



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

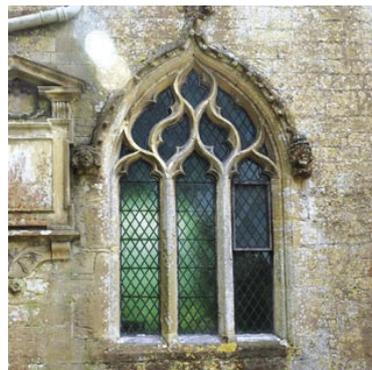
Taynton

What are Conservation Areas?

Conservation Areas are places of special architectural or historic interest, which have a particular character or appearance worthy of preservation or enhancement. Groups of buildings, walls, trees and hedges, open spaces, views, and the historic settlement patterns all combine to create an individual sense of place. It is this character, rather than individual buildings, that Conservation Area status seeks to protect. The first Conservation Areas in the District were identified in the late 1960s. Since then, there has been a rolling programme of designations. Recent Conservation Areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Taynton Conservation Area was designated in 1970, following a process of public consultation.

The purpose of this document

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal describes the main aspects of character or appearance which contribute to the special interest and quality of the area. This document is intended to complement the approved policies for Conservation Areas contained in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. In Conservation Areas there are controls over the demolition and minor alterations of unlisted buildings, and on works to trees. Full details can be obtained from the Planning Service. The Preservation and Enhancement document for Taynton accompanies this Character Appraisal and describes strategies for the future maintenance and improvement of Taynton, as well as providing development advice and guidance on conversions, extensions and the design of new buildings within the Conservation Area.



Location and setting

The village of Taynton lies in the extreme west of the District, close to the Gloucestershire border and two miles north-west of Burford. It is connected by lanes to main roads that serve Lechlade to the south; Chipping Norton and Stow-on-the-Wold to the north; and Great Barrington in Gloucestershire to the west.

Taynton has altered remarkably little down the centuries, and the village retains, to a pronounced degree, a tranquil and distinctive rural character. Houses and cottages, dating from the 17th and 18th centuries and built from the fine and mellow-toned local limestone, are scattered informally along lanes that wind lazily through the village. Other properties lie beside lanes that terminate in one of the four large farms that serve to frame the settlement.

Taynton lies in the upper Windrush valley, in a landscape of gentle slopes, valley floor farmland and water meadows. The river Windrush itself meanders by to the south of the village, bearing south-eastwards towards the towns of Burford and Witney. The underlying geology of Taynton comprises middle and upper lias rock, and includes the fine oolitic limestone for which Taynton's quarries are justly famed.



Historical development

Evidence for early activity at Taynton is sketchy and the origins of the settlement remain obscure. When Taynton does find its way onto the pages of recorded history it is often in connection with its quarries. These have, for more than 900 years, yielded up a pale limestone (or 'freestone') of exceptional quality. The quarrying of this stone was probably carried out first by the Romans, and was certainly taking place in the 11th century when it is mentioned in the Domesday Book. As well as being employed extensively within a 20 mile radius of Taynton, it was also used further afield. Most of Oxford's churches were built from the stone, and from the first quarter of the 13th century so were many of its colleges. The material was also used in the building of Windsor Castle, Eton College, St Paul's Cathedral, and Blenheim Palace.

For most of its history Taynton has remained a small, dispersed farming community under manorial control. In 1059 the Manor at Taynton was granted to the Abbey of St. Denys, Paris, by Edward the Confessor. Subsequently it belonged to Tewkesbury Abbey. At the Dissolution in the first half of the 16th century the manor house was purchased by Edmund Harman, who thus became Lord of the Manor. He and members of his immediate family are buried in a vault in the south aisle of the church in Taynton.

Throughout the Middle Ages the manor house and church formed the focal points for administrative and religious life. However, the character of the settlement resides not so much in these structures as in Taynton's four large farms. Farming has played a central role in the history and development of the village. The meadowland along the Windrush beyond the village provided pasture for flocks, while the dispersed form of Taynton encompassed a pattern of minor fields and smallholdings that is still discernible.

The 17th and 18th centuries saw the construction of most of the buildings visible today, together with the retention of the informal and loose-knit form of the village. Since this period, Taynton has witnessed very little change and has escaped much of the development and infill witnessed in equivalent villages in the first half of the 20th century.

Settlement pattern

The attractions of Taynton for its earliest settlers were numerous. The site had forgiving and moderately enclosed topography, and rich pasturing for livestock adjacent to the river Windrush and the Coombe brook. These latter were not the only sources of water. In the small valley that runs due north of Taynton a number of springs surface. From an early date the underlying geology was exploited to provide limestone for building. The region was also served by a number of important early transport links, including the Saxon route running north-south between Mercia and Wessex. During the Middle Ages, Burford's markets, traders and artisans were central to the welfare and prosperity of Taynton's farming community.

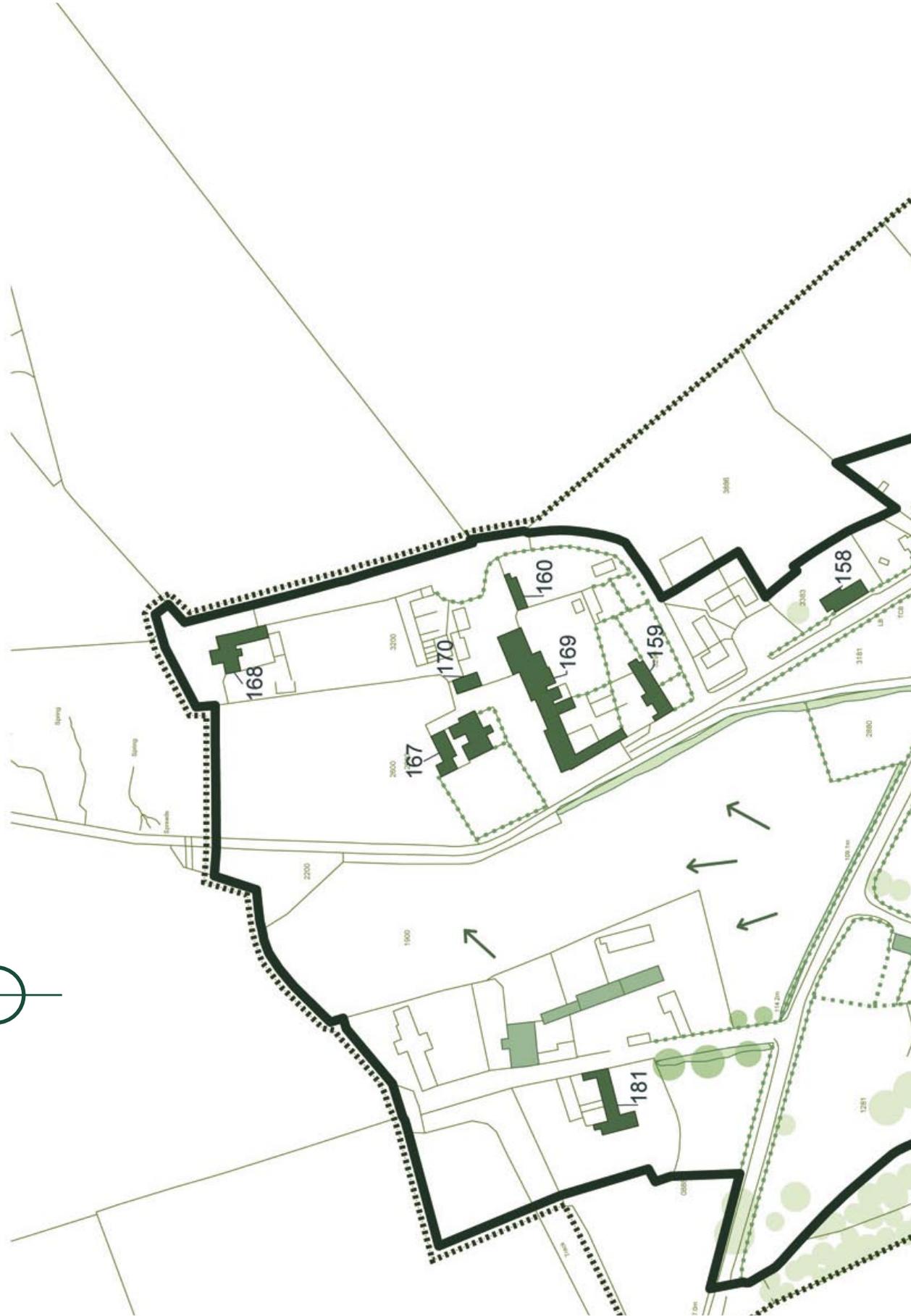
Taynton's informal, dispersed form is typical for the District, and reflects the haphazard way in which such settlements evolved through the ages. The church and manor house formed the early hub of the village, but rather than a nucleated pattern of settlement developing about this core, the houses, cottages, and farmsteads straggle off to the north and west.

Initially, settlement appears to have been concentrated along the route linking Burford with Great Barrington. The church lies just south of this road, next to Manor Farm. To the north of this road other properties are scattered along a narrow side road. A number of longer side roads branch off the Burford road. Each leads past, or terminates in, one of the three other farms. Lower Farm to the north includes an extensive and memorable set of early farm buildings. The portion of the village stretching from Manor Farm in the south up to Lower Farm in the north, although dispersed, is relatively interconnected. Upper Farm, Garnes Farm, and their associated structures, however, lie off to the west, separated from the main part of Taynton by small fields and the Coombe Brook.

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed very little by way of infill or development in Taynton, and almost no discernible alteration to the dispersed form of the village. A handful of recent structures can be seen (mainly occupying discreet locations) but most new building has been restricted to the extension of existing structures.



Taynton Conservation Area





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Listed Buildings

There are 33 Listed structures of architectural or historic interest in the Conservation Area. Listed Buildings are classified in grades of relative importance

Grade II* – Particularly special and important buildings (4% of Listed Buildings)

- 10/161 Church of St. John the Evangelist
- 10/174 Strong's House (formerly listed as Nos. 16 and 17)

Grade II – Buildings of special interest

- 10/148 No. 14 (Garry Cottage) (Formerly listed as No. 14)
- 10/149 No. 20 (Formerly listed as No. 20 and Barn)
- 10/150 No. 20, Barn approx. 30m SW (Formerly listed as No. 20 and Barn)
- 10/151 Nos. 21 and 22
- 10/152 No. 23
- 10/153 Nos. 26 (Byway) and 27 (Formerly listed as Nos. 26, 27 and 28)
- 10/154 Nos. 31 and 32
- 10/155 Stone stile approx. 15m S of Nos. 31 and 32 (Formerly listed as Stone stile opposite No. 31)
- 10/156 Nos. 33 and 35 (Formerly listed as Nos. 33, 34 and 35)
- 10/157 No. 38 (Formerly listed as Premises 20 yds NE of Taynton House)
- 10/158 No. 41
- 10/159 Nos. 42 and 43 (Formerly listed as Three cottages at Lower Farm, South of house)
- 10/160 No. 45 (Formerly listed as Cottage at Lower Farm, ESE of house)
- 10/162 Church of St. John, chest tomb to Cozins family approx. 24m N of chancel
- 10/163 Church of St. John, group of 2 chest tombs approx. 3m NW of N Porch
- 10/164 Church of St. John, group of 4 chest tombs approx. 8m N of chancel
- 10/165 Church of St. John, group of 5 chest tombs approx. 18m S of S aisle
- 10/166 Church Cottage
- 10/167 Lower Farmhouse (Formerly listed as Lower Farmhouse with Barn and adjoining building)
- 10/168 Lower Farm, barn approx. 100m NNE from farmhouse
- 10/169 Lower Farm, barn, stable and sheltershed approx. 20m SE of farmhouse (Formerly listed as Lower Farmhouse with barn and adjoining building)
- 10/170 Lower Farm, Stable approx. 8m NE of farmhouse
- 10/171 Manor Farmhouse (Formerly listed as Manor Farmhouse and attached barn)
- 10/172 Mead House (Formerly listed as Taynton Farmhouse)
- 10/173 Mead House, Granary and cart shed, and attached farm buildings approx. 60m W (Formerly listed as Group of Barns to west)
- 10/175 Taynton House
- 10/176 Taynton House, Gatepier approx. 5m E
- 10/177 Taynton House, gate pier approx. 8m SE
- 10/178 Taynton House, railings and gate approx. 4m E
- 10/180 The Old Vicarage (Formerly listed as Vicarage and small outhouse)
- 10/181 Upper Farmhouse

Note: The numbers indicate the unique identification number by which Listed Buildings are referenced

Architectural character and quality of buildings

The consistent use of the fine, indigenous limestone gives Taynton a pleasingly harmonious appearance. Most of the houses and cottages date from the 17th and 18th centuries, and employ the local limestone in courses: rubble and squared in the humbler properties, and ashlar in those of a higher status. Roofs are predominantly of stone slate with stone stacks, and many have gables and gabled windows.

As well as drawing on the vernacular tradition, the architecture of Taynton also draws heavily on the formal. Stone mullion windows with hood moulds, and doorways with stone hoods on brackets, are unusually abundant in the village.

The striking visual harmony of Taynton is due in large part to the lack of recent housing. This, together with its unspoilt backwater setting, makes the village a time capsule little altered since the 18th century.

Historically, the most significant building in Taynton is Strong's House. This property was named after its builder, Thomas Strong, one of Sir Christopher Wren's master masons at St. Paul's Cathedral. Dated 1676, the house has coped gables and cross-gables with decorative finials. It is a particularly fine example of the evolved Cotswold Vernacular style.

The small but lofty church of St. John the Evangelist has a number of fine Decorated (Gothic) features. The most notable of these are contained in the c. 1360 north aisle, which has ballflower decoration and elaborately traceried windows. The nave and side aisles feature stone corbels carved as heads; while the nave roof has a variety of finely carved bosses. The octagonal font, showing the evangelists alternating with kneeling angels, belongs to the 15th century.

The four principal farms - the most notable of which is Lower Farm, with its array of fine period outbuildings - are major components of the character area, forming highly significant clusters that serve to define the extent of the settlement, and remind us of the importance of agriculture in the village's history.

Boundary treatments

Limestone walling forms the most conspicuous boundary feature in Taynton, and varies in height and composition throughout the village. A squat drystone wall runs along the lane to Lower Farm. Elsewhere, taller walls, some mortared and of dressed stone, coped and terminating in square pillars topped with ball finials, can be seen in the village, close to the Old Vicarage. The walling serves to bind together the dispersed houses, cottages and farms of Taynton, enhancing significantly the visual harmony of the village. Period railings also appear (outside Taynton House), but hedges are less plentiful. The irregular orientation of properties in relation to the lanes through the village is also distinctive.

Landscape, trees and views

Taynton has a remarkably unspoilt rural character, and is situated within both the Cotswolds AONB and, by virtue of its proximity to the Windrush, an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). The village's setting in a shallow valley rich in trees affords a high degree of visual containment. Approaching from the west, Taynton emerges bit by bit from the landscape. Views into and out of the village are limited, but those within the village itself are often memorable. The triangle of open land formed by the lanes to the north-east of Garnes Farm allows for attractive views between the elevated houses along the road to the north of Garnes Farm, and the main portion of the village to the east. The view from Upper Farm down over the buildings of Lower Farm, which merge into the vegetation of their valley setting, is also memorable. Other fine vistas are caught along the lanes that wind between the houses.



West Oxfordshire District Council - Planning Service
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General planning enquiries and application forms
List entries and grant enquiries
Trees and landscape enquiries
Architectural and technical enquiries

01993 861683
01993 861666
01993 861662
01993 861659

