



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal

# Little Tew

### 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. Little Tew Conservation Area was designated in 2006, 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 Little Tew accompanies this Character Appraisal and describes strategies for the future maintenance and improvement of Little Tew, 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 small village of Little Tew lies in the north of the District, five miles east of Chipping Norton and one mile south-west of Great Tew. The settlement has a tucked-away feel, with a striking mixture of properties (including sizeable 17th- and 19th-century houses) scattered along narrow lanes that wind through a villagescape rich in trees. These features give Little Tew a highly distinctive appearance and character.

Little Tew lies just below the 183m contour, yet remains cloaked, despite this elevated location, by a folded landform with a strong landscape structure of trees and hedges.

The parish is underlain by an area of transitional geology, with the broad expanse of oolitic limestone to the south giving way to lias stone in the north. This latter geology yields up the orangey-brown ironstone (or *marlstone*) that forms the principal building material in the area, and that makes such a striking counterpoint to the pale limestone that distinguishes the buildings to the south.



## Historical development

Despite the discovery of flint implements and Romano-British and Saxon pottery and tools, there is no indication of substantial early activity in the area. Little Tew first appears on the pages of recorded history in the Domesday survey of 1086, when 16 households are recorded. The settlement, which by 1207 was known as *Parva Tiwe*, probably began as an outlier or colony of Great Tew to the north-east.

There were three manors at Little Tew. Two of the three manorial holdings were, from the 15th century, controlled by Exeter College in Oxford and Eton College. The manor house of the Exeter College land is now known as Little Tew Manor and lies north-west of the church. The manor house of the Eton College land was probably on the site of Prior's Close (which was given by Eton in 1853 for the new church). The third manor was held by the de Broc's, and their manor house is known as Timberyard Cottages (aka Keck's House).

For most of its history Little Tew has been a humble farming community whose character has been shaped by agriculture. This past is reflected in such local place names as *Shepherds Close* and *Farriers Close*. Manor Farmhouse in the south dates from the 16th century, while the adjacent Timberyard Cottages incorporate some 14th-century work. The pattern of landholding in the village led to the building of farmhouses for yeomen leaseholders in the 17th century.

The population appears to have remained fairly stable until the 19th century, when much of the property previously owned by the colleges was sold off. There followed a modest population increase, supported by the building of the church (in 1853), the vicarage (in 1858), almshouses, school and a store. Little Tew became a separate ecclesiastical parish from about 1875, but the living was reunited with that of Great Tew in 1916.

The 20th century saw very little new development in the village, and the retention of Little Tew's highly distinctive unspoilt and slightly unkempt character. Today, this character continues to provide a striking contrast to the more picturesque, managed and manicured feel of Great Tew to the north-east.

## Settlement pattern

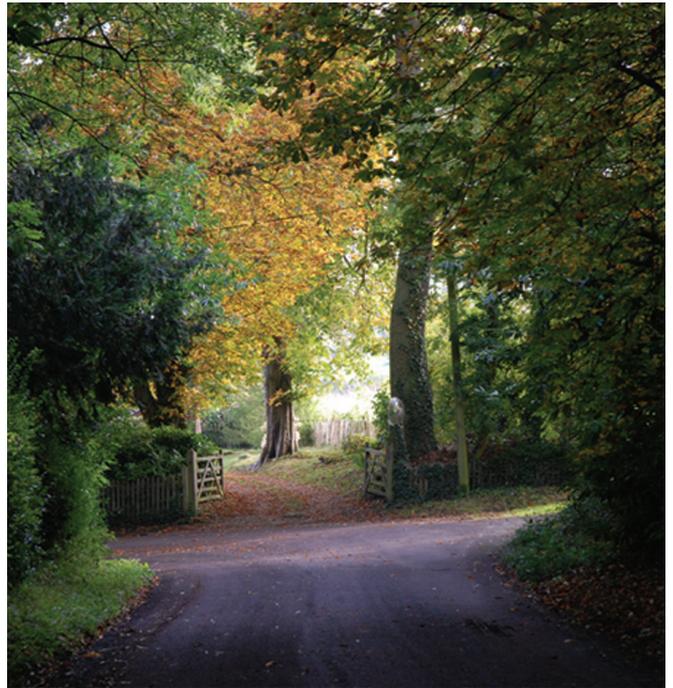
Initial settlement seems to have taken place along the banks of the small stream (now partly culverted) that enters the village from the north-west along Water Lane, before joining the river Dorn to the south. Early houses were also built on the slope to the south of the road to Enstone. The existence of 14th-century fragments in Timber Yard Cottages confirms settlement here in at least the medieval period; and the manorial nature of the early buildings here suggests that this may have formed an early hub.

The settlement took on the form visible today in the 17th century, with the building of a cluster of houses and cottages at Water Lane's junction with the road to Great Tew. South-east of this, where this road is met by the Enstone Road, there is another cluster established in the 17th century. Infill between these two points, and between the latter and Manor Farm to the south, has been piecemeal in nature, never affording the settlement as a whole a nucleated or compact form.

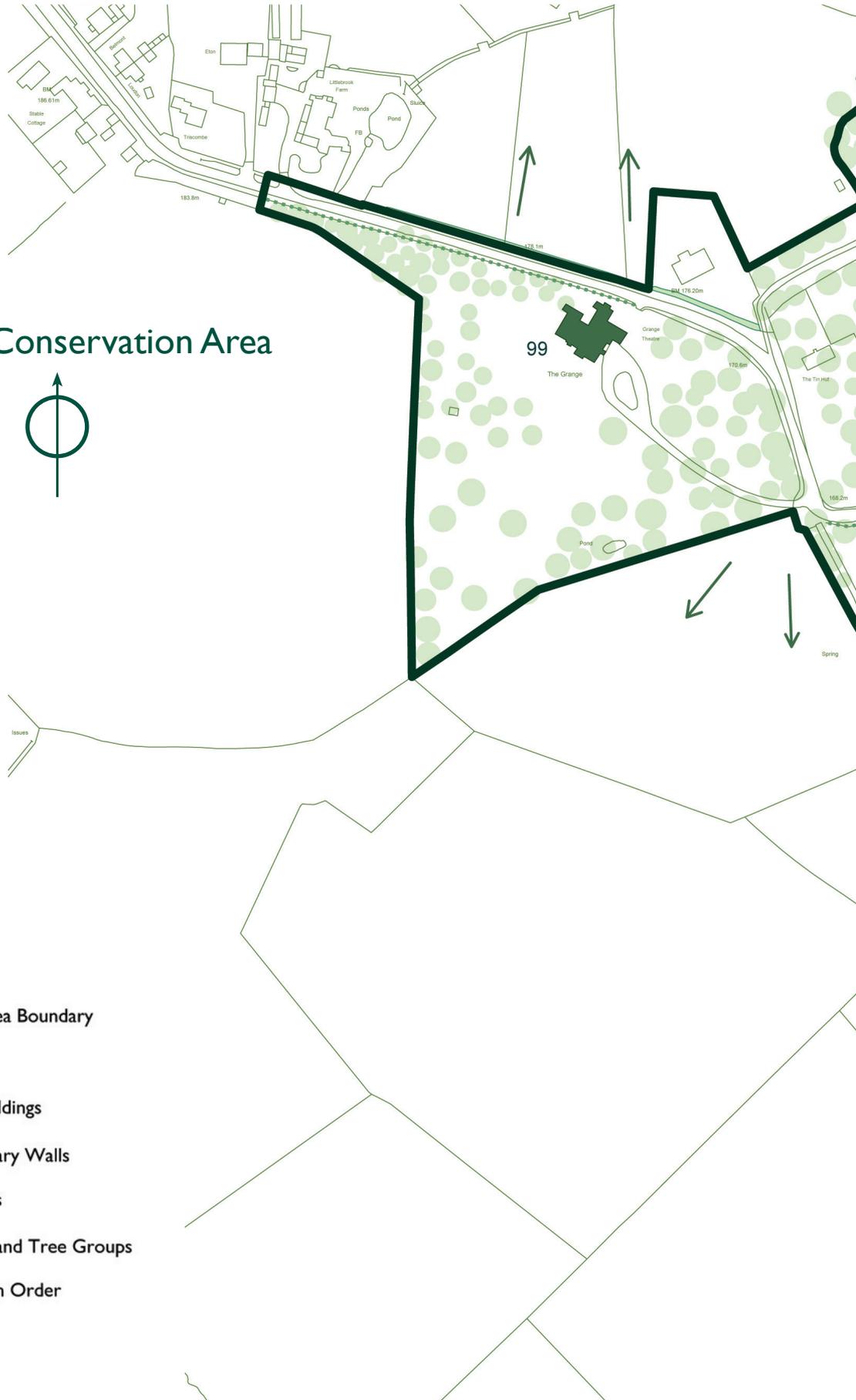
The village street plan was altered around the time of Enclosure in 1794. The right-angle turn, west of the former school and almshouses, retains two arms of a former crossroads. At the bottom of the hill from Great Tew the road continued and joined the Enstone Road at Manor Farm.

After the Enclosure award of 1794 some farmland was arranged to radiate out from homesteads in the village. The pattern of village buildings and lanes was reorganised and there appears to have been some demolition of college-owned properties, particularly between Istock Close and Shepherds Close.

Development in the 19th century was fairly piecemeal and saw the addition of a number of substantial buildings, which have added a distinctive Victorian shade to the built character of the village. These include the Grange, School House, School Cottage, The Croft and St. John's Church.



## Little Tew Conservation Area



### Key

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Buildings
-  Locally Listed Buildings
-  Significant Boundary Walls
-  Significant Hedges
-  Significant Trees and Tree Groups
-  Tree Preservation Order
-  Significant Views



## Listed Buildings

There are 15 structures Listed as being of architectural or historic interest in the Conservation Area. Listed Buildings are classified in grades of relative importance.

### Grade II – Buildings of special interest

11/94	Nos.1 to 4 (consecutive) Croft Cottages
11/96	Church of St. John the Evangelist
11/99	The Grange
11/100	No-oven Cottage
11/101	Shepherds Cottage (Formerly listed as House immediately NW of 'Up the Steps')
11/103	Up The Steps
11/104	Water Lane Cottage
11/105	Water Lane House
11/106	ENSTONE ROAD (East side) Manor Farmhouse
11/107	ENSTONE ROAD (West side) Nos. 1 to 4 (consecutive) Timberyard Cottages
11/109	THE GREEN (North side) Ibstock Close
11/110	THE GREEN (North side) Cottage approx. 10m N of Ibstock Close
11/111	THE GREEN (North side) The Bell House
11/112	THE GREEN (South side) Manor House
11/113	THE GREEN (South side) Coach house and cottage approx. 20m NW of Manor House

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



## Architectural character and quality of buildings

The early dwellings of Little Tew are predominately vernacular in form and detailing, with some of the larger properties featuring complex plan forms. Roofs tend to be of stone slate, with some thatch, Welsh slate and terracotta. Windows include stone mullion types, together with casements and sashes. The mixed nature of the underlying geology is reflected in the use of pale grey limestone and, most notably, ginger-coloured ironstone. These materials appear in rubble form, sometimes coursed and sometimes uncoursed. However, ashlar-cut stone is unusually abundant.

Little Tew has a high proportion of 17th-century farmhouses built by yeomen leaseholders on college land. These, when bought by private owners in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, were modernised and enlarged. Typical of these is Ibstock Close. Its near contemporary, Bell House, was formerly The Bell Inn.

Of the 17th-century houses in Little Tew the Manor House (which was once a farm) is arguably the most interesting. Although variously extended and altered down the centuries, it remains an atmospheric house with a wealth of original features. Externally, these include a variety of stone mullion windows, while inside are Tudor-arched corner fireplaces; moulded plank doors; re-used 17th-century panelling, and butt-purlin roofs.

Distinctive to the village are a number of substantial mid-Victorian buildings in the gothic-revival style. The church dates from 1853 and is mostly by G. E. Street. The Grange, also by Street, was built as the vicarage, and features both mullion windows and trefoiled lancets in groups. In the 1930s the Grange became the home of a branch of the Sitwell family, and from the 1970s it has been an amateur theatre.

Two other Victorian buildings are noteworthy. Charles Buckeridge's 1862 grouping of school, teacher's house and almshouses is approached through a lychgate and constitutes an appealing and distinctive accretion of forms; while the Methodist chapel of 1871 has façade enlivened by a pretty stepped gable.

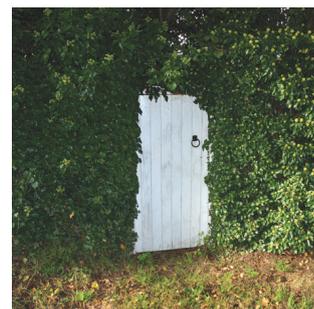
## Boundary treatments

Little Tew, although enclosed by its topography, has a scattered feel, which is accentuated by the relationship between the houses and roads within the village. Many houses and cottages are set back from the road behind front gardens and verges of varying depth. Drystone walling of various heights can be seen throughout the village. The house at Ibstock Close sits behind a formal yew hedge that rises above stone walling.

## Landscape, trees and views

The location of Little Tew within its cupped landform gives the settlement a pronounced sense of enclosure. Views across and within the village are further limited by variations in topography and an abundance of trees and other forms of vegetation. The trees vary greatly, both in terms of species and scale, and include a significant number of mature coniferous species. A Wellingtonia (a species introduced to these islands in the 1850s) forms a dominant and memorable specimen tree at the centre of the village.

There are also a number of hedgerows that add to the enclosed and secretive character of the village. In the centre of the village the combination of the location of the dwellings, the topography, and the richness of the vegetation precludes the cross-views characteristic of many other villages in the District. Views out over the surrounding landscape become possible towards the north-western edge of the village where several of the buildings are located on higher ground.



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General planning enquiries and application forms  
List entries and grant enquiries  
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Architectural and technical enquiries

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