



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Cornwell

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. Cornwell Conservation Area was designated in 1994, 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 Cornwell accompanies this Character Appraisal and describes strategies for the future maintenance and improvement of Cornwell, as well as providing development advice and guidance on conversions, extensions and the design of new buildings within the Conservation Area.



Location and setting

Cornwell is a small rural estate village associated with Cornwell Manor. The private nature of the village, in concert with alterations by the architect Clough Williams Ellis in the 1930s, has given Cornwell a highly distinctive and idiosyncratic character.

Cornwell is located in the far north-west of the District, near to the county borders of Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. The settlement lies three miles due west of Chipping Norton and is connected to the villages of Salford to the north-east and Adlestrop to the west by a network of lanes.

Cornwell enjoys a tranquil setting on the side of a semi-enclosed valley, with the village itself sloping down to a stream. The character of this landscape is derived in part from the formal parkland adjoining Cornwell Manor, and in part from the complex network of valleys and ridges, with its intricate patchwork of fields, hedgrows and woodland, which comprises the wider landscape setting.

The parish overlies an area of mixed geology, with cornbrash limestone to the south and softer middle and upper lias rocks (which yield up a darker, orangey ironstone) to the north.



Historical development

The origins of Cornwell are obscure, but the settlement is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. In the 16th century the estate belonged to the Annesley family, and in the early 17th century it was sold to the Penystone family, who owned it into the 19th century. For most of its history the village was essentially a compact settlement housing workers employed by the estate and its related farms.

The centres of religious and manorial control – the church and manor house – date from the 12th and 16th centuries respectively; the village houses and cottages date mainly from the 17th century (though one has a re-used 14th-century doorway).

In the 1930s Mrs Anthony Gillson employed the architect of Portmeirion in North Wales – Clough Williams Ellis – to undertake works of restoration and enlargement to the manor house, and the ‘reconditioning’ of the village, with the general instruction to ‘*maintain the traditional appearance so far as possible or might seem desirable, while contriving up-to-date interiors within the ancient husks.*’ (Christopher Hussey, *Country Life*, 1941).

In realising the high quality of vernacular detailing that characterises the commission, Clough Williams Ellis benefited greatly from the skill and knowledge of his contractors, Groves of Milton-Under-Wychwood, who boasted a continuous pedigree of Cotswold craftsmanship, apparently dating from the 17th century and including work for Sir Christopher Wren.

Although Cornwell’s houses and cottages are no longer the sole preserve of local estate workers, the village’s agricultural past still lends much to the character of the settlement, with three farms still lying adjacent to Cornwell: Park Farm to the north; Manor Farm against the western edge; and Glebe Farm off to the east. There is a complete absence of recent housing in Cornwell, again contributing to the time-warp quality of the settlement.

Settlement pattern

Cornwell lies in an area of sheltered topography adjacent to a stream and several springs. To the north is an ancient trackway that runs from Stow-on-the-Wold past the Rollright Stones, and on towards Northampton to the east.

The settlement occupies an area that is roughly rectangular in shape, the houses and cottages lying on a hillside that slopes down to the stream fringing the southern edge of the village. When viewed from a distance the buildings form a picturesque huddle of simple roof forms.

Cornwell Manor itself is detached from the village, and enjoys a beautiful situation on a small hill overlooking formal gardens and parkland to the south and east. It is separated from the hamlet by estate buildings, gracious open spaces and formal avenues of trees.

The hamlet of Cornwell is centred about the village square, which is enclosed by buildings or curving stone walls. The stage-set nature of this square, with the buildings forming a self-conscious backdrop, also characterises Williams Ellis's much larger open space in the centre of Portmeirion.

Manor farm and its associated agricultural buildings form a further grouping to the north-west of the hamlet. The 12th-century church, meanwhile, lies marooned in the parkland well to the east of Cornwell Manor, and is reached by a footpath.

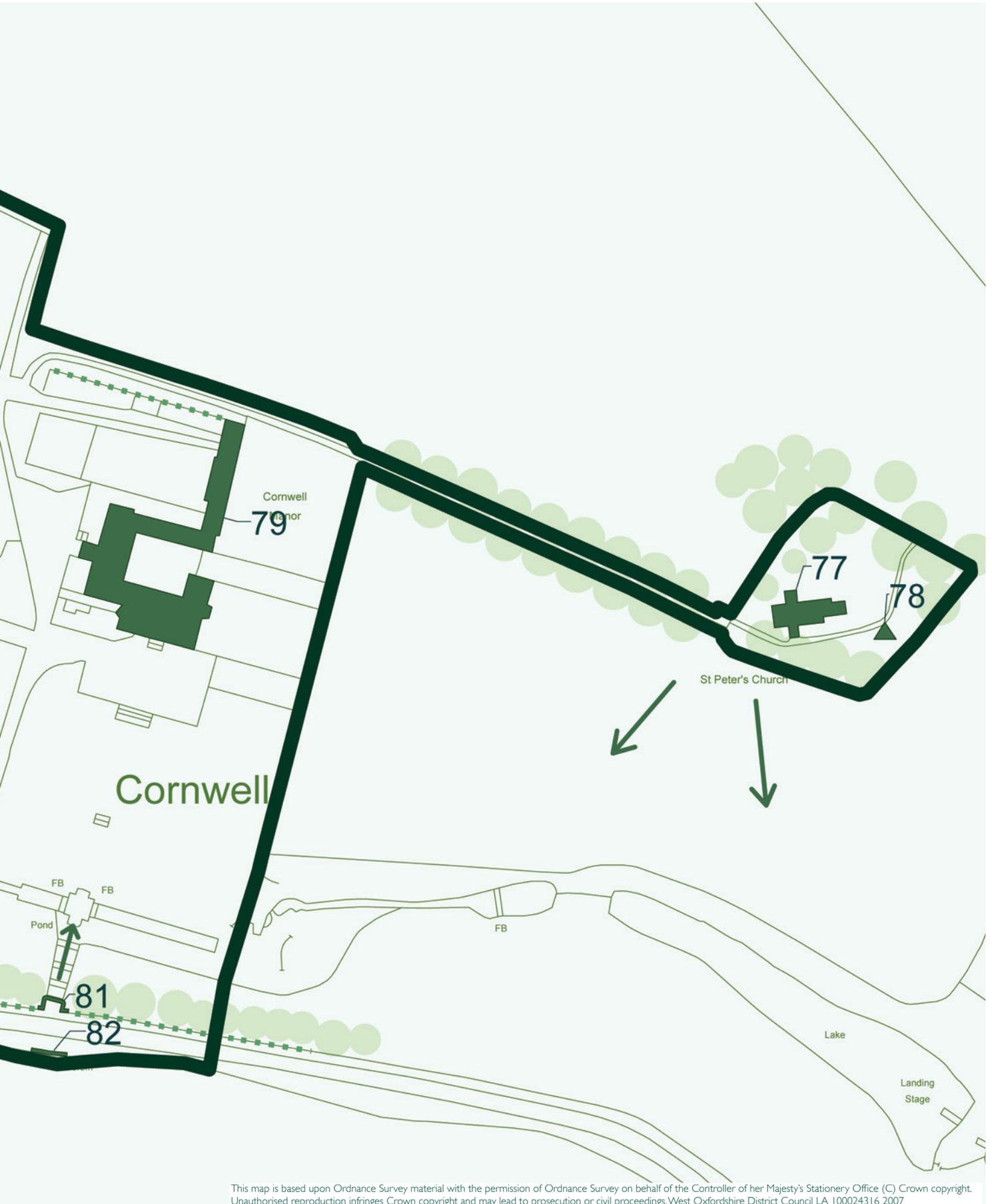


Cornwell Conservation Area



Key

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



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Listed Buildings

Of the 12 Listed structures in the parish, 11 lie within the Conservation Area, and the majority of these have been either built, extended or altered by Clough Williams Ellis. Listed Buildings are classified in grades of relative importance.

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

13/77 Church of St. Peter

13/79 Cornwell Manor

Grade II – Buildings of special interest

13/78 Medieval coffin approx. 9m SE of SE corner of chancel of Church of St. Peter

13/80 Gate piers, gates and quadrant walls approx. 105m SW of Cornwell Manor

13/81 Gatepiers and gates approx. 105m S of Cornwell Manor

13/82 Gatepiers and gates approx. 115m S of Cornwell Manor

13/83 Dovecote approx. 65m SW of Cornwell Manor

13/84 No. 1

13/85 Nos. 2, 3 (former shop), 4 and former school

13/86 Nos. 7 and 8

13/87 Nos. 9 and 10

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



Architectural character and quality of buildings

The village buildings of Cornwell are typically small in scale and vernacular in form, materials and detailing. Simple plan forms and gabled roofs topped with stone slates predominate. Window types vary throughout the village, and range from leaded lights within stone mullions, to glazing bar casements and sashes. Although of humble status, the village buildings are overlain by the alterations and interventions of Clough Williams Ellis – the architect of Portmeirion. A singular and eccentric architectural character is created over and above that naturally arising from the traditional forms (and this despite the consistent use of traditional building materials).

Subtle interpretations of vernacular details exist alongside more vigorous work drawn from an eclectic mix of Art Deco, Rococo, Classical and Vernacular influences. So it is for example that substantial tapered stone stacks with Art Deco cappings dominate the roofs. The focal point of the villagescape is the former village hall (originally the school and now the estate office). It is a building of simple vernacular origins onto which Clough Williams Ellis added an apsidal end set with long neo-Georgian windows and an over-scaled belfry-cum-air-raid-siren in Art Deco style with ball finials and Rococo scrolls.

Cornwell Manor itself has a finely-balanced classical front dating from 1750, which masks an earlier core. The prominent siting of the house is emphasised by the Williams Ellis gateway with its Art Deco metalwork, which frames the vista to the house from the main road. Indeed, Art Deco metalwork forms a distinctive thread running through the hamlet, and is evident in both gates and porch canopies. Elsewhere, the use of robust stone piers capped with ball finials defines the village square, and similar piers appear throughout the village and adjoining park.

The small church of St. Peter comprises a simple nave, chancel and central bell cote. Dating from the 12th century, alterations in later centuries culminated in the partial rebuilding of the structure in 1830, and its further restoration in 1882.

Boundary treatments

Apart from the Williams Ellis influence, boundary treatments are generally vernacular in materials and detailing. Drystone walling with flat copings links buildings fronting the road, while higher stone walls surround Cornwell Manor and the stable yard.

Landscape, trees and views

Cornwell hamlet nestles in a rolling landscape setting, surrounded on three sides by the parkland and formal gardens of Cornwell Manor. The park is characterised by mature specimen trees and long avenues. At the same time as his works to the manor house and village, Clough Williams Ellis also laid out the gardens. This included terracing the valley south of the house and canalising the stream into a series of artificial pools. These features, together with part of the village, are included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest (Listed Grade-II). The approach to Cornwell is lined with mature trees, giving a sheltered and enclosed character. By virtue of its location on the side of a small valley, views out of Cornwell are generally restricted to the opposing slope of the valley. However, the tree-lined path to the church offers good views beyond, out over the valley.



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

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