

# Grafton Underwood Conservation Area

(As reviewed March 2007)



Produced for Kettering Borough Council

by

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Grafton Underwood Conservation Area was designated by Kettering Borough Council in 1977. In the years since it was designated, attitudes towards the conservation of the historic environment have become more sophisticated, and the threats to the survival of the special character of the Conservation Area have changed.
- 1.2 The husbandry of its holdings exercised by Boughton Estate has preserved much to the character of Grafton Underwood as a rural settlement. Nevertheless it is considered desirable that the Borough Council now takes steps to ensure that this special character is conserved for the future.
- 1.3 Kettering Borough Council appointed Donald Insall Associates to undertake this appraisal of Grafton Underwood Conservation Area in September 2006.
- 1.4 This appraisal begins with a summary of the statutory planning context and a summary of the special interest of Grafton Underwood Conservation Area. The appraisal continues with a more detailed analysis of the setting and historical development of the village, and spatial and character analyses. A summary of key issues affecting the conservation area and changes adopted for these then follow, with a list of sources of further information.

- 1.5 No appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and omission of any particular building, feature or space in this conservation appraisal should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.



*St. James' Church*

## 2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 This Appraisal has been undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the English Heritage publications, *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals* and *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*.

2.2 The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act defines a conservation area as “an area of architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” The Act places a duty on local authorities to designate conservation areas where appropriate and from time to time to review the extent of Conservation area designation within their districts. It also requires the local authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

2.3 The designation is seen as the first step in a dynamic process, to quote English Heritage “the aim of which is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the designated area – and to provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future through the development of management policies”. Designation gives the local authority additional powers to stop for example removal of significant features and to encourage sensitive new development.

This particular study needs to be seen as part of the series of planning documents which already exist serving Kettering: These include:

- *the Kettering Local Plan 1995;*
- *Kettering Development Framework, Kettering Masterplan; 2005,*
- *the North Northamptonshire Statement of Community Involvement*
- *the Borough Council’s Issues and Options for Urban Extension.*

2.4 Government policy set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.15 (PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment) includes that, “The general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.” This appraisal reflects the values identified by English Heritage in *Power of Place- The Future of the Historic Environment; 2000* and by the Government’s Urban Taskforce in *Towards an Urban Renaissance, 2001*.

### 3.0 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST

3.1 Grafton Underwood is one of a small group of former estate villages (along with Warkton and Weekley) associated with the Duke of Buccleugh's Estate at Boughton. Because the village has remained in estate ownership until relatively recent times, it retains a coherent character that is strongly identified with agriculture and the management of the Estate.



*Nos 4,5 and 6*



*Manor Farm*

### 4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

4.1 The morphology of Grafton is defined by the course of the Alledge Brook. The main village street runs along the eastern bank of the brook. The village is organised on a typical linear mediaeval plan, with long narrow plots associated with individual holdings stretching between the main street and (former) back lanes running parallel to the street.

4.2 The village possesses a good selection of Estate buildings dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present. These include farmhouses, cottages in the post medieval tradition, model 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages, barns and other farm buildings.

### 5.0 LOCATION AND SETTING

5.1 Grafton Underwood is a parish of 730 hectares situated approximately 3½ miles to the east of Kettering, located for the most part at 90m above OD and set within the area of the former Rockingham Forest.

5.2 The landscape of the parish is characteristic of the glacial clay geology of north Northamptonshire. In early medieval times the landscape was heavily wooded. There are extensive areas of managed ancient woodland (Old Head Wood, Grafton Park Wood) within the parish. The village is located in the centre of the parish on Blisworth limestone; this is exposed beneath the glacial clay by the small south- flowing brook that runs from north to south through the centre of the village.

5.3 Grafton Underwood has good communications via local roads to Kettering and Corby, and via the A14 at Cranford to the Midlands and East Anglia. Grafton Underwood is 25 minutes by car from Kettering station on the Midland railway main line (London 55 minutes).

5.4 There is a population of 135 living in 58 households in the parish (2001 Census).

## 6.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

6.1 Grafton is recorded in the Domesday Book as *Grastone*. It was a minor settlement having land for only one plough. The medieval village had 3 open fields (Wood Field to the north, Cranford Field to the east and Warkton Field to the west), and a common known as Grafton Wold. The open fields were enclosed in 1777. The suffix 'Underwood' was added in the eighteenth century.



*Paddock to the rear of the No 14*

6.2 The linear form of the village suggests that Grafton was a planned settlement of later Saxon date. Linear villages are common in this part of the country (Sudborough, Lowick, Slipton and Twywell are nearby examples), but the organisation of this plan along a stream, which is a distinguishing character of the village, is rare in north Northamptonshire (Barnwell being the only other example). The extent of the village today is roughly the same as it would have been in early medieval times.

6.3 The parish Church of St James is of various dates, with significant fabric from the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

6.4 The area in the north east part of the parish now occupied by Grafton Park Wood was enclosed in 1343 to form a deer park (Grafton Park), which was extended in 1450 by Henry Greene of Drayton, who held the manor of Grafton at this time. Some evidence of the park pale remains.

6.5 Extensive avenues and rides were created within the parish as part of the vast landscape created by the first and second Dukes of Montagu in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The plantation of Grafton Park Wood was conceived as part of this landscape. Other rides to the south of the village no longer survive.

6.6 There are settlement remains comprising of boundary earthworks and a former sunken lane (the former back lane) in the paddock immediately west of Whitehouse Farm.

6.7 Early buildings surviving in the village, in addition to the Church, include Dukes Arms farmhouse (1645) and Manor House (1653). There is also a number of 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages and agricultural buildings (including Nos. 22, 23, Duke's Mill Cottage, Duke's Mill House, barns at Grafton Park Farm, Nos. 13 and 14, 32, 34, 35 and 36, Orchard Cottage and May Cottage, No. 42). It is probable that early fabric also survives elsewhere (e.g. Grafton Park Farmhouse).



*Duke's Arms Farmhouse*



*Grafton Park Farmhouse*

- 6.8 There is also a good collection of later 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in Grafton, including the Tudor gothic former school (Architect unknown 1853) and model cottages (Nos. 24, 44 and 45, 46 and 47, 48 and 49).



*Nos 46 and 47*



*The Laurels*

- 6.9 Grafton Underwood airfield was built immediately north of the village in 1941 and Brigstock Road was closed during World War II. The airfield included nearly all of the area of the mediaeval Wood Field, as well as parts of Old Head Wood and Grafton Park Wood, and was over 500 acres in

extent. The former runways can be traced as coniferous woodland planted after the pavement was removed post war. There is a granite memorial recording the presence of the 384<sup>th</sup> Bomb group of the United States 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force at Grafton Underwood at the point where the runway crossed the Geddington Road to the west of the village.

- 6.10 Two houses were built along Brigstock Road during the latter half of the 20th century. This area constitutes the only significant extension to the village area since medieval times.

## 7.0 SPATIAL ANALYSIS



*Boundary fences in Rectory Paddock*

- 7.1 As noted, the physical character of Grafton Underwood derives from the disposition of its linear medieval plan along both sides of the Alledge Brook. At the northern end of the village, the buildings are set back from the brook effectively creating an elongated green that is visually enclosed by trees and architectural features. Buildings are

arranged informally along the main street and also along Geddington Road running westward.

7.2 The village remains strongly linked to its historic rural surroundings. Importantly, the pre- enclosure ‘closes’ behind the buildings along the main street mostly survive in their ancient form without having been built upon except for agricultural buildings, and the line of the back lanes of the medieval village that would have separated these from the open fields beyond can be traced on the ground as a landscape feature or from the modern field boundaries.

7.3 The church spire is visible intermittently as one moves through the village, and announces the presence of the village as one approaches from the south.



*View from Cranford Road*

7.4 Within the village, buildings are grouped informally, with some areas being occupied at relatively high density (e.g. Nos. 26-36), whilst others occupy relatively large plots (The Rectory, the model cottages at Nos. 44-49). Houses at

the edge of the village are relatively isolated (No. 1, nos 22 and 23).

7.5 Most buildings are constructed up to the street pavement line, particularly at the northern end of the main street. Higher status buildings are generally set back from the street behind front gardens (e.g. the Rectory, the Manor House, Grafton Park Farmhouse, The Laurels, The Post Office). The nineteenth century model cottages are also generally set back from the street with generous gardens that were intended for vegetable growing. In some locations houses are arranged in groups away from the street (Nos. 4-7, Nos. 22-23).



*Main Street*

7.6 A relatively large number of the buildings are orientated so that the principal elevations face south and are therefore at right angles to the street. Gardens to the side of these houses allow side views from the street, although these are generally contained by the topography of the landscape by

built features and by garden planting. In some situations buildings orientated in this way enclose long views. The orientation of the Duke's Arms Farmhouse at the northern end of the village and No. 1 at the opposite end are both important in this respect.



No. 1



Nos. 35, 36 and 37

- 7.7 There are significant groups of mature trees within the village, notably in the Rectory garden and behind the wall to the paddock in front of the Rectory.
- 7.8 The extensive stone walls between and in front of the buildings along the main street and elsewhere help to define much of the spatial character of the village. These walls include the 18<sup>th</sup> century garden walls associated with Grafton Park Farm, the 19<sup>th</sup> century walls to the large paddock in front of the Rectory, and the wall along the side of the road between No. 1 and the allotments by the bridge to Whitehouse Farm.



The Manor House

- 7.9 Fortunately, nearly all the garden walls associated with the cottages remain intact. Only in a few locations have they been taken down to create access for off-street car parking (e.g. the Manor House).

## 8.0 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### 8.1 Generally



Main Street

8.1.1 The appearance of the village as it is in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has evolved over a period of over 1000 years. Three principal periods of development can be traced which contribute significantly to the character of Grafton Underwood familiar today:

- The medieval settlement plan, which preserves the relationship of the village with its closes to the wider landscape of the former open fields beyond;
- The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages and agricultural buildings, significant in themselves and in terms of the spatial relationships between them as a group;
- The village buildings added in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century including the former school and the model cottages.



*Nos 48 and 49*

## 8.2 Character

8.2.1 The survival of the medieval settlement plan at Grafton Underwood in large part lends uniformity to the character of the village today.

However three distinct areas can be identified:

- The main street, distinguished by the presence of the brook and by its spatially enclosed character defined by buildings, trees and walls.
- The area around the Church and Whitehouse Farm, and along the Cranford Road, which is more open in character.
- A similar area, along Geddington Road and Brigstock Road, where the former airfield is a major landscape feature immediately adjacent to the village.

This characterisation is, however, a subjective assessment and there are no clearly demarcated boundaries between these areas. Indeed, the physical character of the village is notably a coherent whole.

## 8.3 Land use and building types

8.3.1 Until very recently, Grafton Underwood was primarily an agricultural settlement, the imperatives of the seasons and the diurnal requirements of the herds being the primary determinants of the character of the village. Agriculture, and those crafts necessary to support that activity, determined the use of the land and the forms of the village buildings. The governance of Boughton Estate has meant that human energy has been channelled with particular focus, and this has formalised these relationships to a greater extent than might otherwise have occurred.

8.3.2 The only farm buildings to survive from before the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the village are barns, the principal non-domestic agricultural building type. Barns are double height buildings, generally without partitions or floors. Until recently, a 17<sup>th</sup> century example at Grafton Park Farm survived in agricultural use. There are also 18<sup>th</sup> century barns including those at Manor House Farm and at Duke's Arms Farm, neither of which is presently in agricultural use.

8.3.3 Other surviving farm buildings include stables, open sheds for carts, farm implements and cattle, and granaries. These buildings are generally of single storey construction. There are a number of examples of these types of building, mostly of 19<sup>th</sup> century date at Whitehouse Farm (now converted to residential use), Manor House Farm, Grafton Park Farm, Duke's Arms Farm and elsewhere (e.g. to the rear of the Laurels). There are also a number of stables and Coach Houses for domestic use (The Rectory, The Post Office, The Laurels)



*Grafton Park Farm: Stables..*



*and the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> Century barn*

8.3.4 Manor House Farm and Grafton Park Farm both have barns and cow sheds of early 19<sup>th</sup> century date arranged informally around stock yards, an arrangement that is not uncommon in north Northamptonshire. There are also significant ranges of 19<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings at Whitehouse Farm, now converted to residential use.

8.3.5 Of the more recent agricultural buildings, only the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch barn at Grafton House Farm is note worthy as an example of a now rapidly vanishing type.



*Grafton Park Farm*

8.3.6 There are a number of buildings in the village associated with craft uses, including the workshop in front of No. 26.



*No. 26 Former Workshop*

8.3.7 Other significant non-residential buildings, in addition to the church, include the former school, the former reading room, the well head opposite Spring Cottage and the bridges over the brook. The bridges and the well head probably all date from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



*Well Head, Geddington Road*

8.3.8 Residential buildings include the cottages which make up the majority of the domestic buildings in the village and a number of houses which, whilst in some cases still modest, are generally rather grander in status.

8.3.9 The cottages are of various dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present. There are significant examples from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cottages of all periods were usually built as pairs of dwellings, sometimes as short terraces of up to 4 dwelling, each provided with a wash house and privy. Most of the cottages survive in this form. The possibilities of grouping cottages and wash houses to picturesque architectural effect were exploited in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century model cottages. Wash

houses added to earlier cottages in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also often form satisfying architectural compositions (e.g. Nos. 4-6, 20 and 21, 22 and 23).



*Nos. 4,5,6 and 7*

8.3.10 Interesting 20<sup>th</sup> century fabric in the village includes street furniture and signage. The listed K6 telephone kiosk, the direction road sign from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the junction of Geddington Road with Brigstock Road and the Main Street, the street name sign probably from the late 1950s or early 1960s (with David Kindersley designed Roman lettering) to Geddington Road are all noteworthy

survivals. Sadly, a second direction road sign outside the village where the Cranford Road crosses the Warkton to Slipton Road was taken down in 2006. There are also a number of cast iron street lights probably of later 20<sup>th</sup> century date.



*Geddington Road street sign*

#### **8.4 Building materials and construction**



*No. 42*

8.4.1 All of the buildings described in this appraisal are of traditional construction. The majority are in the post medieval tradition of masonry buildings associated with the 'great rebuilding' that took place across England from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The Church and the Manor House are the only early buildings having any architectural pretension, although the presence of stone mullioned windows as opposed to iron casements in wooden frames in a number of instances elsewhere is clearly an indication of status.

8.4.2 Buildings in the post-medieval tradition are characterised by non-symmetrical plan forms and elevations and the use of locally sourced building materials. Their design and construction is essentially utilitarian. They are generally of one or two storeys only with low floor to ceiling heights. It is rare for the floors in these buildings to span more than five metres or so from front to back, which generally means that these buildings tend to be long, low and narrow.

8.4.3 Their ubiquity and the uniformity of built form of these buildings lends the character of the village as a whole an homogeneity, whilst individually they still have a character of their own consequent upon the re-iteration of the basic architectural vocabulary to meet the requirements of different building uses and users.

8.4.4 Of later date, the Old Rectory, the former School, the Post Office, the Laurels and the model cottages can be described as polite architecture and these are to be considered apart

from the earlier ‘vernacular’ post-medieval buildings. Generally a named designer can be associated with these later buildings, and they have architectural features that signify their status, whether the social standing of the occupants (The Old Rectory, The Post Office, The Laurels), or to the progressive aspirations of the Estate (the model cottages, the former school).



*The Old Rectory*

- 8.4.5 Whatever the architectural sophistication of the buildings in the village as a whole, a simple palette of building materials prevails throughout. This palette includes limestone rubble for walls to buildings and for boundary walls, limestone ashlar and dressed stone for quoins, window surrounds, gable parapets and other architectural features, bricks used for chimneys and for walling, straw thatch, Collyweston slate, Welsh slate and clay tiles (pantiles and plain tiles) for roofs.

Windows are typically side hung casements, either iron or wooden. Doors, window frames and other joinery is generally painted white, as is ironwork. Rainwater goods (not found on thatched roofs) are generally of cast iron, also painted white.



*Former School: roof details*

- 8.4.6 Limestone rubble is typically either locally quarried Blisworth limestone, or in one or two instances Upper Lincolnshire limestone from Weldon or Stanion. Dressed stone is always Upper Lincolnshire limestone, most commonly from Weldon, but in some instances a more heavily oolitic type is used (Ketton or possibly Kings Cliffe). Chimneys of ashlar with moulded capping (e.g. to the Manor House), ubiquitous in north Northamptonshire are not common in Grafton, although fragmentary survivals are found where chimneys have otherwise been rebuilt in brick (e.g. No. 35).



*Manor House: quoins*

- 8.4.7 The use of rubble without quoins is not uncommon (presumably because of the high quality of even the cheapest material). This construction is common on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings and also in the buildings of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when even the arches to the bridges over the brook appear to have been constructed in limestone rubble. The practice of laying coursed limestone to form a tabled coping to boundary walls, much in evidence at Grafton, appears to be a speciality of the Boughton Estate.
- 8.4.8 It is probable that many of the stone buildings in the village were finished with lime stucco and/or whitewash prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century mortar pointing survives to a number of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages, and there is evidence of historic limewash on window surrounds to the Church. In other cases rubble has been

inappropriately re-pointed with cement mortar (including some particularly bad ribbon pointing) in recent years.

- 8.4.9 Bricks include orange bricks made locally from Oxford clay and yellow bricks made with Gault clay from Cambridgeshire. Bricks were not used before the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the preponderance of red brick chimneys on earlier buildings must represent the result of an Estate campaign of rebuilding works to cottages throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The yellow bricks are possibly a higher status material (used for example to build Whitehouse Farm house).
- 8.4.10 Thatch was used predominantly for roofing in rural locations, including to higher status buildings throughout north Northamptonshire until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when other roof coverings became widely available. Many formerly thatched roofs were recovered in Collyweston slate and (after 1850) Welsh slate during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 8.4.11 Clay pantiles are of various different types, and do not pre-date the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They include single and multiple roll, natural and black finish. The jazzy angular multiple roll type found on Nos. 11 and 12 and elsewhere are probably a local variant. The use of pantiles on other than wash houses and the rear or secondary roof slopes of buildings is uncommon. Pantiles have however been used to form a coping to garden walls (e.g. to Grafton Park Farmhouse).

- 8.4.12 A number of roofs were re-covered with concrete plain tiles in the latter twentieth century. In some instances chimneys have been rebuilt in mid twentieth century facing bricks.
- 8.4.13 Windows to the post-medieval buildings are typically iron casements (sometimes with glazing in lead comes), hung in oak frames set back a few inches from the outside face of the adjoining masonry. In many instances, however, the casements are wooden. Stone window surrounds, which are glazed directly, are only found in higher status locations.



No. 42

- 8.4.14 From the late eighteenth century onwards, wooden window frames became more common. Sliding sashes make an appearance in the third quarter of the nineteenth century at Whitehouse Farm house. The detailing of the later

nineteenth century windows shows considerably more variation than that of earlier dates, with casements either iron or wooden in dressed stone surrounds being typical.

- 8.4.15 Other joinery includes doors, eaves trim and barge boards. Doors are typically boarded ledged and braced types, whilst bargeboards (a nineteenth century fashion) occur in relatively few later 19<sup>th</sup> century contexts (the Laurels, the model cottages).
- 8.4.17 Paving to footways is generally of macadam with a bound gravel topping and concrete and granite kerbs, giving an entirely sympathetic finished appearance. Kerbs incorporate rather neat cast iron gulleys in some locations. The extant paving is all of later 20<sup>th</sup> century date.



Main Street: Kerb details

## 9.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 9.1 Public Consultation

9.1.1 Public consultation has followed the ten Principles enumerated in North Northamptonshire's *Statement of Community Involvement*. The Parish Clerk having convened a meeting at which parish councillors and Boughton Estate gave their views on issues affecting village life and the special interest of the conservation area, including:

- History and evolution, including farms, market gardens, local crafts, industry;
- Estate policy and development;
- The village as a community: local organisations, clubs;
- Commerce (or lack of): post office, shops, pubs, cafes;
- Housing, old and new;
- Provision for the young: schools, playgroups;
- Recreation space;
- Provision for the elderly: sheltered housing, care homes;
- Accessibility: public transport, roads, footpaths, bridleways;
- The street scene: bridges, trees, boundary walls, hedges and fences, street furniture, paving materials.

## 9.2 Community Facilities and Activities



*The Village Hall*

- 9.2.1 The Parish Church of St. James is one of three with regular church services in the benefice of Cranford with Grafton Underwood and Twywell, part of the Diocese of Peterborough.
- 9.2.2 The former school has ceased to function, and the school building has been converted to residential use.
- 9.2.3 The Village Hall is a sectional wooden structure erected in the 1960s. It is well used even though of rather basic construction. There is insufficient off-street parking on the Village Hall site.
- 9.2.4 The Post Office is a key amenity within the village. Ensuring its long term sustainability is a matter of paramount concern for the village. Boughton Estate are keen to bring forward proposals for diversification of use.

The success of the tea room at Weekley is cited as an example of diversification that has allowed a rural Post Office to continue to function.



*The Post Office (No.31)*

- 9.2.5 Boughton Estate has a policy to provide housing for the elderly in Grafton. They have identified specific properties that are considered suitable for the elderly and considered that there may be a requirement for additional sheltered housing to meet local needs in future.
- 9.2.6 The bus service between Brigstock and Grafton and Grafton and Geddington has recently ceased. There are now no bus services to or from the village.
- 9.2.7 There are public footpaths from Grafton to Warkton and from Grafton to Slipton and Twywell. These rights of way are linear rather than circular, meaning that the options for walkers in the village are limited.

## 10.0 BOUNDARY CHANGES

- 10.1 The conservation area designated in 1977 included most of the built up area of the village, excluding only the later 20th century expansion along Brigstock Road. It also included the Rectory paddock and the paddock between No. 1 and the rest of the village.
- 10.2 Fields to the east and west of the existing conservation area boundary represent the closes of the medieval village, and are significant to the understanding of the surviving medieval settlement plan. The conservation area boundary is extended to include the paddock west of Whitehouse Farm where there are landscape traces of former boundary features and of the former sunken back lane to the West of the village, and also the ridge and furrow of the medieval open field (Warkton Field) beyond. This extended boundary also includes the closes to the north of the Rectory and west of Grafton Park Farm which evoke the pastoral character of the medieval village most strongly.

The boundary is also extended East of the village, where the former paddocks presently turned over to arable farming, but where the spinney north east of the village centre preserves remains of the medieval sunken lane trust that formerly led to Slipton.

10.3 The boundary includes all the hedges and hedgerow trees to the field boundaries forming the perimeter of the extension to the conservation area.

10.4 Beyond this, it is unrealistic for more land to be given conservation area protection, but if medium density development approaches from the direction of Kettering a ‘buffer zone’ of economically viable farming land should be maintained around the village.

## **11.0 LOCAL GENERIC GUIDANCE**

### **11.1 Generally**

11.1.1 It is important that consistent policy guidance should be available for all the villages in the borough, varied only by special circumstances in any particular village.

11.1.2 With little historical information published on individual buildings, the significance of historic fabric of the villages is not always recognised when proposals are put forward for their alteration.

11.1.3 Although the statutory lists of buildings of architectural and historic importance in all of the villages have been updated periodically, there are buildings that meet the criteria for listing outlined in PPG15 that are currently unlisted.

### **11.2 Pressures for development outside the village envelope**

11.2.1 Pressures for the expansion of Kettering threaten the landscape setting of the villages to the east of the town. The proposed Kettering East Relief Road would form a boundary for most of the urban area expansion. The significant remains of the second Duke of Montagu’s extensive landscaping in Grafton, Warkton and Weekley parishes will also help to define areas of open land in the wider landscape.

11.2.2 Light pollution from Kettering has a negative impact on the special qualities of the villages at night. New street lighting associated with the proposed Kettering East Relief Road, and with the eastwards expansion of Kettering generally should be designed to minimise light pollution.

### **11.3 Pressure for new development within the village envelope**

11.3.1 With little historical information published on individual buildings, the significance of historic fabric of the villages is not always recognised when proposals are put forward for their alteration.

11.3.2 Although the statutory lists of buildings of architectural and historic importance in all of the villages have been updated periodically, there are buildings that meet the criteria for listing outlined in PPG15 that are currently unlisted.

## 11.4 Infill development

11.4.1 There has been an unfortunate trend in recent years for many of the larger gardens and paddocks, that were formerly such notable features of the villages of North Northamptonshire, to be identified as suitable sites for infill development. The villages east of Kettering are all fortunate still to possess a number of these open spaces; however their survival as such cannot be taken for granted.

11.4.2 The many and varied views between one part of a village and another, from a village to the surrounding countryside and of a village from outside contribute significantly to the character of the conservation areas in the villages. These are at risk from insensitive development within the village as well as from large-scale new development in the surrounding countryside.

11.4.2 There are sites within some villages' envelopes where limited infill could advantageously be permitted, but only if the scale, form and materials are appropriate, repeating and echoing the values already established in the conservation areas.

## 11.5 Changes of use

11.5.1 Changes in farming practices have left a number of redundant sites with agricultural buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area but are consequently now at risk. Dereliction obviously detracts

from amenity, but there are also issues in bringing these buildings back into new uses (see 11.4.2 and 11.6.1 below).

11.5.2 Conversion of former agricultural buildings to residential use often involves extensive modification to building fabric and it is therefore preferable to find business uses for redundant farm buildings. Frequently, however, the business cases for such conversions are hard to make and residential conversions may be considered if it is demonstrated that they are the only viable options.

## 11.6 New buildings

11.6.1 Recent examples of infill development in the villages include examples of buildings of a sensitive design constructed of appropriate materials, but other examples where the lack of considered design (which is a failing in itself) has included scant regard for the special character of the conservation area. This failure is characterised by:

- **Large size:** expectations of domestic accommodation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are for more and larger rooms than traditional building forms can often contain. Modern construction can deliver buildings that meet these expectations, but at the cost of introducing architectural forms that are alien to the special character of the conservation area. This problem is compounded by popular equation of status with building size rather than built quality. Furthermore the scarcity of building land means

that even small sites command high values, making the building of small houses uneconomic. The results of these pressures erode the subtle hierarchy between cottages and the larger houses that characterise the historic settlement pattern.

- **Accommodating cars:** There is a need to balance the impact of on-street car parking with the impact of creating garaging and hard standings for cars which is at odds with the forms of traditional village housing.
- **Poorly articulated composition:** Contrived and fussy proportions combined with a lack of consideration of the formal relationships between the different parts of a building to one another are at variance with the robust and straightforward quality of clear, restrained and unambiguous formal composition associated with traditional rural building forms. The lack of consideration of seemingly small matters such as window sightlines and joinery details can have a hugely detrimental impact on the overall composition.
- **Inappropriate materials:** The presumption for any extension or new development within the conservation area should be for the use of appropriate materials and a very strong case should be required for any departure from such guidelines.

Whilst there is a general acceptance that new construction in the context of a conservation area will be in natural stone or in quality facing brick as appropriate, with roofs in natural slate or clay tiles, less thought is given to the particular sourcing of these materials or how they are laid. Modern work often fails to replicate the use of different and particular stones for dressed work and for the rubble walling that characterises traditional construction. Where bricks are used, often these are non indigenous types laid in stretcher bond, rather than in traditional Flemish or English bond. Inappropriate materials such as concrete imitation stone and interlocking concrete tiles are not acceptable.

Good modern design has its place, but domestic buildings should generally follow one of the forms of good existing housing, either conjoined or detached. Individual buildings of a 'suburban' character should not be permitted.

## **11.7 Alterations and extensions to existing buildings**

- 11.7.1 Even minor alterations to historic buildings can significantly affect the presentation of a conservation area if they are inappropriately designed, whilst extensive alterations can have a significant and direct impact on the historic fabric of the village. Much of the special character of the villages derives from the traditional architectural forms of the buildings. Cottages are long, low, and narrow buildings with small windows. Offshuts and extensions are traditionally small and single storey additions.

Traditional agricultural buildings are larger, and in the case of barns have large door openings. However other openings in the walls of these buildings are designed solely for ventilation. Agricultural buildings are difficult to adapt to other uses, and often the interests of conserving the traditional appearance of them requires some compromise in the expectations of the accommodation which they can provide.

Pressures for the following are additional matters for particular concern:

- **Replacement windows and doors:** The fashion in recent decades for the replacement of traditional joinery with modern items results in both the loss of traditional features that contribute to the special character of the conservation area and in the introduction of inappropriate materials and forms. Traditional windows are specially made, with careful consideration given to sightlines and proportion. Replacement of finely moulded traditional sash windows with (for example) rather crudely detailed plastic casements, results in a loss of architectural interest and historic authenticity and its substitution with the ubiquitous and banal.
- **Replacement roof coverings:** There have been significant increases in the costs of some traditional roofing materials including Collyweston stone

slates and long straw in the last few decades. This has resulted in pressures to substituting traditional materials with alternatives including artificial stone slates, machine made clay tiles and Norfolk reed thatch. This has occurred less frequently in the villages in the Borough than elsewhere locally, but is nevertheless a significant threat to the character of the conservation area.

- **Satellite dishes and television aerials:** these installations can be highly detrimental to the presentation of traditional architectural fabric. Satellite dishes should be positioned on secondary elevations and in back gardens where they are not generally visible.
- **Conservatories:** Whilst the desire to maximise daylighting is perfectly understandable, the modern fashion for conservatories is alien to the traditional forms of village buildings. There should be a presumption against constructing conservatories on the front elevations of buildings.
- **Off-street car parking:** Pressure for off-street car parking results in front gardens being given over to car parking with consequent loss of mature planting, and of stone walls, fences, hedges and other traditional boundary features. Front gardens,

and the boundary features that define them, give a sense of enclosure and their loss is detrimental to the special character of the conservation area. Boundary treatments are often continuous in front of a row of cottages, and the disruption of these strong linear elements by the creation of even a single new opening can be particularly visually disruptive.

These concerns apply equally to new development as they do to the alteration of existing buildings.

### **11.8 Trees**

11.8.1 Where individual trees, groups of trees and large hedges contribute to the character of the conservation area these should be maintained, including re-placing aged, diseased or fallen specimens. Loss of horse chestnut and elm trees due to disease is a major issue. Action should be taken now both to manage the decline of failing and older trees, and with planting of new trees so that replacements for those that are now reaching maturity will be properly established when the existing trees are gone.

11.8.2 The planting of *Cupressus Leylandii* should be discouraged because of the negative impact that these trees have on the traditional appearance of rural areas and because of the potential that they present for structural damage to buildings.

## **12.0 PARTICULAR ISSUES**

### **12.1 Generally**

12.1.1 The survey and research work undertaken in the course of preparing this appraisal have identified a range of particular issues and trends which threaten the unique historic and architectural character of the conservation area. These are summarised below.

### **12.2 Infill development**

12.2.1 Infill development to reinstate Nos. 2 and 3, which might be regarded as buildings that were formerly significant to the spatial character of the village, might be acceptable. The cost of this would however be the loss of allotment gardens that are an amenity to the village, and an attractive feature of the village in their own right. Any proposal for reinstatement of these buildings would therefore need to include a proposal for relocation of these gardens, and in addition would need to demonstrate the highest design standards in replicating the character of those cottages that formerly occupied the site.

### **12.3 Changes of use**

12.3.1 Appropriately designed development of Manor House Farm, Grafton Park Farm and Duke's Arms Farm could have benefit for the special character of the conservation

area. Proposals for change of use of these sites would be regarded favourably if problems of access and car parking were overcome, buildings at risk bought back into use, and/or unsympathetic land uses concluded. Whilst the preference would be for conversion to business uses, residential housing might be the most appropriate form if business use is demonstrated to be uneconomic.

#### 12.4 Highways issues and landscaping



*Main Street – traffic calming measures*

- 12.4.1 The minor roads passing through the village have become increasingly busy in recent years, especially at peak times. The need to slow down the traffic is an emotive issue for the Parish Council.

- 12.4.2 Whilst the detailed design of paving to carriageways and footways is generally considered to be appropriate to the special character of the conservation area, highways maintenance of the village streets is poor, with paving generally requiring resurfacing. The character of these roads make a vital contribution to the village scene, and any proposals for highways engineering works should therefore be carefully designed so as not to detract from the presentation of the special character of the conservation area.

- 12.4.3 Whilst the signage and street furniture described above (para. 8.3.10) have a positive impact on the special character of the conservation area, elsewhere they have neutral or negative impacts.

#### 12.5 Car parking

- 12.5.1 The provision for car parking in the village is inadequate. There are particular problems at the northern end of the village where the road is narrower. Various proposals to provide a visitor car park have been discussed. It is generally thought that provision for additional car parking can be identified on or adjacent to the Village Hall site, or immediately outside the village on the Brigstock Road. Neither of these proposals is considered to be entirely adequate because of the perceived remoteness of these sites from the rest of the village.

## 13.0 USEFUL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

### 13.1 Planning Guidance

Kettering Borough Council,  
Municipal Offices,  
Bowling Green Road,  
Kettering,  
NN15 7QX  
T:01536 410333  
F: 01536 410795  
E: [customerservices@kettering.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@kettering.gov.uk)

### 13.2 Heritage Guidance

English Heritage Eastern England Office  
East Midlands Region  
44 Derngate  
Northampton  
NN1 1UH  
T:01604 735400

Northamptonshire Sites and Monuments Record (archaeological  
information)  
Christine Addison (Environment Record officer)  
Northamptonshire County Council  
PO Box 163  
County Hall  
Northampton NN1 1AX  
E: [CAddison@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:CAddison@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

## 13.3 Amenity Groups

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings  
6 Fitzroy Square  
London W1P 6DY  
T: 020 7377 1644  
E: [info@spab.org.uk](mailto:info@spab.org.uk)

The Victorian Society  
1 Priory Gardens  
Bedford Park  
London W4 1TT  
T: 020 8994 1019

CPRE  
Sue Baylis PO Box 7939  
Market Harborough  
Leicestershire LE16 9XW  
T: 01858 433136  
E: [sue.baylis@cprenorthants.org](mailto:sue.baylis@cprenorthants.org)

## 13.4 Tourist Information Office

The Coach House  
Sheep Street  
Kettering NN16 0AN  
T: 01536 410266  
E: [tuc@kettering.gov.uk](mailto:tuc@kettering.gov.uk)

### 13.5 Further Information

#### Related planning Documents

- DETR*                    *Planning Policy guidance Note 1, 1997 (PPG1), General Policy and Principles*
- DETR*                    *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, 1994 (PPG15), Planning and the Historic Environment*
- English Heritage* *Power of Place – The Future of The Historic Environment 2000*
- English Heritage* *Streets for All: East Midlands, 2005*
- Kettering Borough Council: Kettering Urban Extension Issues and Options, 2005*
- Kettering Borough Council: Local Development Framework*
- Kettering Borough Council: Local Plan, 2005*
- North Northamptonshire: Statement of Community Involvement, 2005*

#### Historical Background

- Pevsner N and Cherry B: The Buildings of England, Northamptonshire 1961*
- RCHME: Northamptonshire: Vol.II: archaeological Sites in Central Northamptonshire 1981*
- DETR: Towards and Urban Renaissance: The Report of the Urban Task Force 1999*

### 14.0 MANAGEMENT POLICIES

#### 14.1 Planning Guidance

The conservation area appraisal highlights the need to manage the significant levels of new development in the area which, if unrestricted, will adversely affect the special character the designation was intended to conserve. In order to mitigate the effects of harmful change, policies set out appropriate standards for new development and for alterations to existing buildings, including specific design guidance.

The policies contained in this appraisal plan accord with Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1), *General Policy and Principles*; 1997, PPG15, *Planning and the Historic Environment*; 1994 and *The Future of the Historic Environment*, produced for the Government by English Heritage in 2000.

#### 14.2 Buildings at Risk

The Council will maintain a register of Buildings at Risk, which will include buildings within the conservation area, and seek to secure their repair and re-use as assets which preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Most parts of the conservation area are in a fair state of repair and, with continuing regular maintenance, are likely to remain in good health provided that they continue in sympathetic and active use. However, a few buildings of merit are unoccupied and deteriorating and are therefore at increasing levels of risk. Such decay will not only lead to the loss of important structures, but will also blight the neighbourhood. A Buildings at Risk register will identify buildings for which action is most urgently needed and will set out the priorities for such action. This will provide the basis for a strategy for each building to include urgent works, supported by statutory provisions, where necessary, to halt further decay in extreme cases.

### **14.3 Demolition**

The Council will not normally permit the demolition of buildings in the Grafton Underwood conservation area.

### **14.4 Alterations**

The historic buildings of Grafton Underwood conservation area are its primary asset. Many are statutorily listed as being of special architectural or historic interest while others contribute to their setting or to the group value of an ensemble of buildings.

Few buildings within the conservation area fail to make a positive contribution to its character and appearance. Those of greater architectural distinction most easily catch the eye

but others are of equal importance, because they represent typical building types and construction. All of these factors contribute to the rich architectural and historical character of the conservation area.

These unique qualities will be best maintained by keeping the buildings in good repair and in use. Proposals to alter buildings in ways which diminish their special character pose the greatest threat to the integrity of the conservation area.

There will be a presumption against alterations to buildings which adversely affect their character and appearance or that of the conservation area.

### **14.5 Historical Research**

The Council will require historical documentary research to be carried out in support of proposals for significant alteration or demolition within the conservation area.

### **14.6 Archaeology**

Where significant archaeology is known to exist, land should not be released for development (including for the development of social housing to meet local needs) outside the scope of the Borough Council's formal forward planning processes.

#### **14.7 Changes of Use**

The Council will promote the re-use of obsolescent farm buildings for small businesses, encouraging local employment, reducing the need for commuting, but will not normally permit any changes of use where the new use would adversely affect its character, the appearance of the conservation area or the community life of the village.

#### **14.8 Repair and Maintenance**

- 14.8.1 The Council will provide guidance on materials, techniques and finishes appropriate for the repair and maintenance of buildings within the Conservation Area.

#### **14.9 The Design of New Development**

Permission for new development will only be granted where it respects the scale, form and density of the historic pattern of development, where it protects views and townscape and where the character and appearance of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced.

#### **14.10 Design Guidance**

The Council will publish a design guide for the village conservation areas, having particular regard to:

- The scale and mass of new buildings. The Council will require new buildings to respect the scale and mass of traditional buildings within the locality.

- The plan form, elevational treatment and materials of new buildings. The Council will require the plan form, elevational treatment and materials to complement the historic and architectural character of the conservation area.
- The maintenance of the hierarchy of the historic street pattern. The Council will require new development to follow the hierarchy of the historic street pattern.
- The height of new buildings. The Council will require new buildings to respect the height of traditional buildings within the locality.
- Car Parking. The Council will not permit car parking spaces on forecourts or in gardens in front of buildings.

The presence of uncharacteristic buildings in the conservation area does not provide grounds for allowing more like them and a further erosion of historic character. By seeking to conserve traditional buildings and adding new ones that reinforce historic character, the relative impact of negative elements will be diminished.

#### **14.11 Links and Views**

Grafton has strong physical, functional and visual links with the surrounding countryside. These views and links will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. The Council will also seek to protect other key views which contribute to the character of the conservation area.

#### **14.12 The Street Scene**

Policies for the street scene need to pay regard to the character of the area and to historic features. This includes new paving, and street furniture such as traffic signs and street lighting – which should all be designed or selected to enhance the unique character of the conservation area. Paving in particular should provide at least some of that interest provided by traditional features – such as setts for kerbs and bonded pea shingle for path and road surfaces – effects largely missing from standardised black macadam finishes.

Landscaping strategy and design will recognise the importance of gardens and paddocks, hedges and grass verges to the special character of the conservation area, and seek to preserve and enhance these features. Emphasis will also be placed on the need to retain and repair boundary treatments and avoid loss of front gardens for hard standings for cars.

#### **14.13 A village trail**

To encourage appreciation of the special character of the conservation area, as well as the use of footpaths, the Council will identify a Village Footpath Trail with route markers, and publicise this in a pamphlet illustrating features to be noted along the route.

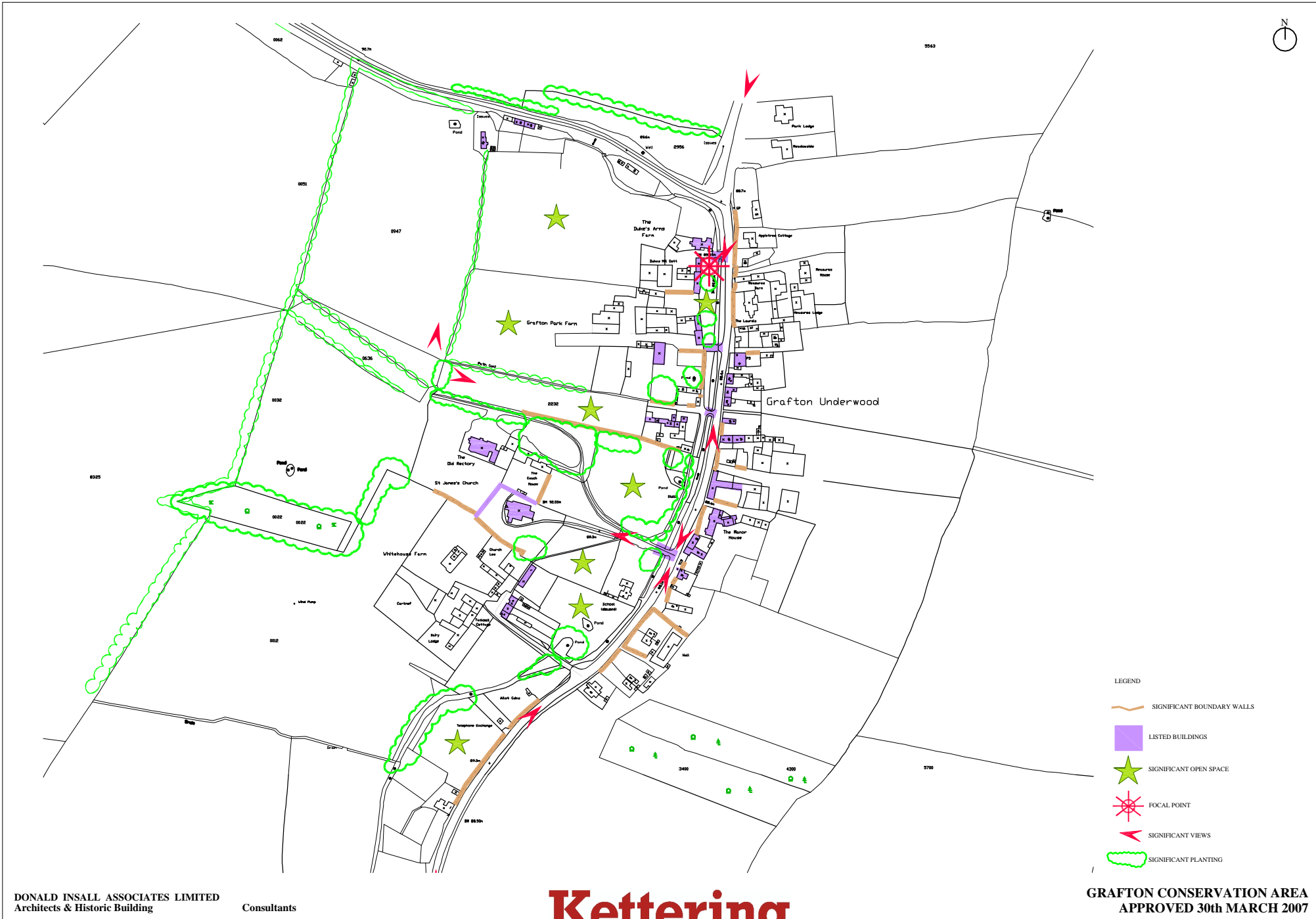
#### **15.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**







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- LEGEND
-  SIGNIFICANT BOUNDARY WALLS
  -  LISTED BUILDINGS
  -  SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE
  -  FOCAL POINT
  -  SIGNIFICANT VIEWS
  -  SIGNIFICANT PLANTING