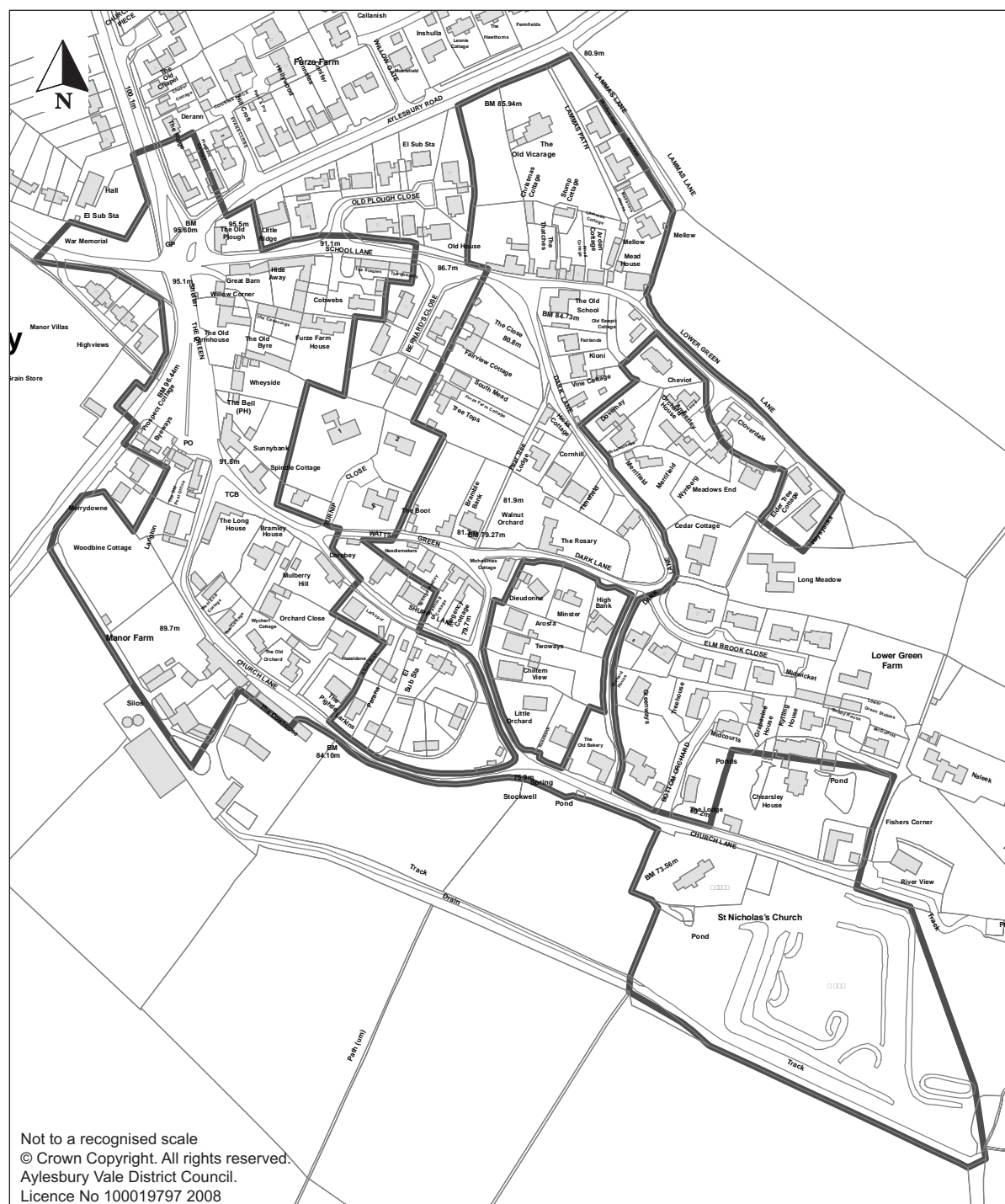


CHEARSLEY CONSERVATION AREA

Designated 16th October 1991

The village of Chearsley is situated on sloping land high above the course of the River Thames, four miles north of Thames. The four approach roads into the village from Long Crendon, Chilton, Winchendon and Aylesbury converge at an offset crossroads north of The Green, at the village's highest northern end. The lanes which enter the remainder of the village form the



crossroads or The Green, such as School Lane, Church Lane and Shupps Lane all terminate as footpaths. The dwellings are strung around a very intricate, looping road framework of narrow, sunken lanes bounded by embanked grass verges and enclosed by hedgerows and boundary walls of witchert, brick or stone. This road pattern and form of enclosure is quite unlike any other village in the District. The layout and characteristics of the sunken lanes or holloways show that Chearsley is a good example of late Saxon village, with its origins probably during the eight and ninth centuries.

The thirteenth to fifteenth Century rubblestone parish church of St. Nicholas is situated on what is now a rather detached site at the extreme south-eastern end of the village. Adjoining the churchyard are some ancient earthworks which probably mark the site of an older settlement left derelict after the Black Death in the fourteenth Century.

The four approaches to the village are all interesting. The road from Chilton is along a ridge above the village. There are fine, long distance views to the south and west and directly ahead, beyond the focal point of the chequered brick and tile 17th Century old farmhouse, are views eastwards across the Aylesbury Vale to the Chiltern Hills. Arriving at the road junction the picture broadens: it includes the excellent group of black, weather-boarded and stone barns in School Lane, the colourwashed and tiled cottage, the fine horse chestnut tree and the whitewashed (but much altered) old Smithy. An important feature here, which may be overlooked at first glance, is the important role played by the two, low brick outhouses to the farmhouse and also the colourwashed cottage; these mark the entrance to School Lane.

Approaching from Winchendon one descends gently. The road runs along the same ridge, on a converging course, with that from Chilton. This approach gives superb long distance views across the Aylesbury Vale to the Chiltern Hills. The road then passes between inter and post war development, the feature ahead being the horse chestnut tree at the road junction. Arriving at the road junction from this particular angle, there is a splendid view of almost all the buildings which encompass The Green. The scene can be divided into two distinct parts; first the black barns and flanking cottage, tree and Smithy, previously described. Second, the longer view to the group which includes the thatched, colourwashed seventeenth/eighteenth Century Bell Inn and the recent brick and tile shop/post office (which in this crucial position is almost wholly redeemed by the use of old clay roofing tiles, so important to this group. This group clusters around the far end of The Green with its three sycamore trees.

Approaching from Aylesbury, there is a hint of the village in the form of the distant tower of the parish church, a cottage and, close to the road, the tall, intricate brick chimneys and tiled roofs of the C19 Vicarage set amongst the trees. This edge to the village is, in essence, a rural one, being well clothed with trees and hedgerows. At the Vicarage the road bends right and slowly ascends. Beyond a small stretch of ribbon development the focal point of the horse chestnut tree at the road junction, flanked by two entrance cottages, arrests the eye. Passing through this 'entrance' the road bends sharply left and the view is a long one across The Green. The road winds across The Green to disappear from view between a long, whitewashed, slate roofed cottage and a visually important brick and slate agricultural building.

On the ascending approach from Long Crendon there are excellent views to the west, and to the east even more extensive ones to the Chiltern Hills. In the foreground is the high witchert wall to Manor Farm, culminating in the attractive black weather-boarded and tiled barn. This is a very attractive approach, the whitewashed cottage and brick agricultural building previously mentioned now forming the entrance 'pinch point' with the witchert wall leading the eye along to it. The focal point seen through the entrance is the excellent double-gable elevation of Old Farmhouse. Then, on passing through the entrance, there is the surprise element of the spaciousness of The Green.

The Green is enclosed by buildings on three sides: at the southern and northern ends these are principally colourwashed and tiled; on the eastern side are more spacious dwellings mainly of brick and tile with brick and stone boundary walls. On the remaining side the sense of enclosure is maintained by some very important hedgerows, a brick agricultural building and a pair of Victorian brick cottages set back behind the hedges.

The only high density development in the village is the terrace of cottages in School Lane and Lower Green Lane, opposite the Victorian school building. These form an excellent visual group comprising a mixture of timber frame with brick infilling, rubblestone and brick, many colourwashed. Roofs are mainly of clay tiles but two are thatched.

The entrance to the footpath here, which leads to the Aylesbury Road, is intriguing being tightly enclosed by the white colourwashed and thatched witchert and wall, and red brick wall opposite. The path curves from sight around the cottage, the brick wall first containing and then closing the view.

The red brick Victorian school building, with its low, enclosing brick wall, is a fine structure forming the focal point from School Lane. There are extensive views out in an easterly direction from both Lower Green Lane and School Lane.

At Watts Green, where the grass verge widens out at a lane junction, there is a very attractive cluster of cottages, three of which are of timber frame construction with brick infilling and three are brick and tiled. An interesting glimpse of the dormer window and thatch of Farthing Cottage is afforded along Hicks Path leading from Dark Lane.

Walking the narrow, winding lanes of the village the eye is often delighted by a succession of exciting glimpses of cottage gables, thatch and tile. The majority of these views have fortunately been retained as new development has been set back to a building line. A subtle contribution to the overall 'townscape' of parts of the village is made by small outhouses.

The old cottages are of rubblestone, rendered witchert, timber frame with brick infilling, and brick (some colourwashed). A few cottages are a combination of two or even three of these materials. The finest of the witchert and brick walling is to be found at Manor Farm and in Church Lane. Generally, brickwork is in the orange/red colour range, sometimes of a chequered pattern formed with dark, glazed headers.

Roofs are of thatch, red/brown clay tiles or slates and are generally of a fairly steep pitch with simple gable ends, often with exposed purlins. Any barge boards are usually narrow and fairly insignificant, the principal exceptions being one or two Victorian buildings. Eaves are often flush, or, where they overhang, are formed by exposing the rafters.

There are many important trees and tree groups in the village in addition to the trees on The Green and the hedgerows flanking the lanes which have already been mentioned. Particular attention should be drawn to the hedgerow screening the back gardens of the houses in Old Plough Close from the main Aylesbury Road, and also to the hedgerows enclosing the western side of The Green and road junction.

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