HERTFORDSHIRE BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST
BEAMS Built Environment Advisory and Management Service

CHURCH END, SARRATT

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL
AND TOWNSCAPE ASSESSMENT

MARCH 1994
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is a duty of the Local Authorities under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 to designate areas of special architectural and historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Act imposes a duty on the local authority to review from time to time the situation and decide whether any further parts should be designated or parts de-designated. There is also a duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their conservation areas.

Three Rivers District Council have requested BEAMS to undertake a character appraisal and townscape analysis of Church End, Sarratt Conservation Area. This report will therefore address the relevant background to the conservation area, advise on the character of the area, provide a townscape analysis and conclude with recommendations for further consideration by the Council.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Designation

Church End was designated as a conservation area in April 1980 by Three Rivers District Council for the following reasons:-

"The hamlet is located in a prominent position overlooking the Chess Valley and is contained within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty. Although only the Church is listed, 'Goldingtons' together with its outbuildings and the Alms-houses opposite the Church are worthy of consideration for listing, and these buildings, together with other buildings within Church End, form an architecturally pleasing and harmonious group.

Church End is of considerable historic interest as a medieval village on the site of a Roman settlement. The evidence of Roman occupation has been found in metal work, pottery and a brooch, dug up in and around the churchyard, and the Roman cemetery which belonged to the settlement.

The medieval village of Sarratt was presumably first centred around the Church at Church End, which is a Norman building (12th century) with a late medieval manorial site, Goldingtons mentioned in records as early as 1236. Evidence of the medieval period has been discovered beside the site of the manor. The medieval village may have been larger than the modern settlement"¹

2.2 Setting and Location

Just over two miles outside of Rickmansworth, Church End is located in the south west of the County and near the boundary to Buckinghamshire. It was partly desiganted for its prominent location overlooking the Chess Valley and set within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty.

¹ Three Rivers District Council Planning Committee Minutes 24th April 1980.
3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Figure 1 illustrates the boundary of the Conservation Area.

3.1 The Historical Landscape and Townscape

Church End Conservation Area lies mainly within the Area of Archaeological Significance 7, which contains the medieval manorial site of Goldingtons, the 12th century Church of Holy Cross and a wider area within which considerable evidence of Roman and Medieval activity exists and which roughly coincides with the boundaries of Goldingtons Park.

The earliest evidence for occupation in this area - a hearth of possible prehistoric date - is located outside the Conservation Area, as is some undated evidence for an early metalled trackway running alongside the River Chess, at the base of the valley slope.

Roman pottery (possibly urns), a ring, a fibula and an iron key have been found in the churchyard and there is an unsubstantiated reference to the existence of a Romano-British cemetery in the same area. Early reports note the presence of a very large quantity of Roman brick and tile in the rebuilt church tower although this is disputed by the O.S., who state that all the brick and most of the tile is Medieval. The small quantity of Roman tile probably came from a nearby settlement site; perhaps from the Roman villa site discovered about 1/2 mile to the north-west at Sarratt (Valley) Bottom Farm.

The remaining archaeological evidence is associated with the development of the medieval manor of Goldingtons. This manor existed before the Conquest and was reputedly granted by King Offa (with Sarratt manor) to the abbey of St Albans. Although its ownership at Domesday is unrecorded it probably was in Abbey hands, since their ownership was confirmed in 1199 and the Abbey held Goldingtons until the Dissolution. The name itself is recorded from the mid 13th century, when a Peter de Goldington held land here and it occurs several times in succeeding centuries. In 1520 the manor was described as 'Goldyntons in Sarratt'. Although the parish church and the adjacent presumptive site of medieval and perhaps the earlier manor-house are the principal surviving elements of the manor there is also visible archaeological evidence in the form of a series of a very well-preserved medieval strip lynchets or cultivation terraces. These lynchets, which have survived due to the fact that this land became part of Goldingtons Park, follow the line of the hill-slope immediately west of the present manor-house (TQ 0355 9830) and may extend further to the south.

It is likely that Church End and Goldingtons retain considerable archaeological potential, particularly for the Roman and Medieval periods.

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2 Victoria County Histories etc, held in the Public Record Office

3 1237, Feet of Fines, Herts

4 op.cit.
3.2 Important Characteristic and Architectural Elements of the Area

Church End is virtually unspoilt and as such the character has remained intact. Many features contribute to this overall character, the main ones are identified below:-

- Mixture of materials - flint, clunch, puddingstone, brick, weatherboarding
- Harmonious mixture of building types from the large Manor house to Almshouses built by Day of Sarratt Hall.
- The retention of boundary walls either in brick and flint or brick and railings
- Retention of details such as the Victorian Post Box, the lamp in the graveyard, the plaque to Day on the Almshouses and many fine gravestones and monuments.
- Buildings which nestle into the landscape.

3.3 Conservation Area Boundary

The boundary is drawn to not only include the buildings in this settlement but also to place it in its natural landscape setting.

4.0 TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

4.1 Important Areas

The Settlement is based around Church Lane, the Church and the grounds of Goldingtons.

Church Lane

The natural curve in the road provides a pocket for settlement to take place. Church Lane became the main route by the Tithe Map of 1840 (see figure 2) with the earlier alternative route suggested on the Drury and Andrews Map of 1766 (see figure 3) via Goldingtons becoming a footpath. The tree lined Church Lane from Rickmansworth curves round the garden of the Cock Public House, providing a natural curtain of greenery which helps enclose the views into the Conservation Area at this point, thus concentrating attention on the lodge house and the Church of the Holy Cross, especially which terminates the view as an obvious focal point.

Past the Cock into the car park the New Model Farm can be seen punctuating the view across the valley from this point. Church End Cottage completes the area. The road to the Green, Sarratt disappears into the distance enclosed by a curtain wall of hedges to either side.

Church of the Holy Cross

At the bend in Church Lane, the area opens up to the Church set within the open space of the graveyard, with fields disappearing off beyond the conservation area. The barn
to Goldingtons provides a backdrop to the south, whilst the curtain wall of greenery to the Cock helps enclose the scene to the east.

**Goldingtons**

The estate of Goldingtons is mostly included in the Conservation Area. The house, originally dates from the 16th century and is the focal point of this section. The boundary follows the ha-ha around the estate, allowing for the inclusion of a pleasant Victorian garden building. From Goldingtons, splendid views of the valley are afforded. Nestling between the House and the Church lie the farm buildings which make up a pleasant group of weatherboarded and stock brick buildings. The settlement is virtually untouched by the encroachments of modern development.

### 4.2 Building Designs and Influential Periods of Development

The settlement grew up around the late 12th century Church of the Holy Cross. Constructed of knapped flint with Tottternhoe dressings with Roman tiles and puddingstone, it has an unusual cruciform plan. The tiled roofs, particularly those of the unusual tower roof are an attractive feature.

Although Goldingtons was originally built in the 16th century, it was rebuilt in the 18th century, with an additional storey added between 1820 and 1840. The farm buildings date from the 18th century through to the 19th century and the Cock public house is also from the mid to late 18th century. Drury and Andrews Map of 1766 (Figure 3) illustrates that the settlement was heavily built up at this point.

Activity on the farm extended into the early 19th century with outbuildings being added. The trace of a walled garden on the Tithe Map (figure 2) has been replaced throughout the 19th century by various outbuildings. The Lodge to Goldingtons dates to the mid 19th century, although unlisted it is untouched with the original windows, cast iron window box holders, leaded rolls to the ridge and moulded barge boards.

The Almshouses date from the early 19th century with the date stone of 1821. These are charming red brick and tiled houses with pointed heads to all the windows adding a Gothic influence to the elevations.

Finally the last building to be built is Church End Cottage, a simple mid 20th century house which is on the outskirts of the settlement and as such does not detract from the Conservation Area.

### 4.3 Form and Structure of Settlement

The settlement is concentrated around the Church and the house of Goldingtons with its associated outbuildings, with the Cock completing the group to the east.
4.4 Trees of Strategic and Local Importance

The landscape is very important to Church End. The approaching roads from Rickmansworth and from The Green, Sarratt are enclosed by hedgerows which lead into the settlement. Church End Cottage although of no interest is well screened from the road. The continuity of tree cover throughout the settlement helps to retain the enclosure of the scene. The bend in the road has a curtain of hedgerow which strengthens the enclosure of views in and out of the area.

The open space provided by the graveyard is important but is ruined by inappropriate fencing and litter bins. The view opens up to low grade farmland to the west whilst the barn and a cedar tree terminate the view to the south. The mix of building and landscape provides a very attractive scene. Unfortunately the desire to discreetly hide the oil tank to the Church is destroyed by the use of a Leylandii hedge which is now as large as the Church and therefore draws attention to itself. A more sympathetic native hedge would be far more appropriate and in keeping with the graveyard.

The laurel hedge to the car park, near the Almshouses is inappropriate. Goldingtons itself is set in old parkland. The wooded wind break forming the boundary of the Conservation Area needs to be consolidated and the ha-ha retained and maintained. The parkland fencing should also be retained.

4.5 Listed Buildings

There are six buildings of special historic and architectural interest within the Conservation Area.

**Grade II* Church of the Holy Cross**

**Grade II**
- Day monument and railed enclosure immediately E of Church of the Holy Cross
- Barn at Goldingtons Farm
- Goldingtons
- Nos. 1-6 Church End Cottages
- The Cock Public House

4.6 Buildings of Local Interest

- Lodge to Goldingtons
- Outbuildings to Goldingtons inclusive of stock brick stables.

4.7 Areas in Need of Attention

The special nature of Church End derives partly from the character of the buildings and their relationship with each other and the surrounding landscape, and partly from the fact that it is unspoilt by the encroachments of modern life. A few minor improvements would preserve and enhance this virtually untouched settlement.
Buildings at Risk  The Cock Public House is currently unoccupied and as such is under threat. It has been a pub since the 18th century and compliments the historic grouping of the manor house, church and almshouses.

Floorscape  The floorscape is tarmac with grass verges which is acceptable as a floor surface which blends in to the background, allowing the buildings to retain their visual importance. However, its use for the car park at the Cock is unacceptable as it is too harsh a treatment for a relatively large open space in the Conservation Area. A surface covering of gravel would help to soften its impact.

Graveyard  The graveyard is well maintained but the litter bins are obtrusive and need to be hidden or removed to a more suitable location. The majority of the graveyard is enclosed by fine brick and flint walls or railings, however the boundary between the graveyard and Goldingtons estate is identified by the appalling fence which is out of character and a very harsh break in the continuity of the area.

Signage  Although the blue notice sign requesting respect for the occupiers of the almshouses is required, it is obtrusive, a more low key solution would be preferable.

4.8 Street Lighting

At present there is no street lighting with the only light appearing to be the lamp at the Church. Street Lighting would be inappropriate for this rural area.

4.9 Traffic Management

At present the only attention to traffic management is a chevron sign. As with The Green at Sarratt it would be a great pity to see a traffic calming scheme implemented without any specialist conservation advice.

4.10 Modern Development

Church End Cottage is the last building to be constructed in the conservation area. It is pleasant and set back from Church Lane and consequently does not detract from the area. However, any further development should be avoided as it would be detrimental to the special nature of the Conservation Area.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Church End may only be a small Conservation Area but within its boundary is a special and attractive mixture of buildings and landscape. Views in and out of the Conservation area are intrinsic to its special character. The close knit settlement rests around a bend on Church Lane with the Church and the Almshouses at the centre of the area. The Lodge, marks the entrance to Goldingtons and its associated outbuildings, another section of the Conservation Area. Finally the Cock completes the scene with its gardens sheltered by hedges which enclose the road at this point.
Special care should be taken to ensure that hedges, planting, flint and brick walls are retained as they contribute much to the overall character.
3.2 IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS AND ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

- The Lodge House in yellow stock brick and slate, seen here in front of the red brick almshouses which look out onto the church and red-tiled Church of St Lawrence. All along the road.

A close up of the Church of St Lawrence - a mixture of building materials - flint, church and even puddingstone.

Rich brick and flint walls and attractive railings wrap around the grave yard.

Set in attractive countryside which affords good views.
COLDINGTONS - the main house dates from the 16th century. Its appearance, however, owes more to its rebuilding in the mid 18th century. Its barns, stables and outbuildings still survive and should be retained.

THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY FARMHOUSES BUILT BY THE DAY FAMILY OF SHERTON HALL.
4.4 TREES OF STRATEGIC AND LOCAL IMPORTANCE

THE LANDSCAPING CURVING AROUND THORCH LINE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA.

AREA WHICH ONLY OPENS UP TO REVEAL THE CHURCH.

AT GOLDINGTONS THE HA-HA PROVIDES A FITTING BOUNDARY TO THE AREA.
4.7 AREAS IN NEED OF ATTENTION

THE COCK IS IN NEED OF ATTENTION - IT HAS BEEN UNOCCUPIED FOR OVER ONE YEAR.

THE GRAVEYARD - SURROUNDED BY ATTRACTIVE TOWN AND BRICK WALLS AND RAILINGS AND THIS VERY POOR FENCE - NOT A FITTING BACKDROP TO SUCH AN IMPORTANT BUILDING AND TO THE MONUMENTS WITHIN THE GRAVEYARD.

THE LITTER Bin TO THE GRAVEYARD NEED TO BE HIDDEN FROM VIEW.