

Michelmersh and Mottisfont Conservation Policy



Test Valley Borough Council

MICHELMERSH and MOTTISFONT

Conservation Policy

After a period of public consultation this policy was adopted by Test Valley Borough Council on 14th January 1987, the date of the designation of the Michelmersh and Mottisfont Conservation Areas.

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INTRODUCTION

This policy document for Michelmersh and Mottisfont is part of the Borough Council's continuing programme, as approved in 1979, for conservation area designations throughout Test Valley. It looks at the history and describes the character of the two villages, identifies the conservation areas and suggests a framework of action to enhance their special qualities.

Conservation of the environment is one of the most important functions of local planning authorities. To be successful it must be the concern of all of us who value our towns and villages, which have evolved over centuries and contain many beautiful and historic areas. Their individual character is due to a highly diverse combination of buildings, trees and spaces.

Historic buildings have been at the forefront of conservation, as a tangible record of our architectural and social history. Since 1947 the Secretary of State has compiled Lists of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest for each locality. Buildings included on the Statutory List enjoy legal protection under the Town and Country Planning Acts and are classified into grades to show their relative importance. The Department of the Environment has been engaged in updating the Lists throughout England and Wales. The revised Lists for Michelmersh and Mottisfont have now been approved by the Secretary of State and the number of statutory listed buildings in the villages have increased substantially.

Conservation areas are a comparatively recent innovation, prior to 1967 the emphasis was on the preservation of individual buildings as distinct from areas. The Civic Amenities Act 1967 imposed a duty on local planning authorities to "determine which parts of their areas were of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it was desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate such areas as conservation areas". The relevant provisions of this Act were subsequently re-enacted in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and have been considerably extended by the Acts of 1972, 1974 and 1980. At present there are more than 6,000 conservation areas in England and Wales; of these 220 are in Hampshire and 25 in Test Valley.

Conservation policies are complementary to, rather than substitutes for, other planning policies. This document is NOT a village plan or a local plan and therefore is not concerned with the principle of whether development takes place. It will, however, have much to do with the form that any such development should take, including alterations or extensions to existing buildings. Particular attention is given to such matters as design, scale, location, use of materials and effect upon the street scene.

In defining areas of special architectural or historic interest there can be no standard of specification as naturally there will be different kinds. In forming a judgement about the extent of an area's boundaries, all the factors which give a place its unique and "special" character; groups of buildings, architectural style, historic settlement pattern, spaces, trees, etc., have to be taken into account. This is based on surveys and an examination of historical records. The intention is not to include every historic building; or to exclude individual buildings of inappropriate design or that are unsightly; or to include all the surrounding countryside, (although key areas of open space are included) as there are complementary planning policies which protect the countryside against inappropriate development.

MICHELMERSH : Historical Background and the Area Today

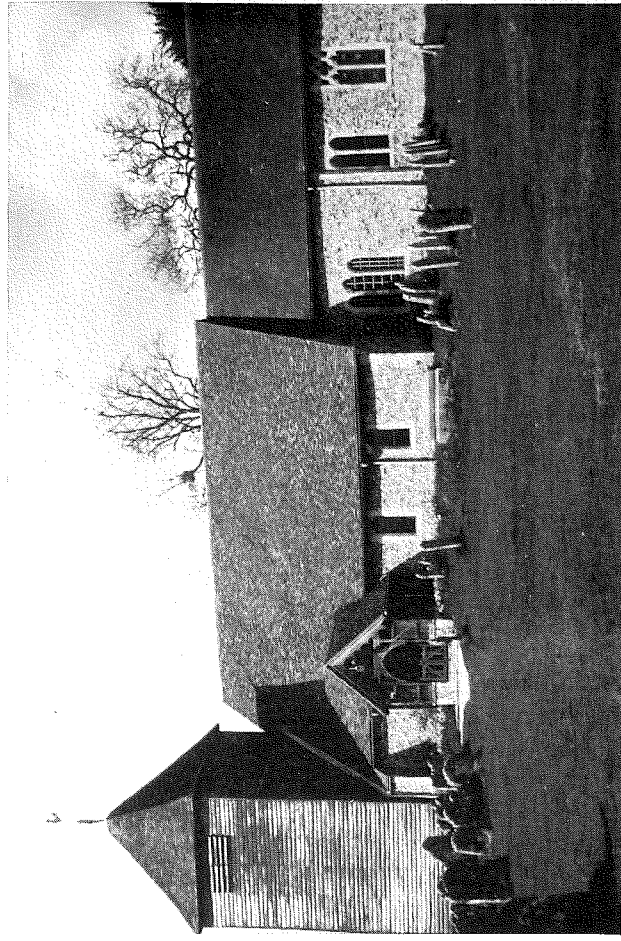
Three miles north of Romsey, the parish of Michelmersh lies on, and immediately east of the River Test. The village of Michelmersh is centrally situated in the parish on the high ground, of Reading beds consisting of clays and sand above the river valley, with the smaller village of Timsbury to the south.

The earliest evidence of occupation in the area was the finding of axeheads near Timsbury, dating from around 140,000 BC. Some 5,000 years ago there was an early farming community around the present day village of Michelmersh. The Romans settled in the area and occupation continued through the Saxon period when high quality pottery was produced locally.

The first recorded mention of Michelmersh was in AD 985 when King Ethelred (the Unready) granted the village a Saxon charter to his friend Aelfred for the term of his life. At this time the village was known as Miclamersce (Great Marsh). There was, however, no reference to Michelmersh a century later when the Domesday Book was compiled, although the neighbouring settlement of Timsbury was recorded (then called Timbreberie and held by the Abbess of St. Mary, Winchester).

Michelmersh remained the property of the Crown until 1043 when Queen Emma granted the manor to the Church of Winchester. In 1243 it was confirmed to the prior and convent of St. Swithun with other lands confirmed by the Pope. The Church of St. Mary (Listed Grade II*) is situated on the highest part of the land and dates back to the 12th Century. Archaeological evidence suggests that it was the centre of a small hilltop settlement which appears to have been abandoned some time in the 13th or 14th Century after which a more dispersed settlement pattern followed. The church is built of flint with stone dressings and a plain tile roof, it has a 16th Century timber frame and weatherboarded belfry with a pyramid roof. A number of 13th Century windows remain and inside there is a stone effigy of Sir Geoffrey de Canterton. The church was partly restored in 1847.

The narrow medieval road pattern converges on the church bounded by high hedges and embankments to the west and south approaches. Long views out of the village are apparent from around the church and at the boundaries of the settlement - see plan in back pocket of document .

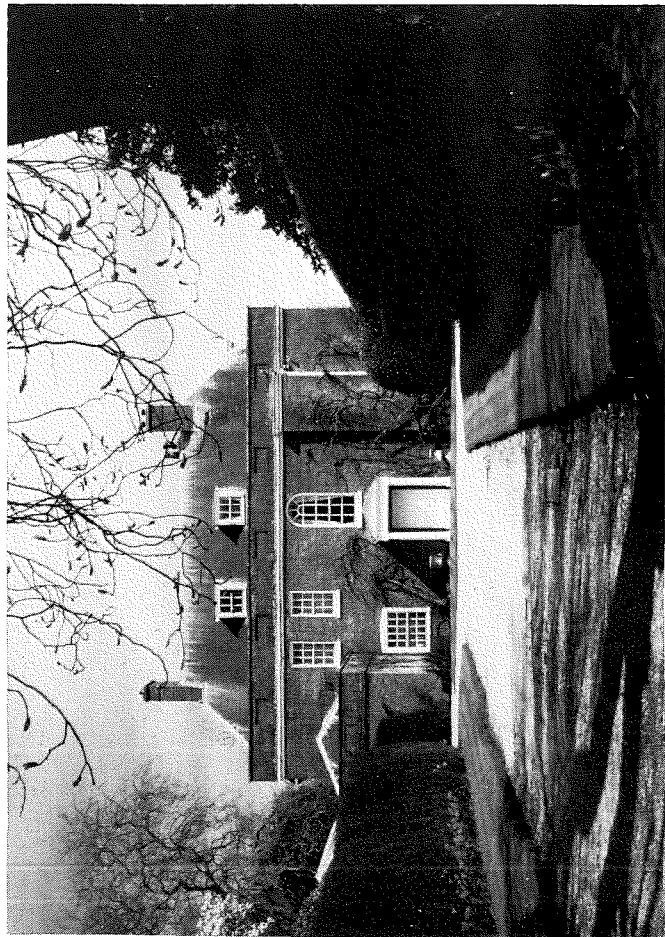


St. Mary's Church, Michelmersh

A number of buildings are noteworthy along these points of entry. Climbing from the north west in Mesh Road, behind a large horse chestnut, is a fine 18th Century thatched and weatherboarded barn (Listed Grade II) with a queen post roof. Set back on the north side of the road is Orchard Cottage (Listed Grade II), an attractive 17th Century timber-framed, thatched cottage with brick infill panels. At the junction of Mesh Road and Church Road is Church Corner House (Listed Grade II) formerly two brick cottages with an old plain tile roof. The smaller rear cottage is dated 1719 in the brickwork and has evidence of timber framing. Still climbing into Church Road on the south side is Michelmersh House (Listed Grade II), an early 18th Century brick farmhouse, however, alterations in the 19th Century resulted in today's rendered and painted front elevation with a slate roof. It has its original central Doric porch, glazed within with double french doors. Also of interest, each side are rectangular bay windows with tripartite sashes.

Opposite the church, are Michelmersh Barns and granary, which are in the process of being restored for craft and community uses by the Michelmersh Farm Trust. The main barn parallel to Church Road is Listed Grade II but the adjoining buildings also have a particular value as a group. A pond divides the barns from a Late 18th Century walled garden to the north which is also statutorily Listed in its own right.

Immediately to the north of the church is Michelmersh Court (Listed Grade II*). Formerly the rectory, this late 18th Century house in brick has decorative blue headers and a slate roof. Although altered and extended in the 19th and 20th Centuries it still retains many original features including circa. 1800 wall panelling.



Michelmersh Court



The Old House, Michelmersh

Approaching the original settlement from the south east climbing Hackupps Lane hemmed in by embankments and hedgerows, Elm Cottage stands at the junction with Church Road forming an important focal point. Adjacent is the Old House (Listed Grade II) once the Dower House to the Manor, of 17th Century origin with a timber framed core but now encased in brick.

The character of the village changes along Hackupps Lane with more recent dispersed development running down the slope to the Old Post Office at the crossroads. From here New Road continues down to the valley through linear, mostly 20th Century development. There are, however, three attractive cottages, all Listed Grade II, dating back to the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries in Chapel Lane. To the south of the old settlement and west of New Road is the Old Brickworks in Hill View Road. Hand made bricks are still produced and records show that this has been so since about 1850.

There are a number of other important buildings outside the old area of settlement of Michelmersh, including:-

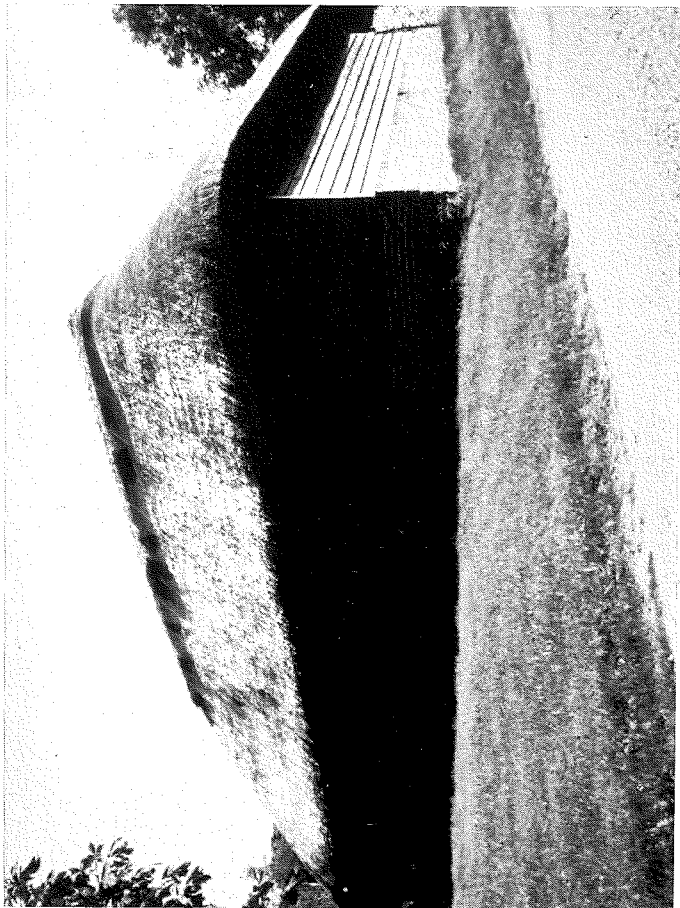
Manor Farmhouse, (Listed Grade II*), situated half a mile east of the old village of Michelmersh, with its 13th Century medieval grange core and granary (Listed Grade II*) possibly the largest of its kind in Hampshire; Hunts Farm (Listed Grade II), a late Elizabethan farmhouse, half a mile to the south east on the Braishfield Road; and the 13th Century Church of St. Andrew (Listed Grade II*) in Tinsbury.

MICHELMERSH CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the conservation area include those buildings and spaces which contribute to the historic and/or the architectural character as defined by the extent of the old Saxon and Early English Settlement of Michelmersh. The area is contained by natural boundaries of the woodlands to the north and east and the hedgerows and School Lane to the west and south. (See plan in back pocket of document).

The key to maintaining the character of the old village and enhancing its environmental quality lies in the retention of those features that contribute towards its unique identity. These are:

- the distinctiveness of the hilltop setting within the surrounding landscape;
- the low level of development; and
- the hedgerows, embankments and surrounding trees which define the boundaries separated by open areas which allow long views to the countryside beyond.



Barn at Corner Barns, Michelmersh

MOTTISFONT: Historical Background and the Area Today

The village of Mottisfont occupies a delightful position on the west bank of the River Test immediately opposite Michelmarsh. Although it was apparently held by William I, there was no reference to Mottisfont in the Domesday Book prepared in 1086. The settlement is thought to have been established by a small group of Augustinian Canons who chose the site on the raised valley gravels, because of its proximity to the main road from Southampton; its sheltered position from what was then a savage and bleak countryside, and because of its plentiful supplies of water and fish.

Saxon freemen used to hold their village "moots" (assemblies) near the spring south west of the Abbey, which rose in a deep pool. The combination of the terms "moot" and "font" were long held to be the origin of the place name. The village was known as Mortesfunda in the 11th Century, Modestfunte in the 13th Century, Mates Fountten in the 14th Century and Mottesfont in the 16th Century. It is only this century that the spring has ceased to be the water supply for the village.

Mottisfont passed to William Brywere the Elder at the end of the 12th Century and he founded the priory in 1201, endowing with it all the land he owned in Mottisfont. In 1227 the prior and convent were confirmed in the possession of the land and rent. William Briwere also granted the priory the privilege of holding the assize of bread and ale which was again confirmed in 1845.

The priory buildings fell into disrepair and were eventually surrendered at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536. The site was then granted to Lord William Sandys who converted the monastery into a Tudor country house. This was further altered and extended in the 18th Century, which made the original abbey almost unrecognisable and completed the transformation of the building to a residence (although the original crypt remains intact). Further remodelling has taken place in the 19th and 20th centuries, but nevertheless the house is of national importance and is accordingly Listed Grade I.

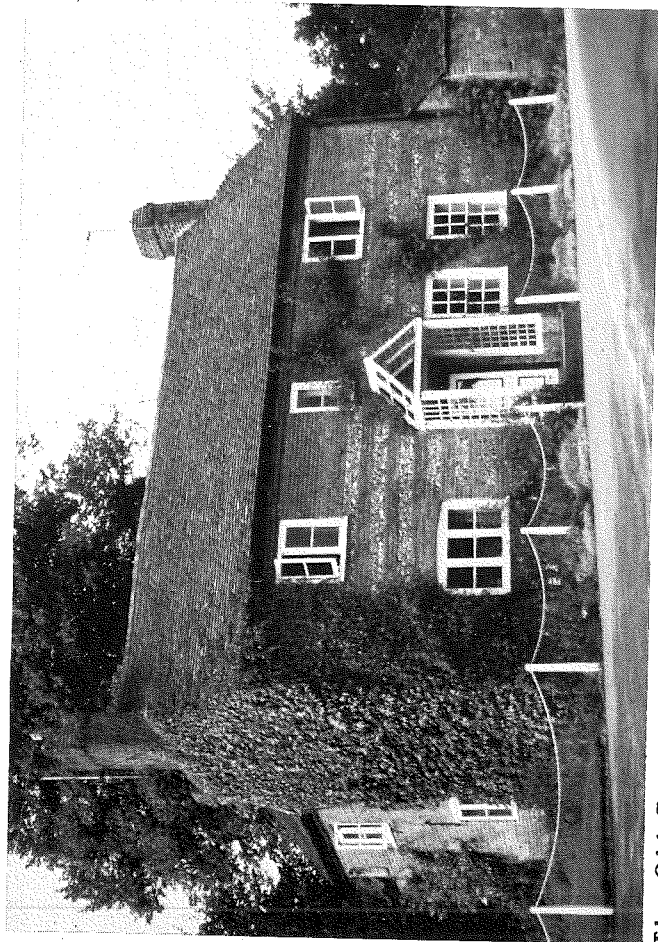


Mottisfont Abbey

The approach to Mottisfont from the south crosses over the flood plain and the main channel of the River Test near to the old station. The road bridge is on the site of an older bridge much used when the Priory was in existence. After passing the Lower Lodge (Listed Grade II) to Mottisfont Abbey, the road crosses another branch of the Test and climbs slightly into the village itself. A fine view is afforded across sweeping lawns of Mottisfont House (Listed Grade II) which lies between the church and the river; alongside is the earlier Little House. Mottisfont House was built in 1812 as a Rectory for the church and curacies of Lockerley and East Dean, it is constructed of stuccoed brick, with a slate roof. An important feature at this point is the old brick wall which runs alongside the roadside of Mottisfont House and grounds and is contemporary with it.

The Church of St. Andrew's (Listed Grade I) dates back to the 12th Century. It was remodelled in the 14th Century, re-fenestrated in the 14th Century and 15th Century and restored in the 19th Century. Constructed of flint and rubble stone, mostly rendered, it has stone dressings, an old plain tile roof and a shingled bellcote. On the western side of Rectory Lane, opposite the church, are a pair of attractive timber framed thatched cottages built in the 17th Century. Further down Rectory Lane, past the cemetery is an 18th Century brick ice-house.

Glebe Farmhouse on the main village street was built around 1800 of brick, now pebble-dashed. The east elevation has two full height arches with recessed panels containing pointed Gothic casements. The house was probably built with the "picturesque" elevation to be seen from the lane when entering the village from the Lower Lodge. West of Glebe Farmhouse is the Tithe barn - possibly of 15th Century origin, which has a king post roof, with 18th and 19th Century alterations to become a village hall.



The Old Fox, Mottisfont

A mature walnut tree in front of the Post Office, forms a focal point where the village street bends northwards at the junction with Hatt Lane. The Old Fox (Listed Grade II) on the north west corner was formerly an 18th Century inn. Built of brick with flint bands on the front elevation, the old plain tiled roof has toothed eaves and end stacks. Opposite, the Old Smithy (Listed Grade II) now a garage, dates from the same period.

North of the Old Fox in Oakley Road, Dairy House (Listed Grade II) is one of the earliest remaining houses in the village - the section nearest the road dates from the 15th Century and the timber framing, now mostly encased, is still visible on the northern elevation. West of Dairy House is a small 18th Century granary on staddle stones and a long barn of the same date with a queen strut roof, both Listed Grade II.

Abbey Farm Cottages (Listed Grade II) directly opposite Dairy Cottage is another very early building. The section fronting the road was constructed in the 15th Century as a hall house with a service bay and solar (bedroom) over. Much of this early timber frame building survives though the building has been added to over the centuries, most notably in the 16th Century when a rear wing was added, and the end chimney stacks with stone fireplaces inserted on each floor.

Although Mottisfont Abbey and its historic landscape garden dominates the village in area, its presence is however, only apparent from within the village at its western entrance opposite Bengers Lane, with a number of mature trees on the southern corner. The imposing, late 19th Century gate piers are topped with rearing horses and ball finials alongside Upper Lodge which is an attractive single storey building in flint (Listed Grade II). North of Upper Lodge, a high wall forms an important feature to the village's northern approach. Bounding Oakley Road, it forms the western side of three walled gardens, two of which contain the National Trust's important collection of old roses.

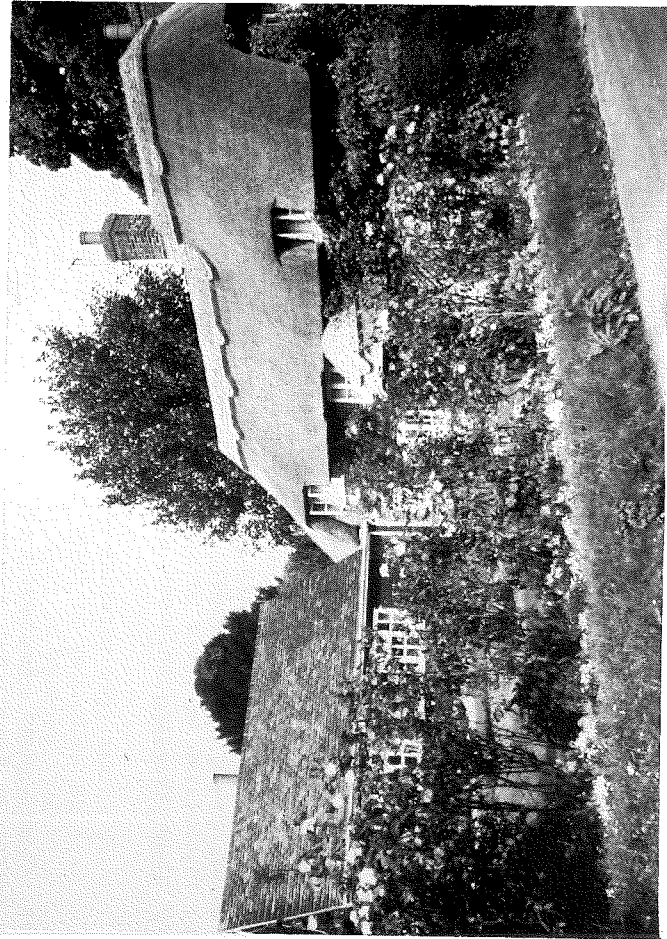
The Abbey is set in attractive grounds which includes some notable trees, particularly a giant London Plane. The 1836 stable block is Listed Grade II* and there are many features and structures which are individually listed ranging from walls and the spring source, down to individual urns, all contributing to a historic and picturesque setting.

MOTTISFONT CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the Mottisfont conservation area include those buildings and spaces which contribute to the essential historic and/or architectural character as defined by the compactness of the village and its close relationship with the Abbey and its grounds. (See Plan in back pocket of document).

The key to maintaining the character of the village and enhancing its environmental quality lies in the retention of those features that contribute to its unique identity. These are:-

- the compactness of the village in relation to the historic landscape garden with its trees and surrounding walls; and
- the landscape setting surrounding the historic garden and village.



Dengrid, Mottisfont

FURTHER READING

The Victoria History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight ed. - William Page, 1911

Buildings of England, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight - Nikolaus Pevsner/David Lloyd 1976

Hampshire Treasures Survey, Volume 9, Test Valley South - Hampshire County Council 1984

Southampton Archaeological Society Spring Bulletin 1966.

The Archaeology of Hampshire - Ed. by S.J.Shennan & R.T.Schadla-Hall - Monograph 1 of Hampshire Field Club - Pub. 1981.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PROCEDURES

Conservation areas have been established under Planning Legislation in order to secure the preservation of areas of special architectural and historical interest, in which the character and appearance of the buildings and environment are to be preserved and enhanced. The policies set out in this document are complementary to existing planning policies concerning land use, including the countryside. The Mid Test Local Plan when adopted will provide a detailed and up to date framework for development decisions.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The designation of a conservation area has a number of direct legal consequences: such as special procedures for applications for planning permission, control of demolition of buildings and felling of trees. These matters are discussed below. However, there is considerable misunderstanding as to what 'permitted' development rights pertain.

Normally in accordance with Section 22 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, all building works, engineering operations, uses of land etc. require planning permission, but there are some categories of development which under certain circumstances do not usually need a planning application. These 'permitted development' abilities are set out in the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 and in various subsequent modifying Orders. The definition of a conservation area does not of itself automatically remove these rights, but there are important variations contained in Special Development Orders. You are therefore strongly advised to consult the Planning Department for clarification before ANY works are undertaken to ANY building, structure or tree.

Control of development

- (1) Designation of an area as a conservation area does not preclude the possibility of new development within the area: what is important is that new developments should be designed in a sensitive manner having regard to the special character of the area. Section 28 of the Act of 1971 requires the local planning authority to advertise applications for planning permission for

any new development which is likely to affect the character or appearance of a conservation area. The advertisement will be in the form of a notice in the local press and the display of a notice on or near to the land to which the application relates. Twenty-one days are allowed for the public to inspect the details of the application and to make representations to Borough Council.

Detailed applications will be required to show the relationship of any proposals to its site and surroundings to ensure that new development "fits in" by reflecting traditional building forms and the use of local or compatible materials.

Where development involving building work is proposed, the Borough Council mindful of the archaeological potential, will ensure that adequate time is allowed for excavation/ investigation of selected sites before and during development and may attach conditions to planning permissions, as appropriate.

(2) Control of demolition

There will be many buildings in a conservation area which do not merit listing, but their demolition might be detrimental to the general appearance of the conservation area. Anyone intending to demolish a building or part of a building within a conservation area, whether listed or not, must first apply for consent from the Borough Council. The only exceptions are certain small or temporary buildings.

(3) Listed buildings

Certain special buildings by virtue of their architectural or historic interest are listed by the Secretary of State for the Environment under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and are thereby protected. Listed building consent and/or planning permission must be obtained in order to demolish, alter or extend a listed building both internally and externally. This could include such works as external redecoration, re-roofing, the alteration of doors and windows, as well as structural changes.

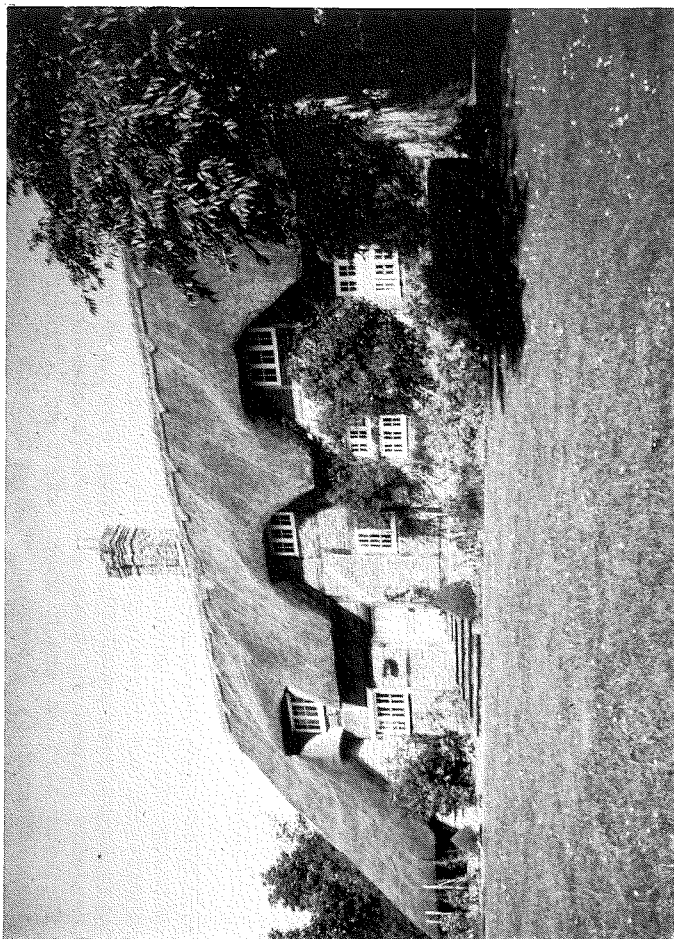
(4) Trees and other natural features

In conservation areas most trees except fruit trees are protected. Separate notification must be given to the Borough Council six weeks BEFORE a tree is felled or before ANY work to a tree is carried out, unless required to be done in connection with approved development. All significant trees and hedgerows should be retained as far as possible, but where vegetation is proposed for removal intentions should be clearly shown as part of any detailed application. A landscaping scheme should include an accurate survey of existing features showing their location, height, spread and species, together with any new planting.

Certain open areas are identified within and adjacent to the conservation areas as being important to the character of the villages. Because of this it is improbable that any development will be permitted on them. The Borough Council would therefore wish to see them retained and enhanced accordingly.

(5) Advertisements

There are strict controls concerning the display of outdoor advertising in conservation areas, similar to that which operates in areas of special control which are normally rural areas as defined within S.63 of the 1971 Act.



Orchard Cottage, Michelmersh

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT

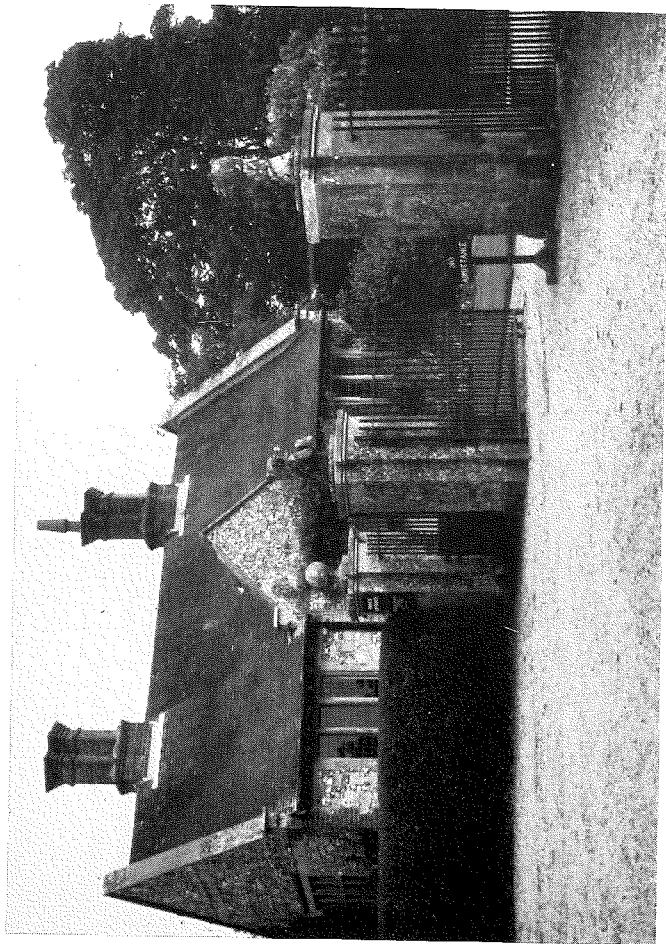
In addition to the legal consequences of designation of a conservation area, it is important that action is taken to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area. It is not just the buildings which are important. A number of more general improvements to footpaths, bridleways, open areas or tree planting may contribute to the overall attractiveness of a place. Special financial assistance is available from central government in certain circumstances. However, in the cases of Michelmersh and Mottisfont the source of any grant aid is likely to come from the Borough Council and the County Council and is summarised below:--

(1) Historic Buildings Grants

Under the Local Authorities (Historic Buildings) Act 1962 both the Borough Council and the County Council are empowered to contribute towards the cost of essential repairs to historic buildings. The offer of grant-aid is entirely discretionary and the amount of grant will be related to the nature and extent of repairs to be carried out. Works regarded as coming within the normal maintenance liability of an owner are not eligible.

(2) Environmental Enhancement Grants

The Borough Council and the County Council have funds for environmental enhancement projects, which may be initiated by the Parish Councils of Michelmersh and Mottisfont, voluntary groups or individuals. Such work is not limited to only the conservation areas, but projects within the village centre are certainly encouraged. Suitable works include tree and shrub planting, the removal of eyesores, the provision of appropriate surfacing and street furniture and clearance of waterways and footpaths.



Upper Lodge, Mottisfont

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on legal requirements, advice on building work and details of grants are available from the Planning Department, Test Valley Borough Council, Duttons Road, Romsey, SO51 8XG (Tel: Romsey 515117).

APPENDIX : Trees in Conservation Areas

The Town and Country Planning Act 1971 (Section 61A), requires anyone who proposes to 'top, lop, uproot or wilfully damage or destroy' a tree in a conservation area to give six weeks notice to their district council (in this area, Test Valley Borough Council). This requirement is intended to give the district council a final opportunity to serve a tree preservation order (TPO), before work is commenced. Work may not be commenced within the six week period without consent.

If the work to a tree in a conservation area is begun without the six weeks notice, the person carrying out the work becomes liable for penalties similar to those for contraventions of a tree preservation order and a similar duty to replant. If the authorised work is not completed within two years of giving notice of consent, further notice must be given. The particulars of a notice are recorded by the council in a register open to public inspection. 'Notice' forms are available from the Planning Department, Test Valley Borough Council, Duttons Road, Romsey.



Hazel Cottage, Mottisfont

The six weeks rule does not apply to trees that are dying, dead or dangerous, or where works are necessary for the prevention or abatement of a nuisance. Except in an emergency, however, a minimum of five days should be given to the Authority to decide whether to dispense with a requirement to replant with a tree of appropriate size or species.

There are certain categories of trees that are exempt from all tree preservation or conservation area controls; these are summarised below.

Main Exemptions

- (i) Trees of less than 75mm in diameter, 1.5m above ground level (or 100mm where the act is carried out to improve the growth of other trees);
- (ii) Trees cultivated for fruit production that are growing or standing in an orchard or garden;
- (iii) Trees cut down in accordance with a forestry dedication covenant or Forestry Commission plan;
- (iv) Trees cut down by a statutory undertaker (such as the British Telecom or river authority); and
- (v) Trees which need to be felled to enable development to be carried out following the granting of planning permission.