



Stanwick Neighbourhood Plan

Assessment of Housing
Character & Design

Stanwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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Assessment of Housing Character & Design

Prepared by Stanwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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Purpose of the Assessment of Housing & Character Design Report

The Stanwick Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Aims recognises future development should meet the needs of residents whilst not distorting the shape and essence of the village, allowing it to evolve and expand whilst retaining its unique and distinctive character.

Stanwick has never benefited from a Village Design Statement. Consequently each decade has witnessed new housing in a wide variety of styles.

This report aims to document the disparate housing styles to provide a base line for design of future development.

Introduction

A character assessment is a document that describes the distinct appearance and feel of a settlement or an area. It communicates the key physical features and characteristics that combine to give a particular settlement or an area its local distinctiveness and unique identity¹.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes the requirement for sustainable development within policy 6 and expands on the principle in policy 7 which states that the planning system has a number of roles including “contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment”.

NPPF policy 58 outlines the requirement for plans to have an understanding of an area and an evaluation of its defining characteristics. It continues that plans should “respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.”

The North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) was adopted in June 2008 and forms a key part of the Local Development Framework for North Northamptonshire replacing the County Structure Plan and the Local Plans for each member council.

The CSS is comprised of 17 policies that provide a framework for new development.

¹ How to prepare a character assessment to support design policy within a Neighbourhood Plan. Planning Aid

CSS Policy 13 sets out the General Sustainable Development Principles and this includes:

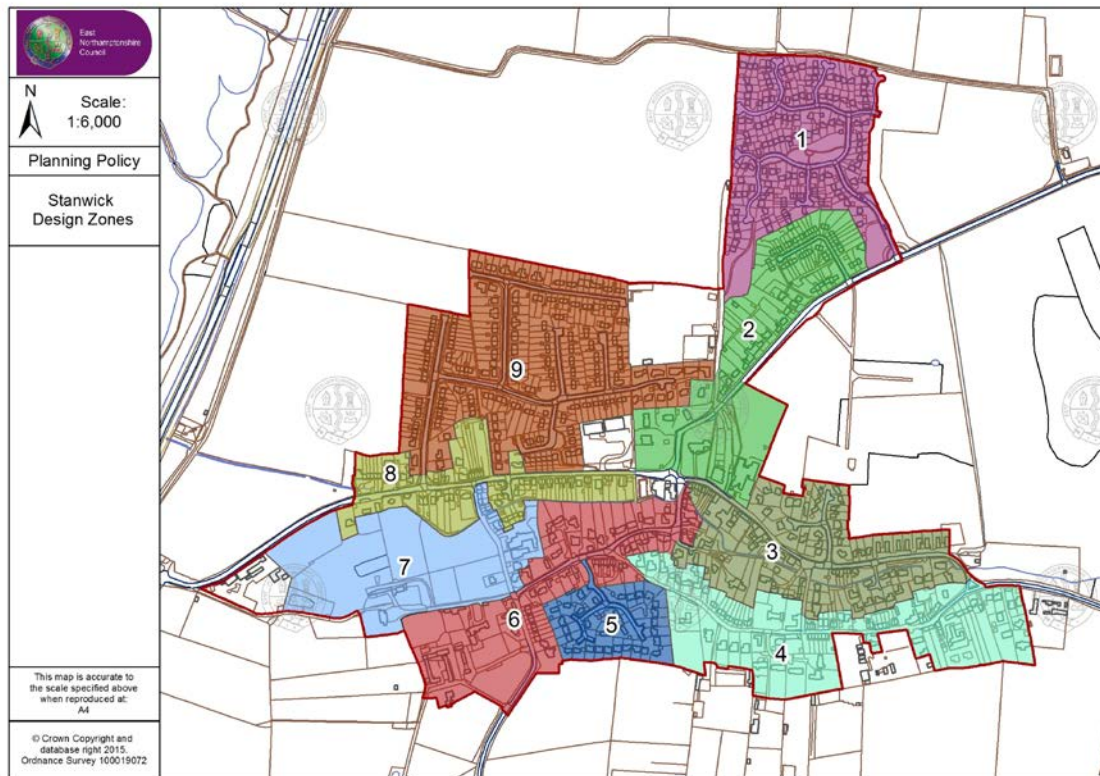
i) Create a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive historic and cultural qualities and townscape of the towns and village through design, landscaping and public art.”

North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) is an emerging plan that will replace the CSS. The JCS is in its final stages of preparation and it is expected that it will be adopted early in 2016.

The JCS recognises that industrial heritage, including that of the boot and shoe industry, modern built assets, including 21st century architecture, can also contribute towards a sense of place and identity (para 3.15).

This report should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Audit which provides more details on listed properties within Stanwick, entries on the Historic Asset Register and local views.

Map 1 Character zones



Area 1
Mallows Grange

Area 2
Raunds Road
Cumberland Avenue

Area 3
Church Street
The Avenue
Newbridge Lane
The Hollow
Woodlands
Chapel Lane
Hillstone Court
Manor Gardens
Courtwood

Area 4
Grange Road
East Street
Marks Close
Orchard Close

Area 5
Hill House Gardens

Area 6
High Street
Higham Road

Area 7
Villa Lane
Stanwick Hall

Area 8
Spencer Parade
West Street
Samuels Close

Area 9
Dolben Avenue
Mansfield Street
Alfred Street
Needham Road
Rectory Close
St Laurence Close
John Eagle Close
Parklands
Green Lane

Design Statement

Introduction

Despite being the largest village in East Northamptonshire and its very close proximity to the towns of Raunds, Irthlingborough and Higham Ferrers, Stanwick has managed to retain its rural character. This is mostly achieved by:

- having views from various locations within the village into open countryside
- the abundance of stone walling throughout the village
- having open countryside between the village and adjacent towns
- having farm buildings within the village envelope

Therefore, in order maintain its rural character it is important that these features remain in Stanwick. Although the many of the farm buildings themselves remain, sadly many of the working farms that used to be within the village envelope have been lost for development, particularly over the last 20 years. These were Hillstone Farm, Grange Farm and Manor Farm. Only Orchard Farm remains as a working farm within the village.

In the village some areas can be described as having a predominant character. However, many areas contain properties and features that present a very mixed character from a range of eras. This is evidence of the lack of thoughtful planning in the past which is hoped to be avoided in the future.

This character assessment describes each area of the village and should be read in conjunction with Map1.

Design Assessment

Courtwood and Manor Gardens are a small/medium sized development of early 1980's detached houses that were, inappropriately, built in the grounds of the 16th Century Manor House that is now situated in the centre of this development.



The Hollow is secluded part of the village near to the brook that runs the length of the village. It comprises of predominantly stone cottages giving a rural character to this area. However, adjacent to the cottages is a small



development of larger modern detached houses that are out of character, though they are not particularly visible from the road.



Modern houses at The Hollow

There is a pleasant open space at the entrance to The Hollow with seating provided.



There is a footpath from The Hollow that runs alongside the brook. This foot path links up with **Chapel Lane** which is a narrow lane off High Street. As its name suggests, there is a former chapel there that has been converted into a house. Off Chapel Lane is Hillstone Court which is a relatively modern development of large detached houses built in the former farmyard of Hillstone Farm.

These houses are stone faced and therefore in keeping with their surroundings. Chapel Lane leads to The Woodlands which is a large stone built house that has now been split into three separate properties. This area is very secluded and surrounded by mature trees.

The Avenue has mixture of housing types; Victorian terraced brick built cottages, early 1980's detached houses, 1970's bungalows with garages below. The Avenue also has a pleasant open space at its junction with Newbridge Lane and Church St. The larger detached houses are set well back from the road and screened by tall hedging.



1970's bungalows with garages below in The Avenue



Open space at the junction of The Avenue with Newbridge Lane and Church St.



Victorian terraced cottages



Newbridge Lane is a steep slope that connects Church Street/The Avenue/The Hollow with East Street/Grange Road. Stone cottages in The Hollow back onto one side of Newbridge Lane and opposite are three modern brick built large detached houses.

Detached modern homes in Newbridge Lane

Brookside is a cul-de-sac that is not clearly visible from the main through road (The Avenue). It is a small late 1980's development comprising of large brick built detached houses built on several levels as they are built on rising land.



East Street is a quieter road in the village and accommodates a mixture of stone and brick built cottages from the Victorian era and earlier. Some of these older houses have their entrances at the rear of the properties which is unusual in this village.

These are interspersed with some less appropriately designed larger modern detached dwellings that have been built from the late 1990's onwards. These properties are not in keeping with their surroundings.



Stone and brick built cottages in East Street



Modern detached houses between Victorian cottages



There is a small development (Orchard Close) built in 2013 forming a cul-de-sac off East Street. These detached dwellings, where visible from East Street, are of an older design and built from materials of a traditional character so they are in keeping with the area.

New property in East Street built in an older style from materials with a traditional character.

At one end of East Street there are more substantial older properties from around the Victorian era. These are set back from the road with large front gardens giving an “open” appearance.



Orchard Farm provides a pleasant green space and with views to the open countryside enhancing the rural nature of the village. The stone walling that is a prominent feature in many parts of Stanwick extends along the front boundary of the farm.

In **Grange Road** the conversion of farm buildings at The Grange (formerly Grange Farm) has provided two substantial stone dwellings. The Grange is dominant in this part of the village and is a substantial Grade II listed former farmhouse with extensive grounds.



The Grange



On one side of Grange Road there are several detached bungalows that were built in the 1980's. They are well set back from the road with large front gardens giving an “open” feeling.



Several 1950's style semi-detached houses are also found in Grange Road (left).



Again, stone walls are very evident in this area of Stanwick.

Marks Close is off Grange Road and is a small relatively modern (late 1990's) development of large brick built detached Georgian style properties with large gardens that were constructed on the former Grange Farm yard. Each property is of different design and materials giving some individuality.



At the village centre end of **High Street** the Post Office/shop/bistro is on one corner and photographic studio on the other. Nearby is Stanwick Club. This is very much a “hub” part of the village. Commercial properties here are a mixture of older brick and stone. Lantern style lampposts have been installed in this area in keeping with the age and style of properties.



Residential properties in High Street are a mixture of larger stone and brick built Victorian and pre-Victorian houses. There are also several smaller bungalows built in the 1950's that are set below the level of the road and row of stone terraced cottages set higher than the road.





At the far end of High Street the only thatched cottage in Stanwick can be found. This cottage is a Grade II listed property

Stone walls predominate in this area also.

Though still called High Street, just off High Street is a cul-de-sac of larger brick built detached houses that were built in the mid/late 1980's and are typical of that era; geometric. The properties are quite secluded due to the sloping topography of the land and the presence of plenty of now relatively mature trees. The only house in this development that is clearly visible from the main through road is stone faced to fit in with the older neighbouring properties.



Off High Street is a large development, **Hill House Gardens**, which comprises of large detached properties of mock Tudor style in two cul-de-sacs built in the mid 1990's. This development was built on the site of Hill House which had fallen into disrepair long ago. Many of the original mature trees were retained helping to make the development take on an established appearance from the outset.





High Street runs into **Higham Road** which heads out of Stanwick towards Higham Ferrers. Residential properties within the village confines of Higham Road are mainly semi-detached houses built in the 1950's. These are raised up from the road.

Beyond the village confines there are farm houses and barns and widely interspersed larger detached houses of mixed eras that have views over the Nene Valley. Most of these properties are well set back from the road and screened by mature trees so they do not detract from the rural nature of this area.

Off Higham Road is **Dovehouse Close** which is a tree lined lane that has two Grade II listed buildings; Dovehouse and the Georgian Stanwick Hall. Both are stone built and are very imposing houses. There are also stone buildings that are in part converted from former farm buildings.

View towards Stanwick Hall



Villa Lane is a short lane is dominated by a substantial stone built property that is now a nursing home for the elderly (Brockfield House). This property has undergone numerous extensions over the years which have been mostly achieved reasonably sympathetically.

At the top of Villa Lane (junction with High Street and Higham Road) there are two detached properties that were built around 2010 using stone or reclaimed brick ensuring that they are in keeping with the neighbouring properties.





Also in Villa Lane is a former chapel that has been converted into a residence and a row of terraced stone built cottages that once formed part of a former shoe factory.

Only one side of Villa Lane is built up to a significant degree with the other side having views of fields and Stanwick Hall enhancing the rural character of Stanwick.



Villa Lane joins West Street at its lower junction.

West Street is the principal road into Stanwick from the A45. With its open fields as it enters the village from the A45 roundabout, it gives an important rural aspect to the entrance of the village.



Open fields from West Street

The first property encountered as you enter the village from the A45 is the Courtyard Hotel which, although clearly signposted, is not fully visible from West Street due to screening by mature trees and hedges. Stanwick Service Station (a motor repair and sales business) is also located in West Street.



Opposite the Service Station is a row of 1950's style houses that are well set back from the road with very large front gardens.

There is also a mixture of stone cottages, modern brick built houses and 1970's style bungalows, behind which are the grounds of Stanwick Hall; an important open area within the village



Behind some of the stone properties that face the road is a small row of brick built mews cottages.



Modern brick built houses next to stone cottages in West Street. Not only are the styles mismatched, the newer houses are set further back thus affecting the overall street scene.

This part of Stanwick is a good example of how planning decisions in the past showed little regard for the blending of design and positioning amongst juxtaposed properties

Further into the village along West Street is a converted chapel and a row of Victorian cottages that are raised up on a bank behind a stone wall that is so characteristic of Stanwick.



Opposite these cottages is a large detached modern brick built house built in the 1980's which is quite out of character.



West Street runs into **Spencer Parade** and the Stanwick stone walling can be found along its whole length on one side. Behind the stone wall, up on a steep tree lined grassy bank, is the rear of housing association owned bungalows for the elderly.

On the opposite side there are semi-detached and terraced Victorian cottages with small front gardens. In between these cottages is one large detached modern brick built house built in the 1980's which is out of character.



Single modern house between Victorian cottages in Spencer Parade

Potter's the butchers can be found in Spencer Parade opposite which is the entrance to Hawkes Technical (an industrial cutting equipment company). The front of their premises is laid to lawn creating an open aspect to what is a very busy road through Stanwick. In front of Hawkes Technical a grassy bank proudly shows off the village sign that was erected in 2000.



At the end of Spencer Parade the Village Hall can be found which, although built as recently as 2011, is built in materials that are sympathetic with its surroundings and part of the building that it replaced, The Shant, which used to be the school master's house. This was built from stone with a pantile roof.

Off Spencer Parade is **Samuel's Close** which is a modern development (early 2000's) of pseudo Tudor houses. This site was once a commercial premises that had seen many uses over the years including a former shoe factory and furniture manufacturer.



Green Lane is a short unadopted road off West Street where there are several 1950's style bungalows built on a steep slope.

Also off West Street is **Dolben Avenue** which has mainly housing association owned houses of similar age and design to those found in Cumberland Avenue (see later in this report). Dolben Avenue leads into a large housing estate built in the 1970's. The properties in this area are predominantly semi-detached bungalows and houses.



At one end of the estate some large, more modern properties have been built as John Eagle Close.

There are also housing association bungalows for the elderly in **Parklands** which back onto Spencer Parade.



Next to this estate is the recreation ground where the local football team play and also Stanwick Bowls Club.



Raunds Road



Clearly the Church of St Laurence, found at the junction of Spencer Parade, Raunds Road, Church Street and High Street, is the most imposing building in Stanwick. It is Grade I listed and parts of this historic church date back to medieval times and it has a particularly unusual octagonal spire.

Opposite the Church is the Old Rectory which is an imposing Grade II listed stone property built in 1717. In the former grounds of the Old Rectory a small development of large modern brick built detached houses took place in the 1980's which although are totally out of character to the Old Rectory, are sufficiently far away from it not to totally spoil the listed building.



The remainder of Raunds Road predominantly comprises of substantial late Victorian/Edwardian semi-detached and detached houses on one side with tree lined open land opposite. This open land is predominantly the school playing field and Stanwick Pocket Park. This open land enhances the rural character of Stanwick.



Towards the end of Raunds Road is a row of brick and render housing association owned properties, most probably built in 1950's.

Next to these and off Raunds Road is **Cumberland Avenue** which has similar properties also mostly owned by a housing association.



Off the far end of Raunds Road is the **Mallows Grange** estate. This is a very large development that took place during the mid 1990's. It comprises of seven roads and cul-de-sacs containing detached and semi-detached properties of a mixed designs in modern brick.



The streets of Mallows Grange are interspersed with large open areas of grass and shrubs. The entrance to the estate is defined by a brick built "gateway" which tends to separate it from the rest of Stanwick rather than integrating it.



Church Street

The junction of Church St, Raunds Rd, Spencer Parade and High Street forms the village centre and is dominated by St Laurence Church.



Next to the Church is the Duke of Wellington public house which is stone and believed to have been built in 1817, although an Inn may have existed on the site prior to then.

Opposite are terraced Victorian brick built cottages. Also a Chinese takeaway which is of more modern design.

Opposite the school, which was built in 1899 and sits well back from the road on a high bank, is Bland's Yard. This is a former shoe factory which has now been separated into smaller commercial units. The main building is thought to date back to 1890 and behind are other small units built at various times since then. All of the businesses in Bland's Yard are small and often owned by Stanwick residents. This area is important from an industrial heritage point of view and also for the economy of Stanwick as it provides valuable employment and reduces commuting. Acorn Nursery is also found here which provides valuable child care services.



Stanwick School from Church Street



Commercial properties at Bland's Yard

Next to Bland's Yard is a stone and rendered cottage that was formerly 3 cottages that have now been combined. Beyond here are several stone built cottages including Crown Cottage which is former public house. There are also two brick built detached houses built in the 1970's which are slightly out of place.



Crown Cottage



More modern brick built houses in Church Street

Local Green Space Designation

Local green spaces can play an important part in establishing the character and form of a settlement.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) policy 76 states that local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them.

In March 2015 East Northamptonshire Council invited Town and Parish Councils to nominate sites for consideration for Local Green Space Designation as part of the Four Towns Plan Local Development Document.

Stanwick Parish Council proposed two sites for consideration. Consequently it is not necessary for the Neighbourhood Plan to include Local Green Space designation within its remit.

Important Open Space

The character of villages depends not only on buildings, but also on the open spaces and their relationship to buildings and features. The particular character of a settlement may be determined largely by the arrangement of buildings around these open areas and the views they give of the surrounding countryside. Apart from their attractiveness, such areas may also have historic or nature conservation significance, or may be part of an important network of green space, which it is desirable to maintain and enhance.

Retained policy EN20 of the adopted East Northamptonshire Local District Plan 1996 designates Important Open Land in villages. Such sites perform a visual/amenity character function which is different to the function of sites identified by the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2006) (commissioned by East Northamptonshire Council) and the Open Space Audit undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

The Local District Plan specified one site in Stanwick and shows the site within 'Inset 10 Stanwick left'. The land lies between Villa Lane and West Street. The designation was carried forward into the 'Raunds Area Plan Preferred Option Report 2007'.

Stanwick Parish Council has nominated this site for Local Green Space Designation.

The North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy policy 13(o) requires a principle of development should be the protection of assets and should 'enhance the landscape, historic landscape, designated built environmental assets and their settings'

The Joint Core Strategy (2011-2031) (JCS) para 3.15 explains the importance of non-designated heritage assets. Non-designated heritage assets are identified as having a degree of significance that merits consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Non-designated heritage assets are an important component of North Northamptonshire and are at risk from the impact of development, or the cumulative loss of structures

Orchard Farm on East Street is the last working farm within the village. It has not been promoted as for Local Green Space designation. However it offers significant value as an Important Open Space because it is intrinsic to the character and appearance East Street. The farm building and fields that flank it have historic value as they acknowledge Stanwick's agricultural heritage as well as providing a significant visual amenity with their open views.

Land between Stanwick Village and the parish boundary with Raunds. There is a strategic gap between the Malloes Grange housing estate and parish boundary with Raunds. This is important open space as it preserves the setting of the village from the Raunds direction and prevents the possibility of coalescence between Stanwick and Raunds.

The JCS para 5.7 states that "Distinctive and separate settlements will be maintained in North Northamptonshire. Part 2 Local Plans can identify areas of particular sensitivity to coalescence that should be protected strategically using measures such as strategic gaps to maintain the separate identities of settlements."

The JCS policy 11 provides "The special mixed urban/rural character of North Northamptonshire with its distinctive and separate settlements will be maintained through the avoidance of coalescence."

Conclusions

It is important that Stanwick retains its rural character. This could be achieved by ensuring that those open spaces that provide views into open countryside from within the built environment are retained at strategic locations as marked on Map 1.

Ideally, these areas should be retained for agricultural use, although development for recreational use such as Community Woodland, Country Park or informal public open space will be supported providing the proposals do not detract from the open and undeveloped character of the area.

In the case of Orchard Farm, the area has significant value as an Important Open Space because it is intrinsic to the character and appearance East Street. The farm building and fields that flank it have historic value as they acknowledge Stanwick's agricultural heritage as well as providing a significant visual amenity with their open views.

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The Local District Plan specified one site in Stanwick and shows the site within 'Inset 10 Stanwick left'. The land near top Stanwick Hall lies between Villa Lane and West Street. The designation was carried forward into the 'Raunds Area Plan Preferred Option Report 2007'. Stanwick Parish Council has nominated this site for Local Green Space Designation.

It is vital that coalescence does not occur between Stanwick and Raunds. There is a strategic gap on both sides of Raunds Road between the Mallows Grange housing estate and parish boundary with Raunds. This is important that this open space is preserved. This is supported by the following policies:

The JCS para 5.7 states that "Distinctive and separate settlements will be maintained in North Northamptonshire. Part 2 Local Plans can identify areas of particular sensitivity to coalescence that should be protected strategically using measures such as strategic gaps to maintain the separate identities of settlements."

The JCS policy 11 provides "The special mixed urban/rural character of North Northamptonshire with its distinctive and separate settlements will be maintained through the avoidance of coalescence."

The design statement has identified numerous incidents of inappropriate design where developments have taken place in the past without any consideration for their surroundings. This is to be avoided in the future by ensuring that future developments respect the predominating local character and historic and natural assets of the surrounding area, and takes every opportunity, through design and materials, to reinforce local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place. This could be achieved by producing a design policy for each area of the village.