



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Minster Lovell

What are Conservation Areas?

Conservation Areas are places of special architectural or historic interest, which have a particular character or appearance worthy of preservation or enhancement. Groups of buildings, walls, trees and hedges, open spaces, views, and the historic settlement patterns all combine to create an individual sense of place. It is this character, rather than individual buildings, that Conservation Area status seeks to protect. The first Conservation Areas in the District were identified in the late 1960s. Since then, there has been a rolling programme of designations. Recent Conservation Areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Minster Lovell Conservation Area was designated in 1990, following a process of public consultation.

The purpose of this document

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal describes the main aspects of character or appearance which contribute to the special interest and quality of the area. This document is intended to complement the approved policies for Conservation Areas contained in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. In Conservation Areas there are controls over the demolition and minor alterations of unlisted buildings, and on works to trees. Full details can be obtained from the Planning Service. The Preservation and Enhancement document for Minster Lovell accompanies this Character Appraisal and describes strategies for the future maintenance and improvement of Minster Lovell, as well as providing development advice and guidance on conversions, extensions and the design of new buildings within the Conservation Area.



Location and setting

Minster Lovell lies on the river Windrush, six miles east of Burford and three miles west of Witney. Today, the village has two distinct components. The Conservation Area comprises the part of the village lying north of the B4047 and incorporating the early core; while that to the south-west, incorporating Charterville and other later developments, forms the heart of today's settlement. The Conservation Area also encompasses Little Minster to the west, which formed a separate settlement by the mid-11th century.

Famed since the early 19th century for the scenic ruins of its medieval manor house, 'old' Minster Lovell is a small, highly attractive village, whose distinctive character derives much from its idyllic riverside setting. The portion of the village in the Conservation Area is polyfocal in form. From Minster Lovell Bridge, the main road runs firstly north-east and then east to a cluster of early buildings which includes the church and Minster Lovell Manor. Cottages and small houses, sometimes in terraces and generally dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, line this road.

Minster Lovell and Little Minster lie in the Upper Windrush Valley in a wider landscape setting striking for its tranquillity and largely unspoilt rural character. Most of the village is low-lying and situated on valley floor or open valley side farmland. Large numbers of trees, blocks of vegetation and areas of open land within the village all contribute significantly to this rural character.

The underlying geology of the parish comprises cornbrash limestone, forest marble and a small area of boulder clay within the former woodland. The valley floor is lined with alluvium and pockets of terrace gravel along the valley sides.



Historical development

A wealth of evidence exists for early activity in the area. Finds include Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze-age pottery and implements. Roman activity is attested to by Akeman Street (which runs along the parish's northern boundary); while the discovery of nine graves and the spectacular Minster Lovell Jewel (in 1718) points to Saxon activity. The village's name probably derives its prefix from the pre-Conquest Minster that stood on the site now occupied by the church and Manor Farmhouse. The suffix, added from the 13th century, derives from the chief landholding family.

A manor house is known to have occupied the site of Minster Lovell Manor in 1197, and may have been pre-dated by an even earlier structure. In 1086 most of the 29 tenant households recorded were on the chief manor. At this date, Minster Lovell was in royal ownership, and was probably among lands granted to William Lovel by Henry I before 1124. The Lovel family retained the lands until 1485.

By the end of the 13th century the number of households on the manor had risen to 50 and the village had developed into a modest, essentially agricultural community. In 1287 the chief manor included 55 acres of meadow land. To the present day, farming in the area has been predominantly arable.

The 17th and 18th centuries saw local limestone used in the building of new properties and the replacement of existing timber structures. Plague mortality robbed the village of many of its occupants in the mid-14th century, and by the early 17th century numbers had not recovered noticeably (in 1602, only 27 houses were recorded in Minster Lovell). The 19th and 20th centuries saw many of the smaller land holdings consolidated into larger blocks. In 1848, the Chartist settlement of Charterville was established along the Brize Norton road to the south-west. The Chartists, under Feargus O'Conner, were an influential social movement dedicated to helping the working poor. The 19th century also saw woodland clearances in the northern part of the parish, and the opening of a post office and the National School in 1872. Between 1960 and 1980, a number of housing developments added significantly to the size of the portion of the village south of the B4047.

Settlement pattern

For Minster Lovell's early settlers the attractions of the site included fertile meadow land, benign contours and a good supply of water. The area was also well served by transport links. In addition to Akeman Street, an ancient ridgeway followed the course now taken by the Burford to Witney road, and a now-lost road (called Wood Street in the 10th and 11th centuries) ran along the parish's south-eastern boundary.

Evidence for settlement prior to the Saxon period is sketchy. However, settlement along the Thames and Windrush valleys, including at Minster Lovell, seems to have been established by the 5th century. By the 9th century, Minster Lovell may have been the site of both a pre-Conquest church with wide-reaching jurisdiction, and a Mercian royal *vill* (or parish).

The church and manor house formed the early hub of the village. As well as nucleated growth here, the settlement began to string out to the west as far as Little Minster. This axis runs parallel to the Burford to Witney road - an early route accessed via the bridge at the west end of the main road. The steady rise in the village's population was reversed in the 14th century (with the plague), and did not increase again significantly until the 18th and 19th centuries.

In recent times settlement has concentrated in the angle formed by the Burford and Brize Norton roads. This represents a decisive shift in the focus of the community away from the village's historic core. Such is the demarcation (and visual difference) between these two parts that they appear as separate villages. In the last century the part lying within the Conservation Area has remained largely unchanged, while that lying without has altered radically.





At the western end of the Conservation Area is Little Minster. Here, the settlement pattern is at its most dispersed, with a small number of houses and cottages scattered along a narrow, winding lane, or down one of the minor tracks which branch off it. At no time did Little Minster attract the scale of development seen at Minster Lovell to the east. Throughout its history it has remained an essentially humble community of farmsteads and labourers' cottages.



Minster Lovell Conservation Area



Key

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Buildings
-  Locally Listed Buildings
-  Significant Boundary Walls
-  Significant Hedges
-  Significant Trees and Tree Groups
-  Tree Preservation Order
-  Significant Views



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Listed Buildings

There are 29 Listed structures of architectural or historic interest in the Conservation Area. Listed Buildings are classified in grades of relative importance.

Grade I – Buildings of national importance and exceptional interest (2% of Listed Buildings)

- 19/108 MANOR ROAD (South side) Minster Lovell Manor Ruins (formerly Listed as Ruins of Manor House)
- 19/114 MANOR ROAD (South side) Church of Saint Kenelm

Grade II* – Particularly special and important buildings (4% of Listed Buildings)

- 19/107 MANOR ROAD (South side) Minster Lovell Manor Dovecot (formerly Listed as Dovecot at Manor Farm)
- 19/109 MANOR ROAD (South side) Gateway approx. 20m NW of Minster Lovell Manor Ruins
- 19/110 MANOR ROAD (South side) Manor Farmhouse
- 19/111 MANOR ROAD (South side) Barn approx. 55m ESE of Manor Farmhouse (formerly Listed as Barns at Manor Farm)

Grade II – Buildings of special interest

- 18/75 Minster Lovell Bridge
- 18/76 Windrush Farmhouse
- 18/77 Windrush Farm, Barn approx. 30m SE of farmhouse
- 18/94 Barn House
- 18/182 The Old Manor House
- 18/183 Barn and barn room approx. 30m N of The Old Manor House
- 19/97 MAIN ROAD (North side) The Old Post House (formerly Listed as The Old Post Office and Locks Cottage)
- 19/98 MAIN ROAD (North side) The Old House
- 18/99 (19/99) MAIN ROAD (North side) Barn approx. 15m NW of The Old House
- 18/100 MAIN ROAD (North side) Tulloch's Cottage
- 18/101 MAIN ROAD (North side) The Rosary
- 18/102 MAIN ROAD (North side) The Old Swan Hotel (formerly Listed as The Swan Inn)
- 18/103 MAIN ROAD (North side) Cross base approx. 10m W of The Old Swan Hotel
- 19/104 MAIN ROAD (South side) Lily Cottage (also known as The Old Bakehouse)
- 18/105 MAIN ROAD (South side) The Old Post Office
- 18/106 MAIN ROAD (South side) Causeway Cottage
- 19/112 MANOR ROAD (South side) Barn, stable and outbuilding approx. 25m NE of Manor Farmhouse (formerly Listed as Barns at Manor Farm)
- 19/113 MANOR ROAD (South side) Outbuilding approx. 25m E of Manor Farmhouse
- 19/115 MANOR ROAD (South side) Chest tomb to Deodalus Collis and 2 low chest tombs approx. 11m NW of Church of Saint Kenelm
- 19/116 MANOR ROAD (South side) Chest tomb to John Freeman approx. 28m NW of Church of Saint Kenelm
- 19/117 MANOR ROAD (South side) Chest tomb to Little family approx. 5m W of Church of Saint Kenelm
- 19/118 MANOR ROAD (South side) Chest tomb to Mary, wife of Thomas Green, approx. 8m N of West End of Church of Saint Kenelm
- 19/119 MANOR ROAD (South side) Two chest tombs to Cobbin family approx. 2m N of Church of Saint Kenelm

Note: The numbers indicate the unique identification number by which Listed Buildings are referenced

Architectural character and quality of buildings

The majority of the village's period structures are small houses and cottages (sometimes in terraces) conforming to a humble, vernacular style and dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. Most have simple plan forms and are constructed from coursed, squared limestone (pale grey in colour) with stone slate or thatched roofs. 20th-century housing is largely absent.

Minster Lovell is generally rich in Listed structures but is made unforgettable by its ruined manor house, whose evocative remains haunt a picturesque site on the banks of the river Windrush. It was built c. 1431-42 for William, 7th Lord Lovell, on a courtyard plan. It incorporates a hall, solar, and chapel range with a kitchen and bake house cross wing to the east, and accommodation ranges to the north-west and west. Almost all of the floor plan survives above ground level, with both the hall and the west range tower forming substantially complete shells.

Adjacent to the Manor House are a number of period buildings, which in combination form a dispersed cluster of great charm. North-west of the Manor House is the church of St. Kenelm - an attractive and consistent building of the mid-15th century with a central crossing tower. Manor Farmhouse, just north of the church, incorporates parts of a 12th-century chapel (probably that of St. Cecelia) and some 15th-century elements (probably taken from the Manor House). To the east of Manor Farmhouse stand a fine dovecote and two barns dating from the 15th century (one of which has pre-10th-century buttresses to the rear). Both the Manor House and dovecote sites are Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

Minster Lovell Mill conference centre is an important early work by the RIBA Gold Medal-winning architect Edward Cullinan. It comprises a series of buildings backing up against a long stone wall. The buildings employ vernacular materials (such as local stone slate) and merge cleverly with a number of existing stone structures; yet the pitched roofs have been variously cut into and sliced away to give a piece of modern architecture that is both highly accomplished and richly sympathetic to its context.

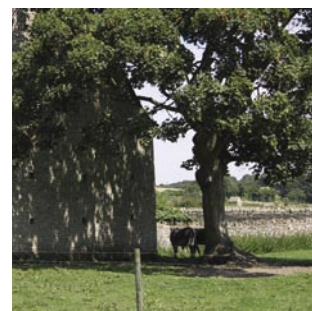
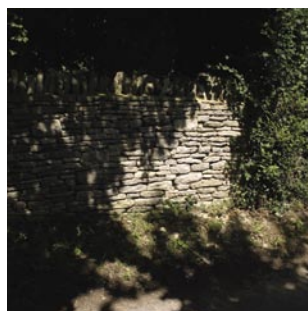
Boundary treatments

A number of the cottages and small houses lining the main road through Minster Lovell front directly onto the road. Of these, the 18th-century terrace where the main road climbs at its eastern end is particularly striking. Other houses and cottages are set back behind grass verges of varying depth.

Extensive stretches of drystone walling (of the same pale limestone as that used in the buildings) can be seen throughout the village. Unkempt hedgerows form the other boundary feature of note. In Little Minster, the scattered houses and cottages are set back from the road, or lie at the end of long driveways. The lanes here are bounded by tall, gappy hedges and, in the case of School Lane, are noticeably incised.

Landscape, trees and views

The landscape surrounding Minster Lovell has a pleasing and largely unspoilt rural character. Much of the character area lies within the Cotswolds AONB. Throughout Minster Lovell itself a wealth of mature and semi-mature trees adds greatly to the visual appeal and rural character of the setting. There are a number of attractive internal views, including that framed by the 17th- and 18th-century cottages that line the main road. Views out into the surrounding landscape are at their most memorable at the top end of the main road and from the ruins of Minster Lovell Manor, out into the tranquil and tree-lined valley of the Windrush beyond. Similar views into the adjacent landscape can be enjoyed at Little Minster.



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General planning enquiries and application forms
List entries and grant enquiries
Trees and landscape enquiries
Architectural and technical enquiries

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