



## DUNHAM-ON-THE-HILL

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL, JANUARY 2008



*Chester  
City Council*

Maps can be seen on the following link: [www.chester.gov.uk/conservationareareview](http://www.chester.gov.uk/conservationareareview)

# DUNHAM ON THE HILL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL - JANUARY 2008

## DESIGNATIONS

<b>Conservation Area</b>	First designated in April 1979
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Church of St Luke</i></li> <li>• <i>Town Farm Farmhouse</i></li> <li>• <i>Rock Cottages</i></li> <li>• <i>Pear Tree Farmhouse</i></li> <li>• <i>Dunham Hall Farmhouse</i></li> <li>• <i>Smithy Farmhouse (with barn, stables and outbuildings)</i></li> <li>• <i>Manor Farmhouse</i></li> </ul>
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>Archaeological priority</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Article 4 direction</b>	None
<b>Regulation 7 direction</b>	None
<b>Area of Special County Value (ASCV)</b>	None
<b>Site of Biological Interest (SBI)</b>	None
<b>Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV)</b>	None
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Green Belt Area</i></li> </ul>

## HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The element Dun in the name is of Celtic derivation and signifies a Hill fort, with Ham a dwelling place. No trace of any fort now remains in Dunham, the nearest being on Helsby Hill. The villagers believe there may have been a Roman settlement on the site, but again no trace remains. The village was mentioned in the Domesday Book as Donham, and after numerous changes the name evolved to Dunham on the Hill. The first grantees of the Manor were the Fitzalans. Later the manor passed to the Earls of Shrewsbury and Talbot until sold by them in 1917.

The development of Dunham into the recognisable character of today occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when the majority of the buildings within the Conservation Area were built. The road surface of the central Village Road is presently tarmac, but at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at least the portion opposite to Town Farm was cobbled.

## KEY FEATURES OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

<b>General:</b>	strong rural and agricultural setting
<b>Topography:</b>	located on a ridge
<b>Streetscape:</b>	one main road crossing the settlement, from north to south, i.e. Dunham Village Road
<b>Built environment:</b>	Brick built properties two storeys high with slated or clay tiles, pitched roof, dating from 17 <sup>th</sup> century until 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
<b>Building setting:</b>	detached and terrace houses with unified set back often with front yard raised a couple of feet above street level
<b>Local views:</b>	fine views towards the Helsby/Delamere Hills to the East or over the Cheshire Plain to the West.
<b>Boundary treatment:</b>	important presence of sandstone walls with curved or triangular coping stones in the conservation area, Frequent outcrops of the sandstone bedrock which occur in numerous places throughout the village, sometimes as foundations for buildings or boundary treatment.
<b>Trees and hedgerows:</b>	some hedgerows bordering a couple of properties
<b>Open spaces:</b>	Pump square, main open space, triangular, located in the centre of the village
<b>Change of conservation area boundaries:</b>	last changed in 2009.

## CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

North Cheshire is dominated by the high sandstone ridge running approximately North-South and ending at the North end in Helsby Hill. Roughly two miles West and parallel to it is a lesser ridge, and on this is Dunham on the Hill. Village Road, formerly the Old Chester Road, runs for some 700m along the top of the ridge, rising up from its junction with the A56 at the North end to a central high point by the village green and then falling away



Rock Cottage, Dunham on the Hill



again to the junction with Barrow Lane at the South end where it bends South-West and rejoins the A56 as Low Hill. The main part of the Conservation Area is stretched out on both sides of Village Road, linear in form, with the road down the centre.

The character of the area is rural and agricultural and the village within the Conservation Area has a feeling of ancient peace and tranquillity. It owes this in large measure to the by-pass to the West, now the A56. It is understood this was constructed in 1844 and widened in 1938. Thus through traffic has been wholly diverted for many years and Village Road remains narrow, with the old front boundary walls to the houses mostly untouched.

Within the Conservation Area there are approximately 65 dwellings. There are no shops. There is a solid red brick Village Hall, which was the village school until 1974 when the new County Primary School was built centrally but on a site excluded from the Conservation Area. St Luke's Parish Church (which also serves Hapsford) and the Wheatsheaf public house are in a smaller part of the Area to the North-West, separated from the main part of the village by the A56.

## **POSITIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA**

### **Listed Buildings**

The listed elements within the conservation area highlight the key features of its overall character. These include two types of building construction: Farm houses and farm buildings, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries or perhaps earlier, on both sides of Village Road. Mostly in brick, weatherworn and of sombre hue, these give the whole village a feeling of solid continuity from an earlier age. The other type of building construction is the Church, built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, located on the other side of the A56, out of the village centre.

### **Unlisted building of merit**

Like the listed buildings, unlisted buildings of merit are varied in their detailing, use of materials and overall form. Most of them seem to date from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

When special circumstances arise and for more effective built environmental protection in conservation areas, it may be appropriate to consider the provision of article 4 directions and making use of a local list for Dunham on the Hill's unlisted buildings of merit.



**1 - 4 Smithy Cottages, Dunham on the Hill**

It is particularly worth mentioning in particular the small terraces of brick cottages, usually three or four cottages in a row, of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, complementing the larger farm buildings and reflecting the social hierarchy of earlier days.

### **Local views**

There are a number of local views that are considered important and which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- The village runs along the top of a ridge, from which public footpaths provide fine views towards the Helsby / Delamere Hills to the East or over the Cheshire Plain to the West.

Full consideration should be given to any development which would impact upon views from public footpaths.

### **Townscape and landscape details**

Local townscape details contribute to the sense of local distinctiveness and may be unique to a particular conservation area. They can range from specific building detailing, characteristic building elements, boundary treatments, to the quality of the streetscape. Individually and collectively they contribute to the overall quality of Dunham-on the-Hill as well as enhancing individual areas of character within the settlement.

#### *Townscape details*

Townscape details contributing positively to the village character are:

- The small gables over cottage windows at first floor level. These can be seen on Old Hall Cottages, Post Office Cottages and several other properties. They have been reproduced with reasonable success in the four modern houses in Dunham Court and other places.
- The use of natural slate on roofs. This is a significant unifying factor.
- The use of brick of a subdued, even sombre colour. This again is a major unifying factor.



**1 - 4 Post Office Row, Dunham on the Hill**

- The design of windows, made of wood not plastic, proportionate in size to the property, and painted white.
- Small porches with hipped roofs over front doors, e.g. Post Office Cottages and the modern houses in Dunham Court (though the roofs on their porches are sloping, not hipped).
- The front gardens to the houses, in some cases raised several feet above the level of the road, and the stone steps and paths leading to the front door.

### *Boundary treatments*

Boundary treatments have a significant impact upon the setting of properties, the coherence of a group and the overall character of a conservation area. Traditional and appropriate treatments will preserve or enhance the appearance of the conservation area.

The old walls, mainly of sandstone blocks with triangular coping stones, but in some cases of brick, and often acting as retaining walls to the raised front gardens, add significantly to the townscape of the village.

Often the outcrops of the sandstone bedrock which occur in numerous places throughout the village, sometimes as foundations for buildings, act as a unifying feature and epitomise the age and solid foundations of the village, contributing to the special character of the conservation area.

### *Trees and hedgerows*

Trees and hedgerows have significant amenity value and are almost always a positive contributor to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Hedgerows growing on the edge of some properties, above the outcrops of sandstone bedrock on the northwest side of the village contribute also to highlight the character of the area.

### **Open Spaces**

The village green, a small triangular area of grass surrounding the old pump, and situated on the East of



**1 - 4 Old Hall Cottages, Dunham on the Hill**

Village Road at its highest point, is not only a central feature in a somewhat elongated village, but has a focussing effect out of all proportion to its size.

### **Accepted extension to Dunham on the Hill's Conservation Area boundaries 2009**

**Area A:** The whole site of the Primary School, located between Pool Cottage and Pear Tree Farm, should be included in the future Conservation Area boundaries, providing an opportunity for an enhancement for the benefit of the Community.

### **NEUTRAL ELEMENTS**

The rather bland style of the conversion (but which as a conversion is to be welcomed) of Holly Bank Farm, and the repetitive similarity of the three houses known as Greenbank apparently built at the time of the conversion, fortunately largely hidden from the road by a hedgerow and by their elevated position.

Newcombe House. This is a substantial executive-type house with pillared portico and double garage. It is out of character with the rest of the village and dominates the Green. However, it was built in about 1980 and is now established. Painting the garage doors a dark colour would be an improvement.

### **NEGATIVE ELEMENTS**

- The remains of the old sandstone barn adjoining Old Hall Cottages. It was burnt out in 2005 and stands roofless with sandstone pillars supporting nothing. It is owned by the Oldfield Trust, a charity which owns several other properties in the village.
- Replacement UPVC windows made at Ariel View, the most southern of the terrace of cottages south of the Village Hall.
- The stark red brick used in the construction of Mayfield (1991).
- High Corner, the relatively modern house at the South-West corner of the Area, with its square appearance and unsympathetic tiled roof, and the ugly electricity sub-station next to it. Fortunately these are at some distance from the main part of the Area.
- The overhead wires and cables which proliferate through the main part of the village.
- Village Hall parking area, surfaced in tarmac, affecting the setting of this building and the Conservation Area.

## **ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Landscape improvement**

- The small open field in front of the current village school – indeed the whole site if the school closes - could provide an opportunity for an enhancement for the benefit of the Community.
- Village Hall parking could be improved by an appropriate landscape scheme, carefully redesigned with traditional materials such as surface dressing, reclaimed sets, gravel or cobblestones.

It is hoped that funding mechanism to achieve these enhancements may be explored locally in due course.

### **Building requiring attention**

Ariel View with its UPVC windows would benefit from the reintroduction of traditional material – i.e. timber - and taking into consideration the key features that makes Dunham on the Hill's Conservation Area special.

**NB:** These are our suggestions for improvement, but owners should note that the Planning Authority has no powers to implement those recommendations.

## **MANAGEMENT TOOLS**

In order to maintain the character and appearance of conservation areas, Chester City Council will use the appropriate pieces of legislation relevant for this task:

- Urgent Work Notice.  
This notice relates to a building which is in a very serious state of disrepair and needs basically to be water safe. It should be confirmed by the Secretary of State.
- Tidy Land Provision Notice, section 214 of the Planning Act 1990.  
This notice relates to a building and its curtilage that is poorly maintained. It requires a tidy up of the property.
- Dilapidated Building Notice, section 16 of the 1984 Building Act.  
This Notice refers to a building that is in a poor state. It implies either repairing the building or removal of the building. In a Conservation Area, such demolition would need a Conservation Area Consent.

## **THREAT**

Increasing car traffic - mainly due to commuting - with its side effects such as street widening, road signs, tree cutting, poorly designed garages and drive ways,



inappropriate traffic calming measures, etc. often seriously and irreversibly affects the character of a conservation area.

It is therefore important to foresee and manage very carefully the design and material impact of traffic on new developments, in order to maintain the essential features that make a conservation area special, accordingly with the latest guidance on streets published by the Department for Transport (Manual for Streets, March 2007, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)).

## **SURROUNDINGS OF A CONSERVATION AREA**

Developments on properties located in the surrounding of a conservation area should also be considered with great care, in order to maintain the essential features that make an area special.

## **APPENDICES**

- Map of the conservation area as existing, scale 1:2,500
- Map of the conservation area as proposed, scale 1:2,500

## **FURTHER READING**

Chester City Council - 1997 *Living in a Conservation Area - A Guide to Householders*  
Chester City Council - November 2006 *Chester District Local Plan*

### **Relevant Local Plan Policies**

- ENV21 Protection of trees and woodland
- ENV24 Preservation of key features within the landscape and its overall character
- ENV37 Preservation or enhancement of conservation areas
- ENV38 Protection of local views
- ENV45 Preservation of the special interest of listed buildings
- ENV46 Appropriate changes of use to listed buildings
- ENV47 Protection of unlisted buildings of merit

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The Chester City Council would like to express its gratitude to the Chester Civic Trust for their valuable assistance in connection with Conservation Areas.