

Stapleford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



September 2021

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1. Introduction

Conservation Areas are defined as ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’¹.

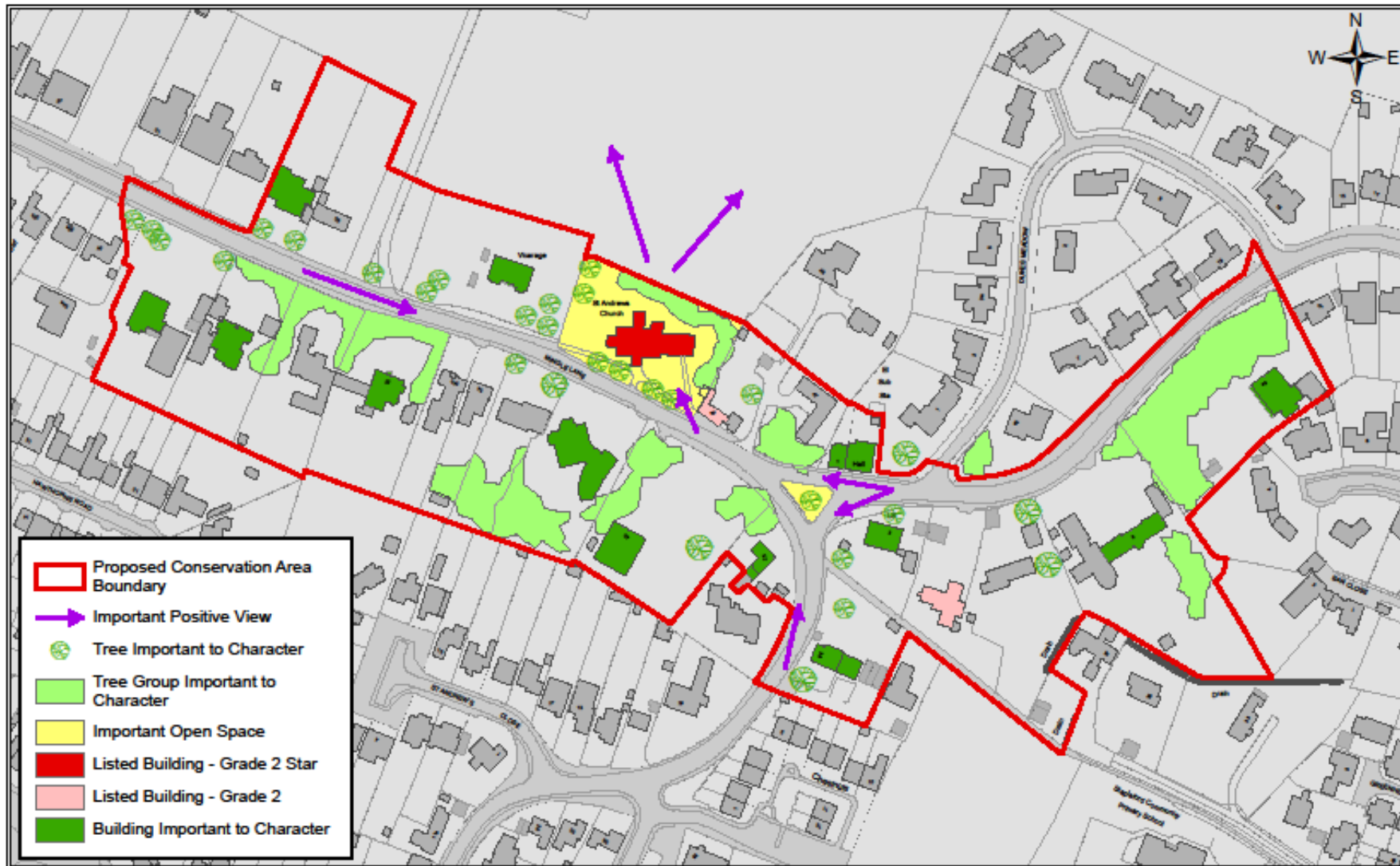
This document sets out the special architectural and historic interest of the Stapleford Conservation Area and aims to fulfil the District Council’s duty to ‘draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement’ of its conservation areas as required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

This document covers all the aspects set out by Historic England on conservation area appraisals and management plans, including an analysis of the special character of the conservation area and recommended actions for the management of the area in order to preserve and enhance its character.

2. Statement of Community Involvement

Following survey work, a draft conservation area appraisal for Stapleford was published on the Joint Planning Service website on 17th January 2021. Notification of this was sent by email to the parish council and the elected members representing Stapleford on SCDC. Separate notification was sent by post to all the addresses in land recommended for removal from the conservation area. All these parties were invited to respond to the draft through an online survey.

The survey drew nine responses. In addition, the parish council, one of the elected members, and another member of the public responded via email. A limited number of changes have been made to the appraisal in the light of responses.



- Proposed Conservation Area Boundary
- ➔ Important Positive View
- ⊗ Tree Important to Character
- Tree Group Important to Character
- Important Open Space
- Listed Building - Grade 2 Star
- Listed Building - Grade 2
- Building Important to Character



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Stapleford Conservation Area

Date:	24 June 2021
Produced by:	PPSE Team
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning	
Scale:	1:2,000 @ A4

3. History and development

3.1 Location and setting

- 3.1.1 Stapleford lies on the alluvial and river gravels around the bed of the River Granta. It is within the Chalkland Landscape Character Area as identified in the District Design Guide SPD. To the north-east the land rises to the chalk downs of the Gog Magog hills.
- 3.1.2 Although Stapleford is close to major road and rail routes, the village retains the appearance of a quiet rural settlement. This is especially true of the conservation area, which is focussed around the early medieval parish church and the historic buildings which cluster round it.
- 3.1.3 The surrounding landscape to the south, east and north is agricultural, primarily large arable fields. There are long views over the rising ground to the north of Mingle Lane. To the west, the village merges into Great Shelford.

3.2 Historic development

- 3.2.1 The origins of the village are probably close to the ford across the Granta to the south of the current village.

Here one of the Icknield Way tracks crossed the riverside route from Great Shelford to Babraham. Small early Saxon settlements are likely to have been dotted around the crossroads; in 970 the manor is listed as one of the endowments of the monastery of Ely. Named Stapleforde ('ford marked by a post') in Domesday Book, it is recorded as having 27 households.

- 3.2.2 The village grew around a large green on the site where Mingle Lane, Church Street and Gog Magog Way meet, and the population reached 62 adults by 1377. The Bishop of Ely built a moated manor house a short distance to the south (Stapleford Bury), and a parish church was built across the old Icknield Way track to Cherry Hinton. Houses were built on the roads which ran around the manor house and alongside the church.
- 3.2.3 Stapleford remained a small settlement in late medieval times. It expanded eastwards, but its population was only 140 adults by the end of the 17th century. The majority of land around the village was arable. There was also grazing of sheep, especially on heathland in the north of the parish, and in the 17th and 18th centuries, smaller landowners also raised cattle. In 1740, there were 9 farmhouses, 10 other houses, and 14 cottages in the village.

3.2.4 Agricultural innovation was taking place by 1800. A windmill was constructed in 1804. After enclosure in 1812 the number of farmers was reduced. A National School was opened in the old vicarage in 1845. By the end of the 19th century, there were just four substantial farms. The railway reached nearby Shelford in 1847. This brought a new influx of residents, and there was much additional building in the area, including large detached houses close to the church on Mingle Lane. The population fell again, however, during the agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century.

3.2.5 The popularity of the village as a new residential area continued into the 20th century. Edwardian mansions were built on Haverhill Road. By 1961 the village had over 490 houses. By the 1980's many new culs-de-sac had been created, and most of the ancient closes of the village were filled with new houses set closely together. As a result of this, Stapleford effectively merged with the neighbouring village of Great Shelford.



**Northern part of
Stapleford: Ordnance
Survey Six-inch Series
1886**

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4. Character

4.1 Summary description

- 4.1.1 Stapleford village has a long history, but in the modern era it has become part of the larger settlement of Shelford. The conservation area surrounds the historic core of Stapleford village, and includes the medieval parish church and two of the seven other listed buildings in the village.
- 4.1.2 The triangular green where Mingle Lane meets Church Street and Gog Magog Way was the centre of medieval Stapleford, but apart from the church and the neighbouring White House, few clues to this history remain. The conservation area is quiet and sylvan, and its character is that of a nineteenth and twentieth-century residential area, with glimpses of the surrounding countryside, through gaps between houses.

Right: Detached houses from the nineteenth and early twentieth century predominate in the conservation area, but there is considerable variety in architectural character



4.2 Key characteristics

- Medieval **church** and triangular **green**, indicating the original village site
- Substantial and distinctive **detached houses**, set well back from the street in large plots with significant **spaces between buildings**, mainly from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but with some modern houses
- Sense of enclosure created by **curving streets**, **tall hedgerows** and **substantial areas of mature trees**
- Semi-rural quality of streets arising from grass **verges**, many trees, kerbs of **traditional materials**, and central **green** at the junction
- Long **views** from the churchyard, and through spaces between houses, across the rising chalk downs to the north
- Retention of **small heritage assets** in, and adjacent to, the public realm, including traditional signpost, village sign, post box and railings

Right above: View north across the rising chalk downs

Right below: Curving streets and substantial trees; the old vicarage/National School building in the centre



4.3 Architectural characteristics

Scale and form	<p>Generally two storeys; some one-and-a-half</p> <p>Mostly substantial detached houses</p> <p>Just one timber-framed house, otherwise mostly traditional masonry construction</p> <p>Architecturally varied; C20 buildings include emulation of earlier periods and assertively modern forms</p>
Walls	<p>Mostly buff brick</p> <p>Some white-painted brickwork, some render</p>
Roofs	<p>Varied, including slate, clay tiles, concrete tiles, pantiles and green glazed tiles</p>
Windows	<p>Very varied, including timber sashes with both large and small panes, some unorthodox glazing bar patterns, timber casements, mid-twentieth-century steel casements, modern emulations of Victorian timber sashes, uPVC replacements, and modern powder-coated metal.</p>
Boundary treatments	<p>Many substantial hedges</p> <p>Limited number of low and mid-height brick walls</p> <p>Railings and vertical boarded timber fences used occasionally – mostly recent additions</p>



Left: distinctive glazing patterns at 32 and 28 Mingle Lane

4.4 Spatial characteristics

- 4.4.1 The conservation area encloses the meeting point of three roads (Mingle Lane, Gog Magog Way, and Church Street), which was the historic village centre. All three roads curve as they approach the junction, so that views are gradually revealed of the prominent buildings around the junction, such as 25 Church Street, 45 Mingle Lane, 1 Gog Magog Way, and the church.
- 4.4.2 Almost all of the buildings in the conservation area are set well back from the street, and in large plots, although some sub-division of plots has taken place, most recently to facilitate the construction of two new houses at 34 and 34a Mingle Lane. The only buildings hard up against the street frontage are the White House (45 Mingle Lane), a fifteenth-century building which may possibly have been a church or a guildhall before its mid-seventeenth century alteration, and 1 Gog Magog Way, which dates from the first half of the nineteenth century, and originally contained the National School, opened around 1845, and the schoolmaster's accommodation.
- 4.4.3 The church is set in a substantial churchyard scattered with mature trees and some gravestones. There are clear views across the fields to the north.
- 4.4.4 The conservation area has a more strongly rural character than the remainder of Stapleford. This character rests mainly on the plentiful trees and hedges, the spacious plots and generous set-back of buildings, and the glimpses of open countryside to the north.

4.5 Key views and landmarks

- 4.5.1 The curving streets, substantial mature trees and high hedges in the conservation area mean there are few landmarks. The only exceptions are the church, and the two buildings which form a backdrop to the triangular green: 25 Church Street, and the Johnson Memorial Hall/ Verger's Cottage building (formerly the National School) at 1 Gog Magog Way. Key views and landmark buildings are identified on the conservation area map, and some are shown below.

Stapleford Conservation Area: landmark buildings and key views



St Andrew's Church



Johnson Memorial Hall



25 Church Street



View east past the church



View west along Mingle Lane



View towards the green from Gog Magog Way

4.6 Landscape and open spaces

- 4.6.1 Trees and hedges are very significant to the character of the conservation area. They screen many of the buildings from public view, either partly or wholly, and are hence a dominant characteristic of the three streets. Trees and hedges also form a backdrop to many of the buildings which are visible from the street, define spaces and views, and give this part of the village its shaded and private qualities.
- 4.6.2 Hedges form the majority of the street boundaries in Mingle Lane and Gog Magog Way. At the east end of the conservation area they are mostly above eye-height, and more formal. In the centre and east of the conservation area there are more mixed heights and greater informality in hedging. Many hedges here are also above eye-height, however. Laurel is a prominent hedging plant, but many other species are used.
- 4.6.3 Groups or areas of trees are especially important to the character of the conservation area:
- around the church and the vicarage
 - along the south side of Mingle Lane
 - in front of 6, 8 and 8a Gog Magog Way
 - behind 25 Church Street

- 4.6.4 Individual trees and smaller groups, such as those in front of 4 Gog Magog Way and in front of 47 Mingle Lane are also important to the character of the conservation area.
- 4.6.5 The churchyard, with its views north to the downs is an important open space within the conservation area, as is the triangular green in the centre of the conservation area, which echoes the character of another green to the east, just outside the conservation area in front of Stapleford Hall. The informal and rural character of the green is enhanced by the traditional materials of the carriageway edging and limited footway paving, the design and materials of the buildings which face it, and the brick boundary wall of the old vicarage / National School building.

4.7 Archaeology

- 4.7.1 Archaeological work during recent development on the southern fringe of Cambridge has shown that the area was a densely-settled agricultural area in Romano-British times; it is probable that Stapleford, only 3km south, had a similar pattern of activity in that era. However, most of the archaeological record around Stapleford is focussed on Wandlebury, to the north

east, where there is an Iron Age hill-fort, and Roman remains have also been found.

- 4.7.2 Test pit excavations were carried out in the village during 2013 to 2017. The sites included several

gardens within the conservation area: the Vicarage, 38 Church Street, 1 Dukes Meadow and 40 Mingle Lane. Pottery from a number of different eras was discovered. The latter site at 40 Mingle Lane, close to the green, yielded some Romano-British pottery.

5. Management, enhancement, and new development

5.1 General advice to protect and enhance the character of the conservation area

- 5.1.1 Guidance to promote enhancement of the conservation area is provided in the Council's District Design Guide SPD and in the Development in Conservation Areas SPD. These two documents were adopted by the Council to support previously adopted Development Plan Documents that have now been superseded by the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. The two documents are still material considerations when making planning decisions, with the weight in decision making to be determined on a case by case basis having regard to consistency with national planning guidance and the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. Bearing in mind this proviso, new development should have due regard to the two SPD documents, which are available on the Council's website.

- 5.1.2 Sustaining the character of the conservation area into the future will depend on proper management of the existing heritage assets, on care in the design of new development, including alterations and additions to existing buildings, and on taking opportunities for enhancement.

5.2 New development

- 5.2.1 Beyond domestic extensions, proposals for new development in the conservation area are likely to be either for the subdivision of existing large plots, or for the replacement of existing houses by new ones. Any such new development should:
- be set well back from the street,
 - adhere to the scale of existing development, which is generally only two storeys,
 - contribute to the strongly sylvan quality of the conservation area, by retaining existing trees and

hedgerows and planting new large trees and hedgerows.

- Replicate the characteristic street frontages of the conservation area, using walls and especially hedges,
- Avoid designs and layouts which erode the visual character created by single houses in large secluded plots.
- Avoid unsympathetic addition of micro-generation technologies such as solar panels.

5.2.2 Subdivision of plots will be a particularly sensitive issue in the conservation area in the future. The Mingle Lane frontages are especially vulnerable, as there are a number of very wide plots. Without very careful handling of space and proportion, and imaginative site planning which maintains the appearance of the existing plots and avoids radical loss of existing hedges, shrubs and trees, one of the core qualities of this conservation area could be lost.

5.2.3 Detailed design and materials selection in new development should take the opportunity to enhance the character of the area. There is no clear template for new development in terms of materials or massing, but the scale, proportions, positioning, orientation, boundary treatments and landscaping of the existing buildings provide pointers which will help to avoid harm. Restrained material palettes for new buildings and the use of high-quality materials and high-level craft in their

application will also help to enhance the character of the conservation area.

5.3 Trees

5.3.1 Long-term management of trees is essential to the character of the conservation area. Such management needs to both ensure the continued welfare of the existing trees and plan for enhancement and replenishment. The replacement of existing forest-scale trees by smaller species should be resisted, and appropriate new planting of larger tree species and Hedges in new development, on existing plots, and on highway land should be encouraged.

Below: Trees in Mingle Lane, south side



5.4 Enhancement

5.4.1 The table below sets out detracting elements and opportunities for enhancement in the conservation area.

Opportunities for enhancement	Description	Management proposal
Hardstanding	Large, leafy gardens in front of houses are an important characteristic of the conservation area. There is little pressure for additional off-street parking at present, as most of the houses have substantial driveways, but further sub-division of plots is possible. Further extensive paving of the present front garden areas, already evident in Mingle Lane could erode the sylvan character of the conservation area.	New hard-surfaced car parking in front of and alongside buildings facing the street should be carefully designed. Schemes which include new trees and hedging plants along the street frontage are positive, and should be encouraged, but even behind such a screen, large unsoftened areas of paved car parking space should be discouraged.
Highway engineering	Carriageways in the western part of the conservation area are mostly edged with short granite kerbstones. The footways are set very close to carriageway level. This contributes to the rural character of the area.	Encourage the retention of this engineering approach, especially if new footway crossings are created. Discourage further urbanization of the street surfaces.
Boundary treatments	Boundary treatments, especially on the street frontage, are especially important to the conservation area. Hedges are particularly important, but there are walls and railings which also contribute positively.	Resist planning applications for inappropriate boundary treatments such as close-boarded fences or unduly ornate railings, or the removal of existing positive boundaries. Where permission is not required for removals, encourage retention by informal communication.

Trees	Large trees are of immense importance to the character of the conservation area. The trees are located in both public and private spaces.	Ensure conservation area controls over tree works are used to protect existing tall trees, and encourage succession planting.
Windows	There has been limited replacement of older windows in the conservation area, and few instances of such change significantly harming the character of the area. Nonetheless, the traditional, and in some cases intricate glazing patterns are a positive feature of the conservation area.	Promote guidance on traditional windows, outlining their positive contribution to the character of a conservation area. When planning permission is required, the loss of traditional windows should be resisted, and the use of suitable modern windows supported where appropriate. Historic England guidance is extensive, e.g.: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/traditional-windows-care-repair-upgrading/
Extensions and alterations	Many buildings in the conservation area have been substantially extended. Further proposals of this sort can be expected.	Alterations to buildings in the conservation area, whether those buildings are identified as making a positive contribution or not, should respond carefully both to the original character of the existing building and that of the conservation area as a whole. Alterations which eliminate or ameliorate recent poor design, or restore elements of original character to buildings should be encouraged.
Signage and lighting	Most existing signage in the conservation area is muted, and of traditional design. There are no commercial premises in the conservation area, and the pressure for new signage is likely to be minimal	Nonetheless, retention of existing traditional signs should be encouraged, and the introduction of any brash or assertively modern signage and lighting resisted.

6. Heritage assets and positive structures

6.1 Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.1.1 There are three listed buildings within the Stapleford conservation area boundary: St Andrew's Church, the adjacent White House, and Dove Cottage, 4 Gog Magog Way.
- 6.1.2 Each listed building or structure is identified on the Conservation Area map, and full details of their listing can be found on the Historic England website at www.historicengland.org.uk/listing.

6.2 Positive Buildings & Structures

- 6.2.1 In addition to the above, there are also about a dozen buildings or structures which are not nationally designated and are unlikely to meet the criteria for consideration as a non-designated heritage asset, but nonetheless do contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation areas.
- 6.2.2 These buildings or structures make a valuable contribution and should be viewed as key elements of

the overall character and significance of the relevant conservation area. Alterations to, or the loss of, these assets can have a lasting impact on the special character of the area in which they lie. These structures have been identified as positive buildings on the conservation area maps.

7. Proposed Boundary Changes

The proposed boundary changes are listed below and illustrated on the Conservation Area Boundary Changes Map on page 19.

Proposed deletions to the conservation area and reasons for deletion:

- Entirety of land belonging to 23 Church Street
Although this plot is adjacent to views from Church Street towards the historic centre, it does not contribute to these views, and the building does not share the characteristics of the conservation area.
- Entirety of land belonging to 42 Church Street, except for the boundary wall adjacent to the public footpath on the north side.
This house is not especially distinctive, and it does not share the characteristics of the conservation area. The only part of this curtilage which contributes to the

character of the conservation area is the boundary wall, which should remain within the conservation area.

- Entirety of land belonging to 5 Finch's Close

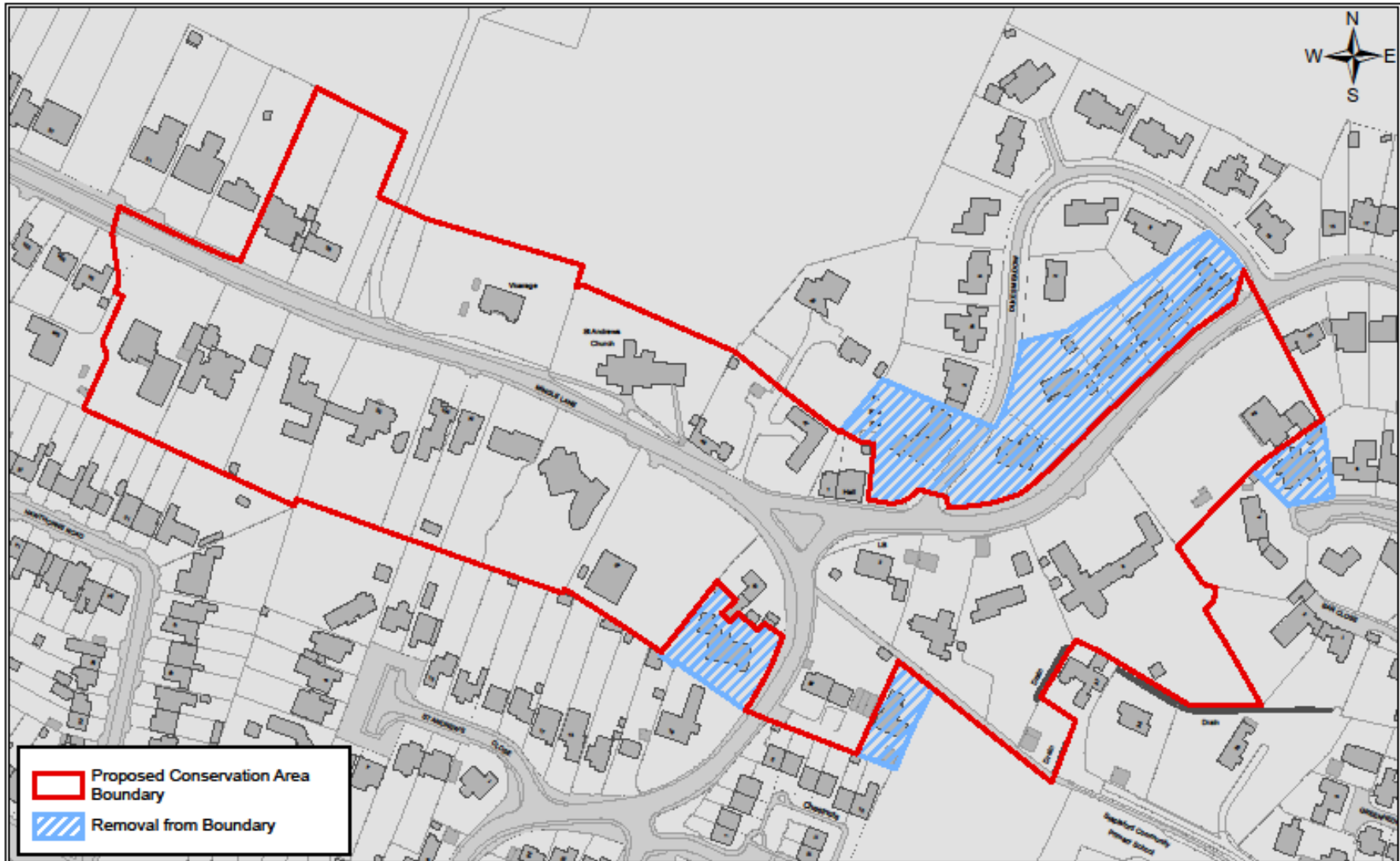
This plot has no connection with the conservation area at all, and its inclusion is due to a now superseded ownership boundary.

- Entirety of land belonging to 1 and 2a Dukes Meadow, and the highway between them
- Entirety of land belonging to 7,9,11 and 13 Gog Magog Way

The two areas above are occupied by relatively modern buildings which are neither distinctive, nor characteristic of the rest of the conservation area. The verge on Gog Magog way needs to be retained in the conservation area, but the proximity of the residential plots to views towards the historic core is not a justification for retaining them within the conservation area.

8. References

South Cambridgeshire District Council South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018
South Cambridgeshire District Council District Design Guide SPD 2010
South Cambridgeshire District Council Development Affecting Conservation Areas SPD 2009
University of Cambridge / Archaeological Test Pit Excavations in Stapleford, 2013-201 2019
Access Cambridge Archaeology /
Stapleford History Society



Stapleford Conservation Area Boundary

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Scale:	1:2,000 @ A4

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