

Littlemore Conservation Area Appraisal



1. Introduction

Despite the growth of Littlemore into a self contained south Oxford suburb, the historic core of the village has been retained with many surviving historic buildings and the original street plan. The traditional styles of buildings span the 15th to 19th centuries and is archetypal of an evolved village settlement. There are 13 statutorily listed buildings within the conservation area including farm houses, the church of St Mary & St Nicholas, Newman's College and Lawn Upton House. There are also many other buildings that are of local interest, all of which contribute to the strong village character.

Littlemore is also important for its historic connections with John Henry Newman. Newman was known for his passion for the small community, his teachings and his eventual conversion to Catholicism in 1845. The links with Newman have been maintained, the former college building being acquired by the Birmingham Oratory and used as a retreat by the Friends of Newman. The Catholic church also maintains the connection with Newman following his conversion by being named after Father Dominic Barberi, in recognition of his welcoming Newman into the Catholic faith.

Reason for appraisal

Local planning authorities are under a statutory duty to designate "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" as conservation areas (s.69 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). S.71 of the Act further requires local authorities to

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formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of all designated conservation areas. The Appraisal has therefore been produced in compliance with this requirement.

S.72 of the Act specifies that in determining any application for development within the conservation area, due regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area. The adopted Appraisal will therefore be a material consideration when determining any application for planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent within and adjacent to the conservation area.

The document should be read in conjunction with the Historic Environment policies as set out within the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001 – 2016.

The Appraisal seeks to define and record the special architectural and historic interest within the conservation area. It also seeks to identify any opportunity for enhancement. Additional information regarding conservation areas and their management can be found in English Heritage's publications 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' and 'Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas' (August 2005). Government guidance on conservation areas and listed buildings is set out within PPG15 – Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment.

The Appraisal cannot make mention of every building, feature or space within the conservation area. Any omission should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

Local community involvement

The first draft of the Appraisal was circulated for comment in April 2008. [A summary of the comments received, Oxford City Council's response and appropriate action to be taken, will be attached at Appendix 1]

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Executive summary

Summary of significance

1. Long views along Sandford Road and Oxford Road together with gradually unfolding views along the curving Cowley Road.
2. Organic building pattern representing various development periods.
3. Characteristic coral ragstone boundary walls and buildings.
4. Historic connections with John Henry Newman.
5. Mature trees contribute to the skyline and streetscape.
6. The village qualities survive despite suburban growth enveloping it as a part of Oxford.
7. Survival of spaces between buildings.

Vulnerabilities

8. The threat to the open spaces/gaps between buildings to infill development.
9. Loss of mature trees impacting on the green and leafy character of the village.
10. Introduction of new housing developments which do not respond to the traditional scale of the surrounding townscape.
11. Insensitive alterations to existing buildings, especially on street facing elevations.
12. Deterioration and loss of traditional streetscape features eg. lamp posts, boundary walls, historic materials etc.
13. Use of materials and textures that do not correspond or complement the established warm and muted tones of the historic core of the village.

Opportunities

14. Conserve and maintain the characteristic coral rag boundary walls.
15. Traffic management proposals for the central road junction to reduce the visual prominence of the highway.
16. Implementation of a tree planting and management strategy, introducing appropriate species to replace dead or mature trees.
17. Rationalisation of street furniture with the possible removal of unnecessary road markings further enhancing the rural character of the area.
18. Improvements to the public realm eg. resurfacing of roads and pavements, reinstatement of stone kerbs etc.

Location

Littlemore is located approximately 3 miles to the south of Oxford, south of the Eastern Bypass and to the west of Blackbird Leys. Access to the village is via the A4074 Sandford Link Road into Henley Road/Sandford Road and the Eastern Bypass (A42142) onto Oxford Road and Cowley Road, Littlemore.

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Boundaries and designation



Littlemore was brought under the administration of Oxford City Council following changes to the administrative boundaries on 1 April 1991. In recognition of the important historic character, Oxford City Council designated the village as a conservation area in December 1995.

The conservation area boundary has been tightly drawn to encompass the historic core of Littlemore, along the three main arterial roads of Sandford Road, Oxford Road and Cowley Road. The majority of development along these three roads has been included within the boundary with the exception of eastern side of Oxford Road. Whilst the Edwardian terraces were found to be of local interest and benefited from their own group value, they do not form part of the essential rural character of the village that the conservation area seeks to preserve and enhance.

Topography

Littlemore is situated upon the settled plateaux landscape, 15m above the Thames floodplain.

2. History



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Taunt c.1890



Taunt c.1890

There was no ancient parish of Littlemore: originally it was split between the nearby parish of Iffley and the parish of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford. The exact origin of the connection with St Mary's is unknown though it is thought to date from pre-Norman times. The 13th century rector of St Mary's held tithes in Littlemore and from 1326, Oriel had been granted the advowson of St Mary's together with the Littlemore lands.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, new farming families moved into the village including the Bleas/Blays who were tenants of Corpus Christi Farm and the Greenings who lived at the Manor House. Together with the Allins and Costards, these families became the leading farmers in the area until the 19th century. Littlemore remained a small farming hamlet until the mid-1800s, sparsely populated with farmers cottages surrounded by open fields.

At the time John Henry Newman was granted the living of St Mary the Virgin and Littlemore, the village had not changed. It was still a small rural settlement, with a cluster of rubble stone cottages surrounded by open countryside. Agriculture and malting were the main industries. There was no school or church although a Baptist chapel had opened in 1804 to the west of the main village. Upon attending one of Newman's catechetical lectures in the village, the poet Matthew Arnold commented that Littlemore was 'a dreary place'.

Newman arrived in Littlemore in 1828 holding cottage services in rented rooms together with his Sunday evening lectures. As these services gained popularity a need for a village church was confirmed. Oriel was not to be easily persuaded that a separate church was necessary, permission only being granted in 1835 with the condition it was to be a chapel of ease rather than a separate parish. The first service was held in 1836. The church designed by Henry Jones Underwood, was of a simple rectangular design without chancel or aisle. The building was extended courtesy of Charles Crawley in 1848 once Littlemore had finally become an independent parish, adding the chancel and tower but the intended spire was never added.

The first church school was constructed in 1838 on land adjacent to the church at the entrance to the churchyard and became affiliated to the National Society in 1851. As the village expanded so did the need for a new school: what was to become known as the Speedwell School on Sandford Road was opened in 1904 for infants. Lawn Upton House was converted into a school in 1949.

Reverend Newman planned to establish his own monastic house within the village and in 1840 acquired a 10-acre plot close to the church. Building was not necessary as he was offered the use of a late 18th century stable range to the north of the church that could be converted for the use Newman required. Part of the surplus 10-acre plot that Newman had acquired was then planted with trees along the Sandford Road frontage beginning the gradual greening of the village. Charles Crawley

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developed the remainder of the plot in 1846 constructing Lawn Upton House and Lodge.

The railway station was opened in 1864, closing a century later, with the small timber station building erected next to the hospital, and accessed via Railway Lane. The construction of the Oxford to Wycombe branch of the GWR line created further employment opportunities and housing demand in Littlemore.

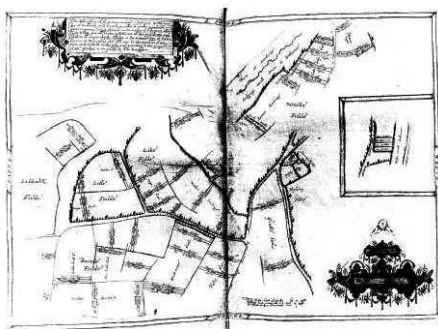
Although the village was expanding, by the end of the 19th century, Littlemore was still a comparatively small village surrounded by fields. Farming was gradually replaced by six market gardens. By the 1920s, much of the farmland had been built upon. Within the village rows of tightly packed Victorian and Edwardian terraces were emerging and beyond the village core, large housing developments were being built.

20th century infill development has taken place amongst the more historic buildings creating continuous edges of development along the three main roads. Additional pockets of modern housing developments have also taken place on David Nicholls Close, Pipleay Furlong and Chapel Lane and at the former Speedwell School Site on Sandford Road.

Surviving historical features

- Retained street layout dating from the 17th century.
- Characteristics ragstone walls
- Newman's planting in the grounds of Lawn Upton House
- The Church of St Mary & St Nicholas
- The College – late 18th century
- Cluster of rural 15th-19th century cottages forming the historic core of the village
- Historic public houses including the Golden Ball and The George, original coaching inns.
- Parkland setting of the larger houses eg. Lawn Upton House

Development of Littlemore



One of the earliest surviving maps of the area is Thomas Langdon's 1605 map of Corpus Christi College's holdings in Littlemore. The map clearly shows the layout of the roads as they appear today: *Oxforde Waye*, *the Road from Cowley to Littlemore* and *the Waye to Dorchester (Sandford Road)*. Corpus Farm is shown with very little other development in the neighbourhood.

The Davis map of 1797 shows that slightly more development has taken place in the form of small houses, a cluster of which can be clearly seen around the junction of the turnpike road to Sandford and Oxford Road. The settlement is still surrounded by open countryside.

The Ordnance Survey of 1810 shows that little additional development had taken place in the intervening years. Littlemore remained as a small hamlet surrounded by fields.

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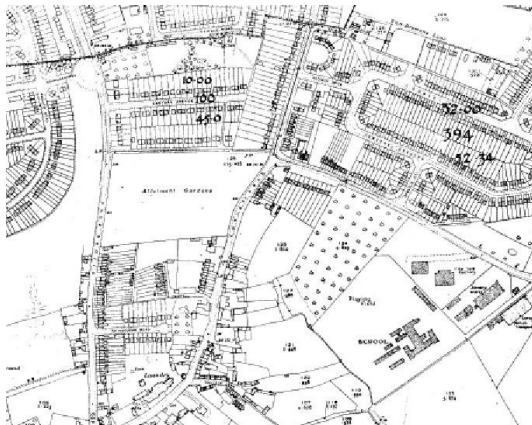


Enclosure took place in 1819, the award map clearly showing the roads as they appear today together with development along what is now Railway Lane and along both Littlemore and Cowley Roads. The turnpiked road to Oxford does not show any development.

The First Edition OS Map of 1878 shows the surrounding fields still reflecting the enclosure award, with development along the western side of Oxford Road, whilst the land between Oxford and Cowley Road was still open fields. There is little development around the Church of St Mary and St Nicholas and the trees planted by Newman are shown. The village is still surrounded by farmland.

Chapel Lane, Oxford Road and Cowley Road

have all experienced additional road frontage development but the surrounding area is still predominantly rural.



The 1937 OS Map shows a rapid expansion of suburban Littlemore with dense development along the eastern side of Oxford Road and within the triangular site between Oxford Road and Cowley Road. Swathes of the surrounding agricultural land have also been developed.

surrounding agricultural setting. The only remaining open space abutting the core of the village is the recreation ground and allotments to the west of Oxford Road and the open space at the end of Lanham Way on the eastern side of the village.

Modern maps illustrate how the historic village of Littlemore has been engulfed by 20th century development, altering the

The gradual evolution of the village meant that there is no standard plot size. The remaining 17th and 18th century properties benefit from sitting in the largest plots, some of which have extensive gardens to the rear. The 19th century properties on the western side of Oxford Road have rear views over the open recreation ground. There is more uniformity in plot size with the Victorian and Edwardian terraces but generally, the spacing of properties is random creating a more organic village layout.

3. Character appraisal

For the purposes of the Appraisal only, the conservation area has been divided into three character areas. The context of the conservation area as a whole must be taken into account when considering proposals for change, the character areas must not be regarded in isolation¹.

- Area 1: Sandford Road
- Area 2: Oxford Road
- Area 3: Cowley Road

¹ 'Guidance on Conservation Areas' English Heritage 2005, p.14

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Area 1: Sandford Road



The busy thoroughfare of Sandford Road provides access from the Sandford Link Road through the village up to the Eastern Bypass. At peak times the flow of traffic can be heavy, impacting upon the quiet and rural nature of the village. The gateway into the conservation area, via a traffic calming scheme over the railway bridge, is green: branches arch over the bollards and dense tree cover continues along the western side of Sandford Road, broken by its junction with Railway Lane. From the gateway into the conservation area, long views, framed by trees and boundary walls, along Sandford Road are possible, terminated by Blewitt Court to the north.

The eastern side of Sandford Road is more densely developed with setback houses and the former Speedwell School site, now a residential development. Tree coverage extends along the entirety of Sandford Road creating a green and leafy access into the conservation area strengthening the rural image of the village.

Late 20th/early 21st century development has taken place along the road in the form of David Nicholls Close and the Speedwell School site. David Nicholls Close provides driveway access to Lawn Upton School and has now been developed with detached houses. A semblance of open character has been retained despite the development due to the set back position of the houses and their open front gardens. The houses do not impact upon the appearance of the main road as they are mainly tucked away behind Lawn Upton Lodge and the curve of the road prevents clear views up the close from the main road.

The small Edwardian Wilberforce building fronting the road at the Speedwell School site has been retained strengthening the historic character of the streetscene and shielding the new development from the main road. The requirement to retain a number of the mature trees along the frontage of the site has also contributed to the retention of the historic and rural continuity of the road whilst minimising the impact of the new buildings on the appearance of the conservation area.

The two sides of Sandford Road have contrasting characters: the eastern side differs in terms of use with public houses, schools, church and residential properties facing onto the road, whilst the western side is entirely residential. Despite their differing

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uses, the two sides of the road are unified in terms of architectural character (ie. age and materials) and by greenery enabling a strong village character to prevail. Characteristic buildings along Sandford Road include Corpus Christi Farmhouse a 17th century rubble stone house; Old House, 7 Sandford Road early 18th century of limestone rubble construction; the George Inn, an 18th century former coaching inn of rubble stone construction and the Emanuel Christian School, 19th century small school house of stone construction.

Lanham Way, just to the north of the Speedwell School site, is a narrow rural trackway, the majority of which is outside the conservation area. The lane is an enclosed space formed by high boundary walls, buildings directly onto the lane and planting. The lane eventually leads to the school playing fields forming part of the more open setting to the conservation area.

Railway Lane and Chapel Lane are two short and narrow side roads to the west of Sandford Road. Railway Lane is a narrow gently curving village lane with an intimate character and rural charm. The space is defined by boundary walls and buildings fronting directly onto the pavement. The spacious plot size along the lane emphasises the setting of the buildings with the Village Hall, Beenhams Cottage, Beenhams, Beenhams Barn and the former post office sitting in substantial plots. The Village Hall sits a distance from the pavement whilst its neighbours, the Old Post Office and Campion Cottage are much closer to the roadside. Beenhams is a large white painted rendered house, sitting directly onto the road adding to the sense of enclosure and forming the end view when looking towards Railway Lane from Chapel Lane. Beenhams Barn is a historic reminder of the agricultural use that once dominated the village. The stone barn dates from c.1700 and is characterised by a steep pitched red tiled roof and is slightly set back from the roadside.

The remainder of Railway Lane suffers from a neglected character: the small industrial area towards the southern end of the road and the garages to the rear of the terraces of Chapel Lane are both areas that could benefit from some works of improvement.

Chapel Lane is more suburban in character than Railway Lane. The terraced houses along the southern side of the road date from the mid-19th century contributing to an intimate and enclosed space. The Baptist Chapel was the first permanent place of worship constructed in the village, established in 1804 and is tucked away to the rear of the site between two 19th century red brick and stone cottages, the view to the chapel being over a central garden. Glimpses of the chapel are also possible from the overgrown lane to the west of the building and from the corner of Thomson Terrace beyond no. 11 Chapel Lane. The chapel is an important feature of the religious development and history within the village but following a recent planning application, will be demolished.

'Spring Cottages', nos. 1-9 Chapel Lane benefit from a retained group value despite the alterations that have taken place eg replacement windows, roof lights, rendering of the facades and painted detailing. They are all set back from the road behind small gardens and various boundary treatments but provide a cohesive character to the southern side of the lane. The small scale cottages at nos. 12-17 Chapel Lane were constructed c.2000, their set back position, retained boundary wall and planting reducing their impact upon the streetscene.

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Area 2: Oxford Road



Oxford Road is an area of mixed character with only the western side of the road included within the conservation area boundary.

Due to the raised footpath and tightly packed terraced housing along the eastern side of the road, there is quite a strong feeling of enclosure along Oxford Road. The western side of the road encapsulates the more rural elements of the village, extending from the large red brick Victorian villa at no. 1 Oxford Road to no. 47 Oxford Road, a stone built mid-19th century detached cottage positioned at the junction of Oxford Road and the Eastern Bypass.

The road is straight, affording long views in either direction and is accessed via a roundabout junction at either end. Oxford Road is a heavily used thoroughfare and during peak times traffic is often backed up along the road waiting to access the bypass.

Despite the proximity to the Eastern Bypass and the more densely developed areas of Littlemore, the western side of Oxford Road has retained its village character. The more historic properties date from the 18th and 19th centuries and have been interspersed with 20th century infill. Oxford Road itself is not a tree lined road but many of the properties sit in well planted grounds, contributing to the leafy and rural image of the village as a whole.

The boundary treatments are varied, ranging from stone and brick walls topped with railings and hedging. Whilst the boundaries may be different, they combine to create a continuous built line, adding a sense of definition to the road, clearly demarcating public from private realm.

The buildings are generally set back from the pavement, many of which sit in slightly elevated positions behind varying sizes of front gardens. The increased height of the building level adds to the sense of enclosure.

There are two sites of commercial activity: the village shop and the small industrial courtyard towards the southern end of the road. No. 33 Oxford Road, the shop is a

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three-storey building, rendered with steep pitched roof and gable end facing the road. The increased height and prominence of the property, together with the pitch of the roof and the large advertising hoarding on the north elevation are a focal point of the road. The shop opens directly onto the pavement whilst the two-storey cross wing is set behind a small garden in an elevated position.

R Ovenden & Son, Wrought Iron Works is situated within the small industrial courtyard between nos. 25 and 29 Oxford Road, set back from the road. The main workshop building dating from early 19th century is of brick and timber construction with a corrugated metal roof and external staircase to the first storey, forming part of the original development of this site. Clustered around the workshop are associated workshops and storage buildings of 20th century construction. Although originally a farming community, there were associated industries including iron foundries and malting. The low key industrial use of the site complements the predominant residential character of the road, with the more open setting of the ironworks creating a break in the continuity of the built frontages along the road.

The two main pockets of 20th century development along Oxford Road make contrasting statements. Nos. 39-39a Oxford Road are c.1960s brick built bungalows. Although these properties do not continue the rural vernacular, their low level and set back positions reduces their impact on the streetscene. Each property sits behind a small front garden with the low boundary walls continuing the strong building line of the road.

Nos. 35a and 35b Oxford Road have been constructed in the front garden of no. 35, which sits along the rear boundary of the plot and along the boundary of the conservation area. The two new houses are a pair of semi-detached 1½-storey cottages with the new building line creating a more continuous frontage along the road. Although they are semi-detached dwellings, they are not identical with one slightly larger than the other adding to the architectural individuality of the street. The elevated position, the small front gardens and the materials used in their construction are in keeping with the character of the road.

Oxford Road as a whole is quite densely developed but due to the predominantly detached nature of the houses there are important open spaces between the buildings, creating a more spacious feel to this side of the road. Some of the gaps provide glimpses through to properties at the rear of the plot eg. the gap between nos. 35 and 37 Oxford Road whilst others have been partially filled with single storey garages but their recessed positioning and low height permit glimpses allow more light through to the road.

Area 3: Cowley Road



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Cowley Road is a gently curving road, creating unfolding views with an alternating character of enclosed and open spaces and benefiting from a strong rural and intimate character. The gateway into Cowley Road is quite open but the area to the north of the church and around the College is very enclosed opening out into a more spacious character by nos. 33-53 Cowley Road, closing in again towards the underpass. The sense of enclosure has been created by way of mature trees, building line directly onto the pavement and high boundary walls. The more open character is courtesy of the set back and elevated positioning of the red brick terraces and wider stretch of road and pavement forming the gateway into Cowley Road.

The contrasting and imposing Blewitt Court and the more tranquil green setting of the Church of St Mary & St Nicholas mark the gateway into Cowley Road from the three-way junction of Sandford Road, Oxford Road and Cowley Road.

Blewitt Court sits in a very prominent position on the triangular site between Oxford Road and Cowley Road. The building was constructed as the Marlborough Head public house and despite its conversion into residential use, Blewitt Court has retained many of its original architectural features including doorways and windows. Whilst the small planted garden to the front of the southern elevation does make some contribution it does not soften the stark appearance of the stone building. The open hard standing for parking also does not make a positive contribution to the setting of the building and could benefit from planting to soften its appearance. Due to its positioning, Blewitt Court forms a terminating view when looking north along Sandford Road and for this reason, it forms a local landmark.

In contrast to the austere appearance of Blewitt Court, the church benefits from a soft green setting created by the well treed graveyard. The stone boundary wall clearly defines the plot whilst enclosing the churchyard with the lych gate adding to the intimate feeling of the space. The gate opening creates framed views of the church. Originally sited in a much more open position along with the vicarage and the small school, the setting to the church has changed with much of the surrounding land

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developed. As a result of the containment of the site, the more recent developments have not unduly impacted upon the character of the church and its immediate setting.

Although Littlemore village is synonymously linked with the Reverend JH Newman, it is Cowley Road that has the strongest links with him. St Mary & St Nicholas's Church was built as a result of Newman's persistent approaches to Oriel College for the village to have its own church. The Catholic Church of the Blessed Dominic Barberi was built and named in remembrance of the Priest who accepted Newman into the Catholic faith. The College, now in the ownership of the Fathers of the Birmingham Oratory, is important in terms of historic use as Newman's monastic house and also for being the place where Newman had his important meeting with Father Barberi. No. 31 Cowley Road, St George's, was the temporary residence of Newman whilst overseeing the conversion of the College. This small cluster of buildings makes an important contribution to the historic importance of the village as well as adding to the architectural diversity of Littlemore.

Whilst much of Cowley Road continues the rural vernacular that dominates in the village, the Church of the Blessed Dominic Barberi creates a contrasting and unique image. Designed and built in the 1960s, the church is of brick construction incorporating blank elevations and a roof of glass pyramids. Architecturally the church is very different to the character of the road but due to its unique design and its open and partially green setting, the church makes a bold statement adding to the architectural diversity of the conservation area.

One of the most important buildings in terms of historic connections is the College. The single storey range of former agricultural buildings converted for Newman's use, stand in a prominent corner position, creating a focal point along Cowley Road. The simple conversion aptly reflects the simple and monastic requirements of its occupants. The 'L' shaped building fronts directly onto the pavements of both Cowley Road and College Lane, with gardens to the rear. Access is via a timber and roofed walkway, providing glimpses through into the gardens and the stone bust of Newman. The building line onto the pavement adds to the enclosed nature of this stretch of Cowley Road.

College Lane is a short road terminating with a dead-end and characterised by a wide variety of architectural styles spanning from the 17th century to the 20th. The entrance to the lane is quite wide, made more so by the open setting of the Golden Ball public house opposite the College. The stone built pub is an early 17th century coaching inn and was the first building in the village to be installed with electricity in the 1920s. Beyond the public house and the wide entrance to the lane the space becomes more enclosed and suburban in character due to the positioning and style of the buildings.

The grade II Charity Farm Cottage has a sense of isolation despite being surrounded by terraced development. Once a farm house, the 17th century farm has long since disappeared and the land developed with the cottage now surrounded by 19th and 20th century developments. The white painted cottage fronts directly onto the road whilst to the west and rear of the property are two rows of terraced houses, glimpses of the rear cottages can be seen between Charity Farm Cottage and no. 14 College Lane. The majority of the houses along this road front directly onto the road and the glimpsed views of the trees and the gardens add important elements of greenery into the streetscene, softening the built elements of the road.

The stone wall around no. 31 Cowley Road (St George's) creates a strong sense of enclosure as well as being an important feature of the village. The overhanging trees and verge bordering the pavement adding to the green character of Littlemore. The house itself is one of the oldest in the village dating from the early 17th century and both house and stretch of wall along Longwall are grade II listed. The stone built

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house sits in a very open and prominent position along Cowley Road, the wall directly in front of the house being considerably lower than the rest of the enclosing wall allowing the house to make a substantial contribution to the architectural quality and diversity of the road.

Pipley Furlong, named after one of the enclosure fields of the 19th century, is predominantly a 20th century development of red brick houses. The design has attempted to emulate architectural features of the late 19th/early 20th century terraces found within the village eg. stone window details in brick facades, large 'sash' style windows and small dormers that are similar to those found in the more rural style properties in the village. The open nature of the front gardens positively contributes to the space but the houses lack the depth of character that their older counterparts exhibit and as a result, makes more of a neutral contribution to the character of the area.

Opposite the modern houses is the former Saunders Dairy building, originally part of St Giles's Farm, and form a pair of late 18th/early 19th century cottages that now front directly onto the roadside. Although alterations have been undertaken these cottages are still representative of a vernacular building type that represented the function of the area ie. a rural farming community. The developments of Giles Close (outside the conservation area boundary) can be glimpsed to the rear.

The early 17th century nos. 26 and 28 Cowley Road known as Dormer Croft, are grade II listed and add to the more historic character of the village. Originally two houses but converted into one in the 1960s. No. 28 is a single storey red brick cottage with small dormers to the attic and is set back from the road behind a small area of cobbles and a couple of mature trees. The cross wing to the house, no. 26 is of stone construction incorporating a steep pitched roof, stone and brick chimney stack, sash windows and an inscribed quoin on the gable wall 'N/B/S/1657'. The painted stone and red brick cottage attached to the gable and fronting onto the pavement is not listed.

Across from Dormer Croft are the distinctly suburban form of Victorian red brick terraces, nos. 33 – 53 Cowley Road, formerly known as 'Cheshunt Terrace'. The houses sit behind gardens, boundary walls and hedges and benefit from an elevated building position adding to the spacious character of this section of Cowley Road. Despite their suburban design not being wholly in keeping with the softer village character of Littlemore, their regimented form of the terraced row has been tempered by their set back position and green setting, making a positive contribution to the streetscape. Some of the houses have replaced the windows and doors, the row benefits from a strong group value as a result of their retained architectural features eg bay windows, the continuous row of brick chimneys and the uninterrupted slate roofs. As demand for housing increased within the village due to the construction of the hospital and railway, dwellings similar to nos. 33-53 Cowley Road were being constructed to house the influx of workers.

Towards the boundary of the conservation area along Cowley Road, the character becomes more enclosed again heading towards the underpass. No. 57 Cowley Road is the last building along the road that is within the boundary. The small scale cottage is grade II listed dating from c.1800 and is of single storey limestone rubble construction, set in well planted gardens.

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Summary of townscape features

- Strong historic village character despite the proximity to dense 20th century suburban development.
- Larger 17th and 18th century farm houses set in spacious grounds along Sandford Road, interspersed with smaller stone built cottages.
- Detached brick Victorian farm houses along Oxford Road.
- Mature trees marking the southern access into the conservation area.
- Characteristic coral rag stone boundary walls throughout the historic core.
- The Church of St Mary & St Nicholas set within a walled enclosure with dense tree cover in the graveyard. This area forms a focal point in the centre of the village.
- The Catholic Church is set in an open position close to the pavement – its unique design being a striking focal point along Cowley Road.

Architectural styles and detailing

The earliest buildings within the village were constructed from local rubble stone, were of two storey construction with tiled roofs and generally set in more substantial plots than later buildings. The windows were set flush into the facades and were painted timber, both casements and sashes were found in the area.

The characteristic rural buildings forming the historic core of the village include a variety of styles but all benefit from continuity of material and scale. Beenhams Barn (Railway Lane), Corpus Christi Farmhouse (Sandford Road), St George's (Cowley Road) and the Golden Ball Public House (Cowley Road) are some examples of 17th century stone built rural architecture within the village. All were constructed from the local coral ragstone, their warm tone and rough texture creating a distinctive feature of the village, the ragstone boundary walls continued the rural theme.

18th century buildings were also constructed from stone including the George Public House (Sandford Road), the College (College Lane/Cowley Road), Old House (7 Sandford Road) and the former Saunders Dairy Building (Pipley Furlong). There was still great variation in design but most buildings were predominantly of 2-storey construction, with timber sash windows and slate or tiled roofs.

Lawn Upton House was the largest house in the village, reflecting the growing prosperity of the incoming residents. Designed and built for Charles Crawley 1846, on the 10-acre plot acquired by Newman for his monastic house. The large stone built house and lodge, of gothic design incorporating tiled roof, gabled dormers, casement windows with mullions and an octagonal staircase turret is not in keeping with the established rural vernacular of the village. The grounds were landscaped, the driveway was long and the small lodge was indicative of the comparative opulence of this house, compared to the small rural form of the majority of the houses in the village.

As the village expanded in the late 19th century, stone construction gradually gave way to red brick houses. Oxford Road saw a number of mid-19th century double fronted detached farm houses being constructed with stone detailings eg. nos. 29 and 31 Oxford Road, whilst the Victorian and Edwardian eras saw smaller terraced houses being built along Chapel Lane and nos. 33-53 Cowley Road, reflecting the industrial change in the village: moving away from agriculture with the nearby Cowley Motor Works, the railways, the hospitals etc creating the employment, bringing in additional workers to the village who required smaller housing.

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20th/21st century developments are generally of red brick construction, the smoother surfaced modern brick lacking the texture and character of the older material. The houses are often of larger scale than the more traditional rural houses, incorporating additional living accommodation in the roof space eg. the red brick terraces on Pipleay Furlong. The design of these houses has attempted to emulate their older Victorian terraces incorporating some of their key design details eg. sash windows, stone window detailing etc. The use of uPVC window frames for 'sash' style windows and the double-glazed panes result in thicker glazing bars and frames and blank windows –Victorian glass tended to be uneven that added to the character of the facades.

Summary of key architectural features

- Predominantly 2-storey rural style houses
- Predominant use of local ragstone in the more historic properties, gradually moving towards red brick houses in the mid-to-late 19th century.
- Some facades have been rendered and/or painted but this was not a traditional feature of the village architecture.
- Slate and tiled roofs, with varying pitches
- Timber framed sash windows, mainly 6-over-6 or 4-over-4 panes and timber casement windows incorporating small panes eg St George's and Charity Farm Cottage.
- Stone detailing to door and window surrounds in red brick buildings.
- Low boundary walls with small front gardens to Oxford Road; high ragstone walls Cowley Road. Boundary walls create a distinctive building line.
- Small gables to upper storey accommodation.

4. Views and open spaces

Public open space within the conservation area is limited to the church yard, the green space to the front of the catholic church and a small seating area at the Railway Lane/Sandford Road junction. Additional space is provided by way of outdoor tables at the numerous public houses throughout the village.

Due to the linear nature of the conservation area, views into and out of Littlemore are limited to each of the three gateways ie. looking north up Sandford Road and south down Oxford and Cowley Roads. Internal views can be found along the main roads: Sandford Road is straight and therefore long views up to Blewitt Court are possible. Oxford Road is also straight allowing long streetscape views. Cowley Road is quite a curved road, with short gradually unfolding views.

5. Negative and neutral features/areas of future enhancement

Inappropriate alterations to buildings: the older buildings are suffering from an incremental loss of architectural detailing eg. the installation of replacement doors and windows with materials and styles that are not in keeping with the age and character of either the buildings or village as a whole.

Original detailing has also been lost through the application of rendering, altering both the appearance and character of the individual buildings and impacting upon the streetscape, especially where the buildings form part of a group.

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Traditional boundary walls have generally been retained but some have been lost to provide vehicular accesses impacting upon the continuity of form. In places, there is a lack of continuity in building materials used for the boundary treatments eg. stretches of stone wall next to brick sections, some topped with railings, others with hedging. Whilst both stone and brick are historically correct materials and are both in context with the character of the village, the lack of continuity impacts upon the overall streetscene. The boundary treatments are an important feature as they create a uniform building line, providing a clear demarcation between public and private realm and in some roads, adds to the sense of enclosure.

Poor condition of historic buildings: a few of the more historic properties appear in a rundown condition and could benefit from some attention to safeguard their future and to strengthen their contribution to the historic character of the village eg. St George's and Charity Farm Cottage.

Intrusive traffic: the three main roads are major thoroughfares and are subject to heavy traffic, especially at peak times of the day, detracting from the environmental quality and attractiveness of the area. There is no easy solution to the situation and the road calming measures that have been introduced are visually intrusive and are not in keeping with the rural character of the village.

Negative/neutral sites: these are sites that do not make a positive contribution to the special character of the conservation area and could benefit from appropriate works of enhancement/improvement

- eg. the works site on Railway Lane,
the garages to the rear of the Chapel Lane houses,
the grounds of the village hall: the non-integration of the tarmac driveway, worn and patchy grass area etc,
the junction of Sandford Road, Cowley Road and Oxford Road is a bland open space, dominated by the slightly raised traffic island, road signs and pedestrian islands,
Blewitt Court could benefit from additional planting to help soften its hard built form and disguise the parking area,

Public realm: despite the lack of public open space within the conservation area, the public realm is of a high standard, due in part to the strong rural character and the retained historic features. The two main features which could benefit from improvement are the lighting columns, a consistent approach to street lighting would enhance the area and road surfaces, the patched surfaces detracting from the overall appearance of the area. Traffic calming measures should be sensitively fitted into the streetscene as though they were part of the original design of the area.² Each feature should ideally relate to the established townscape in terms of design and materials, adding to the local character rather than adversely impacting upon it.

6. Conclusion

Littlemore conservation area comprises a small historic village known mainly for a former resident, John Henry Newman. As Littlemore grew into a large suburb of Oxford providing dense housing developments, the historic core of the original village retained its character. Originally a farming hamlet, the village benefited from slow development with the rural vernacular still dominating the character of the village. Victorian and Edwardian terraces were built to accommodate the growing population adding variety to architectural style but despite this expansion, the tranquil village image prevailed.

² Streets for All – English Heritage

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The village has continued to evolve, reflecting its change in function from small farming community, mid-19th century development into a self contained village with church, school, shops, pubs and small localised industries to a 20th century suburb of Oxford. The historic core of the village is still clearly discernible with ragstone cottages and farm houses scattered throughout the village, interspersed with Victorian brick detached and terraced houses. As the village continues to expand, the more recent housing developments eg. the Speedwell School development, have not eroded the significance and historic qualities of the settlement.

Littlemore has come a long way since being described as being 'dreary' by Matthew Arnold in the early 19th century. John Henry Newman started the greening of the village by planting two acres of land at what is now Lawn Upton School and since then, the village has continued to develop a green and leafy character.

The historic links with Newman have been retained, the rural image of the traditional village have been retained and strengthened. The small scale rural vernacular architecture and the mature trees that cover much of the village both combine to create a picturesque village and through further appropriate management of change, this special character will be strengthened for future generations to enjoy.

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Appendix 1: Listed Buildings in Littlemore

Littlemore Listed Buildings

The College, College Lane – Grade II

Home of religious community, now cottages and museum. Late 18th century/early 19th century. Converted 1842 from farm buildings for use by John Henry Newman. Limestone rubble with ashlar dressings. Welsh slate roof with brick ridge stacks. L-shaped plan on 2 sides of a walled garden. One storey entrance range has wide through passage under a weatherboarded gable.

Charity Farm Cottage, College Lane – Grade II

Farmhouse, now house. early-to-mid 17th century. Coursed squared limestone rubble with dressed quoins and timber lintels. Plain tile roof with brick ridge stack. 2 storeys.

Church of St Mary & St Nicholas, Cowley Road – Grade II*

Church 1836. Tower and chancel 1848. By HJ Underwood for Reverend John Henry Newman, extended by Joseph Clarke. Coursed limestone rubble with ashlar dressings, steep pitched tiled roof. 4 bay aisleless nave and chancel with tower and vestry to north. Early English style.

Dormer Croft, Nos. 26 and 28 Cowley Road – Grade II

House. Early 17th century, possibly earlier. Coursed squared limestone rubble and brickwork of irregular bond. Old plain tile roof and brick stacks. 2-unit through passage plan with crosswing. Main range of one storey plus attics with brick cased 2-window front. 20th century door between 2-light casement with 2-light dormers. Steep roof with stacks to left of gable and to right of passage. Left gable wall has N/B/S/1657 on quoin. 2 storey stone cross wing to right has been altered.

St George's, 31 Cowley Road – Grade II

House. Early 17th century. coursed squared limestone rubble with timber lintels, stone slats and old plain tile roof with brick and stone stacks on rendered stone bases. T-plan. 2 storey plus attics. Massive clustered central stack with the gnomon of a sundial.

Longwall (wall of no. 31 Cowley Road and nos. 21-23 Swinbourne Road) – Grade II

Garden wall. 17th century/early 18th century. Coursed limestone rubble. 2.5-3m high with a tapering coursed-rubble coping. The wall forms the north boundary of gardens to no. 31 Cowley Road (St George's) and no. 23 Swinbourne Road and the north and west boundary to the garden of no. 21 Swinbourne Road.

No. 57 Cowley Road – Grade II

Cottage. C.1800. Coursed squared limestone rubble with ashlar dressings, Welsh slate roof with central brick stack. Square double-depth plan. Single storey.

Barn attached to Beenhams, Railway Lane – Grade II

Barn, c.1700. Limestone rubble with ashlar quoins, old plain tile roof. 4-bay. Porch with weatherboarded gable to right of centre, full height door at rear facing street. One slit window to each bay and gable. Several later openings.

Old House, No. 7 Sandford Road – Grade II

House, early 18th century, possibly earlier. Limestone rubble with squared quoins and timber lintels with some render. Old plain tile roof with ridge stack on stone base. 2

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storeys plus attic. Eaves have been raised giving shallower pitched roof and the upper part of the wall is rendered. Dormers and casements at rear.

Corpus Christi Farm House, Sandford Road – Grade II

Farm house now house. 17th century. Limestone rubble and squared rubble banded with lias rubble, plain tile roof and brick stacks on stone bases. 2 storeys.

Lawn Upton House, Sandford Road – Grade II

House in gothic style c.1846 built for Charles Crawley (Crawley Coat of Arms over oriel window). 2 storeys in 'H' plan, the wings on the north side added by W Herschel in the late 19th century. Coursed, squared limestone rubble with freestone dressings. Tiled roof with coped gables and multiform ashlar ridge stacks. Coped gabled dormers. Casement windows with mullions and glazing bars. 1st floor oriel window to south wing. Octagonal staircase turret in corner between main range and south wing. The site has associations with John Henry Newman who proposed to found a monastic house here before his conversion to Rome in 1845.

Lodge of Lawn Upton House, Sandford Road – Grade II

c.1846 in gothic style, built for Charles Crawley. 1.5 storeys, Irregular plan. Coursed, squared, limestone rubble with freestone dressings. Tiled roof with gables and tall rubble stacks. Mullioned casement windows with glazing bars. Wooden oriel window. Doorways with Caernarvon arches and boarded doors.

Manor House and Campion Cottage, Sandford Road – Grade II

Manor house now two houses. Possibly 15th century. remodelled late 17th century/early 18th century. Limestone rubble with some ashlar quoins, plain tile roofs with brick stacks. 2-unit through passage plan with crosswing. 2 storeys. Main range – Manor House, crosswing – Campion Cottage