

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT EAST GRAFTON, WILTSHIRE

Heritage Statement

Bob Edwards

BSc. (Hons.) PG Dip. IHBC MCIfA

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The owners of two adjoining plots of land to the north of the A338 approaching the village of East Grafton from the west are seeking planning permission to build five houses: one on the western plot and four within the eastern plot. Plans for the proposed dwellings are being prepared by Fowler Architecture & Planning which will be submitted as two separate applications following a pre-application submission covering both parts of the site for a larger scheme for nine houses (ENQ/2024/01201). The sites lie outside, but adjacent to the East Grafton Conservation Area, and lies within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

1.2 Forum Heritage Services has been commissioned to make an assessment of the extent and importance of the setting of the conservation area and any other nearby heritage assets and its contribution to their significance, and to consider the potential impact of the proposals upon the significance of the conservation area and to prepare a Heritage Statement in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Bob Edwards BSc (Hons) PG Dip IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services visited the site in May 2025 and subsequently prepared this report which considers both sites, and which will be submitted with the two applications.

1.3 This report will present:

- A brief background to the proposed development site using historic mapping
- A description of the setting of the relevant part of the conservation area and any nearby heritage assets presented as a series of captioned photographs
- Policy and guidance background
- An assessment of the importance of the setting of the heritage assets and the potential impact of the proposed development on their significance following Historic England guidance on assessing the importance of setting in *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition, December 2017)
- Conclusions

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Maps from the late 19th century show that the area of the proposed development was agricultural land divided between two fields with a roughly north – south boundary (Figure 1). A pair of cottages, now Park Cottage, were present at this date to the west of the site

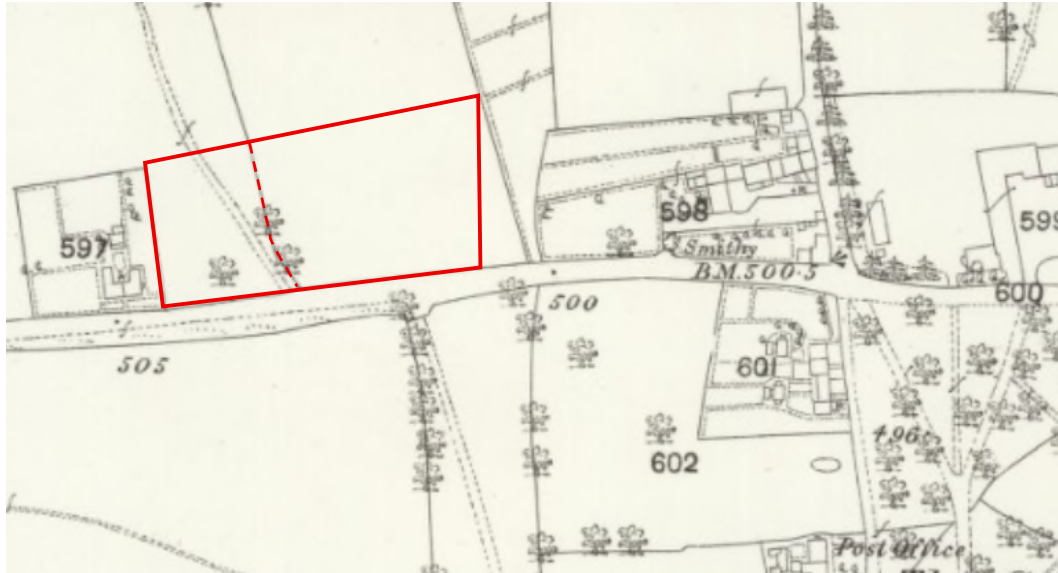


Figure 1 The approximate area of the proposed development sites as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1880.

- 2.2 There are no listed buildings on or adjacent to the proposed development sites. The closest listed building is The Olde Shoppe to the east, which was listed at Grade II in 1986, and which is described as:

Cottage. C18 - C19. Brick with timber framed extension left, and thatched roof. Two-storey, 2 bays. Central boarded door and timber casement windows, leaded to first floor. Three course brick string course. Left extension of single storey mixed framing and windows. Rear 1 bay wing with further lean-to along Dark Lane.

3.0 DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The setting of the East Grafton Conservation Area within the area of the proposed development will be described using a series of captioned photographs, the location of which are marked on Figure 2.

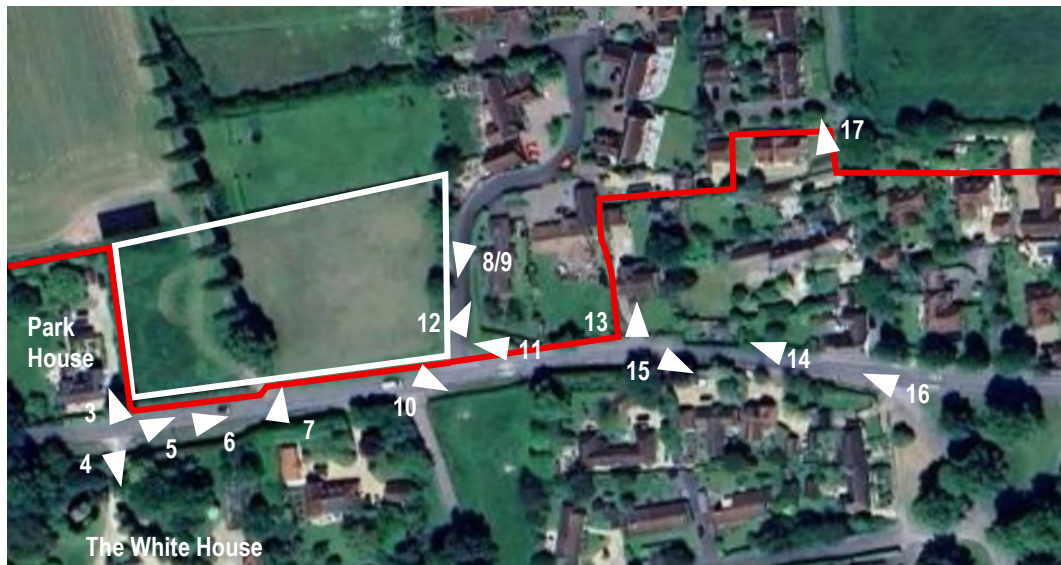


Figure 2 The area of the proposed development (white), the northern boundary of the conservation area (red) and location of the photographs illustrating this description.

- 3.2 Approaching East Grafton from the west along the A338, Burbage Road, the edge of the conservation area is marked by the plots of Park House to the north of the road The White House to the south. The conservation area appraisal describes this element of the conservation area as:

'West along the Burbage Road are the grounds of two properties that each side of the road define the western limit of the Conservation Area.

Outlying to the west of the village north of the A338 Park Cottage is solidly traditional in style and built in the mid 19th century as a pair of cottages but now combined into one house. The brick was unfortunately painted at some time but the slate roof is original. Historically its name may relate to the ancient park of 1347 that lay to the north. Mature trees and a high hedge enhance the roadside and its garden boundaries.

South of the road is the White House built in 1924 as a residence concurrently with Forest View, a bungalow for an estate gamekeeper. The house is skewed from the roadside and

orientated to face south-west amid spacious lawned grounds including a small area of woodland, the edge of which defines the limit of the Conservation Area. The house is of unusually complex form and layout with interesting varied roofs of water reed thatch and slate and a variety of fenestration which together with the woodland is significant to the character of the approach to the village.'



Figure 3 Park House, a former pair of 19th century semi-detached cottages now with rendered walls and slate roof stand at the entrance to the conservation area, being partly screened by a hedge to the front of the property.



Figure 4 To the south side of the road, the first property within the conservation area is The White House, a rendered and thatched house built between just before 1929. Despite the conservation area appraisal claiming that, due to the thatch and slate roofs and varied fenestration, the house '*is significant to the character of the approach to the village*', being set back from the road frontage and almost completely hidden from view by substantial hedges allowing only a glimpsed view through the entrance to the property, the house cannot be described as being significant to the character of the approach. It is a house that would easily be missed when travelling along the road unless on foot. The use of water reed, although difficult to discern from the road, is not characteristic of traditional thatching within this area.



Figure 5 East of Park House the conservation area boundary returns to run alongside the northern edge of the road east of the house plot, the edge of the conservation area being partly marked by a substantial hedgerow. The modern houses on Grafton Place are visible above the hedge, and the gable of a late 20th century house facing onto the main road is visible in the mid-distance.



Figure 6 The view along the A338 to the east. No historic buildings are visible from this point within the conservation area as the core of the settlement is approached.



Figure 7 The eastern part of the roadside boundary to the proposed development plot is a wire fence allowing open views towards the modern development on Grafton Place. The boundary between the two parts of the proposed development plot is marked by a line of poplar trees. The conservation area appraisal makes reference to this view:

'Grafton Place. Exposed large scale houses of a development in an open green field site on the edge of the village. The excessively wide visibility splays detract from the vulnerable rural character of the Conservation Area. Some tree planting on the western edge of the housing and hedging along the roadside would soften the impact of this standard type of development.'



Figure 8 East of The White House is Forest View, also built in the mid-20th century and similarly largely obscured from view from the road by the tall roadside hedge, the chimney just being visible over the top of the hedge in this view from the southern part of Grafton Place (marked by red arrow). Some further modern buildings can be seen down a track east of Forest View leading towards Manor Farm (see also Figure 9).



Figure 9 Modern houses including Manor Farm Cottages alongside the track to Manor Farm within the conservation area as viewed from the south end of Grafton Place.



Figure 10 Looking south-east from the main road at the junction of the track to Manor Farm modern houses in Green Close can be glimpsed through the trees bounding a paddock that extends up to the main road, with the track to Manor Farm on its western side.



Figure 11 The view from the main road to the north-west across the proposed development site from near the junction with Grafton Place. Park House can be seen near the road frontage, and the row of poplars stands along the boundary between the two parts of the proposed development plot are a strong feature of the view.



Figure 12 The view up Grafton Place to the modern development set behind the houses that mark the edge of the main area of the village, the first three of which are modern (see Figure 13).



Figure 13 Meadowbank, one of the three modern houses on the north side of the main road.



Figure 14 A view west along the main road with the boundary treatments of the three modern houses consisting of a mix of close-boarded fencing and non-native hedgerow.



Figure 15 The modern houses on the south side of the main road including The Garth which stand opposite Meadowbank. The character of this entry point to the village derived from the houses and boundary treatments is modern suburban.



Figure 16 A view along the main to the west from opposite the closet listed building, The Olde Shoppe, a thatched and painted brick house of 18th or early 19th century date.



Figure 17 Dark Lane runs to the north from the main road to the east of The Olde Shoppe. Beyond the listed row of Nos. 272-274A set gable end to the lane and behind The Olde Shoppe the modern houses of Barley Fields facing the lane back on to the development at Grafton Place.

4.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE BACKGROUND

4.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach to the management of historic buildings and areas and requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses, and its setting, under Section 66 – a matter the Courts have held should be afforded considerable importance and weight. Section 72, relating to conservation areas requires that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’. Notably, whilst the settings of listed buildings are specifically referred to in Section 66, there is no reference to the settings of conservation areas.

4.2 The statutory approach is reflected in Policy CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted January 2015 (CS) and Policy 99 of the Draft Local Plan Review: Ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment which has ‘weight’ following submission to the Secretary of State in late October 2024.

4.3 Paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) states that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

4.4 Paragraph 212 advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation whilst para. 208 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

4.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (Annexe 2 Glossary) defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

4.6 The Historic England Guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition, December 2017) states that:

'Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate that significance' (p.4)

4.7 The HE guidance sets out a staged approach to the assessment of understanding the significance of setting:

- 1 Identification of heritage assets and the extent of their settings
- 2 Assess whether, how and what degree the settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage assets
- 3 Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful on the significance
- 4 Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm
- 5 Record the process

4.8 The guidance also states that views which particularly contribute to the significance of heritage assets include those where the relationship between the asset and other historic assets or places or designed views.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SETTING TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

- 5.1 This assessment will follow the approach as set out in the Historic England guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* to identify the importance of the setting of the listed buildings and to assess the potential impact of the proposed development on their significance.

Step 1: Identification of heritage assets

- 5.2 The heritage assets to be considered in relation to the proposed development within their settings are:

- East Grafton Conservation Area
- The Olde Shoppe (Grade II listed)

Step 2: Assessment of contribution of setting to the significance of the heritage assets

- 5.3 Firstly, before assessing the importance of the setting of the conservation area, it is necessary to review what is the special architectural or historic interest of the designated heritage asset, the East Grafton Conservation Area. The conservation area appraisal describes the key aspect of the conservation area as:

‘Much of this area is the large and beautiful Green enhanced by immense mature lime and chestnut trees. Most of the historic and traditional buildings are spaced around its perimeter and include several thatched cottages, the 19th century Parish Church of St Nicholas and the Old Rectory. The active Manor Farm lies to the south west adjoining its arable land while other farmhouses including Green Hall and East Grafton Farm lie to the north and east adjacent their former farmyards now redeveloped as residential areas.’

This identifies that the most important aspect of the character of the conservation area is the open space of The Green with its mature trees, lined by historic buildings including the church, several former farmsteads and various cottages which includes timber-framed buildings, many of the buildings having thatched roofs (Figures 18 and 19). This is clearly a high quality area in heritage terms which merits its designation as an area of special architectural or historic interest.



Figure 18 A view north-west across The Green towards The Olde Shoppe.



Figure 19 A view across The Green to the east towards some of the historic building that line the edge of this area of open common land.

- 5.4 The boundary to the north-western part of the conservation area runs along the south side of the A338 to include The White House and Forest View, houses of early 20th century date that are largely screened from view from the public realm due to the substantial hedgerow along the south side of the road. The White House reflects local character through the use

of thatch which can only be glimpsed (and which is of non-locally characteristic water reed), but due to the screening, it makes a minimal contribution to the significance of the conservation area. The conservation area extends to the north of the road to include the plot of Park House which stands in a relatively isolated position. This house is seen as an altered former pair of road-side cottages. These houses do not accord with the dominant character of the focus of the conservation area – the common-edge settlement dominated by historic buildings set around The Green.

5.5 Because of the level of screening along the south side of the road, the isolation of Park House and its limited architectural interest, there is no clear indication that one is entering into a conservation area. These three houses are, effectively, of limited significance in terms of the character and appearance of the conservation area – the hedgerow is the main characteristic. When approaching from the west, the modern development at Grafton Place indicates that one is approaching a nucleated settlement, but the appraisal identifies the openness of the view to these houses as a negative feature. It is only when close to The Olde Shoppe where there is any sense of arrival to an historic settlement by which time, when travelling from the west the proposed development site has been passed.

5.6 The proposed development site lies adjacent to the boundary of the conservation area and so may be regarded as being within its the setting. In terms of the importance of the setting in relation to how it contributes the experience of the conservation area or the ability to understand or appreciate its significance, given that it is not really possible to identify the presence of the conservation area on the ground along this section of Burbage Road, it is considered that the land to the north of the road makes little to no contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of the conservation area which is almost wholly derived from the historic grouping of cottages and farms around The Green at the heart of the conservation area. The area to the south of the road is former agricultural land developed in the early 20th century.

5.7 The setting of the Grade II listed The Olde Shoppe, c.130m from the eastern edge of the proposed development site. This historic building stands alongside the road where it enters into the north-west corner of The Green, the house having angled views into The Green, and being visible from The Green when looking north-west. This is the most important aspect of its setting, forming part of the common-edge settlement fringing the Green. West

of The Olde Shoppe are modern houses representing 20th century piecemeal expansion of the village, buildings that are neutral elements in the setting of the listed building.

Step 3: Assess impact of the proposed development on significance

5.8 It is proposed to construct five detached houses within the area of land on the north side of the A338 between Park House and Grafton Place. Access to the development will be from the main road, the plot to the west using the exiting agricultural track, the plot to the east having a new access point. In relation to the scheme for nine houses submitted for pre-application advice, the Conservation response stated:

'The site is a large open field of agricultural/grazing use, and is on the approach, but outside of, the East Grafton Conservation Area. Adjacent to the site is a modern residential development, which was the redevelopment of a haulage yard, approved in the 1990s. The current enquiry is for new development on a greenfield site.'

I do not want to comment in particular detail, but the development of such a rural site has the potential to cause visual harm to the approach to the conservation area: therefore careful and sympathetic consideration of access details, buildings' details and relationships to the street scene, materials and boundary treatments should be respectful of this, should the principle of the development be found in favour. Design details should not introduce architectural features that are not traditional within the conservation area, such as dormer windows not within thatched roofs.'

5.9 Taking the NPPF definition of setting as set out in 4.5, above, it follows that the test for whether a development within the setting of a heritage asset will affect significance must be based on the impact on the ability to:

- Experience the heritage assets or
- To appreciate or understand their significance.

Further potential aspects of potential impact on setting include:

- Whether the proposed development would be harmful aesthetically when seen in combination with or adjacent to a heritage asset
- Impact on tranquillity, appearance though light pollution or the experience of a heritage asset through the introduction of smells.

5.10 The proposed development of this area represented by the two plots will change an area of open, agricultural land to a housing, forming part of the settlement of East Grafton. This represents the growth of the settlement which, in heritage terms, is not necessarily inappropriate as a means of contributing to the housing need – settlements grow over time, adding to the rich architectural history of the county.

5.11 As discussed above, in the approach to East Grafton from the west, the presence of the conservation area to the south of the road is not really evident on the ground until one is east of the proposed development site, although the fact that one is approaching a settlement is evidenced by the modern development at Grafton Place which appears rather oddly set well back from the road although it is accessed from the A338 – the open views to this development being identified as a negative element on the approach to the conservation area in the appraisal document. The first houses that are clearly visible when approaching the village east of Grafton Place are all modern suburban houses, and whilst some are within the conservation area, they are clearly not of special interest, and are effectively, the setting to the important area of settlement around The Green.

5.12 The principle of housing development on this site will change the character of the land, extending the area of the settlement, but there will be no impact on the experience of the evidently special area of the conservation area – the settlement around The Green. Given the fact that the presence of the conservation area on the south side of the road is not evident on the ground, the development will have no impact upon the ability to experience the designated conservation area, nor will it impact on the ability to understand or appreciate its significance as the special interest of the conservation area is not conveyed by the land or buildings to the south of the main road. Therefore, it is considered that the change from open, rural land adjacent to the conservation area to housing will have a very minor impact on the special architectural or historic interest of the designated heritage asset, particularly

as this section of the conservation area represents later expansion of the village and is of limited heritage value in comparison to the area of The Green.

5.13 Sensitive landscaping and highways detailing to the frontage of the site was rightly noted as being critical to the success of the development in the Conservation comments. The conservation area appraisal identifies the wide visibility splays of Grafton Place and the visibility of that development as negative elements in the setting of the conservation area. The proposals require two access points – the gate to the existing agricultural track will serve the western site whilst a new access point will be formed to serve the eastern site. The substantial hedge to the western plot will be retained; this hedge provides a high level of screening and conveys a rural character. The roadside boundary of the eastern part of the site will have a new native species hedgerow and some tree planting softening the impact of the new houses. Having only two of the four proposed houses being set to the front of the site will minimise the apparent density of the development. The landscaping measures will limit the impact of the development on the rural character of this approach to the village, but there will be some inevitable change to this character. This will need to be balanced against the benefit of the additional houses.

5.14 In relation to The Olde Shoppe, a Grade II listed building, it is considered that this building is located at such a distance from the proposed development areas, and already has 20th century housing to the west, that the development will not impact on the setting of the house. The most important aspect of the setting, its relationship to The Green and the other historic buildings around The Green will not be harmed.

Step 4: How to maximise enhancement or avoid or minimise harm

5.15 The detail of the landscaping, particularly to the front boundary, offers the opportunity to limit the visual impact of the development on the character of the area.

Step 5: Record the process

5.16 This report presents a record of the process of the assessment of the importance of the settings of the heritage assets and the contribution to their significance, together with the assessment of the potential impact of the proposals.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed development sites lie to the north of the north-western part of the East Grafton Conservation Area. The conservation area is primarily of significance because of the special character of The Green and the cluster of houses, farms and church that fringe this open area of common in which there are numerous mature trees. The north-western part of the conservation area takes in mainly 20th century houses, most of which have no architectural interest, and a former pair of 19th century cottages, Park House, now one house, that has been altered externally from its original appearance and is of limited architectural interest.
- 7.2 Approaching East Grafton from the west, there is little opportunity to recognise that one is entering a conservation area at Park House although it is evident that one is approaching a settlement due to the visibility of the mainly modern housing. As such, without knowledge of the presence of the conservation area boundary, there will be no impact on the ability to experience the designated area, or to be able to understand or appreciate its significance. The rural setting to the north of the road adds little to the heritage value of the adjacent part of the conservation area.
- 7.3 Accepting that settlements grow and change, the proposed sites to the north of the A338 offer a location where there will be no harm to the special interest of the important area of The Green and its numerous listed buildings. There are no views of significance into or out of the conservation area that will be impacted by the development of this area, and the proposal will allow a moderate level of growth in the village which will balance the minor impact of the introduction of two new access points to the developments.
- 7.4 Accordingly, I find that the minor changes to the street scene in relation to the new access points is balanced by the benefit of the new houses, and so the proposal accords with the statutory duty in Sections 66 or 72 of the Act, National Policy in the NPPF or Policy CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted January 2015 (CS) and Policy 99 of the Draft Local Plan Review: Ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, and conclude that the application should be allowed.