



Rutland
County Council

**MORCOTT CONSERVATION AREA
CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**



October 2014

**Morcott Conservation Area
Character Appraisal and Management Proposals**

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	2
National Planning Policy Framework	2
Local Plan.....	4
3. ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST	4
Location and setting.....	4
4. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT.....	5
5. SETTLEMENT PATTERN	9
6. PREVAILING USES	9
7. BUILDING MATERIALS AND DETAILS.....	9
Walls.....	9
Roofs.....	10
7.4.1 Collyweston stone slate.....	11
7.4.2 Blue slate	11
7.4.3 Plain tiles.....	11
7.4.4 Clay pantiles.....	11
Chimneys.....	11
Dormers.....	12
Eaves detailing	12
Windows	12
Doors.....	13
Driveways	14
8. KEY VIEWS AND VISTAS	14
9. BOUNDARIES.....	15
10. OPEN SPACES AND TREES	16
11. BUILDINGS OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE	18
12. HIGHWAYS	21
13. DEFINING THE SPECIAL INTEREST	22
14. LOSS OF CHARACTER.....	24
15. PRESERVING THE CHARACTER.....	25
16. CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY	27
17. PUBLIC CONSULTATION	28
18. MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT	30
APPENDIX 1	31
Listed Buildings within Morcott Conservation Area	31
APPENDIX 2	32
Tree Preservation Orders	32
APPENDIX 3	32
Management Proposals	32
CONTACT	33

**Morcott Conservation Area
Character Appraisal and Management Proposals**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Rutland County Council, as local planning authority, is required to designate as conservation areas, “*any area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*” (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). It also has a duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of designated conservation areas.
- 1.2 Morcott Conservation Area was designated on 9th March 1981 and is one of 34 conservation areas in Rutland. It is not the purpose of a conservation area to prevent development but to manage change to reflect the special character of the area. When making decisions on new development, the Council is required to pay “special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area”.
- 1.3 This appraisal and the attached proposals map are intended to identify those elements that contribute to Morcott’s special character and appearance and which justify its designation as a conservation area. It also identifies possible management proposals to preserve and enhance the special character. It is important that all interested parties are aware of the elements that need to be safeguarded in order to preserve the character of the village. The appraisal will be a material consideration when the County Council considers planning applications within the conservation area. It has the status of being a supplementary planning document to the Rutland Core Strategy and complements the Development Principles and Guidelines contained in the Morcott Village Plan.
- 1.4 The appraisal is based on advice in the English Heritage document “Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2011).

2. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 Guidance on the historic environment is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, introduced in March 2012. Local planning authorities should:

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- Set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation of the historic environment (paragraph 126);
- Ensure that a conservation area justifies its status because of its special architectural or historic interest (para 127);
- Identify and assess the particular significance of a conservation area and take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposed development (para 129);
- In determining planning applications, the local planning authority should take account of:
 - the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, and
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (para 131);
- Give great weight to the conservation of a heritage asset when considering the impact of proposed development. The significance of a building can be harmed or lost through alteration or development within its setting and requires clear and convincing justification (para 132);
- proposals resulting in substantial harm should be refused consent unless it is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm; less than substantial harm should be weighed against public benefits (para 133 & 134);
- look for opportunities for new development to enhance or better reveal the significance of conservation areas; proposals that preserve those elements that make a positive contribution should be treated favourably (para 137);
- loss of a building that makes a positive contribution to the significance of a conservation area should be treated as either substantial or less than substantial harm, taking into account the significance of the element affected and its contribution to the conservation area (para 138);

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- information about the significance of the historic environment should be publicly accessible (para 141);
- Article 4 directions should be used where necessary to protect local amenity (para. 200).

Local Plan

- 2.2 The Rutland Core Strategy was adopted by Rutland County Council in July 2011. Policy CS3 identifies Morcott as a smaller service centre which can only accommodate a minor level of development where appropriate to the scale and character of the village.
- 2.3 Policy CS22 states that the quality and character of the built and historic environment will be conserved and enhanced, with particular protection given to conservation areas. New development will be expected to protect and where possible enhance conservation areas and their setting. Measures to protect and enhance conservation areas include the production of management plans to identify and explain how the special interest will be preserved and enhanced; the use of Article 4 directions to control certain types of development which could cause harm to the special character and appearance of a conservation area is also suggested.

3. ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Location and setting

- 3.1 Morcott is a moderately sized, compact and attractive Rutland village with a parish population in the 2011 census of 321. The village lies to the north of the A47, four miles to the east of the nearest town, Uppingham. It is located in particularly attractive, undulating, open countryside, approximately 75 metres above sea level on the north facing slope of a tributary of the River Chater. Ground levels slope gently from west to east along High Street and from south to north towards the stream. The village is located in a landscape type described in the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment as “High Rutland - Ridges and Valleys”. The village is not prominent in the landscape.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- 3.2 The underlying geology – Morcott stands on the middle Jurassic limestone belt that runs across Britain – has influenced the appearance of the village, since, historically, good quality building stone and Collyweston slate was available locally.



The view into the conservation area from Wing Road; the consistent use of limestone for walling and either Collyweston or Welsh slate creates a unity of appearance.

4. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The village name is Saxon and is an Old English derivation of “a cottage on the moor”. The village is recorded as Morcote in the Domesday survey of 1086 and formed part of the king’s manor of Barrowden. The village served the manorial interests of several different ownerships but passed to the Fydell Rowley family in the early 19th century, whilst other agricultural interests in the parish lay with the Ancaster and Exeter estates.

- 4.2 The compact plan form and street pattern reflects the villages’ Saxon



The Church of St Mary is the defining landmark in the village; the earliest parts are 12th century and St Mary’s is regarded as the most complete Norman church in Rutland.

and medieval origins, with the historic layout based around a main street and back lane. Within this, there is a central core comprising St Mary’s Church and Priest’s House (now Sundial House), Morcott Hall and the Manor House. St Mary’s is regarded as the most complete

Norman church in Rutland, the earliest surviving parts - the nave and

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

chancel dating from 1150 - but probably stands on the site of an earlier place of worship. The Priest's House is dated 1627; the Hall is thought to date from 1720 but was extended in 1851 while the nearby Manor House dates from 1687. They were clearly high status properties, reflected in their being constructed in imported Barnack stone rather than more locally available limestone. High Street was an important east to west route, with five inns, before the main road to the south was improved as a turnpike road at the end of the 18th century.

- 4.3 The historic origins of the village is associated with agriculture and has



The former Priest's House on Church Lane reflects the quality of 17th century stone building in the village, with a Collyweston roof with coped parapets and a full height bay window; the three light casement windows with a single glazing bar are likely to be 19th century replacements.

resulted in a legacy of good, stone built farmhouses, cottages and outbuildings. Although none of the surviving houses are believed to date from earlier than the 17th century, the style of many of the buildings and the dated examples indicate that Morcott shared in a period of transformation in the 17th and 18th centuries that reflected wider economic prosperity, based on growing demand and improvements in agriculture, notably in crop rotation and

the wealth generated by sheep farming, that occurred in large parts of rural middle England at that time.

- 4.4 This transformation established the distinctive character that is seen today and Morcott provides good examples of stone building in the 17th and 18th centuries. There is a mix of house types and styles but they share a number of common features, influenced by the use of a limited range of materials; there are rarely two identical farmhouses or smaller cottages, reflecting the individual nature of the building. They were built to a simple, understated design in limestone, generally two-storey in height with steep pitched stone roofs and with the front or gable end of the house set close to the back of the footpath to create a sense of enclosure. It suggests a village with a large proportion of yeoman freeholders and wealthy tenant farmers who desired the levels of privacy previously only enjoyed in buildings of higher social status; the common fields survived late and were not fully enclosed until 1835.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- 4.5 Traditionally, solid walls dominate over window openings and there is little ornamentation; many of the smaller cottages are rectangular in plan and originally of single room depth with steeply pitched gabled roofs running along their lengths. Increases in floor space were often accommodated in single or two storey projections to the rear and side of the original building. Many houses show elements of symmetry, particularly where modified or rebuilt in the 19th century.



Although individually built, the houses along High Street share a number of consistent themes in use of materials and design that create visual unity.

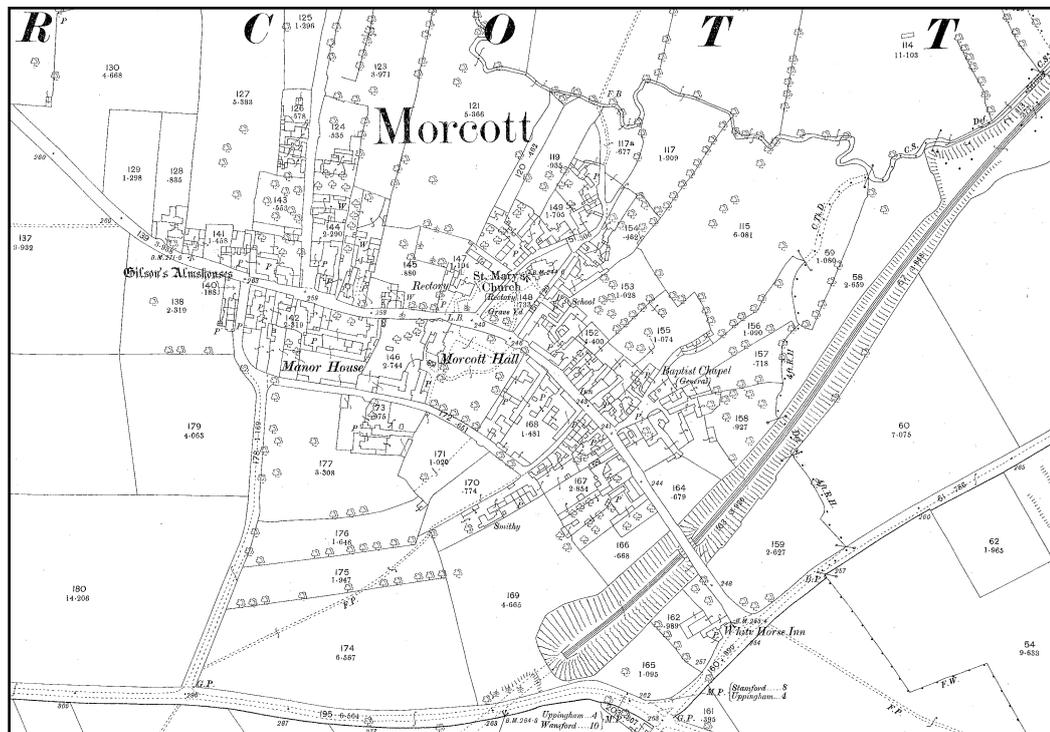
- 4.6 The Fydell Rowley family at Morcott Hall remained important in the life of the village into the 20th century, but the Hall became a school in the 1940s and has recently reverted to residential use. The squire funded the village school and paid for a road to the site of a railway station that opened in 1898 on the branch line from Rugby to Stamford, nearly fifty years after the line had been built in a deep cutting at the eastern end of the village. Although locally popular as providing the main public transport to nearby towns, the railway did not have a significant impact on the growth of the village and finally closed in 1966.



Firdale House is a prominent landmark at the junction of Willoughby Road, showing a 19th century frontage to an earlier house and unusual in being extended to three storeys; Collyweston roof, ashlar quoins to coursed rubble stone walling.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- 4.7 The population of the village peaked in the mid-19th century at 667 (although this figure probably included itinerant labourers) and subsequently declined with changes in agriculture to just over 400 at the start of the 20th century; it has remained fairly static over the past 50 years.
- 4.8 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (below) indicates that the physical extent of the village has changed little over the past 125 years. There was some limited demolition in the 20th century, notably of The Grange at the eastern end of High Street and new housing beyond the former railway line, together with some limited infill development and conversion within former farm yards (such as the barns at Clarke's Farm, Hall Farm and Manor Farm), but the compact, tightly contained footprint has largely remained and is an important characteristic of the village.



- 4.9 The historic importance of a number of the buildings within the village is reflected in there being 30 entries on the National Heritage List for England. Listing also includes historic ancillary buildings and walls within the curtilage of the main building. The list is included as Appendix 1. Outside of the village, but within the parish, the windmill on Barrowden Road is a prominent landmark in views from the conservation area and surrounding countryside.

5. SETTLEMENT PATTERN

- 5.1 The settlement pattern of the village is compact, in a form described as “nucleated” and still reflects the Saxon/medieval layout of a main street and back road, with later side lanes off the main street. At the centre of the village remain the Church, Hall and Manor House.

Back Lane is of historic importance and reflects the early plan form of the village of a main street and back road.



6. PREVAILING USES

- 6.1 The original function of Morcott as an agricultural settlement has changed over the past 100 years. Although there is still a working farm within the village, changes in agriculture, amalgamation of farms into larger units and improvements in transport mean that the majority of residents are no longer reliant on the village for employment. This pattern is seen throughout Rutland, but it inevitably means that the historic character of Morcott as a farming village has been largely lost.

7. BUILDING MATERIALS AND DETAILS

- 7.1 Morcott is characterised by the predominant use of a limited range of building materials which give a uniformity of appearance. In order to retain the character and appearance of the village, it is important that appropriate materials are used for repairs or new development. Detailed guidance is also contained in the Appendix to the Morcott Village Plan: “Development Principles and Guidelines”.

Walls

- 7.2 The predominant use of cream-coloured, limestone for houses and boundary walls is a defining feature of the village; this has often weathered to grey. On some buildings, a limited amount of ironstone has been mixed-in. Farmhouses and smaller cottages are usually built of

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

coursed rubble, although smaller cottages may have no coursing at all. Cut ashlar stone is a feature of higher status buildings, such as Morcott Hall. Quoins are usually of harder cut limestone, more durable than the coursed rubble walling.



Walnut Tree Farmhouse. The quality of 17/18th century stone building is also seen in this grade II listed farmhouse; coursed rubble stone with Collyweston roof, central chimney stack, parapet gables and a canted bay window at ground floor level.



High quality coursed stonework and stone mullioned windows on Morcott Hall.

- 7.3 There is a limited amount of red brick within the village, particularly along Mount Pleasant Road and Church Lane, which would have been fired locally, but is not widespread.

Roofs

- 7.4 Roofs are traditionally simple in form, gabled rather than hipped (the large hipped roofs to the Manor House are an exception) with the most important roof materials being Collyweston stone slate and Welsh slate.



The large hipped Collyweston roof of the Manor House is distinctive and unusual in the village and emphasises a building of high status; the boundary wall and grass verge are attractive features in the street scene.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

7.4.1 Collyweston stone slate

Limestone slate from pits on the opposite side of the Welland valley is the most distinguishing roofing in the village and the steep pitched, rugged roofs laid in diminishing courses are a defining feature. As a locally distinctive vernacular material, it is important that surviving Collyweston slate roofs are retained and not replaced with alternative materials if the character of the village is to be maintained.

7.4.2 Blue slate

Welsh slate is the other most commonly found roofing material in the village. It was not widely available until the mid-19th century, when development of the railways enabled it to be transported cheaply across Britain from quarries in north Wales. Slate can be laid at a shallower pitch than Collyweston but where seen on a steeply pitched roof, is likely to be a replacement for thatch.

7.4.3 Plain tiles

Roofs of small, plain, red, clay “Rosemary” tiles are not common in the village but were used on buildings throughout Rutland that were part of the Ancaster estate; the house at the corner of High Street and Willoughby Road is an example.

Tall, decorative brick chimneys and plain red tiles are features of Normanton estate houses built or extended in the late 19th century; the front wall is a mix of limestone and ironstone with more durable cut limestone quoins and brick to the rear. (The redundant former telephone kiosk (listed grade II) has found a good new use housing a defibrillator).



7.4.4 Clay pantiles

Red and orange clay pantiles were usually confined to outbuildings - the former village forge on Mount Pleasant Road is an example. – and were not traditionally used on houses within the village.

Chimneys

7.5 Chimney stacks, sometimes brick due to it being more durable than stone, are important features and create roofline interest. Buildings of higher status tend to have the stack on the gable end to reflect the plan form, whilst cottages tend to have central stacks rising from a position to one side of the doorway, with later stacks on the gable end. The

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

chimney flues are usually internal; stacks projecting from the gable end are not a traditional feature.

Dormers

7.6 Dormer windows are not a common feature, although three small hipped dormers low down on the roof have been inserted at 17 High Street. Rooflights are not traditional but may be acceptable, although they should not be positioned on prominent roof slopes.

Eaves detailing

7.7 Eaves are generally plain rather overhanging, although coped or parapet gables are a feature of higher grade buildings. Variations in eaves level create interest between buildings, notably along High Street. Gutters are traditionally black painted cast iron and supported on brackets spiked directly into the wall. Decorated bargeboards and timber fascias are not a typical feature.

Windows

7.8 Timber is the traditional material for windows but the type of window tends to reflect the status, date and style of the building. High status older buildings tend to have stone mullioned windows with metal casements; farmhouses and simple vernacular cottages usually had side-hung, two and three-light timber casements, usually made of painted softwood and originally small pane or horizontal sliding windows. Later replacements may have a single horizontal glazing bar. Multi-pane sliding sash windows are seen in some late 18th and early 19th century buildings, while improvements in glass manufacture with the introduction of sheet glass from the mid-19th century onwards resulted in larger pane sash windows, with two or four panes divided by slender glazing bars.



19th century cottage with original multi-pane sash windows and later replacements.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- 7.9 Timber window frames were usually recessed slightly behind the face of the wall both for reasons of fashion and to provide greater weather protection and set beneath timber lintels on early buildings and stone or brick lintels on later ones. Bay windows are not a common feature, although angled or canted bays are a feature of some of the higher status buildings, such as the Priest's House, Walnut Tree Farmhouse and The Old Bluebell.



Large pane sash windows with slender glazing bars and decorative horns to strengthen the joint and a shallow pitched roof are mid-19th century features.



Traditional windows on a late 18th century cottage: the downstairs windows are side hung casements, with horizontal sliding sashes above, all below chamfered timber lintels. On vernacular buildings, upper floor windows are generally smaller than those on the ground floor.

- 7.10 Window cills are usually stone; projecting timber cills and top-opening windows are not a traditional feature. There has been some introduction of historically inappropriate upvc double glazing on some unlisted buildings.

Doors

- 7.11 Door types also vary according to status, period and style of building, although many have been replaced. The simplest and earliest are solid, vertical boarded ledged and braced doors. Panelled doors were popular from the 18th century onwards but are not a common feature of traditional farm houses. There is an attractive early 20th century bracketed porch above the door of 17 High Street but enclosed porches are not a local feature.



Entrance porches are not a common feature of traditional buildings in the village but this moulded early 20th canopy is an attractive addition to this farmhouse, dated 1686; street facing dormers are also not common.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

Driveways

7.12 Many driveways are laid in buff shingle or gravel which gives a softer, more natural tone than hard paving. Permeable material should be used, although the first five metres may require a hard surface to prevent material carrying onto the road. The use of block paving or large areas of asphalt can detract from the historic appearance of the conservation area.

8. KEY VIEWS AND VISTAS

8.1 The church on its mound is the defining landmark in views within the village. Moreover, the village is largely hidden and unobtrusive in the landscape, which results in the church tower and its distinctive stumpy spire being the defining landmark, notably in views of the village, notably from Wing Road and footpaths to the north.



Church Lane. Standing on higher ground, the church with its distinctive tower and spire is the dominant feature in views within the village.

8.2 The enclosure provided by buildings being set at the back of the footpath and the narrow width of the road means that views along High Street are constricted. The road level drops in level from 82 metres at the west end of the village to 74 metres and this, together with slight bends in the road, creates a sense of interest as views are alternately opened up and closed. The scale of Morcott Hall and its boundary wall, in particular, makes it a dominant feature in views along High Street.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals



The scale of Morcott Hall makes it a dominant feature in the street scene; the bend in the road creates interest while trees in the grounds of the Hall and the former Rectory opposite contribute to the appearance of the village.

- 8.3 The enclosed street scene along High Street contrasts with the more open views out of the village towards undulating countryside, particularly northwards along Willoughby Road, and reinforces the rural setting of the village. Similarly, the gardens between nos.5 and 9 High Street allow views out of the village. Views eastwards towards open countryside and Morcott windmill are framed by trees along the former railway line.



Views along Willoughby Road towards open countryside reinforce the rural location of the village.

9. BOUNDARIES

- 9.1 Limestone boundary walls are an attractive and important feature which provides strong definition and enclosure, notably along High Street, Back Lane and Church Lane. They also provide visual unity with the buildings. The high walls to the Hall and Manor House are particularly prominent and are listed in their own right as being of historic significance. The walls to the churchyard and Rectory frame a particularly attractive view of the church.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

9.2 The earliest surviving sections of wall are of dry stone construction with either “cock-and-hen” (stones set on edge), rounded mortar or stone flag copings. Low dry stone walls on the approaches to the village enclosing sheep pastures, particularly along Wing Road, and the south side of Back Lane reflect the history of the settlement and the enclosure of former open fields.



Dry stone walls with cock and hen copings, such as this section on High Street, are an attractive feature within the village; the garden allows views out of the village towards open countryside.

10. OPEN SPACES AND TREES

10.1. Although there is no village green or formally designated areas of public open space within the village, there are several areas of privately-owned green space which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. These are shown on the attached proposals map. Particularly significant in this respect is the field on the south side of High Street (previously the site of The Grange) which, together with the adjacent cemetery, provides an open perspective at the east end of the village.



The cemetery and adjacent field – formerly the site of The Grange – provide important areas of greenery and an open aspect at the eastern end of the village; the chain link fence detracts from the overall appearance.

10.2 Also of value to the street scene is the openness provided by the gardens between nos. 5 and 9 High Street, which allow views out of the village and contrast with the sense of enclosure provided by the tight building line of the houses along the street.

10.3 The raised grass verges along the south side of High Street and those along Back Lane, Mount Pleasant Road and Willoughby Road are attractive features that soften the street scene and reinforce the informal character of the village.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

10.4 In the heart of the village, trees within the grounds of Morcott Hall, although enclosed by high stone walls, and the Rectory opposite lend perspective to adjacent buildings; the rear boundary to The Hall onto Back Lane also provides an attractive frontage.



The boundary wall to the rear of Morcott Hall and trees within the grounds are important features along Back Lane.

10.5 The heavily-wooded disused railway cutting provides an attractive backdrop at the east end of the village; its contribution to the appearance of the village justifies its inclusion within the conservation area. The large sycamore in front of the White Horse Inn on Stamford Road is a prominent landmark.



Trees within the disused railway cutting provide an attractive backdrop to the village and are protected by being included within the conservation area.

10.6 Conservation area status offers protection to all of the trees within the village, since it is an offence to undertake work without giving the Council notice; this gives the local authority the opportunity to assess whether a tree preservation order should be made. Several trees are already protected by such orders, including a holly on Willoughby Road, a sycamore in the grounds of Morcott Hall and an ash at the rear of 38 High Street. However, there are a number of other trees which, although individually not of sufficient size or



The raised grass verge and pine tree in front of Morcott Hall are attractive features which soften the appearance of the buildings and contribute to the appearance of the conservation area.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

quality to justify a preservation order, are collectively important to the “green” character of the village. Examples are the pine alongside the boundary wall to Morcott Hall and the yew trees within the churchyard.

11. BUILDINGS OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE

11.1 In addition to the buildings that are statutorily listed, there are a number of other buildings which contribute to the character of the village, either due to their age, history, design or appearance, but which are not nationally important. Demolition of a building that makes a positive contribution would constitute harm to the conservation area.

11.2 The following buildings are considered to fall within this category. The list is selective and the absence of a particular building does not imply that it is not of significance to the character and appearance of the conservation area:

1-4 Fydell Row

Row of three estate workers houses, dated 1852, set back and prominent on the original back lane.

1850's built agricultural tenants' cottages on Fydell Row.



2 High Street

Attractive, symmetrical house, dating from 1850, coursed stone with shallow pitched slate roof.

4 & 6 High Street

Prominent pair of 19th century farmhouses, opposite the junction with Willoughby Road.



This prominent 19th century farmhouse on High Street, opposite the junction with Willoughby Road, makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

Corner House, 2 Willoughby Road

Prominent house with stone mullioned leaded windows, previously an Ancaster estate property and “modernised” in the late 19th century with red tile roof, overhanging eaves and decorative brick chimney stacks.

Corner House – an attractive 18th century house, extended and altered in the late 19th century; the plain tiled roof, overhanging eaves and decorative brick chimneys are features seen throughout Rutland on estate workers’ houses that were part of the Normanton/Ancaster estate.



Old Hall Farmhouse, 14 High Street

Attractive, symmetrical fronted late 18th century farmhouse with attached former barn.



The symmetrically fronted Old Hall Farmhouse and attached barn symbolises the contribution that unlisted buildings make to the overall character of the conservation area.

The Forge, Mount Pleasant Road

House and converted former village forge; built in red brick with a slate and pantiled roof to the forge.

The converted former forge and blacksmiths house on Mount Pleasant Road, illustrating the traditional use of pantiles for ancillary outbuildings. There are few red brick houses in the village.



Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

1- 4 Mount Pleasant

18th century row of cottages set back from the road.



Attractive row of 18th century cottages off Mount Pleasant Road.

Village Hall, Station Road

Former Baptist chapel, rebuilt in 1903 in Arts and Crafts style and important in the history of the village.



Morcott village hall, the former Baptist Chapel, was rebuilt in 1903 in Arts and Crafts style; it is an example of a building that is locally important due to its contribution to the social history of the village but is not of national significance to justify listing.

Former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Willoughby Road

Dating from the early 19th century and now converted into a house, the building is significant as reflecting the social history of the village



Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

Nos. 1 & 2 Wing Road (Tyler's Row)

Single storey cottages, rebuilt in the 1980s from the early 17th and 19th century Gilson's Almshouses; previously listed, but important to the social history of the village.



The former Gilson's Almshouses on Wing Road

Crown House, 8 Wing Road

This property is within the extended conservation area boundary and is a prominent and attractive house at the entrance to the village; symmetrical, ashlar fronted and with good recessed sliding sash windows.

White Horse Inn, Stamford Road

Historic coaching inn at the junction of Stamford Road and High Street, dating from the 18th century and forming an attractive entrance to the east end of the village. Although extended, the core of the building fronting High Street is still apparent.



The White Horse Inn, a former coaching inn at the junction of Stamford Road and High Street dating from the late 18th/early 19th century, is a prominent landmark at the eastern end of the village. The tree is also an attractive feature in the street scene.

12. HIGHWAYS

12.1 The main High Street runs east to west through the village and for most of its length has a footpath on the north side only. Low, vitrified brick kerbstones are an attractive feature while the raised grass verge contributes to the street scene. At the east end of the village, granite kerbstones and some inappropriate concrete kerbs have been laid. The cast



The cast iron 19th century railings at the corner of Willoughby Road are a distinctive feature and are listed grade II.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

iron railings on Willoughby Road outside Firdale House are distinctive and are listed in their own right, whilst the traditional fingerpost direction signs along High Street also help to reflect the rural identity of the village.

12.2 Narrow lanes off High Street are an attractive feature that reinforce the informal village character. Back Lane and Mount Pleasant Road are particularly historic and reflect the early origins of the village. The narrow width and absence of a footpath along Church Lane and the sense of enclosure provided by the walls to the churchyard on one side and the Rectory on the other is a particularly attractive feature.



Mount Pleasant Road, part of the historic back lane to High Street; the informal character of the village is reinforced by the narrow width of the lane, the absence of footpaths and the grass verges.

13. DEFINING THE SPECIAL INTEREST

13.1 The preceding sections have attempted to identify those features which contribute to Morcott's special and distinctive character. They can be summarised as follows:

- Morcott is a compact village in which the Saxon and medieval street pattern of a high street and back lane, with later narrow side lanes, is still apparent.
- A high density of development; the core of the village is characterised by a sense of enclosure with buildings either fronting directly onto or with gable ends hard-up to the back of the footpath and with individual buildings abutting the neighbouring property; the density decreases at the edges of the village.



The consistent use of limestone walls and slate roofs, slight variations in eaves line and the tight enclosure of buildings hard-up to the footpath, are defining features of the village character. Overhead power lines and poles are one of the few features which have a negative impact on the overall appearance of the village.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- The sense of enclosure is reinforced by the narrow width of the roads, the absence of footpaths on both sides and by stone boundary walls.
- The village is characterised by good quality stone buildings, a large number of which are listed as being of architectural or historic importance;
- The village is distinguished by a high degree of visual harmony created by the uniformity of walling and roofing materials. Most houses are built of limestone and with steep pitched roofs of Collyweston stone or Welsh slate and timber windows. The predominant use of a limited range of materials creates a consistency of colour and texture between buildings of different periods and results in a distinctive visual cohesiveness.
- The unity of appearance is reinforced by the predominance of limestone boundary walls along street frontages.
- The simple, understated design of the buildings. Although many houses have been modified and altered over the centuries, they follow consistent themes with limited decoration and with slight variations in eaves height;
- The harmony is further reinforced by the majority of buildings being two storey in height with subtle variations in eaves line and roof pitch; this gives added dominance to the key buildings in the history of the village – the Church, Hall and Manor House.
- Grass verges reinforce the informal character of the village and soften the dominance of the buildings. The lack of a clear definition between the verge and the road and along Church Lane and Back Lane, the absence of a footpath further reflects the rural location.
- The absence of defined areas of public open space means that, trees and greenery within private gardens provide important balance; particularly prominent and important in the street scene are the trees within the grounds of Morcott Hall, the Old Rectory and along the former railway line; the field and cemetery at the east end of the village provide an important open aspect that contrasts with the tightness and enclosure of the buildings.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- The low height and grouping of buildings on a valley slope results in the village being largely hidden and unobtrusive in the landscape; although buildings to the south of High Street are on higher ground, the dominant landmark in views of Morcott remains the distinctive shape of the church tower and spire.
- Views out of the village along High Street and Willoughby Road in particular are of open countryside and reinforces the rural identity of the village.

14. LOSS OF CHARACTER

14.1 There are few features within the village which have a significant adverse impact on the overall quality and appearance of the conservation area. One negative factor, however, is the presence of overhead power-lines and transmission poles throughout the village. In some villages in Rutland, electricity cables have been placed underground and this would be the preferred option in Morcott.

14.2 Some of the boundaries detract from the appearance of the conservation area. In particular, the concrete post and chain link fence on High Street diminishes the appearance of the Grange field. Part of the boundary wall to the Hall in Back Lane has been rebuilt in inappropriate brick rather than stone.

14.3 The narrow width of the minor roads and absence of off-street parking to some properties means that the grass verges and banks are vulnerable to damage. The low kerbstones are also vulnerable to damage by heavy vehicles.

14.4 Potentially harmful to the appearance of the village are alterations to houses which can be undertaken without requiring planning permission, such as replacing original windows or roofs. If such alterations became widespread, the cumulative effect would be to erode the character and appearance of the village.

14.5 Some new development has not been sympathetic to the character of the conservation area; an example are the garages built in front of new houses at the east end of High Street and which dominate views on the approach to the village.

15. PRESERVING THE CHARACTER

15.1 Conservation area designation means that the County Council, as local planning authority, is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area when considering planning applications. Applications are also subject to extra publicity through a press notice in the Rutland Times and are advertised by a notice on site.

15.2 Within the conservation area, planning permission is needed to:

- clad buildings in stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles;
- enlarge a house by an addition or alteration to the roof, such as a dormer window;
- extend beyond the side wall of the original house;
- extend by more than one storey beyond the rear wall of the original house;
- demolish boundary walls or buildings of more than 115 cubic metres;
- install a satellite dish on a chimney, wall or roof facing and visible from a highway;
- display illuminated advertisements;
- Install solar panels on a wall facing the highway.

15.3 Designation does not prevent minor alterations to the appearance of houses, such as replacing windows and roofs in alternative materials, which can be undertaken as “permitted development”. At present, fifteen of Rutland’s conservation areas are covered by an Article 4 Direction, which means that planning permission is required to make external alterations to the front of houses. However, in consultation with the parish council, it is not considered that such alterations are sufficiently widespread to justify an Article 4 direction in Morcott.

15.4 The previous sections have identified how the setting, the relationship of buildings and the traditional proportions of the buildings contribute to Morcott’s special character. In particular, the use of a limited range of traditional materials – limestone for walls, timber for windows and either Collyweston stone slate, Welsh slate or clay tiles for roofs – is important to the appearance of the village. Replacement of traditional features or materials with inappropriate replacements could lead to the gradual erosion of the appearance of the village.

15.5 The installation of solar panels on roofs can have an adverse impact on the appearance of the conservation area; wherever possible, they should be sited on roof slopes that are not prominent.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

15.6 The appearance of the conservation area can be preserved by careful repair and restoration of existing features rather than replacement. By matching as closely as possible the original material and design, the appearance of a building and the overall character of the area can be maintained.

15.7 Examples of sympathetic repair include:

- Re-using original slates when re-roofing a property. Collyweston slates are particularly important to the appearance of the village and should be retained wherever possible; if a roof does require re-covering and there is insufficient original material available, then the new roof should be in either new or reclaimed natural Collyweston slate rather than artificial slates, which differ in appearance. Slate roofs should be renewed in either new or reclaimed Welsh slate; imported or artificial slate often differ in appearance and may weather differently. Similarly, clay rather than concrete pantiles of matching roll should be used where pantiled roofs are being renewed;
- Re-pointing with soft lime and sand mortar rather than hard cement will help prevent moisture becoming trapped in the walls and damaging the stonework;
- Retaining and, where necessary, rebuilding chimney stacks, using matching replacement stone or bricks;
- Repairing timber windows and doors. The use of alternative materials such as upvc to replace original windows and doors within the village is not widespread but can detract from the character of the building. Upvc is not a traditional material and the appearance, details and proportion of original windows can rarely be replicated; if upvc is to be used, the style of the window should try to match a traditional window, with external glazing bars. Secondary glazing and draught proofing can be as effective and be cheaper than double glazing and have less visual impact; double glazing may not be acceptable on listed buildings;
- Where windows are beyond repair, they should be replaced in timber with the proportion and style of the windows matching the originals. Top-opening windows are not historically appropriate.

Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

- Boundary walls should be carefully maintained and, if necessary, rebuilt like-for-like, using traditional materials and construction to retain the visual unity of the village.

15.8 It is important that new development reflects the character and scale of buildings within the village. Hard surfacing of frontages should be kept to a minimum to retain the village character.

15.9 In addition to the trees protected by Tree Preservation Order, all other trees within the conservation area have a degree of protection since it is an offence to cut down, lop, top or uproot any tree within the area without giving six weeks' notice to the local planning authority; this enables the local authority to assess the amenity value and to decide whether a tree preservation order is appropriate. Replacement planting is important if the character of the village is to be safeguarded and should be of native species appropriate to the location.

16. CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

16.1 Section 69 of the Listed Buildings Act advises that cancellation of conservation area designation should be considered where an area no longer possesses the special interest which justified its original designation. The preceding sections indicate that Morcott's special character and interest survives and it is not therefore proposed that conservation area status be cancelled.

16.2 The Act also requires that the boundaries of conservation areas be reviewed to consider whether further extension or reduction is justified. The conservation area boundary established in 1981 was drawn tightly around the village; unlike other conservation areas in Rutland, it did not include open land outside of the village limit.

16.3 The original boundary reflected conservation guidance at that time. More recent advice from English Heritage recognises that views of and from surrounding areas of countryside can also be important to the setting and character of a conservation area. Following consultation with Morcott Parish Council and residents, the boundary has been extended, as detailed in Section 17. The revised conservation area boundary is shown on the proposals map.

**Morcott Conservation Area
Character Appraisal and Management Proposals**

17. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

17.1 Morcott Parish Council, residents and key stakeholders were consulted on the draft of this document from 13th May until 24th June 2014. An exhibition and public meeting was held in the village hall on 13th May 2014.

17.2 In light of comments received, the following changes were made:

- The boundary of the conservation area was extended to include the whole of the village and open land to the north of High Street to the tributary of the River Chater and parish boundary, that contributes to the setting and views into and out of the village;
- the boundary was extended to the south of High Street to include the group of trees within the disused railway cutting that contribute to the appearance of the village;
- the boundary was extended on the south side of Back Lane and Wing Road to include sections of stone wall and grass verge that contribute to the appearance and setting of the village;
- An Article 4 direction was not made.



Sycamore House on Wing Road, built as an estate workers' house in 1856 and listed grade II.

Sycamore House and the adjacent Crown House are included in the extended conservation area on account of their contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area..



Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals



The stone boundary wall and verge on the south side of Back Lane, included within the Conservation Area.



Open land to the north of High Street has been included within the enlarged Conservation Area on account of its importance to the historic setting and views of the village.

18. MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

18.1 The County Council is required to formulate and publish proposals for the management and enhancement of the conservation area. The proposals set out in Appendix 3 are based on this appraisal and from consultation with Morcott Parish Council and residents.

**Morcott Conservation Area
Character Appraisal and Management Proposals**

APPENDIX 1

Listed Buildings within Morcott Conservation Area

The following are included on the National Heritage List for England and are listed in the following grades:

Church Lane	Church of St. Mary	Grade I
Church Lane	Wall to churchyard	Grade II
Church Lane	Coach house and walls to Old Rectory	Grade II
Church Lane	Nos. 1 and 5	Grade II
Church Lane	Barns to rear of Nos. 1 and 5	Grade II
Church Lane	No. 17	Grade II
Church Lane	Sundial House (former Priests House)	Grade II
High Street	Firdale House	Grade II
High Street	Farm buildings behind Firdale House	Grade II
High Street	K6 telephone kiosk	Grade II
High Street	Nos. 3 and 5	Grade II
High Street	Priory Farmhouse	Grade II
High Street	Nos. 9 and 9a	Grade II
High Street	No. 15 The Old Rectory	Grade II
High Street	No. 17	Grade II
High Street	Nos. 19-23	Grade II
High Street	No. 25 (former Old Blue Bell)	Grade II
High Street	Barn and granary to rear of No. 25	Grade II
High Street	No. 27 Holly House	Grade II
High Street	The Manor House	Grade II
High Street	Wall and piers to Manor House	Grade II
High Street	Morcott Hall	Grade II
High Street	Wall and gate to Morcott Hall	Grade II
High Street	No. 16	Grade II
Pingle Lane	No. 3	Grade II
School Lane	No. 6 and part of school	Grade II
Station Road	Walnut Tree Farmhouse	Grade II
Willoughby Road	Railings outside Firdale House	Grade II
Willoughby Road	Wall and gate to Firdale House	Grade II
Wing Road	No.12 Sycamore House	Grade II

There is one listed structure within Morcott parish that is outside of the conservation area:

Barrowden Road	Windmill	Grade II
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Morcott Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

(Nos. 1 & 2 Wing Road, previously listed as Gilsons Almshouses, were removed from the list in 2010 on account of them being rebuilt in the 1980s).

APPENDIX 2

Tree Preservation Orders

There are four Tree Preservation Orders within the Conservation Area:

TPO/2008/0149 – Land at rear of 11 High Street Morcott TPO 1997 – Cedar

TPO/2008/0095 – Land at 3-5 Willoughby Road TPO 2002 – Holly

TPO/2009/0006 – Land at Morcott Hall, High Street TPO 1998 – Sycamore

TPO/2012/0833 – 38 High Street Morcott TPO 2012 – Common Ash

APPENDIX 3

Management Proposals

In order to safeguard the character and appearance of Morcott Conservation Area, Rutland County Council as local planning authority will undertake the following:

- 1. Apply guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and policy CS22 of the Rutland Core Strategy to ensure that new development pays special attention to the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of Morcott Conservation Area, as identified in the character appraisal.**
- 2. Extend the conservation area as described in Paragraph 17 and as shown on the attached proposal map.**
- 3. Publish and distribute to all properties in the Conservation Area an explanatory leaflet on the implications of conservation area designation.**

**Morcott Conservation Area
Character Appraisal and Management Proposals**

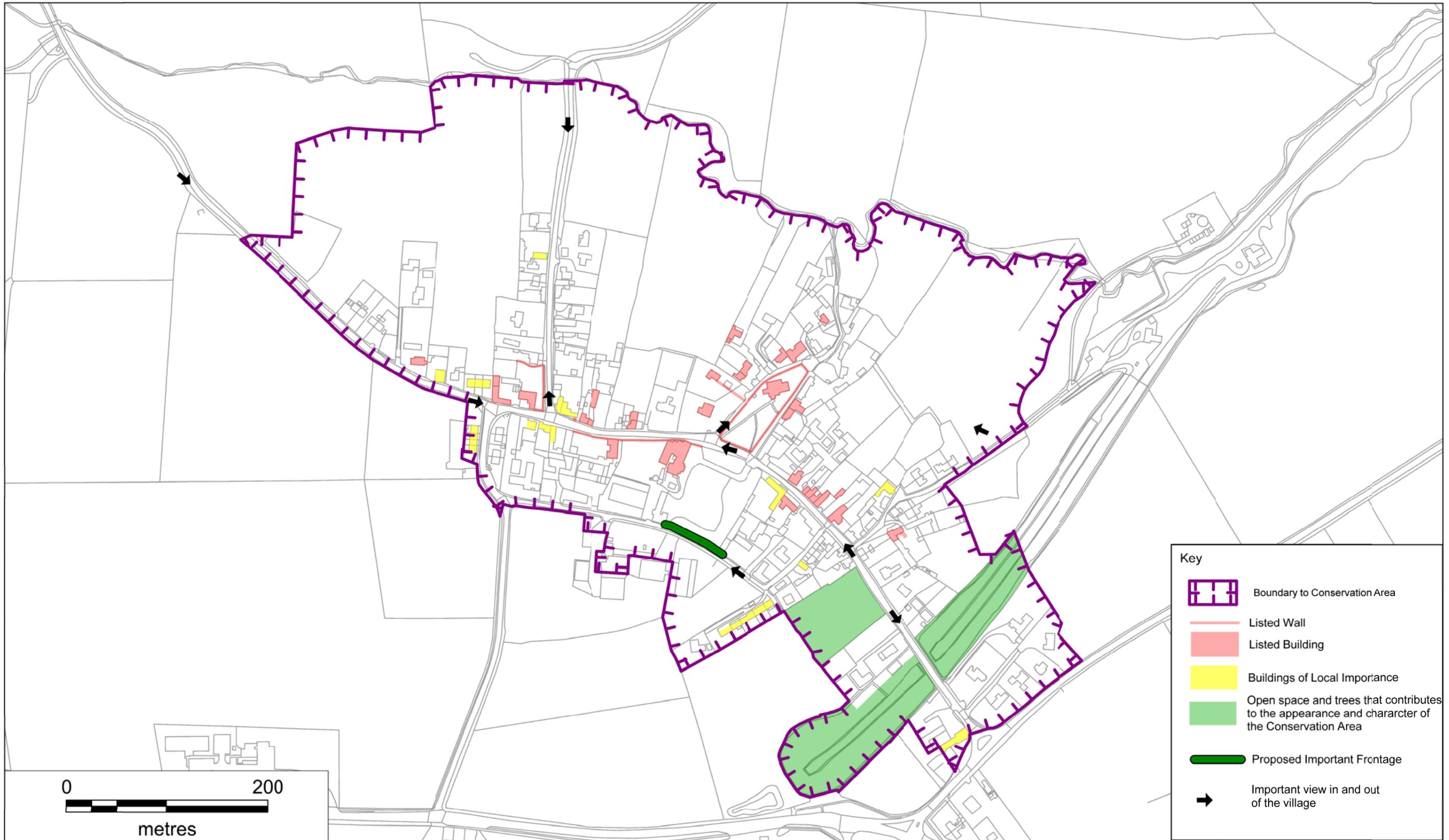
- 4 Provide advice and encourage the sympathetic repair of features of architectural or historic interest that contribute to the appearance of the conservation area.**

 - 5. Liaise with statutory undertakers to try to secure the routing of electricity cables underground.**
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CONTACT

Your views on the conservation area are welcome and will be taken into consideration in any future review.

Comments should be sent to:
Conservation Officer,
Rutland County Council,
Catmose,
Oakham,
Rutland, LE15 6HP
Tel: 01572 758268
Email: localplan@rutland.gov.uk



Rutland County Council
Places Directorate

Morcott Conservation Area Appraisal

October 2014



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