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Conservation Area Map

The drawings in this document are included as illustrative sketches only, to help in the understanding of local character.

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Middle Claydon Conservation Area
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conservation Area status recognises that Middle Claydon is "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance".1

1.2 The designation of Middle Claydon as a Conservation Area will influence the way in which the Local Planning Authority deals and applies its planning policies to the area and will ensure that any alterations or extensions to buildings within or adjacent to the Conservation Area are constrained by the need to respect the special characteristics identified in this document, the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance.

1.3 Designating a Conservation Area does not remove or diminish other legislation that may apply within an area, including Listed Building protection, protection for Ancient Monuments and Tree Preservation Orders. It does however impose planning controls in addition to those that normally apply. For further information please refer to the District Council’s advisory leaflet on 'Conservation Areas.'

1.4 The following report describes the criteria that have been used, and the judgements made, in defining the proposed Conservation Area boundaries within Middle Claydon. It provides an appraisal which identifies, describes and illustrates the features and characteristics of the village that justify its Conservation Area designation.

1.5 The following principles have also been applied in defining the boundary:

• Wherever possible the boundary follows features on the ground that are clearly visible, for example walls, hedges, building frontages. This is to minimise confusion.

• Where there are important buildings, the boundary includes their curtilage. This is due to the setting of a building being as important as the building itself, and also to ensure that the Conservation Area is not eroded if land is sold or sub-divided.

• Where landscape features such as a row of trees or an important hedge defines a land boundary, then the Conservation Area status is assumed to apply to features on both sides of the boundary. It is not therefore necessary to define the width of a hedge or the span of a tree.

1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
Chapter 2

APPRAISAL

2.1 Middle Claydon and Claydon House are located in the Vale of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, close to East Claydon, Steeple Claydon, and Botolph Claydon and approximately 6 miles south-east of Buckingham and 8 miles north-west of Aylesbury.

2.2 The house and village are situated within a largely agricultural landscape of arable farmland, meadows and woodland with small villages situated amongst and on top of the surrounding low clay hills.

2.3 The Conservation Area boundary encompasses approximately 100 hectares of the Claydon Estate and also includes the village of Middle Claydon, which is located approximately one quarter of a mile to the north of the house, Catherine Farm to the south-west and a disused brick yard to the east.

2.4 The grounds of Claydon House were registered grade II by English Heritage in 1987 and revised in 2000. The boundaries of the Conservation Area roughly follow those of the registered parkland running along the Botolph Claydon to Charndon road to the south of Claydon House and, to the north, follow the Steeple Claydon to Sandhill road incorporating the village of Middle Claydon. To the west of the house, the boundary follows the line of a lane linking the roads to the north and south and includes a small disused brickyard.

The Origins and Development of Middle Claydon

2.5 The history of the ownership of the Manor of Middle Claydon, prior to the tenure of the Verney family, is complex. The Domesday Book records that in 1086 the manor, which was estimated at 10 hides, was held by a William Peveral. Through the succeeding decades the manor was held by several families until, in 1463, it came into the possession of Sir Ralph Verney.

2.6 On the death of Sir Ralph Verney, the Manor of Middle Claydon passed to his son John who, in turn, leased it to his kinsman Roger Gifford. Roger Gifford built a manor house on the present site of Claydon House and also erected the chancel of All Saints Church which is situated 50 metres to the south of the house.

2.7 The principal seat of the Verney family was at Pendley, near Ashridge in Hertfordshire. However, during the early 17th century this building was sold and Claydon House became the Verney family seat.

2.8 In 1752 Sir Ralph Verney succeeded to the title of 2nd Earl Verney and inherited Claydon House which was a late Tudor brick building constructed on a traditional H plan form. Successive generations of the Giffards and Verneys had altered and modernised the building but, nevertheless, it appeared old fashioned to classical 18th century tastes. Given the considerable wealth and political ambitions of Sir Ralph Verney, the Tudor building was not considered to be an adequate statement of his family’s social status and fortune. Therefore Sir Ralph resolved to rebuild Claydon House in a manner to rival the great 18th century estates such as the nearby Temple-Grenvilles family seat at Stowe.
The Earl began the aggrandisement of his Middle Claydon estate with the construction of the Stable Court, which was completed in 1754 and is located to the east of the main house. The next major phase of work was the construction of a seven bay stone range to the west of the stable and the original Tudor house. Evidence, notably in the form of a mid-18th century design drawing of the west front, suggests that this range was originally conceived as a complete building, with a doorway, rather than a Venetian window, centrally positioned within the principal elevation. This range is the only element of the 2nd Earl’s remodelling and extension of the main house to have survived. However, as works progressed, Earl Verney’s ambitions for Claydon House burgeoned and in 1768, as the west range was nearing completion, work began on the construction of a substantial addition to the north that trebled the length of the existing building. The new addition consisted of a large central dome classical rotunda articulated externally with 6 giant engaged Corinthian columns, that linked the existing building to a matching 7 bay range to the north. However, the compositional effect, although balanced, could not conceal the incremental development of the building.

Internally the central rotunda formed the main entrance to Claydon House. The northern range contained a vast ballroom, seven bays in length and two storeys high. The earlier, and now the only surviving range, to the south contained the staterooms.

The early phases of the rebuilding of Claydon House were carried out under the supervision of Luke Lightfoot, an extremely gifted carver who created the extraordinarily imaginative and flamboyant decorative internal woodwork for which Claydon House is renowned. However, Lightfoot was arguably a less accomplished architect and engineer and the building works at Claydon were beset with structural problems. In 1768, Sir Ralph Verney replaced Lightfoot with Sir Thomas Robinson, a Yorkshire Baronet and an amateur and rather conventional architect of the Burlington-Palladian school. Luke Lightfoot continued to work at Claydon House until he was dismissed in 1769 following accusations made by Sir Thomas Robinson that he had been stealing from his employer. Earl Verney eventually fell out with Sir Thomas Robinson and in 1771 he was replaced by William Donn, the former Clerk of Works.

In 1763 Earl Verney commissioned James Sanderson to landscape the grounds surrounding Claydon House and to create a natural and informal parkland in the style championed by Capability Brown. During this landscaping work, the village of Middle Claydon, which was originally located adjacent to the church, was removed to its present location approximately a quarter of a mile to the north of Claydon House. A sketch map dated 1654, in the ownership of the Claydon House Trust, shows the layout of the Jacobean manor, the church and a number of cottages, a century prior to the transplantation of the village. The 2nd Earl Verney had also considered demolishing All Saints Church in order to open up views of the house. Thankfully this never transpired. However, the graveyard between the church and Claydon
House, which is identified on the 1654 map, was cleared in the late 1770s in order to extend the effect of Sanderson’s open landscaping.

2.13 The 2nd Earl Verney led an extremely extravagant lifestyle, lavishly patronising artists and writers and investing unwisely in speculative ventures. The enormous cost of the rebuilding programme at Claydon House also took a heavy toll on the Earl's financial reserves. In 1783 and 1784 Earl Verney had to auction the contents of Claydon House and his house in London in order to meet his financial obligations and the following year he lost his seat in Parliament and was forced to flee to France to avoid being arrested for unpaid debts. With Verney's increasing financial difficulties, work on Claydon House continued fitfully and ceased altogether after his exile. The Earl eventually returned to England after a board of trustees had been appointed to manage his affairs.

2.14 On the Earl's death in 1791, his niece, Mary, the daughter of his elder brother John, inherited the estate. Mary Verney, created Baroness Fermanagh in 1792, consolidated the family estate, selling off land to repay her Uncle's outstanding debts. In November 1791, she began to demolish the ballroom and rotunda at Claydon House retaining only the southern portion of the building, which still survives today.

2.15 In 1827 the Verney Estate was inherited by Sir Harry Calvert, who changed his name to Verney. He married twice and his second wife Parthenope Nightingale, was the elder sister of Florence Nightingale, who was a regular visitor to the house. During his tenure, Sir Harry Verney carried out extensive repairs and alterations to Claydon House and All Saints Church and also rebuilt many of the cottages on the estate.

2.16 In 1956, the 5th Baronet gave the house and restrictive covenants over 392 acres of the park to the National Trust. The majority of the contents of Claydon House belong to the Verney family and safeguards exist to ensure that they always remain within the house. The Verney family still live at Claydon, occupying a private wing of the house. However, the main body of the building and much of the grounds are open to the public.
Landscape Context

Key

Contours are shown in metres at vertical intervals.

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Not to any recognised scale
Landscape

2.17 The grounds of Claydon House cover approximately 100 hectares of land, extending from the village of Middle Claydon in the north, southwards to the road from Botolph Claydon to Charndon that runs in an east-west direction along the southern boundary of the park. The grounds to the north of this road were landscaped during the 18th century and consist of scattered mature trees in open parkland and a lake located to the west of the house. The parkland, which slopes slightly from east to west, is contained to the north, south and west by public roads.

2.18 The land to the south of the Botolph Claydon to Charndon road, outside the Conservation Area, includes extensive areas of woodland, some of which may have been planted prior to the 18th century landscaping of the park. Within the woodlands, sections of rides, aligned on the house still survive and a formal avenue extends south-east for approximately three quarters of a mile to the south-east of Claydon House. The Conservation Area boundary does not include the land to the south of the road because, despite containing areas of ancient woodland and surviving elements of a formalised landscape, it is nevertheless dislocated from the main house and forms the wider, rather than the immediate, setting of the building.

2.19 Trees make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Claydon Park, Middle Claydon village and the surrounding countryside. Within Claydon Park, mature trees reinforce the naturalistic appearance of the landscape, emphasise individual features and frame views of Claydon House. Evergreen oaks, pines and giant sequoias are prominent landmarks and have a particular architectural quality. Others are planted in belts and mark the boundaries of the park. Within the village, trees define boundaries, form the focus to views, provide foregrounds and backdrops to individual buildings and help to integrate the village into the surrounding countryside.

2.20 The treatment of boundaries makes an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The boundaries of Claydon House estate are generally defined by belts of mixed broadleaf and conifer trees and simple post and wire fences. In Middle Claydon, hedges are the most common form of enclosure, creating a soft edge to the street and helping to emphasise its rural quality. There are no pavements or kerbs in the village and the edges of the road are formed by narrow grass verges. This simple treatment softens the appearance of the street and helps to reinforce the rural ambience of the village.
**Townscape Quality**

2.21 Claydon House is an important example of polite 18th century architecture situated within an 18th century park. The estate dominates the landscape and forms the focus to the parish of Middle Claydon.

2.22 In contrast, vernacular estate style cottages dominate the nearby village of Middle Claydon. A number of the historic buildings in Middle Claydon are listed. Others, although not listed, make a positive contribution to the overall visual quality and character of the village. Historically the economy of Middle Claydon was focused upon the Claydon estate and based on agriculture. This is reflected by the layout of groups of buildings such as the Home Farm in the village and Catherine Farm to the south-west of Claydon House.

2.23 The historic buildings within Middle Claydon tend to be either detached or semi-detached and situated within reasonably large plots. With the exception of the Almshouses, the Old Rectory and Rosedene, the buildings tend to be situated some distance back from the road edge behind mature boundary hedges. The gaps between the buildings allow views out to the open countryside and reinforce the rural character of the village.

2.24 The majority of the buildings in Middle Claydon date from the 19th century and are probably associated with the programme of improvements made to the Claydon estate by Sir Harry Verney. The Almshouses, Townsend Cottage and the Old Rectory have earlier origins but have been considerably altered. With the exception of the Old Rectory, the buildings in the village are vernacular in style and domestic in scale and tend to be either one and a half or two storeys high, with narrow gables.

2.25 Traditional local building materials are key elements that make up the character of Claydon House and Middle Claydon village. Although the principal elevations of Claydon House are faced with ashlar stone, the predominant material of both the house and Middle Claydon village is brick.

2.26 The majority of the brick buildings within the village are constructed in a traditional Flemish or Header bond, which adds visual interest to the surface of the walls. There are also a number of examples, notably the Almshouses, where vitrified bricks and/or a combination of red and buff coloured bricks have been used for decorative effect.

2.27 Other distinctive features of the cottages in Middle Claydon are the decorative architectural detailing such as brick hoodmoulds above windows and doors, and brick string courses between storeys.

2.28 The majority of historic roofs in Middle Claydon are steeply pitched and covered in handmade plain clay tiles. Natural slates are used on shallower pitched roofs as at the Old Rectory and Rosedene. Examples of gabled, full-hipped and half-hipped roofs are all found in the village and there are also a number of examples of catslide roofs and lean-to outshots. Gabled dormers are prominently positioned on a number of roof planes and are generally embellished with decorative wooden bargeboards.
2.29 The windows in the historic houses in Middle Claydon tend to be either vertically proportioned wooden or metal casements or vertical wooden sliding sashes, and openings are generally small in relation to wall area.

2.30 Chimneys are also prominent and attractive architectural features that add visual interest to the roofscapes of individual historic buildings in Middle Claydon. Notable chimneys include the tall elegant stack of the Old Rectory and the diagonally set stacks of the Old Post Office and 5 and 6 Middle Claydon.

2.31 Modern development has had little impact upon the character and appearance of Middle Claydon. With the notable exception of the Almshouses and Townsend Cottage, the majority of the buildings in the village were constructed during the 19th century and the only modern additions are the Home Farm complex and Rectory Close.

2.32 On a broader level, Middle Claydon’s special interest lies in the unspoilt and relaxed informality of historic development and, in particular, the relationship between the village and Claydon House. Public footpaths through the village and across the registered park reinforce this relationship.
Identity Areas

2.33 Although historically connected, Claydon House and its grounds and Middle Claydon village have separate and distinct identities. Therefore for the purpose of analysing their individual special interest, each has been treated as a separate ‘Identity Area’

3 Interlocking identity areas within the Conservation Area

Claydon House and Park

2.34 Claydon House is centrally situated within approximately 100 hectares of 18th century landscaped park. Prior to the re-landscaping, the grounds surrounding the house formed a deer park. Some elements of the pre-18th century landscape survive, notably to the south of the Botolph Claydon to Charndon road, and include rides aligned on Claydon House, which still cut through Home, Romer and Balmore Woods.

2.35 The house is situated on slightly elevated ground and views from the principal rooms within the building look west towards the lake and, across the park, towards the open countryside. The late 19th century ha-ha, which divides the terrace from the open parkland, provides a visually un-obtrusive barrier between the house and park creating the appearance of open landscape extending virtually up to the house itself.
2.36 James Sanderson designed the park in 1763 in the informal, pseudo-naturalistic manner made popular by Capability Brown during the mid-18th century. It is divided into two distinct areas, east and west, which are separated by the north and south entrance drives. The land immediately to the west of the house slopes gently down to the lake, which forms the principal feature of the 18th century park. Beyond the lake, the land is generally level and is characterised by clumps of trees and individual, carefully placed, specimens. To the north of the lake, the distant spire of Steeple Claydon Church projects above these trees.

2.37 The eastern half of the park is given over to pasture and contains a double avenue of lime trees and large ancient oaks. The village of Middle Claydon is visible to the north of Claydon House whilst to the north-east are views of the distant countryside. At the eastern boundary of the park, the land slopes gently down to the brook and then ascends again towards low hills to the east.

2.38 A prominent feature of the parkland is the lake, which lies approximately 200 metres to the west of Claydon House. The lake is divided into three sections and is aligned roughly north to south, with the most northerly section curving around to the west for approximately 400m. At the southern end of the lake is a mid-18th century single arched brick and stone bridge. Sanderson designed it as an ornamental feature within the park, but it also served as a means of disguising the termination of the lake. During the 19th century the lake was extended and a north-western arm and island were created.

2.39 Two drives, one from the north and the other from the south, provide vehicular access to Claydon House. Originally the main drive led up to the west front of the building. However, it fell into disuse after the extensions to the main house were demolished in 1791.

2.40 The main public access to Claydon House is from the Steeple Claydon to Sandhill road, which passes to the north of the estate. Two simple ashlar lodges, dated circa. 1760, are situated one to each side of the entrance. Each lodge is a square plan block of one storey and one bay with shallow tiled gables to the north and south, which are hidden by stone parapets. The north elevations are blank, but the southern have round headed sash windows with intersecting glazing bars and on the east elevations are part glazed entrance doors.

2.41 It is a short distance from the entrance lodge along the drive to the visitors’ car park in front of the north elevation of Claydon House. The narrow drive climbs gradually through the parkland and, to the west of it, the land falls gently away to the lake to reveal extensive views of the open parkland, lake and the rolling countryside beyond.
2.42 The south drive enters the park from the Botoph Claydon to Charndon road and extends round to the east of the house to eventually meet the northern drive. The 1841 Tithe map, indicates that another driveway formerly ran from this southern entrance around the western side of the house eventually meeting the northern drive in a curved carriage sweep in front of the principal elevation of Claydon House. The former driveway now exists only as a grass track and the carriage sweep has been replaced by the western terrace.

2.43 Positioned at the entrance to the southern drive are two lodges. The western lodge, which incorporates elements of an earlier stone building, is constructed of brick, timber and stone in a 19th century mock Tudor style. On the eastern side of the entrance is a comparatively simple and relatively unaltered plain stone lodge.

2.44 The visitors’ car park is situated in front of the north elevation of Claydon House. It is enclosed by a clipped beech hedge with an impressive cedar situated in the north-east corner, and occupies the site of the demolished rotunda and ballroom wing. The northern elevation, which serves as the principal entrance to the house, was largely constructed between 1771 and 1772 using material from the demolished wing. The unprepossessing and austere appearance of the northern elevation reflects the fact that this side of the building was never intended as the principal entrance and access would have originally been gained via the west front. Until 1862, when two of the ground floor windows on the north elevation were altered to create doors, access was through a doorway in the south range, to the left of the present entrance.

2.45 The west front originally formed the main entrance to Claydon House and still remains the principal ornamental elevation. The elevation is faced in fine ashlar stone and has a restrained classical quality. It is divided into seven-bays and the central three bays, which project slightly forward, carry a pediment. On the ground floor at the centre of the projecting bays, is a large Venetian window, the central arch and upright elements of which are delineated by blocks of rusticated masonry. The window is recessed within a shallow niche and a blank arch extends over all...
three parts. Above each of the remaining ground floor windows are alternate triangular and semi-circular pediments and between each ground and first floor window is a bulls-eye window, which lights the staterooms on the ground floor.

2.46 In front of the west elevation of Claydon House is a formal 19th century terrace contained to the west by a stone ha-ha. The terrace consists of two rectangular areas of grass surrounded by gravel paths and was created to separate the west front of the house from the park. From here are gained expansive views of the distant countryside and the low hills to the west and south-west.

2.47 All Saints Church is prominently situated on a small knoll, less than 50 metres to the south of Claydon House. The church, which is built of rubble stone with a lead roof, was originally constructed in the 13th century, but has been extensively restored and rebuilt. The nave is late 15th century but was considerably altered by Sir G. G. Scott in the early 1870s when the Perpendicular chancel of 1519, originally built by Roger Gifford, was also reconstructed. The west tower is 15th century, also built in the Perpendicular style and consists of a plinth, battlemented parapet, diagonal buttresses and 2-light openings to the bell chamber. The south porch and vestry are late 19th century. Within the church are several impressive monuments to the various members of the Verney family and to the south of the church is a small churchyard, shrouded in trees, which contains more family tombs.

2.48 To the east of the main body of the house is a large brick range which contains the family and service apartments and which is not open to the public. This range, which was substantially remodelled by the 2nd Baronet between 1859 and 1862, was built in 1757 on the site of the Jacobean Manor house. The 2nd Earl Verney used some of the original fabric of the manor house in its construction. The north and east elevations of this range are relatively simple. However, in 1871, the southern elevation was altered by the architect Sir G. G. Scott, who added canted bays and ornamental strapwork designed to capture something of the more flamboyant character of the original Jacobean building.

2.49 To the east of the house lies the stable block which was the first improvement work to be undertaken by the 2nd Earl. It was constructed in 1754 and was originally situated right against the east front of the original Jacobean house. The stable range forms three sides of a courtyard and each range has five single storey bays to each side of a central pedimented pavilion. Each of the ranges, which contain regularly spaced sash windows or doors with rectangular barred fanlights, are built of brick laid in a Flemish bond with vitrified headers. The pavilions are two storeys with central archway and flanking sash windows with segmental arched heads and within the pediments are centrally placed round windows. The north and south pavilions are built of vitreous brick with red brick window and door surrounds; the east pavilion is built of red brick. On each pavilion, stone is used for the plinths, quoins, springers and keyblocks, which provide a strong visual contrast with the brickwork. The east pavilion varies slightly, having smaller side archways instead of lower windows and a clock turret with slender Doric columns and a leaded dome.
2.50 Attached to the western end of the southern stable range is a small mid 18th century fernery. Built of ashlar in a Gothick style, this small structure is highly ornate with a cornice of pointed arches running beneath a pierced quatrefoil parapet with ball finials at each corner. The main (west) elevation has a central door and flanking arched sash windows, contained beneath three ogee dripmoulds topped with ornate finials.

2.51 The pleasure gardens at Claydon extend from the house south-east to enclose the kitchen gardens, east beyond the stables and north-east to include a square pond. These gardens, which are not open to the public, are more formally arranged than the open landscaping of the surrounding parkland and include a number of fine specimens of cedar of lebanon, giant sequoia as well as lines of yews.

2.52 Approximately 100 metres to the south-east of the house are two walled gardens. Within each of the four walls of the kitchen garden is a central entrance, the northern one of which was the service entrance and as a consequence has little ornamentation. In contrast, brick piers with stone ball finials mark the other three entrances. In the south-east corner of the kitchen garden is a small late 19th century gazebo and just outside the wall at the north-east corner is a small cottage for the gardener. Within the walls of the 19th century kitchen garden, the beds and paths are laid out in a cruciform pattern and at the centre is a brick lined pool.

2.53 Against the west wall of the kitchen garden is another area enclosed by 19th century brick walls. The enclosure is less than a quarter of the size of the kitchen garden and contains a swimming pool and modern greenhouse.
The key buildings in this area are:

- **All Saints Church.** Listed 13th century church. Substantially restored and rebuilt during the 19th century.

- **Claydon House.** Listed Tudor/Jacobean house. Substantially remodelled during the mid 18th century.

- **Bridge in grounds.** Mid 18th century stone bridge at the southern end of the lake.

- **Fernery.** Mid 18th century ashlar Fernery

- **The Stable Block to the rear of Claydon House built in 1754.**

- **Walled Gardens.** Mid 18th century brick garden walls to the south-east of Claydon House

- **Lodges at southern entrance to Claydon House.**

- **North Lodges.** Pair of lodges circa 1760 at northern entrance to Claydon House.

Other important features in this area are shown on the map at the back of this document.
**Middle Claydon Village**

2.54 The village of Middle Claydon lies to the north of Claydon House on the edge of the registered parkland. It is an attractive hamlet consisting of a few buildings situated along a short stretch of road which runs in a south-west to north-east direction through the village. The Conservation Area boundary encompasses the whole of Middle Claydon, reflecting the fact that, with the exception of Rectory Close and the modern agricultural buildings associated with Home Farm, every building makes a positive contribution to the character of the village.

2.55 Approaching from the west, the main road runs along the northern boundary of the park, turns south-eastwards and climbs steeply to the top of a hill before bending sharply to the north-east, at the edge of the village. Views of Middle Claydon and the surrounding countryside are gained only at the point beyond the bend where the road straightens and continues north-eastwards through the village.

2.56 From the direction of Sandhill, the road bends southwards as it approaches the 19th century cemetery at the bottom of the hill and then turns south-westwards and straightens in its ascent through the village. The rising contours of the land allow expansive views of Middle Claydon and reveal the incomplete outline of buildings that are partially obscured by trees and hedgerows.

2.57 With the exception of the Old Rectory and the Post Office, most of the historic development in the village is located on the north-west side of the road. Buildings tend to be detached or semi-detached and situated back from the street within reasonably substantial plots and the gaps between them provide glimpsed views of the surrounding countryside.

2.58 The treatment of property boundaries plays an important role in identifying the rural character of the village. Grass verges, hedges and trees define the edge of the road and contribute to its rural character. This is further reinforced by the narrow width and falling gradient of the road, the lack of pedestrian paving and the fact that the majority of the buildings are set deep with in their plots and partially obscured by hedges and trees.

2.59 The Old Rectory, which is located on the southern side of the street, is a large rendered building set slightly back from the road behind a narrow grass verge and a two metre high brick wall. The principal elevation of the building faces onto the road and provides a focus to views when approaching the village from the west. The scale, restrained proportions and classical references of the Old Rectory set it apart from the more vernacular style buildings within the village and reflect the social status of the rector within the community.
2.60 Opposite the Old Rectory on the northern side of the bend is a row of late 17th century brick almshouses. The almshouses face directly onto the street and, in contrast to the Old Rectory, are situated immediately adjacent to the road edge, thus creating a hard visual boundary. Initially six almshouses, and now divided into four flats, this building was originally located by All Saints Church, but was moved to its present position during the mid 18th century when the grounds around Claydon House were enclosed and re-landscaped. The almshouses have a distinctive character and are a prominent feature within the street. The building is one-and-a-half storeys with a steeply pitched, fully-hipped tiled roof and prominent gable dormers. It is constructed of vitrified bricks laid in header bond with red brick window and door surrounds and it has a central gable bay flanked by two brick ranges of seven irregular bays. Each doorway is contained within a 19th century gabled porch, with characteristic wavy bargeboards and fishscale tiles.

2.61 The Almshouses and the Old Rectory are located at the highest point of Middle Claydon and significant views of the village can be gained from here looking north-eastward along the road. These views, which are initially channelled by the Almshouses and the boundary wall of the Old Rectory and then further along the road by boundary hedgerows and trees, are truncated by the sharp bend and by the 19th century cemetery at the north-western end of the village.

2.62 Adjacent to the Almshouses, on the northern side of the road, is Rosedene which is a simple, detached 19th century brick cottage, set back slightly from the street and partially screened by a dense hedge. The hedge creates a soft edge to the street, in contrast to the hard building line of the adjacent Almshouses, and provides interest and variation in the street.

2.63 Adjacent to the Old Rectory is Rectory Close, which is a modern detached building, situated back from the street and hidden from the road by a tall leylandii hedge. The lack of screening along its south and south-eastern boundaries make it a prominent feature in views of the village from the park of Claydon House to the south.

2.64 The grounds of Claydon House encroach into the village on the south-eastern side of the road, between Rectory Close and the Old Post Office. A simple wire and post fence marks the edge of the parkland and allows extensive and uninterrupted views across the park towards the northern elevation of Claydon House. The break in the street line also reveals significant views of the south-west elevation of the Old Post Office with its prominent catslide roofs, dormers and open rear veranda.

2.65 Ballams is a substantial 19th century red brick property situated back from the north-west side of the street behind a low boundary hedge. It is two and a half storeys in height and symmetrical in appearance, with two gable wings with decorative bargeboards and a striking, centrally positioned, partly-glazed porch. The property faces directly onto the street and is located opposite the opening onto the parkland of Claydon House. Trees and hedges form
the side boundary and backdrop to the building and help to enclose and isolate it from neighbouring properties. Views of Ballams, particularly from Claydon Park to the south-east, make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The mature trees to the right side of the entrance also provide an important focus to views from all directions.

2.66  Adjacent to Ballams, are a pair of semi-detached 19th century estate cottages. Set some distance back from the road behind long narrow front gardens, the cottages, which face onto the street, are one and a half storeys and are constructed of patterned brickwork with vitrified headers. Views of the principal elevations are glimpsed over the garden gates in the front boundary hedge, and views from the north-east reveal the outline of the tiled roof, gabled dormers and prominent brick chimney stacks. The cottages sit within rather than define the landscape and their incomplete outline, partially obscured by trees and hedges, help to reinforce the rural setting of the village.

2.67  To the north-east, and set back from the road along the same building line, is a row of four 18th century brick buildings called Townsend Cottages. Extended during the 19th century, the original three bay 18th century range to the right is two storeys plus an attic and is constructed of chequered brickwork. The tiled, half-hipped roof is punctuated by gable dormers and two brick chimneystacks, each with four diagonally set square shafts. Set against a backdrop of trees and protruding above boundary hedges, the distinctive roofline of Townsend Cottages is clearly visible in long distant views of the village from the north-east.

2.68  Home Farm is a working farm located at the north-eastern end of Middle Claydon, adjacent to Townsend Cottages. The farm complex, which consists of a number of modern agricultural buildings, provides the foreground to views of the village from the north-east. Although generally these buildings do not make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, the farm complex is a reminder of the important role of agriculture in shaping the historical landscape and economy of Middle Claydon.

2.69  On the south-eastern side of the road opposite Townsend Farm is the Old Post Office. Set back from the road behind a boundary hedge, the property backs onto the park of Claydon House. It was built in 1827 in the picturesque gothic style by the well-known architect C. R. Cockerell, and also served as a public library, village school and private dwelling. The Old Post Office is significant not only for the quality of its architectural design but also because it claims the distinction of being the first village library in England. Constructed of brick and rendered in pebbledash, the two-storey projecting half-timbered gabled porch (which dominates the principal elevation), gabled dormers, tiled outshots, open rear veranda and prominent brick stacks with diagonally set square shafts, all contribute to the individual character of the building.

2.70  The grounds of the Old Post Office extend down the hill to the north-east of the building. The boundary of the property is formed by trees and hedging and half way along the plot, immediately adjacent to the road, is a K6 cast iron square telephone kiosk designed in 1935 by Sir G.G. Scott. This attractive structure adds visual interest to the street and contributes to the character of the Conservation Area.
2.71 Located at the bottom of the hill and isolated from the rest of the village is the Victorian cemetery. Situated on the south-eastern side of the bend in the road, the cemetery and lychgate form the focus to views looking north-eastwards along the main road through the village. The cemetery, dating from 1877, consists of a small rectangular enclosure bounded by trees and hedgerows set against the backdrop of Claydon Park to the south-east and open countryside to the north-east. At the entrance to the cemetery is a small, but striking, brick and timber lychgate with a distinctive steeply pitched tiled roof and bell turret.

The key buildings in this area are:

- The Old Rectory. Substantial 19th century building with earlier origin.
- 1 - 4 Townsend Cottages. Originally 18th century brick cottages extended during the 19th century.
- Almshouses. Grade II listed brick 17th century almshouses. Originally located by All Saints Church relocated during the 18th century.
- The Old Post Office. Grade II listed building. Built in 1827 in the picturesque gothic style.
- Rosedene. 19th century brick cottage.
- Telephone Kiosk. 1935 Grade II listed.
- Ballams. Substantial 19th century brick building.
- Lychgate. 19th century lychgate at entrance to cemetery.
- 5 & 6 Townsend Cottages. 19th century brick estate cottages.

Other important features in this area are shown on the map at the back of this document.
The Old Brickyard and Catherine Farm.

2.72 The disused brickyard is situated approximately 800 metres north-west of Claydon House on the west side of the lane which runs in a north-south direction between the Botolph Claydon to Charndon and Steeple Claydon to Sandhill roads.

2.73 The site, which abuts the road, is rectangular in shape and bounded by trees and hedges. It contains a series of brick pits, which survive as marshy ponds towards the south-west side of the site. On the eastern side of the site is a pair of semi-detached cottages which are orientated so that the gable faces the road. The cottages, which are in need of maintenance, display a date stone on the east gable stating the year of construction as 1868. Other now derelict brick and wooden buildings, situated near the centre of the site, may relate to the former brickworks.

2.74 In an area of no local source of stone, brick making was an important local industry and in surviving 18th century correspondence relating to the construction of Claydon House, many references are made to brick fields in the area. The brickyard to the west of Claydon House has been included within the Conservation Area boundary because it is an important survival of a traditional local industry.

2.75 Catherine Farm is located to the south-west of Claydon House at the junction between the Steeple Claydon to Sandhill road and the lane running north to south which connects it with the Botolph Claydon to Charndon road. Opposite the farm, and beyond the Conservation Area boundary, is Three Points Lane, which is an ancient route which runs south-west from the Botolph Claydon to Charndon road for approximately three quarters of a mile until it reaches Knowlhill Farm.

2.76 The 19th century brick farmhouse is situated a short distance back from the road edge behind a boundary hedge. The building faces onto the road. It is two storeys high and symmetrical in appearance with a central door and bay windows to each side. The roof is half-hipped and covered with slate, and a brick chimney stack protrudes from the ridge at each hip.

2.77 To the west of the farmhouse, and partially screened by trees and boundary hedges are the modern agricultural buildings associated with Catherine Farm. These buildings do not in themselves make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, but they serve as a reminder of the historical and continued importance of agriculture in the local economy of Middle Claydon parish.

The key buildings in this area are:

- Catherine Farm. 19th century brick farmhouse.
- Brickyard Building dated 1868.

Other important features in this area are shown on the map at the back of this document.
Chapter 3

DESIGNATION

3.1 The Conservation Area map identifies features important to the character of the Conservation Area. Building groups, listed buildings, important townscape views and green areas are shown. The written description and the Conservation Area map describe and show where development control policies will apply.

3.2 The map defines the extent of the area which is regarded as possessing those qualities of townscape, architectural character or historic interest which warrant Conservation Area status.

Chapter 4

ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Claydon House and the village of Middle Claydon remain remarkably unspoilt. However, a number of enhancement measures have been identified. These are described in order to target investment should resources become available in the future.

Suggested Improvements

4.2 Overhead wires at the centre of Middle Claydon are dominant features that arguably detract from the visual quality of the street.

4.3 Careful planting of trees or hedging along the south-west boundary of Rectory Close would help to soften the outline of the buildings and reduce its prominence in views looking towards the village from Claydon Park.

4.4 The disused brickyard and 19th century cottages to the east of Claydon House have fallen into disrepair and are in need of maintenance.
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