1. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Finedon is an A6 town located approximately 3 miles to the north-east of the town of Wellingborough, lying at the intersection of the roads from Wellingborough to Thrapston and from Higham Ferrers to Kettering.

1.2 The town rises to a little over 90 metres Above Ordnance Datum from the River Ise which forms the western boundary of the parish. Apart from its position relative to the regional road network, its origins are likely to be related to the availability of water from the central “town brook” and also, in common with many other settlements in central Northamptonshire, the occurrence of local springs\(^1\) between the 80 and 90 metre contours. The sub-soil is Upper Lias and Great and Inferior Oolite, the surface soil being clay producing wheat and barley (Victoria County History 1937).

1.3 Finedon’s place name is thought to have evolved from the early Tingden(e) (Domesday, 1086), through Thynden (1281), Thingden(e) (to 1363 with Thyng-variant), Thingdoun (1396), Fyndon (1606), Thindon, Thingdon, to Finedon (1685). The underlying etymology relates to the “valley where the ‘thing’ assembled” (Old English “ping”: assembly; “denu”: valley or vale). An earlier form of the present name survives in Thingdon Mines. Bridges (1722, ii 250) tells us that “the place is in common pronunciation ‘Findon’”, showing that the vowel could be short.

1.4 The settlement was clearly a place of some significance in the Middle Ages. The date 1042 incorporated in the mock Gothic façade of the present Bell Inn is often mistaken for its year of construction. In fact it is simply a memory of the year of Edward the Confessor’s accession to the throne. The significance for the town, though, is that Queen Edith, whose statue stands in an alcove on the inn’s frontage, was Edward’s wife and owned the manor of Finedon before the Norman Conquest.

1.5 At the time of Domesday the town, with a population of c400, was the head of a royal soke and is thought to have been the meeting-place of the Navereslund Hundred, the specific suggested location being Dolben Square beside the prehistoric stones\(^2\), the vestiges of which still stand at its south-west edge. This is of course corroborated by the meaning of the word Finedon as a “valley assembly”, as mentioned above.

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\(^1\) medieval pottery, roads, house platforms and wells have been noted in Finedon (DMVRG, 16th Annual Report, 1968, 5)

\(^2\) suggested as being of a type set up to mark a boundary or track (John Bailey, “Finedon Revealed” 2004)
1.6 Additional indications of Finedon’s importance in the medieval period are:
- the evidence that Edward I visited in July 1306 and Edward II and his court in April 1323 when royal documents were issued from the town;
- the Abbot of Peterborough had only two bailiffs, one based in Peterborough, the other in Finedon;
- a market held in the town in the 13th century and held every Thursday in 1330 [VCH];
- the large size of the parish church, built c1350, its 12th century Norman font also being an indication of an earlier church on the site.

1.7 Bridges records the population in c1722 as “180 families” – perhaps 500-750 persons. The common fields of the parish of Finedon were enclosed in 1805 marking the end of the feudal open-field system, the population then being approximately 900. It increased steadily in the hundred years from 1741 to 1841 to 1,378 persons, and then rapidly trebled in the sixty years to 1901 to 4,129.3 The burgeoning population in the latter part of Victoria’s reign, the demographics of which are essentially an acceleration of the move from an agrarian to an industrial society, is largely explained by the new availability of work in shoemaking (male and female) and ironstone quarrying (male). By 1937 VCH was able to report that that the manufacture of boots and shoes remained the principal industry at the time, but that: “ironstone was formerly worked and the Finedon Ironworks [which were actually situated in Little Harrowden parish], belonging to the Glendon Iron Ore Co. are now disused.”

2. KEY ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE

2.1 Perusal of the 1805 Enclosure Award map and the first proper Ordnance Survey coverage of 1884 shows the substantive settlement developing within a roughly triangular area of land bounded by Back Lane (now Orchard Road) to the north, Wellingborough Road to the south and the interface with the manorial hall and church land to the west. The Town Brook, recorded by Bridges in c1722 as “passing through the town [dividing] it from north to south”, flows through the centre of the triangle forming a natural focus for parallel streets running with the contours to north and south. The tenement burgage plots in turn run at right-angles to the streets and watercourse up the respective valley sides. The memory of the brook which appears to have played such an important part in shaping the town from early times, but which is now entirely culverted east of Bell Hill, is preserved in the names of the two streets: Affleck Bridge and Waterlow Bridge. Until the mid-19th century Dolben Square alongside Affleck Bridge contained a substantial pond called The Ware4, and this is clearly the reason why the south-central town street, which would otherwise have been a generally consistent width, perceptibly widens at this point.

3 It now stands at 4,309 (2011 census)

4 a wayour was a pond for washing horses, “ware” being a variant
2.2 Dolben Square has already been mentioned as the likely meeting-place of the local hundred. In the case of the adjacent Affleck Bridge, it is reasonable to assume from the nomenclature of the four streets that radiate therefrom: North West Street, North East Street, South West Street and South East Street (now Church Street, High Street, Regent Street and Well Street respectively), that Affleck Bridge represented the perceived centre of the settlement in Victorian times.

2.3 The Royal Commission for Historical Monuments in England report of 1968 for Finedon 5 comments on a “hollow way” up to 15m wide and 1.5m deep extending westwards from the end of Regent Street alongside the brook, suggesting that it “represents the line of one of the main through-roads of the parish and was perhaps abandoned in the 18th century when the park was made.” This appears to be further proof as to Dolben Square and Affleck Bridge’s role as a civic focal point within the Regent Street – Well Street axis.

2.4 The relatively dense urban form discussed above does not extend west of Bell Hill/Church Hill. A process of emparkment occurred here in the 1830s which served to consolidate the already exclusive pleasure garden land associated with Finedon Hall, reinforcing its historic sense of openness. This entailed actual physical demolition of cottagers’ and other property in and around The Grove, but with the offer of alternative housing in the Lord of the Manor’s new purpose-built units in Mackworth Green to the east (constructed in 1840). In terms of urban structure, therefore, the hall and its grounds remain divorced from the remainder of the town to the east where the character is of a more conventional built-up townscape comprising streets, houses and other land uses.

3. ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

Listed Buildings’ Overview

3.1 Listed buildings in the proposed conservation area (see mauve and orange colouration on the Draft Appraisal Map), commonly feature:

- squared and regular-coursed ironstone or, less commonly, limestone; often with ashlar dressings;
- brick or ashlar gable parapets, with or without kneelers;
- chimney stacks in stone, occasionally brick, or a combination of both, located variously at ridge or gable end;
- wooden cross-windows with leaded lights, wood lintels and stone mullions;
- roofs predominantly in slate, but several examples of pantiles and plain tiles.

5 DMVRG 16th Annual Report, 1968; 5
3.2 Apart from the Grade I Listed Saint Mary’s Parish Church dating\textsuperscript{6} from c1350, the listed buildings are fairly evenly spread out within the proposed conservation area and are mainly Grade II 2 or 2.5-storey post-medieval domestic (including associated curtain-walling). A large number (19) were built in the first half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, whilst another concentration (12) occurs in the latter half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The noted architect E F Law was active, either building or remodelling houses for William Mackworth Dolben, between 1847 and 1872, and Law is recorded as being responsible for most of the new work in the town (which was ultimately to become listed) in this latter period.

“Other Buildings of Note”

3.3 The majority of the remaining built fabric (i.e. apart from the listed buildings), in the designation area, inasmuch as it fronts or is visible from the streets, is comprised of “Other Buildings of Note” (see buildings shown in light blue colouration on the Draft Appraisal Map). These notable buildings, whilst not at present capable of being considered for statutory listing, are mainly 19\textsuperscript{th} century local ironstone or red brick houses and shops with slate roof covering. As good quality vernacular architecture, they help to create a strong sense of place, making a positive contribution to the settings of the various listed buildings and to the character and appearance of the draft conservation area as a whole.

4. SPACES: TOWNSCAPE ENCLOSURE AND GREEN SPACE

4.1 The only significant publicly-accessible open or “green” spaces in the study area are the churchyard containing a mixture of deciduous and coniferous tree specimens and the adjacent old cemetery in Church Hill which has entirely coniferous trees. Both contribute positively to local character and are recorded on the Appraisal Map under the “Area Identity” and “Important Open Space” notations in recognition particularly of their role as places of quiet contemplation.

4.2 Additionally, small incidental areas of open space occur in the following places:

- opposite No. 41 High Street;
- opposite No. 2 Affleck Bridge;
- Berry Green Road/Church Street corner; and
- Stocks Hill/Church Street corner.

Given their comparative rarity as “breathing space” within the townscape, there appears to be potential at these locations for beneficial hard and soft landscaping improvements (e.g. modest tree-planting and seating).

4.3 Townscape enclosure, indicated on the Appraisal Map by the “Building Line” (thick black line) notation along property frontages, occurs variably within the study area

\textsuperscript{6} Note all dating refers to first construction phase
streets. Perhaps the best example of the distinctive townscape character that this feature engenders occurs at the Church Street – Berry Green Road junction.

5. BUILDING MATERIALS

5.1 Common materials and features of special architectural or historic interest visible from streets and other public places include the following, with some typical examples given in brackets:-

- **Walling**
  Regular coursed ironstone; Wellingborough red bricks; bricks also in red/brown stock, smooth red, painted brickwork and occasionally Peterborough buffs; limestone (regular coursed); rendered/plastered stone; rendered or painted brickwork – pastel, white or off-white. Features include smooth red-brick frontage with an ironstone gable; painted stone window heads and sills; heavy white or cream-painted chamfered stone window heads (and keystone); polychrome brick stretcher feature to window head (buff and black on red); brick “kneelers”; horizontal limestone banding on ironstone, to front and gable; irregular ashlar quoins to windows; red brick on short 150mm stone plinth.

- **Free-standing Walling**
  This occurs typically in ironstone including with blue engineering brick capping at varying heights from 1 metre to approximately 2.5 metres. “Important Walls” are shown in a black dot notation on the Appraisal map and walls which are themselves listed are indicated as such.

- **Roofing**
  Natural slate; clay, including plain, pantile, and double Roman profiles; stone coped parapet with kneelers.

- **Windows and Doors**
  Large-format timber mullions and transoms; 2 x 2 or 6 x 6 or 9 x 9 painted sliding sash; side-hung flush-closing casements; casements with Georgian panes; stone mullions with Gothic heads; timber lintels. Doors in plank or panel construction; timber doors, top half glazed with glazing bars and fanlight above.

- **Shops**
  Bow-fronted large-format glazing bar panels; stall risers; moulded cornice/fascia.

6. EXTENT OF INTRUSION OR DAMAGE TO BUILT ENVIRONMENT

6.1 Historic map coverage of the town centre up to 1926 shows a built form characterized by continuous terraced cottages directly fronting the main streets east of Bell Hill/Stocks Hill. This architectural style and layout is considered to be locally distinctive. However, as a result of two waves of “slum clearance”, firstly in 1938 and
then in the ’50s and ’60s, many of the cottages were demolished. Replacement development forms invariably failed to maintain this terraced configuration on back-edge-of-footpath, tending to push back building lines, thereby causing fragmentation of the original sense of enclosure. This damage to the built environment was compounded by a loss of craftsman-like architectural detailing on the new houses and a tendency to replace ironstone and slate with lower quality, non-traditional, mass-produced brick and concrete roofing tiles.

6.2 The present proposed conservation area extension is intended to identify particular additional zones to the east which, in the face of the ravages of “slum clearance” have largely maintained something of the town’s earlier architectural and historic form and character. Examples of built form which is not locally distinctive do, however, occur in various locations in the study area, including the Dolben Square Health Centre and flats block opposite, Ironstone Court off Well Street, 9-13 Orchard Road, the flats opposite 49 and 55 High Street and the flats block at 1-12 St Marys Court in Church Street.

7. NON-RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

7.1 Finedon is a relatively large settlement on a County level, and the central area contains a correspondingly healthy variety of land uses. The biggest single non-residential land use is shops - these are mainly spread out along Church Street and the High Street and include 4 antique shops and one each of general store, health & beauty, hairdresser’s, ladies wear, bridal wear and butcher’s (Dolben Square).

7.2 Other notable non-residential land uses are:

- **St Marys Parish Church.** This is the oldest building in the Appraisal area (listed at Grade I) and its tall spire is particularly visible from the Orchard Road and Bell Hill directions (see “Vista” eye symbols). The spacious churchyard and adjacent well-treed graveyard provide an attractive and dignified setting to the church and this contributes positively to the character of Church Hill. It is no coincidence that the church site is located contiguous to the manor house – these two uses would have formed the nucleus of the early medieval settlement.
- **Independent Wesleyan Chapel (Affleck Bridge).** An imposing piece of Victorian ecclesiastical architecture which has largely retained its original character and appearance. The building reflects the growth in non-conformist worship at the time.
- **Town Hall and Library (Berry Green Road).** Built as a Temperance Hall in 1868, this Grade II listed building became the Town Hall in 1905 and incorporates a subsequent additional use as the town library.
- **Conservative Club (High Street).** This building acts as a useful “bookend” to the east entrance to the proposed designation area, retaining much of its original Edwardian character.
- **Star Hall meeting hall (Laws Lane).** Built in 1898 by the Church of England Temperance Society as a church hall, this large polychromatic brick building
creating a pleasing sense of enclosure in association with the adjacent listed former Star Institute and Mackworth Green opposite.

- **Bell Inn public house** (Bell Hill). Built in 1598 as a dwelling-house, it became the Bell Inn about 1830 when the original inn nearby was closed and demolished (in connection with the “emparkment” of land around Finedon Hall). Its mock Gothic façade was added in 1872 presumably by E F Law. It is an attractive square-coursed ironstone building of 2 and 3 storeys with a plain tile roof (originally thatched) and traditional stone detailing, all justifying its Grade II listed status.

- **Health Centre** (Dolben Square). Built in the 1980s (?) to a rather utilitarian design as well as with a materials specification with a relatively short design life, the centre is an important asset for the town albeit of an architectural style and appearance which is not locally distinctive.

- **Finedon Old Band Club** (Orchard Road). Built in the late 19th century.

8. MANAGEMENT PLAN

8.1 As a draft document, this appraisal will be subject to consultation with interested parties, notably Finedon Parish Council, before being returned, amended as appropriate, to the Council’s Development Committee for final ratification. Accordingly, the management proposals listed here are simply suggestions as a starting-point for consideration by the Parish Council and others. They can be put forward for acceptance or amendment, or indeed be substituted by alternative ideas, as required.

8.2 As a result of the appraisal survey, consideration should be given to the following measures intended to improve the appearance of the conservation area through reinstatement of lost features, protection of vulnerable buildings and general environmental improvements including traffic management schemes:

- BCW to make an Article 4 Direction allowing control over demolition of, or inappropriate alterations to, dwelling-houses.

- The Parish Council to Identify details and funding sources for hard and soft landscaping improvements to the following small incidental areas of open space: opposite No. 41 High Street; opposite No. 2 Affleck Bridge; Berry Green Road/Church Street corner; Stocks Hill/Church Street corner.

- BCW and the Parish Council to prepare advance architectural briefs setting out redevelopment design parameters for selected sites where it is desired to reinstate an earlier authentic built form (see paragraph 6.2, above).