



*Basingstoke
and Deane*

Conservation Area Appraisal
Park Prewett



...making a difference



Medstead/Highclere block

Introduction

The Park Prewett Conservation Area was designated in 1998 by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in recognition of its special architectural and historic interest.

Having designated the Conservation Area, the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that those elements that form its particular character or appearance should be preserved or enhanced, especially when considering planning applications.

It is therefore necessary to define and analyse those qualities or elements that contribute to, or detract from, the special interest of the area and to assess how they combine to justify its designation as a Conservation Area. Such factors can include:

- its historic development;
- the contribution of individual or groups of buildings to the streetscene and the spaces that surround them; and
- the relationship between the built environment and the landscape.

They can also include the less tangible senses and experiences, such as noises and smells, which can play a key part in forming the distinctive character of an area.

The Appraisal takes the form of a written text and an Appraisal plan. In both respects every effort has been made to include or analyse those elements that are key to the special character of the area. Where buildings, structures or features have not been specifically highlighted, this does not mean that they are of no visual or historic value to the Conservation Area. The document is intended to be an overall framework and guide within which decisions can be made on a site-specific basis.

This document was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane on 17 July 2003 and complements the policies of the Borough Local Plan (review).

It has been subject to consultation with Councillors, and local amenity groups. A full list of consultees, copies of their responses, and details of the Council's consideration of the issues raised during the consultation period are available for inspection, by appointment, at the Civic Offices, during normal office hours.

Location and Population

Park Prewett Conservation Area is located on the north-west fringe of Basingstoke. The former hospital site lies adjacent to the North Hampshire Hospital. The A339 Basingstoke to Newbury trunk road lies to the south, the A340 Aldermaston Road to the east, and Rooksdown Lane to the west.

Historic Development

Settlement Origins

The construction of psychiatric hospitals in the 19th century was a positive move away from the workhouse mentality used in the past. These large hospitals were built on the outskirts of towns, with the purpose of providing fresh air and good water for the patients, whilst affording a certain amount of seclusion.

The hospital estates were usually quite extensive, including a farm and staff houses. They were important employers of local labour – not only nursing, but farm workers, gardeners, groundsmen, kitchen, stores and works staff. Patients led a restricted existence and spent their time in wards and ‘airing courts’. Men and women were segregated on either side of the hospital. Work was encouraged in these institutions. Men in tradesmen’s shops, engineers’ departments or on the farm. Women in the laundry, sewing room or kitchen, as well as carrying out the housework on the wards.

The Park Prewett Mental Hospital is one of many such sites in England and was based on the plan of the Grove Hospital in Epsom, Surrey (designed by the same architects). The building is one of the few in England to survive the 20th century – only 20 or so of an original 120 remain.

By 1898 the asylum of Knowle Hospital, Fareham, had become dangerously overcrowded. The Commissioners in Lunacy looked at constructing another asylum in the neighbourhood of Basingstoke, to accommodate the overflow. Several sites were visited and Park Prewett Farm, part of The Vyne estate, was chosen as an ideal location.

The Commissioners called in the expert advice of London architect, George T Hine, who had designed other large psychiatric hospitals. He was concerned that the location at Park Prewett Farm would be very exposed, as this was the highest point in the surrounding landscape, and suggested that the site be surrounded by a belt of trees, most of which still survive today.

Park Prewett Farm was acquired in 1899 at a price of £30 per acre. He produced plans in 1899, but the scheme was postponed as the number of patients at Knowle Hospital had declined. In 1910, it was agreed that building work would start at Park Prewett in 1912. Work was well advanced by 1914 when war broke out. The Army took over the site and



Front bay of main administration building



Garden Pavilion



Covered walkway

the Canadians used the buildings as a convalescent hospital from 1917-1919, during which time it was known as 'Number Four Canadian General Hospital'.

The mental hospital finally opened in 1921 and by 1936 catered for 1400 patients. When war was declared on 28th August 1939, all but 80 patients were evacuated to allow the institution to be used as a military hospital. By the end of 1943, 31,000 patients had been treated there. The hospital was also used by Sir Harold Gillies the pioneering plastic surgeon, to further his research. The institution reverted to a mental hospital in 1946 and remained in use until 1997.

Settlement Development

The original framework and built form of Park Prewett is significantly intact. The principal blocks were arranged in a south facing symmetrical semi-circle, situated between the east and west arms of an outer fan arrangement. Each faced a formally laid out garden. A number of satellite villas surrounded this central core. The Mental Hospital consisted of 15 wards, housing 804 patients. The Admission Hospital catered for 100 patients and the 10 villas were for patients suffering from dysentery; mild class epilepsy; quite chronic conditions, convalescents and those able to work.

The plan of the hospital also included an Isolation unit of 6 beds, a separate house for 100 paying patients and a chapel to seat 700 people. Nurses and attendants were accommodated in separate rooms, not dormitories, and had facilities in the main block of the hospital. This included a sitting room for the women and a billiard room and club for the men. Sixteen cottages were constructed for married staff. The Central Hall with its tall round, headed decorative glass windows was built to cater for all the entertainment, concerts and dances organised by the hospital.

Hine's scheme for the hospital also included a railway line that transported all the construction materials to the site. This line was also used to transport patients in wartime, and was finally closed during the 1950's.

Park Prewett Farm lies to the south-east of the main complex. It comprises a farmhouse, a Grade II listed 18th century barn, and a 19th century stable block. The farm had been in the possession of the Chute family since the Tudor era and a tenant farm was established on the site by the 18th century. After the building of the main core of the hospital, 450 acres of land remained for agricultural purposes. Many of the patients worked on the farm raising livestock, along with the production of bulk root and vegetable crops and cereals. A separate department was established to produce plants, flowers, herbs, greenhouse produce and fruit. After the war (with the introduction of the Index of Food Prices), Park Prewett Farm gradually went into decline, unable to survive because of the regional price placed on their goods. The animals were sold off and the farm buildings converted into industrial therapy units. The hospital farm was officially closed in 1965.

An Appraisal of the Conservation Area

An Overview

The Appraisal plan identifies those buildings, views and key features considered important to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In addition to the listed Park Prewett Farm barn, the plan also includes those unlisted buildings of particular value, which are indicated on the plan as notable. This is not to undermine the value of other unmarked buildings or structures that reflect the historic development of the site, without detracting from its special qualities.

The essential appearance of the Conservation Area is in part derived from the uniformity of the design, scale and materials of the buildings that comprise the main focus of development. It is also significantly influenced by the fan-shaped arrangement and irregular, angular shape of the perimeter blocks. There is a special quality to the spatial relationship of the buildings and to the spaces between and around them.

The historic interest of the area is mainly due to the architectural integrity and completeness of the buildings. Their social and cultural value is of national, as well as local, importance.

Built Form

Only the barn at Park Prewett Farm is included in the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. It is listed as being of regional or local interest (Grade II).

Key Individual Buildings

The barn at Park Prewett Farm dates from the late 17th century and is punctuated by two opposing entrances on the north and south elevations. Constructed of timber-frame, with an alternate butt-purlin roof structure, it is five bays long, with aisles both along the sides and across the ends. The timber-framed structure rests on a wall plate located on a high redbrick plinth. The steep hipped roof that was once thatched, is now covered with a corrugated steel material. The barn was used in connection with the Industrial Therapy Centre when the hospital was in use.

The barn forms part of a small group of buildings to the south-east of the main hospital complex. The farmhouse is a substantial three-storey building with two parallel ranges, and double gables that are a prominent feature in views from the north. Constructed of brick, it is now rendered with clay tile roof slopes. The principal elevation faces to the south, forming an inward facing space with the former barn and stable buildings. The group, as a whole, reflects the farming origin of the area, and its subsequent integration with the main hospital function.



Overton/Petersfield block with garden pavilion



Line of beech trees adjacent to former railway line



Cromwell/Deane block

The main administration building, the water tower and the central hall are of particular note, and contribute significantly to the special qualities of the Conservation Area. The main administration building has a T-shaped spine, around which the symmetrical layout of the fan is arranged. The intended status of the building, in terms of both plan form and use, is emphasised by the enriched architectural detailing of the principal south facing elevation and its prominence forward of the other perimeter blocks.

The main façade is symmetrical in design. It is orientated around a central two-storey projecting pediment of one bay width with rusticated quoins, those around the ground floor being of stone for additional emphasis. Two projecting wings, with pediments and canted bays, flank this central section. Two features of particular note are the dentilated stone cornice to the eaves, and central clock stone.

The water tower is a seven-storey rectangular structure of red brick. Each storey is differentiated by a horizontal stone string course. The upper two-storeys are articulated by polychromatic brick quoins and pediments above large cambered openings. The tower is a significant landmark and dominates the immediate environs and the surrounding countryside for a considerable distance to the west. Of particular note is the almost full view of the tower from within the inner eastern courtyard space. It is a prominent feature, punctuating the roofscape of the hospital, in most views towards the north-east corner of the fan.

Central to the hospital function was the Hall. This substantial structure, rising above the surrounding two-storey buildings, is almost totally enclosed within the perimeter 'fan' blocks. Its large slate roof slopes are only visible in views from outside the main complex and from the south between the main administration block and adjoining buildings.

A red K6 telephone kiosk, believed to be the last surviving example in Basingstoke, stands at the entrance to the main hall. To the east of the complex is the cricket pavilion which defines the eastern perimeter of the playing fields. A single-storey building within two small flanking gables and central cupola, it forms a focus for views eastwards and serves to link this open space to the main hospital.

Significant Groups of Buildings

The main feature of the Conservation Area is the symmetrical fan shaped arrangement of nine perimeter buildings, orientated to form narrow pinch points into two central courtyard spaces. These inner spaces are defined by encircling, covered walkways, which link each of the blocks, including the utility and service areas to the north. They provide a sense of visual cohesion and intimacy to the enclosed central areas.

The fan arrangement reinforces the intentional relationship between the buildings and associated spaces that characterise this type of institutional architecture. The walkways have cambered roofs supported on cast iron columns and are integral to the circulatory system of the hospital. Collectively, these features form a distinctive and integral element of the special character and visual interest of the Conservation Area.

The principal two-storey blocks forming the fan are articulated in part by projecting wings and other features, such as canted bays. They have a predominantly longitudinal form and horizontal emphasis. This is reinforced by the strong unbroken eaves line, dentilated brick string courses, and visually dominating slate roofs. The varied forms of the blocks, in relation to one other, relieve this apparent conformity of character. The juxtaposition of forms, and the staggered arrangement of the buildings, create views and spaces of visual character and interest.

The outward facing quality of the buildings serves to screen the inner core, with only occasional glimpses afforded between blocks. This creates a strongly contrasting character between the inner and outer spaces, and is a defining characteristic of the hospital site.

Associated with the philosophy of the hospital were the garden pavilions situated in the centre of formal lawns, four of which survive. These timber buildings are rectangular, square, or octagonal in shape and have hipped diamond tiled roofs. The sides are open and fitted with seats to allow views out across the gardens. Although they are later additions to the design of the formal lawns, these small pavilions are distinctive features and enhance the open spaces.

George T Hines' scheme relied heavily on a layout for the modern, efficient, and effective control and treatment of hundreds of patients, rather than architectural grandeur. However, the design of Park Prewett remains significantly intact, with very little alterations to the buildings or gardens.



View towards north-east with conifers lining former golf course on left



Trees lining the open space

The Character and Importance of Public and Private Spaces



Andover/Basingstoke block



Main administration building

The former Park Prewett Hospital is located in extensive grounds, with structured planting defining open spaces and roads. Open spaces in this Conservation Area include the playing fields (east of the main buildings) which comprised two football pitches, a cricket square, and the derelict pavilion. A line of mature trees, including beech, chestnut and some birch, mark the edge of this open space at the boundary of the cricket pitch.

The formal gardens front the outer elevations of each of the ward buildings and continue the fan design of the central core of the hospital. They also have a distinct spatial relationship to each of the blocks. Within the core of central buildings (to the east and west of the main hall) are two small formal gardens. There is a small formal drive in front of the main administration block. This provides an essential setting, appropriate to the status and entrance function of this part of the hospital. All the open spaces in this Conservation Area were integral to the central design and concept of George T Hines' scheme.

The formal lawns are laid out with paths and planting beds, with specimen trees in the lawns. The planting may have developed at different stages, with the original layout having been of lawns with specimen trees, surrounding lines/avenues of trees and planting beds. The planting of ornamental shrubs and informal hedges followed later, along with the construction of the wooden pavilions located in the centre of the western lawns. Lines of trees, including beech, chestnut and birch, were planted in order to define the edges of spaces and roads.

Between the A340 and the playing fields is an avenue of trees consisting of a double staggered row of mature limes set back from the road. This has been reinforced recently by ornamental and native shrub planting. These include hawthorn, cotoneaster, mahonia, dogwood, laurel, vinca, hebe and conifers. This avenue exists for short stretches (less well defined) on the southern edge of the playing fields and near the main group of buildings. Mature trees can also be found on the verges, including fruit trees, birch, beech, pines and limes. More of these species also surround the playing fields and lawns around the main buildings.

The structure of the formal planting is complementary to the buildings and crucial to the whole design concept. This was part of Hine's holistic approach to the planning of Park Prewett Hospital. Individual hedgerows have not been included on the Appraisal plan.

Building Materials

Red brick and slate are the most prevalent building materials, with yellow brick and stone used to define architectural details (such as keystones, cills and string courses). Lower windows have a central keystone in a brick arch, and upper windows have stone lintels. All windows have a stone cill.

The majority of the surviving buildings have original timbered, small eighteen-pane sash windows. There are several tiny four-pane sash windows in places at ground floor level. Other details include curved brickwork details on projecting corners adjoining the walkways and ornate corbelled chimneystacks.



'K6' Telephone Kiosk at entrance to main hall

The Setting of the Conservation Area

The Hospital was originally separated from Basingstoke by agricultural land, but this relative isolation disappeared during the expansion of the town after the 1960's. To the north-east and north-west of the Conservation Area can be found agricultural land. The Portway, the Roman road from Badbury Rings to Silchester, runs close to the northern boundary of the Conservation Area. It is adjacent to the former golf course, which was owned and run by the Hospital. The Spinney, a prominent belt of mature beech and sycamore, encloses the hospital site and many trees, planted on the boundary of the site when the hospital was established, still survive to form a mature landscape.

To the south and south-east much residential and business development has occurred. The location of the Conservation Area on the edge of the urban development, and the position of the roads around the site, contribute to a strong sense of visual enclosure. The mature planting is important in defining the Conservation Area. It provides an appropriate setting to the former hospital buildings.



Prewett Farmhouse



Greyshott/Froyle block with water tower behind

New Developments

Outline planning permission was granted in May 1997 for a mixed-use development of approximately 12,500 dwellings and a village centre at Park Village. It is planned to develop the hospital complex as a core area for the Park Village development to provide community facilities. The clock tower, water tower, main hall, six fan buildings and the four garden pavilions are all to be retained. They will be converted to either residential, office or community use. The existing gardens are also to be retained as open spaces.

The proposed development will create a new, mixed use, urban village environment for Park Prewett and will enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

Conservation Area Planning Controls



Boiler House



Cricket Pavilion



View south into Conservation Area

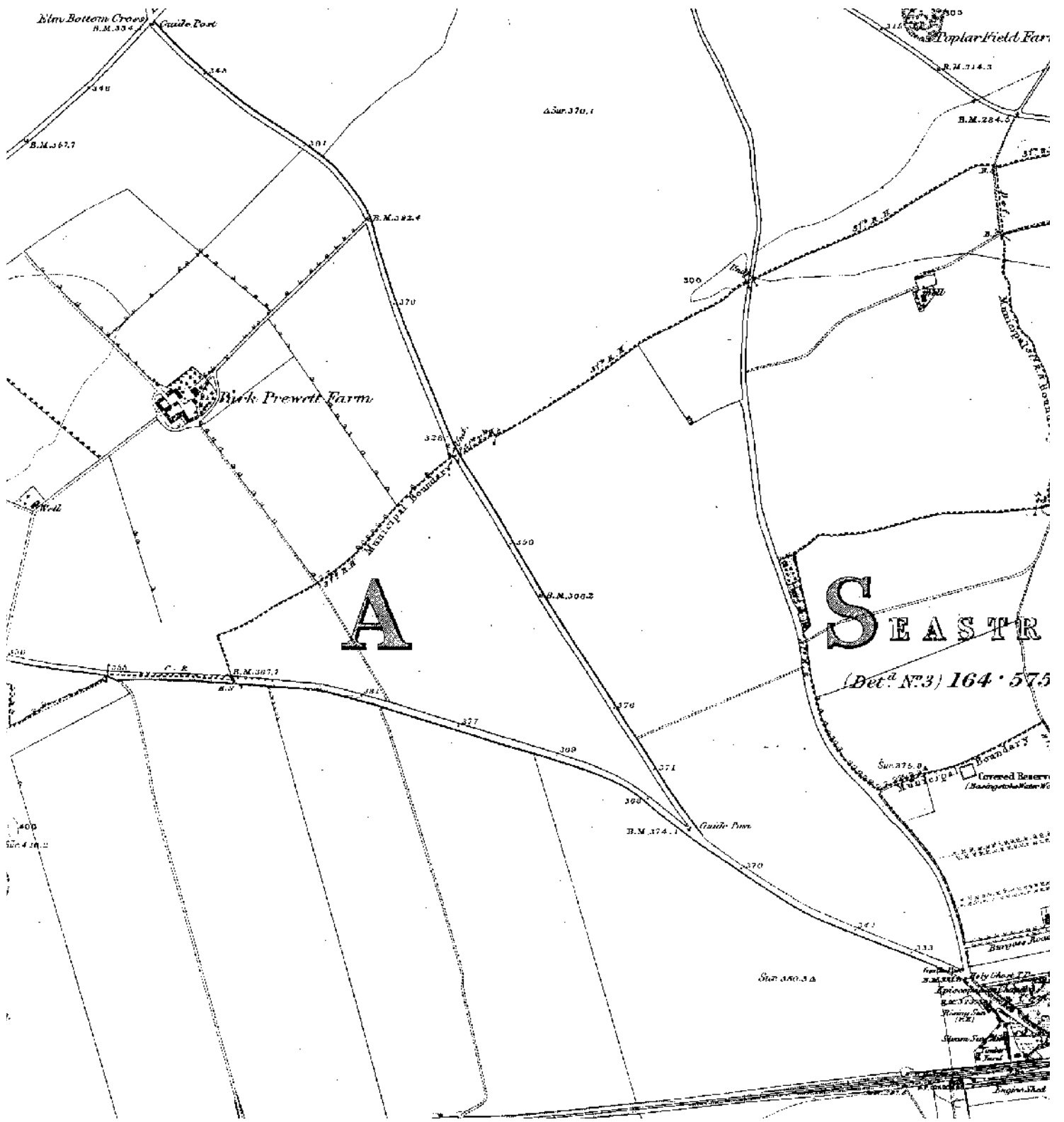
The following controls apply within the Conservation Area in addition to normal planning controls:

- Conservation Area Consent is normally required for the demolition of buildings or structures over a certain size within a Conservation Area.
- The Council must be given six weeks notice of any intention to undertake works to, cut down or uproot any trees over a certain size in the Conservation Area.
- Planning applications which, in the opinion of the Borough Council, would affect the special character of the Conservation Area must be advertised and the opportunity given for public comment. This may include proposals outside the Conservation Area which nevertheless affect its setting.

Statutory policies relating to Conservation Areas and listed buildings are set out in the adopted Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan. These policies reflect the statutory duty on the Local Planning Authority to have regard for the preservation of historic buildings and their setting, and for the enhancement of areas designated as being of special interest. These policies seek to ensure that particular attention will be paid to the scale, height, form, materials and detailing of proposals including boundary treatments and other features of note. In order to consider the implications of development and given the level of detail required, the Borough Council will normally require proposals within a Conservation Area to be submitted in the form of a full, and not outline, application. The Borough Council's conservation officers are available for advice and information on all matters relating to development proposals within Conservation Areas.

Grants

The Borough Council provides grants for various types of work. These include, Historic Building Grants, Environment and Regeneration Grants and Village and Community Hall Grants. Leaflets are available explaining the purpose and criteria for each grant and an approach to the Council is recommended for further information on any grant.



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