

## ALSCOT CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Reviewed and Updated, July 2016-January 2017



Fig 1: Alscot on the 1877 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map

### INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, which are considered worthy of preservation or enhancement. They are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Alscot was first designated a Conservation Area by Wycombe District Council in 1982. A Conservation Area Character Survey (CACS) was prepared and adopted as supplementary planning guidance in 1997 by Wycombe District Council. Government Guidance states that conservation areas should have an up-to-date appraisal.

This review updates the Survey in light of changes to buildings and areas within and

adjacent to the conservation area since it was adopted in 1997 and review recent historic research that further informed our understanding of Alscot. Furthermore the recent Historic England publication *Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* published in 2006 offered helpful advice on the form appraisals could follow. The opportunity was also been taken to review the boundaries of the conservation area: also a requirement of Section 69 of the Act.

### CHAPTER 1

#### Planning Policy Context

The designation of a conservation area influences the way in which a Local Planning Authority applies its planning policies to the area. It ensures that any planning applications within or adjacent to the conservation area should respect the special

characteristics identified in this document and local planning policies.

The major change since the publication of the 1997 survey has been the replacement of various central government planning policy guidance notes and statements by the National Planning Policy Framework adopted in 2012 and the issuing by Historic England of updated guidance on conservation area appraisals and management in 2016.

### **Summary of current national policy and guidance**

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF)
- Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2016)

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Summary of Special Interest**

The Conservation Area was designated in 1982 and contains a concentration of historic rural buildings including both listed and unlisted buildings, along with their curtilages and settings, that illustrate the use of the local vernacular architecture and materials for cottages, farmhouses and agricultural structures from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, including evidence of their past use and development. Alscot Lodge stands, out in addition, as a well preserved example of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century country villa, standing within its own designed landscape and with contemporary and later ancillary buildings. It is considered to be an area of special architectural interest.

It is considered also that the area has special historic interest that includes the illustration of the development of a small rural settlement lying in an isolated location outside a small market town, the evolution of which can be traced into the medieval period. The lack of significant development since the later 19<sup>th</sup> century has preserved evidence of the hamlet's development since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which includes farmbuildings and cottages, as well as the surrounding infrastructure of lanes, gardens and small agricultural enclosures providing a high degree of integrity.

The area has particular special interest for the illustration of the development of a small Regency country villa estate from an earlier farmstead including the development of pleasure ground, gardens and service spaces, which with the associated buildings form a well-preserved ensemble.

The buildings and landscape of Alscot Lodge preserve a designed aesthetic relationship between each other and the wider landscape, including the apparently designed view of 'borrowed landscape' of small fields to the south-east and the Chilterns escarpment in the distance. The narrow lane, verdant surroundings and historic farm buildings and cottages have acquired a more fortuitous aesthetic value eliciting associations with an agrarian past and rural isolation away from busier urban settlement and activity.

In summary Alscot's special character is focused on its principal dwelling, Alscot Lodge within its modest-sized planned parkland bounded on the north by a stream, the Crowbrook Stream. This core occupies the western parts of the designated area and the eastern 'tail' is more vernacular in nature with a former farmyard, farmhouse and two

cottages. In this small hamlet there are no less than six statutorily listed buildings.

It is also entirely surrounded by fields and the Crowbrook Stream winds picturesquely, both west and east of Alscot. The high quality of its buildings and walls, and the mature trees to the grounds of Alscot Lodge that dominate views from the north, west and south, all add up to a hamlet of special historic and architectural value that fully justifies its continuing conservation area status.

### ***Conservation Area Changes Since 1997***

There have been some changes since the 1997 Alscot Conservation Area Character Survey, including the residential conversion of the listed eastern farmbuilding ranges at Alscot Farm (its main barn was converted in 1990), and this revised document takes this into account.

In 2015 research undertaken by the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (BGT) in their Research and Recording Project was published for a number of historic parks and gardens in Buckinghamshire. In December 2015 their report on Alscot Lodge was published and this document has resulted in a significantly enhanced understanding of the house and its parkland setting.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Assessment of Special Interest**

#### **1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING:**

##### ***Location and Landscape Context***

The conservation area is about 1km north of the market town of Princes Risborough's parish church of St Mary and runs north-east

from the Longwick Road, now the A4129, its houses are along Alscot Lane, a *cul de sac* road that continues as a bridleway to Monks Risborough. The conservation area is about 220m from east to west and follows Alscot Lane for its entire length. It is at its deepest across the park to Alscot Lodge but of varying depths further east. At the west end its frontage is to Longwick Road, the A4129.

Once off the busy A4129, the hamlet retains a remote and rural character and is surrounded by agricultural fields.

The village lies to the north of the Chiltern Hills and within the Upper Thames Clay Vales (Character Area 108 of the Countryside Agency's classification of The Character of England published in 2005). The Chilterns are identified as Area 110 and consist of chalk hills and are a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its boundary comes within 1.75 km of the Alscot Conservation Area but its escarpment is clearly seen from within the conservation area. Moreover in views from points such Whiteleaf Hill view the conservation area is seen in a setting amid open countryside. The village is still surrounded by farmland, much of it pasture along the winding stream valley, with arable further out.

The conservation area sits on the south edge of the shallow valley of the Crowbrook Stream that runs roughly parallel with Alscot Lane. Its valley continues to the south-west towards Longwick Mill whose waterwheels it once powered and the stream eventually enters the River Thame near Kingsey.

##### ***General character and plan form***

The Conservation Area is very compact and it is clear which building sits at the top of the

hamlet's hierarchy: Alscot Lodge at its west end set within a park and largely concealed by mature trees and flint walls. To its east Alscot Farmhouse is the dominant vernacular building, with the other two cottages architecturally of lesser social status, The Pightle being the only dwelling on the south side of Alscot Lane.

## 2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

### *Origins and Historic Development*

Alscot is recorded as 'Eilscot' in a 13th century enfeoffment and the name is believed to derive from the Old English 'Ælfsiges Cot' meaning 'Ælfsige's cottage', a name that was still found in the hamlet in the 13th century as the personal name 'Elis'. In this enfeoffment Alscot was described with three dwellings situated by the highway, presumably modern Alscot Lane. In the reign of Edward III 'Ascote' belonged to the Hornere family. It then passed to the Reading family and after a few changes of ownership it was purchased by John Evans Tarrant in 1829.

The railway arrived in nearby Princes Risborough in 1862 and a branch line was opened in October 1863 from the town to Aylesbury, skirting some 350 to 475m to the south-east of Alscot. The railway had little discernible impact on Alscot apart from allowing the occupants of Alscot Lodge more convenient access to London and the farmer similarly a wider market for his produce.

### *Manorial history*

Alscot was always a part of the manor of Risborough, known as Princes Risborough (after The Black Prince), as against Monks Risborough to the east. More detailed information can be found on this in the

Victoria County History, Buckinghamshire volume 2 on pages 260 to 267 or the British History on Line web site

[www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/bucks/vol2/pp260-267](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/bucks/vol2/pp260-267)

### *Historic Development of Alscot*

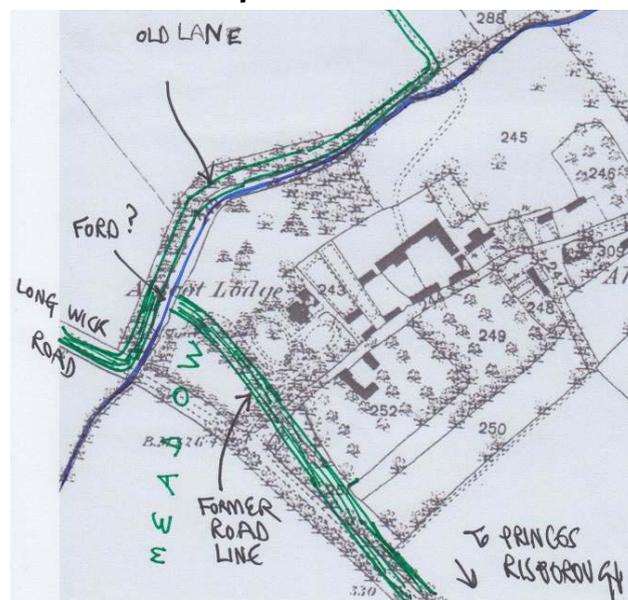


Fig 2: Enclosure proposals map recording the original course of the Longwick Road before 1823 superimposed on 1870s OS map

The earliest detailed map at a large scale that shows Alscot is that related to the Princes Risborough Enclosure Act of 1820 (Buckinghamshire Centre for Local Studies document IR/22/2). This shows the Long Wick Road, as it was then named, in its earlier location cutting off the western section of what is now Alscot Lodge's park. Fig 2 shows the old roads superimposed on the 1870s OS map. The Enclosure Award straightened the Longwick Road to its present course. When the 1825 Risborough and Thame Turnpike Trust's Act was implemented a bridge was built across the stream, the modern alignment having already been built, but apparently crossed by a ford.

This map indicates that there were still only three dwellings in Alscot in 1820, the same

number as mentioned in the 13th-century enfeoffment referred to earlier but obviously rebuilt since the 13th century. These were the three at the east end of Alscot: Alscot Farmhouse, Alscot Cottage and The Pightle. Alscot Lodge did not then exist and the other buildings shown on the Ordnance Survey maps in figs 3 and 4 must have been farm buildings and the surveyor only indicated the dwelling houses on his plan.



*Fig 3: Ordnance Survey 1" to the Mile Map First Edition (1860s revised edition)*

The next useful map is the Ordnance Survey (OS) 1" to the mile one (fig 3). Originally surveyed between 1804 and 1815 it was revised in the early 1830s for issue and shows the re-aligned Longwick road (OS map revisions focused somewhat on main roads). The railway was added for in this 1860s edition to the revised one of about 1828-30. It still shows the lane shown on the Enclosure map running from east to west parallel to the stream. This lane was subsumed into the parkland's northern shelter-belt beyond a lake formed by damming the Crowbrook Stream and had almost certainly long gone by the 1840s. The map also shows the northern slopes of the valley by means of hachuring (the predecessor of contour lines on maps).

### **Alscot Lodge**

About 1829 a retired London solicitor, John Evans Tarrant (1783-1848) bought land and buildings in Alscot and commissioned the new house, Alscot Lodge, and its park. The house was completed in 1838, the work hampered by a fire in 1836. The principal block was finished as a stucco villa, the service ranges in flint and brick.

Some consider that the flint and brick range was built during the 1820s as a farm cottage, but inspection of its fabric produced no evidence of this. As the house is not shown in any form on the 1820 Enclosure sketch map it is considered that this range is of the same date as the stucco block. It is a service range and merely in a less fashionable form with Yorkshire sashes whereas the stucco block, the 'polite' rooms for the Tarrants is in tune with the Late Regency or Early Italianate forms found at the time in London's countless new stucco terraces and villas.

More detailed information on the history of Alscot Lodge's ownership and parkland can be seen on the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust's web site at [www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk)

Tarrant and his wife, Mathilda, died in 1848 and the descendants of the Tarrants owned it until 1936. In the later 19th-century they let the house and farms to tenants and one of these, the Pursell family, later occupied the house itself. They farmed the estate and bought it outright in 1936, moving into Alscot Farmhouse and selling Alscot Lodge, Alscot Cottage (then named End Cottage) and The Pightle which have since remained in private ownership. Alscot Cottage and The Pightle had been farm workers cottages (confirmed

by the Census Returns from 1841 to 1911) until the Pursells sold them.

Ernest Pursell, born in Great Hampden in 1864, became the tenant prior to 1891 (1891 Census) and is recorded as living in The Lodge in the 1901 Census. He died in 1912 and was succeeded by his brother William who is recorded as the farmer in Kelly's 1915 Directory. His son Frank Pursell lived and farmed in the hamlet all his life and died in 1995, his widow continuing to live in Alscot Farmhouse for a few years more.

Alscot Farmhouse and Alscot Cottage are both 17th-century timber-framed buildings and thus the oldest in the hamlet. Most of the farmbuildings of note are late 18th century or early-19th century. The Pightle is mid-18th century (information from Peter Lunnon).

### **Archaeology**

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or any sites of archaeological interest identified within the conservation area.

Apart from a Neolithic flint axe found in the 1990s in the garden of The Pightle, there are no archaeological items or finds recorded in the County's sites and monuments record. As the hamlet is clearly of an historic nature in the event of archaeological deposits being found the Council may require archaeological conditions attaching to planning permissions where appropriate, including watching briefs, excavation or similar recording procedures as deemed advisable by the County archaeological service.

## **3 SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

This section covers the relationship of buildings, spaces and gaps between them

and resultant views, and how these create special character:

### ***The Character and interrelationship of spaces within the area***

#### ***Streetscape:***

There is no formal public open space within the conservation area, but Alscot Lane is a public road and just east of The Pightle is joined by a public footpath and becomes a bridle way heading eastwards out of the conservation area towards Monks Risborough through paddocks and eventually converging with the Crowbrook Stream. The footpath east of The Pightle turns south-west and runs parallel to the fields south of Alscot Lane to join Longwick Road 115m south of the lane's junction. The footpath provides a number of views across the meadow towards Alscot Lane and the conservation area's buildings and of course Alscot Lane provides numerous views at the heart of the conservation area.

The third public element that gives a sense of the conservation area is along the Longwick Road, particularly importantly reading the shallow valley with the winding stream continuing westwards, marked by trees and lower foliage.

#### ***Important Views and vistas***

Some of these views are indicated on the map but these are by no means exclusive as the Act identifies the whole character or appearance of the area as the element that it is desirable to preserve or enhance. It should be noted that it is not in fact necessary to determine that each of these views should contribute to or reveal the area's special interest. They are intended to assist viewers to experience and understand the

conservation area in more depth. Some views are clearly deliberately planned and others are more fortuitous.

It is notable for Alscot that there are intimate views within the conservation area that do not relate to the hamlet's rural setting, others that look outwards from within it and still more that look towards it from open country where it is also seen within a broader rural landscape beyond the town of Princes Risborough.

***Views into the conservation area:***

From the Longwick Road the main view into the conservation area is looking north-east along Alscot Lane with a densely treed and genteel preamble, Alscot Lodge's park trees looming over its flint and brick boundary walls on the left and surrounding the surviving stretch of the pre-1820 road to the right. Then beyond are brick and brick and flint walls and tiled roofs on the left.

From the east beside the field gate onto the bridleway the views towards Alscot Lane from the east boundary are green and enclosed by domestic hedges. These views are of the more vernacular end of the conservation area. The houses and buildings here range from the 17th century (the two northern houses) to the 18th and 19th centuries (The Pightle and the farm buildings).

To the south of the conservation area the two fields between the old pre-Enclosure road in its wooded surrounds and the curtilage to The Pightle have their surface at a higher level than Alscot Lane but there are views across it from the footpath to its south, more intermittent in summer than winter of course, but several of the buildings in the conservation area are seen, although their roofs and upper storeys are more prominent.

On old maps these fields are shown as orchards which distinguish them from the agricultural arable and pasture fields that surround the hamlet.

Approaching Alscot from the Longwick direction the public views are of Alscot Lodge's tree belts as the land dips into the stream's valley. These densely planted trees and foliage clearly demarcate the hamlet from the adjacent fields with their hedges and occasional standard trees. The bridge over the stream is inconsequential but the west boundary of the conservation area is prominent with tall and mature trees, many dating from the creation of the park in the 1830s. There are no public footpaths to the north of the conservation area.

To the south of Alscot lie the Chiltern Hills and from such points as above the Whiteleaf Cross, Whiteleaf Hill and from Brush Hill the hamlet is seen as a well-treed interlude between Princes Risborough and Longwick and surrounded by open fields (Chiltern Conservation Board). Alscot Lodge, the architectural climax of the hamlet is clearly seen and other buildings further east glimpsed amid the trees.

***Views within the conservation area:***

Alscot Lane is the 'spine' of the conservation area and has a gently curving character so there is no complete view along it. From the east end, by the field gate onto the bridleway the views are green and open on the left and initially enclosed by hedges before the flint boundary walls to the former farmyard and Alscot Lodge curve gently away. Longwick Road cannot be seen in this view.

From the west, that is the Longwick Road end, as one progresses through the

conservation area the views are variously of flint boundary walls, tiled roofs and then hedges, with the open field to the south, as the lane curves gently. As the south field is passed there are open views that afford views of the Chiltern Hills escarpment. There are also views northward into the grounds of Harvest Barn and Southerndown, the former farmyards to Alscot Farmhouse. Alscot Farmhouse itself and Alscot cottage can only be seen obliquely in summer due to dense hedging. Similarly The Pightle is well screened from public view, although the footpath and the lane pass it on three sides. There is also a view of the frontage of Alscot Lodge over the boundary wall to the lane.

***Views out of the conservation area:***

There are relatively few of these, apart from looking west from near the junction with Longwick Road, from within Alscot Lane, the view closed in the distance by the Chiltern escarpment's Bledlow Cop. At the east there is a view along the bridleway where Alscot Lane leaves the conservation area to the north-west into open countryside, a view somewhat debased by a recent tarmac drive to Little Orchard Farm, a modern house just beyond the conservation area.

From the lane there are views across the field between The Pightle and the old road within its trees at the west. It should again be stressed that the preceding sections are not intended to list every view, merely a significant selection. For example, some views appear to enable appreciation of Alscot's status as an historic hamlet sitting in an isolated position within a setting of large arable fields, whilst others reveal its genteel improvement through the development of Alcot's Lodge.

## 4 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

***Definition of Character Areas or Zones***

Alscot is a compact conservation area and has a single 'spine' in Alscot Lane. There are two character zones: the higher status largely tree-screened and private landscaped park to Alscot Lodge, a homogeneous development of the earlier 19th century; and the farmsteads and cottages to the east. These latter pre-date Alscot Lodge and are the earlier core of the hamlet.

***Activity and land use, and influence of these on the plan form and building types***

Leaving aside Alscot Lodge, none of the listed buildings, are now connected to the farms and fields which they worked in times past, and farmers occupy none. The former farmbuildings to Alscot Farm have been converted to dwellings. However their agrarian past is still evident, both for the houses and the former farmbuildings. Their curtilages are now domestic gardens but more recent garages and outbuildings have been added within them in a consistently agricultural style.

Alscot Lodge, however, remains in its original use as a single-family dwelling within its landscaped grounds. Its coach house has been separated off to form a new dwelling.

***Architectural and historical quality of buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area***

There are six statutorily-listed buildings within the conservation area, all Grade II listed. Their full statutory list descriptions can be seen on the Historic England website [www.historicengland.co.uk](http://www.historicengland.co.uk)

**Alscot Lodge** Built between 1829 and 1838, this villa in its landscaped parkland is the principal building in the conservation area. The park, an integral part of the house's special interest and historic context is discussed later in this Appraisal. There is an attached service or north-east block in flint with brick dressings, Yorkshire sliding casement windows and old tile roofs. The western block contains the family's apartments and is more 'polite' or fashionable. Its principal entrance front faces south-east (fig 4). This stuccoed block has sash windows and a shallow-pitched hipped slate roof.

The south-west and north-west elevations are similar but with French casements and a bay window, uniting the house to its parkland in typical villa style.



Fig 4: The south-east or entrance front

**Alscot Farmhouse** is a 17th-century timber-framed house, the framing exposed to the right gable. It has a three-bay 'lobby entry' plan with the 17th-century stack intact behind the entrance lobby between the right hand bays. In the 18th century it was re-fronted in brick and the upper storey was raised. The roof is clad in unfortunate interlocking

concrete tiles that pre-date the building's listing. Inside is much timber-framing and chamfered spine beams. Within the right hand bay the fireplace retains its original 17th-century three-centred brick arch.



Fig 5: Alscot Farmhouse from the east



Fig 6: Barn and Dairy in January 1996 prior to conversion into a dwelling

**Barn and Dairy (now part of Southerndown)** This range, along with the separate stable building immediately to its south were converted into a dwelling in 1997 (fig 6). It has a former three-bay timber-framed and weatherboarded barn of about 1800 with a central wagon entry and a projecting bay to the left. An early 19th-century flint dairy of two storeys and two bays is attached. Fig 6 shows the building as it was before the conversion to *Southerndown*.

**Stables and Attached Wall (now part of Southerndown)** This early 19th-century flint

farmbuilding has brick dressings and a hipped plain-clay tiled roof and was converted in 1997 as an annexe to *Southerndown*. Attached to its south-west angle is a run of brick and flint walling, the surviving rear wall of a long-demolished farmbuilding.



Fig 7: The stables and attached wall in January 1996 prior to conversion



Fig 8: The barn in 1996, after conversion

**Barn (now Harvest Barn)** is a converted late 18th-century timber-framed weatherboarded barn of four bays. It has curved principal roof trusses and a roof with one-third hips. A scrum of modern attached farmbuildings was removed for the 1990 conversion and the wagon porch reinstated.

**Alscot Cottage (formerly End Cottage)** Like Alscot Farmhouse this is a three-bay 17th-century timber-framed building, the framing exposed to the left gable. As with Alscot Farmhouse the cottage was refronted in brick in this case in the early 19th century. The roof

is tiled and there is a 17th-century stack between the right hand bays.

### ***The contribution of key unlisted buildings***



Fig 9: The Coach House, north elevation

**The Coach House (formerly a service building to Alscot Lodge)** The former coach house is a two-storey flint building with brick dressings and bands with three modern windows on the Lane elevation and a gable window, formerly a hayloft door. The best windows are to the coach yard or north elevation with Y-tracery in arched heads to the ground floor, the right hand one inserted into the blocked coach house doorway (fig 9).

Across the small service yard is a single-storey brick and flint stable range of the same age and design with Y-tracery arched window heads and two former stable doors. The buildings were built as part of the Alscot Lodge and are thus listed as curtilage buildings. The Coach House's contribution to the character and appearance of Alscot Lane is considerable.

**Outbuildings and Walls fronting Alscot Lane (fig 10)** The character of the north side of Alscot lane is strikingly dependent on mostly flint and brick-dressed walls. These run from the gates to Alscot Lodge at the Longwick Road junction as far as the former

stable building to Alscot Farmyard, a total of 175m of the 220m east-west length of the conservation area.



Fig 10: The walls fronting Alscot Lane looking south-west

The walls are mainly early 19th century and characterised by flintwork divided into large horizontally rectangular panels by brick bands and toothed flush piers. They commence with the gate piers and entrance to Alscot Lodge, the wall crenellated to either side of stone-capped gate piers. Along Alscot Lane the crenellations give way to half-round copings.

Opposite the frontage of Alscot Lodge it becomes relatively modern brick stretch with an older flintwork plinth. Was the original lowered at some stage to give Alscot Lodge a more open view to the Chilterns? To the west of the Coach House are the red brick gate piers flanking the service access to Alscot Lodge.

East of The Coach House the old flint and brick walls resume, as the outer wall of outbuildings, the tile-roofed one old. Beyond the vehicular access to Harvest Barn the walls continue, interrupted only by the access gates to Southerndown. From the 1877 OS map it appears these walls were the rear walls of largely demolished farmbuildings.

Similar high quality flint and brick walls also bound the former kitchen gardens to Alscot Lodge which are, unusually, laid out as two long narrow ones side by side, and form the west curtilage of the grounds of Harvest Barn.

**The Pightle** is shown on the 1877 OS map as a long, narrow building consisting of two parts: of 18th-century date it has a two-storey range of three bays, brick with casement windows and plain-clay tiled roofs, and had a single storey wing continuing south. In recent years a two-storey range replaced the single storey one. More recently two and one-storey ranges were added at right angles at the south end. The west boundary is marked by a modern flint and brick wall for its first 25m.

### ***The Contribution of Historic Landscape and Parkland***

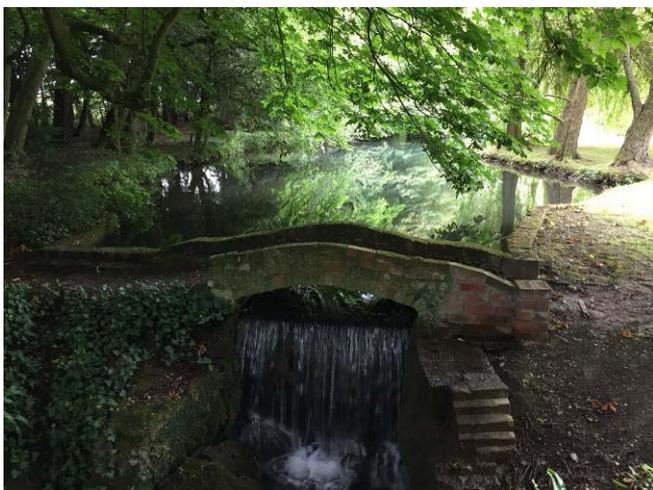
The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (BGT) have established that the small historic park to Alscot Lodge was laid out in the 1830s for John Evans Tarrant (1783-1848), a retired London solicitor. He was in residence by 1832 when Caleb Stratton, a local surveyor and schoolmaster, who after corresponding with Tarrant over the purchase of the estate, drew up a '*Sketch of an Estate Belonging to J E Tarrant, Esq.*'. He charged Tarrant 3 guineas for this and this was the design followed for Alscot Lodge's park layout.

The house was completed in 1838 but the grounds took longer and were largely completed in 1871. Tarrant and his wife had both died in 1848, leaving the grounds to be completed by Horace John Brooke, the husband of their daughter, Emma. The BGT describe it as a 'villa garden' rather than a park and it extends to 2.5 hectares. The 1877 OS map (fig1) is particularly helpful as it shows the park in some detail, including its

trees and paths. It is striking that it has remained relatively unchanged since, the main obvious change being the thickening of the tree planting in the western section.

It has terraces and lawns sloping down to the Crowbrook Stream dammed near the Longwick Road to form a lake about 100m long and 20m at its widest (fig 11).

The park is notable for its tree plantings that include a belt beyond the lake which replaced the track shown on the first edition OS maps (fig 3): a path still follows its course amid the trees. The western end of the grounds is densely planted and the current carriage drive from the Alscot Lane/Longwick Road junction was laid out in the 1830s and included a carriage-turning circle in front of the house, still in everyday use.



*Fig 11: The bridge, weir, and the lake beyond*

Within the grounds the course of the former road diverted in the early 1820s (fig 2) was incorporated in the design and can be clearly traced as it descends as a sunken lane towards the lake. To the east of the house there are kitchen gardens divided by walls into two long rectangles a coach house and stable block with their own separate gated access from Alscot Lane.

A fuller analysis and description are in the admirably complete and detailed BGT Research Report which can be viewed on [www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk).

### ***Local details***

#### ***Boundary Walls***

These have been discussed in the section on the Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings and are those along the north side of Alscot Lane, a stretch to the left of the main gates into Alscot Lodge fronting Longwick Road and those at right angles to the road within the former kitchen gardens to Alscot Lodge and flanking the front area to Harvest Barn (former farmyard walls). They are key elements in establishing the historic character of the conservation area.

These walls, though unlisted in their own right are within or form the curtilages of several listed buildings and are thus protected from demolition and alteration without consent.

#### ***Prevalent and traditional building materials***

The predominant publicly seen materials are the flints of the numerous boundary walls and outbuildings along the north side of Alscot Lane and give the conservation area much of its character. The Coach House is also in flint, as is the east wing of Alscot Lodge and two of the listed former farmbuildings now part of Southerndown. The flintwork is mostly dressed in brick with bands and flush keyed piers, brick quoins, window and door arches and jambs.

Timber-framing is found in Alscot Cottage, Alscot Farmhouse, Harvest Barn and the main barn to Southerndown. Brickwork is used for the refrontings, infill panels to timber-

framing and for the extensions to Alscot Farmhouse and Alscot Cottage. The Pightle appears to be all brick-built.

The principal block of Alscot Lodge, the most sophisticated building in the conservation area, is in the then fashionable stucco and the roof is slated.

Two roof materials dominate the conservation area: plain clay tiles and slate. Concrete interlocking tiles replaced these on Alscot Farmhouse to its detriment.

Although these elements and materials are described individually they and the vegetation all come together to create a historic settlement of considerable and unspoilt character.

### ***Contribution made by the natural environment***

#### ***Green Spaces & Open Spaces***

There are no formal areas of public open space, but Alscot Lane and the footpaths are accessible to the general public. The fields south of Alscot Lane are considered key green spaces for the conservation area's character.

The grounds of Alscot Lodge and the other houses and converted farmbuildings can be seen over boundary walls and hedges in places, through drive entrances or garden gates. Some views are glimpsed, particularly in summer when leaves are on trees and hedges but the visitor is very much aware of them as part of the historic whole.

#### ***Trees and Vegetation***

In such a rural location and surrounded by open countryside, trees and vegetation make

very significant contributions to the appearance and special character of the Alscot Conservation Area.

***Alscot Lodge*** The trees here are part of an earlier and mid-19th century planned landscape and thus distinct from the vegetation in the rest of the conservation area. There are a large number of surviving and additional mature and specimen trees within and surrounding the grounds of Alscot Lodge. Species include a fine holm oak overhanging the pavement along Longwick Road, horse chestnuts, limes, ashes, geans, yews, Scots pines, and black poplars.

#### ***Remainder of the Conservation Area***

Hedges are also significant in establishing the conservation area's rural character, mainly at the east end of the conservation area where there also a number of significant trees including beech, ash, yew and a walnut. Many are in gardens or hedges and clearly less formal than the grounds of Alscot Lodge.

#### ***The extent of loss, problems and pressures***

At present there are no pressures on the conservation area. However the Local Plan proposes residential development passing to both sides of the hamlet with the potential to dramatically change its character as a hamlet set within extensive farmland.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Recommendations**

#### ***1 Emerging Policy and Land Use Allocations***

The Princes Risborough Town Plan, the subject of public consultation in early 2016, proposed a green corridor passing to south and north of the conservation area to

preserve some sense of rural and self-contained integrity. Since that time the proposals for Princes Risborough have been incorporated into the overall new Local Plan for Wycombe District.

In order to protect the setting of the conservation area, it is recommended that the Local Plan maintains this element of the consultation plan. A nominal distance of 50m would provide the necessary setting. However, the exact boundary of development needs to relate to features on the ground – notably existing hedges – that would form an appropriate boundary. It may be appropriate to augment these hedgerows with additional tree planting to further reinforce this landscape boundary.

Moreover the Local Plan should set out positive plans to conserve and enhance the historic rural setting of Alscot Conservation Area, avoiding or minimising and mitigating any adverse impacts.

Clearly the extent of any green corridor would need to take into account the setting of the conservation area and ensure an adequate green buffer. Moreover the Local Plan should set out positive plans to conserve and enhance the historic rural setting of Alscot Conservation Area, avoiding or minimising and mitigating any adverse impacts.

Moreover the scale of development to the south of the conservation area will need to bear in mind the rising land to the south and the potential thus for unacceptably blocking views south towards the Chiltern Hills. Ensuring development in this area has a low scale and density, allowing green landscaping and longer view lines to the hills could reduce harm. The nearer to the

conservation area the more green landscaping, via such measures as incidental and planned open spaces and lower scale development, should be considered.

The proposals for development to the south of the conservation area should avoid as far as possible compromising the hamlet's integrity and avoid extending the suburban character of the town of Princes Risborough into the current buffer field in a way that links the two together in the way that happened decades ago to nearby Monks Risborough to the serious detriment of its character.

It should be noted that this section relates to the Local Plan proposals and it is not proposed that any green zones to protect the setting be included within the conservation area. Historic England considers this section's discussion of the issues relevant and justified as the Plan has the potential to have a very considerable impact on the setting of Alscot Conservation Area whatever the form subsequent development takes.

## ***2 The Conservation Area Appraisal and the Extension to the Conservation Area:***

During the preparation of the revised Appraisal and the public consultation exercise proposals for extending the conservation area boundary were thoroughly analysed and discussed. The conservation area boundary had been re-assessed to see how robust it was and whether it clearly identifies the area of special architectural or historic interest and character as required by the Act.

As a result the conservation area was extended to include two small fields south of Alscot Lane to the west of The Pightle and the wooded surrounds of the former road diverted in 1820.

These fields are shown on the enclosure map and the 1877 OS map (fig 1), the southern one narrower. Their size indicates they were home closes that later became orchards and are thus decidedly different in character from the surrounding arable and pasture fields (figs 12 and 13).



*Fig 12: View south-west across south field*

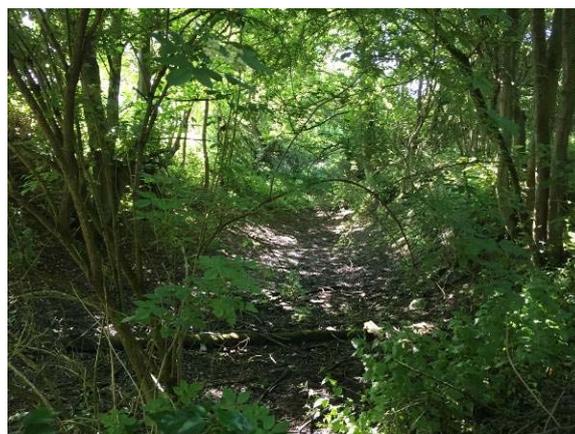
The 1877 map shows farmbuildings opposite Alscot Lodge and roughly where the current field gate is situated. The west and south range had been demolished by the date of the 1898 OS and the east range after 1921. The northern and larger of the two fields had become an orchard by 1898.



*Fig 13: View across south fields from the public footpath to their south*

It was considered that these two fields, the southern one with the public footpath alongside contributed considerably to the character of the conservation area. The views across to the Chilterns and views from the public footpath north and north-west are a material consideration, besides their openness.

At the west end of the lane the course of the old road south of Alscot Lane is now included. This is a sunken way that continues across the lane into the Grounds of Alscot Lodge and has archaeological, historical and evidential value in its own right. This sunken way in its well-treed triangle of land plays an important part in the history of Alscot and its evolution: in particular, the changes that took place in the earlier 19th century (fig 14).



*Fig 14: The old road looking south-east from Alscot Lane*

These two elements south of Alscot Lane were added to the conservation area as they related significantly to the hamlet's history and were distinct in scale and character from the farmland surrounding the conservation area.

## **2 Buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area:**

All older buildings are either statutorily listed in their own right or are listed by virtue of

being curtilage buildings and walls. By definition these contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, by virtue of their age, design, massing, scale, and enclosure.

The Pightle is the only unlisted building but it also makes a positive contribution to the historic and architectural character of Alscot Conservation Area and should be retained.

### **3 *Proposals for the enhancement of the Conservation Area***

It is not considered that any enhancement of this well conserved village is presently necessary, with the notable exception of some of the hedges fronting the lane at the east end of the conservation area. These have in places been thickened by inappropriate evergreen plantings, presumably to provide privacy. Their removal would enhance appreciation of the special character and better relate the buildings to the public realm aspects of Alscot.

The two narrow fields south of the lane will need particular care in the future to ensure their contribution to the conservation area's special character is safeguarded and maintained. For example consideration could be given to replanting as an orchard which could help in mitigating the impact of future development to the south of the conservation area.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Next Steps/further Information**

#### **1 *Public Consultation and Community Involvement***

The draft revisions to the Alscot Conservation Area Appraisal were consulted on during October and November 2016. Both relevant

consultees, including the Chilterns Conservation Board and Historic England, and each household within the conservation area received a copy of the appraisal, including the appraisal map, and their comments and suggestions were carefully considered to take account of these responses. The revised Conservation Area Appraisal was formally adopted by Wycombe District Council in February 2017 and supersedes the 1997 character survey.

#### **2 *Monitoring***

Changes in the appearance and condition of the Alscot Conservation Area should be monitored regularly. A photographic survey was undertaken at the time of the appraisal work, and this could be updated every two years or so.

#### **3 *Design Guidance***

The policies and proposals of the Wycombe District Local Plan are the primary source of reference for development management advice. In addition the Council's approved Conservation Areas guidance note is seen as a supporting document to the plan.

The Council will also have in mind the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) which requires it to have special regard for the impact of proposals on the significance of a conservation area or a listed building, and indeed on non-designated heritage assets.

Appended to this document is a series of development guidelines, covering both new development and the protection of existing character. This forms the base of a management plan for the conservation area but avoids being site specific as proposals for development within or beyond the

conservation area will be judged on their individual merits at the appropriate time.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A Conservation Area Map

The attached Appraisal map illustrates and clarifies the text and defines the extent of the area which is regarded as possessing those qualities of special character, architectural and historic interest which designation is intended to protect. It identifies particular areas, vistas, views, buildings, etc. that are considered essential to that character.

Where buildings are shown on the conservation area map as being of local importance, they are considered to make an especially positive contribution to the historic interest or architectural character of the conservation area.

### Appendix B Listed Buildings:

These are indicated on the conservation area map and listed in earlier pages. Further information on listed buildings can be obtained from the Historic England website [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk)

If you own a listed building and are considering undertaking alteration works, please ensure that you contact the Conservation Officer at Wycombe District Council to find out whether they require listed building consent and for advice.

### Appendix C Bibliography:

Victoria County History of Buckinghamshire:  
1925  
Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust: Research  
and Recording Project: Alscot Lodge 2015

Statutory List Entries (Historic England)

Historic mapping, Census and Directory entries

### Appendix D Acknowledgements

This revision has been greatly assisted by the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust's excellent and thorough Report on Alscot Lodge's house and historic park and garden and by advice and comments from Historic England's Historic Places Advisor (South East England).

### Appendix E

#### Development Control Guidelines

The following guidelines have been drawn up for the management of change in the Alscot Conservation Area to allow for development and alterations that keep the conservation area vital, without losing the characteristics that make it special:

In conservation areas, the Council has an overriding and statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. Many seemingly minor alterations, if insensitively carried out, can have a cumulative and highly damaging effect on the overall appearance of the area. Such alterations not only damage appearance, but also reduce character and the historic patina of houses as historic features and adversely affect overall attractions of the conservation area.

#### Preservation of existing character: the maintenance of historic buildings in Alscot Conservation Area

1 The use of traditional materials and detailing can have a considerable positive effect in enhancing the conservation area. The owners of historic properties should be encouraged to remove unsympathetic modern materials, such as concrete

tiles and plastic rainwater goods, and to reinstate traditional materials such as plain clay tiles, painted timber windows and cast iron guttering.

2 Repointing should only be carried out when structurally necessary, and kept to a minimum. Variations in colour and the application of excessive amounts of mortar in a non-traditional manner can detract from flintwork and brickwork and obscure it. Inappropriate mixes can cause brickwork to deteriorate more rapidly and lime mortar should always be the preferred choice.

3 A variety of window types can be seen within the conservation area including wooden sliding sashes and casements. They add to the charm and character of the area. Original windows should generally be retained as they have a character of their own which derives from the proportions of the frames and glazing bars and from the charm of old glass which can have a 'wobbly' or rippled effect. Original single glazed windows can be draught-proofed and upgraded by specialist companies and secondary glazing installed to improve heat retention. UPVC windows should not be installed as their proportions, opening methods, modern shiny plastic or bogus 'wood-grain' foil appearance and the reflection of the double glazed units are all very much at odds with the traditional character of historic buildings.

4 The use of modern machine made roof tiles should be avoided as a

replacement for traditional handmade tiles. Concrete or artificial slate should be avoided as these materials are visually detrimental.

### **The maintenance of trees and green spaces**

5 Trees make a significant contribution to Alscot's special character and property owners should continue to manage existing trees sensitively. Within the conservation area, consent is required to fell, lop or top trees. Consideration should be given of important views into and out of the village when planting or undertaking tree works, as should the setting of historic buildings.

All trees in conservation areas are protected and any new development should recognise this and should not present a risk to their continued growth and habit.

6 The fields, gardens, parkland and incidental open space, whether publicly visible or private, are key to the character of Alscot as a conservation area. These areas are valuable resources and will be protected.

### **Design guidance for new development and extensions**

7 In the conservation area higher standards of design are required, as it is the statutory function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance its special character as identified in this appraisal.

- 8 Since 2006 most planning applications within the conservation area require Design and Access statements accompanying them, in order for local authorities to evaluate the impact of the scheme on the wider locality, and understand the design process behind the proposal. Applications for listed building consent will also require a Heritage Asset Statement.
- 9 Listed and other significant buildings are identified on the survey map and their specific qualities are described in the text. Any new development must not harm the buildings or their settings or any of their special architectural or historic features. It should be recognised that new development may well not be acceptable in this rural conservation area.
- 10 Applications for development adjoining but beyond the conservation area boundary will be assessed for their affect upon the conservation area's character, appearance, and setting, and may be refused permission if this affect is considered adverse. This is particularly significant for Alscot as its setting is entirely rural.
- 11 Special care should be taken to avoid or minimise harm to the character or appearance of the conservation area through intrusive development within views into and out of the conservation area. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map.
- Contextual design**
- 12 Within Alscot any new development such as extensions, ancillary buildings or other proposals should respect the character of this small rural village and respond to the immediate environment, particularly in terms of scale, density, form, materials and detailing. Building works such as extensions must be designed not as a separate entity but relate to the original building. Care should be taken not to fill gaps between buildings which could then give the appearance of continuous development.
- 13 The intention of this guideline is not that new development should automatically replicate buildings in the locality but that important features set out above should be taken into account where appropriate, especially in relation to the individual circumstances of each case.
- 14 Development opportunities in Alscot Conservation Area are limited indeed. Proposals for new development and extensions within the conservation area should include a detailed analysis of the locality and villagescape, and show how the proposals have been drawn up in relation to this by means of a Design and Access Statement and/or Heritage Asset Statement as appropriate.
- 15 Where extensions to existing buildings are proposed, the extension should be subservient to the main buildings, with a lower roofline.
- Appearance, materials and detailing**
- 16 The emphasis in conservation areas is to provide high quality design. Conservation area status does not

preclude good modern design provided that it takes account of the prevailing form of existing development, scale, density, height and massing. Innovative modern design can be successfully integrated into historic areas and can provide vitality and interest to the streetscene. Natural materials and high quality detailing should be incorporated into any proposals.

17 Where a more traditional approach is appropriate buildings should be designed in a traditional form (including plan form, roof spans and pitches, etc) and include pitched roofs. Dormers and rooflights should be modestly sized. Use of historic detailing such as stringcourses, eaves details, fenestration pattern, etc, will be acceptable if they are appropriate to the design of the new building. Such detailing, or a modern interpretation of it, can do much to break up facades of buildings. Chimneys are essential in roofscapes and should be incorporated into designs.

18 Materials for any new building works must be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area. Where possible local traditional material should be used: good quality traditional sand-faced brick and/or, hand-laid random coursed flintwork for walling and sand-faced plain clay roof tiles, and natural slate. Modern interpretation and techniques are not always visually successful and should thus be used with care. Where traditional materials survive they should be retained.

19 Inappropriate replacement windows and doors can damage the character of the conservation area. Traditional natural materials should be used in order to safeguard the special character of the conservation area. Windows should be timber, painted, not stained, and their design should reflect local styles, usually sliding sashes or side-hung casements. If the windows of unlisted buildings are to be double-glazed these should be a slimline type with a maximum depth of 14mm (4mm glass and a 6mm inert gas-filled cavity). Joinery details should be submitted with planning applications. Top hung lights and modern materials such as UPVC and aluminium are inappropriate in the conservation area. Doors should be traditional panelled ones or vertically match-boarded for vernacular cottages.

#### **Boundary treatments**

20 Some agricultural hedges are given protection by the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations but in villages the majority of hedges are not covered by these Regulations. However in the conservation area hedgerows should be retained and where possible enhanced.

#### **Public realm**

22 Street furniture, lamp posts, CCTV camera mountings and posts, telephone boxes and other public works that are not within the scope of planning control can have a disproportionate impact on the streetscape and character of a conservation area. However it is

unlikely that much of this sort of intrusion will come to such a rural and isolated conservation area where the majority of the buildings are either listed in their own right or by virtue of their curtilage and boundary status.

23 Surfacing within domestic curtilages for driveways, paths and hardstandings should be in keeping with the rural nature of the hamlet. Large areas of tarmac and concrete are wholly out of place. Gravel, whether loose or resin-bonded is infinitely preferable, particularly in large areas of parking such as a farmyard. Paths to front doors were historically surfaced with clay tiles or brick, and this is a tradition that could be encouraged.

24 Satellite dishes and solar panels are unsightly especially when poorly sited or on front elevations. Care should be taken to site these in the back garden or on roof slopes that are not visible from the lane or public views. Satellite dishes and solar panels are generally not acceptable affixed to listed buildings and should be located on ancillary buildings out of public view.

*Further information can be obtained on Wycombe District Council's website or by contacting the Conservation Officer on 01494 421578.*