

Briary Conservation Area

Conservation Area Appraisal

Adopted June 2012



Conservation and Design
Planning Services

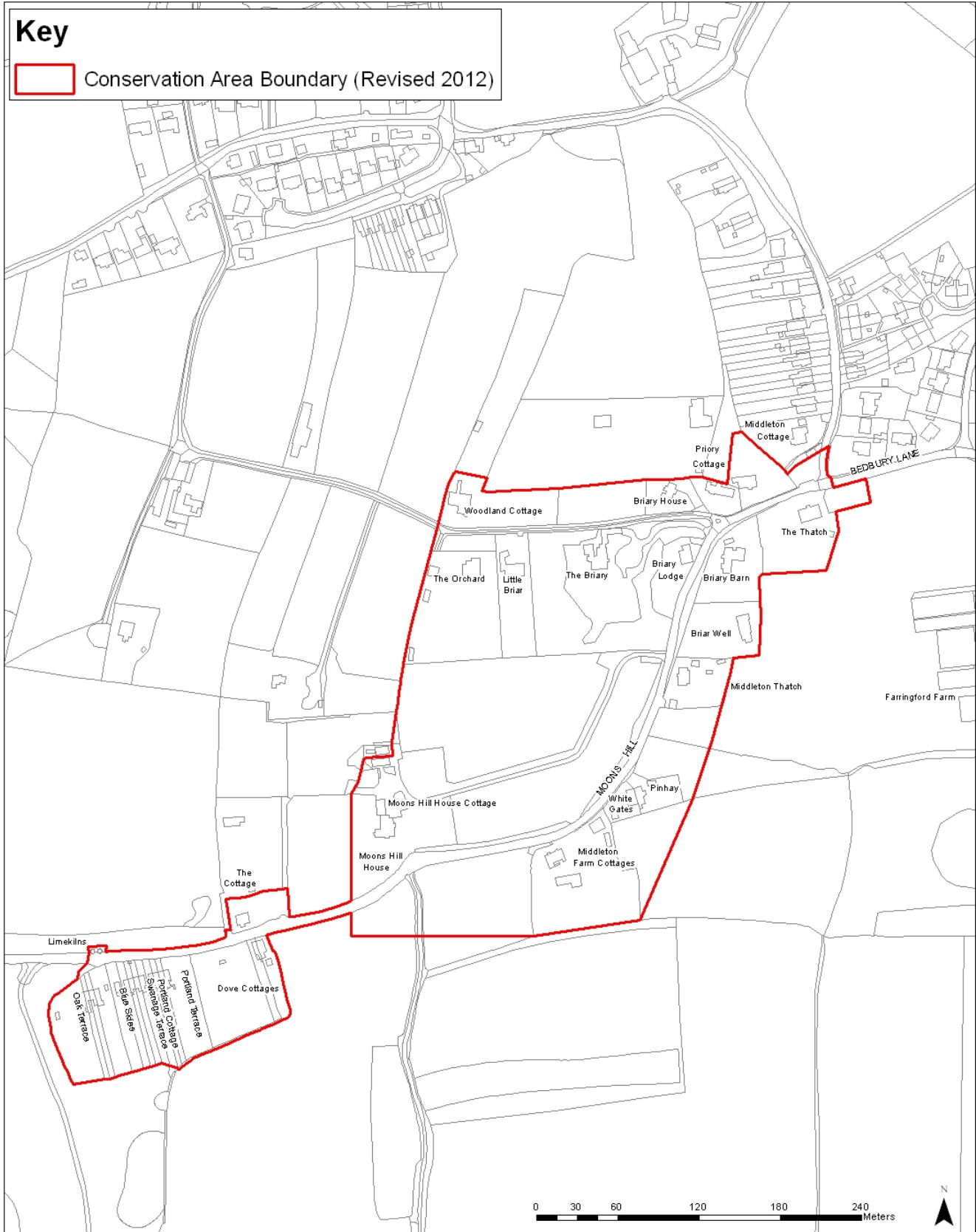
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Briary Conservation Area



1 Introduction

1.1 The Briary Conservation Area falls within the parish of Freshwater on the western peninsular of the Island. Freshwater has 3 existing conservation areas and these are Pound Green, Freshwater Bay and Briary. Pound Green and Briary were designated in July 1979 and Freshwater Bay 30 years later in December 2009. This conservation area appraisal has been undertaken as part of a review of areas with special character. Briary has already been recognised for its historic and architectural character that is worthy of protection but despite its earlier designation there is no appraisal document to help identify its special character. The area has now been reappraised to ensure the boundary still captures the areas special interest.

1.2 This appraisal has been produced using information contained within the Freshwater Village Design Statement (2007/08), Freshwater Parish Plan (2004-6), Isle of Wight History Centre website, Isle of Wight Industrial Archaeology Society website, Historic Environment Records (HER), the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), the Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP), and the Isle of Wight Records Office. A full list of references can be found in the bibliography at the back of this document.

1.3 This document does not identify all the known heritage assets within the conservation area, therefore any omission of any building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

2 Planning policy context

2.1 The Isle of Wight Council recognises that a quality built environment is an essential element in creating distinctive, enjoyable and successful places in which to live and work. Our Ecoland Sustainable Community Strategy and Island Plan Core Strategy recognise that our historic environment assets attract investment and tourism, can provide a focus for successful regeneration and are highly valued by local communities.

2.2 As part of a rolling programme of conservation area designation and review, the Council has reviewed Briary Conservation Area. Local Planning Authorities have a duty under The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate as conservation areas any areas considered to be of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

2.3 The legislation also makes provision for schemes to enhance the area. Therefore, the inclusion of areas of potential allows for schemes to be put forward that will improve the area, in keeping with its own individual character, and to a high standard. Further policy guidance and information for land and property owners can be found www.iwight.com/conservation.

2.4 Designation **does not** mean that development cannot take place within the conservation area or within its setting. Designation means that special consideration will be given to applications within the conservation area to ensure that any demolition is fully justified and that schemes (which are acceptable on all other planning grounds) are of a suitable design, are high quality and appropriate to the special character. This additional level of consideration allows the Council to insist upon the best possible standards of design within a conservation area, and equally to refuse development proposals on the grounds of poor design or quality.

2.5 Conservation area appraisals are produced in partnership with the community. By means of a 6 week period of public consultation (in this instance December 16th 2011 to January 27th 2012), local communities are able to input to the research to identify areas of special character and to map the development of their distinctive streetscapes. Conservation area appraisal documents produced in partnership with local people in this way can assist with community planning to explore the best ways for an area to develop and grow whilst ensuring that it keeps its local character and sense of identity.

3 Location, context and setting

3.1 The Briary Conservation Area is located in an area known generically as Freshwater Isle and there are properties located in both the parishes of Freshwater and Totland. Freshwater and Totland are situated in the west of the Isle of Wight. Totland is bounded by the sea on the north, south and eastern side. Freshwater extends from the Parish of Totland on the western side to the town of Yarmouth and the Parishes of Thorley, Shalfleet and Brighstone in the east.

3.2 The Briary Conservation Area encompasses the majority of Moons Hill, the eastern end of Briary Lane and a handful of buildings where Moons Hill meets Middleton. The properties to the west of Moons Hill are within the Parish of Totland and those to the east of Moons Hill are within Freshwater Parish. Newport, the Isle of Wight's administrative centre is 17km (11 miles) to the east. Freshwater and Totland's economy's are mainly based on agriculture and tourism, with a small number of manufacturing and service companies. The population of Freshwater is just over 5,000 and Totland just under 3,000¹.

3.3 The geology of Briary comprises of clays of the Barton, Bracklesham, Thames and Lambeth Groups.

3.4 For the purposes of this document, and bearing in mind the majority of properties present in the Briary Conservation Area predate the establishment of Totland in 1894, reference will be made to its location within Freshwater.

4 Historic development of Freshwater

4.1 A Neolithic mortuary enclosure on Tennyson Down indicates that Freshwater area was significant in the early prehistoric with the natural chalk ridge rising toward the west providing a possible processional route for ritual. Some prehistoric material has been recorded from this area but there is no known evidence that this was a heavily populated landscape.

4.2 An Anglo-Saxon settlement may have grown up beside the parish church on gravel deposits beside the Yar Estuary, close to the lowest fording point of the River Yar and north of the estate centre at Kings Manor. By the late Anglo-Saxon period Freshwater was a royal estate. The estate centre was at Kings Manor (known at the time of the Domesday Survey as Kings Freshwater). The bounds of this estate may have corresponded with the mother parish of Freshwater before the Norman Conquest, including land to the east of the Yar Estuary. Freshwater Parish Church of All Saints has some Anglo-Saxon fabric with its walls but should not be considered as the focus for settlement in this area as the church was divorced from the agrarian community that it served.

4.3 In the 12th century further land was granted out of Kings Freshwater to form the manor of Weston Braboef. A planned settlement may have been laid out after the Norman Conquest in the area later known as School Green.

4.4 Field patterns show clear evidence of enclosure from medieval open-field. In medieval times open-field arable seem to have occupied a significant percentage of land within this area. There are no references in Domesday Book to woodland within Freshwater. This apparent lack of woodland may be a much older phenomenon. Extensive woodland clearance may have taken place by later prehistoric or Roman times, allowing the development of relatively large areas of open-field in the later Anglo-Saxon period. However, elsewhere on the Island extensive prehistoric woodland clearance is associated with archaeological evidence of contemporary settlement.

4.5 In the 17th century, the Freshwater region was a predominantly agricultural area, made up of scattered, small hamlets and farmsteads, dispersed throughout Freshwater Isle amongst a mixture of enclosed and open field systems. There was no single focus to the settlements in the area and therefore, even in the 17th century, there existed no significant nucleated settlement. From Saxon times, the development of the settlement pattern had resulted in a polyfocal pattern, based on a loosely associated and dispersed collection of settlements. The Freshwater parish

¹ Office for National Statistics, 2001 Census data

therefore consisted of small pockets of habitation, centred on a 'green': More Green, Freshwater Green, Pound Green, Sheepwash Green, Middleton Green, Stroud, Easton, Norton and the settlement round the parish church. However, there were two areas of significant settlement: one centred on School Green and another crowding around the west end of the parish church, in what is today Church Place. Small fishing hamlets existed at Freshwater Gate, Brambles Chine and Norton.

4.6 By using the Hearth Tax records, the population of Freshwater Isle can be estimated at around five hundred in the last half of the 17th century. The majority of this population earned a living from agriculture: in the wills for Freshwater, most people are described as 'husbandman' or 'yeoman'. Almost seventy five percent of the population were involved primarily in agriculture. The other occupations are allied agricultural trades, such as blacksmith, miller and carpenter, and service trades, such as grocer and butcher.

4.7 Appreciation of the Island by the wealthy from late 18th century led to building of isolated larger houses at Norton, Westhill and Farringford. In mid 19th century Lord Tennyson lived at Farringford and other well-to-do and artistic residents also came to Freshwater Isle. Weston Manor dates from 1870s. Farringford and Weston Manor added parkland and estate buildings to the landscape. As well as larger Victorian and Edwardian villas, modest semi-detached cottages were built around Freshwater. The present village centre at Freshwater grew up around the existing hamlet of School Green (shown as 'Freshwater Green on the OS 1793 map) developing from the late 19th century when Tennyson Road and Avenue Road were laid out to the west of School Green Road. In 1885 Afton Road was built on the east side of the river, providing a new route into Freshwater Isle via Bow Bridge and easier access to Freshwater Bay. Railway links between Newport, Yarmouth and Freshwater were created from 1889 to 1953. Considerable residential development continued in the later 20th century.

5 Archaeological potential

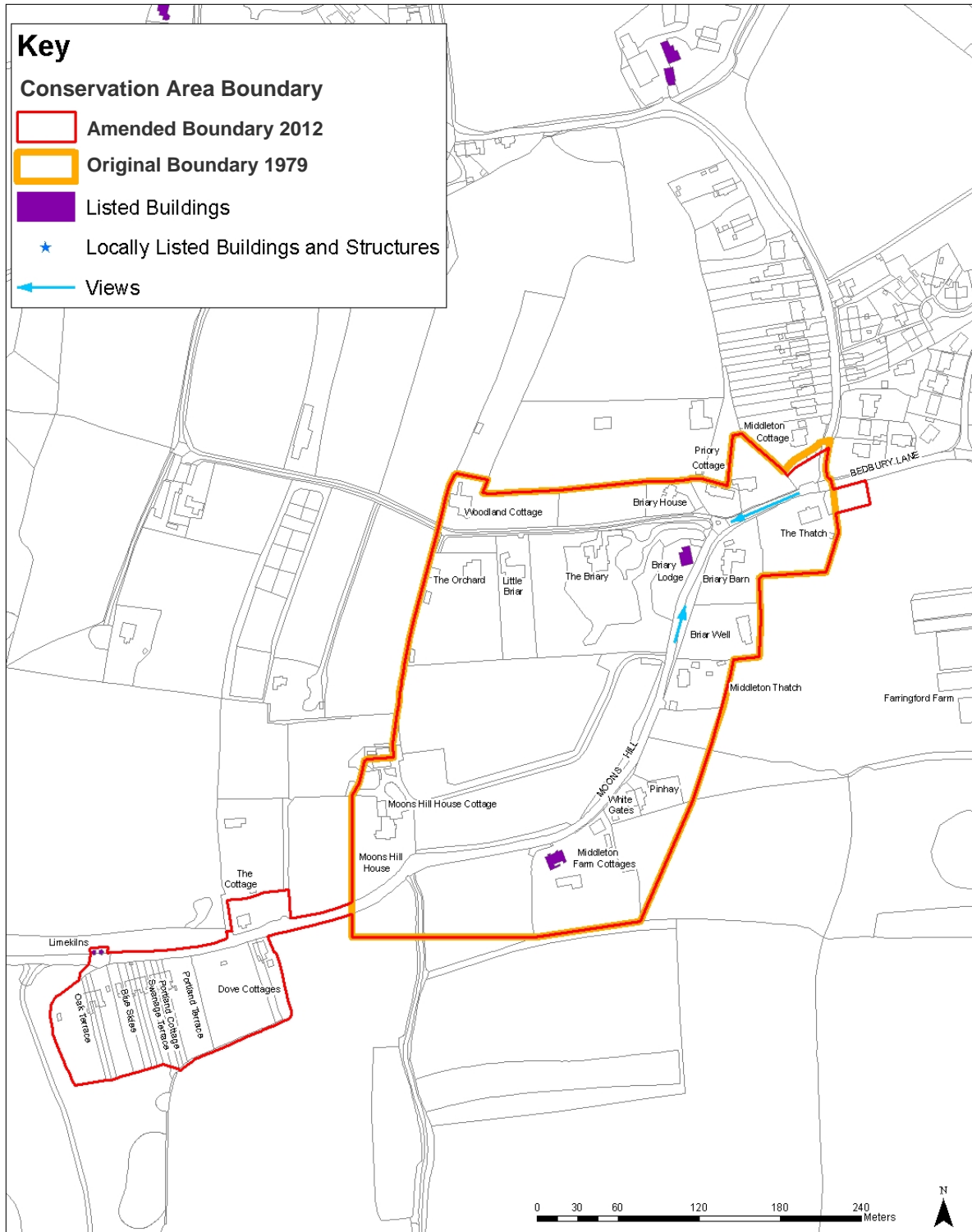
5.1 Archaeological remains often contribute to the sense of place of an area, providing historic context which includes evidence of 30,000 years of human intervention in the landscape. Whilst the current evidence can only demonstrate a high degree of potential for archaeological remains in this area it should be understood that each period overlies the preceding chapter of human history producing a time depth that has resulted in the current unique character of the area. In this instance, the conservation area is best considered within the context of the Freshwater Isle area, comprising of land to the west of the River Yar and to the north of the chalk downs. Historically, Freshwater Isle was isolated from the rest of the Isle of Wight and had developed a distinctive landscape character by medieval times, with green rolling down land and an intricate network of routes and pathways connecting a series of small hamlets.

5.2 A variety of prehistoric material has been recorded from this area, including worked flint and metal work but no clear evidence survives of landscape use or for settlement other than the Headon Hill Bronze Age round barrows. A Bronze Age axe hoard has been recorded at Moons Hill and Bronze Age urn fragments recorded at Totland. Roman burials, coins and pottery have been recorded but no Roman buildings have been recorded to date. However, it has been predicted that the site of a Roman villa may exist in this area.

5.3 This document does not identify all the known heritage assets within the conservation area, therefore any omission of any building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

6 Briary Character Analysis

6.1 The Briary Conservation Area is a hamlet that comprises of a group of houses that principally bound Alum Bay Old Road, which is known as Moons Hill. The analysis of the character of this area is examined in depth in the following chapters.



Briary Conservation Area

Key Views

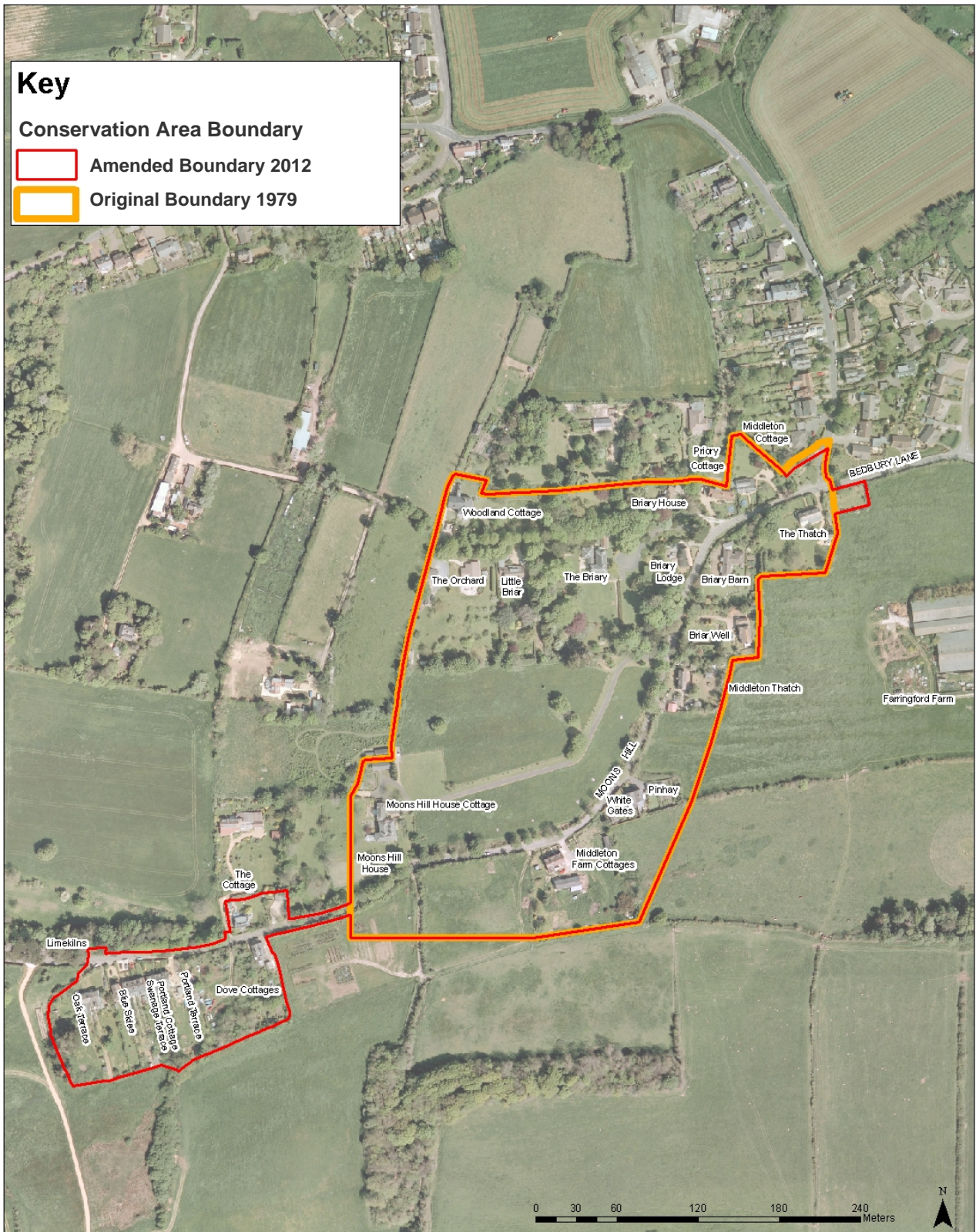


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Figure 1: Character area and key views

Summary of special interest

The variety of vernacular architecture nestled amongst the trees and hedgerows along a narrow twisting lane.



Briary Conservation Area

Conservation Area Boundary



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Figure 2: Aerial photograph, 2005

7 Historic development

7.1 The unpublished 1793 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3 below) appears to illustrate that what is known today as Middleton Farm Cottage was present, along with Middleton Cottage, The Thatch (which was originally 2 properties) and Briary Lodge. Middleton Farm Cottage is inscribed "1554 restored 1884 AET". References are made to these initials representing either Alfred and Emily Tennyson or Alfred Lord Tennyson. Little of the original cottages remain and whilst the reference to Emily in the initials is not clear, these Farringford Estate cottages are good examples of the Tennyson Estate style.



Figure 3: The unpublished Ordnance Survey map of 1793 showing 4 properties that exist today

7.2 The 1861 Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 4, page 7) illustrates some isolated additional development along Moons Hill and notably Woodland Cottage and Moons Hill House are present. Moons Hill House is likely to date from the 1830's and is of a late Regency style. Attached to the house is a stone walled cottage which appears to have once been the stables. Between 1861 and 1896 the house was linked to the stables which now forms an annex. Interestingly the property known today as Prior Cottage appears at this time, despite having a date stone within its front elevation stating 1896. The cottage was originally 2 cottages.

7.3 The 1896 Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 5, page 7) closely reflects the extent of development found in 1861, with the notable addition of The Briary. This property was built by George Frederic Watts in 1873. Watts (1817 – 1904) was a popular English Victorian painter and sculptor associated with the Symbolist movement. The decision to build here follows his move to the Island in 1871 where he bought property close to where his friends Julia Margaret Cameron and Tennyson who already had homes here. This area clearly had strong cultural associations and in the late 19th century Freshwater had a distinctive creative community, although many writers, painters and intellectuals were summer visitors rather than permanent residents. The local environment both influenced this creative community and was influenced by it (seen today by some of the properties present).



Figure 4: The 1861 Ordnance Survey Map illustrating Woodland Cottage and Priory Cottage at the top and Moons Hill House below.



Figure 5: The 1896 Ordnance Survey Map illustrating the addition of The Briary (top) and the later 19th century workers cottages (bottom).

7.4 The present Briary property is a replacement, in a different style of the one built in 1873 which was destroyed by fire in 1934. Briary Lodge became the lodge building for The Briary and the stone building opposite the lodge known today as Briary Barn appears contemporary with the lodge but was later used as the stables for The Briary. The drive for the current Briary building remains the same including the turning circle at the front for the carriages.

7.5 White Gates, Pinhay, 1&2 Dove Cottages and the Portland, Swanage and Oak Terraces (believed to be workers cottages for Farringford Farm) are also present on the 1896 Ordnance

Survey map (Figure 5, page 7). The 1907 Ordnance Survey map indicates the same properties present as those in 1896.

7.6 The 20th century sees developments to the west of Briary (post 1979) and in particular Briar Well which replaced a property present on the 1861 Ordnance Survey map. Briary Barn, previously the stables for The Briary has been converted into a dwelling. There is also an Edwardian infill development between Swanage and Oak terrace, known today as Blue Skies.

7.7 Opposite Portland, Swanage and Oak Terraces are the disused lime kilns, now grade II listed (Figure 6 below). There has always been much speculation as to the origin of these structures which are often referred to as ice houses or even roman crematoriums (the Ordnance Survey maps up until 1907 use this term). However recent surveys have led to the conclusion that these are a 'flare' type of lime kiln.

7.8 The kilns appear to have been simply sculptured pits dug into the top of the bank with entrances through the front of the bank. No building materials were used as the surrounding clay would have fired itself into a secure terracotta wall.



Figure 6: *The lime kilns, under heavy overgrowth.*

7.9 Robert Walker excavated these structures in the 1890's and subsequently built the concrete domes and bricked entrances to protect them from vandalism. Their final appearance was the result of some speculation on Walker's part as to the original shape.

7.10 In the absence of building materials or finds, dating them is not possible. Many local people were aware of Walker's excavations at the time but none seem able to supply anecdotal explanation for the kilns. This would seem to put their latest possible date as the end of the 18th century or very early 19th century. Lime kiln design tells us little as such basic design remained unchanged for centuries. If they were created to provide field liming, rather than building material, they would be later rather than earlier. The 1837 tithe map shows all the surrounding land to be arable farmland, suggesting a need for considerable liming.

7.11 Regarding the people that lived in this area, unfortunately Kelly's Directory of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (volumes 1889 – 1894) does not make reference to any of the properties or people in this area.

7.12 Up until the 20th century the roads would have been little more than single-carriage track ways, whose surface had been strengthened with a coating of compacted gravel of variable thickness. Where potholes appeared in the thinner sections, further gravel or gathered stones were deposited in the holes. Gravel terraces around the parish church and at Easton would have provided a source of gravel.

7.13 Research suggests that the name Moons Hill appears to have been derived from the French

translation “the Monk”. There were Monastic connections with Freshwater and these are still evident from Monks Farm and Monks Lane between Norton and Colwell Bay.

8 Qualities, materials and local details

8.1 The area has mainly detached residential dwellings but with some semi-detached and terraced buildings at the western end. Natural stone is prominent, principally rough coursed rubble with dressings of stone and brick used for quoins and around windows and doors. There are two examples of painted natural stone but unpainted is more common (see Figure 7 below).



Figure 7: The presence of painted and unpainted natural stone buildings

8.2 Render has been used for Moons Hill House and The Briary and despite the latter being a 1930's dwelling, the status of these properties reflects this material with its smooth finish replicating an expensive dressed stone. These are the exception in an area dominated by simple vernacular buildings using local materials and styles. The group of three terraces in the southern end of the area are particularly interesting with a purposeful variety of pebbles, stone and brick being used with great decorative effect (see Figure 8 below).



Figure 8: Pebbles, stone and brick being used with great decorative effect

8.3 The Edwardian Blue Skies property (Figure 9, page 10) is a good example of Edwardian design with its mock Tudor panels on render and the brick ground floor. Whilst this is a later style of building for this area it is a good example of this type of building. Middleton Farm Cottage is also very interesting with its ironstone front elevation and red brick dressings and the windows with their terracotta surrounds with vine leaf motifs (see Figure 10, page 10).



Figure 9: *An Edwardian infill*



Figure 10: *Middleton Farm Cottage*

8.4 Roofs are covered with slate, clay tile and thatch, with the latter appearing on the most prominent buildings in the area. Slate roofs tend to have terracotta ridges. Gabled roofs dominate and are mostly orientated with the eaves facing the road. A variation to this is the later red brick buildings which present their gable ends to the road with the decorated timber barge boards (see Figure 11 below). The brick used for their construction is notably a deeper darker red than that used for the dressings of other earlier buildings suggesting an alternative source.



Figure 11: *The rarer red brick buildings with their decorated timber bargeboards.*

8.5 Occasionally dormers appear but they are not a dominant feature unlike chimney stacks which protrude through roofs everywhere. Red brick stacks utilise both buff and terracotta pots.

8.6 Casement windows are common with a high proportion of painted timber windows retained. The notable exception to this is Woodlands Cottage and Moons Hill House with their elegant sliding sash windows. Oak terrace (Figure 8, previous page) also has timber sliding sash windows. Some buildings have lost their original windows which is unfortunate. Figure 11 above shows this, although Pinhay (the left hand property in the right hand photograph) still retains its timber sliding sash windows.

8.7 Boundary treatments tend to be hedgerows with some low fences or walls occasionally found. The natural boundaries reinforce the rural aspect of this area with glimpses through to properties through the vegetation. Property curtilages are often large with plenty of space around and between buildings.

9 Public realm

9.1 The street surface is tarmac and there is no formal arrangement for pedestrians. Despite the widening of the roadside verge outside Briary Barn and Briary Well, the road is narrow, and mainly enclosed by vegetation and trees. From Middleton Farm Cottage to Dove Cottage the road is very narrow and enclosed by trees. There are no parking restrictions in force and vehicles tend to park in the Highway outside of Portland, Swanage and Oak Terraces.

9.2 Telephone and electricity cables and their posts are present which does harm the rural character of the area. There is however a notable absence of street lighting, signage and road markings, all of which reinforces the rural character of this area.

9.3 The later developments in the northern end of the area have had their front boundaries reduced to create grass verges which visually enlarge the highway despite the road width remaining the same. This is contrary to the rest of the area which is characterised by its narrow twisty road.

10 Green spaces and biodiversity value

10.1 Much of Freshwater area is classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the coastline as Heritage Coast. In particular the southern part around Farringford House and Farringford Farm are included within the AONB. Immediately to the south and neighbouring Farringford Park is Tennyson Down which is nationally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its calcareous grassland. It is also part of a wider internationally important Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is a highly sensitive and valuable area.

10.2 The largest area of open space is to the east of Moons Hill House but this area is private and not particularly obvious when passing through. Properties tend to have substantial gardens to the side and rear and many have glimpses through to the Downs on the southern side.

10.3 The trees in this area form the backdrop to the majority of buildings. In particular the trees around the Briary and Briary Lodge are important and this is recognised by their protection with tree preservation orders. The tree cover is also valuable in this conservation area for providing habitat for red squirrels. Tree corridors are particularly important to maintain in order for the squirrels to move safely through the landscape.

11 Key views

11.1 The views approaching from the east looking towards Briary Lodge and from the south looking towards Priory Cottage are important in that these are both appreciated from the enclosed sections of the public highway and focus the view towards the more open aspect with the traditional buildings nestled amongst the trees (see Figure 12 below). These views are uninterrupted and define the rural character of the area.



Figure 12: Important views – looking westwards and northwards respectively

CONDITION ANALYSIS

The preceding chapters have defined the character of the conservation area and listed a host of positive elements that are essential for its continued existence as an area of special interest. However there are a number of factors that are recognised to have a cumulative negative affect.

Problems, pressures and the capacity for change

P1 There are examples where traditional windows and doors have been replaced with later less sympathetic units. Care should be taken to retain existing windows and doors and where replacements are required consideration should be given to the type, design and profile.

P2 Trees are important across the conservation area and should be maintained.

P3 Pressure for development and redevelopment may result in applications for inappropriate infill dwellings and inappropriate extensions to buildings of local interest which fail to respect the size, scale and materials of the original buildings. Such applications will not be supported.

Potential for enhancements

E1 A key opportunity for improvements will be the Council's Highways PFI project involving renewal and like for like replacement across the Island from 2013 and to include road surfacing, street furniture, road signs and lighting. This is an opportunity to safeguard the local distinctiveness through improving the poor aesthetics of the public realm, in particular reducing the cluttered elements of the public realm. The general approach to all highways works throughout the conservation area will follow the less-is-more principle and an audit of the public realm should be undertaken to inform decision making. Detailed guidance is contained in the Council's Guidance for Works on Highways and the Public Realm document. Where cost savings permit, natural or traditional materials will be sought, stretches of historic material re-laid and specific local designs replicated in order to sustain important local character.

E2 Outside of the PFI project, the Council will work in partnership to secure sensitive public realm enhancement schemes in the conservation area. We will work with the Parish Council to identify public realm improvement projects which will sustain the historic interest and local distinctiveness of the conservation area.

E3 The Council will continually seek improvements to both vehicle and pedestrian movements whilst respecting the character of the area.

E4 Within the designated conservation area boundaries, the local planning authority will apply stricter policies and tighter controls on all types of development, paying particular attention to the need to sustain and enhance the character of the conservation area and to consider its setting in line with National Planning Policy Framework and the Isle of Wight Council Core Strategy Island Plan (Policy DM11). Where new developments are proposed in the conservation area or its setting, the local planning authority will seek to encourage ingenuity and quality in design, appropriate to its particular historic context. The need to sustain various characteristics such as the historic plan form, views, traditional materials and relationships between buildings will be key considerations in determining applications within the designated area. Proposals which lack quality materials or applications which are poorly detailed will not be supported. Key information on the external finishes, profiles and fenestration detailing will be sought as part of the application in order that the effect of a proposal on the character of the conservation area can be determined.

E5 In line with English Heritage guidance on sustaining and enhancing the character of a conservation area, residential dwellings may be subject to an Article 4 Direction to remove certain permitted development rights. This will control certain types of development and may prevent the loss of original material. Where loss is acceptable steps should be taken to control the type, design and profile of certain features (for example, replacement windows).

E6 Where appropriate the local planning authority will work with owners and the Parish Council

to improve the local environment and take action to address disamenity, unlawful development, inappropriate land uses and to secure investment in and sensitive management of vacant land or buildings in the area.



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1793 Unpublished Ordnance Survey Map

1st Survey 1861

2nd Edition 1896

3rd Edition 1907

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Richard Smout (County Archivist) and David Lewis.

Appendix A—Boundary description

- Starting at the junction between Bedbury Lane and Middleton head east along the southern edge of Bedbury Lane until the far eastern boundary of The Thatch.
 - Follow the boundary of The Thatch south and west until the eastern boundary of Briary Barn.
 - Continue southwards following the eastern boundaries of Briary Barn and Briar Well.
 - Turn west and follow the southern boundary of Briar Well until the junction with Middleton Thatch.
 - Turn south until at the south eastern point of the boundary at Middleton Thatch the conservation area boundary cuts across an area of land to the south eastern most point of Middleton Farm Cottages boundary (including the properties Pinhay and White Gates).
 - Follow the southern boundary of Middleton Farm Cottages to the south western edge and continue directly west until inline with the western boundary of Moons Hill House on the opposite side of the road.
 - Turn north and continue to the southern edge of Moons Hill, follow the southern edge of the road up to the boundary of 1 Dove Cottage and turn south and continue to the rear boundary of 1 Dove Cottage.
 - Turn to face west and follow the rear boundaries of the group of properties to the south western point of the boundary of 1 Oak Terrace, head north and follow the boundary line to Moons Hill.
 - Cross the road to the west of the two Limekilns on the opposite side, follow the rear of the Limekilns and turn south to return to the northern edge of Moons Hill.
 - Follow the northern edge of the road until The Cottage and turn north to follow the west boundary, turn east and follow the north boundary, then south to follow the east boundary until returning to Moons Hill.
 - Follow the northern edge of the road until the western boundary of Moons Hill House is reached.
 - Follow the western boundary line north turning north east across the courtyard and in between the three outbuildings, north of the larger southernmost building. Immediately after the outbuildings turn north and continue along the western boundary of Moons Hill House (and Cottage) and then follow the western boundary of The Orchard, continue over the track following the western boundary line of Woodlands Cottage.
 - Head east along the northern boundaries of Woodlands Cottage and Briary House and continue along the rear building line of Priory Cottage, when at the boundary of Middleton Cottage follow the boundary line north, east and then south east until a grassed area adjacent to Moons Hill.
 - Follow the southern boundary of Linden until Middleton, cross Middleton and turn south and rejoin starting point.
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