

Dacorum Borough Council

Conservation Area Appraisal

Dudswell



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Emma Adams and Partners Ltd

80 Greenway, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 3LF

Tel: 01442 875599

Info@eahp.co.uk

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by Emma Adams and Partners Ltd in September 2017.
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Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Scope of the Appraisal	4
3.0	Planning Policy Context	5
4.0	Summary of Special Interest	6
5.0	Assessment of Special Interest	7
6.0	Intrusions and Negative Factors	32
7.0	Pressures, Problems and Opportunities for Change	33
8.0	Recommendations and Plan for Further Action	35
Appendix 1	- Planning Policy Detail	
Appendix 2	- Draft Development Control Guidelines	
Appendix 3	- Local List	
Appendix 4	- Article 4.2 Directions	

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Dudswell was designated as a Conservation Area in 1980, it has not been subject to revision since this date.

Definition of a Conservation Area

- 1.2 A conservation area is an area of special architectural and historical interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance¹. Designation takes place by local planning authorities under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Local planning authorities also have a duty from time to time to review the extent of designation and to designate further areas if appropriate².
- 1.3 Section 71 of the Act imposes a duty on the local planning authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Proposals should be publicised and incorporate public comment.
- 1.4 The purpose of the Appraisal is therefore, in accordance with the methodology recommended by Historic England³, to define and record the special architectural and historic interest of the Dudswell Conservation Area.
- 1.5 A detailed review of the existing boundaries of the conservation area has also been undertaken to determine if areas should be included or removed from the designation.

¹ Section 69 (1) (a) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

² Section 69 (2) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

³ Historic England, Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management Historic England Advice Note 1 (2016), Chapter 3

2.0 Scope of the Appraisal

- 2.1 This appraisal is intended to be comprehensive in its scope and content. However, omission of any specific building, structure, site, landscape feature, space, feature or aspect located in or adjacent to the Dudswell Conservation Area should not be taken to imply that it does not hold significance and positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset⁴.
- 2.2 This appraisal was undertaken consulting guidance provided by Historic England⁵ including Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management Historic England Advice Note 1 2016.

⁴ Conservation areas are defined as Designated Heritage Assets within the Framework.

⁵ Those pre 2015 being published under the auspices of English Heritage.

3.0 Planning Policy Context

- 3.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides the overarching statutory framework. Section 69 provides the Framework for designation of Conservation Areas noting that Local Planning Authorities should determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall designate those areas as conservation areas. In addition, the Act notes that when considering works within a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area⁶.
- 3.2 The document has been compiled in accordance with nationally and locally adopted policy and guidance, further details of which can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

⁶ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 - Section 72

4.0 Summary of Special Interest

- Dudswell a small hamlet set alongside the Grand Union Canal at the valley bottom with gentle sloping hills to the north and south, the canal bisects the hamlet and is a key focal point for the hamlet.
- The character of the area is rural with a core focused around the canal bridge, locks and lock cottages, the landscape is of a valley with wide gently sloping sides.
- There are key transport routes through and close by to the conservation area, all running in parallel close to the valley bottom along a north west to south east axis. Whilst only the canal is located within the conservation area the railway provides context to the north and a natural boundary feature, whilst the road also runs to the south, again beyond the boundary of the conservation area.
- The Grand Union Canal and its associated infrastructure act as a focal point, channelling vistas from north west to south east and vice versa. The canal, its locks and tow path and the associated green space it encompasses are a key feature of this conservation area.

5.0 Assessment of Special Interest

- 5.1 This Appraisal will now consider the landscape and historical character of Dudswell in order to consider what contributes to its significance and thus special interest as a conservation area.

Location and Landscape Setting

- 5.2 Dudswell is within the designated as the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – an area of high quality landscape of national importance which was designated in 1965. There are a number of specific components of the location and landscape setting of Dudswell which contribute to its character, significance and special interest, discussed in detail elsewhere within this Appraisal.

Location and Context

- 5.3 Dudswell is a small hamlet, the conservation area only includes approximately 30 houses, it lies in the Dacorum district of the County of Hertfordshire, situated within the Bulbourne valley with gently sloping slides of arable fields/horse grazing surrounding the hamlet. The hamlet is bisected on a north west/south east axis by the Grand Union Canal, whilst to the immediate north is the Westcoast mainline railway which is a prominent feature and to the south is the A4251.

General character and plan form including Landscape Context

- 5.4 The conservation area only covers a small part of the hamlet, outside the conservation area to the south most of the wider development is modern and has occurred predominantly as ribbon development on the road network.

- 5.5 On the south east side of the hamlet, **Dudswell Lane** approaches the hamlet centre from the A4251. This approach is characterised by ribbon development to the south side of the road and open countryside to the north side. One enters the conservation area when reaching the flint boundary wall of Dudswell House, a listed house with extensive gardens towards the canal.



Flint wall boundary to Dudswell House and CA boundary



View to Dudswell House to the north – note the important tree and brick boundary wall.

- 5.6 To the south of the hamlet is **Boswick Lane**, a north to south road from the A4251 to Dudswell, again characterised by modern ribbon development to both sides of the lane. The brick boundary wall of Boswick House denotes the start of the conservation area and the development to the west has limited historic architectural value and is of generally modern form of extended bungalows, with one exception, a two storey vernacular cottage finished in render and incorporating some planted timber detailing to its prominent gable.



View from hamlet centre up Boswick Lane



This is the one exception 4th house from west side of Boswick Lane when counting from the southern CA boundary.

- 5.7 To the north west of the canal is **Wharf Lane**, a narrow lane from Cow Roast to Dudswell, with strong hedges on both sides of the road, open fields to the north with the railway visible halfway up the shallow incline to the wooded area beyond. The mature treeline along the canal is apparent in the long distance along with a substantial dense row of conifers to the first undeveloped plot on the north side of the road (outside the conservation area but impacting on its setting).
- 5.8 To the south side of Wharf Lane, the conservation area extends to incorporate the second lock and Lock Cottage, one of only two properties included within the conservation area boundary to the west of the hamlet core.
- 5.9 The Lock Cottage to the west of the road, makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, evidencing the function of the canal and its position within the settlement. The cottage is an example of simple functional canal architecture, in this case the use of planted timbers suggesting that care has been taken to integrate the architecture with that of the wider hamlet, this property has a paddock sandwiched between Wharf Lane and the canal.



Lock Cottage

- 5.10 The second, closer to the hamlet core is a converted double piled mill building, this was originally building to house 20 working horses and an associated lloŵkeŵ cottage, it is an unlisted building but one that has a positive role to play within the conservation area.



Converted Mill Building

- 5.11 Norcott Hill, a lane, leads north from the hamlet core, over the railway (and beyond the Conservation Area boundary) up the hill to a number of rural traditional houses including Norcott Hall. The lane is bordered by mature hedging and trees to

delineated the lane, giving it a Sylvan character, there are glimpses through the vegetation to a timber framed listed building with 16th century origins (Arne Cottage) to the north of the hamlet.



View looking north from the hamlet centre



View of listed building on Norcott Hill

- 5.12 There are views out across the open arable field to the east of the conservation area, this affords long views in and out of the conservation area and is important to the wider setting and context of Dudswell Conservation area as it allows an appreciation of the manner in which the canal and railway follow the valley bottom and the manner in which the surrounding landscape sits at the periphery of the settlement.



Looking east



Looking south east to the tree lined canal.

- 5.13 The spatial centre and aesthetic focal point of the conservation area is the bridge over the canal, with the canal lock and the listed lock cottages adjacent. The conservation area sits within the existing topography of the valley, the variations in land form being a key characteristic of the conservation area.

- 5.14 From the canal bridge the land rises to the north and to the east, the lock is situated to the west of the bridge as are the lock cottages evidencing engagement between the canal and settlement.
- 5.15 Access to the bridge is delineated by traditional canal fencing to either side of the bridge, the locks and to identify the tow path either side, these black and white painted fences are typical features found in and around canals. To the west of this lock is a second lock and associated lock cottage located on the western edge of the conservation area.



Looking west



Looking north over bridge

Historical Development and Archaeology

Origins and Historic development

- 5.16 An assessment of the historic mapping and surviving settlement form and timber buildings suggests that it is likely that Dudswell originally developed organically as a small rural hamlet centred upon Dudswell Farm, as with many in its locale. However, whilst engaging with the valley bottom the historic plan form of the settlement itself is located a short distance above the valley bottom as the marshy land to the valley bottom would likely have made historical habitation difficult.
- 5.17 However, the origins of Dudswell as we know it today is due to the Grand Union Canal which runs from Birmingham to London (Paddington Basin). Its construction was

approved by an Act of Parliament in 1793 and work started in the same year on the Braunston to Weedon leg which opened in 1796, James Barnes was the Chief Engineer. The canal was completed in 1805.

- 5.18 Due to the topography of the land it was required to site locks at Dudswell and the location of such infrastructure required staff on site and thus the canal engaged with what was already a small existing settlement.



Historic image of Dudswell Lock (No 48)⁷

- 5.19 From Cow Roast, the Canal commences a 35-mile descent along the valleys of the Bulbourne, Gade, Colne and Brent to its destination at Brentford, and in the course of its journey negotiates 57 locks to drop the canal from the Chilterns crossing to the appropriate level at Brentford. The first section of the descent is comparatively steep, with 33 locks encountered in the 15 miles to Watford, with the first locks being located at Dudswell, which in 1798 was severed by the new waterway, leaving the spatial arrangement as now encountered.

⁷ Taken from www.Gerald-massey.org.uk

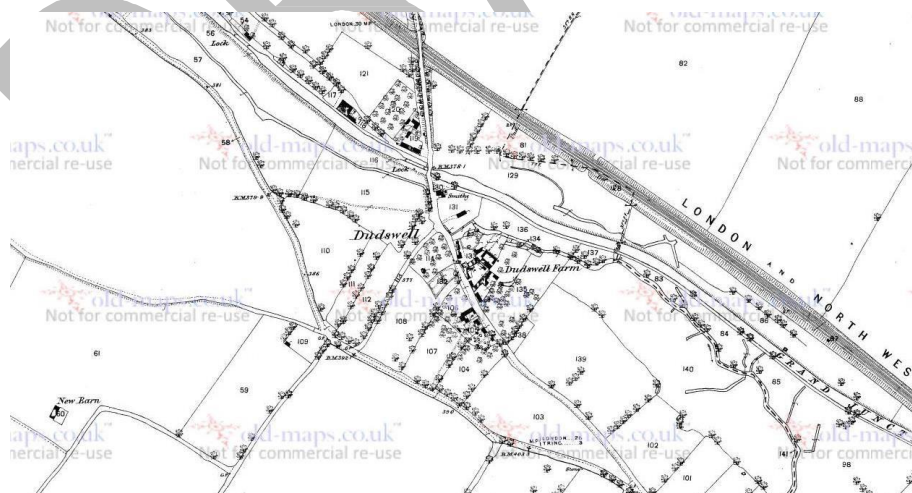
- 5.20 The arrival of the canal caused much change to what previously had been a quiet rural hamlet, as certain developments were undertaken associated with the important arterial route which the canal formed between London and the north drawing Dudswell into a burgeoning transport network and thus expanding its linkages to the wider country.
- 5.21 The Canal Company also had some effects upon the development of the settlement, bringing infrastructure and a wharf to encourage trade.
- 5.22 The Canal Company built Mill House to provide stabling for 20 boat horses, along with an adjacent cottage for a keeper. At this point in history rapid canal trade was operated by 'fly boats' which required regular horse changes to maintain speed, and thus Dudswell was chosen as the location for one such facility.
- 5.23 As with many such canal developments whilst the canal building company erected the buildings they subsequently leased them, in this case to Pickfords, who at the time had an extensive goods carrying business and thus were important users of the canal.
- 5.24 The arrival of the railways in the district further revolutionised transit of goods and thus in the late 1840s Pickfords switched their focus to the railways, following which the Dudswell facilities were taken back in house by the Canal Company's newly formed Carrying Establishment which used the building until 1876.
- 5.25 Following the end of the Canal Company use the building was leased to an Albert Mead, a member of the family who ran Tring Flour Mill and who also had interests in the canal wharf at Gamnel Bridge. Mr Mead's occupation at Dudswell continued into the 1890s, after which the buildings use moved away from that associated with the canal and instead related to milling and mixing for local farmers.
- 5.26 Moving into the 20th century various uses have occupied the building until in 1986, it was converted to the residential role it fulfils today.

5.27 The wider settlement has also evolved since the decline in canal traffic and thus an associated turning away of focus from the canal to other uses and functions. The remaining high quality transport links from the locale to London have left a hamlet that now operates as a dormitory settlement, with much of its historical agricultural and industrial functions being lost and converted to residential uses.

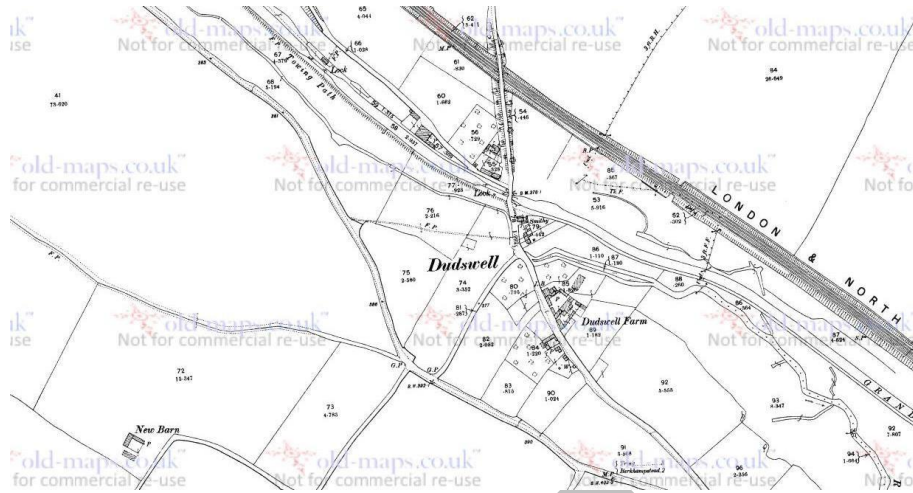
5.28 A review of the Hertfordshire Environmental Record undertaken has revealed no known archaeological sites or finds within the conservation area, with the only assets identified being the listed buildings noted elsewhere within this Appraisal.

Historic Maps

5.29 The map of 1877 is of some interest as it illustrates that at this date the built elements of the settlement continued to be centred upon Dudswell Farm to the south east of the canal crossing and locks, with the canal infrastructure a little isolated to the north. The map also shows the relationship between canal and railway running along the valley were evident at this date, as is the road running to the south of the hamlet.



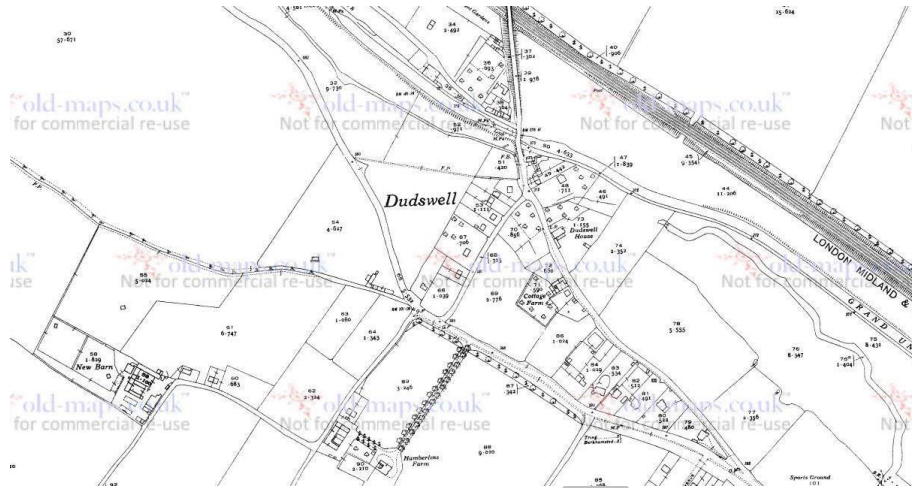
5.30 The plan of this date is also of use as it illustrates the infill which has occurred in the area designated as the conservation area since the latter 19th century.



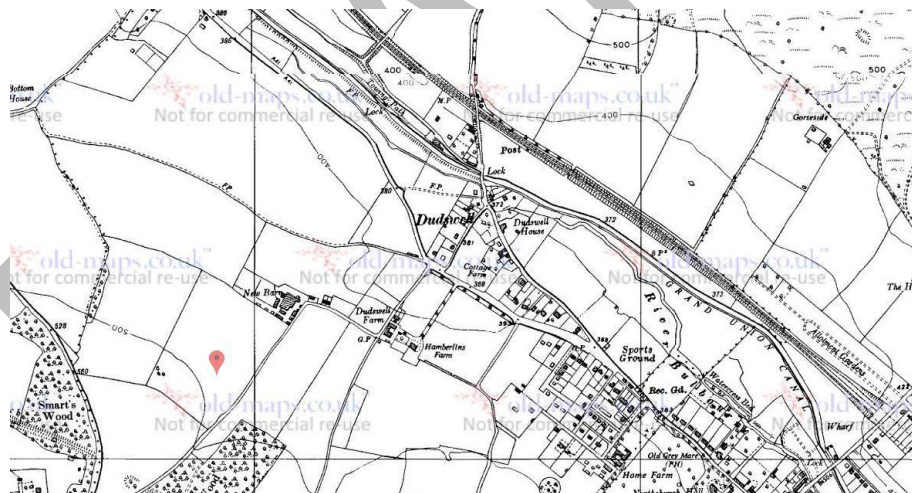
5.31 Turning to 1898 and the hamlet appears little changed.



5.32 The next map for consideration is that of 1924, this shows little developmental change within the pattern of the hamlet located within the conservation area, however one feature of note is that Dudswell Farm is now titled as Dudswell House suggesting a move away from agriculture as they key social and economic focus of the settlement.



- 5.33 Turning to 1937 some linear developments have occurred within the hamlet along, with much infill development, expanding development away from the historic core of the settlement.



- 5.34 Even as late as 1960 the hamlet centre which forms the nucleus of the conservation area appears little altered from the 1930s, however by this date the settlement has begun to expand with further developments in the fields enclosing the historical core.
- 5.35 Therefore, it is clear from a review of the historic mapping that the core of the hamlet and thus conservation area developed around a farm and the relationships to the canal and locks. The conservation area retains much of its built form dating from the

19th century, albeit interspersed and enclosed by later developments. Whilst the settlement has expanded which has affected its prominence when one enters the conservation area the overarching form is little altered from that as found in the 18th century.

Character Analysis

5.36 A key element of understanding the significance of the conservation area relates to its character, morphology and spatial arrangement. The Appraisal now summarises this character, with further analysis below in detail to provide that understanding.

Summary of Character

- Predominantly brick construction, some flint and limited timber framing
- Two storey properties
- Traditional fenestration
- Predominantly tiled roofs with slate to the canal influenced buildings.
- Verdant character with strong hedges / large trees.
- Brick walls / 5 bar gates
- Varied built forms set back from the Dudswell Road
- Canal buildings addressing the Grand Union Canal and Wharf Road.
- Limited dormers
- Chimneys
- Soft verges
- Views to open countryside/woodland

5.37 The character of Dudswell is of a small rural hamlet with two distinct characters, one along Wharf Lane which is canal focused and the other along Dudswell Lane which stems from the historic farmstead but is now characterised by a variety of building styles, as land was released around the farmstead for piecemeal developments.

- 5.38 The character along Dudswell Lane moving north is a verdant one with strong hedges and trees to the roadside, which contrasts somewhat with that to the south west on Dudswell Road. These properties are set back from the roadside with open lawns to the pavement edge and from Melrose Cottage towards the canal bridge the soft green verges remain, however, there are set back strong hedges / brick walls to the boundary to the properties, due to the close proximity of the road this is a strong character feature.
- 5.39 At this point the character to the North east also changes from open fields to the enclosed garden of Dudswell House, the gardens area enclosed with a brick wall behind a soft verge; a timber barn with the adjacent house are a prominent feature on this approach to the canal bridge.
- 5.40 North of the canal, the character of the conservation area transitions from that of a rural hamlet to that heavily influenced by the canal. The boundary walls are replaced with the low level fencing consisting of black posts and white rails, and whilst the verdant character remains with brick being the key building material it is often painted white, there is also a small amount of timber framing, influenced by way of earlier buildings.
- 5.41 In terms of morphology and settlement form the built form is of traditional narrow span with varying built forms but predominantly of varied scale of two storey or less. The canal, locks and the arrangement of properties addressing the canal are a strong character feature highlighting the canals influence on the built form in this area.
- 5.42 The listed cottage to the north east of the lockkeepers cottage is nestled at the foot of the hill with the land rising behind which shields the West Coast Mainline that runs to the north of the hamlet. This marks another zone of transition as one departs the conservation area north, there are important glimpsed views of this cottage from the canal and its tow path. To the south west of the canal the trees and the verdant character is a dominant feature shielding any development beyond and the A4251.

- 5.43 Beyond the collection of buildings incorporating the lockkeepers cottage the properties to the north east of Wharf Lane are of limited note, however the flint boundary walls and hedging to the north east are a feature within the conservation area.
- 5.44 Beyond this the character is rural with open fields and hedges with a listed cottage which is set in close proximity to the canal along the canal side within the gardens and open countryside. These spaces are important to the significance of the conservation area as they allow engagement between the canal and the surrounding rural area and also appreciation of the spatial relationship between the canal and railway following a common line through the Chilterns, albeit there is no interchange point in the vicinity, illustrating the effects that these modern transport facilities had on the development of the settlement.

Approaches

- 5.45 The approach from **Dudswell Lane** has detached dwellings to the south west and open fields to the north east, the built form is set back with soft verges to the road side. Dudswell House and its boundaries is the key feature to the north east.
- 5.46 The approach from **Wharf Lane** is again a rural, incorporating hedgerows, open fields to the north east and paddocks to the south west flanking the canal. Initially the small cottage, canal and set of locks are not visible, however as one moves east they reveal themselves as a key structural feature, which combines with the character of the open fields and trees to illustrate the manner in which canal infrastructure has been imposed within a rural setting.
- 5.47 The approach from **Norcott Hill** is focused south to the canal bridge, the lane is narrow and tree lined with glimpsed views of the listed cottage behind the lockkeepers cottage and across to the canal. The field to the east is an important open space allowing views across the canal to the edge of the Dudswell Lane properties.

5.48 The approach from **Boswick Lane** is focused north to the canal bridge and the collection of canal buildings incorporating the listed lockkeepers cottage.

5.49 Taking note of the approaches noted above we will now consider in greater detail the character of each area grouped around these important approaches.

5.50 Dudswell Lane Character Area

To the north of Dudswell Lane: there are limited buildings with **Dudswell House** (listed grade II) being a key focus as one enters the conservation area, having a positive impact to the north side of the lane, along with its boundary treatments and barn abutting the highway.



Dudswell House

The barn abutting the roadside is of some note as it provides evidence of the agricultural origins of the settlement.



Roadside barn at Dudswell House

- 5.51 Beyond Dudswell House approaching the hamlet core are a number of properties which have been inserted into the streetscape as plots have been divided.
- 5.52 **Little Dudswell** shown below stands in open grounds allowing views to the countryside beyond the property, whilst its roofline has varying pitches and forms which draw the eye.



Little Dudswell

- 5.53 The building on the approach to the bridge (**Dudswell Cottage**) makes a positive

contribution to the character of the conservation area, being a prominent building featuring well-mannered architecture, and is adjacent to the bridge and green space to the eastern side, sitting within open grounds, contrasting with the more enclosed character further south around Dudswell House.



Dudswell Cottage



Looking east from south of canal bridge

- 5.54 **To the south west of Dudswell Lane are houses of both the 19th and 20th centuries.** The first house (Primrose Cottage) is built forward of the now established build line and draws the eye. It has a simple form with a hipped slate roof, it is shown in the photograph below.



Primrose Cottage

- 5.55 The following house (Cottage Farm) is of traditional form set back from the road edge, this is painted brick work with a slate roof and as shown below, whilst its elevation

engages directly with the roadside the doorway is not encountered within this elevation.



Cottage Farm

- 5.56 Beyond this lies a collection of modern housing, however, a key feature is the strong hedge boundary set back from the road side and the significant tree within the curtilage of Boswick House and marked upon the Appraisal Plan.



Housing to the east of Dudswell Lane

- 5.57 The importance of the boundary treatments to the significance of this character area conservation area is illustrated in the photograph below and discussed later in the Appraisal.



Channelling of views by boundary hedges and prominence of trees within streetscape

- 5.58 At the junction of Boswick Lane and Dudswell Lane is **Boswick House**, set within a large garden with strong wall / hedge boundary treatments.



Boswick House

Boswick Lane Character Area

- 5.59 **Boswick Lane:** the buildings on the lane have limited architectural interest, the key feature along this lane is the framed views it creates funnelling along the highway and the strong wall boundary treatment to Boswick House.

- 5.60 This important characteristic in framing views and engaging with both Wharf Lane and Dudswell Lane makes a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area, providing context to the historical development of the settlement.

Norcott Hill Character Area

- 5.61 This character area is dominated by trees delineating the road edge, glimpses through this vegetation allows **Arne Cottage** (grade II listed) to be viewed, tucked down and build on a lower level to the rising road. In addition, looking east allows further engagement with the open countryside which evidences the historical foundation of Dudswell as amended by the arrival of the canal and railway.

Wharf Lane Character Area

- 5.62 This character area is focused around the canal, the buildings associated around the lock and the raised and overseen space created by the engineered topography of the canal.



Wharf Lane showing cottage and lock viewed from canal bridge

- 5.63 The canal lock 48 and bridge (listed grade II) and associated cottage (listed grade II) hold significance as a highly visible example of the manner in which the engineering of the canal network was often imposed upon established rural settlements. This contrast between designed engineering features and the rural setting of the hamlet provide important significance to the wider character of the conservation area.
- 5.64 Further along Wharf Lane is the converted **Mill**. This now has a large car parking area in the foreground and whilst planted and therefore screened to a degree, it is unfortunate the effects it has upon the buildings setting, minor changes to its fenestration form and colour would allow this building to be more easily read as a mill conversion.



Canal lock with Mil to rear

- 5.65 Beyond the Mill to the west is the second lock and lock cottage, which make a very positive contribution to the character of the area and are visible from both Wharf Lane and the towpath.

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

- 5.66 The Grand Union Canal is the prominent land use within the conservation area, its form and associated structures having led to the nucleus of development centred on the crossing and locks.
- 5.67 In addition to the south of the canal there is much evidence of agricultural use (surviving buildings), relating to the surrounding land use visible on the valley slopes above the floodplain.

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

- 5.68 This section refers in more detail to the historical buildings in the conservation area.
- 5.69 There are four listed buildings / structures within the conservation area, some incorporating more than one structure, these are noted below with the listing descriptions being available via: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

- **Arne Cottage, Grade II**
- **Lock no 48 and Bridge no 138 on Grand Union Canal, Grade II**
- **Lockside Cottage and Dudswell Wharf - 2no lock cottages adj. to the lock, Grade II**
- **Dudswell House Grade II**

The contribution of key unlisted buildings





- 5.70 There are certain buildings that are part of Dudswell Conservation area that are unlisted but make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

Importance of Boundary Treatments

- 5.71 The engagement of properties to the highway contributes much of the significance of the conservation area, however in this case some of the boundary treatments are limited due to the development being located at the historic rear of the towpath, or directly abutting a road without a footpath.
- 5.72 However, within the hamlet core the overarching characteristic is properties set in their own grounds with strong boundary treatments lining the highways and limiting the permeability of views.
- 5.73 The brick walls around Boswick House and to the road boundary of Dudswell House are a positive feature within the conservation area.
- 5.74 The majority of other boundary treatments are hedging of the typical canal painted timber fencing around the locks and bridge.

Prevalent and traditional building materials

- 5.75 Vernacular Chilterns materials are prevalent within Dudswell conservation area and add greatly to its charm, below are listed some of the common most materials within the Dudswell Conservation Area which contribute to its character and significance.

Material	Discussion	Example
Brick	Brick is the most common material in the conservation area, and the majority of buildings from all eras utilise the subtle Chilterns palette of red and browns to great effect.	
Flint	The use of flint as a building material is not uncommon in the Chilterns AONB and within the conservation area there are examples of flint used in construction in the boundary wall to Dudswell House and also to walling along Wharf Lane.	
Timber Framing	Timber framing is visible within Dudswell to the listed building on Norcott Hill and also to the listed lock cottage to the terrace of cottages adjacent to the locks. There may be further evidence of timber framing within the hamlet core but many of the buildings were updated in the 18th century, many of the frames remain in older houses, but have been concealed by later brickwork.	
Painted Brickwork	The effect of render is also achieved by painting brickwork, either on the whole facade, such as the side elevation of the listed lock cottages, or to Boswick House.	
Roof Coverings	Tile and Slate are the most common roofing material. Within this conservation area there are examples of both clay tile and slate, clay tile is the local material however the canal allowed for slate to be transported and there are examples of both, the listed Dudswell House and timber framed house on Norcott Hill both have clay tile slate due to their vernacular built form, the listed lock cottages use slate and have shallower pitched roofs.	

Contribution Made by the Natural Environment

Open Space

- 5.76 There is limited open space in sense of a park or defined area within Dudswell Conservation Area, however there is a small section to the south eastern side of the bridge towards the towpath.
- 5.77 Open space for this conservation area is defined more organically, the tow path leads east to Berkhamsted, west to Cow Roast and Tring. There is a sense of open space to the arable field within the conservation area to the north east and areas of open space around the locks.

Trees and Vegetation

- 5.78 Trees and vegetation form a strong part of the character of Dudswell Conservation Area. The trees aligning with the canal to the south side are a very strong and positive feature within the conservation area.
- 5.79 The strong hedge road delineation to Norcott Hill and Wharf Lane are also an important feature of the conservation area.
- 5.80 Significant trees within the gardens of the houses on the north side of Dudswell Lane also contribute to the rural character of this conservation area.

6.0 Intrusions and Negative Factors

- 6.1 The Dudswell conservation area is relatively small, whilst there are certain buildings that do not contribute to the overall character, they equally do not detract and thus are neutral in terms of relationship to character and significance and allow a context and setting for the conservation area boundaries to be drawn.
- 6.2 However, there are certain modern developments from the mid-20th century which are not particularly in keeping with the overall character, drawing the eye and intruding upon the overall character in a negative fashion, although more recent development more closely follows the vernacular architecture.
- 6.3 The introduction of the car and traffic has had a significant impact on the hamlet. The majority of houses have off road parking however there is a very limited opportunity for on-road parking which results in cars being parked at the core of the conservation area resulting in the area being cluttered by parked cars which has a detrimental impact on the character.



Wharf Lane showing cottage and lock viewed from canal bridge

7.0 Pressures, Problems and Opportunities for Change

- 7.1 This Appraisal will now consider pressures, problems and opportunities for enhancement within the context of the Dudswell Conservation Area.

Buildings Which Cause a Detriment to the Character and Special Significance of the Conservation Area

- 7.2 Whilst retaining much of its historical form and character, Dudswell has suffered somewhat from 20th century development, however such evolution is now part of the hamlets character in the 21st century.
- 7.3 This is illustrated by many of the modern houses outside the conservation area which form the approaches, especially from the south, therefore new housing or extensions to existing housing needs to be carefully considered to protect the overall character and setting of the area. Care should be taken on matters specifically relating to property scale and block form, proximity to boundaries and landscaping proposals.

Buildings at Risk

- 7.4 No buildings were identified to be at risk.

Proposed Boundary Changes

- 7.5 During the assessment process, no boundary changes were considered necessary, the existing conservation area boundary is well considered and pertinent to its specific role of identifying an area of 'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

- 7.6 The conservation area boundary follows the roads/lanes to the focal Grand Union Canal, listed bridge, lock gates and lockkeepers cottages, there is an area of open land to the east of Norcott Hill and north of the Grand Union Canal, it is bounded but the railway.
- 7.7 Upon evaluation, it has not been proposed to remove this open land as it does contribute positively to the views into and out of the core of the conservation area, allows an appreciation of the canal and railway taking a common line through the landscape and the settlements relationship and origins within the surrounding agricultural landscape.
- 7.8 The landscape is open to the north side of the canal and there are strong views of this open land from the tow path, the bridge and the area adjacent to the locks which form part of the rural setting of this conservation area.
- 7.9 It is accepted that there are no buildings of note to this area, however, it is considered to play an important role in the setting of this conservation area and the cluster of listed buildings and structures at its core.



View from the public real approaching the listed bridge form Dudswell Lane looking East across the open space

8.0 Recommendations and Plan for Further Action

- 8.1 **The Conservation Area Appraisal and possible boundary amendments:** Whilst the Dudswell Conservation Area has been designated since 1980, a detailed appraisal of its character has not until now been undertaken. This appraisal aims to identify Dudswell unique architectural and historic qualities, and to give weight to planning policies relating to conservation. The conservation area boundaries generally closely encompass the best historic settlement form; however, this appraisal process has identified potential areas for change which should be subject to the consultation process.
- 8.2 As part of this process a detailed assessment of the boundaries of the conservation area has been undertaken and it would be recommended that the field to the north of the canal be removed from the conservation area. The field gains no protection from being within the conservation area and no features within the field are protected by the conservation area. Therefore it would be recommended that the field be removed.
- 8.3 **Buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area:** A review of the conservation area to identify locally important buildings which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, by virtue of their age, design, massing, scale, and enclosure
- 8.4 **The buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area (marked on the draft appraisal map) could be individually assessed for being identified for Local Listing and/or potentially an Article 4.2 Designation.**
- 8.5 **Balancing the need to adapt properties to today's needs while retaining the historic character,** including at the rear of the property, and respecting the traditional grain in terms of space and built area of the plot.

- 8.6 **Appropriate boundary treatments:** Boundary treatments have been identified as an important element in terms of the character and significance of the conservation area, therefore it is important to ensure that suitable boundary treatments are encouraged and planting and pruning of hedges where appropriate.
- 8.7 **Appendix 2** sets out draft development control guidelines, guidance of an informal nature which aims to assist householders and developers in ensuring that the character and appearance of Dudswell is preserved and enhanced.

Appendix 1

Planning Policy Detail

DRAFT

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides the overarching statutory framework. Section 69 provides the Framework for designation of Conservation Areas noting that Local Planning Authorities should determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall designate those areas as conservation areas.

In addition, the Act notes that when considering works within a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area⁸.

Relevant National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework, 2012

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) provides an overarching planning framework to which local planning policy must relate. Additional detail is provided by the Planning Practice Guide (March 2014), which provides more practical guidance on how the policies laid down with the Framework should be interpreted and implemented.

The Framework notes that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations

The Framework also places certain responsibilities upon Local Planning Authorities in that they should have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.

⁸ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 - Section 72

The Framework then goes on to outline certain principles which should be accorded to when considering applications affecting heritage assets⁹.

Local Policy and Supplementary Guidance:

Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy 2006-2031 (2013)

The Dacorum Core Strategy was adopted September 2013 and should be read alongside the Local Plan. The Local Development Framework (LDF) for Dacorum Borough Council is currently being prepared and will in time replace the existing Local Plan. The documents of the LDF have yet to be adopted, until this time the 'saved' policies of the Local Plan will remain in force. The Core Strategy (2013) should be read alongside the Local Plan 2004 for a complete picture of current planning policy.

With relation to the Historic Environment Policy CS27 is of relevance, this notes that all development will favour the conservation of heritage assets and that the integrity, setting and distinctiveness of designated and undesignated heritage assets will be protected, conserved and if appropriate enhanced. Specifically regarding conservation areas, it notes that development will positively conserve and enhance the appearance and character of conservation areas. Negative features and problems identified in conservation area appraisals will be ameliorated or removed.

Dacorum Borough Council Local Plan, 2004

Dacorum Borough Council's Local Plan as adopted on the 16th April 2004 under transitional arrangements in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, but is not a plan adopted in accordance with the 2004 Act i.e. the Local Plan is a plan prepared under the 1990 Act.

⁹ National Planning Policy Framework Paragraphs 131-138

Whilst the Core Strategy has now been adopted certain Policies within the Local Plan relate specifically to conservation areas and remain saved and current, Policy 120 relates to proposed developments within conservation areas and notes a presumption against the demolition of any building that contributes to the character of a conservation area. It goes on to note that new developments or alterations or extensions to existing buildings in the conservation areas will be permitted provided they are carried out in a manner which preserves or enhances the established character or appearance of the area.

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Appendix 2

Draft Development Control Guidelines

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This guidance gives advice on works to buildings in Dudswell Conservation Area and sets out the guidelines which will be taken into consideration when planning applications are determined. In conservation areas, the Councils have an overriding 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 reduce the value of buildings as historic features and attractive areas, all of which are highly desirable in today's property market.

Preservation of existing character

The maintenance of historic buildings in Dudswell Conservation Area

1. The use of traditional materials and detailing can have a considerable positive effect in enhancing the conservation area.
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 brickwork and obscure it. Inappropriate mixes can cause brickwork to deteriorate. This is equally important when repointing boundary flint and brick walls, which should be repaired with matching materials and a traditional lime mortar. Oversized flints and the use of flint panels are not generally acceptable.
3. A variety of window types can be seen across the conservation area including sliding sash, casement, or metal windows. They all 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 both from the proportions of the frames and glazing bars and from the texture of old glass. 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 appearance and the reflection of the double glazed units are all very much at odds with the character of historic buildings. Modern windows can appear very out of place, particularly if surrounded by more traditional types. Dark staining of timber is a modern technique which does little to enhance windows, and can look out of place when juxtaposed to traditionally painted windows. Care should be taken to ensure all casements windows are matching in size whether openable or not.

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, hedges and green spaces

6. Trees make a positive contribution to the character of the hamlet and property owners should continue to manage existing trees sensitively. Within the conservation area, consent is required to fell, lop or top most trees. Consideration should be given to important views into and out of the hamlet when planting or undertaking tree works, as should the setting of historic buildings.
7. Most trees in conservation areas are protected but special consideration should be given to those trees indicated on the conservation area map to ensure that they are not harmed. New development should recognise this and should not present a risk to their continued growth and habit.
8. Some agricultural hedges are protected by the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. The majority of hedges are not covered by these regulations; however, in the conservation area the hedgerows indicated on the survey map are an important element of the areas character, and should be retained and where possible enhanced.

Design Guidance for new development (including extensions to buildings)***General***

9. In the conservation area high standards of design are required, as it is the function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance the special character or appearance as identified in conservation area appraisals. The sides and rear of buildings, where visible to the public, must be of equally good design and materials.
10. Planning applications for development within the conservation area will be required to include both a Heritage Statement¹⁰ and Design and Access Statements accompanying them. Applications for development which require a statement will possibly not be registered unless they have one.
11. Listed and other significant buildings are identified on the survey map and their specific qualities are described in the text above. Any new development should not harm the buildings or their settings or any special architectural or historic features that they may contain. It should be recognised that new development may not always be acceptable if the impact on a listed building is considered adverse.
12. Applications for development within the setting of the conservation area will be assessed for their effect upon the conservation areas character, appearance and setting, and may be refused permission if it fails to address the tests as laid down within the National Planning Policy Framework.

¹⁰ In order to address Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework

13. Any proposals that affect important views in and out of the conservation area will be assessed to establish the potential effects upon these views. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map, and are referred to in the text.

Contextual design

14. Within the Dudswell Conservation Area, new development or proposals should respect the character of this small hamlet. Building works such as extensions must be designed not as a separate entity, but should be sympathetic in form and scale with the existing buildings and the conservation area as a whole.
15. Areas of open space, yard layouts and gaps between buildings will be carefully considered for protection from development or enclosure in order to protect the character of the Dudswell Conservation Area, the setting of listed buildings, and any important views.
16. In the draft appraisal, it describes the important features of buildings in the conservation area. Whilst there is some variation in the characteristics of the buildings, there are key features as described in the accompanying text and in relation to the individual buildings which new development proposals should take account of. These key features include:
- a) The height and scale of buildings, including the location of windows and doors within the elevations.
 - b) The form of buildings, e.g. detached, terraced
 - c) The siting of new buildings, e.g. in relation to the highway and spacing between buildings.
 - d) The density of development.
 - e) The style and materials of doors and windows

- f) Detailed design features, e.g. gables, brick course, treatments around doors and windows, bay windows, decorative features, etc.
- g) Roof styles and chimneys.
- h) Building materials
- i) Garden boundary treatment.

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.

Scale and density

17. Scale is the combination of a buildings height and bulk when related to its surroundings. Respecting the existing scale of adjacent buildings within the conservation area is of particular importance as the cumulative effect of development over time erodes the character. Applicants should demonstrate that their proposals have had regard to the scale of surrounding buildings and show how new development will relate to them. New buildings should generally be no more than two storeys high.
18. Density is the amount of development related to the site area. Government guidance states that high density development can make good use of land, provided it is carefully chosen and sensitively sited. However higher density schemes will be considered as to whether the special character and appearance of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced, in particular to ensure that sites are not overdeveloped.
19. Form: layout of new buildings should respect the width of existing plots in the hamlet.

Height and massing

20. New development should reflect the hierarchy of buildings. New buildings should generally be no more than two storeys high in the conservation area and allow enough sufficient space to the boundary to reflect the character of the conservation area.
21. Proposals for new buildings within the conservation area should include a detailed analysis of the locality and townscape, and show how the proposals have been drawn up in relation to this. Proposals on backland sites should always be secondary to the more important buildings that face onto the main roads.

Appearance, materials and detailing

22. 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 street scene. Natural materials and high quality detailing should be incorporated into any proposals.
23. Where a more traditional approach is appropriate buildings should be designed in a traditional form (including plan form, roof spans etc) and include pitched roofs. If needed, dormers and rooflights should be modestly sized and situated on rear facing roofslopes. 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 an appropriate modern interpretation of it, can do much to break up facades of buildings. Chimneys are essential in roofscapes and should be incorporated into designs.
24. Materials for any new building works should be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area. Where possible local traditional material should be used – good quality

traditional brick for walling and sand faced clay roof tiles, and slate. Care should be taken if reusing bricks to avoid ones which have old paint on them, as the visual effect is usually unacceptable. Although some of the buildings within the conservation area are rendered or have painted brickwork, the modern interpretation and techniques associated with these finishes are not always visually successful and should thus be used with care. Where traditional materials survive they should be retained. The Chiltern Building Design Guide gives general information on Chiltern building materials; specific advice will depend on the immediate locality.

25. Inappropriate 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 windows are to be double glazed these should be carefully designed to reduce the bulkiness of glazing bars. Joinery details should be submitted with planning applications. Top hung lights and modern materials such as uPVC and aluminium are generally inappropriate in the conservation area. Traditional doors were wooden panels or vertical matchboard on vernacular cottages, more complex designs may be appropriate for polite buildings.
26. Applications for development adjoining but beyond the conservation area boundary will be assessed for their effect upon the conservation area's character, appearance, and setting taking full note of the guidance prepared by Historic England and held within the Planning Practice Guide.
27. Special care should be taken to ensure that views looking into and out from the conservation area are not spoilt. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map, and where numbered are referred to in the text.

Extensions to existing buildings

28. Extensions to existing buildings require the same approach as to new build in that they must take into account the prevailing forms of development and complement the form and character of the original house. This is of particular importance when designing extensions to listed buildings.
29. Design should be of high quality, and take account of existing roofscape and chimneys, eaves details, fenestration patterns, and architectural detailing. Extensions should not dominate the original buildings or result in the loss of historic plots, but should be subservient to the main buildings, with a lower roofline. Gaps between buildings delineate their separate identity and care should be taken that these are not filled, creating a continuous line of development.

Public realm

30. Modern day street furniture, lampposts, CCTV camera mountings and posts, telephone boxes and other public works often fall outside planning control and can have a significant impact on the streetscape and character of the conservation area. Most of these modern day street furniture will be inappropriate in this rural setting, where control is available any street furniture proposed should respect the canal dominated character of this area, those responsible need to bear in mind this potential effect when considering installations and seek advice from the councils conservation staff before specifying or undertaking any works to ensure that any potential detrimental effects can be minimised.
31. Satellite dishes are unsightly especially where dishes are poorly sited on front elevations. Care should be taken to site these in the back garden or on roof slopes that are not visible from a street.

Dudswell conservation amendments

