

# CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

## **SUNNINGDALE VILLAGE**

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January 1995



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1 Brief History

1.1 The earliest archaeological evidence for human activity in the area of Sunningdale are the remains of Bronze Age Burial Barrows at Broomhall about 2 miles south of the village itself. Later, in Roman times, the Roman Road linking London to Silchester was constructed and the remains now known as the "Devil's Highway" runs just to the south of Sunningdale Village abutting the edge of the allotments on the south side of Church Road.

1.2 The area has long associations with Royalty. Sunningdale was once within the Royal Windsor Forest which was a vast forest stretching over most of East Berkshire. Although there were small hamlets or farmsteads within the area now known as Sunningdale village, it was not until the 19th Century that Sunningdale became recognised as an independent settlement from the longer established Sunninghill, which had medieval origins. Most people know Sunningdale to be the large commercial centre surrounding the Railway Station where there is a shopping centre and many housing estates. This part of the settlement is, however, a separate entity to the other village core of Sunningdale and lies to the south of the area identified for a Conservation Area.

1.3 Sunningdale became a separate parish from Sunninghill in 1895, although it had been a separate ecclesiastical parish since 1841. One of the main factors that helped in establishing Sunningdale as a separate entity was the opening of Sunningdale Railway Station in 1856 (actually in the area now known as Broomhall) which in turn helped the expansion of the local horticultural business in Sunningdale. The original Church was built on the site of an old gravel pit which had been used in the construction of roads in the area to serve military exercises in and around Sunningdale which required good roads and access to and from Sandhurst.

1.4 There were many large influential 18th and 19th Century properties around Sunningdale whose influential occupants on occasion played host to Royal visitors. Coworth Park, (with older origins) and Fort Belvedere, St Bruno, Berystede, Lynwood Mansion and Sunningdale Park are just a few of these substantial properties that still survive, albeit now in different usage, around the village.

1.5 The village itself appears to be a mid 19th Century settlement which grew around the central Church core. Later 20th Century infilling has occurred, but the majority of the village core is still clearly Victorian and Edwardian in age and character and some of these smaller properties may have originally been built to serve the larger houses in the area.

2. Topography and Street Patterns

- 2.1 Sunningdale village lies close to the acid heathlands of the Berkshire/Surrey Border. The area used to be dominated by the Great Windsor Forest landscape of woods, interspersed with estates belonging to large houses and the occasional farm complex.
- 2.2 The central core of the village is mostly flat with a slight rise towards Station Road, thus providing views of the Holy Trinity Church steeple from many directions. Church Road is a long straight and relatively flat road which runs the length of Sunningdale's centre, from Station Road to Bedford Lane allowing glimpses of the Church and its boundaries along its length.
- 2.3 The village itself is surrounded on most sides by open space and woodland which gives it a rural backdrop. To the south are allotment gardens and the Holy Trinity Primary School playing fields which are in turn surrounded by pasture land. To both the east and west are large private estates, Sunningdale Park to the west and Coworth Park to the east. Both of these provide an attractive belt of trees which line the estate boundaries and present, once again, a green backdrop to the village. The northern part of Sunningdale beyond the Conservation Area boundary comprises 20th Century housing but this also has a green backdrop north of Kiln Lane provided by the grounds of the Tittenhurst Estate.

### 3 Chief Architectural Features

- 3.1 The main core to Sunningdale Village is characterised by Victorian and Edwardian properties which feature a variety of different styles of architecture in different parts of the Conservation Area. The diversity is increased by the range of different sized properties from semi-detached cottages to substantial single dwellings. Properties are predominantly 2 storey, although some of the larger houses have attic storeys.
- 3.2 The High Street has a mixture of early Victorian to late Edwardian buildings and probably the earliest surviving buildings within the settlement are the Baptist Chapel and Nos 30 and 32 High Street. There are a mixture of slate roofed and brick and rendered structures with many timber sash windows still surviving within this end of the High Street. The bricks used in Sunningdale are predominantly orange-red in colour, the best example of this being Holy Trinity Church.
- 3.3 The variety of different architectural styles in the High Street is in contrast to the consistency of style in Whitmore Lane and Trinity Crescent. In the former a row of late 19th semi-detached cottages form an important group of relatively unaltered properties typical of the 1890's. Each pair of semi's are called a different name; Mossvale Cottages, Redstone Cottages, Maitland Cottages, Springfield Cottages. In Trinity Crescent semi-detached houses from the 1930's, reflect the Arts and Crafts Movement styling with small gabled front elevations, form an harmonious setting to the Church itself.
- 3.4 The larger properties in the Conservation Area are along both sides of Church Road. Again there are a mixture of different styles and construction materials, some are 19th Century and early 20th Century in date whilst others are quite modern. Many of these

buildings are constructed from brick some painted or rendered, with slate roofs. Most have either timber sliding sashes or casement windows.

3.5 Church Road is also typified by the large mature grounds that belong to these properties, together with the public buildings of The Sunningdale Social Club at its eastern end and the Holy Trinity School at the western end which has quite substantial grounds and playing fields.

#### 4 Important Buildings

4.1 Holy Trinity Church is a Grade B listed building lying at the heart of the Conservation Area and it is cruciform in shape with a crossing tower. The chancel was built in 1860 by G E Street replacing an older church on the same site. J. Oldrid Scott built the remainder of the church between 1887-8 and this part of the church has a different character than the Street section. One of the stained glass windows is by Kempe and was commissioned in 1892. The Church is built of red brick with vitrified blue brick header patterning and limestone quoins, string courses and diaper work with some recesses infilled with knapped flint. The roofs are clad in red clay tiles with ornamental clay crested ridge tiles whilst the tower is capped with a powerful steeple clad in timber shingles. The whole Church is "Early English" style, which is typified by cusped lancet windows and spandrels on the tower.

4.2 Holy Trinity is surrounded by a triangular shaped churchyard which is bounded by Trinity Crescent and the High Street and Church Road converging at a point east of the village. The majority of the boundary to the churchyard is formed by a mature holly hedge, but at the northern and southern entrances to the churchyard there are the remains of wrought iron gates (one single, one double) and railings dating from 1839 and, therefore, a relic of a previous church on this site. These are listed Grade II and are a handsome example of posts with spiked ball finials supporting the gates and railings which have spearheads on spiral upper parts.

4.3 At the point where the High Street and Church Road meet at the east end of the Churchyard is the stone war memorial commemorating the two World Wars. Its overall height and proportions reflect the proportions of the Church immediately behind it and on entering the village from the east, these two structures form an important group which signifies the beginning of the village proper.

4.4 On the northern side of the High Street is one of the earliest buildings surviving in Sunningdale. The Baptist Church is a modest brick and slate roofed building built in 1828. The church faces end on to the High Street and is surrounded by a small grassed churchyard with a low brick wall forming the boundary. The main feature of the church is the large triple arched stained glass window which faces onto the High Street and the diaper patterning in the brickwork.

4.5 Next door to the Baptist Church is the Nags Head Public House, which is quite a dominant building within this part of the Conservation Area displaying typical mid Victorian features; hipped slate roof, timber sash windows with multiple glazing bars and tall chimney stacks giving the building an overall symmetrical appearance.

Originally the building probably had its bricks exposed but has since been rendered and extended at each side with single storey extensions and two bay windows on the main front elevation. In front of the pub is a car park/forecourt and to one side is a small brick outbuilding with a slate roof and recessed blocked openings fronting onto the road elevation. The original purpose of this outbuilding is unknown, but was possibly a stable or cartshed used in association with the main building.

- 4.6 There are other buildings of note which form interesting architectural groups or are individually of historic value. Nos. 30 and 32 High Street, Hammer House and Greendale, two cottages immediately to the east of the Baptist Church, may have been a single dwelling originally with early 19th Century origins. This building is particularly attractive because of its unusual windows and fanlights above the front doors and the curved edged slates on its roof. The detached pairs of cottages in Whitmore Lane, all display an attractive form of egg and dart pattern in the stone dressings above the windows and each pair has its own stone name plaque. The houses in Trinity Crescent provide an example of an early 20th Century grouping of buildings that provide a backdrop to Holy Trinity Church.
- 4.7 Many of the properties along Church Road provide individual character to the conservation area by the diversity of their architectural design and quality of workmanship. Leigh Cottage, Wingfield House, The Firs, Pennington, (which still has the old tobacconists shopfront in its front elevation), and Little Chewtons are perhaps the most prominent of the Church Road properties because of their size, architectural features or age. Holy Trinity School and School House are again a typical group of late Victorian buildings which form an interesting corner to the village in Church Road and Station Road, although some unfortunate later additions have been added.

## 5 Trees and Open Spaces

- 5.1 The Holy Trinity Church and grounds are the dominant feature of this Conservation Area. The churchyard by its nature is a large area of open space bounded by a mature holly hedge with specimen trees planted within it. An avenue of small trees line each side of the path to the two entrances to the north and south of the Church. One notable tree stands on the western boundary to the Church and is as tall as the Church tower. The actual pattern of the roads around the churchyard create an island in which the church stands isolated from the remainder of the village settlement.
- 5.2 Some significant trees line the length of Church Road and the High Street/Trinity Crescent corner. Of particular note are two trees within the grounds of Old Church House (the former Vicarage) in Church Road. An English Oak forms part of the front boundary and a Blue Spruce tree is further back within the garden. Both these trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The hedge belonging to Old Church House also makes an important contribution towards the character of the conservation area. Other gardens, particularly to Nos 30 and 32 High Street and in Church Road have quite extensive mature grounds with attractive trees and hedges forming their boundaries. The School has a mixture of hedges, trees and wrought iron fencing still around its perimeter. The fencing, in particular, forms an attractive edge to this corner

of the conservation area, although it is in need of repair and replacement in some places.

- 5.3 Immediately outside the conservation area boundaries on the eastern, southern and western sides, are areas of open space formed by the allotments, fields and lengths of trees and woodland. This provides a green backcloth for the dominating structure of the church and also softens the built up areas surrounding the church reinforcing the rural character.

## 6 Uses

- 6.1 The predominant use of properties in the Conservation Area is residential. The only commercial buildings are the public house; The Nags Head, and some of the properties adjacent to the pub in the High Street. There is a disused garage opposite the churchyard at the eastern end of the High Street, which together with the abandoned tobacconist shop in "Penningtons" on Church Road indicate that there has been a decline in the commercial uses in this part of the village, with commercial activity now centred further west along the High Street and on Station Road. This results in a quiet, residential area with limited traffic disturbance.

## 7. Relationship to Countryside and Important Views

- 7.1 The Church and grounds are the visual focus of the settlement. The most important views of the Church are commanded from the top of Church Road and along parts of the High Street. One other view of the church from outside the conservation area is from the east along Bedford Lane. However, most points within the Conservation Area have views of the Church, as its tower is such a dominating feature in the settlement.

- 7.2 The views from the Conservation Area, outside over the agricultural land to the south and towards the wooded estates to the east and west are also important in establishing the character of the Conservation Area.

## 8 Enhancement Opportunities

- 8.1 Generally Sunningdale village is kept in quite good condition with little scope for any improvements other than finding a new use for the disused garage. There is a bench on the opposite corner from the War Memorial which is outside the Conservation Area, but is in quite poor condition and could be improved by replacement or repair. The fences around the boundary to Holy Trinity Primary School could also benefit from some replacement and repair.

## 9 Boundaries

- 9.1 North - This boundary follows the northern boundary to the cottages on the corner of Whitmore Lane and Coworth Road and then runs along the rear gardens of the cottages fronting onto Whitmore Lane before turning through over 90 degrees to run along the rear of

land belonging to the Baptist Church, the Nags Head Public House and Nos 26 and 28 High Street.

West: - The boundary runs down the side of the land belonging to "Atom" works, crosses the High Street and then runs along the back of the gardens to all the properties fronting onto Trinity Crescent coming out along the western side of Holly House. It then runs up to the entrance to Sidbury Close and the returns behind the rear of boundaries belonging to Old Church House, Little Chewton and The Laburnums before turning 90 degrees, to run along the side of the latter property and cross Church Road, It then turns east again along the pavement on the south side of Church Road and then follows the road around into Station Road. The boundary follows the edge of the School's fencing as far as the southern edge of the school's playground.

South: - This boundary follows a line of mature trees along the edge of the schools playground and the village hall's land before diverting up through 90 degrees along the lane leading off Church Road to the allotments. The boundary briefly runs along the pavement immediately outside the drive entrance to the new houses before diverting back along the western side of Rosenhurst's garden boundaries. The southern boundary then continues to follow the line of the rear gardens belonging to the properties on the southern side of Church Road as far as the Sunningdale Social Club.

East: - This boundary runs from the south side of the Social Club up, past the corner where Church Road and the High Street merge, taking in the War Memorial than across the High Street and up the western edge of Whitmore Lane.