



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal

# Kencot

### What are Conservation Areas?

Conservation Areas are places of special architectural or historic interest, which have a particular character or appearance worthy of preservation or enhancement. Groups of buildings, walls, trees and hedges, open spaces, views, and the historic settlement patterns all combine to create an individual sense of place. It is this character, rather than individual buildings, that Conservation Area status seeks to protect. The first Conservation Areas in the District were identified in the late 1960s. Since then, there has been a rolling programme of designations. Recent Conservation Areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Kencot Conservation Area was designated in 1994, following a process of public consultation.

### The purpose of this document

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal describes the main aspects of character or appearance which contribute to the special interest and quality of the area. This document is intended to complement the approved policies for Conservation Areas contained in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. In Conservation Areas there are controls over the demolition and minor alterations of unlisted buildings, and on works to trees. Full details can be obtained from the Planning Service. The Preservation and Enhancement document for Kencot accompanies this Character Appraisal and describes strategies for the future maintenance and improvement of Kencot, as well as providing development advice, and guidance on conversions, extensions and the design of new buildings within the Conservation Area.



## Location and setting

The small village of Kencot is located in the south-western corner of the District, five miles north-east of Lechlade. It is connected to the nearby villages of Alvescot and Filkins by a main road at its northern end. This road, which runs east to west, is part of an early network of routes crisscrossing the area, associated with the River Thames and connected to the historic bridges at Radcot and Lechlade.

Kencot has a tranquil, rural character. Houses and cottages, many of which originated as farm buildings and were later extended, are scattered along the lanes that gently wind through the village. In between, areas of open land, mature trees and drystone walls are important components of the character area.

Kencot lies in the Upper Thames Valley in an area of open and low-lying countryside intersected by small streams. The village straddles two distinct landscape types: farmland (including floodplain pasture) at its southern end, and semi-enclosed limestone wolds at its northern end. The underlying geology of the parish is dominated by Oxford clay and cornbrash limestone, but overlying this are localised deposits of alluvium and terrace gravels.



## Historical development

No conclusive archaeology relating to early habitation has been uncovered at Kencot. The parish's name derives from Coena's cot (or cottage) raising the possibility that a small late Anglo-Saxon community may have existed here. Nearby villages, including Alvescot and Kelmscott, which were associated with late Saxon estates at Broadwell and Bampton also feature the component 'cot'.

By 1086, there was a large estate at Kencot with at least 14 tenant households. Most of the land belonged to Kencot Manor. The nearby church of St. George dates from the mid-12th century, and from the 13th century Kencot formed an independent parish. The land at Kencot was divided up between coheirs early in the 14th century, the two halves then passing to a succession of mainly absentee owners. Modest population growth during the Middle Ages was curtailed by the Black Death, and in 1377 only 28 inhabitants over the age of 14 were recorded. By the middle of the 16th century the population had recovered, and in 1548, 64 inhabitants were recorded.

From the Middle Ages the parish had its own open fields, and the two recorded at Enclosure in 1767 (East and West field) comprised two-thirds of the parish's total area. Kencot also had large areas of pasture, including Kencot (or Cow) Common to the south-east, and Great and Little Downs to the north. As befitting an agricultural community, most of Kencot's surviving buildings originated as farmhouses. However, an influx of wealthy gentry and professional families after 1700 saw larger properties appearing during the 18th and 19th centuries. A school was opened in 1723 (an unusually early date for a village school). By 1871, the population had reached 244, partly due to an increase in agricultural labour.

By the 20th century Kencot's population had dropped once more to roughly half the levels of the late 19th century. It rose again briefly when Broadwell aerodrome became operational during WWII. Very little infilling took place during the 20th century, and the village appears today much as it must have done more than a century ago.

## Settlement pattern

From an early date Kencot was served by a number of important transport routes. At the northern end of the village and running east to west is a road that connected with a medieval or earlier route through Black Bourton to Bampton, and a pre-Conquest route through Brize Norton to Witney. The north-south road along which much of the village lies also pre-dates Enclosure in 1767.

Besides good communications the advantages of Kencot for its earliest settlers included the suitability of its surrounding land for agriculture, and the relative enclosure afforded by its setting.

With no clear evidence of continuous settlement prior to 1086 it is probable that the 12th-century church formed the early core of the village. South of this stands the Manor House. This latter may occupy the site of the medieval manor house mentioned in the 13th century.

Today, Kencot's form is essentially polyfocal. Although the village is strung out between the Filkins to Alvescot road in the north, and the neighbouring village of Broadwell to the south, its development was not linear and the buildings of Kencot form four separate and distinct groupings.

At the southern end of the village is a cluster of buildings just north of the parish's boundary with Broadwell. This part of Kencot represents an expansion northwards of settlement in the shadow of Broadwell's church and manor houses. North-east of this, at the main street's junction with the Burford to Langford road, is a grouping whose main component is the manor house: the administrative centre of medieval Kencot. On the main street north of this is a group which includes the church and represents the hub of both the early village and present-day Kencot. This street runs parallel to the Burford to Langford road, and encloses an area of former pasture closes. North of the Filkins to Alvescot road is a later grouping. Settlement here may not have taken place until early in the 17th century.





# Kencot Conservation Area





## Listed Buildings

There are 23 Listed structures of architectural or historic interest in the Conservation Area. Listed Buildings are classified in grades of relative importance.

### Grade II\* – Particularly special and important buildings

8/216 Church of St. George

### Grade II – Buildings of special interest

- 8/213 Asthall Farm House
- 8/214 Stable and cottage c. 10m to SW of Asthall Farm House
- 8/215 Belham Hayes
- 8/217 Chest tomb to John Stevens c. 7m SE of S porch of Church of St. George
- 8/218 Headstone to Elizabeth H? c. 4m S of SE corner of nave of Church of St. George
- 8/219 Headstone to Christopher Burrow c. one m to S of nave of Church of St. George
- 8/220 Headstone to E.H. c. 2m S of chancel of Church of St. George
- 8/221 Home Farmhouse
- 8/222 Kencott Cottage with attached railings, gate, outbuildings and pump (Formerly listed as The Cottage)
- 8/223 Kencot House
- 8/224 Stable range 25m to N of Kencot House, with attached wall and gatepier on E side of stable yard
- 8/225 Wall along S and E sides of stable yard at Kencot House, with archway and gatepier
- 8/226 Kencot Manor, Manor Lodge, and attached gatepier (Formerly listed as Manor House)
- 8/227 Gatepier c. 5m to SE of Kencot Manor
- 8/228 Maisey Cottage (Formerly listed as Kencot Farm Cottage)
- 8/229 Malt House
- 8/230 Manor Farm Cottage and Wychwood (Formerly listed as Kencot Farm Cottage 25 yds S of Manor Farmhouse)
- 8/231 Manor Farmhouse
- 8/232 North Lodge and Kencot Lodge
- 8/233 The Old Rectory
- 8/234 Nos. 1 & 2, Red Rose Close
- 8/235 K6 telephone kiosk at the entrance to Kencot Manor

*Note: The numbers indicate the unique identification number by which Listed Buildings are referenced*

## Architectural character and quality of buildings

The consistent use of the indigenous pale limestone and stone slate gives Kencot a pleasingly harmonious appearance. Most of the houses and cottages date from the 17th and 18th centuries and are small in scale and vernacular in form and detailing. Simple plan forms, steeply pitched gable roofs, ridge end stacks and plain timber casements predominate. Terraces of small cottages are interspersed with larger houses, farm houses and imposing barn ranges.

Together with its humbler buildings, Kencot features an unusual number of higher status houses. These are partly a legacy of the influx of affluent gentry and professional families after 1700. These incorporate a more formal architectural vocabulary, including stone mullion windows, ashlar quoining, coped parapet verges, and finials. Classical influences can also be discerned. Manor Farmhouse for example has an open pedimented porch on Tuscan columns. These higher status houses are also sometimes of a grander scale.

The influence of the Cotswold vernacular style can be seen at No. 1, Red Rose Close, with its steeply pitched gables and chamfered stone mullion windows. The 20th-century village hall also shows the influence of this style and the Arts and Crafts Movement. Kencott Cottage is one of a number of properties retaining its original roughcast render - a finish once common throughout the District.

The small church of St. George dates from c. 1150 but has been altered and added to over the centuries. It features an unusual three-stage tower with monopitch roof and stair turret. The south doorway has a tympanum with a fine, low relief carving of Sagittarius killing a monster. Other finely-carved stonework can be found within. The visual impact of the church is modest compared with that of the larger, spired church of neighbouring Broadwell.

## Boundary treatments

A number of the cottages and barns lining the road through Kencot front directly onto the road. Some link directly onto stretches of stone walling, creating a strongly linear feature along sections of the road. Other properties stand back from the road behind verges of varying depth or, in the case of Kencott Cottage and North Lodge, behind Victorian metal railings. A number of cottages and houses stand gable end on to the road, including No. 1, Red Rose Close and the terraces (called Gablends) near the church. Throughout the village run stretches of drystone walling of the same mellow limestone used in Kencot's buildings. Around the higher status houses coursed rubble walls with flat copings ramp up to square pillars topped by capping stones and ball finials. Key to Kencot's distinctive polyfocal form are the scattered fields and smaller spaces that punctuate the four clusters of buildings that make up the village.

## Landscape, trees and views

Kencot has an unspoilt rural character. Settlement in the surrounding area is sparse, giving Kencot an isolated, tranquil feel. Despite the flat and open nature of this landscape, mature trees give the village a degree of enclosure. Trees stand at the junction of the Alvescot to Filkins road at the entrance to the village. A dense copse of native trees to the south is complemented by a more formal arrangement of yews and conifers on the north side of the road. Open spaces are enhanced by mature oaks, and between these and the well-spaced houses, attractive views out into the countryside beyond are possible. Within the village are numerous appealing, internal vistas, including several along Kencot's serpentine main street.



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General planning enquiries and application forms  
List entries and grant enquiries  
Trees and landscape enquiries  
Architectural and technical enquiries

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