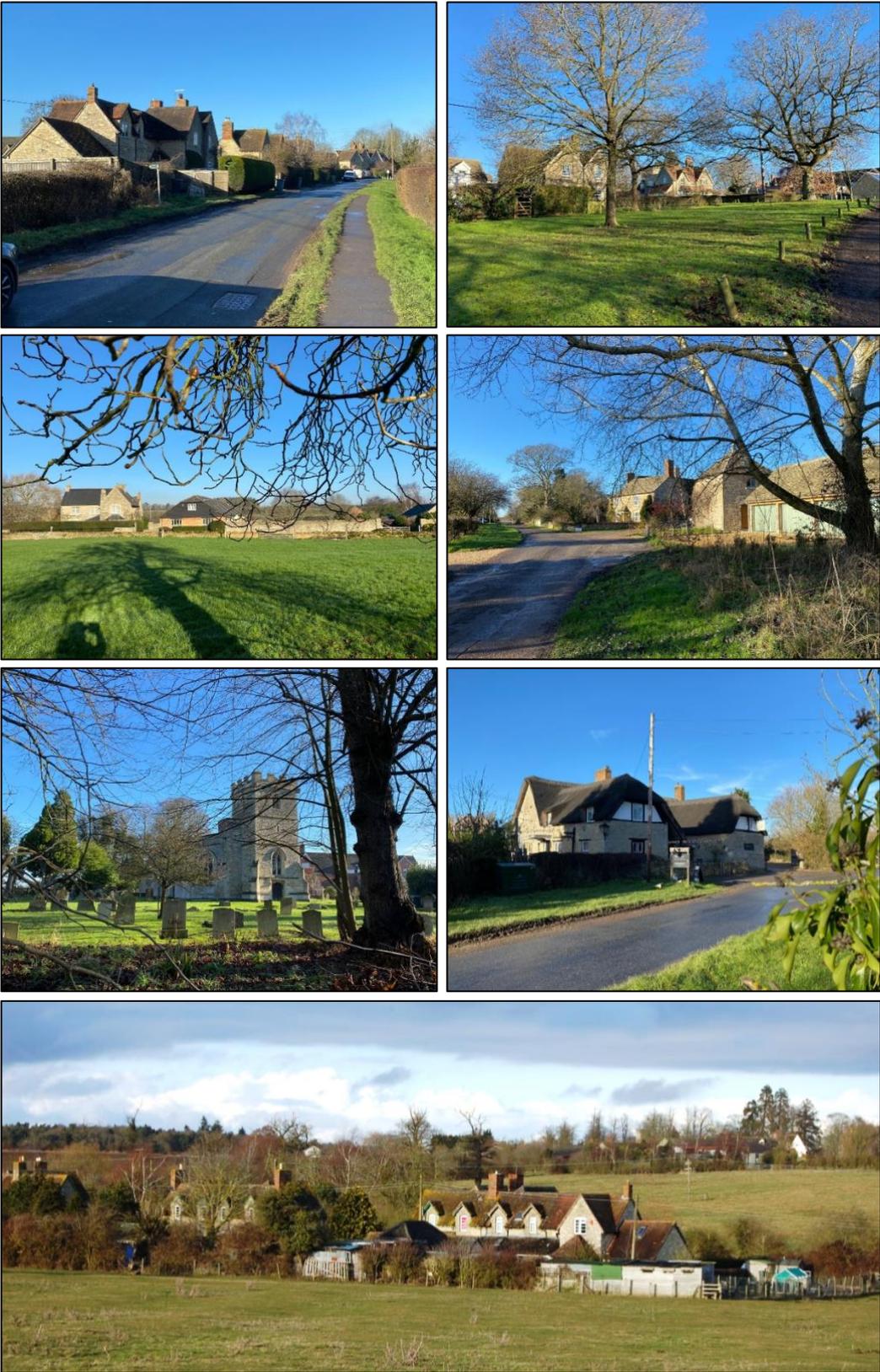


South Leigh & High Cogges Parish Council

Draft

Application for Conservation Area designation

14 October 2022



# South Leigh & High Cogges Parish Council

## Application for Conservation Area designation

### Introduction

South Leigh & High Cogges Parish Council (PC) wishes to submit an Application for parts of the Parish to become Conservation Areas (CA) in order to preserve and enhance their historic environment, local distinctiveness and special 'setting'. This document has been prepared in close co-operation with independent heritage/planning advisers, Mr. Graham Keevill and Mr. Graham Soame, whose professional credentials are at the end of this document together with those of Ms. Heather Horner, a local building historian

We set out here our Application for your kind consideration.

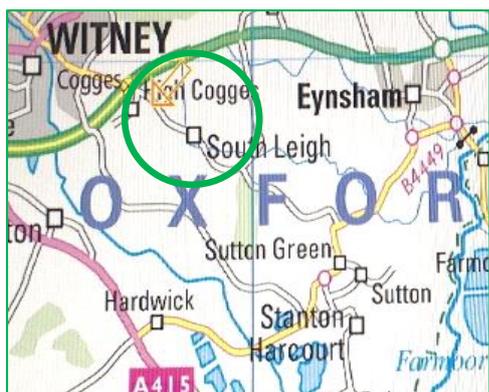
The Parish of South Leigh & High Cogges lies 2 1/2 miles East of Witney on the Limb Brook, a small tributary of the Thames, and comprises some 130 dwellings of which 16 are listed. It is home to just 336 residents at the last census in 2011 and is, thus, one of the smallest parishes by population yet it covers some seven square miles (some 18 sq. kms).

### West Oxfordshire's Secret Asset

The population in and around Witney and Eynsham grows faster than the County average, and within a stone's throw of our Parish live some 40,000 people. This number is set to expand rapidly, plus there is the new population of the impending 2,200 new homes at Eynsham's Salt Cross Garden Village.

We submit that the challenges that our generation faces and the opportunities they afford are for us to meet the needs of these new homes and infrastructure focussed on the area's key service centres, and to embrace them. Meanwhile, the quality of life of those who live there and in the wider area needs to be underpinned and enriched with the benefits of 'nature' and the area's 'history' that surround them.

We suggest that the rich bank of unspoiled natural assets in our Parish could well be West Oxfordshire's *secret asset*. Its recreational, heritage and cultural potential as a 'green lung', even a 'historic and natural playground' for the enjoyment of residents and those of the entire district, is what we want to protect and enhance.



The clusters of houses in the Parish are not time warps of 'chocolate box' cottages, but tell the story of a close-knit community that has lived in the countryside for eons, and with the evidence to support this. These are assets to be treasured and nurtured, and to be enjoyed by the residents of the entire area and its visitors.

It is in this context and setting that we submit our application for core parts of the Parish of South Leigh & High Cogges to be considered for Conservation Area status.

## Conservation Area Application Background

Two years ago, the PC authorised a Working Group to investigate CA status, the Parish having been interested in doing so earlier, in 2016. That process was suspended because of the lack of District Council resources to take it forward at that time.

Then, our Parish was the subject of interest by Gladman Developments Ltd as a proposed site for a large residential project that would have adversely affected South Leigh & High Cogges. This was countered, but our community again faces potential encroachment on all sides - by the A40 expansion, an anaerobic digester site, and by other potential extensive housing developments and solar farms, one that is already in place. The Parish has much more to offer the District's residents, as we have noted above.

In 2018 the Parish successfully completed a Neighbourhood Plan with an overwhelming 92 percent support of the 71 percent of the electorate that turned out in the rain. However, residents are concerned that more protection is now needed.

## Residents' Consultation

As a result, the PC fulfilled its commitment and obligation to consult the community on possible CA status and this has been done continuously since mid 2020. Updates have been distributed and the matter has been on virtually every PC meeting agenda since November 2020. A full set of documents was delivered to every household in the Parish prior to an informal but comprehensive poll in the same month asking the question: **Do you agree, disagree, or remain uncommitted to a proposal that the Campaign Group (later called the Working Group) should prepare a draft Application for Conservation Area status for the Parish of South Leigh.**

We have subsequently changed the Parish name to South Leigh & High Cogges to better reflect the combined communities.

The result was 64% in favour and 27% against.

The Working Group then raised funds from interested residents and instructed a heritage consultant (Mr. Graham Keevill) to work with us to study the area and to prepare a draft report. This report was submitted to the PC before being submitted to WODC as the basis for a pre-application submission on 11 November 2021.

The Working Group received a response from Mr. Phil Shaw, of your advisers Publica, on 9 February 2022. In response to its interpretation of his advice, the Working Group very significantly reduced the original size of the proposed CA and that was again submitted to the entire Parish in a poll between 15 and 30 October 2022. This Application is largely based on Mr. Keevill's report and consultation with residents and our other advisers before and after a Parish Council meeting on (date), when the Application was supported (All to be up dated after the poll if it is in favour).

We trust that this Application now addresses Mr. Shaw's concerns and meets those of the majority of residents. It has been reviewed and endorsed by Mr. Keevill, Mr. Soame and Ms. Horner.

## Application Structure

The bulk of the 140 homes in our Parish (of 330 residents) are in three clusters of population. Two are relatively close to each other while the third is some mile and a half to the west. Thus, our Application that went to pre-application, presented a case based on advice from Mr. Keevill to have them joined with 'buffer' land.

He and we believe that this is very much part of the 'setting' of the settlements and Mr. Keevill's report presented a legitimate case for the land to be included in the proposed CA. However, Mr. Shaw did not agree, thus we have reluctantly omitted much of the 'buffer' land, as well as other areas, and now present South Leigh & High Cogges as two separate physical areas, but very much linked by the human elements of our close-knit community.

## The Application

Our lead consultant advises us, and you will be aware, that local planning authorities are responsible for the designation of CAs in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. An area must have “special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (1990 Act, para 69) to be designated as a CA. “It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas; and, if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly” (1990 Act, para 70).

We understand, therefore, that local communities can put forward their settlements and areas for CA status – but only the local planning authority can make the designation (after appropriate local consultation, that we believe that we have done, in accordance with the 1990 Act).

Conservation Area status brings with it some additional planning controls (e.g. work on trees, the need for consent to demolish a building and some restrictions on permitted development rights<sup>1</sup>), but it also has several distinct advantages where communities wish to preserve the character and setting of their localities. This is particularly so in comparison to Neighbourhood Plans (useful though they are). The advantages, as understood by our Working Group, can be summarised as:

- Conservation Area status is a statutory designation (and protection) under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – the Neighbourhood Plan is only an advisory document in planning terms. (The Parish successfully completed a neighbourhood Plan in 2017).
- A Neighbourhood Plan is time-limited whereas Conservation Area status is not – once designated, this should effectively be permanent (it would require some catastrophic change or loss for CA status to be removed).
- A Neighbourhood Plan can be interpreted in many ways within a local authority’s planning remit: this is much less true for a Conservation Area, especially where an Appraisal and Management Plan is in place.
- Conservation Area status seeks to *preserve* and, if possible, *enhance* the special character of a place. This can be its historical, architectural/aesthetic, landscape, ‘setting’, visual or other trait.

Note: 1 Conservation Area maps – West Oxfordshire District Council ([westoxon.gov.uk](http://westoxon.gov.uk))

## Heritage Asset Considerations

We understand that the significance of a place’s heritage assets will not be the only material factor in whether or not it is suitable for CA designation, but it is a major factor in the decision. Designated heritage assets such as listed buildings are the most important, but we are advised that the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) makes it clear that locally important (non-designated) heritage assets will also be a factor in local decision making – including on whether a place merits CA status. The following paragraphs therefore very briefly describe/note the heritage assets in South Leigh & High Cogges.



### Designated Heritage Assets in the Villages

Within our Parish, there are 16 Listed Buildings, all Grade II except for the Grade I Church of St. James the Great. These are summarised in the table that follows.

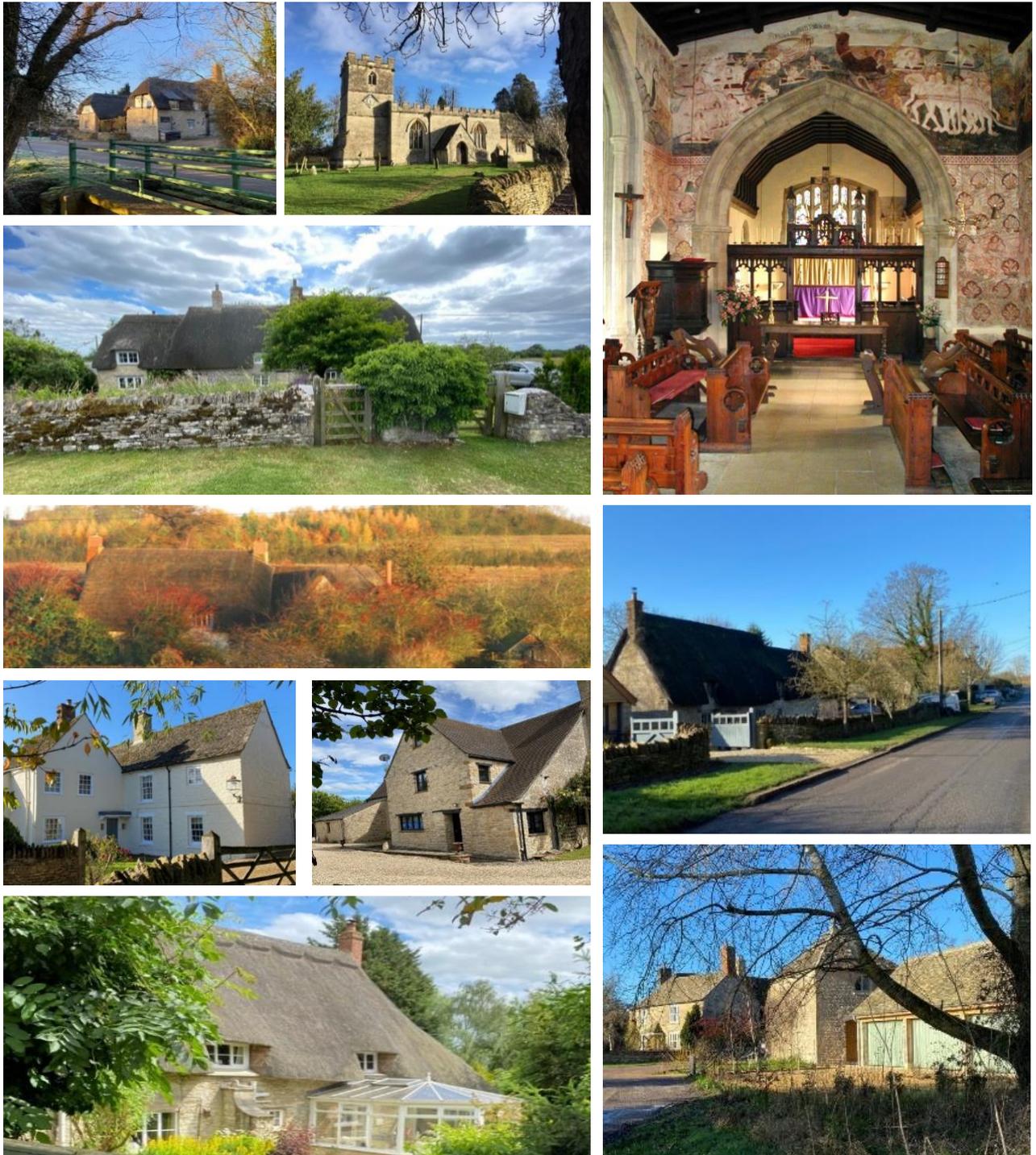
The majority of the Listed Buildings in South Leigh & High Cogges were dated by external features only. Subsequent internal examination by Ms. Heather Horner, an experienced South Leigh-based buildings historian, confirms that many of these buildings have timber-framed cores at least a

century earlier, later underbuilt in stone. In the case of Wayside Cottages (above) that are owned by the National Trust, they are now known to have two 14<sup>th</sup> Century open halls with smoke blackened thatch.

A National Trust report states that these properties are, "*one of the oldest surviving examples of 'historic thatch' in the UK, and amongst the best-preserved ancient plant remains ever recovered in Europe.*"

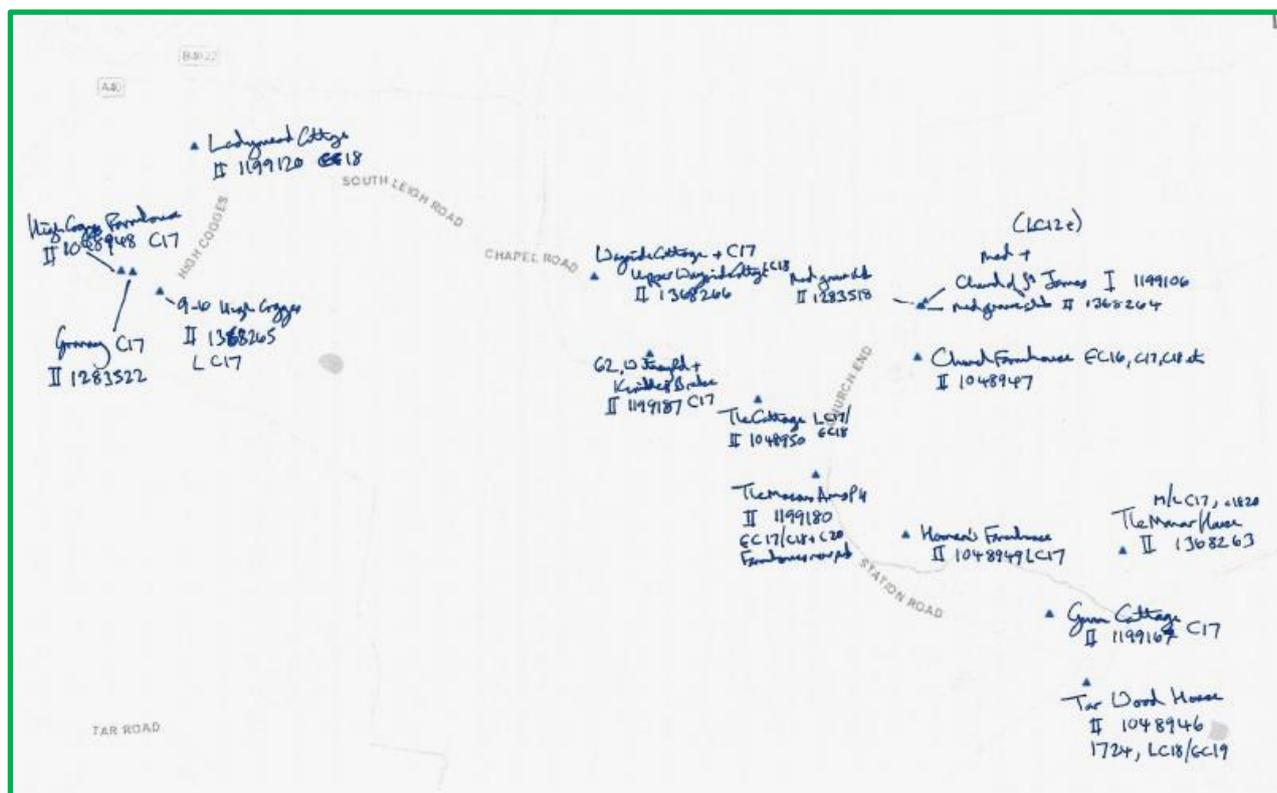
A church has been present here since Norman times. The current building is noted for its 13<sup>th</sup> Century south door and extraordinary 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century wall paintings. Later, John Wesley wrote in his journal of 16<sup>th</sup> October 1774, "*I preached at Southlye – here it was that I preached my first sermon six and forty years ago*" (1728).

### Some of the 16 Listed Heritage Assets



## Listed Heritage Assets in the Parish

Name	Grade	Date/comments
<i>South Leigh</i>		
Church of St James	I	Late 12 <sup>th</sup> -century and later. Exceptional survival of wall paintings internally.
Grave slab nr church	II	Medieval
Grave slab nr church	II	Medieval
Church Farmhouse	II	Farm/manor house, early 16 <sup>th</sup> century origin with 17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> -century and later work
The Cottage	II	Late 17 <sup>th</sup> /early 18 <sup>th</sup> -century house (now known as Acre Cottage)
62 Witney Road / Kimbles Brake	II	17 <sup>th</sup> -century house, now two properties
Wayside Cottage / Upper Wayside C'ge	II	17 <sup>th</sup> and late 18 <sup>th</sup> -century attached properties
The Mason's Arms	II	Public house, early 17 <sup>th</sup> -century origin, 18 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> -century additions/alterations
Homan's Farmhouse	II	Late 17 <sup>th</sup> century house
Gunn Cottage	II	17 <sup>th</sup> -century house
The Manor House	II	Mid-late 17 <sup>th</sup> -century manorial residence, c 1820 alterations
Tar Wood House	II	Late 18 <sup>th</sup> /early 19 <sup>th</sup> -century house
<i>High Cogges</i>		
High Cogges Farmh'e	II	17 <sup>th</sup> -century house
Granary nr HC F'hse	II	17 <sup>th</sup> -century granary adjacent to the farmhouse
9-10 High Cogges	II	Late 17 <sup>th</sup> -century house
Ladymead Cottage	II	Early 18 <sup>th</sup> -century house



Above: Distribution of listed buildings in South Leigh & High Cogges, taken from the National Heritage List mapping.

### Non-designated Heritage Assets

South Leigh & High Cogges contain numerous 19<sup>th</sup>-century houses and other buildings (notably the old school - now Village Hall - as well as The Old Vicarage, the earlier Vicarage (Glebe House) and Holyrood House, built as a residential school. They are of good design, appear to be of high build quality, and are consistent in appearance, detailing and materials. They contribute strongly to the stock of historic buildings and the general character of the place. Several images are below.

Though not listed, these are important elements of the settlement pattern and also provide regular historical reference points on a journey through South Leigh & High Cogges. The later 19<sup>th</sup>-century pairs of labourers' cottages in Station Road were constructed by the predecessors of the Eynsham Park estate (the Sibthorpe family), and also have strong local historical resonance, as do Station Farm and its converted outbuildings.

### Some of the Non-designated Heritage Assets



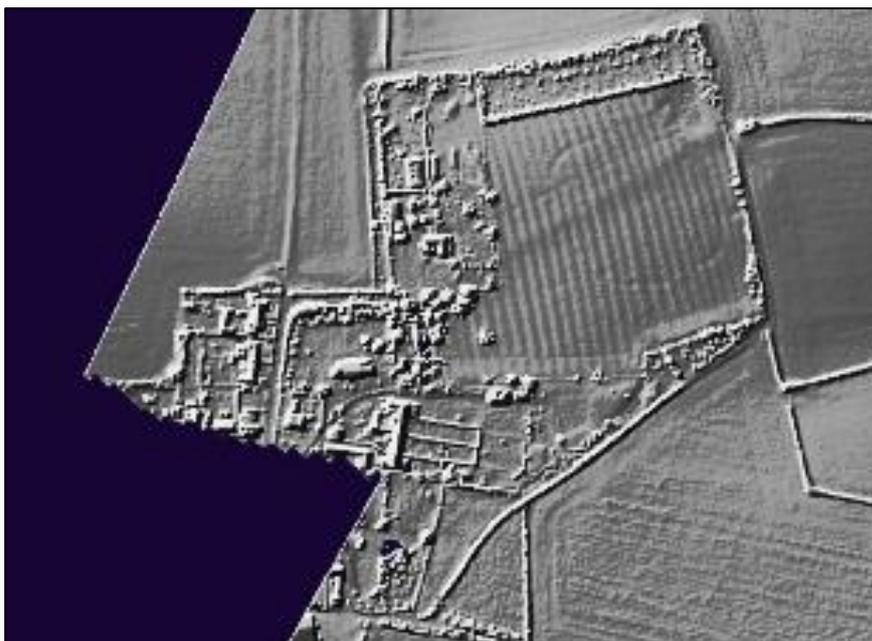
The Old Post Office



## Other Character Features

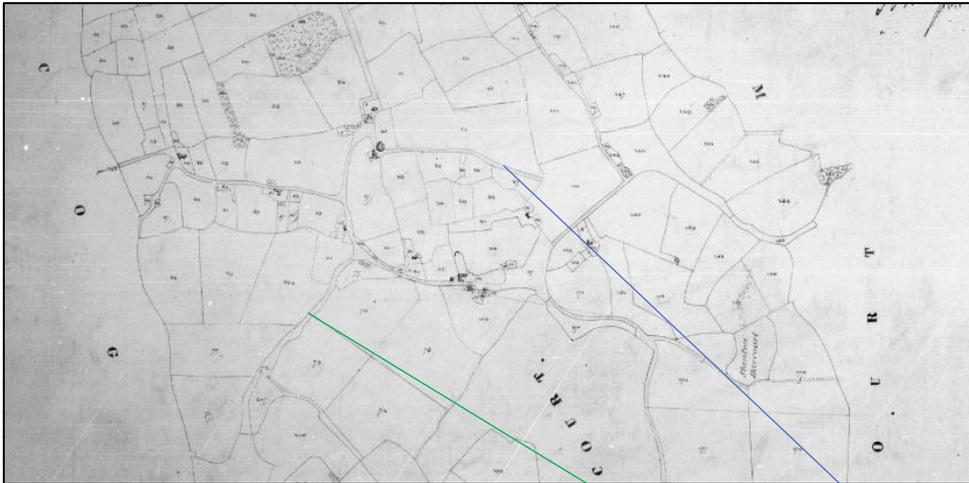
A number of natural and created/historic features make an important contribution to the villages and their setting.

- The Limb Brook and other water courses are important physical and conceptual threads running through the village.
- Old drove ways and paths, especially Bond's Lane (right) with its existing earth walls, shown on the earliest maps, are extremely important features.
- The disused railway line that runs mostly to the south of the village (right). Some evidence of the former station remains, but the old crossing on Station Road is still appreciable, as is the Station Master's/Level Crossing Keeper's house, which is still a private residence (lower right). The lines have been removed, but much evidence remains along the former track (right) that was once the community's lifeline until it closed to passengers on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1962. Poet, Dylan Thomas, who lived in South Leigh wrote frequently about his train journeys to and from the station.
- Significant areas of medieval ridge and furrow fields survive around the village (below). Much has been lost to mechanical/deep ploughing in the modern era, but there is still some good survival – and in at least one case what appears to be earlier archaeological earthworks are also preserved within/by the ridge and furrow.

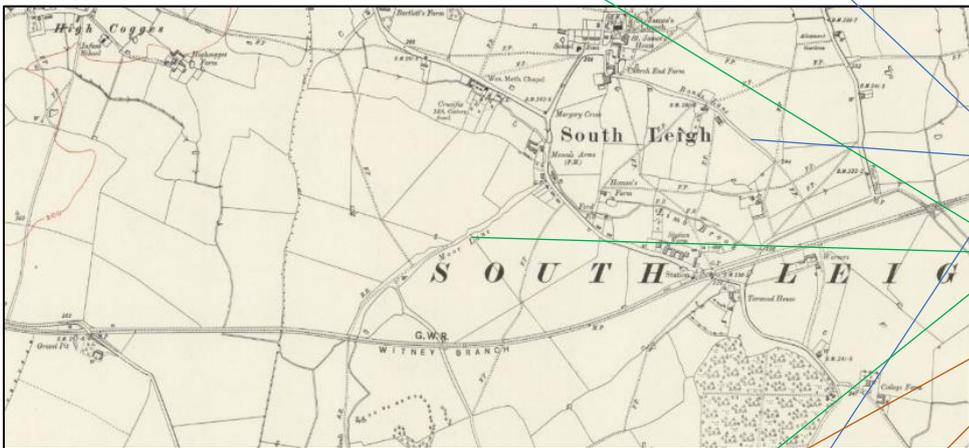


*Left: Lidar image for the area around the church of St. James the Great and Bond's Lane. Note the medieval ridge and furrow to the north-east of the church, apparently with a circular archaeological earthwork under it.*

The villages also feature on a series of high-quality, detailed surveys and maps from the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The text relating to an estate map of 1793 survives, the Tithe Map of 1849, and Ordnance Survey 25-inch (1:2500) maps of 1877 (surveyed 1872-5), 1899 (revised 1898), the 1910 District Valuation map ([https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/district-valuation/DV-VIII-353\\_Oxfordshire\\_XXXII-10.pdf](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/district-valuation/DV-VIII-353_Oxfordshire_XXXII-10.pdf)) and 1921 (revised 1919) are the most important, but later editions are useful as well. These maps make it relatively easy to follow the historical development of the village and its buildings in considerable detail.



Left: Extract from the 1849 Tithe Map of South Leigh (High Cogges was in a different parish), with a relatively sparse distribution of buildings. Bond's Lane and Moor Lane can be seen.



Centre: Extract from the 1921 1:2500 OS map, with Eynsham Estate houses, public and other buildings having been added

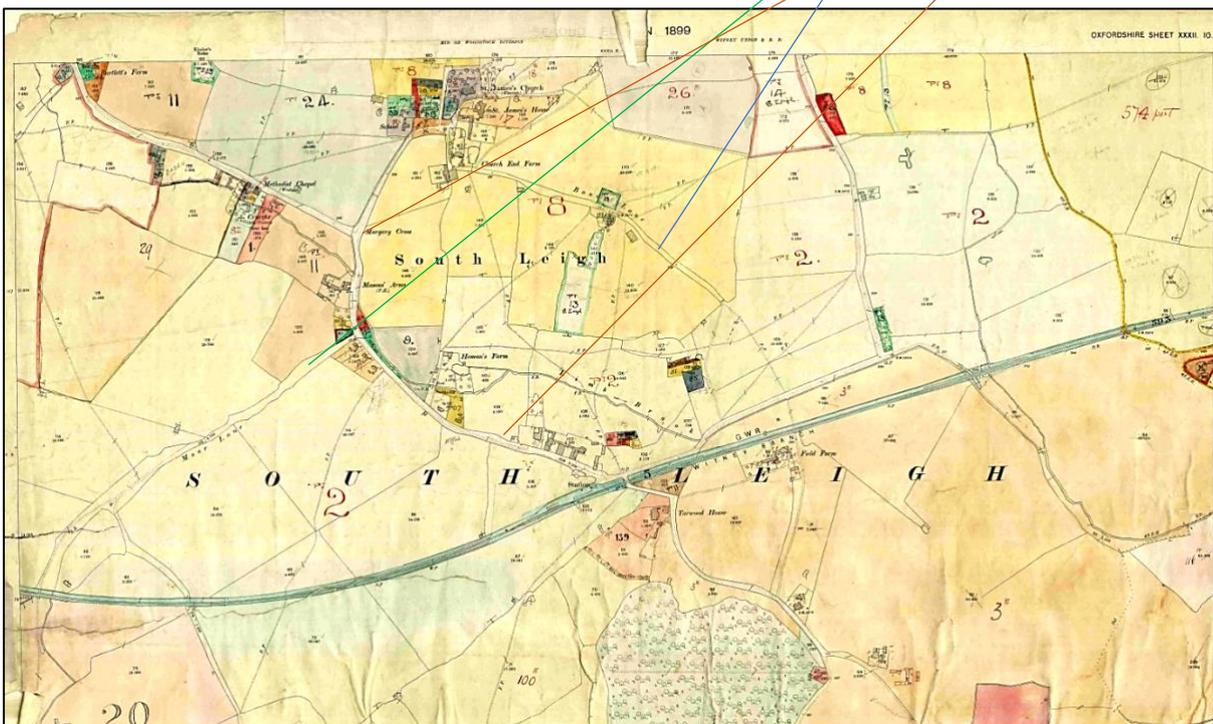
Bond's Lane

Moor Lane

Below: the 1899 map

Margery Cross

Station Road



### Modern development

The villages of South Leigh and High Cogges remained very largely as they were in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century until well after World War II. New houses were built in both settlements thereafter, especially during the 1960s. The main concentrations were at Lymbrook Close (off Station Road) and west of Margery Cross between The Cottage (now Acre Cottage) and Kimbles Brake, (now Wayside Cottages) in South Leigh, with a smaller but still important development in High Cogges (see map on page 12).

There have been relatively few new builds since then. Most of the modern buildings are typical of their time and generally do not use vernacular materials. They are scattered among the more historic building stock, and do not detract from the attractive rural ambience or setting of the villages. Some of them make a positive contribution. The Lymbrook Close group is one case, as an interesting example of social housing (as it would now be termed), integrated quite well and with some care into the village layout. Such was not always the case with this type of development, which tended to be pushed to the margins of, or completely outside, existing settlements.

### Landscape Character

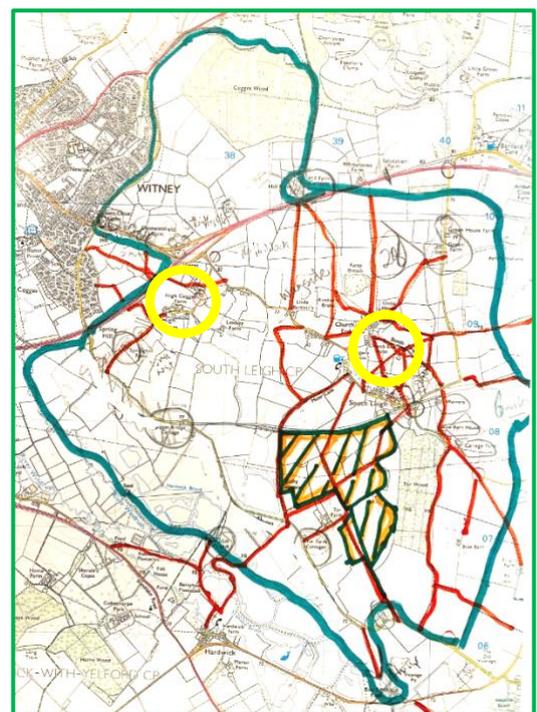
The two villages nestle into very attractive open countryside, with the core of South Leigh around the medieval Church of St. James with High Cogges being on the highest ground to the west. There are excellent, uninterrupted views from the church area to the south and to the north, while High Cogges also has expansive views in a number of directions.



Views within the villages themselves are a feature of them. While generally a little more constrained by high hedgerows along the slightly sunken lanes, excellent vistas open up to the rolling farmland on either side at most entrances to the abutting fields that punctuate the residential areas.

### Footpaths and Bridleways

The old paths and railway provide some excellent panoramas as well, and the villages are at the centre of a network of public footpaths and bridleways that criss-cross in all directions. (See the red lines in the illustration on the right). The green hatched area is the proposed solar farm. This concentration of footpaths makes the area a prime destination for walkers and country lovers both locally and from more far afield.



The landscape therefore provides a fine frame for South Leigh & High Cogges – so much so that the very busy A40 dual carriageway (which passes by a short distance to the north and west) is barely perceptible until one is very close to it.

*Above right: The yellow circles are South Leigh and High Cogges. Public footpaths are shown in red.*

*The proposed solar farm is hatched. The Parish boundary is the outer green line.*



*Left: The ancient Moor Lane*

### The potential for Conservation Area designation(s)

As noted in our introduction, the possibility that South Leigh & High Cogges might be designated as a Conservation Area is not new. Important studies were carried out in 2016, and proved useful in our heritage consultant's consideration of what might be achievable. He was in 'no doubt that the villages merit designation'.

He advised, *"It is important to re-state the critical phrase: candidate areas must have "special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" (1990 Act, para 69) to qualify for CA designation. This does not mean that modern buildings are problematic or need to be excluded – there are probably very few CAs which do not include some. Indeed there are CAs which are almost exclusively modern (eg mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century) in terms of their building stock.*

*At South Leigh & High Cogges, most of the older buildings have been listed, or are so by virtue of curtilage listing.*

*There is no doubt that these buildings are all of high historic, architectural and aesthetic value both individually, in their settings (there are strong visual links between many of them), and for their group value. They would form the core of the proposed Conservation Area.*

*The later 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings in the villages are mostly the result of enlightened development by the predecessors to Eynsham Park estate. They are of good architectural quality and design, undoubtedly making an important contribution to the historical and architectural character of the area. The more modern buildings are well integrated into the historic settlement pattern, in scale with the historic houses/cottages, and help to link what would otherwise have been very dispersed settlement areas.*

*They therefore make a positive contribution as a group (even if few of them contribute individually) to the overall layout and character of South Leigh & High Cogges. The countryside around and between the two villages is important visually, its topography giving them an unusual degree of self-containment and protection from features such as the A40 main road which could have been very intrusive. The landscape thus makes an important contribution to the character of South Leigh & High Cogges as a feature in its own right, helping to integrate them, and as a protective buffer around them".*

### Our Proposed CA Boundary and Character Areas

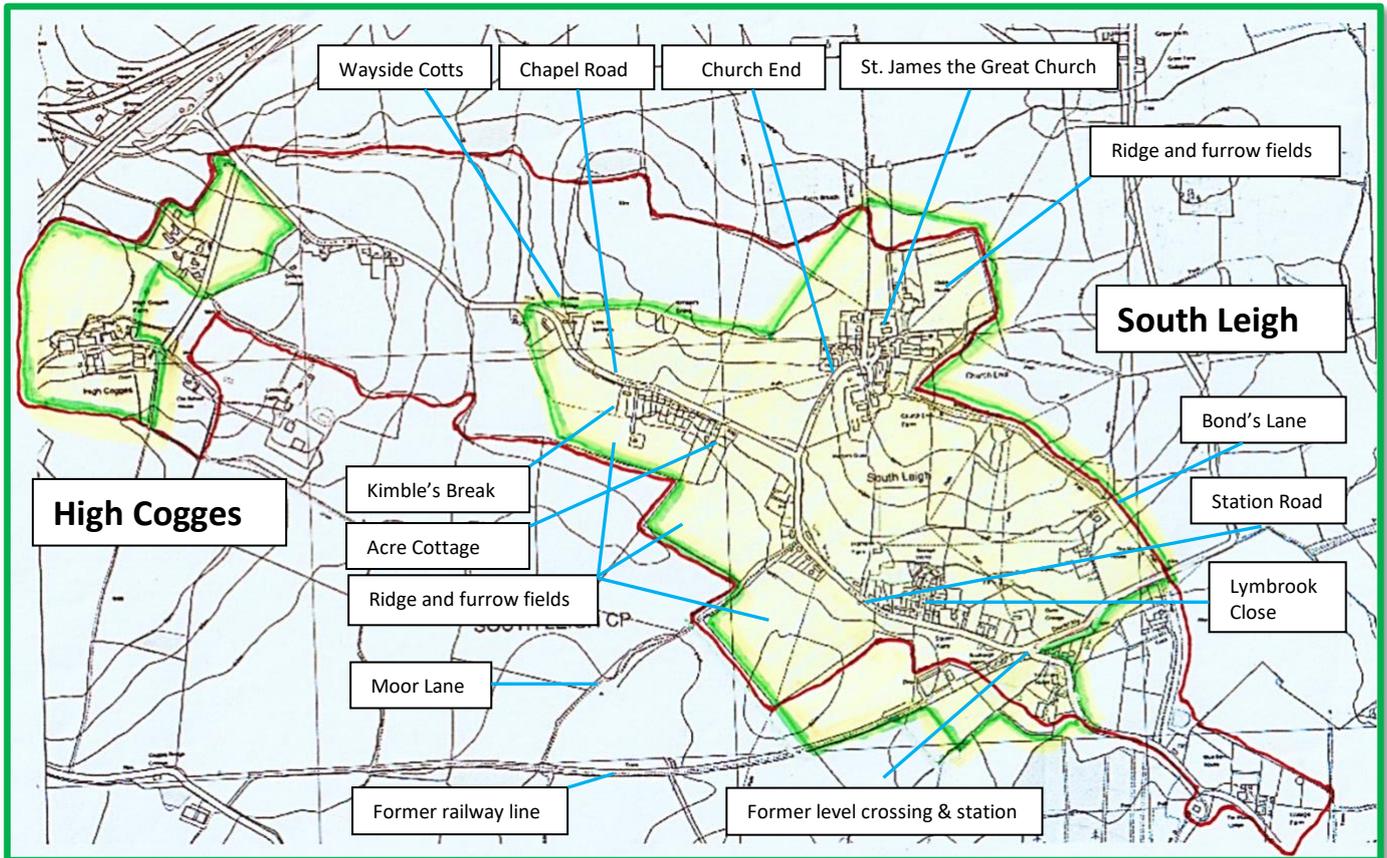
Our heritage consultant defined the Church and its surroundings as core area 1, and Station Road as core area 2. The eastern end of this road also has important character as a 'gateway' from this direction. The area to the west of Margery Cross includes an important group of listed buildings, but also a long line of later 20<sup>th</sup>-century houses which, as suggested above, provide linkage between what might otherwise be dispersed areas of historic settlement. He advised that they do therefore contribute to the "special architectural or historic interest" of the villages. Their linear quality and consistent distance from the road are helpful in this respect, and reinforce the village's historic plan form. They also lie within the setting of the listed buildings. They are worthy of inclusion.

Similarly, he strongly believes that Bond's Lane and the area to its west, should be included so that Bond's Lane receives maximum protection.

Regarding High Cogges, he wrote, *"to my mind, this a self-defining core zone – although an argument could be made here that the settings of the listed buildings provide sufficient protection for the area as a whole in terms of heritage designations. However, I do not think that argument holds up and believe the hamlet deserves CA status in conjunction with South Leigh".*

## Proposed Boundaries

Green/ Yellow: Proposed Application Poll boundary. Red: Pre-app boundary considered too broad.



### Our Application Submission

This report presents our case and a proposed boundary (above) for a South Leigh & High Cogges Conservation Area to be considered by WODC in line with Parish residents' wishes. Our lead heritage consultant believes that there is a *strong case for CA designation* as shown in the pages above. He concludes, *"This is robust, and founded on careful analysis of the site and source materials"*.

Thus, on behalf of the residents of South Leigh & High Cogges Parish, we respectfully submit this Application. We hope that the West Oxford District Council will agree that the Conservation Area we request meets the requisite criteria i.e. that it would protect an area of *"special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"*.

As set out at the start of this document, we believe, and are advised, that this is a very special area that should be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of the Parish residents and those who live in the wider community in West Oxfordshire. We believe that this may be the first Conservation Area Application to have been submitted for your consideration for many years and are excited to be presenting it to you. We shall be most happy to meet to discuss any part of it and/or to accompany you around the proposed areas.

Thank you.

XXXXXXX

Chair, The South Leigh & High Cogges Parish Council.

Date .....

Nicky@southleighandhighcogges-pc.gov.uk

Telephone: 01993 701137

## Our Independent Heritage Advisers

**Graham Keevill** BA (Hons), FSA, MCifA  
**Lead Consultant**



**Graham is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquities and a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists with more than 40 years' experience, having gained a BA (Hons) degree in Archaeological Studies at Leicester University in 1980.**

Graham has a substantial publication track record, with a book on Medieval Palaces produced by Tempus Publishing, seven monographs, and many other published papers.

**He has also been the sole or a major contributor to around 30 Conservation Plans and equivalent documents. In addition:**

- He has been a freelance consultant archaeologist since 1999, and is the Consultant Archaeologist for: The Dean and Chapters of Blackburn (since 2003), Rochester (since 2006), Christ Church Oxford (since 2007), and of Salisbury (since March 2011).
- He also wrote the Conservation Plan for Rochester Cathedral and its precinct, completed in (2005).

*He advises:*

- Tewkesbury Abbey (Parochial Church Council – since 2008).
- Historic Royal Palaces (since 1999).
- Medway Council (Rochester and Upnor Castles, and Temple Manor; since 2007).
- Eynsham and Dorchester Abbeys (Oxfordshire).

*Other relevant work has included:*

- Heritage conference organizer at the University of Oxford.
- A new Conservation Area designation in Staffordshire and extending another.

**Graham has extensive knowledge and experience of heritage legislation and planning policy, with particular expertise in Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments (including relevant Consent procedures and application processes).**

He was a member of the Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists from 2004 (and sat on its Council since 2007), and of the Institute for Archaeologists since 1985.

Graham is a highly experienced and expert archaeological consultant. He has directed all types of archaeological work from small watching briefs and evaluations through to major survey, excavation and building archaeology programmes.

He has also been extensively involved in major strategic studies, infrastructure projects and Environmental Assessments, e.g. on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and at the Tower of London.



**Graham Soame** MRTPI

Chartered Town Planner and Designer

Graham is a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and an independent planning consultant covering the Oxfordshire and Cotswold region with over 40 years' practical experience in the area. He lives in South Leigh.

Graham provides clear planning and design advice on domestic properties of all sizes and ages, as well as to a wider range of business and private clients.

**He has unrivalled local planning expertise and has achieved more than 2,000 permissions of all kinds across the Oxfordshire and Cotswold regions including work for heritage and listed properties and with Conservation Areas.**

He works with a team of experienced planners, designers and surveyors across the regions and drafts in any additional professionals that may be required.

Graham works as Chartered Town Planner and designer who began his career in County and District Planning Departments in the 1970s before going independent with his own consultancy providing in-depth planning, design and development advice.

In each of the last 20 years, Graham has worked on numerous projects that are either Listed Properties or are in Conservation Areas, or both, the majority of which are within the West Oxfordshire District. These include recent assignments in Kingham Conservation Area, Church Hanborough Conservation Area and listed properties in Black Bourton, and work for the Listed 'Mason Arms Artists' Residence' hotel in South Leigh.

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**Heather Horner** M. Phil

Buildings Historian



Heather is a South Leigh-based experienced buildings historian. She has a deep knowledge of the properties in the Parish of South Leigh & High Cogges and their historic setting.

Heather has researched many of the local Listed Properties' interiors thus adding considerably to the knowledge bank of these Heritage Assets in the Parish. As referred to in the text, Heather has established that some are much older than recorded. She has also gained considerable knowledge of most of the non-designated asset buildings.

Heather is an active member of a number of local and national historic buildings research groups including:

- Oxfordshire Buildings Record <https://obr.org.uk/>
- Vernacular Architecture Group <https://www.vag.org.uk/index.htm>,
- Medieval Settlement Research Group <https://medieval-settlement.com/>
- Historic Farm Buildings Group <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/collections/historic-farm-buildings-group/>
- Heather is also a Caseworker for Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society Listed Buildings Subcommittee <https://www.oahs.org.uk/>