

Snigs End A Chartist Settlement

Introduction

Snigs End, situated in the two parishes of Staunton and Corse, is the remains of the mid 19th century Chartist settlement established by Fergus O'Connor, the driving force behind the Chartist Land Company. The estate completed in 1848, is comprised of around 70 plots of between two and four acres, 81 houses and a school, covering an area of approximately 268 acres of land.

The purpose of this report is to carry out an evaluation of the setting of the Chartist settlement to complement the existing character appraisal of the Staunton/Corse Conservation Area. In order to ensure that future development both preserves and enhances the settlement and its key features.

Statement of Special Character

Key Features

Five Chartist estates were constructed across the country during the mid nineteenth century, each slightly different in its layout and appearance. However the settlements can be defined by a number of key features which give it its distinct character. These elements are outlined below:

- A Uniform Layout

Plots of land were laid out in a formal arrangement of grids and crescents on predominantly flat land. Unusually these developments were unnuclated settlements that were set out on parcels of rural land, giving them a sense of organisation, unlike most rural settlements which tended to develop in an organic fashion around roadsides and services.

- A Dispersed settlement character

The estate is characterised by small single storey cottages set back a similar distance from the approach track in a large plot. These plot sizes extended from two to four acres per cottage to encourage self sufficiency among its occupants. The result of which was a low density settlement with a distinct dispersed, rural character.

- The Chartist Cottage

The Chartist origins of many of the cottages are still apparent today as they are of a uniform layout and style. For the most part single storey constructions, built in local stone and brick with a stone plinth and slate roof and a distinct projecting bay and pediment complete with a trefoil opening. A central door flanked by two casement windows and two further casement windows in the adjoining bays. Each cottage had two single





storey outbuildings to the rear which enclosed a courtyard for livestock.

- **Narrow tracks and Boundary Hedgerows**

The roads, originally tracks, providing access to the plots are narrow single lane approaches. The dominant feature of which is the high hedgerows which flank either side, further emphasizing the narrowness. The hedgerows vary in height (between 4 and 6ft) and thickness and were also planted to mark plot boundaries. The original species planted is understood to be French Furze and today is in the main privet however other species are present.



- **Mature Trees and Orchards**

The extensive number of trees present are a key feature within the settlement. Large numbers of native species exist within the hedgerows and plots of land. Many of the plots also contained small orchards as part of their self sufficient lifestyle, remnants of which can still be seen today.

Character Analysis

- * **Area 1 Gloucester Road ¹**

The two crescents either side of Gloucester Road are still clearly discernible and although the approach tracks are removed the original layout is still intact. The degree of modification and infill is limited, a number of the houses still retain the original features and 8 are statutorily listed. Whilst some of the plot sizes are reduced and are now enclosed by post and rail fencing to the rear. Many of the hedgerows are still in evidence and several of the plots contain remnants of orchards.



- * **Area 2 Prince of Wales Gloucester Road and School Lane**

The crescent to the west of Gloucester Road is difficult to discern given the changes in layout; the widening of the road junction at Prince Crescent. The crescent includes the Grade II former school house an impressive 2 and half storey building now disused. The crescent to the east is relatively intact and all 5 of its cottages are listed. However the heavily trafficked A417 does detract from the setting.

School Lane located off the A417 retains many of the characteristics of the original Chartist settlement. Laid out along a narrow lane bounded by hedgerows with little infill (mainly located at the southern end of the lane where it is less intrusive) and only minor alterations. Where hedgerows are lower glimpses of open countryside can be seen beyond giving a sense of the character of the original Chartist settlement.



¹ Areas as defined in Snigs End Conservation Area and Character Appraisal



**Area 2a Prince Crescent*

The most significant change to the original settlement has taken place here over the last 40 years. Since the 1970s significant infill has taken place along with road widening rendering the original layout indiscernible. The pattern and density has altered to such an extent that the Chartist settlement has been lost as the development more resembles a suburban retirement village. Few original Chartist cottages remain such as Pear Cottage which now look incongruous set amongst the 20th century development.



** Area 3 Ledbury Road Crescent*

The layout of this Crescent is perhaps the most legible of the settlements. The approach track is still in evidence and the view along the crescent shows the formation of cottages. The plots of land are still in existence in front of the cottages however to the rear some have been shortened. There are 4 listed buildings within the crescent, however many have undergone alterations some of which are substantial. Due to the flat nature of the landscape the substantial development at Princes Crescent is visible from this location and encroaches to degree on the setting of this crescent.



**Area 4 Moat Lane*

The original layout of 4 Chartist plots in a grid formation has been eroded, as the plots have been subdivided and infilled. Some of the original approach track enclosed by hedgerows still remains however the properties are now accessed via a cul de sac that dissects the original settlement.



**Area 5 North of Moat Lane*

This settlement located on the outskirts of the village adjacent to agricultural land, giving it a distinctly rural quality. The original layout of groupings of 5 plots appears unchanged. To the west of the settlement cottages are accessed via the original approach track each plot enclosed by hedgerows providing a sense of privacy to the cottages. Although several of the cottages have undergone renovation and some significant changes in formation, no infill has taken place and much of its original character remains.

**Additional Features*

A number of buildings not part of the original Chartist settlement have been added as part of the Conservation Area. These include 2 listed buildings along Ledbury Road. Laburnum Cottage; a brick nogged timber frame house dating from the 16th century and Copelands; a former school house dating from the 19th century. As well as Corse Grange and Staunton school situated off Gloucester Road.



Located outside of the Conservation Area but playing an important role in the setting of the Chartist settlement is St James Church founded in Norman times, the spire of which can



be seen from the Chartist plots at a number of locations. As well as Staunton Court, an attractive brick and timber building constructed in the second half of the 16th century. Sadly however a number of industrial buildings located immediately adjacent, whilst partially hidden by bunds, nonetheless detract from this setting.

Negative Features

There are a number of features present which significantly detract from the key characteristics of the Chartist settlement and its setting:

- The subdivision of the original plot sizes resulting in infill, thus altering the density and the layout of the Chartist development. This is evident to a degree in many of the layouts, but is most apparent at Princes Crescent where the infill is to such an extent that the original Chartist layout is hidden.
- The demolition of original cottages and their replacement with new dwellings. The Prince of Wales Gloucester Road crescent on the west side has reduced legibility as a result of the construction of new dwellings which bear no resemblance to the original Chartist style.
- The significant alteration of original cottages with extensions or the replacement of original features such as front doors and windows. This can be seen in particular along Ledbury Road Crescent where significant alterations detracting from the original simplistic style of construction have taken place.
- The removal of hedgerows and the introduction of inappropriate post and rail or closed board fencing to mark plot boundaries.
- The introduction of inappropriate access ways; in the form of electronic gates and tarmaced or block pave driveways.
- The introduction of more recent development unsympathetic to the Chartist settlement.



Settings

Setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. This depends on a wide range of physical elements within, as well as perceptual and associational attributes pertaining to the heritage assets surroundings. Each of these elements may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the asset or be neutral. In some instances the contribution made by setting to the assets significance may





*be negligible in others it may make the greatest contributions to significance.*²

Currently the conservation area comprises the original Chartist Settlement and a small number of listed buildings. Due to the sensitive nature of the historic character of this Chartist settlement this report looks at its setting to ascertain what level of protection it should be given.



Snigs End is a settlement located within open countryside. To some degree natural boundaries determined the extent of the original Chartist settlement. To the North the land rises at Staunton Coppice and to the West land falls sharply at Glynch Brook. To the east and south some containment may have arisen from watercourses and roadways, however here the boundaries are less defined.



As the landform is predominantly flat, ranging from 30m AOD to the north of Staunton and to 25m AOD south of Corse. Visibility across the settlement varies. The nature of the land does not give rise to many vantage points. However where gaps in hedgerows occur views can be glimpsed of the settlement as a series of green spaces, private plots of land extending out to open countryside. Equally the nature of this landform and the particular style of the Chartist settlement renders it highly sensitive to inappropriate development.

Conclusion

For this reason therefore, the settlement and its surroundings have been surveyed and mapped and an area identified where development proposals have the potential to erode the setting of the Chartist settlement. Development within this area (indicated on the map) will need to consider its impact on, both the settlement and individual key features.

² English Heritage Guidance The Setting of Heritage Assets.