



Sunningwell Parish

Neighbourhood Development Plan – 2026-41

Non-Designated Heritage Assets – Informal Briefing Note



May 2026

Prepared by: Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on behalf of Sunningwell Parish Council

Non-Designated Heritage Assets Documents

This document is one of three related to Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs) for Sunningwell Parish's Neighbourhood Plan:

1. Non-designated Heritage Assets – Factual Information
2. Non-designated Heritage Assets – Informal Briefing Note
3. Non-designated Heritage Assets - Nomination Form

Helping to shape the future of the parish

A shared opportunity

Sunningwell Parish is preparing its Neighbourhood Plan to help shape how the parish will look, feel, and evolve over the coming years. The latest version of the Plan can be found at <https://sunningwell-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

This is about understanding what people value most about living here, and making sure those qualities are not gradually lost as change happens over time. It is also an opportunity to address the priorities that parishioners have identified in the three surveys carried out in 2025 and 2026, see <https://sunningwell-pc.gov.uk/np-survey/>

Some of the buildings, places and landscapes that make a real contribution to the character of the parish are already protected through trusts or by being “Listed”, but many currently have no protection. The Neighbourhood Plan is the way to protect these valued but currently vulnerable features by adding them to a local list of **Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs)**.

Further details of this process can be found in the Factual Information document which can be accessed from <https://sunningwell-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/> which summarises Sunningwell Parish Council's understanding of the process (although it is not professional advice).

At its heart, NDHA designation is about the everyday things people already notice and value in our parish.

- the houses people point out to visitors
- the groups of buildings that have distinct character
- the mix of historic and rural features that make the parish distinctive
- the quiet details that make it feel like Sunningwell, not anywhere else

This is not about changing how people live in their homes. It is about recognising what already gives the parish its identity.

What is a Non-Designated Heritage Asset?

A Non-Designated Heritage Asset is a building, structure, place or feature that has local significance because of its history, appearance or role in the parish.

It is essentially a way of saying: **this place matters locally, even if it is not nationally listed.**

It might include:

- historic cottages or old farm buildings
- distinctive individual houses
- dwellings that have associations with notable people
- barns, walls or rural features
- village landmarks and green spaces
- groups or clusters of buildings that work well together

NDHAs are **not listed buildings** and do not carry the same level of statutory protection.

Why identify them?

The purpose is to:

- protect what people already value about the parish — familiar buildings, lanes and views
- help new development fit in better with existing character
- keep a record of important local places before they are lost or altered
- guide better design in the future through scale, materials and setting
- use local knowledge properly to reflect what residents understand about the parish.

What does this mean for homeowners?

Being identified as an NDHA does not change how a home is used or maintained.

It does not prevent:

- living in your home
- making repairs
- normal alterations where permission is not required.

Where planning permission is required, the building's local significance may be taken into account so that proposals are considered in context.

Additional benefits of being an NDHA

- **Clear recognition of local importance**

The building is formally acknowledged as part of what makes the parish distinctive, rather than relying on informal opinion or memory.

- **Stronger voice in planning decisions**

When planning applications are considered, the building's local significance must be taken into account, helping ensure decisions are properly balanced.

- **Better protection against unsuitable development nearby**

NDHA status can help ensure that new development in the immediate area is designed more carefully, with more regard for local character.

- **A stronger case for sensitive repair and alteration**

Where changes are proposed, the NDHA status can support approaches that use appropriate materials, scale, and design — helping maintain quality rather than limiting it.

- **Contribution to a well-documented parish record**

The building becomes part of an official local evidence base, helping ensure Sunningwell's history and character are properly recorded for the future.

- **Recognition of group value (where relevant)**

Being part of a recognised cluster can strengthen the identity of the wider area, not just individual properties.

- **Support for long-term neighbourhood planning outcomes**

NDHAs help ensure the Neighbourhood Plan reflects what residents actually value, giving the community more influence over how the parish evolves over time.

Isolated properties or features

There are several reasons why an individual property or feature may appear on the NDHA list, including, architectural significance, local historic significance, identifiable value to character of the area, or association with notable persons past or present.

Clusters of buildings

In many cases the character that parishioners wish to protect resides not only in individual buildings, but in the in the coherent combination of buildings which could be destroyed by the inappropriate development of one of more members of the cluster.

We welcome suggestions for inclusion on the list, which will ultimately be independently assessed against the criteria mentioned later.

In some cases it will be appropriate for a single property to appear on the NDHA list both individually and as part of a wider cluster.

A note on the NDHA process and criteria

The Local Planning Authority, in our case the Vale of the White Horse District Council, has sole responsibility and authority for determining what is included on the NDHA list.

They will typically be working from a list suggested as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, and the evidence and support gathered as part of that process, but they have unilateral authority to add or remove items from this suggested list.

The criteria that the VOWH will use to determine whether an item is on the list will be whether it meets all four of the following criteria:

1. is capable of meeting the government's definition of a heritage asset
2. possesses heritage interest that can be conserved and enjoyed
3. has a value for the neighbourhood or community beyond personal or family connections, or the interest of individual property owners because of its heritage interest
4. has a level of significance that is greater than the general positive identified characteristics of the local area.

Important note

This document is an informal guide for discussion purposes only and does not constitute professional planning, legal, or heritage advice. Independent advice should be sought where appropriate.