

Cofferidge Close Listing Decision: Summary and Comment

The Milton Keynes Shopping Centre became a Grade II listed building in 2010 and on 30 May 2012 another modern building in Milton Keynes has been given protected status with a Grade II listing.

Following the recommendation from English Heritage the Secretary of State has added 7-23 Silver Street, including the covered entrance to the Cofferidge Close development, to the list of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historical Interest. This terrace row of five town houses, four flats, and the entrance archway into the Close, form the southern boundary of the Cofferidge Close development.



The row of houses, flats, and archway, on Silver Street (left) and into the Close (right)

What makes the listing significant in conservation terms is that it happens at a time when the Cofferidge Close scheme faces partial demolition to make way for a supermarket development.

The Cofferidge Close scheme was designed and built by Milton Keynes Development Corporation between 1970 -76 during the first phase of the new city of Milton Keynes. The Cofferidge Close development is in the conservation area of Stony Stratford and was designed by Derek Walker, chief architect to the Corporation, and Wayland Tunley, project architect.

The decision to list the town houses, flats and entrance arch is because they are considered to be historically significant post-war architecture and *“an integral part of Cofferidge Close, a commercial and residential development, set within a carefully designed landscape that reflects the historic use of the site”*. The shopping and office building was not nationally listed because English Heritage considered the alterations made to the scheme by previous owners (including the Parks Trust) detracted from the original design, particularly the removal of the High St colonnade (*see photo on next page*), and the removal of raised beds and planters that was integral to the original landscaping. In contrast the houses, flats and arch remain unaltered.

The houses and flats were designed as an integral part of the Cofferidge Close scheme - a commercial, retail, community and residential development. Very few post war buildings are listed by English Heritage. The significance is that listing brings protection so a building's specific interest can be safeguarded for the future.



The original High Street colonnade and signage before alterations

Milton Keynes is an urban environment rich in greenery and English Heritage considered the setting of the townhouses within the open green space of the Cofferridge Close development as significant: “the open aspect of the close is an important component of the setting of 7-23 Silver Street given the integrated nature of the design of the whole, and thus positively contributes to the conservation area”

The Listing application was made by local people with an interest in preserving Cofferridge Close. Stony Stratford is a very engaged community in protecting its conservation area and Stony Stratford Town Council has been awarded Vanguard funding by the Department for Communities and Local Government, through Milton Keynes Council, to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the town.

In considering development proposals that affect listed buildings, local planning authorities are under a statutory obligation to have special regard to preserving the setting of the building. In the listing of the Cofferridge Close houses and flats the Secretary of State’s decision notes that the row of houses is “set within a carefully designed landscape that reflects the historic use of the site”

Setting is often an essential part of a listed building's character, especially if green space has been laid out to complement its design or function. English Heritage designation for listing the Cofferridge Close houses says: *“The integral planning of the houses within the wider scheme with their enclosed courtyards and first floor principal living space with balconies respond to the open green space, historically an orchard”.*

Even though English Heritage did not list the whole Cofferridge Close scheme as a national heritage asset they say it is of local significance, and Milton Keynes Council have added it as a non-designated local asset to a local list, as a first step to identify Milton Keynes new town heritage. Local listing for Cofferridge Close would help to promote the idea of restoration – to put back some of the features that have been lost, rather than the to go ahead with major demolition and loss of landscaping.