

INTRODUCTION

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act places a duty on every local planning authority to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Act also states that the local planning authority should, from time to time, formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas.

This document is an appraisal of the Chalgrove conservation area to give an overview of the established character to be preserved and to identify possible areas for future enhancement. It is intended to assist in defining what is of special architectural or historic importance, what should be protected and to give guidance as to the form, style and location of future change and development.

The document is divided into various sections as follows:

1) The History of the Area

This covers the period from prehistory to the present day. It includes significant architectural history, important dates and references to people and events that have helped to shape the area we see today.

2) The Established Character

This is an assessment of the existing character, including the topography of the area, the vernacular style, predominant building materials and natural or man-made features of local interest.

3) Possible Areas for Enhancement

These can range from major areas for environmental improvement, to very minor works of repair and redecoration.

4) Existing Conservation Policies

This is an extract from the South Oxfordshire Local Plan identifying policies relating to listed buildings and conservation areas.

5) Plan of the Conservation Area

This is a scale plan of the area which aims to identify the elements which contribute to the character. The plan includes the conservation area boundary, listed buildings (buildings identified by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as being of special architectural or historic interest), former Grade III listed buildings (a now obsolete category but where the buildings may still be of architectural or historic interest) and other buildings of local note. This latter group consists of

buildings that play a part in establishing the character of the street scene but have not yet been considered to be of sufficient importance to meet the current criteria for listing. Recent government guidance contained in PPG.15-**Planning and the Historic Environment** indicates, however, that there is a presumption against the demolition of such buildings. Important trees are also identified. These are usually highly visible from public places and/or they contribute to the setting of a listed building. Important open spaces are identified as these are a vital element in the character of an area. Character is defined not just by buildings, walls and trees, but also by the spaces between them. These contribute to the setting of buildings. They allow views around the area and they are often an important element in the historical development of a settlement.

Important unlisted walls are identified. These are usually built of local materials and help to define spaces and frame views. Lastly, important views into, out of and around the conservation area are identified. It should be appreciated that a conservation area's character does not end with a line drawn on a map. Often the character is closely associated with attractive views out to surrounding countryside, sometimes via gaps between buildings. Views within an area such as that to a church or particularly attractive group of buildings are also important.

6) Archaeological Constraint Plan

The character and history of an area are closely linked to its archaeological remains. This plan identifies the location of ancient monuments, earthworks and known cropmarks, find spots, archaeological sites and linear works identified on the Sites and Monuments Record maintained by Oxfordshire County Council. If nothing has yet been identified within an area then this map will be blank, but this does not mean that the area is necessarily archaeologically sterile.

CHALGROVE

1) The History of the Area

The earliest evidence of human habitation in Chalgrove is a Stone Age axe, now exhibited in the County Museum. Pre-Roman settlement can be detected in aerial photographs of the area to the west of the Manor on the south side of the brook and Romano-British remains have been discovered nearby on its north side.

Viking invaders occupied Chalgrove in the late 10th and early 11th centuries. John Blair in his book Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire (Blair, 1996, 105) explains that from the 990s-1060s Oxfordshire experienced an unusual mix of political disaster and economic growth with Viking armies roaming the land. However, after King Cnut's death in 1035, Viking control began to wane, although there are indications that Danish lords retained estates in Oxfordshire right up to 1066, as is shown by the number of Danish names contained in the Domesday Book (e.g., Thorkell in Chalgrove).

In Domesday Book the village is called "Celgrave" which is believed to mean "at the chalk or limestone pit", the predominant building materials in the area. Water and the stream, known as the Chalgrove Brook, have always been an important part of Chalgrove's history and Domesday records five mills in the parish, with one of the highest rating assessments in the county, at 60s (Phoenix Consulting, 1997, 2.2.3). This might be rather misleading as it may not mean five separate mill buildings in Chalgrove, but it certainly suggests that at least one mill has been present in Chalgrove since the late 11th century. A later survey in 1336 reported that in Edmund Beresford's manor there were two water mills valued at 73s 4d (Jaques et al, 1990, 25).

The topographical development of Chalgrove is of particular interest. The church and existing manor house are removed from the main linear development along the High Street and around the village green, which forms the heart of the modern conservation area. Although outside the boundaries of the conservation area, in order to appreciate its historical context within the village as a whole, it is important also to understand the areas around the manor and church.

St Mary's Church is of Norman origin with later alterations. Among its notable features are a 12th century font and 13th century piscina, while in the south wall of the chancel is a low side window, traditionally known as a 'leper window', the actual purpose of which is unknown. The church is particularly noted for its murals, which were brought to light in 1858. They date from the 13 and

14th centuries and are rare in their completeness. In L. Gammon's 1883 description of Chalgrove Church, he quotes a Mr Burges of the Society of Antiquaries who said of the wall paintings:

"The chancel of Chalgrove Church is probably the only place where an idea can be formed of the general effect of the more humble class of paintings of the 13th and 14th centuries"
(Gammon, 1883, p.p. 3-8).

In 1727 the steeple collapsed in a storm and was replaced by the current battlemented tower.

Although above ground evidence of medieval occupation near the church is scant, a series of excavations has revealed early and late medieval material nearby. During the early medieval period two manors existed in Chalgrove, one near the church and the other on the site of the current Manor. During the 1970s the Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook excavations at Harding's Field, south-west of the village. Two moated islands were found on the site, one containing interior earthworks, the other evidence of a bridge abutment. The larger of the islands has yielded the most information. Pottery dating from the 12th and 13th centuries and a coin of Edward I were found, along with clear evidence that the course of the stream had been altered, again showing how Chalgrove's stream is a constant and vital part of the village's history. The first evidence of structures, a cob-walled building and one with stone footings, dates from the late 12th century, while a second phase of development showed a rectangular stone hall with a separate kitchen and access via a bridge across the moat. By the late medieval period there was a large and elaborate stone hall which was roofed with limestone slate and peg tiles: this building also had a cross wing and separate farmbuildings, including an aisled barn. This moated manor house was probably owned by the Barentyne family, who were powerful both at local and national levels. It was demolished in 1485 after the entire estate had been bought by Magdalen College, Oxford (Steane, 1977 & 1979, Medieval Archaeology).

The second manor was owned by John de Plessis and he may well have built the other moated manor house, remnants of which are incorporated in the present Manor House, which dates to the 14th and 15th centuries. It was originally an open hall which was altered in the 16th century when the hall was ceiled in order to create a first floor, a chimney was inserted and cross wings were built to the rear (Jacques, 1989, 7).

It is clear that there were areas of development around the two manor houses and the church and an original linking development between the church and the High Street. Later however, this area was abandoned and population centred on the High Street/Green area. This may be because the area close to the Church is subject to flooding, but the Black Death may also have been a major factor in the depopulation of this part of Chalgrove.

Turning to the conservation area itself, the Green is a well established focal point in the village. It was once a prominent mound, as shown in JC Buckler's illustration of 1822 and the stocks and medieval stone cross were located here. The cross was badly damaged in the Civil War and had been removed by the 1880s; the war memorial now on the Green was erected in 1920.

The thatched cottages which cluster around the Green date mostly from the 17th century, while along the High Street, the Red Lion is one of the oldest buildings in the conservation area; it is cruck-framed and dates to the 15th century, but was remodelled in the 18th century. Unusually for an inn, it is owned by the Church. The Crown, on the Green dates to 1777 but was extensively altered at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Old Vicarage is Jacobean in origin and was rebuilt in 1702 by Thomas Pocock, vicar of Chalgrove from 1701 until his death in 1710. The majority of historic structures within the conservation area are timber framed, but there are a few good Victorian buildings. Croxford's Stores was built in 1869 and has the date picked out in the brickwork of its end wall.

On the outskirts of the village is a monument to John Hampden, the noted Parliamentary leader during the Civil War, who was fatally wounded at the Battle of Chalgrove Field in 1643. Built in 1906, the John Hampden Hall also commemorates this famous episode in the village's history.

From the 1960s onwards the historic character of Chalgrove has changed considerably. A comparison between the 1881 and modern Ordnance Survey maps shows the rapid expansion of housing in the 1960s and '70s, as Chalgrove became a base for Oxford and other commuters. Lionel Brett in Landscape in Distress (1965) devotes a chapter to discussing the post war development of Chalgrove and makes the point that the new plot forms and housing styles, such as bungalows, are totally at odds with the historic character of the village:

"The stream and the old houses related to it are the vestiges of the old community which hold the village together physically. It's a weak grip, slackening visibly" (Brett, 1965, 107).

He then goes on to describe how the area behind the houses on the main street was once open back-land but has since been "blown open" for development.

Despite these major changes, Chalgrove is rich in listed buildings, albeit that much of their earlier settings have been compromised by incongruous modern development. The area around The Green has a distinct historic character and was therefore designated a conservation area on 19 May 1992, with a small extension being added on 14 December 2000.

2) The Established Character

The topography of Chalgrove as a whole is fairly flat. A major part of the character of the conservation area is the stream, which runs alongside the road. The development within and close to the conservation area is mainly linear, along the High Street and is also clustered around the village green. Modern housing impinges on the historic character throughout much of Chalgrove with much infill between many of the older buildings.

There are, however, many listed buildings in the village. Around The Green, most of the buildings are thatched with either timber frame and render or painted brick walls. No. 1 dates to the 17th century and was formerly the village shop and bakery with apparently some of the original shop fittings remaining inside (Harman 1990, 6). No. 4 has the date 1680 carved into its chimney beam. The Red Lion and The Old Vicarage also make a vital contribution to the character of the conservation area. Buildings of local interest, which are not listed, include The Crown, 101 High Street, Croxford's Stores and the John Hampden Hall.

Vernacular building materials within the village include timber frame with rendered or brick infill, local limestone, red brick, thatch, and clay tile. In the majority of buildings the windows are small wooden casements, apart from The Old Vicarage (which has 6 pane sashes) and the Victorian buildings which are generally sashed.

Stretches of retaining wall run along the stream on the north side of the High Street. Constructed principally of stone, they make a strong contribution to the character and appearance of the village by defining the gardens of many of the houses along the stream which are otherwise open to the street, thereby giving the conservation area an attractive open and green aspect. The railings in front of The Old Vicarage and 101 High Street also add to the character of the conservation area. There are a few good trees in the conservation area, such as the sycamore and willow in The Crown garden, the contorted willow near 101 High Street and an ailanthus and large horse chestnut in the gardens of the houses behind the Green.

The most important views within the conservation area are onto and around The Green, although the view down the High Street is also notable. Apart from The Green, other areas of important open

space include the garden for The Crown, the gardens to The Red Lion, 111 and 113 High Street and the area in front of the wall to Swinstead Court and 101 High Street.

The only area of attractive road surfacing that remains is the gravelled strip around The Green and a few granite sets along the dropped kerb on the corner of the Green, opposite the bus stop.

The small extension to the conservation area made in December 2000 includes the attractive stretch of stone and brick wall by the footpath along the western boundary of the school.

3) Possible areas for enhancement

The area around The Green is generally well maintained, but there are a number of locations where the opportunity exists to enhance its existing character. For instance, there are many overhead wires and cables, particularly around The Green and by Croxford's Stores, which could with benefit be laid underground by the statutory undertakers.

The Green is the focal point of the Village. The long lengths of concrete kerbing along the High Street, near the Green could be replaced with a more attractive natural material. The gravelled area behind the Green could also be extended around its side, which would help to break up the mass of tarmac around the Green itself and The Crown. These areas of car parking and the spaces outside 111-113 High Street could also be improved by the use of a better quality surface material or in places by extending the grassed area.

There is no seating near The Green, which is regrettable; a bench near the bus stop could serve both bus stop and green. Indeed, the bus stop itself is singularly unattractive and awkward looking in this setting. Tidying and rationalising the bins, street furniture and signage would also be beneficial. Outside Swinstead Court is a small area of open public space where there are two seats, one of which is now looking rather tired, along with a rather tatty notice board and this area could certainly benefit from some improvements.

As discussed in the section on "The Established Character", part of the essential character of the conservation area is the openness of the gardens onto the street, which means that tall leylandii hedges and high fences should be avoided.

Improvements to the shopfronts of the two shops in the conservation area would certainly be an enhancement. The use of traditional materials and detailing can have considerable effect in enhancing the character of a conservation area. In general, the owners of historic properties are encouraged to remove modern, unsympathetic materials, such as plastic windows, like those found on Croxford's Stores and 125 High Street, and plastic rainwater goods, which are widespread, and to reinstate traditional materials such as clay tiles, painted (rather than stained) softwood windows and cast iron guttering. Also owners are advised to be cautious of cleaning historic buildings with unsuitable proprietary products which may damage the building. All seven of the thatched

buildings in the conservation area have lost their traditional plain, flush ridges and the owners of these properties are encouraged to reinstate this traditional thatching detail when rethatching becomes necessary. An example of this traditional flush style can be found just outside the conservation area at 129 High Street. Finally, the “stone effect” wall outside Swinstead Court could be replaced with a traditionally constructed stone or brick wall.

Small amounts of financial assistance may be available in some instances from the Council for the repair and renovation of historic buildings within the conservation area and the reinstatement of lost original details and materials. Grants may also be available for appropriate schemes of environmental improvement.

4) Bibliography

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Chalgrove Local History Group, *Chalgrove – An Oxfordshire Village* (1990)
Chalgrove Scene Through the Lens (2000)

Gammon, L, “Chalgrove, a Sketch” in *The Pelican*, vol..25 (1883) pp..3-8

Jaques, R, *The Manor, Chalgrove, Oxfordshire* (1989)

Money, W, “A Walk to Chalgrove Field” *Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Archaeological Journal* vol. 1 (1895) pp.14-22

Pevsner, N, & Sherwood, J, *The Buildings of England – Oxfordshire* (1974)

Phoenix Consulting, *Chalgrove Mill, Chalgrove, Oxfordshire* (1997) Unpublished report

Steane, J, Note in *Medieval Archaeology*, vol. 21 (1977) pp..251-2

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5) **South Oxfordshire Local Plan adopted by Council, April 1997**

LISTED BUILDINGS

POLICY CON 1

Proposals for the demolition of any building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest will not be permitted except in most exceptional circumstances.

POLICY CON 2

The council will make full use of its powers to serve repairs notices to prevent the wilful neglect of listed buildings.

ALTERATIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS

POLICY CON 3

The use of modern materials such as aluminium and upvc will not normally be permitted for the doors or windows of listed buildings. Sealed double-glazed timber windows will not normally be permitted unless their mouldings precisely match those of traditional windows. The use of secondary glazing will normally be acceptable.

POLICY CON 4

Listed building consent will not normally be granted for proposals which involve the use of cement-rich mortars, abrasive cleaning methods and chemically-based sealants, nor for the painting of unpainted brickwork and stone or the use of unsuitable colour schemes on listed buildings.

POLICY CON 5

The alteration or removal of historic internal features in buildings included on the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

CHANGES OF USE AND EXTENSIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS

POLICY CON 6

Any change of use of a listed building must be appropriate to its character, and any extension must be sympathetic to the original structure in design, scale and materials and must not dominate or overwhelm it.

THE SETTING OF LISTED BUILDINGS

POLICY CON 7

Proposals for development which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building will normally be refused.

CONSERVATION AREAS

POLICY CON 8

The council will use all its powers under the relevant acts to ensure that the character of individual conservation areas is preserved or enhanced.

POLICY CON 9

Consent to demolish a building in a conservation area will normally only be granted if the loss of the building would not adversely affect the character of the area, and if there are detailed and acceptable plans for the redevelopment of the site.

POLICY CON 10

When considering proposals for development in conservation areas, the council will require:-

- (i) the design and scale of new work to be in sympathy with the established character of the area;
- (ii) the use of traditional materials, whenever this is appropriate to the character of the area;
- (iii) the retention of existing walls, hedges, or any other features which contribute to the character of the area.

THATCHING STYLE

POLICY CON 11

In order to protect the traditional thatching style of South Oxfordshire the District Council will generally promote the use of long straw and resist the introduction of patterned block-cut ridges on thatched buildings.

ADVERTISEMENTS IN CONSERVATION AREAS AND ON LISTED BUILDINGS

POLICY CON 12

The council will not normally permit the display of signs on a listed building or in a conservation area which are in any way harmful to the character and appearance of the building or area. Where it is accepted that a sign is needed, its design and materials should reflect the best traditional practice.

POLICY CON 13

The installation of blinds or canopies of untraditional form or materials on buildings within conservation areas will not normally be permitted.

BURGAGE PLOTS

POLICY CON 14

In the historic towns of Henley, Thame and Wallingford the burgage plots to the rear of the principal streets will generally be protected from amalgamation and from development which would diminish their historic interest and value.

PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

POLICY CON 15

In conservation areas, the council will take all available steps to ensure:

- (i) that the introduction or intensification of uses which conflict with the special character of the area is resisted;

- (ii) that existing walls, buildings, trees, hedges, open spaces and important views are retained, where they contribute to the character of the area;
- (iii) that whenever the opportunity arises, unsightly overhead wires and unnecessary signs are removed. The statutory undertakers will be urged to site their services underground;
- (iv) that where necessary, improvements are made to the visual quality of the floorspace, street furniture, lighting and signs; and
- (v) that development outside a conservation area would not have a detrimental effect on the conservation area.

ARCHAEOLOGY

POLICY CON 16

The council will not normally permit development which would adversely affect the sites or settings of nationally-important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, or those of monuments of special local importance.

POLICY CON 17

Before the determination of an application for development which may affect a site of archaeological interest or potentially of archaeological importance, prospective developers will be required, where necessary, to make provision for an archaeological field evaluation, in order to enable an informed and reasoned planning decision to be made.

POLICY CON 18

Wherever practicable and desirable, developments affecting sites of archaeological interest should be designed to achieve physical preservation in situ of archaeological deposits. Where this is not practicable or desirable, the district planning authority will impose conditions on planning permissions, or seek legal obligations, which will require the developer to provide an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation, recording and publication by a professionally qualified body acceptable to the district planning authority.

PARKS AND GARDENS OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST

POLICY CON 19

Proposals which would damage the character, setting or amenities of a park or garden of special historic interest, especially those contained in the English Heritage Register, will not normally be permitted.

COMMON LAND

POLICY CON 20

Proposals for development on or affecting common land, village greens and other important spaces within settlements will not normally be permitted.

6) Archaeological Constraint Plan

No known archaeological constraints
(See Introduction)