

Listening Learning Leading

Dorchester Conservation Area Management Plan

May 2005

Dorchester and Overy Conservation Area Management Plan

The Council first published the Dorchester and Overy Conservation Area Management Plan in draft form in July 2004. Following a period of public consultation, including a public meeting held on 13th January 2005, the Council approved the Management Plan and the conservation area extensions on 16th June 2005.

Possible Areas of Enhancement

The Conservation Area of Dorchester appears to be generally well maintained, although a number of opportunities exist to enhance the existing character.

The vacant garage site at the corner of Bridge End and the High Street is clearly a weak point at the formal entry to Dorchester and awaits a sensitive development that will reinstate the enclosed character of the main street, respecting the curve in the road and the character of the closed view beyond.

The public lavatory building on Bridge End and the associated railings and paving do not make a positive visual contribution to the Conservation Area.

The broken tarmac surface on the parking area by the public lavatories and the Bridge End road itself could be improved by being re-surfaced with a dressing of natural aggregate - an earlier more sympathetic, surface is visible where the tarmac covering has broken up.



Road surface at Bridge End

Granite setts or river pebbles could be used to define the two distinct areas.

The thin, widely spaced row of trees between the bridge and the parking area should (with the possible exception of a commemorative hawthorn) be removed not least because of the damage they threaten to cause to the stonework of the Bridge.

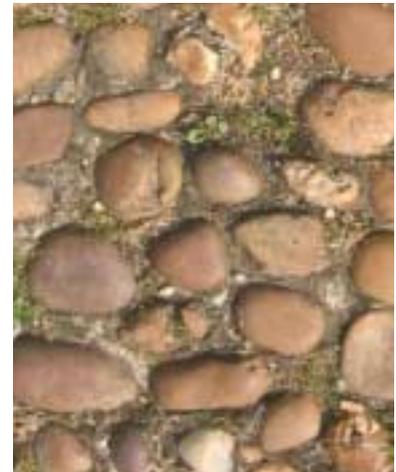


Self-seeded trees

A widely-spaced row of small native species trees, planted along the margin between Bridge End Road and the parking area, would redefine the line of the road and reduce the visual impact of parked cars. Timber bollards could replace the existing thin bent metal posts.

Paving and the surface treatment of roads offer particular opportunities to enhance the character of the conservation area. The attractive areas of river cobbles in the pavement at intervals along the High Street - at the George Hotel and the Post Office, for example - and the natural stone paving at the corner of Malthouse Lane and the High Street should be emulated wherever possible to reduce dull expanses of tarmac or concrete. Although the attractive character of the cobbles depends on the way in which they are laid.

The use of granite setts to give some interest to the tarmac road at the entrance to Malthouse Lane is another effective method which could be adopted elsewhere in Dorchester.



Traditional river pebble paving



Incorrect river pebble paving

The use of traditional materials and detailing generally can have a considerable and positive effect in enhancing the character of a conservation area. Unsympathetic modern materials such as concrete tiles, uPVC doors and windows, and plastic rainwater goods will have the reverse effect - inappropriate details, however small, can all too easily erode the particular character of the area.

The owners of historic and prominent properties are encouraged to replace inappropriate modern materials and to reinstate clay tiles, traditional timber doors and windows, and cast iron rainwater goods. The owners of thatched buildings are also encouraged to retain or to reinstate plain flush ridges: cut ridges are not part of the traditional thatching style of South Oxfordshire.

The use of modern rather than traditional materials, particularly on historic buildings, can rapidly erode the character of a conservation area: they tend to be harsh, rarely weathering well, deteriorating rather than aging gracefully, rarely acquiring an attractive patina. Traditional construction allows buildings to breathe, but this system can be disrupted by the use of inappropriate materials which can cause serious damage to historic fabric by trapping moisture within the construction.



Cement render

New buildings using traditional materials, or repairs to existing buildings, require a thorough understanding of the materials and careful observation of their traditional use. The wrong mortar, wide joints, the over-formal setting of flints or stone - seemingly small details - all can undermine the visual quality.



Bad pointing



Original tuck pointing

Lime render and limewash pigmented with natural ochres should be used in preference to cement render and synthetic paints: they allow buildings to breathe and the colours are sympathetic to other natural materials and to rural settings. By contrast, cement tends to trap moisture within historic fabric and can cause extensive unseen damage, particularly to timber frames. Synthetic paints, unless they are 'microporous', designed to allow moisture in and out, and carefully applied, can cause similar distress to historic fabric.

Modern paint colours are generally inappropriate, bringing an intrusive harshness to the scene: bright pink,

green, brilliant white, - colours derived from artificial pigments rather than being based on natural pigments are out of keeping with the character of a conservation area typified by traditional construction. Colours selected from historic colour ranges are likely to be more sympathetic and can make a positive contribution - although they are likely to be second best to lime render and limewash.

Modern styles of windows and doors can all too easily undermine the character of a conservation area. Windows with a mixture of fixed lights, casements and top hung quarter lights generally have the wrong proportions for window openings in traditional buildings and materials such as uPVC or aluminium produce too thin and flat a section compared with timber. The finish is important too, stained rather than painted timber looking out of place.

Modern doors can be equally inappropriate and ill-proportioned, often too elaborate in comparison with more simple and straightforward traditional styles.

Good quality timber windows and doors, carefully detailed to match local traditional styles can make a positive contribution to the area, while the reverse tends to be the case with uPVC, aluminium and other modern materials. Contrary to manufacturers' claims, uPVC windows are not entirely maintenance free. ⁷

Appropriate roofing materials are equally important. Concrete tiles, machine-made tiles or artificial slates are no substitute for the traditional material and can have a significant and detrimental effect on the character of the conservation area. Their scale and general appearance are at odds with hand-made clay tiles and they tend to

fade and deteriorate rather than acquiring a pleasing patina of age.

The significant number of coach entrances to inn yards along the High Street are essential to the character of the Conservation Area, echoes of Dorchester's coaching past. Like so many historic features they are vulnerable to insensitive treatment, such as infilling with glazed panels.

Overhead wires and cables should be laid underground by the statutory undertakers, removing a visual intrusion.



Intrusive cables

It may be possible to relocate television aeriAls within roofspaces where these are available, and owners of satellite dishes are encouraged to site the dishes unobtrusively (Planning Permission and/or Listed Building Consent may be required to erect satellite dishes).

The many attractive walls in Dorchester, which make such an important contribution to the character of the conservation area, should be sympathetically repaired where necessary and generally well

⁷ Fidler, J. In *Architects' Journal*, November 2002

maintained. Lime mortar should be used for pointing: it is more flexible than cement, allowing some movement in a structure without cracking, and it allows moisture to move in and out of the wall.



Original lime mortar and cement repointing

By contrast, cement mortar can be too rigid, cracking and allowing water to become trapped inside the wall; it can also be too hard causing accelerated decay of stones and bricks.

Landowners should be encouraged to manage and maintain trees and hedgerows, which make such an important contribution to views into and out of the village - although a manicured look should be avoided. The use of native species common to the area is essential. Fast-growing imports such as



Cement coping

leylandii are uncharacteristic and can alter and block important views.

Walls, fences, gates and garage doors can also affect the character of a conservation area for good or ill. Generally, simple forms in traditional materials, based on historical local examples, are likely to make a positive contribution.



Gate and paddock at Bishop's Court

The rural, informal character of Crown Lane, Wittenham Lane, Watling Lane, and the various footpaths should be carefully maintained - with a sensitive eye to scale, road and path surface materials, walls, fences and planting.

Ditches should be kept cleared and rabbits deterred from undermining the Bridge.

The character of the Conservation Area can be easily jeopardized by inappropriate development which fails to take account of local details and traditional forms. Well-designed buildings, appropriate to the needs of the 21st century, distinguished by careful observation of local scale, proportion and detailing, and by the skilful use of traditional materials, could make a positive contribution to the future of Dorchester.

The South Oxfordshire Design Guide provides guidance on appropriate forms and materials to use in conservation areas.

Proposed extensions to Conservation Area boundary

As a result of the character appraisal of the Dorchester Conservation Area, two areas - currently excluded - suggest themselves for inclusion within the boundaries of the Conservation Area.

1. The Cemetery is an important open space to the east of the existing Conservation Area surrounded by mature trees and containing a roofless 19th century chapel as well as a variety of monuments and gravestones.
2. The north side of the eastern section of Manor Farm Road. Some of the boundary walls contain remains of the stone walls of the Abbey barns, important historical and archaeological evidence which is currently unprotected.

Existing Conservation Policies

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.

2011 Second Deposit Draft Local Plan

Demolition of Listed Buildings

Policy CON1

Proposals for the demolition of any listed building will not be permitted.

Alterations and extensions to listed buildings

Policy CON4

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

Policy CON5

Any alteration to a listed building must respect its established character and not diminish the special historical or architectural qualities which make it worthy of inclusion on the statutory list.

Policy CON6

A change of use of part or the whole of a listed building will be permitted only if its character and features of special architectural or historic interest would be protected. Proposals for a change of use should incorporate details of all intended alterations to the building and its curtilage, to demonstrate their impact on its appearance, character and setting.

Policy CON7

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

CONSERVATION AREAS

Proposals affecting a conservation area

Policy CON9

Consent to demolish a building in a conservation area will be granted only if the loss of the building would not

adversely affect the character of the area and, where appropriate, if there are detailed and acceptable plans for the redevelopment of the site.

Policy CON10

The Council will not grant permission for development which would harm the character or appearance of a conservation area. 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; and
- (ii) the use of traditional materials, whenever this is appropriate to the character of the area.

The Council will also take account of the contribution made to a conservation area by existing walls, buildings, trees, hedges, open spaces and important views. Proposals for development outside a conservation area which would have a harmful effect on the conservation area will not be permitted.

Advertisements in conservation areas and on listed buildings

Policy CON13

The Council will not grant consent for 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, it should generally be non-illuminated, made of natural materials and to a design and scale reflecting the best traditional practice.

Blinds and canopies in conservation areas

Policy CON14

The Council will not grant permission for the installation of blinds or canopies

of nontraditional form or materials on buildings within conservation areas.

Burgage plots

Policy CON15

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 by its nature would detract from their historic interest, amenity and nature conservation value.

Archaeology and historic building analysis and recording

Policy CON16

The Council will not 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 CON17

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 CON18

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 Council will impose conditions on planning permissions, or seek planning 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 Council.

Policy CON19

Before the determination of an application which affects a building of archaeological or historic interest, applicants will be required, where necessary, to submit a detailed record survey and analysis of the building. In some circumstances, further survey and analysis will be made a condition of consent.

Historic battlefields, parks, gardens and landscapes

Policy CON20

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

Common land

Policy CON21

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

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Please contact the Press
and Publicity Officer on
01491 823748 or email
press@southoxon.gov.uk**



Listening Learning Leading

Conservation and Design

Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford

Wallingford OX10 8NJ

Tel: 01491 823773 Fax: 01491 823777

Email: conservation@southoxon.gov.uk