

GREAT MILTON CONSERVATION AREA

DRAFT CHARACTER STUDY

May 2001

The information contained in this character study was chiefly collected during spring 2001 and updated on various visits made during the public consultation process. It is believed to be correct at the time of printing in 2001. It should be appreciated that the legislative background may change and that the omission of any feature or features from the text and accompanying maps is not to be regarded as an indication that the feature or features are necessarily without significance or importance in conservation and planning terms. None of the statements contained in the document can be held as binding on the Council in the determination of applications for planning permission, listed building consent or conservation area consent.

DATE OF PRINTING

2001

The Great Milton Conservation Area Character Study which seeks to define the established character of the settlement and to identify areas for preservation or enhancement, was first published in draft form in May 2001. Between then and 2001, when it was formally adopted as supplementary planning by the District Council, it was the subject of public consultation. The results of this consultation have, wherever possible, been included in the final document.

Further general information on this character study and others in the series can be found inside the back cover.

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 Great Milton 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.

GREAT MILTON

1) The History of the Area

Great Milton lies on raised ground (the village is 79 meters above sea level at its highest point) above the River Thames valley almost in the centre of the parish of Great Milton. The local geology is gault clay over Portland Beds providing good soils for mixed farming and supplies of building stone from local quarries.

The main road through the village (Church Road, the High Street and Lower End) is a branch from the main Wallingford to Thames road that continues on towards Wheatley. Thames Road which joins the High Street at its southern end also comes from the Wallingford to Thames road. The effect of the main road by-passing the village is to make Great Milton a quiet and secluded place hidden away from the majority of traffic.

There is little evidence for prehistoric or Romano-British settlement activity in the area, although a Roman villa is known near Little Milton. There was a settlement at Great Milton before 1066 on lands held by the Bishop of Dorchester. Although the exact nature of this early settlement is unclear, the names Breach Meadow (to the west of the village beside the River Thames) and Chilworth Farm are probably of Anglo-Saxon origin. A church, the forerunner of the present St Mary's, was also established during this period and Great Milton had its own priest by 1086. After the Norman Conquest the Great Milton estates were transferred to the Bishop of Lincoln. In 1166 part of this land was granted to Eynsham Abbey and the estates of the Milton manor prebend were created by 1279. In the 14th century Great Milton had become one of the wealthiest parishes in the south of Oxfordshire and the village, along with Little Milton, the most important settlement within the parish.

Although the Green and the High Street are very much the centre of the village today it is possible that the early medieval village core was closer to St Mary's Church. By at least the 16th century, however, the settlement had spread along the ridge where the High Street now stands and down towards Lower End. Several thatched and rough stone cottages at the southern end of the High Street date from the 16th and 17th centuries and reflect a phase of this development. It is indeed possible that this might have been a form of planned settlement that never fully developed, although no buildings now survive to support this theory. This pattern of the earliest settlement around a church with later planned development along a main street is comparable to that identified by archaeologists on topographical evidence throughout the country (Stanton St John is a good local example) both in rural and urban contexts. Although Great Milton clearly never became a town, the width of the High Street (once known as Town Street) suggests that it may once have aspired to become a market centre like nearby Thames, so successfully planted in a then entirely rural landscape by the Bishop of Lincoln in the late 12th century and which subsequently developed rapidly in the 13th and 14th centuries. Another possible explanation of the unusual width of the street is that it is at least in part the result of common grazing land being left in front of the buildings in the 19th century. Of the more substantial houses on the High Street and Lower End, most are of 18th century date but some are clearly earlier. The Bull inn dates from at least 1684 when Robert Parsons owned it and Pettys is a house of 17th century origins to which the old village school was added in the 19th century.

The village towards St Mary's Church contains the grand houses of the village, most of which are on sites originating in the medieval period. The 16th and 17th centuries saw dramatic rebuilding at these sites, including the remodelling of the Great House, to form a concentration of high status houses in substantial grounds around the church.

The earliest parts of the existing church date from the 12th century. It was largely rebuilt in the early 14th century with a new tower added in the later Middle Ages. Restoration work by George Gilbert Scott in 1850 included the re-roofing and partial rebuilding of the chancel and the removal of an 18th century gallery. The church contains many historic memorials and monuments to local families including medieval brasses to Robert and Katherine Edgerley's children. The most prominent monument is perhaps that of Sir Robert Dormer (of nearby Ascot) dating from 1618. The pulpit dates from the 17th century and the reredos is by Arthur Blomfield from 1875. The tower contains a clock of 1699 and bells from 1673, 1771-2 and 1848.

The Monastery is first mentioned in 1318, when it was one of two prebendal houses (possessed by canons of Lincoln Cathedral holding lands in the area) in the village. At this time it was enlarged by Gilbert de Segrave. By the 16th century it was in the hands of the Sled family and was enlarged again from 1650 by John Cave, the vicar of Great Milton. The earliest part of the present building is of 15th century origin with main additions from the 16th and 17th centuries and a phase of modernisation carried out for Sir John Aubrey in 1786-1825. In the 17th century the house had large gardens and fishponds and today two barns and dovecotes of 16th and 17th century date survive. Romeyn's Court is the other prebendal house but the earliest surviving parts date from the mid-16th century when the house was in the hands of the Edgerley family. It has associated stables and a barn of 1868.

The Priory was probably built around 1565 by Dr Westfalling, vice-chancellor of Oxford University on the site of a medieval barn which formed part of the estates of Eynsham Abbey. The house was later owned by Dr John Wilkinson, president of Magdalen College and leased by John Thurloe (1616-68), the Secretary of State. There is a local tradition that Oliver Cromwell and John Milton stayed at the house. The Manor House was built on the site of a medieval house called Ingescourt. The oldest surviving parts date from soon after 1600 and were built by either the Greene family or Sir Gilbert Coppin. The house was extended in 1908 by the architect E.P. Warren.

Typical of all the rebuilding that took place in the 16th and 17th centuries is The Great House opposite the church, rebuilt from an existing farmhouse in the early 16th century by the Smith family and subsequently given a new front in the late 17th or early 18th centuries. The front facing the garden dates from 1788 and is by the noted architect James Wyatt for the then owner the Home Secretary, Richard Ryder. A new vicarage was also built in the 17th century but was replaced in 1762-9, this building itself superseded in 1867 by the present Victorian house designed by Arthur Blomfield on Church Road, now known as the Old Vicarage.

The scale of building among the gentry of Great Milton in the 16th and 17th centuries reflects the growing prosperity of the village as a whole during that period. Hearth tax returns from the mid 17th century show Great Milton to be a thriving agricultural centre, many of its farmers living in quite substantial houses and few too poor to escape the tax. By 1676 there were about 146 families resident in Great Milton. During the

17th and 18th centuries agriculture in the Great Milton area was dominated by a series of large estates which spearheaded the move from pasture to arable as the primary land use and to a less mixed type of farming. Despite this, there seem to have been many small farmers existing among the large farms.

The 19th century was one of dramatic change in Great Milton. The early part of the century saw some people moving away from the village but this accelerated dramatically after 1840. A major factor in this trend may have been the enclosure of 1000 acres of common land around Great Milton in 1839, although the continued domination of larger, more mechanised arable farms in the area may have had an equal effect. By 1851 Great Milton was a typical small agricultural centre with a population largely comprising agricultural labourers, supplemented by a small number of trades people representing the main rural trades, a doctor and a surgeon. Other changes had come to the village with the building of the National Mixed School in 1854 and of the Methodist chapel in 1842. The agricultural depression of the 1860s and 1880s forced more people to leave the village as wages slumped and unemployment took its toll. The 20th century has seen further contraction in agriculture as the main source of employment in the village and Great Milton's development as a commuter community for Oxford and other towns. This is reflected in some of the modern housing development seen around the village but the dominant character of the village's core remains a vivid record of its development over previous centuries. Some major employers in the village are Greenford's works on the High Street, *Le Manoir Aux Quat Saisons* and The Revival (the Old Stores on The Green). The village was designated a Conservation Area in December 1984.

2) The Established Character

Great Milton is a large village with a well-preserved historic core that is still very much at its heart. This historic village centre is in fact in three distinct areas set on a hill around the church, along a ridge road (the High Street) and in the valley between them. This topography and the historic development of the village in these distinct areas has produced an interesting variety of historic characters that is the essence of the village today. The village features both spaces bounded by walls and trees that give an enclosed, almost hidden feeling and open areas with a very public character. Despite this variation there is great consistency in building materials throughout the village, principally due to the widespread use of local stone in buildings of all dates and types.

The area around St Mary's Church is characterised by large properties each set in substantial grounds enclosed by stone walls (The Manor House, The Great House, Romeyn's Court). The effect, when combined with the way Church Road twists down the hill towards the village, is to create an enclosed area with only St Mary's church yard opening out on the eastern side. The high stone walls of the Manor and the Great House define the entrance to the village from the south. The roadside grass verges and abundant mature trees behind the walls soften the effect of enclosure and the buildings are set back within the grounds behind the walls. Only the very recent and extensive development at 'Le Manoir' breaks with this character by setting new buildings against the boundary wall, although this is to some extent mitigated by the high standard of traditional detailing and the workmanship of the buildings themselves.

St Mary's church along with the Great House, which it faces across Church Road, marks the highest point in the village and the churchyard constitutes an important open space. The churchyard is bounded by low stone walls and contains many interesting and attractive memorials, mature yew trees and the lych gate. While the southern side of the church yard faces the side wall of the Manor House complex the northern side is overlooked by Church Cottages and Institute Cottage. These form part of the first group of smaller houses encountered on this side of the village and signify a change in character.

From the junction with The Forties to the start of the High Street, Church Road's character is subtly different. This area displays a mixture of the smaller, more densely placed buildings as found on the High Street and the large buildings in their substantial walled grounds that typify the church end of the village. The southern side of the road is dominated by the wall bounding the grounds of the Priory, a large open area with mature trees and ponds beyond. The southern side of the road nearest the High Street and the northern side are characterised by a more mixed collection of buildings, many of them filling in gaps in the relatively open streetscape in a fairly haphazard fashion. The Victorian Old Vicarage and Hampden House sit on relatively large plots of land as does the 17th century Monastery farmhouse and its 18th century barn, but between these is a close-knit group of cottages centred around the thatched Creeper Cottage and the stream from the Priory ponds. Closer to the High Street are Priory Cottage and Priory Bank Cottages, similar cottages, the former built close to the road as a result of the boundary of the Priory directly behind and the latter bounded at the rear by the distinctive Grove footpath.

The character of the High Street and Lower End is dramatically different from either the area around St Mary's Church or the section of Church Road which links them. The main portion of the High Street is broad with a wide greensward on the eastern side that suggests a space reminiscent of a market place in a town like Thame rather than a typical village street. Houses look directly onto the street with either low or no boundary walls making it a very public space while the foot path from the southern end to the post office is set well back from the road and welcoming for pedestrians.

The traditional pre-Victorian form of building on the High Street is of low terraces of cottages placed right on the street with grassed areas separating them from the road. The Green at the south eastern corner of the High Street is dominated by a very well-preserved group of 17th and early 18th century cottages displaying just these characteristics. Many are still thatched and most have their traditional casement windows. There are occasional 18th and 19th century infill buildings in this area and although constructed in brick and slate, rather than the local stone and thatch/tile, they blend with the pattern of building to make this group set around the Green with its stone trough and trees one of the most architecturally coherent parts of the High Street. This area also gives a good impression of what most of the High Street and Lower End once looked like.

In some places 20th century infill and replacement houses, together with replacement doors and windows and other modern additions, combine to alter the character of traditional building in the central part of the High Street. Many of these houses are bungalows or semi-detached houses (some constructed during a local building boom in the 1930s) set behind low walls with front gardens, a form in some ways completely at odds with the traditional style found elsewhere in the village but which also helps to emphasise the openness of this part of the High Street and is now very much part of its established character. Nevertheless, denser forms of development are found in the groups of cottages near the post office such as Spring Cottage, Draycot and the row on Pegswell Lane. The old school is an exception to this form of building as it is set back from the street but this probably arises from its origins as a high status house in the 17th century, distinct from the smaller cottages. As the High Street joins Lower End there are other large houses, this time of 18th century date (Tallis House, the former King's Head pub and Harris Farm House) mixed with the cottages. The group of former farm buildings associated with Harris Farm is low and set back from the road, blending well with the pattern of traditional building.

Entry to the village on the Lower End is through open rolling countryside dramatically different from the approach to The Manor. However, the historic character of the High Street/Lower End part of the village is immediately apparent: grass verges of varying width and stone cottages (like Garden Close and Honeysuckle Cottage) mixed with some later larger houses. Lower End also features some modern buildings but while some break with tradition by having large front gardens, others respect this pattern, including the front of Potts Close, which although a building of quite alien form does at least contribute a green area to the streetscape. Another feature of Lower End which is common to several parts of the village is the incorporation of farms into the core of the village. Hayesmoor Farm and Tripps Farm at the northern end of the street and the courtyard of Milton Lodge, where Lower End joins the High Street, contribute more open areas in the way Monkery Farm and Harris Farm do elsewhere.

The forms of layout and building described above give Great Milton the skeleton of its essential historic character. Almost as much of this character is to be found in the use of traditional building materials.

The local building stone is one of the defining characteristics of the village but the way it is used varies from building to building and is determined by the age, type and original status of the structure. Thus, well-dressed masonry might be seen at St Mary's Church and the grand houses of the village while rougher 'rubble stone' is often used for cottages, walls and agricultural buildings. Everywhere, however, there is a consistency of colour and texture caused by the provision of stone from the former local quarries and stone pits. Many buildings feature a rendered surface applied to the stone, both to protect it from the elements and, in the case of a building like Red Lion House, to give it a grander appearance. It is only from the 19th century that brick is used in any quantity, found both in small cottages infilling gaps between the earlier properties and larger houses and institutional buildings. Many of these buildings are good examples of their type and make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area by following the form and pattern of earlier building in the village.

The earliest roofs in Great Milton are of thatch (for the cottages) or tile (for the grander houses). Though many formerly thatched buildings have been re-roofed in tile, thatch remains an important part of the village's character. The traditional tile of the area is a plain tile in an orangey-red clay that over time weathers to a darker ruddy colour. This material is widespread in the village and can be seen on buildings of all types and all dates up to the early years of the 20th century. During the latter part of the 19th century imported slate made its appearance in the village, either for new buildings or in extensions to existing buildings. Slate, like tile, has been used to re-roof formerly thatched properties but also appears on grander houses where it replaced local tile.

Boundary walls built from the local stone are common in Great Milton and form one of its chief characteristics. These walls range from high, neatly dressed coursed stone walls with triangular stacks of coping stones (or later bricks) seen around the high status buildings near the church to low rubble stone walls capped with stones on edge seen bounding many small cottages. Entrances are traditionally suited to the status of the property and the consequent type and size of its boundary wall: ornate imposing gate piers and gates to the Manor House, simple gateways to the cottages.

Trees contribute greatly to the character of the area. The open character of the High Street and Lower End is, in general, one that does not incorporate trees although several mature specimens, both in the grounds of larger houses and on the verges make a valuable contribution to views along the street. The area around St Mary's Church and the Priory is much more densely populated by mature trees. These are an interesting mixture of native species and more exotic specimen trees in the gardens and groups of trees in fields and on boundaries that form visual borders to the village. Most of the large open areas in the village are formed by the grounds of the large houses which make an important contribution both as settings for the houses and as 'soft edges' to the village. Smaller public green spaces, such as the Green, the small grassed island in front of Red Lion House and Milton Lodge, and the verges on the High Street and Lower End are equally important, creating space between and settings for road and buildings and bringing a more rural feel to what is in many ways an inward looking and enclosed village.

There are a number of significant local views both inside and into the conservation area which form important parts of its character. The views into the conservation area from Lower End and Thame Road reveal the essential character of the High Street/Lower End part of the village. Similarly, vistas from the Green towards Milton Lodge (and back) and from Milton Lodge down the hill are an attractive mixture of green verges and buildings. Entering the village at The Manor is an altogether different experience with the high walls containing the view. Views from the Green down Church Road from Red Lion House and from the church itself show the complex and varied character of this part of the village, while looking from The Forties through the grounds of Romeyn's Court reveals the church tower as well as the Court itself. The footpath entering the village at The Green presents both a view into the open space of the High Street and down onto the grounds of The Priory. The footpath from the allotment gardens beside the village school offers a view into the top of Lower End beside Milton Lodge with a characteristic stone wall on one side and softening vegetation all around. From outside the village, views across the valley from the west are particularly striking, revealing the High Street on its ridge and the roof tops of its buildings, above the paddocks which slope down to the stream below and it is these that the proposed extension to the conservation area is intended to protect.

3) Possible Areas for Enhancement

Great Milton is an extremely attractive village which is well maintained and cared for by its residents and has a well-preserved historic character. Any new building in the village needs to be carefully considered so that it both protects and, where appropriate, enhances this character. In addition, minor improvements as set out below could be made, both by residents to their own properties and in the treatment of public spaces.

The historical development of Great Milton has defined the extent of the village in a way that is strongly evident in its character today. The southern end of the village terminates in the grounds of The Manor, Romeyn's Court and Great House. The northern end of Lower End blends well into the surrounding countryside with the former Tripps and Hayesmoor farms near the end of the village. The western side of the High Street is defined strongly by the sharp fall in land towards the stream below and the gardens of the houses end at the brow of the hill. These features have acted to restrict modern building to infill rather than expansion of the village and should continue to do so. Only on the eastern side of the High Street has there been considerable new building along Thame Road. However, the area east of the High Street from Thame Road to the end of Lower End is still defined by the rear boundaries of the houses. This is an important historic boundary to the village and should be maintained. The open character of the High Street and Church Road (as viewed from The Forties) is a result of the historic low density of building. The infilling of perceived 'gap sites' or the extension of existing buildings is therefore liable to result in a loss of that character.

Within the village core there are several areas that could benefit from visual improvement. These include the buildings at Greenford's works which, although a long-standing feature of Great Milton, could be remodelled in a form more sympathetic to the overall character of the village. In other areas the maintenance and improvement of the spaces between buildings is as important as care of the buildings themselves. This is not just a question of protecting these spaces from new building but of maintaining walls and hedges and managing vegetation.

Behind the gardens at the rear of properties on the western side of the High Street and Lower End the ridge falls away to the stream below. This area of sloping land, running from Monkery Farm to the end of Lower End is itself of interest as it contains several long, narrow fields that suggest plots of land previously connected with the High Street houses. As such it very much forms part of the historic landscape of the village as well as being an integral part of it when viewed from across the valley. In order that development which might adversely affect this area can be controlled the boundary of the Conservation Area could be extended to include this area, with the stream as the western boundary.

The use of traditional materials and detailing can have considerable positive effect in enhancing the character of a conservation area. The owners of historic and prominent properties are therefore encouraged to remove unsympathetic modern materials, such as concrete tiles, U.P.V.C windows and plastic rainwater goods and to reinstate traditional materials such as red clay tiles, red bricks, softwood windows and cast iron guttering.

The owners of thatched buildings in the village are also encouraged to maintain the roofs in a traditional fashion, and to remove any block-cut ridges and reinstate plain flush ridges, which are part of the traditional thatching style of South Oxfordshire, when re-thatching becomes necessary. Many of the tiled roofs in the village have a special character and are highly attractive because of the colour and texture lent them by traditional materials and tile manufacturing techniques. Individual replacement tiles should always match the existing material and new or replacement roofs should match the traditional local material to preserve the appearance of the village. Modern concrete tiles, such as those on Priory Cottage, are of a colour, texture and size inappropriate to local building and should be avoided where possible.

Great Milton's traditional stone walls are an important part of the village scene and should be cherished. They are vulnerable to the effects of uncontrolled ivy growth and disturbance by tree roots, so management of vegetation is essential. While most walls seem traditionally to have been pointed in lime mortar, inappropriate modern techniques can also be seen, including capping the wall in mortar rather than stone, and pointing with cement-rich mortar. The latter can not only obscure the edges of the stone when poorly applied and give an unattractive finish, but will also hasten the weathering of the stone itself. The use of suitable stone for new and repaired walls is essential along with the replacement and retention of suitable coping. Lime mortars should always be used in repair work and new build and cement mortars raked out by hand and with great care. The use of cast concrete blocks, even those which ape the appearance of stone, is highly alien to the historic character of the village and should be avoided.

Grass verges rather than paved pedestrian walkways are common in Great Milton. The surfacing of pavements therefore needs careful consideration. At the moment the use of a standard tarmac surface is widespread but there is ample scope for improvement, to the surfaces along the High Street and Lower End. The pavement beside the Priory on Church Road is of asphalt with concrete kerbs which would be improved by replacement in stone. The raised pavement by Harrington House could also benefit from resurfacing in stone. Opposite Priory Bank Cottages the grass bank is frequently used as a raised pavement by pedestrians but as it is essentially unsurfaced quickly becomes an unsightly and treacherous muddy track. There could be an opportunity here to create a proper raised walkway, surfaced in stone with a gentle access ramp at the downhill end.

Great Milton has no official street lighting which benefits the conservation area by reducing clutter on the main streets in the form of County Council lamp standards and cabling. In some places private lighting has an adverse effect on the character of the area by illuminating individual structures or areas of paving and throwing light 'pollution' into the surroundings. Residents should be considerate, therefore, when installing domestic security and access lighting, both to other residents and to the appearance of the area. Lamps, cabling and lamp posts can detract from an otherwise well-preserved building and stand out obtrusively because of their modern nature. Laying underground of existing overhead wires and cables would also greatly improve the appearance of the village. This is particularly so where the High Street meets Lower End and near the Post Office.

Trees make a significant contribution to the character of the village and landowners should continue to manage existing trees sensitively. Nevertheless, the appearance of the High Street and Lower End could be adversely affected by the introduction of large trees in this low open area that is largely treeless.

Consideration of important views in and out of the conservation area should also be borne in mind when planting or deciding to lop trees as should the setting of historic buildings.

Great Milton contains a host of buildings that have been included on the plan of the conservation area as buildings of local note because they make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, although they have not yet been considered to be of sufficient importance to meet the current criteria for statutory listing.

Buildings of local note range from substantially intact but altered examples of early cottages on the High Street, (such as Spring and Draycot Cottages and Ach-Na-Grain), to larger Victorian residences like Hillcrest on The Green and Hampden House, on Church Road. Other houses have been included because they form important parts of attractive groups alongside listed buildings. In this category are 1 and 2 Priory Bank Cottages and the Dell and Brookside, all on Church Road. Not only private houses but former farm buildings (like Red Lion Barn on The Forties) and buildings which are important social elements of the village have been featured. The latter category includes the Methodist Chapel and the well on The Green.

Historically farms have been an important part of the village, mingled in with the housing at the village's core. Several farm buildings within the conservation area have already been converted with varying degrees of success. It is to be hoped that the farm buildings of Monkery Farm remain in agricultural use, rather than undergo conversion, which would inevitably lead to loss of part of its character. However, should this happen, great sensitivity would need to be paid to maintaining the barn's character and its setting.

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

4) 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.

PUBLISHED CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STUDIES

(with date of adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance by South Oxfordshire District Council in brackets).

1. Watlington (8 April 1997)
2. Greys Green (8 April 1997)
3. Forest Hill (25 November 1997)
4. Beckley (18 December 1997)
5. North Moreton (18 December 1997)
6. Warborough (18 December 1997)
7. Mapledurham (19 January 1999)
8. Benson (23 March 1999)
9. Waterstock (21 October 1999)
10. Britwell Salome (12 September 2000)
11. Brightwell Baldwin (12 September 2000)
12. Chalgrove (12 September 2000)
13. Stoke Row (12 September 2000)
14. East Hagbourne (14 November 2000)

Others in preparation include Stanton St John, Garsington and Thame.

After the initial fieldwork and documentary research, each character study has been through a process of extensive public consultation (including a public meeting before it has formally been adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in accordance with Policy CON 15 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.