



Listening Learning Leading

# Henley Conservation Area Management Plan

June 2005

## **Henley Conservation Area Management Plan**

The Council first published the Henley Conservation Area Management Plan in draft form in July 2004. Following a period of public consultation, including a public meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2005, the Council approved the Management Plan and the conservation area extensions on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

## Issues

### Conservation Area boundary review.

A thorough survey of the existing conservation area boundaries was undertaken as part of this appraisal and it was decided not to recommend any changes apart from the two detailed below:

#### **1. Extend the boundaries of the St Mark's Road/Vicarage Road Conservation Area.**

This will include:

- (i) Properties in St Mark's Road.
- (ii) Properties in St Andrew's Road.
- (iii) Properties in Reading Road.

These mostly date to the late 19th century and provide examples of well detailed houses of the period, which are marked on the Townscape Appraisal maps. Many of these properties are detached houses in large gardens. These gardens, with planting, trees and some substantial garden walls, make a very positive contribution to the character of the area.

#### **2. Designate a new conservation area based on Reading Road.**

This will cover Park Road, Grove Road, Grange Road, Marmion Road, Quebec Road, part of Reading Road, Boston Road, part of Harpsden Road and Niagara Road. This area was developed at the end of the 19th century on land that had formerly been used for market gardening, to provide a range of artisan dwellings, possibly for railway workers and other workers. The estate was developed in a

comprehensive way, providing an attractive and cohesive townscape, characterised by terraces of two storey red brick houses, largely unaltered.

These buildings are notable for their slate roofs, prominent chimney stacks with original clay pots, sash windows, ground floor canted bay windows and by the use of white brick to create string courses and window and door arches. Stone is also used in some streets (e.g. Park Road) to create the bays and to arch over the front doors. There is evidence of tuck pointing on some buildings, where the brickwork was originally colour washed and then a thin line of lime putty inserted to



Marmion Road

provide a finer joint. Overall, these streets provide a relatively unaltered and extremely well detailed example of late 19th century workers' housing, worthy of preservation and enhancement.

### Negative features - sites, buildings and open spaces.

Henley is an affluent, well cared for town, with no examples of empty,

derelict sites. The high number of listed buildings has created an attractive environment and clearly, property owners have an interest in ensuring that their buildings are regularly repaired and redecorated. Additionally, the District and Town Councils have protected and enhanced the public realm, including the landscaping of Falaise Square in the 1970s and again in 2003, providing Henley with an attractive focal point for both visitors and residents. The greatest threat to the conservation area comes from the pressure for new development and for infilling sites where these affect the historic form of development and the setting of listed buildings.

The Waitrose car park has had a negative impact on historic urban grain of the town. The poorest examples of streetscape are in Bell Street, particularly on the west side where modern development has resulted in the demolition of historic buildings, the loss of original building lines and the construction of modern buildings of little design merit, often with poor

quality shopfronts. The most negative examples are:

- Nos. 15-17 (Clintons - over prominent fascia)
- No. 21 Bell Street (Clarks - over prominent fascia)
- Nos. 23-25 Bell Street (Chilton Watson and Moss Pharmacy - both have over deep fascias but Moss Pharmacy is particularly prominent)
- Nos. 29-31 Bell Street (Mackays - over prominent fascia)
- Nos. 37-43 Bell Street
- The Bull Inn, Bell Street -possibly a Building-at-Risk
- No. 63 Bell Street (Bagatelle - prominent plastic lettering)
- Traffic islands at the junction of Bell Street and Northfield End

### **Pedestrian and traffic management.**

Henley's position on a crossing over the River Thames means that heavy traffic is inevitably a problem. This is travelling from Reading through to Wallingford and Oxford, or is generated locally. Despite this, pedestrian movement in the town centre is relatively easy and the provision of pedestrian crossings in Hart Street and Bell Street has helped. These are in addition to the crossings provided by the traffic lights at the junctions of Hart Street with the Market Place and Thameside with Henley Bridge.

Conflict occurs in a few places: New Street, where there are no designated crossings; in Northfield End, where two roundabouts help the traffic flow but do not provide a safe refuge for pedestrians; and at the junction of Reading Road with Norman Avenue, on the edge of the conservation area.



Inappropriate modern shopfronts in Bell Street

This conflict detracts from the enjoyment of the conservation area and any steps which can be taken to reduce the volume of traffic would enhance the conservation area. Ideally, more of the town centre would be pedestrianised, to provide the more peaceful environment which can be found in the Market Place. However, it is difficult to see how traffic can be banned from such streets as Hart Street, because of the situation of Henley by the river, effectively preventing any town centre bypass. A reduction in locally generated traffic may be achieved through planning policies restricting the provision of off-street car parking in new developments and the provision of better public transport.



Northfield End

### **New development.**

There is very limited scope for new development in the Henley Conservation Area because of the sensitivity of the whole environment due to the high number of listed buildings and the survival of the medieval street pattern and burgage plots. Gardens do exist to the town centre properties, but they are usually part of the curtilage of a listed building and should be preserved as such. The amalgamation of gardens to create parking areas, such as the informal car park behind no. 14-18 Hart Street, should be resisted, as this has a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

On the edges of the conservation area, such as along The Fair Mile and to the south of Henley, the properties have larger gardens but again these form part of the setting of the various buildings (many of which are in any case listed) and should be protected. Some development has already occurred, such as the new housing between Meadow Road and the river (Boathouse Reach), a very successful design which has copied the overall form and picked up on some of the details of the surrounding Edwardian buildings.

### **Potential development sites.**

Any development opportunities are therefore limited to either the improvement of existing buildings, or possibly (where the site permits) by some modest infilling. One major site is currently under discussion for development - Market Place Mews - which is discussed in greater detail in Part 2.

## **Chapter 1 The future management of the Henley Conservation Area.**

### **Introduction.**

Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent may be needed for new development, alterations, additions and demolitions within the Henley Conservation Area. Additionally, lopping or felling any tree over a certain size requires the permission of the Council. If you are in any doubt as to whether you require permission, please contact the Planning Department before commencing work - the details are provided at the end of this document. Failure to obtain the necessary

approvals can result in enforcement action or even, where a listed building is involved, in a criminal prosecution.

### **Buildings of Townscape Merit.**

As recommended by government advice contained within PPG15, Buildings of Townscape Merit, which have been judged to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, have been identified as part of the appraisal process and are marked on the Townscape Appraisal maps for each character area. Any application to demolish a Building of Townscape Merit will need to be accompanied with a reasoned justification similar to that required for a listed building. Permission will only be given for demolition if the applicant can provide proof that the building is beyond economic repair. Similarly, all applications for alterations and extensions will be very carefully controlled.

### **Article 4 Directions.**

Certain minor works and alterations to unlisted buildings in use as family dwellings can be carried out without planning permission from the Council. Development of this kind is called "Permitted Development" and falls into various classes which are listed in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. These minor alterations can cumulatively have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of a conservation area. Powers exist to the Council to withdraw some of these permitted development rights in the interests of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.

In Henley there is a high survival of original detailing such as the finely

detailed timber windows and panelled timber doors which make a significant contribution to the individual character of buildings in the conservation area particularly in the St Marks Road Conservation Area and the proposed Reading Road Conservation Area. It is therefore proposed that permitted development rights are withdrawn for the unlisted dwelling houses in these conservation areas. This will ensure the preservation of unique architectural features and traditional materials by requiring an application for planning permission before carrying out any work.

The kinds of work which it is proposed to control include:

- Installation of new windows and doors
- Alterations to the roof, including changing the roof materials and installing rooflights.
- Building a porch.
- Creating an access onto the road.
- Building a hard standing
- The erection or alteration of gates, fences or walls.
- Painting the exterior of a building.

It is proposed that the restrictions will only relate to development visible from a public highway (this includes a footpath). It will not affect residential property which is in use as flats (i.e. in "multiple occupation") which are already controlled more rigorously as they have far fewer permitted development rights than dwelling houses.

### **The protection of trees.**

Trees make a very important contribution to the character and appearance of the Henley Conservation Area and the Council is committed to their protection and

improvement. Ill-considered works to trees may not only lead to the loss of the trees themselves but also ruin the appearance of the area surrounding them and spoil the setting of any buildings nearby.



Trees next to Henley Bridge

All trees in a conservation area over a certain size are automatically protected by law. Additionally, some may already be specifically covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), which means that formal permission is required from the Council to fell or lop them. (These are marked on the Townscape Analysis Maps). Failure to comply with the legislation can result in prosecution.

Anyone wishing to carry out works to a tree in a conservation area which is not already protected by a TPO must give notice of their intentions to the Council and the Council has six weeks in which to decide whether or not to serve a TPO on that tree. The decision will be based on the contribution the tree makes to the character or appearance of the conservation area, the type of species and the health of the tree. If a TPO is served, a formal application will be required for the proposed works.

The following trees are exempt:

- Trees which are dead, dying, or dangerous.
- Trees with a trunk diameter which is less than 75 mm (3 inches) at any point, or less than 100 mm (4

inches) diameter at 1500 mm (5 foot) about ground level.

- Where the removal of the tree would be to the benefit of other neighbouring trees.
- Trees subject to a forestry dedication.
- Where the tree has to be felled in connection with a development for which planning permission has already been given.

Please note that recent changes in the legislation mean that fruit trees are no longer exempt

It is always advisable to check with the Council's Forestry Officer before starting work. Where the loss of a tree is unavoidable, the Council will encourage and may require in certain circumstances, the replanting of a new tree with a species which is native or traditional to the area.

### Local Plan policies.

The relevant document is the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, adopted in April 1997. Policies relating to conservation areas and listed buildings can be found in Section 4 - The Historic Environment. In the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan, second deposit draft, section 3 contains the relevant policies relating to the historic environment.

## Chapter 2 Design guidance for new development.

### Introduction.

It has already been noted that there are few development opportunities within the Henley Conservation Area, because of the high number of listed buildings and the plan form of the

town. However, some improvement or enlargement of the existing buildings may be possible subject to very rigorous controls and there may occasionally be sites where completely new development is acceptable. However, in the conservation area, where the quality of the general environment is already acknowledged by designation, the community expects the Council to insist on good quality schemes which respond positively to their historic setting.

The following guidance will apply to most schemes, including the creation of parking areas, extensions to existing properties and new houses or commercial buildings. It is based on central government advice, contained in PPG 1 and PPG 15, the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The South Oxfordshire Design Guide and the Chilterns Building Design Guide (1999).

### **The need for contextual design.**

All development, but particularly in the Henley Conservation Area, must respond to its immediate environment, its "context", in terms of scale, density, form, materials and detailing. Applicants for planning permission must provide a "Design Statement", to justify the design decisions that have been made as the scheme was developed and to show how the building relates to its context.

Most development opportunities within the Henley Conservation Areas will be on small, enclosed sites where the "context" - the surrounding buildings and the form of historic plot development - may be obvious but still needs to be acknowledged. The following are general principles which should be adopted for all development in all parts of the conservation area:

### **Urban grain.**

The "urban grain", or form, of historic development, is particularly important in Henley and is based on the late 12th century burgage plots and the early street layout of Hart Street, Market Place, Bell Street, New Street and Friday Street, which have remained largely unaltered. This provides a townscape of great individuality, characterised by a mixture of narrow and wide streets, with long terraces of varied brick or timber-frame properties on either side. The roofscape is also particularly important, with handmade clay tiles, laid on steeply pitched roofs, being an important local feature. Paved courtyards, glimpsed through narrow openings in the street frontages, provide a link to Henley's past as a stop for the Oxford to London coaches.

This "urban grain" is an important part of the character of the conservation area and should be protected. Proposals for new development must include a detailed analysis of the locality and demonstrate that there is a full appreciation of the local townscape and how it has developed, including prevailing building forms, materials and plot ratios. This is particularly important on "backland" sites where new development potential is very limited and must always be secondary in character to the more important primary buildings facing the main street. The amalgamation of burgage plots into larger plots to enable redevelopment and the consequential loss of the historic "urban grain", should be resisted by the Council (see Policy CON14 in the Local Plan).

### **Scale and density.**

Scale is the combination of a building's height and bulk when related to its surroundings. The scale of any



"Urban grain": Bell Street

development should respect surrounding development, so, for instance, three storey office buildings may not be considered appropriate in a conservation area where most of the buildings are two storeys and in residential use. However, some modest changes in scale may actually be advantageous, as this reflects the variety of form in the town centre of Henley where the buildings have developed individually for a variety of functions over a long period of time. For such schemes, the applicant must provide accurate elevations of the surrounding buildings, showing how the new development will relate to them.

Density is the amount of development (measured in terms of floorspace or number of housing units) related to the site area it occupies. In practice, it is the combination of density with layout, landscaping and other factors which determines the quality and "feel" of new developments. As set out in recent government guidance in PPG 6, high density development, if carefully chosen and sensitively sited, can make good use of land and in principle the Council supports such schemes, where appropriate, in existing settlements.

However, where the proposal lies within a conservation area such as Henley, a careful balance must be sought between the sensitivity of the environment and the requirements of the developer. In taking account of existing densities within the conservation area, care must be taken to ensure sites are not overdeveloped. Developments which have a detrimental effect on the character of the conservation area will be resisted. It is especially important to consider how the area has developed over time and to recognise the differences in building form which can be attributed to different periods.

### Height and massing.

Within the conservation area, a number of buildings are already prominent because of their height - St Mary's Church and the Town Hall for instance. Domestic and commercial buildings are historically of lesser importance within the townscape and new development should reflect this hierarchy. Generally, the height of new development should match the adjoining buildings, although allowing for the inevitable variations in height and bulk which are natural to

historic towns. For Henley, this generally means two or three storeys, with lower heights in backland sites.

Massing is the combination of the scale of the development, its layout and its site coverage. For larger schemes, poor massing and over-intensive development leads to the creation of over-shadowed areas, with poor quality spaces between the buildings. These create a threatening environment for pedestrians and reduce the opportunities for good quality landscaping. However, the majority of redevelopment sites in the Henley Conservation Area will be modest in size, perhaps only large enough to accommodate one or two buildings at the most and the issue of massing is less relevant than scale, density and height.

### **Appearance, materials and detailing.**

The emphasis in any new development or alterations must always be on the need to provide a high quality of design. This can be innovative modern design, providing a dramatic contemporary statement, or in some locations, a more traditional design. Positive change in historic towns can provide vitality and interest to the streetscape and designation as a conservation area and the presence of listed buildings should not stifle well thought out, modern design. However, all new development in the Henley Conservation Area should carefully consider the prevailing form of existing development, taking into account scale, density, height and massing. These elements may be used to set out the basic form of the new building(s), including roof shape, roof pitch, height, depth of plan and, most importantly, the relationship of the new buildings to

existing surrounding buildings and to the street. Once this basic framework has been established and the general form and siting of the building agreed, the actual appearance of any new building may be either traditional or modern, providing some opportunities for a good designer to experiment with new materials and details. In all cases, a design statement should be submitted.

Where a more traditional approach is appropriate, the Council will expect new buildings which are designed in a traditional form within the conservation area to be detailed in a manner appropriate to the historic setting though direct imitation should be avoided. Roofs should be pitched and covered in handmade clay tiles, or natural slate. Local features such as full or half hips may be suitable. Dormers and rooflights should be avoided, unless modestly sized and away from the public viewpoint. Chimneys may sometimes be required in certain locations.

Walls will usually be brick, brick and flint or weather-boarded with traditional feather-edged boarding (not modern ship-lap). This can be painted or stained an appropriate colour. Painted brick or render are more modern alternatives which are rarely appropriate. The inclusion of small decorative details, such as string courses, shaped cills or lintels, recessed panels and other features can add interest and a sense of place but must be based on local precedent and used correctly.

Windows should be timber, painted not stained. Their design should reflect local styles, usually simple side-hung casements or vertically sliding sashes. If windows are to be double glazed, then these must be carefully designed.

Avoidance of glazing bars can assist in achieving a satisfactory solution. 'Stick-on' glazing bars should be avoided at all costs. Consideration should be given to alternative ways of complying with Building Regulations if traditional windows are to be used. In all cases joinery details must be submitted with planning applications. Modern top-hung lights and modern materials, such as uPVC or aluminium, are generally unacceptable in the Henley Conservation Area, particularly where the new building abuts a listed building or faces a principal street. Front doors should also be painted timber, again reflecting local historic styles. Notwithstanding the above, well designed contemporary solutions may be more appropriate in some cases.

### **Boundary treatments.**

Traditionally, most boundaries in the conservation area are defined by brick or flint walls, with trees, soft hedging and timber fencing being more prevalent in the residential areas outside the town centre. For new development in Henley, it is important that local materials and detailing are used and new boundaries following the historic precedent of brick and flint will help development to fit in to its context. Modern alternatives, such as concrete blocks, ranch-style timber fencing, or post-and-rail type fencing are not acceptable. Simple, close-boarded fencing, with timber posts, may be an alternative to brick in certain locations away from the public viewpoint but such fencing should be simply detailed, without any decoration such as a curved top.

### **Extensions to existing buildings.**

Extensions to existing buildings require a similar approach to more major



Flint walls in West Street

schemes in that they must take into account the prevailing forms of development, complement the form and character of the original house and use high quality materials and detailing. For listed buildings this is particularly important. Design should be of high quality, whether modern or traditional. Roof lines, roof shape, eaves details, verge details and the creation of new chimneys are important considerations. Extensions should not overlook neighbouring properties, lead to an unacceptable loss of garden space, or result in the loss of historic plot boundaries. Extensions should not dominate the original building

### **Site specific recommendations.**

#### ***Market Place Mews.***

This proposed development site lies partly within and partly outside the conservation area. It includes part of the car park for Waitrose supermarket facing the alley (Market Place Mews) which leads through to the Market Place. It is currently used for a part-time street market and for car parking. Along Market Place are a number of listed buildings (nos. 10, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32 and 34 (King's Arms Public

House), 36 and the stable at the back of nos.32-36 is also listed. Most of these buildings have 18th or early 19th century fronts on 16th or 17th century timber-framed structures. Other Buildings of Townscape Merit form part of the group.

This is a backlands site on land which was and still is in part, gardens (see Figure 1 Map of Henley in 1884). Burgage plots stretched back from the Market Place as far as the modern library and although most of these have been lost below the Waitrose car park, Kings Road preserves the general line of these early boundaries and the plots are still recognisable behind 20-26 Market Place.

Historically there is no precedent for development, apart from single storey sheds, workshops and ancillary buildings to the principal frontage buildings facing the Market Place.

Any development on this site should comply with the local plan policy, the South Oxfordshire Design Guide and the scale, density and detailing of the new buildings should be in accord with the guidance contained within this appraisal.

Any development must:

- be of high quality
- retain existing garden space
- not result in the loss of any listed buildings
- provide adequate space to protect the rear elevations of the listed buildings
- fit in with the historic form of development
- not overshadow the existing listed buildings
- provide a pleasant pedestrian link through to the Market Place

- reflect the linear nature of the burgage plots
- protect the setting of the listed barn
- be of an appropriate density

### Improvements to the public realm

The Henley Conservation Area contains a number of historic street surfaces, some of which are listed. They are interesting survivals of the 19th century when York stone, sandstone granite, cobbles and various kinds of clay pavior were used to improve the pavements and streets. This appraisal has identified the most important examples of these surfaces and it is desirable that all these surfaces are protected and repaired as necessary, using traditional techniques and materials.

Further areas of natural stone paving might be considered, as funds permit, for the town centre, particularly for Hart Street and Bell Street.



Improvements needed to the pavements in Hart Street

## Chapter 3 Conclusions

### How residents and other property owners can help.

This appraisal seeks to explain what is important and special about the Henley Conservation Area and to suggest ways in which its character and appearance can be best preserved and enhanced for future generations. Whilst

the Council can initiate improvements and control new development, the co-operation and enthusiasm of local residents and business owners provides a vital constituent to the future successful management of the conservation area. This means that local residents, tenants and other property owners need to work with the Council and agree common aims and objectives. Hopefully, this appraisal will provide a framework for a positive partnership for mutual future benefit.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance.**

This appraisal will be subject to public consultation and subsequently will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by South Oxfordshire District Council. With the Local Plan, it will be used by the Council to guide the control of change in the conservation area. It will therefore be of interest to local residents, business owners and potential developers who are considering submitting planning applications in the conservation area. The guidance contained within Part 2 is intended to inform the planning process and will be a material consideration when applications for new development in the Henley Conservation Area are received by the Council.

### **Further information.**

***For more information about the Henley Conservation Area, please contact:***

The Conservation Officer,  
Conservation and Design  
South Oxfordshire District Council,  
Benson Lane,  
Crowmarsh Gifford,  
Wallingford,

Oxon OX10 8NJ.  
Tel: 01491 823736

***For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas, contact:***

English Heritage,  
23 Savile Row,  
London W1X 1AB.  
General telephone inquiries: 020 7973 3000  
Customer Services 020 7973 4916.

***For the "Care for Victorian Houses" leaflet, contact:***

The Victorian Society,  
1 Priory Gardens,  
Bedford Park,  
London W4 1TT  
Telephone: 020 8994 1019

***For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets, contact:***

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB),  
6 Fitzroy Square,  
London W1P 6DY.  
Tel: 020 7377 1644

***Further reading:***

*The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire*  
Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner

*The hostelries of Henley*  
Ann Cottingham

*Henley Heritage*  
Jan Baldwin

*Henley-on-Thames Past and Present*  
John Pilling and Lorraine Woods

*Henley Rural*  
Brian Read

*Henley*  
M Airs, K Rodwell and H Turner

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Listening Learning Leading

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