

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 Warborough 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. 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.

WARBOROUGH

1) The History of the Area

Despite its proximity to the nearby Roman town of Dorchester there is no evidence of any Roman settlement Warborough, although three major Roman roads crossed the parish. One road came through Newington, briefly following the course of the present A329 before maintaining its line over Town Hill, continuing along the present footpath and crossing the Thames at a point between Meadside and Shillingford. The Lower Icknield Way from Akeman Street to Dorchester came via Cuxham, Brightwell Baldwin and went between Berrick Prior and Berrick Salome, passing through the village approximately along The Green North and continuing up Henfield View to meet the road from Newington. The Henley-Dorchester road came from Benson, crossing the present A329 at the northern tip of the village by Oatlands and continued into Dorchester.

Warborough is not mentioned by name in any pre-Norman Conquest document or in Domesday Book, but it formed part of the royal manor of Benson. The earliest reference to Warborough is in connection with Osney Abbey, Oxford in the 12th century when “land of Wareberga” was assigned to the canons of the abbey.

The nuns of Godstow near Oxford were also granted land in Shillingford and Warborough by Stephen and the Empress Matilda in the 12th century. Although the nuns of Godstow had obtained an estate in the parish, which was later recognised as a separate manor, it was not until the reign of Edward I that its profits passed to the nunnery. In 1278, Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, founded the Chapel of St Nicholas in Wallingford Castle which was endowed with the rents from the Warborough manor.

At the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century the manor was surrendered to the crown. The land owned by Osney Abbey was given to the Dean and Chapter of the new Diocese of Oxford and the manor owned by the nuns of Godstow was purchased by a syndicate of London merchants for £1393. In 1556 Thomas White, an alderman of London, transferred the land to his new foundation of St John’s College, Oxford.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries the population of Warborough was mostly engaged in open-field agriculture. Before the General Enclosure Act of 1845 there was very little enclosure except for orchards, cottage gardens and the like. Crops grown included corn and beans on the higher ground to the north of the village, and barley on the lower ground towards the river. There was also some rearing of cattle in the area. The Green itself, at the heart of the village, was previously common pastureland before enclosure. Following the request of the Reverend White, The Green was transferred to the parish officers as a place of exercise and recreation for the inhabitants in 1853. 130 acres of common land were sold to St John’s College in order to off-set the costs of enclosure, together with sales to smaller tenants. Most of the land and buildings owned by the college have now been sold to private owners.

Important buildings of architectural or historic interest which survive today include the parish church of St. Laurence, the earliest parts of which date from around 1200. The north and south chapels were built in the early 14th century and the previously existing tower with a low pyramidal roof was replaced by the present

tower in 1666. The church was restored in 1881. A large tomb in the churchyard commemorates Thomas Blackall who died in 1779, weighing 32 stone. His coffin was transported to the churchyard on rollers.

Houses of note include the former barn at Upper Farm, now converted to residential use. This building was originally an open hall house, dating from the late 15th century. The smoke blackening of the roof timbers indicates that the hall had an open fire with the smoke escaping through the roof. This important building was of a high standard and must have been built for someone of considerable social standing, before becoming a barn in the post-medieval period.

Several buildings date from the late 16th century, including Nos. 54, 109 and 117 Thame Road, 31 The Green North and 18 The Green South. There are many fine buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries, including The Old Vicarage near the church and The Manor House on The Green South, which is dated 1696.

There was a strong tradition of nonconformity in Warborough in the 17th century and a Quaker Meeting house was built on the south side of The Green in 1670. This has now been demolished but the Quaker burial ground still exists and the name survives in nearby Quaker Lane.

Warborough today is still a thriving community. There has been some 20th century infill development and larger developments such as Sinodun View and Henfield View, which lie outside the conservation area. Farming still plays an important role on the edge of the village but many of the residents work in Oxford, Reading or commute to London. The village was first designated as a conservation area on 17 October 1978 with minor revisions being made on 18 December 1997.

2) The Established Character

Warborough is an extremely attractive village, the built-up area of which follows the line of the busy Thame Road. The core of the settlement is centred on the square of land formed by St Laurence's Church, The Green North, The Green South and The Green itself. There are many historic buildings throughout the village and some particularly attractive groups around The Green North and South.

The village is well known for its spacious green, the character of which is formed by the ditches around the edge, the gravel tracks, its cricket pitch, the prominent mature trees and the many historic buildings which overlook it. Ditches are also a feature along either side of Thame Road.

There is a wide variety of building types in the village ranging from small cottages to large Georgian houses and late medieval farmhouses, with associated weatherboarded barns. The centre of the village around the church is made up of terraced and other small cottages, including two almshouses, while the larger farmhouses are found on the edge of the historic core. Many older houses are detached and set in spacious curtilages. Several of the houses, now private residences, are named after their former use, e.g. The Old Vicarage, The Old Forge, The Old Bakery.

While there is no predominant vernacular building material in the village, there are many good examples of red brick with flared headers, which are likely to have been manufactured at the Nettlebed kilns, soft rubble clunch stone, some flint work, dressed stone, timber framing, (both exposed and rendered), thatch, clay tiles and slate.

There are several important lengths of wall in the village, particularly around St. Laurence's Church and the northern end of Thame Road. These are constructed of clunch stone and brick. There are also many attractive mature and semi-mature trees which contribute to the village's character and to the setting of its listed buildings. The most significant groups are to be found around The Green North, The Green South, the churchyard, and at the junction of Sinodun View and Thame Road. The oak tree beside the cricket pavilion is referred to locally as the 'Jubilee Oak' and was planted in 1935 to commemorate the silver jubilee of George V. Several historic buildings also have important trees within their curtilages. The Parish Council has embarked on a programme of continuous tree replacement, particularly along Thame Road immediately to the south of Greet Hall and on The Green itself.

There are a number of locations where views out to the surrounding countryside can be gained. The most noteworthy of these are from The Green looking east towards the Chilterns. This open aspect of one side of The Green is a vital element in its character. Views towards Dorchester and Wittenham Clumps are also important and are particularly notable from Hammer Lane. Of particular importance to the character of the village is its open farmland setting, across which views can be enjoyed towards the Chilterns to the east and Wittenham Clumps to the west. Many of the views considered important to preserve this setting are shown on the map accompanying this study.

Apart from The Green, other areas of important open space include the wide grass verges along Thame Road, the curtilages of Violets Farm and 135 Thame Road, the churchyard of St. Laurence's Church and the allotments immediately east of The Green.

Buildings of local interest which are not listed include St. Laurence Hall which was the former National School, built in 1838, the war memorial, the old red telephone kiosk in Thame Road, the Old Chapel in The Green South, now converted to residential use, the cricket pavilion on The Green and the Greet Memorial Hall in Thame Road.

A large scale map of the conservation area identifying the location of traditional street furniture worthy of retention and attractive road surfaces and paving materials has been produced and is available for inspection at the District Council Offices by appointment.

3) Possible Areas for Enhancement

Warborough is a large village that is clearly well maintained. However, there are a number of locations where the opportunity exists to enhance the existing character.

There are many overhead wires and cables which could be laid underground by the statutory undertakers. Also, the long lengths of concrete kerbing along Thame Road could be replaced with a more attractive natural material. This is particularly so around the war memorial where several lengths of granite setts have recently been removed by the County Council and replaced with concrete blocks. The quality of materials used on the pedestrian island between the church lychgate and village shop could also be improved.

The Green is the focal point of the village and here some of the existing seats are in poor condition and could be repaired. The ditches around The Green are an attractive feature and their owners are urged to carry out regular maintenance and not to culvert them. To the south of The Green, various methods have been used to prevent cars parking on the grass including cut stone blocks, wooden posts and whitewashed rough stone. This lack of uniformity creates a muddled appearance which might be improved if a single method were used, such as cut stone blocks.

There is a large and rather ugly area of black tarmac outside the Six Bells public house. This would be enhanced if a better quality surface material were used. Similarly, patch repairs have been carried out to the gravel tracks around The Green in tarmac. This should cease and the existing tarmac be replaced with gravel. A large scale map of traditional street furniture and attractive road surfaces and paving materials has been produced (*see Section 2 'The Established Character'*).

There are various locations in the village where attractive and prominent iron railings are in need of repair and maintenance. These include those outside the Old Chapel, The Green South and outside number 3 The Green North. The railings surrounding St. Laurence Hall have recently been repaired but further works are still necessary.

St. Laurence Hall is a building of local interest, the character of which could be fully restored if the recently inserted uPVC windows on the front gable were replaced with timber windows, and if the felt roof on the south elevation lean-to was replaced with a better quality material. The use of uPVC windows and the heavily struck pointing on the plinth of Greet Hall are also unfortunate.

The large and intrusive stainless steel boiler flue pipe on the front roof slope of the prominently sited 74, Thame Road should be removed or at least relocated.

The many lengths of attractive wall, particularly in the historic core of the village around St. Laurence's Church, should be restored where necessary and generally kept in a good state of repair.

The village pump and shelter at the junction of Thame Road and Sinodun View are of local interest, and their setting would be greatly enhanced if the existing broken concrete around the base were replaced with brick or cobble paving and possibly an information board.

The old horse pond on The Green North in front of the Old Vicarage is in a prominent position. This could be restored and turned into an attractive feature.

The very prominent tarmac car park to The Cricketers public house could be replaced with a more appropriate traditional material.

Noise, light and atmospheric pollution are all major problems, mainly caused by the heavy flow of traffic through the village. The possibility of a sensitive traffic calming scheme should be considered, together with other measures such as lorry weight restrictions. The careful use of features such as traditional kerbing, surfaces and street furniture could be used to create an environmentally acceptable traffic calming scheme.

The use of traditional materials and detailing can have a considerable positive effect in enhancing a conservation area's character. The owners of historic and prominent properties are encouraged to remove unsympathetic modern materials, such as concrete tiles, uPVC windows and plastic rainwater goods, and to reinstate traditional materials such as clay tiles, softwood windows and cast iron guttering. The owners of thatched buildings are also encouraged to retain or reinstate plain, flush ridges, which are part of the traditional thatching style of South Oxfordshire.

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

4) 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.