

WINTERBROOK CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



14.09.12

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of report

An assessment of the character of Winterbrook was undertaken in July 2011 as part of the Wallingford Conservation Area Appraisal process. This report provides an assessment of the special architectural and historic interest of Winterbrook with a recommendation for designation as a new conservation area.

1.2 Planning Policy Context

The Council has a duty to review the boundary of existing conservation areas and to designate additional conservation areas where appropriate (Section 69, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

1.3 Summary of Special Interest

Winterbrook is located within the Parish of Cholsey and is located to the south of Wallingford. Bradford's Brook represents an ancient boundary between Wallingford and Cholsey and continues to mark the parish boundary.

The morphology of Winterbrook is characterised by a linear emphasis with brick boundary walls and mature trees and shrubs creating a strong sense of enclosure. Piecemeal development has contributed to the mixed character of the buildings which include Victorian villas in spacious plots as well as groups of terraced housing and cottages. The proposed area includes five Grade II listed buildings, one locally listed building, three proposed locally listed buildings (No.1 Winterbrook, Nos 3 – 15 Winterbrook and No. 24 Reading Road), and seven Buildings of Townscape Merit. This is a coherent and highly legible phase in the development of Wallingford and is considered to be of special architectural and historic merit.

2 PROPOSED WINTERBROOK CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 The development of Winterbrook

A number of medieval documents refer to the name Winterbrook and a 1550 estate map of Cholsey shows the presence of eight houses. Winterbrook Field is shown as common land on the Cholsey Estate map dated 1695. A number of houses, including Winterbrook House, were built during the 18th century but the majority of development took place during the course of the 19th century. It is thought that The Lawns and Winterbrook Lodge include earlier elements but the earliest known building is probably the locally listed former Nag's Head Public House (No. 25) which, from the evidence of the Cholsey Estate Map of 1695, is likely to date from the later 17th century. Winterbrook House is mid-18th century and clearly represented the first prestigious house to be built in the area. Otherwise most of the buildings are mid- to late-19th century, with a few Post-war houses on the west side of the street. The area is shown on the 1879 map as thinly built up along the main road with fields beyond to either side.

2.2 Boundary of the proposed Winterbrook Conservation Area

Winterbrook is a long straight historic street which is the continuation of Reading Road, itself a continuation of the main north to south route through Wallingford. The hamlet of Winterbrook lies to the immediate south of the line of Bradford's Brook, a small stream which flows in a west to east direction before flowing into the River Thames.

The Wallingford Conservation Area reaches southwards from the town centre along Reading Road, and finishes barely 100 metres to the north, with a small area of Inter-War development providing a break between the two Conservation Areas. On both the western and eastern boundaries of the proposed Conservation Area are large open fields which provide an attractive setting, with the River Thames not far away.

The proposed Conservation Area boundary encompasses a group of some 30 buildings which face Winterbrook. Apart from No. 25, the majority of the buildings date from the late 18th or the 19th century and only six from the 20th century. The boundary has been tightly drawn to encompass these historic buildings and to exclude late 20th century development including properties in The Murren. Four 1960s houses and a newer more recent property (Nos. 6, 8, 8a, 10 and 12 Winterbrook) have been included in the Conservation Area as they sit back from the road so their contribution to the character of the area is more muted. One of them (No. 6) also contains a particularly fine copper beech tree in its front garden, which is important in views along the road. Otherwise, nearly all of the other buildings in the proposed Conservation Area are listed, locally listed, or considered to make a positive contribution. One further building, No. 2 Winterbrook, is a 1930s building of pleasing design (being relatively unaltered). Of note is the sylvan character of the road, the high concentration of well preserved historic buildings, usually set in spacious plot sizes, the high quality historic boundaries (mainly brick walls and cast iron railings), and the major contribution made to the street scene by these boundaries and the accompanying planting and mature trees, including several mature copper beech trees.

2.3 The buildings of the proposed Winterbrook Conservation Area

A Townscape Appraisal Map has been prepared for the proposed Winterbrook Conservation Area which identifies the existing listed, locally listed, and 'positive' historic buildings in the new Conservation Area, as well as the more important historic front boundaries and the most significant trees or tree groups. Suggestions for new 'local listing' are also included. The historic buildings represent mainly upmarket 18th and 19th century residential development outside the Saxon burh boundary, with several large and prestigious family houses, now all listed, as well as a number of mid to late 19th century houses or groups, similarly built to a very high standard. One property, Winterbrook Farm, retains some agricultural buildings on its western boundary, and one of the listed buildings, Winterbrook Lodge, is attached to a probably 18th century barn, which is also listed. There are five listed buildings, all listed grade II, the earliest and most prestigious of which is Winterbrook House. A summary of the list description for each of these is included below.

Listed buildings

Winterbrook House - Grade II

Winterbrook House is a high status two storey Georgian house, almost symmetrically arranged. It dates to c1750 and was for many years the home of the crime writer Agatha Christie, as recorded by a plaque on the front elevation. The two storey house is built from grey brick with red brick dressings, and the old plain-tiled roof is hipped to the right, with brick end stacks. The building retains a six-panelled front door to the centre of the front elevation, with painted wood Doric pilasters supporting a triangular pediment. The windows are 12-paned unhorned sashes to all openings. Brick bands between ground and first floor, and beneath the parapetted eaves, add to the interest of the building.

The stables are also 18th century and are separately listed. They are built using squared coursed limestone with knapped flint bands and red brick dressings. The hipped roof is finished with old clay tiles.

Winterbrook Close - Grade II

Winterbrook Close dates to the early 19th century and is built using yellow brick with red brick dressings. The two storey structure retains a hipped Welsh slate roof, with grey brick internal stacks with red brick dressings to left and right returns. A principal feature is the six panelled front door with a rectangular fanlight set beneath a square Tuscan Doric open porch. Each of the sash windows has 16 panes.

Winterbrook Lodge and attached barn - Grade II

Winterbrook Lodge dates to the early 19th century and is faced in render, with a hipped roof covered in Welsh slate. Two storeys high, it retains a central six panelled front door with a fanlight and an open square porch on Doric columns. The sashes are all 12 paned. The attached barn on the south-west side may be earlier and is also listed. It is built using timber-framing with weatherboarding and a plain clay tiled half-hipped roof.

The Lawns Winterbrook - Grade II

The Lawns has an early 19th century two storey rendered frontage which possibly conceals an earlier house. The roof is covered in Welsh slate with a brick rendered end stack to the right and various stacks to the rear. The building is four windows wide, and the front door is slightly left of centre and is framed by a square porch supported on fluted Doric columns. The ground floor windows are 12 paned unhorned sashes with architrave surrounds and bracketed cornices. A moulded string course between the ground and first floor may confirm the earlier building underneath.

Locally listed buildings

There is one locally listed building, No. 25 Reading Road, the former Nag's Head Public House which is now a private residence. This simple, vernacular building is one and a half storeys high and four bays long as demonstrated by the four small dormers which sit on the eaves. Whilst the front is faced in painted render, the north flank elevation has chequer-work brick, with an unusual crow-stepped gable. The steeply pitched tiled roof

is covered in handmade clay tiles. The Nags Head is shown on the 1695 Cholsey Estate map and therefore some elements probably date from the later 17th century with later alterations.

Positive unlisted buildings

The proposed Conservation Area provides a number of well detailed mid to late 19th century buildings which are considered to make a 'positive' contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area. Most of these are typical of the period between 1850 and 1875, with sash windows, shallow pitched slate roofs and canted bay windows. The use for many of them of the local red and grey brick provides a strong visual link along the street. Some of these properties, most notably No. 1, Nos. 5-15 and Winterbrook Close (listed) retain original cast iron railings. The most notable of these positive buildings are:

- No. 1 Winterbrook – a substantial pair of houses dating to c1850 now in single occupancy. Of note are the Tuscan porches to each side, the use of grey and red brick, with slate roofs, and the six over six sash windows.
- Nos. 3-15 odd Winterbrook – an outstanding terrace of matching three storey houses with canted bay windows, red brick dressings and second floor windows which break through the eaves line.
- No. 33 Winterbrook – a detached Arts and Crafts house was built in the late 1870s and is shown on the 1889 map when it was called 'Cwichelm'. It is faced in painted roughcast with casement windows and an original central dormer set between two front-facing gables.
- No. 24 Reading Road – a grey brick house with red brick dressings of c1850. It retains a pleasingly symmetrical front façade with three sash windows to the first floor and two canted bays with a long slated roof below (probably an addition of the late 19th century). It retains a decorative Georgian fanlight over the front door.

3 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Designate the new Winterbrook Conservation Area
- Consider an article 4 Direction to protect the unlisted 'positive' buildings from unsympathetic change
- Prepare a detailed Character Appraisal and Management Plan for the Winterbrook Conservation Area within two years of designation.