



Ewelme

Neighbourhood Plan



Village Character Assessment

September 2020

Produced by Ewelme Parish Council for Pre-Submission Consultation under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and in accordance with EU Directive 2001/42.

Past and Present



C 1920 The Street looking west showing The Greyhound public house



2019 The Street looking west with former Greyhound public house in residential use



C 1920 The Shepherd's Hut public house and The Street looking east



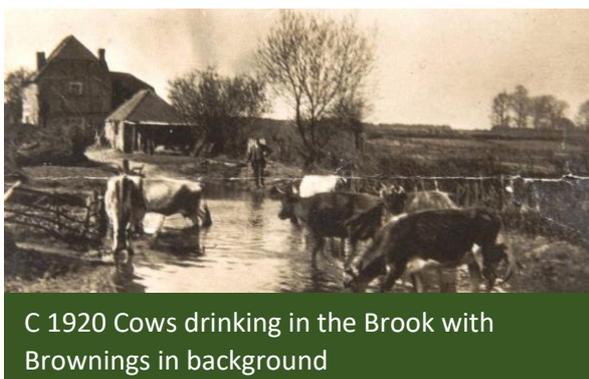
2019 The Shepherd's Hut and The Street looking east



C 1920 Reading Room, Kings Pool Cottage and House with Kings Pool on the right



2019 Reading Room, Kings Pool Cottage and House with Kings Pool on the right



C 1920 Cows drinking in the Brook with Brownings in background



2019 The Brook, with Brownings in background

*Please protect
village character
and rural nature*

*Additional
development
would change the
nature of the
village*

*Any development
should be
sympathetic to
the general
nature of our
small village*

These are some of the comments made by residents at neighbourhood plan drop-in session in 2017 and 2018 but what exactly do people mean by village character or nature of the village? This is what a character assessment aims to answer. It describes the distinct appearance and feel of the different areas of the village and what gives them their local distinctiveness and unique identity. This can then inform a Neighbourhood Plan and can be used at all stages of the planning process - by architects and builders, the Parish Council through to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), the Planning Authority.

Understanding the local character is crucial to the conservation or enhancement of the specific attributes of the village and can ensure that any development proposals are appropriate and of a design which respects and compliments its nature.

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group identified four broad character areas in the village as show in Map Projection *Figure 1*:

Character Area 1

Historic Core of the Village

Character Area 2

The Street below Kings Pool

Character Area 3

Late 20th Century Developments

Character Area 4

Lower End/Cottesmore

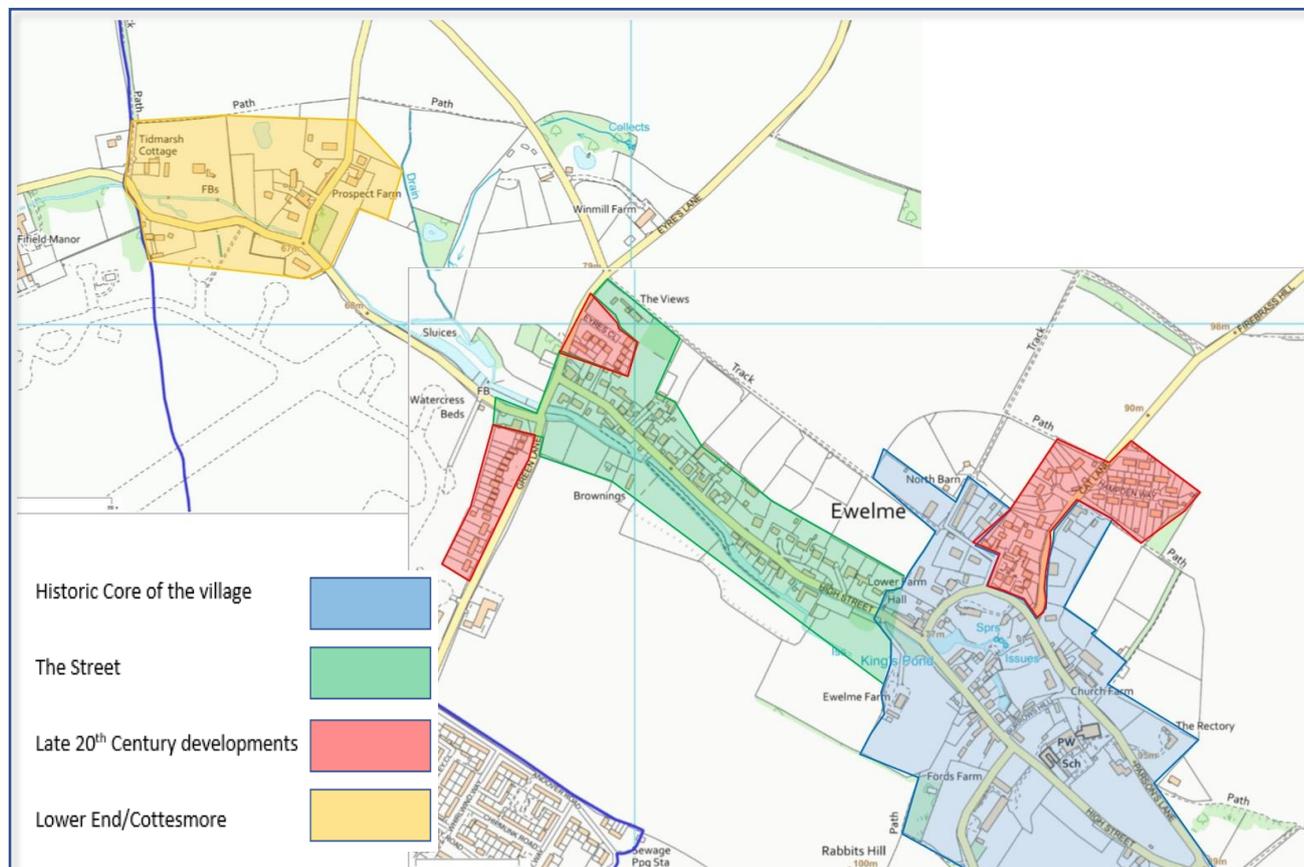
In March 2019 a draft of the character assessment was presented to the parish council, posted on the ENP website and made available for village members to make comments which were taken into consideration in the final document which was accepted by the Parish Council on 11th October 2019.

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Executive Summary

The village divides into four distinct areas, each of which has been assessed in detail.



Map projection Figure 1. Environs map of village

Historic Core of the Village

The Historic Core remains important and central to the village of Ewelme. Development has been added over the centuries. It is likely that the Ewelme Brook and the sheltered valley were the original reasons for the settlement. There is a variety of buildings, some very old, some newer, some thatched, some tiled, some closely packed, some standing in their own grounds. But there is a distinctive character to this part of the village which, whether building within it or adjacent to it, should be conserved. This should be achieved by development blending in with the existing buildings in terms of design, style, size, density, and materials. Buildings in this part of the village sit comfortably with each other and this should continue.

Any development within or adjacent to this area of the village should continue to conserve these important aspects of the built environment.

The Street Below Kings Pool

The Street is the main artery running through the village and has its own very distinctive character. There is considerable variety in the type, age, materials and size of houses – a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached and ranging from 2-bedrooms to 5 or 6. Despite extensions and alterations in recent times, the style has been preserved and residents have continued to live side by side the watercress beds and nature reserve.

Any development within or adjacent to The Lower Street should continue to blend in and complement the existing dwellings in style, design, density, and materials used.

Late 20th Century Developments

The addition of modern developments, including social housing in the village is in marked contrast to the largely historic part of the village or the houses on The Lower Street. The houses in these areas whether social or market housing are of fairly uniform design and style within each development.

Any development in or adjacent to this area does not need to match exactly the existing dwellings but should instead complement the existing built environment and reflect what is already there.

Lower End/Cottesmore

Lower End and Cottesmore are a loose aggregation of 14 homes on Benson Road and Cottesmore Lane, a few hundred metres NW of the main village. Again, it is likely that the Ewelme Brook, which flows through from the historic core to this area, was the catalyst for settlement. Many of the houses were already there at the time of the 1881 OS County Series map, and some well before the Tithe Survey in 1841.

Any development in or adjacent to this area does not need to match exactly the existing dwellings but should instead complement the existing built environment and reflect what is already there.

See also the Input to Planning Policies on Page 25



Figure 1. Gods House in Ewelme



Figure 2. Kings Pool

Methodology and Approach

The methodology used for this assessment follows the advice given by Historic England in their publication *Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance 2008*.

The assessment provides a description of the topography, history and built form within Ewelme and identifies positive and negative features, concluding with a section on Input to Planning Policy - list of features and design criteria to inform future developments.

The assessment was carried out over the period June 2018– February 2019 by a working group formed from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Working Group members were:

David Solomon, Ellie Clements, Andy Evans, Sarah Maine, Geoff Watts

The majority of them have lived in the village for decades and have been able to apply a wealth of knowledge to the Assessment. The detailed assessments of the four distinct areas were carried out by the Working Group. The final assessment was endorsed by the full Steering Group in March 2019, before being published on the website for comment.

A number of data resources were used: maps and Census data from 2001 and 2011, the Ewelme Village Plan 2008 published by the Parish Council and 'Glimpses of an Oxfordshire Village' published for the millennium.

The built-up area of the village was divided into four areas for the purposes of this analysis. There are very clear boundaries between these four areas. This analysis includes all of the Conservation Area. The Historic England methodology has been followed to assess the heritage value of the four distinct areas of the village.

Within each area, the Working Group considered the elements which made both positive and negative contributions to the character of the village and Parish. Elements considered included gaps, buildings, views, green spaces, and some intangible qualities such as light and dark.

The significance of each area is articulated in accordance with English Heritage's Conservation Principles. The values which make up the significance are summarised at the end of each section. The conclusions give recommendations for protecting and enhancing the significance.



Figure 3. Entrance to the Alms-house



Figure 4. North and South Barn

Introduction

Overview

The village of Ewelme is a well-defined aggregation of houses and associated buildings, some modern and some dating back to the fifteenth century. It consists of thatched, tiled, terraced and manor houses which have developed organically over more than 1000 years. Whilst the farmhouses, barns and buildings no longer support agriculture directly, the historic village was built almost entirely as a farming community. Before the First World War, nearly everyone in the village worked either directly or indirectly in farming or supporting trades and crafts.

Since the Second World War, the village has increased in size. The building of the original council housing on Green Lane was followed by a further development to the north of the village and additional Alms-houses for the elderly on The Street. Additional houses within the RAF station were added in the 1960s, 1970s and 2000s although these are not part of this assessment.

The purpose of this Village Character Assessment is to identify the features, design, settings, heritage, and open spaces which it is important to protect in order to retain the unique character of the village of Ewelme.

“At the head of one of the smaller Thames tributaries, a few miles from the river, lies Ewelme, so called for the springing waters which rise there. There are trout in the brook and excellent water cresses higher up, which are cultivated scientifically. Also there was a political row in Gladstonian days over an appointment to the living. But the real interest of this beautiful Thames-valley village is that it is a survival, almost unchanged, of a “model village” made in the time of the Plantagenates.”

From Cornish C J (1902) The Naturalist on the Thames.

The Evolution of the Village

The evolution of the village to the shape it is today can be divided into distinct phases. In common with much of Southern Britain, Ewelme Parish has been occupied by humans for many thousands of years. There is archaeological evidence of major Anglo-Saxon activity within the present-day parish. Much of the area has been cultivated continuously from the Bronze Age onwards. At the time of Domesday Book Ewelme boasted four manors of 20¼ hides (a hide is a ploughed area equivalent to 40-48 acres, so this equates to 830-996 acres), with 39 tenants and seven slaves, plus a significant area of meadow and woodland.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Alms-houses and school forms part of the complex of medieval buildings, located between Parsons Lane and The Street, which has been a focal point of this historic village for over 600 years, and much within pre-dates the Reformation.

Around 1800 Ewelme “home” parish was much smaller than today’s civil parish, but there were extensive open fields shared between Ewelme, Benson and Berrick Salome; repeated narrow strips of land were allocated to each parish for tithe purposes. Enclosure of open and common fields took place piecemeal over a period of about 200 years. However, Cow Common remained unenclosed and is said to be “a rare survival in the county of a medieval and postmedieval system of farming”.

The Historic Village

The school building (c.1450) is an early example of a brick-built structure. Most building at the time used local stone and over time, earlier timber buildings were replaced. Ewelme Palace had fallen out of fashion and was empty, its walls harvested for its stone. For several hundred years from the late seventeenth century, Ewelme evolved into large agricultural estates owned by a succession of yeoman farmers. None of these families survived and the grand houses they once owned are now occupied by more recent incomers. Most residents were labourers, working the land and living in small tied cottages. By the latter part of the 19th century, the historic village as we know it today was largely established, comprising the Church, School, Alms-houses, the main farm houses, outbuildings and barns, cottages for farm labourers, shops, pubs, a smithy, and a forge.



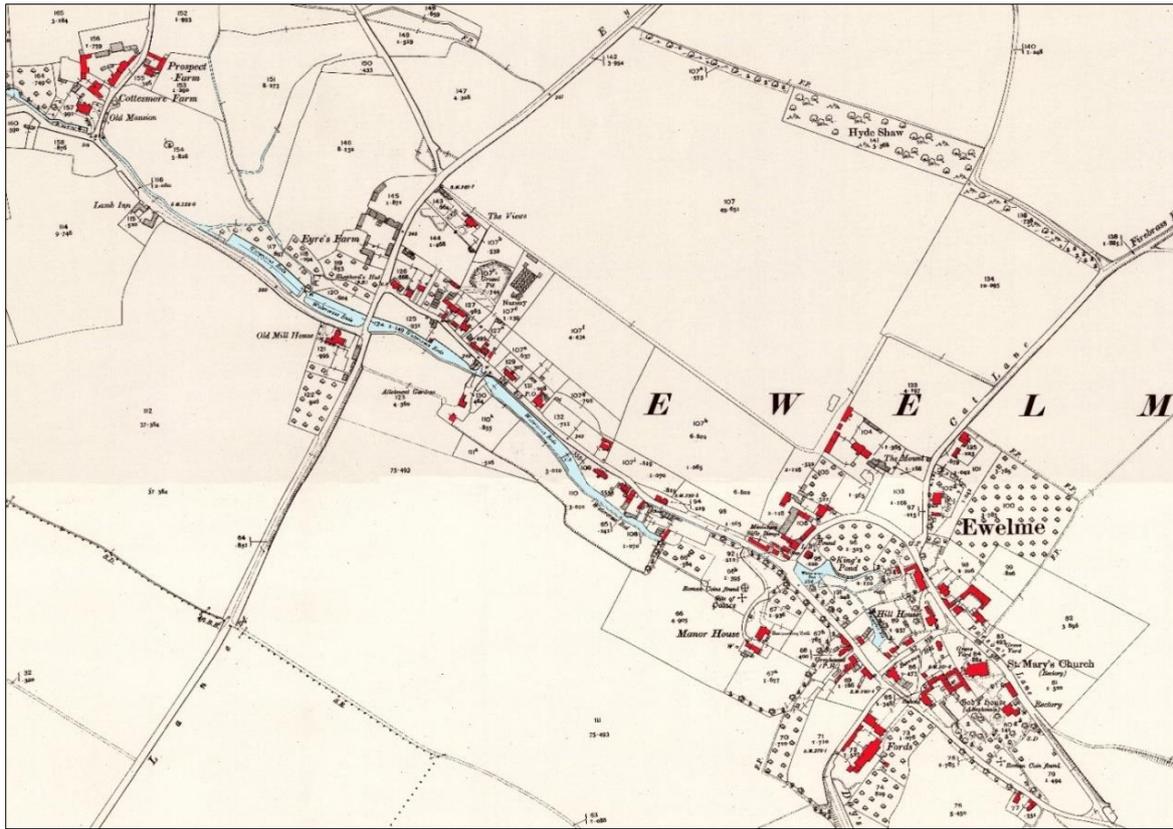
Figure 5. Ewelme School. Built c.1450



Figure 6. Fords farmhouse (left) and converted barns

The Victorian Period

The Victorian era saw ribbon development gradually stretching through the village along The Street to the west, with a cross-section of architecture from various eras. Thus, thatched Elizabethan beamed cottages and Victorian brick villas exist side by side with more modern housing. There was a watermill at the downstream end of the village until it burnt down in 1888, and there is likely to have been another at the outfall of Kings Pool in ancient times. Abundant watercress grows naturally in the brook and is likely to have been used as a source of food from earliest times. After the mill was destroyed, a series of cress beds was developed along the stream for commercial production. The beds spread for half a mile through the village, and after commercial production ceased in 1988 the site was eventually acquired by the Chiltern Society and is now managed as a heritage asset and nature reserve.



Map projection Figure 2. Ewelme in 1912, based on the OS 25" map. Buildings that are still standing in 2020 are shown in red. It is interesting to note how many have now gone, especially around the north-west end of the village and Eyre's Farm.

The 20th Century

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the first social housing was built along what is now called Green Lane with the provision of seven dwellings. A further 12 council houses were added between the Wars and 38 more in Hampden Way, Martyn's Way and Britwell Road during the late 1950s. Five new Alms-houses were built when the original 13 were updated and refurbished to eight to meet the requirements of the 20th Century.

Since the 1970s many of the older houses and cottages have been refurbished, altered, and extended. In addition, a small number of barns have been converted to residential use. It is difficult to track these significant changes in great detail, but the net effect has been that the number of households living in pre-1900 buildings has decreased, although the number of actual buildings has remained much the same (Map projection Figure 1).

The greatest additional housing built in the Parish of Ewelme, (but not included in the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan), was the building of RAF Benson, which began in 1937. Its development continues to this day, providing 165 dwellings for those living within the Parish boundary of Ewelme and many more in Benson Parish.

The Village Today

Size of the Village

The population and number of households within the parish, as revealed by the ten-year census, are shown in Table 1. The population remained fairly stable between 400 and 700 from 1831 to 1961, but then rose sharply to the present level of over 1000; the number of households also more than doubled at the same time. These increases were largely due to development of RAF housing on the air base. The average number of people per household has fallen steadily throughout the period of record, from more than five in 1831, to less than three today. Table 1 shows the approximate evolution of the village since 1830.

Table 1. Ewelme Parish census data

Year	Population	Households	Average household
1831	619	120	5.2
1841	663	140	4.7
1851	673	161	4.2
1861	Data not located		
1871	Data not located		
1881	602	163	3.7
1891	521	144	3.6
1901	473	136	3.5
1911	479	128	3.7
1921	426	121	3.5
1931	447	132	3.4
1941	No census		
1951	471	154	3.1
1961	542	177	3.1
1971	Data not located		
1981	Data not located		
1991	Data not located		
2001	1105	389	2.8
2011	1048	385	2.7

much higher disposable incomes. The socio-economic structure of the population has therefore changed considerably. The most recent census in 2011 reported 385 households in Ewelme Parish, housing a population of 1048. The age breakdown is shown in Table 2, along with the equivalent figures for ten years earlier.

Table 2. Change in demographics of Ewelme Parish between 2001 and 2011 censuses.

Factor	2001	2011
Number of households	389	387
One-person households	59	63
Households all over 65	67	73
Households with children	171	166
Population	1105	1048
Under 18	336	288
18-29	89	94
65 and over	109	149
75 and over	59	66

years there is a surface flow through Cow Common for up to a kilometre upstream of Kings Pool, and in severe drought years there is no measurable flow for several hundred metres downstream of the pond. The brook flows alongside The Street and then Benson Road, to and through the village of Benson and to the Thames just upstream of Benson Lock and Weir. It is thus a major feature of the village and is indeed the reason for its existence. Being a chalk stream, it is fed by groundwater springs and has a very stable and reliable flow regime.

The Shift from an Agricultural to a Residential Village

The 1901 census shows a village based almost entirely on agriculture, along with tradespeople and artisans to support a rural economy. 100 years later, the surrounding landscape was still farmed intensively but the village farmhouses were now purely residential, the barns are largely used for non-farming purposes and only a handful of the population now works on the land.

This has changed the nature of the village from being primarily a farming centre to a much wider role with labourer's cottages now lived in by professional people with

The electoral register for the Parish for 2016 contains 748 people eligible to vote, i.e. aged 18 or over. This compares with a population of 760 aged 18 or over in 2011, suggesting that there has been no major change in overall population during the five intervening years.

Water Courses

The Ewelme Brook is a groundwater-fed stream (chalk stream) which normally rises from a series of springs in the slopes around the Kings Pool in the village. Chalk hills are typically very permeable to water, and anything less than torrential rain or massive snowmelt is absorbed into the ground rather than running-off on the surface. In very wet

Roads and Parking

The layout of the principal roads in the village has not changed for hundreds of years. Whilst HGVs greater than 7.5 tonnes, are banned from the village, today's traffic is negotiating roads which originally carried cart traffic. With increased traffic and use of satellite navigation systems, there is significant rush-hour traffic both ways between Eyres Lane and Benson, and Firebrass Hill and Wallingford.

The village has few pavements except in the newer post-war developments and along Benson Road.

The Street between the Village Hall and the pub is mainly used by local traffic and having no pavement, is shared by road traffic, pedestrians and increasingly by cyclists. School children use this road to access the primary school. Caution is required by both drivers and pedestrians to remain relatively safe but any increase in traffic could jeopardise this.

With an infrequent bus service, living comfortably in Ewelme requires the use of one or more cars. Many of the older houses, and indeed some of the newer builds, simply do not have enough space to park residents' cars adequately.

Parking around both the primary school and pre-school is a problem at the beginning and end of each day. Advice given by the traffic police is that the pick-up and drop-off parking inevitably reduces the speed of traffic through the village but any increase in volume of parking could be problematical.

There is no street lighting in the village.

Open Spaces

Open Spaces as defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is land used for the purposes of public recreation normally for use by walkers and cyclists or other forms of recreation/education.

The Green Spaces (farmland including footpaths and bridleways) surrounding Ewelme are an integral part of our heritage and everyday life and are very important to residents (Consultation Statement: Questionnaire Qu 23). These are privately owned and largely protected by planning law pertaining to development within an AONB.

The Open Spaces within Ewelme, identified by respondents to the 2017 Questionnaire are: Cow Common, the recreation ground and children's play area (the Common), the school playing field, Watercress beds/Nature Reserve, the Pound, King's Pool, allotments and churchyard/Burial ground (Map Projection *Figure 3*).

These have all been considered by the Committee to confirm that they are worthy of Open Space status and if so, to see whether they are adequately protected.

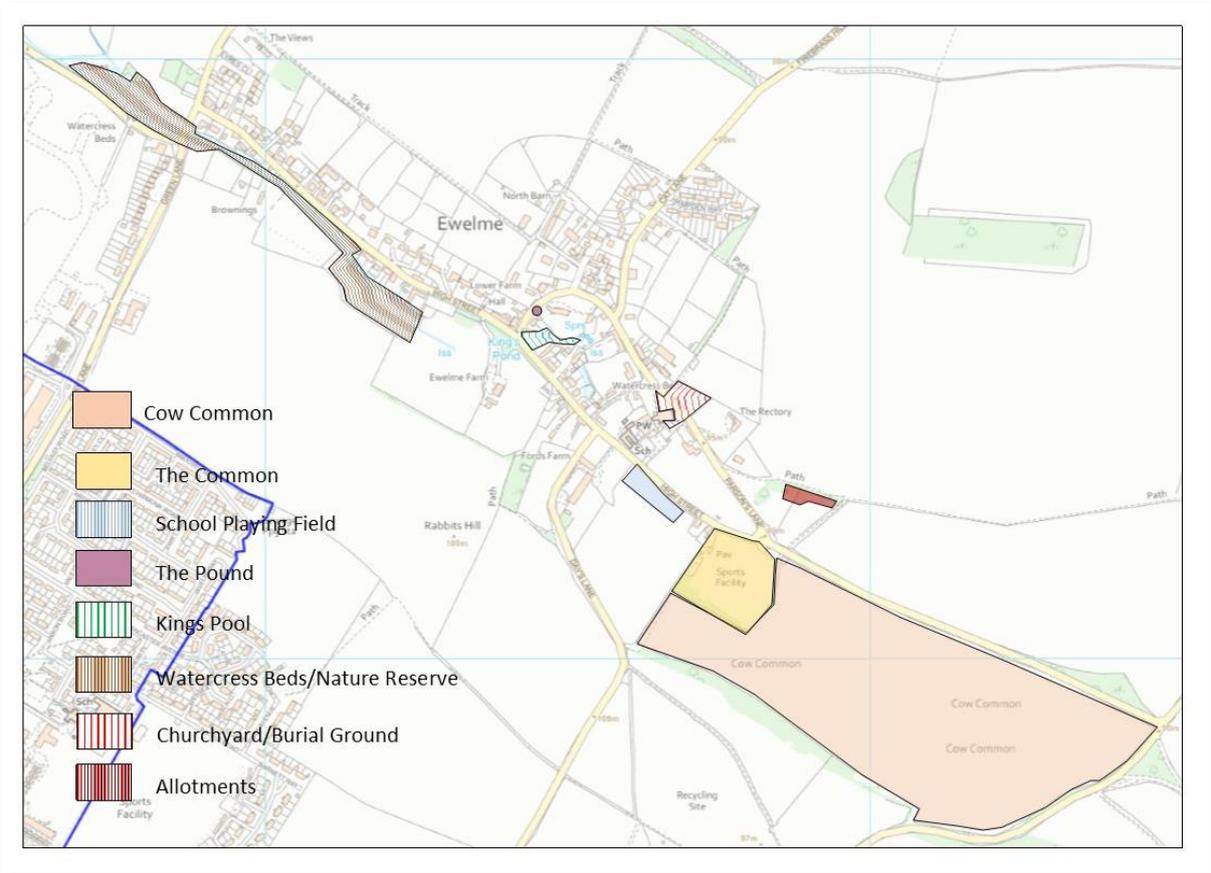
All are used by residents, walkers and cyclists for the purposes of public recreation/education and as such qualify as Open Spaces under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The School Lawn, Pound, King's Pool and churchyard are already protected within the Conservation area as they form an integral part of the setting for important Listed buildings.

The Watercress Beds/Nature Reserve have a Protected Status and are subject to strict planning regulation.

Cow Common, Cricket Pitch/Recreation ground/Children's Play area (the Common) are all owned by the village. Development is restricted by their location within the AONB and policy EP4 in this plan.

Having identified and analysed the important Open spaces in Ewelme, it is not proposed to identify and nominate new Local Green Spaces (as permitted in the NPPF) as the Open Spaces identified are already well-protected by virtue of their location in the Conservation Area or adjacent to a Listed Building.



Map Projection Figure 3. Open Spaces

Trees/Woods/Hedgerows

The historic part of the village has a number of large mature trees within it and views of much of the rest of the village are obscured by those growing in and on the slopes of the valley of the Ewelme Brook. A small number of open spaces (the School Green, Churchyard and the Watercress Beds) located amongst residential housing, give the village an open and light feel. Houses are not crowded together. The developments at the northern and western ends of the village have fewer mature trees.

Utilities

In common with the rest of the country, mains power and telephone came to the historic village in the 20th century, sadly along cables strung from poles rather than underground. Mains water and drainage also arrived.

Access to Green Spaces/Footpaths

Ewelme is fortunate in being surrounded by farmland which is criss-crossed by a network of footpaths, bridleways, and permissive paths. In addition to the Watercress Beds Nature Reserve, there are a number of permissive paths and nature trails in the countryside. The ready availability of access to farmland is an important characteristic of the village.

Buildings of Community Value

Ewelme has over the centuries, accumulated buildings which have become an integral part of the Community. Some are owned by the Parish Council: others by the Diocese, the Ewelme Trust and individual landowners.

Three (Shepherds Hut, Village Store and Watercress Beds) have been registered as Assets of Community Value meaning that they are designated as important to the community well-being. As such, they are protected from a change of use or demolition without planning permission and if they come up for sale, the Assets of Community Value Regulations provide for a six-month delay in the sale process

In 2009, villagers reopened the Post Office premises as a Community Store. The store, formerly a Methodist chapel built in 1826, is in the middle of a row of buildings with Kings Pool House and Kings Pool Cottage at either side.

It is believed that the name Shepherd's Hut came from the time when the building was a private house with and orchard. Apparently, shepherds on their way to market in Wallingford, could rest their flock overnight in the orchard. Today, with the benefit of a dining room extension, the Shepherd's Hut is popular as a drinking pub with a good restaurant. It also hosts a monthly coffee morning for villagers.



Figure 7. The Watercress Beds within the Nature Reserve



Figure 8. Inside the village store

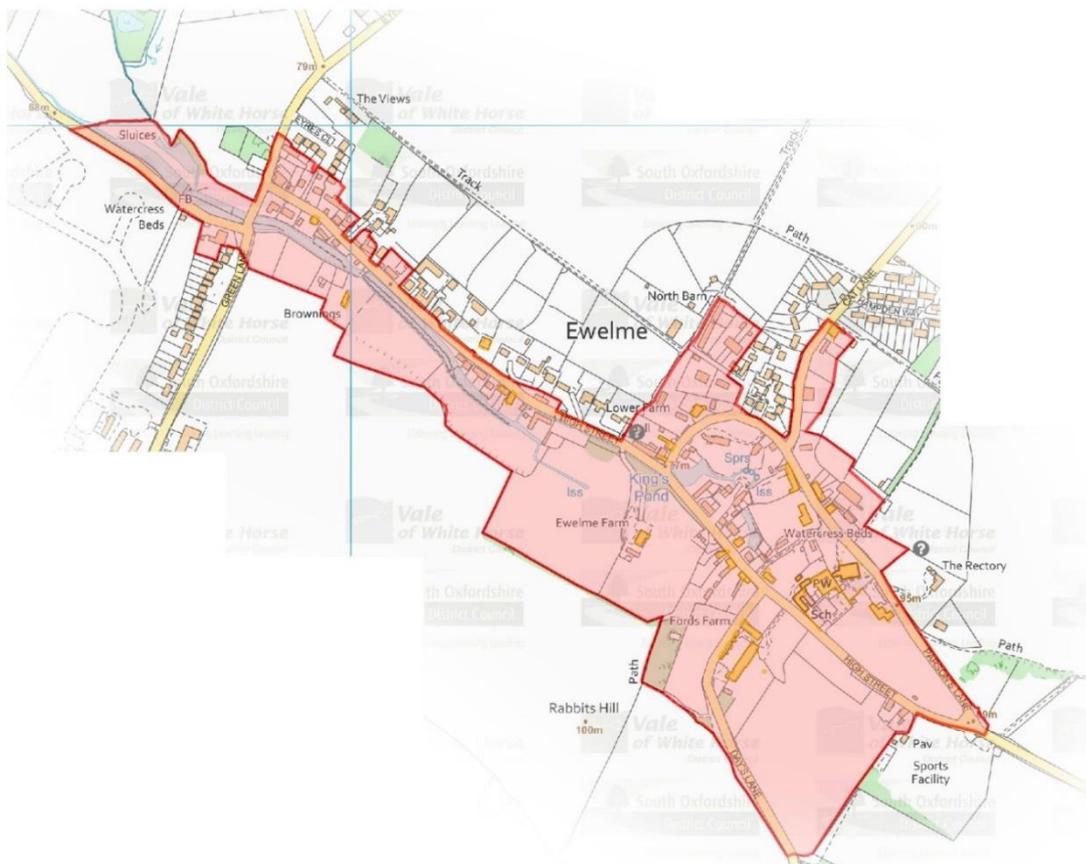
The Village Character

Understanding the Values

Following the Historic England methodology, heritage values are attached to areas of the village under the following headings:

- **Evidential value:** the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity
- **Historical value:** the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – illustrative or associative
- **Aesthetic value:** the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place
- **Communal Value:** the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory

Ewelme Conservation Area



Map projection Figure 4. The Ewelme Conservation Area.

Much of the village and some of its surrounding area is designated as a Conservation Area under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The area covered is shown in Map projection Figure 4. The Conservation Area was designated in 1978. The designated Area in Ewelme centres on the historic core. Visitors to the village are immediately impressed by its physical appearance and history of the village. From the medieval complex of church, Alms-houses and school (circa 1437) to the houses developed on the honey factory in the 1990s, all periods of historical development are represented in the village and old blends with new. Many historic cottages have no or minimal front gardens, larger houses are set in large plots of land, the old garage has been converted into flats and 1960s houses front the Watercress beds. The style of this Conservation Area lies in its variety of housing, which is representative of the people who have lived there over the centuries.

Of the 46 listed buildings or structures in Ewelme (see Section 7 of the Plan), representing one for every 23 head of population in the Parish; 40 are within the Conservation Area.

The south-western end of the Neighbourhood Plan Area includes the Chilterns Escarpment Central biodiversity Conservation Target area. Development in this area should aim to enhance biodiversity and complement the existing Ewelme watercress beds Nature reserve.

Historic Core of the Village

Ewelme has a rich history with connections to the Chaucer family, Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth I, the Civil War and Jerome K Jerome.

Most of the historic core is contained within the Conservation Area, the boundary of which closely follows that of the 19th century village envelope described earlier. It contains 35 listed buildings, 15 of which are houses, plus another 20 listings of historic interest. As noted earlier, many of the historic houses date from the 17th century, some earlier, and are characterised by stone construction with either thatched or tiled roofs.

The key characteristics of this part of the village are its largely unspoilt character - historic buildings and open spaces.

Historic Buildings: Houses built after 1968, with just one or two exceptions blend with the old. With minor exceptions, there are no abrupt changes of style and no obvious eyesores. The houses on the site of the former Rowse Honey Factory facing The Street and Kings Pool are distinctive but, despite being right in the heart of the historic village, are sympathetic with their surroundings.

Its most significant buildings are the Grade I listed medieval complex of Church, Alms-houses and school built by Alice de La Pole and her husband in the mid-fifteenth century and maintained today by her legacy trust, the Ewelme Almshouse charity and Exhibition Endowment. The legacy of this charitable trust has contributed significantly to the character of Ewelme and is still an integral part of the village today supporting the elderly and those in full-time education with the proceeds of their property rental portfolio.

All the buildings of the historic village complement each other in terms of size with the exception of the school, church and Alms-houses which dominate the eastern side of the village. This whole area is hedged, and its road frontage is grassed with trees and shrubs. The Grade II Manor House, originally an outer part of Ewelme Palace and the only part still remaining, is actually the largest and tallest dwelling but it lies behind trees and does not impose itself on the village. A stone brick wall on the south side of The Street opposite the Village Hall is part of the northern boundary of the Manor, whose gardens and grounds contribute to the rural character of the village and allow extensive views to the countryside beyond. The Manor is owned by the charitable Trust and forms part of their property portfolio. It is maintained to high standards.



Figure 9. View looking south from the churchyard.



Figure 10. Ewelme Church



Figure 11. Ewelme Manor



Figure 12. Houses built on the old Rowse Honey Factory site

Although the village is tucked away at the foot of the Chiltern Hills, the tower of St Mary's Church is a major landmark which can be seen for some distance around and from approach roads to the village. The area has many mature and maturing trees, mostly native species. There are ornamental trees in gardens. The small closes and fields which back the housing are bounded by hedges and the source of the brook leads to the spring-fed Kings Pool near the village shop. The Village Hall, located on The Street, is the location for much of the social and community life of the village. It is noted that the Village Hall has no designated parking.

Open Spaces: within the Historic Core of the village a number of Open spaces complement the landscape setting of the historic buildings. The medieval complex of church, alms-houses and school are surrounded by the churchyard, school lawn and school playing field. Villagers have gathered in these particular Open Spaces for centuries when celebrating the birth and death of loved ones and transitioning their children through the school.

The stream which rises to the north of the Kingspool and flows through the village provides a picturesque backdrop for the many water-based activities (both educational and recreational) which take place along the watercress beds,

The large recreational area and children's playground, part of the Common at the eastern end of the village continue to be used by children and dog walkers alike and the recently refurbished pavilion and car park, still hosts the Annual Horticultural show and other Village events.

Gardens are mostly bounded by hedges, fences or walls. Many historic and most modern houses have either a minimal front garden or front doors which open directly onto the street.

There are no ruined buildings or derelict sites in the historic village. The housing stock is generally in a good state of repair. The rich selection of listed buildings and buildings of significance are now largely restored and provide important accommodation in the village.

Views both outward from the historic village and inwards from outside the village are largely unchanged from 150 years ago. Certain iconic local views have been assessed in detail in the Protection of Views document. In addition, linear views along The Street and toward the complex of Church/School/Alms-houses that form the core of the Conservation Area should be conserved. In this context, changes to the views which are in character with the surrounding environment are acceptable; changes which are markedly out of character are not acceptable.

The only detractions in this part of the village are the clutter of road signs associated with The Street and the power and telephone lines strung from poles across the streets.

Summary of Significance

Evidential Value – Ewelme was mentioned in the Domesday Book and there is archaeological evidence of major Anglo-Saxon activity within the parish. The Parish is crossed by a pre-Roman road (Icknield Way) which is still used as a long-distance footpath. Many buildings existing today date from the fifteenth century.

Conclusion– high evidential value.

Historical value – the historical value lies to a large extent in the medieval complex of church, alms-houses and school which still play an important part of village life. Together with the Manor, these provide a link with the politics of 15th century England, the poet Geoffrey Chaucer and Kings Henry VII and VIII and Queen Elizabeth I.

Conclusion – high historical value.

Aesthetic value – Very attractive old buildings, interspersed with Open Spaces, in picturesque and historical settings. There is a wide variety of building material and styles reflecting development through the centuries. Views into and out of the village are largely unimpeded and unique. This is an attractive place to visit, whether on foot or by cycle.

Conclusion – high aesthetic value.

Communal value – the historic centre is centred on the church, community shop, Village Hall, school and pre-school which together with the recreation ground create community hubs.

Conclusion - high communal value.

Development in this Area

There is a distinctive character in the Historic Core of the Village, especially within the Conservation Area. The mix of housing: old, new, thatched, tiled, closely packed, standalone etc each reflects a period of history. Whether building within the Historic Core, or adjacent to it, development should blend in with existing buildings in terms of design, style, size, density and materials. No buildings should be conspicuous and should all sit comfortably alongside each other.

The Street Below Kings Pool

Settlement is predominantly linear along The Street. Housing plots are fairly regular in shape but vary in size. The linear housing development is interspersed with Open Spaces which form an integral part of the landscape setting and give a feeling of harmony with nature. Housing density is greater than elsewhere in the village with a few buildings (mostly former farmhouses and associated agricultural buildings) around the junction with Green Lane/Eyres Lane.

The north side of The Street is developed along its entire length but on the south side this only extends just under half way, where following the allotments, it opens to the watercress beds and nature reserve mitigating the effect of ribbon development, contributing to the rural character of the village and giving views of the wider countryside. All of the southern side of The Street is contained within the Conservation Area.

The building line is generally inconsistent reflecting development over a long period. Most houses have garden frontages to the road, usually bounded by hedges, walls or fences. Houses on the north side are backed by fields, those on the south back on to the brook or open countryside.

The majority of houses are detached and two stories in height. There are two rows of terraced former watercress workers' brick villas with walls made of chalk clunch faced with brick and are three storeys. House ages range from the 16th century to date. Older properties are timber-framed, either rendered and painted or fronted with the local flint and knap (notable examples being the Old Forge and Ashtree Cottage). The former watercress beds hut has been sympathetically rebuilt using local red-brick. More modern houses are a mix of a local yellow brick equivalent or are rendered. Many houses have been extended in some way. Roofing materials are also varied, usually dependent on the age of the property, and include thatch, pantiles, peg tiles, slate and concrete tiles. Windows also vary with casement, sash and horizontal sliding sash.



Figure 13. Victorian brick villas on The Street



Figure 14. Elizabethan thatched cottage on The Street.

A number of allotments are available for residents to grow fruit and vegetables behind the wall of fronting the brook and The Street. These are well used.

Properties are generally in good condition and well-maintained.

The Street is a minor country road following the bottom of the valley. It is wide enough in most places for two-way traffic, but narrower than the standard modern width in parts. Some of the older houses do not have or are not able to have off-street parking and on-street parking can cause problems in this area. There are few pavements in front of residential buildings. The watercress beds are bordered by a grass verge and hedge.



Figure 15. c18th cottage on The Street



Figure. 16 Nalay Close



Figure 17. High House on The Street



Figure 18. 'New' Alms-houses at Suffolk House

A shrine to villagers who died in two World Wars is on the south side of The Street.

There is no street lighting and there are utility poles on both sides of the road with crossing wires. A number of public rights of way and permissive footpaths, which provide a link to other areas of the village and give easy access to the surrounding countryside lead off The Street.

Summary of Significance

Evidential Value – the Ewelme Brook is a central feature of the village and indeed is the reason for its existence and location. Despite some evidence of a Domesday settlement, the evidential value this part of the historic village depends largely on its linear layout as an excellent example of a linear village bound tightly to the brook and its historic farmhouses.

Conclusion – high evidential value.

Historical Value – the historical value lies in the rich selection of listed buildings and buildings of historic interest which form a coherent pattern throughout the village, with commonality of materials and styles. Also, this area is a classic example of a linear village.

Conclusion – high historical value.

Aesthetic Value – despite the presence of traffic on the Street, the historic village still has a certain atmosphere which makes it an attractive place to view, to walk around and, most particularly, in which to live.

Conclusion – high aesthetic value.

Communal Value – this area is the main artery of the village, linking the historic core to the pub and Benson, which has many more shops and community facilities. The allotments are a valuable facility. It is essential to the village.

Conclusion – high communal value.

Development in this Area

The Street, including the Conservation Area, reflects a village which has evolved over time. There is a variety of buildings, some very old, some newer, some thatched, some tiled, some closely packed, some standing in their own grounds. But there is a distinctive character to this part of the village which, whether building within it or adjacent to it, should be conserved. This should be achieved by any development blending in with the existing buildings in terms of design, style, size, density and materials. No buildings in this part of the village are conspicuous; all sit comfortably with each other and this should continue.

Any development within or adjacent to this area of the village should continue to conserve these important aspects of the neighbourhood.

Late 20th Century Developments; Martyns Way, Hampden Way, Britwell Road, Green Lane, Eyres Close, Chaucer Court

These areas of multi-house developments contain a mixture of houses built almost exclusively in brick. The seven houses at the top end of Green Lane were built in the 1920s, standing on the lane outside the village as it then existed.

All the other houses in these areas of the village are all post-war developments. The houses in Hampden Way, Britwell Road and Martyns Way were built by Bullingdon District Council and vary between 2--bedroom terraced homes up to 4- bedroom detached houses. Although houses have been altered and extended, the overall appearance has been maintained.

The expansion of Council and private housing along Green Lane from its original seven houses to the present 28 was an important development for the village at the time in that it brought in a lot of young families with children. Over time, the population of Green Lane has grown older and the demographic has changed.

Eyres Close has its own atmosphere. It is a quiet location next to the village Conservation Area on one side and overlooking open fields on the other. The houses are attractive and shrubs and small trees have softened the area since it was built. This is a far more attractive development than many of its era.

Chaucer Court, the first purpose-built estate development in Ewelme, was built in the 1960s. Formerly the site of one of the oldest manors in Ewelme, its origins can be traced back to the 13th century.

These areas of the village are very different from the historic village and The Street. The majority of the houses are privately owned but some still serve their original purpose of providing affordable social housing.



Figure 19. Green Lane



Figure 20. Chaucer Court

Summary of Significance

Evidential Value – There is minimal evidence of past human activity in this area, apart from Chaucer Court.

Conclusion – low evidential value.

Historical value – there is little historical value in this area of the village

Conclusion – low historical value.

Aesthetic value – these buildings are representative of the era when they were built.

Conclusion – low aesthetic value.

Communal value – this area is important to those who live there and to the village as a whole as it provides more affordable, modern accommodation.

Conclusion – medium communal value.

Development in this Area

The addition of social housing and modern developments in the village is in marked contrast to the largely historic part of the village or the houses on the Street. The houses in these areas are characterised by simplicity of modern design and style and include off-road parking. However, variety in the size and design of houses, and variation in the materials used, avoids uniformity and blandness.

Any development in or adjacent to this area does not need to match exactly the existing dwellings but should instead complement the existing built environment and reflect what is already there.

Lower End / Cottesmore

This largely historic area of the village was once part of the hamlet of Fifield (or Fyfield), approximately midway between Ewelme and Benson, straddling what is now the border between the two parishes. The 1830 edition of the Oxford & Reading 1" Ordnance Survey sheet shows almost continuous ribbon development between the two villages. Much of this development, which probably consisted of basic agricultural workers' cottages, seems to have gradually disappeared, hastened by the building of the RAF station, which opened in 1937, and that of Loretto in the 1930s.

The area now contains four listed buildings (Tidmarsh Cottage, The Old Mansion, Cottesmore House and a barn converted to residential occupation) and two listed walls. All date from the 17th century. Prospect Farm and Nos 1-4 Lower End may date from this period, although they have been much altered.

There are three modern buildings – two bungalows on Benson Road and a large house on Cottesmore Lane. The area is connected to the main part of the village and to Benson by Benson Road and the Ewelme Brook, which flows alongside the road for much of its length.

The area is notable for the Photographic Reconnaissance Unit which processed photographs taken during the Second World War by aircraft flying from RAF Benson, including, famously, those before and after the Dam Busters' raids on the Ruhr. These activities were carried out in The Old Mansion and its grounds, much of it now in the grounds of Cottesbrooke. The photographs were sent to Medmenham for interpretation and then to Hughenden Manor for preparation of target maps.



Figure 21. Lower End



Figure 22. Cottesmore Lane

Summary of Significance

Evidential Value – there is evidence of human activity dating back to the 17th century.

Conclusion – medium evidential value

Historical value – two large former farmhouses provide a link with the past agricultural basis of the village's economy. The Photographic Reconnaissance Unit was an important part of Britain's operations in the WWII.

Conclusion – medium historical value

Aesthetic value – the older buildings are all attractive and enhance the appearance of this part of the village. The contrast between the buildings at Cottesmore and those in the historic core of the village is marked.

Conclusion – medium aesthetic value.

Communal value – with only 14 dwellings and being equidistant between Benson and the main part of the village, this area contributes little to the rest of the village.

Conclusion - low communal value

Development in this Area

Opportunities for development in this area are very limited, as a result of it being next to Benson Airfield. Cottesmore Lane is very narrow and cannot support more than occasional traffic flow. Should a development opportunity arise it does not need to match exactly the existing dwellings but should instead complement the existing built environment and reflect what is already there.

Maintaining the Character of the Village

Common Themes

The character of Ewelme has been formed over hundreds of years, and has changed to accommodate evolving requirements for accommodation, employment and services. Sensitive management of continuing change is essential to ensure that the heritage and unique character of our village is protected whilst facilitating sustainable social, environmental and economic progress. Notwithstanding the differences in the four main areas of the Parish, there are common themes across all areas as well:

- Open spaces form an important part of the landscape setting within the Built-up area of Ewelme and are well protected by a variety of existing planning law
- Apart from the Church, the Manor and the School, no other building in the village exceeds two storeys in height, although some houses include attic bedrooms within the pitch of the roof
- Walls (where painted), doors and windows are conservative in colour
- Obtrusive street furniture and/or obtrusive external lighting has been avoided
- The village is essentially dark at night, with no public street lighting and few glaring security lights
- Boundaries at the front of properties are more aesthetically pleasing if they are either soft (hedges, trees, planting) or low (<1m) stone or brick walls. The few properties where the front boundary is a high wall are not pleasing to the eye.

Heritage Significance

The over-riding theme which emerges from this assessment is that the historic core of the village still firmly retains its essential character despite the inroads of some post-war housing development and the amount of traffic now using the arterial roads and The Street. Many features which would have been familiar to our Victorian ancestors have been retained. It is still a classic example of a linear village sitting at the centre of an intensively farmed landscape. The heritage values assessed above show that this area of the village is of high significance and is valued by those who live there. It is important that this heritage be conserved

The village as a whole is well-maintained and the historic houses have been kept in a good state of repair. It is a good place to live and the villagers have strongly expressed a wish that it remains so. Conservation of the character of the village is seen as a high priority objective. Thus, any development which takes place which would necessarily be infill, should conform in density, character, style and materials. The policies affecting development within or adjacent to a Conservation Area will assist in meeting this aim, as will the policies governing development close to listed buildings.

Input to Planning Policies

Following the above assessment of the character of the village, the features set out below have been identified as those that contribute positively to the character of Ewelme and to good design in keeping with the nature of the village and should therefore form planning policies to guide new development in the village:

- Retention of the character of the village overall and conservation of the historic core of the village.
- Retention of the character of the individual areas of the village with no abrupt changes of style or density and no clashes of style or materials
- The materials used should complement the traditional materials used in the village and respect traditional building plots, scale, form and materials including techniques and detailing,

- The variety of styles, design, materials and layout characteristic of the area should be maintained.
- Buildings should not stand out amongst others and should not be conspicuous,
- Colour schemes should be subdued and in keeping with surrounding properties.
- Housing density should be varied, and new build should not press against established buildings.
- The form and scale of the buildings should reflect the neighbouring properties. Buildings should be a maximum of two storey in height.
- Visual interest should be created by setting buildings back from the street and varying both the positioning of buildings and the building line.
- The boundary at the front of properties should be either soft (hedges, trees, planting) or low (<1m) stone or brick walls.
- Access to new development should not create a significant increase in traffic on village back roads.
- Informal road layouts off the main roads and no street lights are required so as to be in keeping with other village roads: maintenance of the back roads of the village as quiet rural roads with no burden of significant additional traffic due to development.
- Provision of adequate parking; sufficient resident parking should be provided on-plot and should not add any on-street parking burden.
- Adequate storage space should be provided for bins and the design of the storage should not detract from the street scene.
- Retention of views within the village as well as out of and into village.