

Dorchester
ROMAN TOWN

South Oxfordshire
District Council

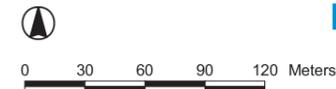
South Oxfordshire
District Council

Bridge End



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With the exception of views, only those features in the key that are located within the boundaries of the conservation area are defined on the plan.



- Conservation Area (CA) boundary
- Listed building
- Building of local note

- ▲ Important views in, out and around
- Important wall
- Important trees
- ▨ Important open space

Plan of the Conservation Area
Dorchester



Listening Learning Leading

Dorchester Conservation Area Character Appraisal

May 2005

Dorchester and Overy Conservation Area Character Appraisal

The Council first published the Dorchester and Overy Conservation Area Character Appraisal in draft form in July 2004. Following a period of public consultation, including a public meeting held on 26th July 2004, the Council approved the Character Appraisal on 2nd September 2004.

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 Dorchester 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 appraisal also includes a review of the boundaries of the conservation area and possible extensions are identified. Any extension to the conservation area will be subject to a separate consultation exercise.

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.

1. Dorchester - the History of the Area

The area around Dorchester has been settled since pre-historic times and is rich in archaeology. Crop marks found during aerial reconnaissance in 1927 were evidence of an important Neolithic ceremonial complex to the north east, now largely destroyed by gravel extraction and road building. An Iron Age hill fort was constructed on Castle Hill (which forms part of Wittenham Clumps) to the south of the Thames - a high point commanding views across the Ridgeway, the rivers and the surrounding area. A later, extensive, Iron Age settlement to the south was defined by the construction of a defensive double bank and ditch - now known as Dyke Hills - overlooking the confluence of the rivers Thame and Thames.

The settlement at Dyke Hills was not only well fortified, it was also strategically placed as a hub of communications, becoming an important administrative and political tribal centre, a focus for manufacture and trade.

The invading Romans also recognised the strategic importance of the area and built a fort slightly to the north of Dyke Hills, on the banks of the Thame, one of a network of forts supporting the successful Roman military occupation of Britain. The fort appears to have been abandoned by AD78 but at the end of the second century, earth defences were constructed - built to protect a settlement of growing importance. Remains of the earthworks can still be seen on the west, north-west and south sides of the village. In AD 276-290 stone walls were built in front of the earth defences and later, in the 4th century AD, ditches were added to the fortifications.



Wittenham Clumps and remains of Iron Age fortifications

Despite the image this conjures up of a tightly enclosed and protected settlement, evidence has been found of human occupation - arable farming and pottery manufacture - well beyond the walls. Within the walls, archaeological finds suggest that Roman Dorchester was a place of some wealth and sophistication.

The town was well placed for road and river transport. It was close to the main Roman route north with a link to Watling Street; and to the southern route to Silchester and Winchester. No evidence has been found of a direct river crossing although there may have been a fording place towards Shillingford, itself a crossing place. There may also have been a link to the Icknield Way and thus to the north east and the west of the country.

Archaeological finds provide the only clues to life in Dorchester as the influence of the Roman Empire in Britain diminished and Saxon incomers gradually changed the character of the Romano-British settlement. By the early 7th century, Dorchester had become part of the Kingdom of Wessex, a wealthy and influential town in a populous area, important enough, according to Bede, to be the place of baptism in AD 635 of Cynegils, King of

¹ Quoted in Sherwood, J., & Pevsner, N., 'Oxfordshire', *Pevsner Architectural Guides*, (Yale 1974), p.584.

² Quoted in Cook, C. & Rowley, T. (ed.), *Dorchester Through The Ages* (Oxford 1985), p.48.

the West Saxons by Birinus, a missionary sent by Pope Honorius I to convert the pagan Anglo Saxons.

Birinus was rewarded by the grant of lands in Dorchester for the establishment of his episcopal see and cathedral church, becoming the first Bishop of the West Saxons. No evidence has been found of the first Dorchester Cathedral but it may have been built on the site of the present Abbey, outside the Roman walls.

The extent and influence of the see of Dorchester waxed and waned over the succeeding five hundred years or so according to the changing political scene. The Episcopal see moved to Winchester in the 660s, only to be refounded in Dorchester in 869 and by the turn of the 11th century its influence extended from the Thames as far north as the Humber. But less than a hundred years later, following the Norman Conquest, the bishop's seat had transferred from Dorchester to Lincoln and the town's period of episcopal power was over.

The Church, however, continued to have a role in the fortunes of Dorchester and in 1140, the Bishop of Lincoln founded the Augustinian Abbey and construction of the Abbey church was started. Evidence of an earlier Saxon church having existed on the same site has been found in the stonework of the nave and choir aisles of the present church, itself possibly the second cathedral.



Guest House

The secular importance of Dorchester during this period had not matched its religious importance: the lack of a ford across the Thames seems to have been a critical factor in Dorchester losing out to Wallingford and Oxford as a centre of trade and commerce. Around 1125 William of Malmesbury noted that Dorchester was 'a small and unfrequented town' but, by contrast found, 'the beauty and state of its churches very remarkable.' ¹ Some 400 years later, John Leland saw evidence of the town's former ecclesiastical vigour, observing that 'of old tyme it was much larger in building than it is now toward the south and the Tamise side. There was a parochie church a little by south from the abbay church. And another paroch church more south above it. There was the 3 paroch church by south weste.' ²

No evidence of these churches remains, nor indeed of the Bishop's Palace or of Bishop's Court Farm, the manorial farm: they had disappeared even by Leland's day, possibly because the building stone, locally scarce, was recycled by the inhabitants of Dorchester.

The extent of lands and estates of the Abbey and the Bishop of Lincoln had grown over the centuries and the suppression of the Abbey in 1536 must have affected the pattern of life and employment in the area profoundly. The Abbey church itself survived through the beneficence of Sir Richard Beauforest, a wealthy local farmer, who bought the chancel at this time and gifted it to the parish. The monastic buildings were less fortunate and only parts of the Guest House survive having been incorporated into what was to become, in 1652 the Grammar School, and is now the Museum. The building also houses a large meeting room.

Bishop's Court was rebuilt in 1552. Part of the stone walls of the great monastic barns survive at the base of the garden walls on Manor Farm Road.



Remains of old barn walls

The Beauforests were one of a few substantial families in the area who were able to take advantage of the changes in land ownership in the sixteenth century, buying up and enclosing land - although not unchallenged by those fearing loss of common land.

Agriculture remained the mainstay of Dorchester. However, any wealth to be had seems to have been spread thinly and by the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the land, apart from the remaining commons, was owned by only four families. Some, notably the Davey family in the neighbouring hamlet of Overy, used their wealth to concentrate on innovatory methods of farming, giving Dorchester a reputation in the wider world for 'intelligent farming'.

Dorchester's strategic location had brought the village fluctuating degrees of importance and prosperity since pre-Roman times. However, by the eighteenth century, although its population was numerically larger than

the average village of the period, Dorchester was described by one observer in 1728 as being 'a poor town without any manner of trade nor likely much to improve.'³

The Thames was navigable up to Oxford and should have been a good channel for commerce, but the conflicting interests of mills, fisheries and river traffic made it unreliable for transport and communication, despite various attempts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to regulate and improve the navigation.

It was the roads, formed in Roman times, that continued to be Dorchester's strongest links to the outside world, although much depended on the efficiency or otherwise of river crossings.

Leland noted in the sixteenth century that 'There was a ferrey at highe waters over the Thames'⁴ and there are references to other ferries between Dorchester and Little Wittenham in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. But ferries were no match for the increasing volume of wheeled traffic making its way through Dorchester.



View of the Abbey across fields

³ Quoted in Airs, M., 'Domestic Buildings in the Village', *ibid* p.58.

⁴ Quoted in Bond, J., 'Dorchester and the Outside World', *ibid* p.54.

⁵ *ibid* p.54.

The Thames, the narrower of the two rivers, was the more easily bridged. Evidence remains of the medieval bridge, originally built around 1142 and described by Leland in the mid-sixteenth century as 'a very faire bridge of stone a little witoute the toun. The brig is of a good lengthh: and a great stone causey is made to cum welle onto it. There be 5 principle arches in the bridge, and in the causey joining to the south ende of it.' ⁵



Site of the old bridge

But the heavy costs for repair of both bridge and roads were clearly a constant burden on the parish until the road from Henley through Dorchester to Gloucester and South Wales was turnpiked in 1736 and tolls could be levied for their upkeep. However, despite this extra revenue for repairs, and works to widen the narrow bridge in 1781, the mediaeval structure could not cope with the traffic and it was demolished in 1816, the year after its successor had been built some 100 yards up river.

Dorchester Bridge



A toll house, built in the year of Waterloo, still stands on the approach road to the new bridge, to the south of the Abbey church.



Toll House and Abbey

The turnpike road heralded another era of prosperity for Dorchester which was to last for a century, a prosperity founded on the passing trade of stage coaches and the daily London-Oxford mail coach. The glum view of Dorchester's prospects noted in 1728 seems to have been ill-founded, judging by the number of fine brick buildings along the High Street built, or fashionably re-faced, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

It was a time when the village could boast at least ten coaching inns and, although the main inns in Dorchester predate the turnpike - the George, for example, existed in the late fifteenth century and must have served pilgrims

to the shrine of St Birinus and other travellers over the preceding two hundred years or so - they must have enjoyed a revival with the increased traffic.



The George Inn yard

A number of these inns survive today, still in commercial use: not only the galleried 'George' but also the 'White Hart' (dated 1691 but the three narrow gables and timber framing on the front suggesting a much earlier construction); 'The Bull' (also galleried) and 'The Crown' survive but have been converted into private houses.

During the second half of the 19th century, no doubt because of its proximity to Oxford, Dorchester did not escape the renewed scholarly and architectural interest in the gothic style sparked by Pugin and Ruskin. Not only did the Abbey undergo extensive repair and restoration under the auspices of the Oxford Architectural & Historical Society and two distinguished architects of the day, William Butterfield and George Gilbert Scott, but Dorchester also acquired a number of significant public and institutional buildings in romantically gothic style. This flurry of activity was thanks to the dedication and philanthropic generosity

of the Reverend William Macfarlane, curate of Dorchester Abbey Church from 1856 until his death in 1885. It was he who commissioned David Brandon to build the new vicarage (1857) and Sir George Gilbert Scott the Girls' and Infants' schools in Queen Street (1872).



Lych-gate

School (now the Village Hall)



⁶ Op.cit. (Yale 1974), p.584.

In 1878, again under the auspices of Macfarlane, Scott went on to adapt and extend the 18th century house on the east side of the High Street (now occupied by Hallidays) to form a missionary training college and to build Church House, possibly one of his last commissions, its flamboyant roofscape providing a striking landmark at the corner of Queen Street and the High Street.



Church House

The advent of the railway, which never came nearer to Dorchester than Culham, signalled another decline in the regional importance of the village. However, in more recent times the Henley-Oxford road, the main artery of the village for so long, was re-routed - much to the relief of the village, described in 1974 as being 'battered by heavy traffic'. ⁶

The contribution of the 20th century to the buildings of Dorchester has, with one or two exceptions, such as the glazed timber pentice on the north side of the Abbey, not been kind. The introduction of materials, plan forms, scale, proportion, and details with no reference to local tradition and practice

has brought anonymity to parts of the village, undermining its particular character.

Perhaps new buildings of the 21st century will be more sensitive. Through high-quality design, the use of traditional materials and a thorough understanding of the scale, proportions and details of the local historic built forms, they may reflect their own time and place, making a positive contribution to the rich history of Dorchester.

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2. The Established Character

The character of Dorchester has been shaped by the imperatives of history, the natural topography and geography, the availability of building materials, and the fluctuations of fortune, evident in the street patterns and in the buildings.

It could be said that there are two characters to Dorchester, one urban, the other rural; but there is also a unifying thread embedded in the style and scale of the buildings, and in the use of traditional building materials which have formed these structures.

Seen from a distance across a flat, open landscape, Dorchester appears as a closely-grouped settlement, dominated by the Abbey. The approach to the village from the south is protracted, winding and curving with fields and hedges on either side and a sense of gradual retreat from the busy Henley - Oxford road.

The curved stone bridge gives a formal sense of arrival into Dorchester, reinforced by the Toll House and the immediacy of the Abbey Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, now seen to be sited on slightly elevated ground by the river.

As a village, Dorchester has no centre - there is no village green, no market square. The High Street, an historic route between one place and another, remains the main spine of the village, creating a strong linear pull through the village.

In the central section, where listed buildings line the road on both sides, there is a distinctly urban feel to the area and Dorchester here becomes a town.

The sense of progression through the town continues along the High Street. Views are truncated by the gently winding street, and the close-knit development along its edges produces a strong sense of enclosure.

At intervals along the High Street this sense of enclosure is broken: at the wide coach entrances of former - or existing - inns with a glimpse to the yards and gardens beyond, and at the lanes leading off the main thoroughfare: Rotten Row, Malthouse Lane, Martin's Lane, and Watling Lane at the War Memorial. Here the other side of Dorchester's character is revealed, less formal, more loose knit and rural.



Martin's Lane



High Street

The historic buildings on the High Street are predominantly on a domestic scale, generally fronting directly on to the street, and broadly typified by simplicity: rectangular, relatively narrow plan forms, window openings above one another, with upper windows being set high in the walls

usually with their heads just under the eaves, and steeply-pitched roofs, varied ridge heights and chimneys creating a lively roofscape.



37-39 High Street

The ingenious use of a limited range of traditional materials has informed the structure and appearance of these buildings, their original form often being concealed under generations of adaptation and change, perhaps paradoxically giving the street an air of settled survival.

The Abbey is one of the few buildings constructed in stone, indicative of its earlier wealth and status since good building stone was not locally available.

The earliest surviving domestic buildings in the village are timber-framed. Nos. 13 - 19 for example, form a terrace of mediaeval cruck-framed thatched cottages, and Nos. 37 - 39 have an early timber box-framed structure concealed beneath their rendered surface. Tudor Cottage, at the north end of the High Street is a cruck-framed hall house and, earliest of all, is 13 Rotten Row, its timber frame thoroughly concealed behind a nineteenth century brick front.



13-19 High Street

Although there are no significant stands of timber around Dorchester today, there is documentary evidence that there were managed woodlands in the area during the 16th century, providing a good supply of this most versatile and sustainable of building materials. Oak was used for the prestigious buildings but elm is found in some of the more humble cottages.



Abbey Cottage

Wealth, fashion and ideas of status did all they could to disguise what came to be seen as the humble timber frame - although the carved timbers of No.55 High Street were an exception, prestigious in their own right and designed to be seen.



Nos. 55-59 High Street, formerly the Bull Inn

Lime render was used as a quick method of covering up the true nature of the structure but others were enlarged and cunningly fronted more fashionably: the late Georgian stuccoed front of Willoughby House, modelled to look like ashlar blocks, conceals a timber-framed hall house.

During the 18th century there was sufficient wealth in Dorchester for new houses to be built of brick. The subtle red and orange hues of the brickwork were



Willoughby House

often crisply decorated with the distinctive silver-grey vitrified headers, common in South Oxfordshire, or sported contrasting flat arches in rubbed bricks over window openings - Hallidays Antiques is a fine example. Sadly some of these lively brick facades are now concealed under the flat uniformity of paint.



Hallidays

Handmade clay tiles are the predominant roofing material in Dorchester, contributing to the character and interest of the roofscape. Slate is also to be found, usually on more shallow pitched roofs.

Lych Gate Cottage is an example of the use of chalk as a building material. It may have been locally available from the Sinodun Hills (Wittenham Clumps) but its uncertain and friable nature did not give it widespread popularity.

Flint walling with brick dressings, common in South Oxfordshire, proved to be a more robust construction - No.12 Bridge End, for example; and Mollymops Cottage in Samian Way where the flints and bricks are arranged in bold patterns.



12 Bridge End

There are some surviving examples in Dorchester of another traditional form of construction using cob. The former non-conformist chapel at Bridge End is an example, although now heavily disguised under modern alterations.



Former chapel at Bridge End



Clunch and brick at Lych Gate Cottage

Cob is a mixture of earth and straw built up in layers, seen as a humble and utilitarian material but currently enjoying a modest and limited come-back in Britain (although not yet in Dorchester). Unless it is given "a good hat and a good pair of shoes" (i.e. an overhanging roof and a sound brick or masonry base), cob will disintegrate in damp conditions.

Cob houses were traditionally thatched, thatch being a cheap and readily available material which provided a good overhang to direct water away from the wall beneath. Long straw is the traditional thatching material in South Oxfordshire with simple flush ridges rather than the more elaborate and distinctive cut ridges found in other areas.

Beyond Willoughby House an important stretch of grass verge curves along the road, signifying a change from the enclosed urban character of the High Street into rural Dorchester as the buildings become more widely spaced and planting more plentiful. The open fields and avenue of trees at Bishop's Court are a potent and valuable reminder of Dorchester's agricultural past.



Farmland at Bishop's Court

This rural side to Dorchester's character is also found along Watling Lane.



Watling Lane

The grass verges and the trees and hedges forming the border on both sides all make valuable contributions to this character. Equally valuable are the open spaces: the large gardens, the glimpses of open country out to the west and, perhaps most valuable of all, the orchard to the north of Port House and the paddock to the south.



Orchard



Rural views

The working farm, complete with animals, is an extraordinary survival in view of widespread pressures to urbanise since the mid-twentieth century: its contribution

to the rural character of Watling Lane cannot be over-estimated.



Farm signboard

The Allotments, set in the curve of Watling Lane, also have their own distinctive and important character: semi-rural, semi-urban, open and bounded by footpaths.



Allotments

This area possesses another layer of significance as it covers a substantial area of the Roman town -and the occasional Roman coin still comes to light when the soil is turned. The allotments were purchased by the Parish Council in the early 1950s, ensuring their protection in perpetuity - although the increasing presence of cars parked on the land or making their way around the edge threatens this protection.

There is a fragility to the character of Watling Lane, something that could so easily be lost through further development; even neglected hedgerows are a threat.

Bridge End, too, has a fragile quality. It is a place set apart from the rest of Dorchester, inward looking, slightly marooned since the mediaeval bridge was

removed - although the wall of the Roman Catholic church, built in 1849 and dedicated to St Birinus, creates some sense of a link between the new bridge and the Bridge End settlement.



Wall of St. Birinus' Church

The distinctive tear-shaped green emphasises the narrow entry to the settlement before it broadens out to meet the river and the fringes of the low open land beyond.

The group of cottages clustered near the site of the mediaeval bridge were originally constructed in the early 19th century to provide basic accommodation for the poorest inhabitants of the village; the utilitarian nature of these buildings and the rough quality of the materials - all part of their character - are perhaps particularly vulnerable to insensitive alteration.

Cottages at Bridge End



In marked contrast to these modest dwellings are the substantial 18th century houses, Bridge House and 24 Bridge End, with their fine boundary walls and spacious plots.



Bridge House



24 Bridge End

village, vertical sliding sash and case windows of classical proportions sit comfortably with small vernacular horizontal sliding sash windows and opening casements. The unifying elements are the use of timber, the painted finish and the proportion of the window openings.

The duality of Dorchester, urban and rural, is threaded through by the extraordinarily narrow footpaths burrowing between buildings and leading from tightly packed built-up street to open space.

The contribution to the dual character of Dorchester made by planting in private gardens, particularly hedges and trees, should not be underestimated.

The urban and rural characteristics of Dorchester are in a delicate balance, all too easily upset by inappropriate development or insensitive alteration.

They are also a reminder that part of the character of Dorchester is to be found in the symmetry, proportions and details of classical architecture. Throughout the

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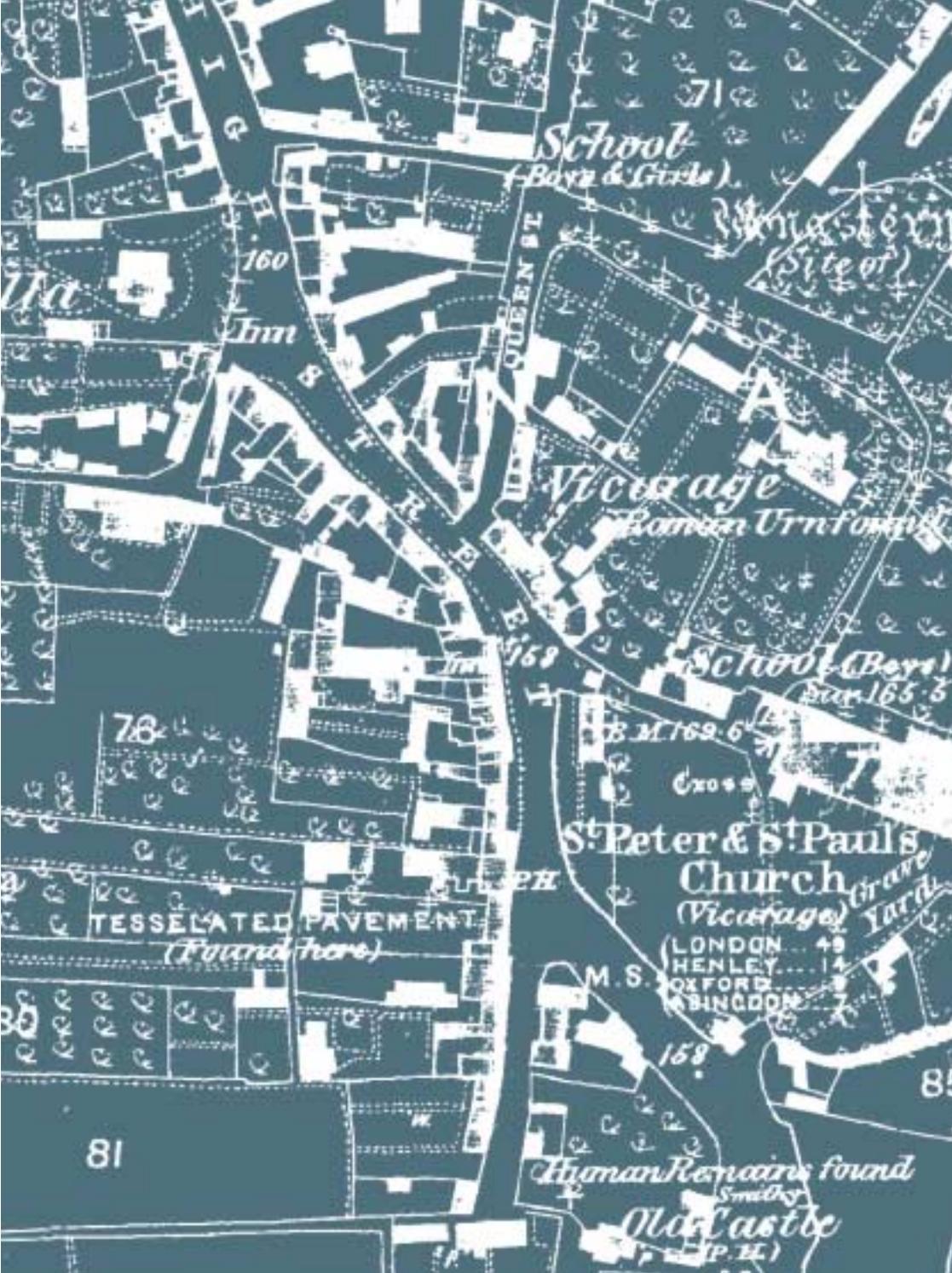
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Dorchester Conservation Area Management Plan

May 2005

Dorchester and Overy Conservation Area Management Plan

The Council first published the Dorchester and Overy Conservation Area Management Plan in draft form in July 2004. Following a period of public consultation, including a public meeting held on 13th January 2005, the Council approved the Management Plan and the conservation area extensions on 16th June 2005.

Possible Areas of Enhancement

The Conservation Area of Dorchester appears to be generally well maintained, although a number of opportunities exist to enhance the existing character.

The vacant garage site at the corner of Bridge End and the High Street is clearly a weak point at the formal entry to Dorchester and awaits a sensitive development that will reinstate the enclosed character of the main street, respecting the curve in the road and the character of the closed view beyond.

The public lavatory building on Bridge End and the associated railings and paving do not make a positive visual contribution to the Conservation Area.

The broken tarmac surface on the parking area by the public lavatories and the Bridge End road itself could be improved by being re-surfaced with a dressing of natural aggregate - an earlier more sympathetic, surface is visible where the tarmac covering has broken up.



Road surface at Bridge End

Granite setts or river pebbles could be used to define the two distinct areas.

The thin, widely spaced row of trees between the bridge and the parking area should (with the possible exception of a commemorative hawthorn) be removed not least because of the damage they threaten to cause to the stonework of the Bridge.

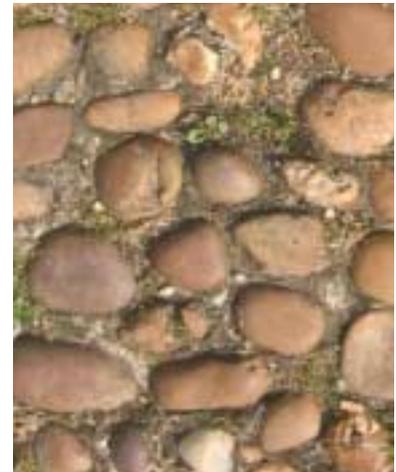


Self-seeded trees

A widely-spaced row of small native species trees, planted along the margin between Bridge End Road and the parking area, would redefine the line of the road and reduce the visual impact of parked cars. Timber bollards could replace the existing thin bent metal posts.

Paving and the surface treatment of roads offer particular opportunities to enhance the character of the conservation area. The attractive areas of river cobbles in the pavement at intervals along the High Street - at the George Hotel and the Post Office, for example - and the natural stone paving at the corner of Malthouse Lane and the High Street should be emulated wherever possible to reduce dull expanses of tarmac or concrete. Although the attractive character of the cobbles depends on the way in which they are laid.

The use of granite setts to give some interest to the tarmac road at the entrance to Malthouse Lane is another effective method which could be adopted elsewhere in Dorchester.



Traditional river pebble paving



Incorrect river pebble paving

The use of traditional materials and detailing generally can have a considerable and positive effect in enhancing the character of a conservation area. Unsympathetic modern materials such as concrete tiles, uPVC doors and windows, and plastic rainwater goods will have the reverse effect - inappropriate details, however small, can all too easily erode the particular character of the area.

The owners of historic and prominent properties are encouraged to replace inappropriate modern materials and to reinstate clay tiles, traditional timber doors and windows, and cast iron rainwater goods. The owners of thatched buildings are also encouraged to retain or to reinstate plain flush ridges: cut ridges are not part of the traditional thatching style of South Oxfordshire.

The use of modern rather than traditional materials, particularly on historic buildings, can rapidly erode the character of a conservation area: they tend to be harsh, rarely weathering well, deteriorating rather than aging gracefully, rarely acquiring an attractive patina. Traditional construction allows buildings to breathe, but this system can be disrupted by the use of inappropriate materials which can cause serious damage to historic fabric by trapping moisture within the construction.



Cement render

New buildings using traditional materials, or repairs to existing buildings, require a thorough understanding of the materials and careful observation of their traditional use. The wrong mortar, wide joints, the over-formal setting of flints or stone - seemingly small details - all can undermine the visual quality.



Bad pointing



Original tuck pointing

Lime render and limewash pigmented with natural ochres should be used in preference to cement render and synthetic paints: they allow buildings to breathe and the colours are sympathetic to other natural materials and to rural settings. By contrast, cement tends to trap moisture within historic fabric and can cause extensive unseen damage, particularly to timber frames. Synthetic paints, unless they are 'microporous', designed to allow moisture in and out, and carefully applied, can cause similar distress to historic fabric.

Modern paint colours are generally inappropriate, bringing an intrusive harshness to the scene: bright pink,

green, brilliant white, - colours derived from artificial pigments rather than being based on natural pigments are out of keeping with the character of a conservation area typified by traditional construction. Colours selected from historic colour ranges are likely to be more sympathetic and can make a positive contribution - although they are likely to be second best to lime render and limewash.

Modern styles of windows and doors can all too easily undermine the character of a conservation area. Windows with a mixture of fixed lights, casements and top hung quarter lights generally have the wrong proportions for window openings in traditional buildings and materials such as uPVC or aluminium produce too thin and flat a section compared with timber. The finish is important too, stained rather than painted timber looking out of place.

Modern doors can be equally inappropriate and ill-proportioned, often too elaborate in comparison with more simple and straightforward traditional styles.

Good quality timber windows and doors, carefully detailed to match local traditional styles can make a positive contribution to the area, while the reverse tends to be the case with uPVC, aluminium and other modern materials. Contrary to manufacturers' claims, uPVC windows are not entirely maintenance free.⁷

Appropriate roofing materials are equally important. Concrete tiles, machine-made tiles or artificial slates are no substitute for the traditional material and can have a significant and detrimental effect on the character of the conservation area. Their scale and general appearance are at odds with hand-made clay tiles and they tend to

fade and deteriorate rather than acquiring a pleasing patina of age.

The significant number of coach entrances to inn yards along the High Street are essential to the character of the Conservation Area, echoes of Dorchester's coaching past. Like so many historic features they are vulnerable to insensitive treatment, such as infilling with glazed panels.

Overhead wires and cables should be laid underground by the statutory undertakers, removing a visual intrusion.



Intrusive cables

It may be possible to relocate television aeriAls within roofspaces where these are available, and owners of satellite dishes are encouraged to site the dishes unobtrusively (Planning Permission and/or Listed Building Consent may be required to erect satellite dishes).

The many attractive walls in Dorchester, which make such an important contribution to the character of the conservation area, should be sympathetically repaired where necessary and generally well

⁷ Fidler, J. In *Architects' Journal*, November 2002

maintained. Lime mortar should be used for pointing: it is more flexible than cement, allowing some movement in a structure without cracking, and it allows moisture to move in and out of the wall.



Original lime mortar and cement repointing

By contrast, cement mortar can be too rigid, cracking and allowing water to become trapped inside the wall; it can also be too hard causing accelerated decay of stones and bricks.

Landowners should be encouraged to manage and maintain trees and hedgerows, which make such an important contribution to views into and out of the village - although a manicured look should be avoided. The use of native species common to the area is essential. Fast-growing imports such as



Cement coping

leylandii are uncharacteristic and can alter and block important views.

Walls, fences, gates and garage doors can also affect the character of a conservation area for good or ill. Generally, simple forms in traditional materials, based on historical local examples, are likely to make a positive contribution.



Gate and paddock at Bishop's Court

The rural, informal character of Crown Lane, Wittenham Lane, Watling Lane, and the various footpaths should be carefully maintained - with a sensitive eye to scale, road and path surface materials, walls, fences and planting.

Ditches should be kept cleared and rabbits deterred from undermining the Bridge.

The character of the Conservation Area can be easily jeopardized by inappropriate development which fails to take account of local details and traditional forms. Well-designed buildings, appropriate to the needs of the 21st century, distinguished by careful observation of local scale, proportion and detailing, and by the skilful use of traditional materials, could make a positive contribution to the future of Dorchester.

The South Oxfordshire Design Guide provides guidance on appropriate forms and materials to use in conservation areas.

Proposed extensions to Conservation Area boundary

As a result of the character appraisal of the Dorchester Conservation Area, two areas - currently excluded - suggest themselves for inclusion within the boundaries of the Conservation Area.

1. The Cemetery is an important open space to the east of the existing Conservation Area surrounded by mature trees and containing a roofless 19th century chapel as well as a variety of monuments and gravestones.
2. The north side of the eastern section of Manor Farm Road. Some of the boundary walls contain remains of the stone walls of the Abbey barns, important historical and archaeological evidence which is currently unprotected.

Existing Conservation Policies

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.

2011 Second Deposit Draft Local Plan

Demolition of Listed Buildings

Policy CON1

Proposals for the demolition of any listed building will not be permitted.

Alterations and extensions to listed buildings

Policy CON4

Any extension to a listed building must be appropriate to its character, must be sympathetic to the original structure in design, scale and materials and must not dominate or overwhelm it.

Policy CON5

Any alteration to a listed building must respect its established character and not diminish the special historical or architectural qualities which make it worthy of inclusion on the statutory list.

Policy CON6

A change of use of part or the whole of a listed building will be permitted only if its character and features of special architectural or historic interest would be protected. Proposals for a change of use should incorporate details of all intended alterations to the building and its curtilage, to demonstrate their impact on its appearance, character and setting.

Policy CON7

Proposals for development which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building will be refused.

CONSERVATION AREAS

Proposals affecting a conservation area

Policy CON9

Consent to demolish a building in a conservation area will be granted only if the loss of the building would not

adversely affect the character of the area and, where appropriate, if there are detailed and acceptable plans for the redevelopment of the site.

Policy CON10

The Council will not grant permission for development which would harm the character or appearance of a conservation area. 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; and
- (ii) the use of traditional materials, whenever this is appropriate to the character of the area.

The Council will also take account of the contribution made to a conservation area by existing walls, buildings, trees, hedges, open spaces and important views. Proposals for development outside a conservation area which would have a harmful effect on the conservation area will not be permitted.

Advertisements in conservation areas and on listed buildings

Policy CON13

The Council will not grant consent for 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, it should generally be non-illuminated, made of natural materials and to a design and scale reflecting the best traditional practice.

Blinds and canopies in conservation areas

Policy CON14

The Council will not grant permission for the installation of blinds or canopies

of nontraditional form or materials on buildings within conservation areas.

Burgage plots

Policy CON15

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 by its nature would detract from their historic interest, amenity and nature conservation value.

Archaeology and historic building analysis and recording

Policy CON16

The Council will not 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 CON17

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 CON18

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 Council will impose conditions on planning permissions, or seek planning 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 Council.

Policy CON19

Before the determination of an application which affects a building of archaeological or historic interest, applicants will be required, where necessary, to submit a detailed record survey and analysis of the building. In some circumstances, further survey and analysis will be made a condition of consent.

Historic battlefields, parks, gardens and landscapes

Policy CON20

Proposals which would damage the character, setting or amenities of a battlefield, park or garden of special historic interest, especially those contained in the English Heritage Registers, will not be permitted.

Common land

Policy CON21

Proposals for development on or affecting common land, village greens and other important spaces within settlements will not be permitted.

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