Dorchester-on-Thames and Overy Conservation Areas Appraisal

October 2023 *South Oxfordshire District Council* *Supplementary Planning Document*

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Acknowledgements

This document has been produced with thanks to members of the Dorchester Neighbourhood Plan group: Prof. Malcolm Airs, Mark Williams, et.al… whose work formed the basis for this amended and updated appraisal.

Note

This appraisal seeks to provide a comprehensive assessment of the character and special historic interest of the conservation area. However, the reader should not assume that details which contribute to the character of the area, but are not mentioned here specifically, can be dismissed by reason of their omission.

Contact Us

For further information and advice on conservation areas contact:
South Oxfordshire District Council
Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE
Tel: 01235 422600
Email: planning@southoxon.gov.uk

1.0 Introduction

What are conservation areas?
Areas of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" – in other words, they exist to protect the features and the characteristics that make a historic place unique and distinctive.

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area. In addition to statutory controls, both National Policy and the Local Authority policies in the Local Plan help preserve the special character and appearance of conservation areas and their setting where it contributes to its significance.

What is the purpose of a conservation area appraisal?

- Identify special architectural or historic interest and the changing needs of the conservation area;
- Define or redefine the conservation area boundaries;
- Increase public awareness and involvement in the preservation and enhancement of the area;
- Provide a framework for informed planning decisions;
- Guide controlled and positive management of change within the conservation area to minimise harm and encourage high quality, contextually responsive design.

How might living in a conservation area affect you?

- Most demolition works require planning permission from the local authority;
- Restrictions on permitted development and advertising;
- If you intend to cut down, top or lop any but the smallest trees you must notify the council so potential harm can be assessed.

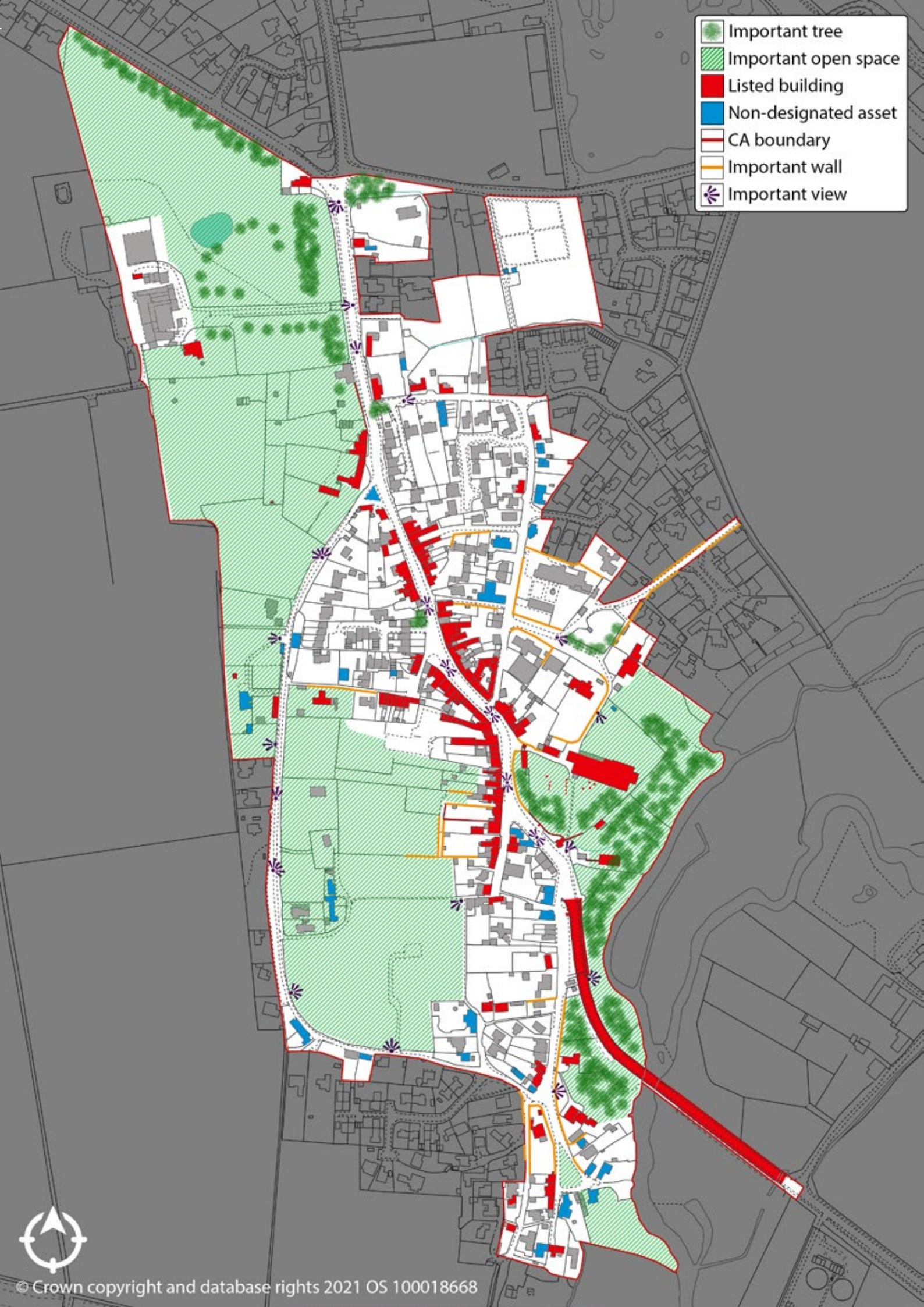
For further information on conservation areas, how they are managed and how this might affect you, please see the South Oxfordshire District Council's website and Historic England's advice on living in conservation areas.

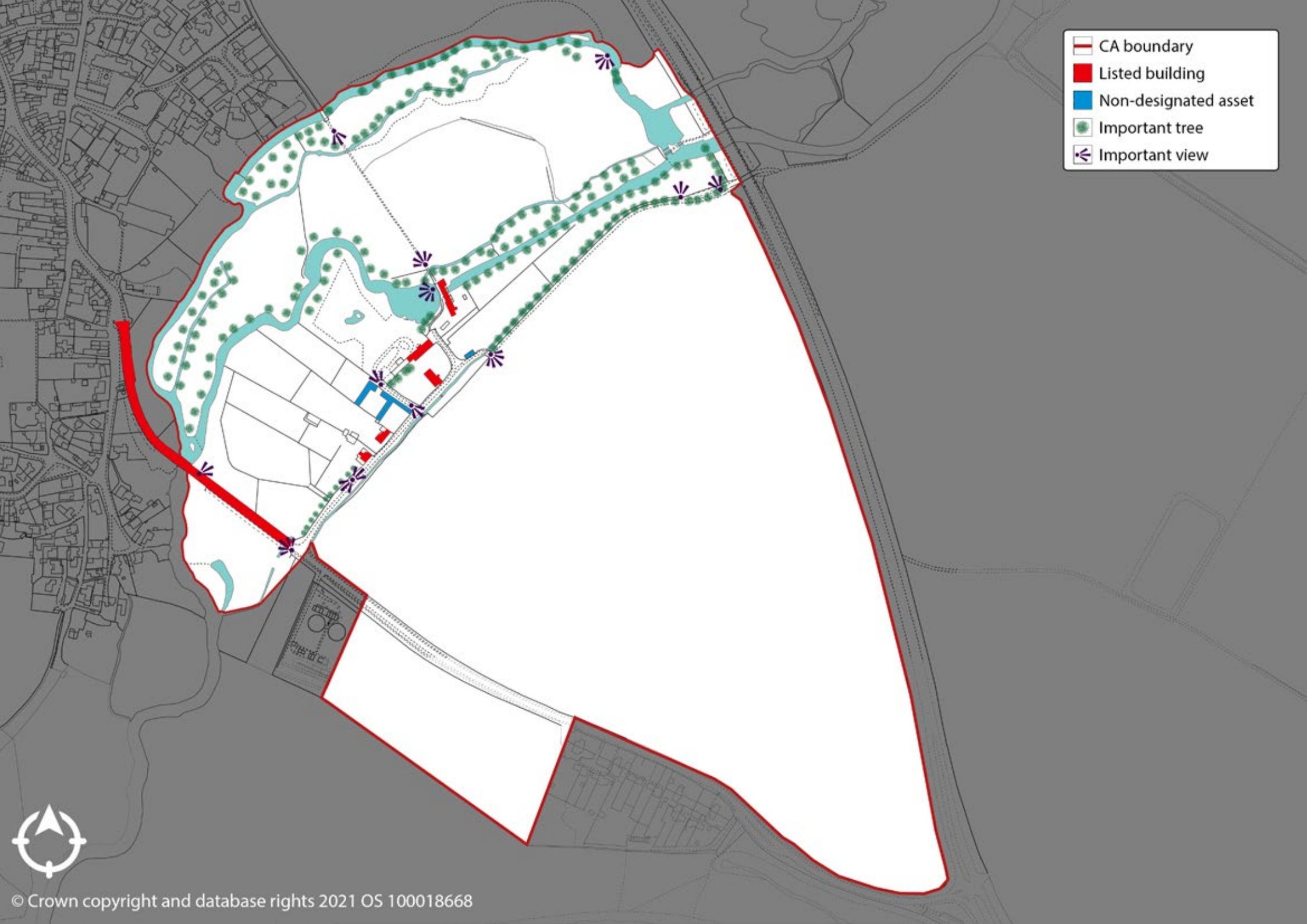
Planning policy context
Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council adopted a neighbourhood plan in April 2018 covering both Dorchester and Overy conservation areas.

The wider district development plan currently sits within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. Other material planning considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Methodology and Consultation
This appraisal was produced with current best practice guidance published by Historic England and information collected using publicly available resources and thorough on-site analysis from the publicly accessible parts of the conservation area.

Public consultation took place from 25 January to 1 March 2023. The appraisal was then reviewed and changes made based on comments received. The appraisal and boundary revision was formally adopted at a South Oxfordshire cabinet meeting on September 28th 2023.





2.0 History of the Area - Dorchester

The following is a brief account of the extensive history of Dorchester. This may be read with reference to the Historic Environment Record Summary and maps showing archaeological data points and areas registered as scheduled monuments in Appendix A.

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, outside of the Roman town, 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

Wittenham Clumps and remains of Iron Age fortifications

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. Despite the image this conjures up of a tightly enclosed and protected settlement, evidence has been found of human occupation - arable farming, pottery manufacture and human burials - 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 Cyneglis, King of the West Saxons by Birinus, a missionary sent by Pope Honorius I to convert the pagan Anglo Saxons. A substantial extra-mural settlement was recently identified to the south of Overy (see Section 8 for more detail).

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.

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 paroche chirch a little by south from the abbay church. And another paroch chirch more south above it. There was the 3 paroch chirch 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.

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.

Guest House

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.

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

Dorchester Bridge

Leland noted in the 16th 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 17th and early 18th centuries. But ferries were no match for the increasing volume of wheeled traffic making its way through Dorchester.

The Thame, 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 sixteenth century as 'a very faire bridge of stone a little witoute the toune. The brig is of a good lenghth: 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]

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.

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. 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.

Toll House and Abbey

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 High Street built, or fashionably re-faced, in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

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

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).

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 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.


Lych-gate


School (now the Village Hall)

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.

Further detail on the early historic development of Dorchester can be found in the Historic Environment Record Report, Appendix A.

6. Op.cit. (Yale 1974), p.584.

3.0 History of the Area - Overy

The small hamlet of Overy, within the parish of Dorchester, has a long history inextricably bound up with its larger neighbour and yet it remains a place apart, with its own distinctive character.

The present buildings of Overy were mostly constructed in the 18th century, but the hamlet probably laid down its roots some 700 years earlier. During the latter part of the 11th century two mills were granted to the Dorchester Abbey Estate by Bishop Remigius, one on the Thames, the other on the Thame 'beyond the bridge'.[1] Both were known as Overy Mill, but it was the latter, " to the east over the bridge on the Thame"[2] which was the forerunner of the present weatherboarded building presiding over the mill pond and still in operation as a water mill in the early 20th century.

Overy, although small, was no poor relation. Before the middle of the 12th century, the hamlet was tithed separately from Dorchester and had its own rectory, indicating a degree of wealth. It may even have had its own church, perhaps one of the three around Dorchester that impressed Leland in the 16th century.[3]

Overy Mill

Overy from Dorchester Bridge

The grant of the mills came with good farm land: fields, meadows and pastures bringing income to the two manors of Dorchester - that of the Bishop of Lincoln and of the Abbey. After the Dissolution, the wealth from Overy's fields and stands of timber was collected by a succession of private landlords.

However, contrary to the increasing trend for enclosing land over the centuries, some of the Overy fields remained as unenclosed common well into the 19th century: it was only after 1861 that all the land was privately owned.

It seems that the farmers of Overy always had a "[R]eadiness to experiment with new agricultural methods'.[4] And foremost among them were the Daveys who, by 1757 appear to have been farming most of Overy. Their innovative methods of using a four-course rotation,

1. Lobel,M.D., ed., Victoria County History, Oxfordshire, Vol. VII, 'Dorchester and Thame Hundreds', p. 46.
2. Ibid. p.45.
3. Quoted in Cook, C & Rowley, T. (ed), Dorchester Through The Ages (Oxford 1985), p.48.

4. Op. cit. (1962) p.48.

Overy Manor

including beans to enrich the soil and root crops to "clean the ground"[5], caught the attention of King George III - Farmer George - who is said to have driven over from Nuneham to see William Davey's model farm.

Two generations later, another William Davey founded the Oxford Agricultural Society and was acknowledged to be "one of the most intelligent farmers" and "one of the best" in Oxfordshire, keeping South Down sheep but mainly concentrating on arable and continuing to experiment with new methods of husbandry. His son George continued the long tradition, farming over 300 acres at Overy and becoming a successful exhibitor at Smithfield.

Apart from the Cherrills in the 16th century, the Earls of Abingdon appear to have been the only other substantial landowning family in Overy. But by the third quarter of the 19th century, the Abingdon lands were sold off and the Daveys' star was waning too, their farm being bought in 1874 by St John's College, Oxford, to add to the College's 1,000 acre estate in the area. Arable farming and sheep breeding was to continue in the fields of Overy into the 20th century but perhaps without the same intensity of purpose.

The Daveys repaid any debt they may have owed to the area by giving generously to both Dorchester and Overy through their building projects. Although Roman Catholics, it seems that the family had long-standing responsibilities for repairing the chancel of the Abbey church, a duty they continued to perform as late as 1860.[6] In 1712 the William Davey of the time rebuilt Overy Manor House, proudly recording the completion of this quietly classical red and silver grey brick house in a stone panel set into the front elevation. This house was extended, in the late 18th century and again in the 19th century, presumably by subsequent generations of Daveys.

It seems likely that the Daveys were also responsible for re-building Overy Farmhouse (originally their home when they were yeoman farmers), Overy Farm Cottage next door, the present Mill, and the Mill House.

All these buildings appear to have been constructed during the 18th century and share a similarity in style, possibly stemming from the use of the same limited palette of materials: brick (red and silver grey), some coursed clunch rubble, timber weatherboarding for barns and outbuildings, and plain clay roof tiles.

5. Ibid. p.50.

6. Ibid. p.50.

Overy Farm House

The barn, to the north-west of Overy Manor, may be the only survivor from the 17th century in Overy, although it contains 18th and 19th century brickwork and was radically altered in the late 20th century when converted to domestic use.

It seems that the Daveys brought not only sophisticated farming methods and fashionable building styles to Overy but also other links to the wider world through the succession of visiting priests who lodged with them, their hospitality extending to a French priest fleeing from the Revolution during the 1790s who is now buried in the Abbey.

Mill House

In the mid-19th century George Davey made Overy House a meeting place for Roman Catholics and his brother, John, built the chapel of St Birinus on land by Dorchester Bridge, next door to his home at Bridge House. Their nephew, Robert was the last of the Daveys to live at Overy, dying childless in 1901 - the same year that brought Queen Victoria's long reign to an end.

The water meadow known as the Hurst which separates Overy from Dorchester passed through a number of hands after the death of Robert Davey. In 1996 it was bought by public subscription to prevent possible development and it is now vested in a charitable trust which actively manages it along traditional lines. It is a highly valued public and educational amenity which is a testament to the value that the parish places on its distinctive setting.

4.0 Established Character - Dorchester

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.

High Street

Martin's Lane

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 apparent focal point. 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 built-up feel to the area. 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.


37-39 High Street

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 open.

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.

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.


13-19 High Street

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 19th century brick front.

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.

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.

Abbey Cottage

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

Willoughby House

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.

Hallidays

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 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 – the former Hallidays Antiques is a fine example. Sadly some of these lively brick façades are now concealed under the flat uniformity of paint.

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 flints and bricks are arranged in bold patterns.


Clunch and brick at Lych Gate Cottage

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. More visible are the cob boundary walls in various locations throughout the village.


12 Bridge End

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.


Former chapel at Bridge End

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.

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

There are many stretches of walling which make an important contribution to the character of Dorchester. They are constructed of a variety of materials which cumulatively establish the vernacular character of the village such as the cob walls in the yard of the Fleur de Lys, the north boundary of the school grounds and adjacent to Cob Cottage in Malthouse Lane. Rubble stone walls include those along the High Street frontage of Lych Gate Cottage and in the footpaths leading east from the High Street, the boundary wall of Herringcote in Martins Lane and on the western and southern boundaries of the School in Queen Street. Distinctive brick walls define the curtilage of the Rectory, the south east side of Manor Farm Road and the west side of Wittenham Lane. Two prominent stone walls mark the former existence of important groups

Rubble stone wall (above image, left) on Queen Street

Cob walls on the High Street

of buildings, that along the north west boundary of Manor Farm Road being all that is left of the medieval Abbey farmyard and that on the north side of the elevated footpath leading west from Bridge End is the remains of Albion Terrace complete with one of its windows. The importance of all these walls as marked on the area map at the start of this document should be a material consideration in any development proposals that might affect their integrity.

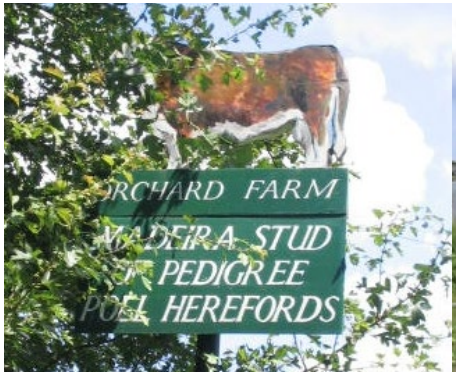
Orchard Farm, a working farm, complete with animals, is an extraordinary survival in view of widespread pressures to urbanise since the mid-20th century: its contribution to the rural character of Watling Lane cannot be over-estimated.

Farmland at Bishop's Court

Watling Lane

Orchard

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.



Farm signboard

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 the soil integrity.

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

Cottages at Bridge End

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.

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.

Wall of St. Birinius' Church

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.

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

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 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.

5.0 Established Character - Overy

Overy

Overy is a small, self-contained hamlet lying along a narrow lane, sheltered by trees from the surrounding water meadows and open fields. Only the constant noise from the Oxford-Henley road disturbs the rural isolation which must have remained largely unchanged since William Davey built his quietly elegant manor house in 1712.

The first two buildings, Overy Farm House and Overy Farm Cottage, both face out across the lane and the overgrown dry ditch to the wide open fields beyond which once contained an extensive extra-mural suburb of Roman Dorchester. Built of brick and coursed clunch rubble in the 18th century, they have the composed look of buildings with proportions rooted in a classical style, but they are undeniably vernacular in character. Each is set back from the road behind a grass verge, Overy Farm House behind understated wrought iron railings, Overy Farm Cottage behind a low brick wall interrupted by a graceful wrought iron gate.

The rural character of Overy is evident immediately on turning into the lane, bordered on either side by hedges and grass verges. Where the fields on the western side end, the few buildings that make up the hamlet begin.

Lane to Overy

Overy Farm Cottage

The only sizeable unlisted buildings in Overy, the 19th century barns at Overy Farm, are set well back from the road behind a brick wall which curves into one of the two courtyards around which they are set. Single-storey red brick buildings, they have now been converted to domestic use.

Overy Farm Barns

One range of these barns backs on to a side lane leading to the entrance to Overy Manor, forming a hard edge, softened at ground level by a grass verge. On the opposite side is another hard edge formed by the stone wall around the garden of the Manor. Underscored by a timber farm gate at the end of this short lane is a fine view of Dorchester Abbey church across flat fields and watermeadows. In the opposite direction is an equally spectacular but distant view of the northern sweep of the Chilterns.

At the junction between the private drive and the lane is an isolated weatherboarded barn, linked to the settlement by the remains of a buttressed stone wall and together forming an important marker at the edge of open farmland. The view back down the lane from the barn emphasises the visual importance of the walls on the right hand side, the grass verges, the open land to the left and the pleasing leisurely curves in the road. Framed at the end of the lane is a distant view of Wittenham Clumps.

Isolated Barn

View of Wittenham Clumps

The fine stone wall of Overy Manor curves round to join the main part of the lane, being interrupted by an unexpected two-storey bay window on the side elevation of the house, before continuing around another corner to form a hard edge to the drive of the Mill House. This is also the public footpath to the mill pool and to Dorchester beyond. Again, grass verges soften the edge between road and wall.

Unusually for a South Oxfordshire village, cars do not dominate the scene. The lane is too narrow for two cars to pass one another and does not invite strangers. Only near the junction with Henley Road does the wider grass verge suggest a parking place.

Trees play an important role in the character of the conservation area. The largest, most striking group are those in the grounds of Overy Manor. Elsewhere, other less formal, trees follow ditches and water courses, grouping around the mill pond and the mill stream, creating important contrasts in the flat expanse of Hurst Meadow which lies between Overy Mill and Dorchester.

The future of Hurst Water Meadow, historically attached to Overy Mill and an open space of vital importance to the area, was secured in 1996 when it was purchased by the residents and Parish Council of Dorchester to save it from unsuitable development and to provide a place for recreation.

The Hurst Water Meadow Trust now manages the area and has already implemented measures to conserve and enhance natural habitats, improving grazing, planting trees, and stabilizing river banks.

The future of Overy hamlet itself could be less secure. Despite the quiet sophistication of the houses, the legacy of the 18th century Daveys, Overy is deeply rural in character and therefore particularly vulnerable to unsympathetic change - even on a small scale - in a modern, generally non-agrarian culture.

The Hurst

6.0 Management Plan - Dorchester

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

Since the first publication of the plan some of these opportunities have been addressed successfully.

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

Self-seeded trees

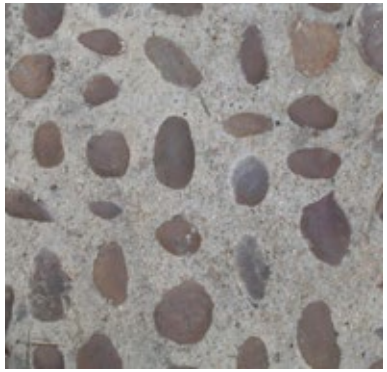
Granite setts or river pebbles could be used to define the two distinct areas.

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.

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


Bad pointing


Original struck pointing

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.

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: 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.

Signage in the conservation area should follow the guidance provided within the district council's Joint Design Guide (2022). It is generally expected that signs within the conservation area will be timber, handpainted and signwritten in the traditional manner. There are a variety of pictorial hanging signs on pubs which add greatly to the interest of the conservation area and would benefit from continued conservation.

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

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

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 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.

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 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.

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 Joint Design Guide (2022) provides guidance on appropriate forms and materials to use in conservation areas.

7.0 Management Plan - Overy

The delicate structure of Overy's character is vulnerable to inappropriate intervention, to neglect and to its opposite - over-zealous neatening.

Landowners should be encouraged to manage and maintain the trees, hedgerows and ditches which make such an important contribution to the character of the area - but care is needed not to destroy essential informality and the natural habitats of local flora and fauna.

Trees at Mill Pond

The land around the mill pool is currently sadly neglected and overgrown, obscuring views from the public footpath. The former open character of the mill pool should be reinstated and views, particularly of Overy Mill, should be opened up. The mill race should be cleared and maintained to prevent the pool becoming stagnant. The length of

Path from Hurst to Mill Pond

footpath between two timber stiles is presently defined by metal fencing and larch-lap panels, inappropriate forms of barrier in a rural location. The original width of the path should be reinstated and maintained, and the stiles kept in good repair.

There is an opportunity here to open up views across the mill pond to the distant Wittenham Clumps, giving privacy to the garden of Mill House perhaps by a hedge of indigenous plants or a low fence of woven willow hurdles.

Carefully-considered planting of suitable indigenous trees could screen several intrusive elements: the 20th century houses to the south east visible from the corner of the lane to Overy Manor; the rear elevations of one or two houses in Dorchester which are highly visible in winter from the footpath across Hurst Meadow; the gas installation opposite the

Gas installation

Sewage works

end of the drive to Mill House; and the sewage works which currently provides an unfortunate focal point at the end of the lane. Fast- growing imported species, such as leylandii, should be avoided: they are uncharacteristic and can alter and block important views. New planting, even of indigenous species, should also respect these views.

View of Abbey and new trees

The earlier brick and cobbled surface of the footpath by the Mill pond - still evident in places - could be reinstated to make what is clearly a popular walk less muddy and more enjoyable.

Cobbled surface of path

The broken surface of the lane through Overy reveals an earlier surface of brown aggregate which would be a more appropriate finish than the existing black tarmac.

The walls, firmly defining the boundary along the lane, should be carefully maintained and sensitively repaired.

Overhead wires and cables should be laid underground by the statutory undertakers to remove a visual intrusion. It may sometimes be possible to relocate television aerials within roofspaces where these are available, and any satellite dishes should be sited unobtrusively (Planning Permission and/or Listed Building Consent may be required to erect satellite dishes).

Intrusive cables

Examples of good and bad pointing

Repairs to existing buildings and walls require a thorough understanding of the original materials and careful observation of their traditional use. The use of cement rather than lime mortar for repointing, for example, wide joints, the over-formal setting of flints or stone - seemingly small details - all can undermine the visual quality of the area and the performance of traditional construction.

Traditional materials and detailing generally can have a considerable and positive effect in enhancing the character of a conservation area, so easily undermined by the use of modern materials such as uPVC rainwater goods, or non-traditional styles of doors and windows. Rooflights and pipes breaking through the sweep of a clay tile roof can be visually intrusive and should be avoided wherever possible.

New building in Overy should not be encouraged - the entire hamlet was built more or less at the same time and therefore has an air of completion which could easily be put in jeopardy. There is already a risk of the existing houses being over-extended and losing their character.

Some modern paint colours can also bring a certain intrusive harshness to the scene: appropriate colours selected from historic colour ranges can be more sympathetic and make a positive contribution.

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. Close-boarded fencing and larch-lap panels are inappropriate in a rural location So, too, are up-and- over garage doors, particularly made of fibreglass or metal: side-hung vertical boarded timber doors would be more in keeping.

The Joint Design Guide (2022) provides guidance on appropriate forms and materials to use in conservation areas.

The conservation area was extended to the north-east in 2005 to include the whole of the Hurst in response to the recommendation in the first management plan. The subsequent discovery of the remains of an extensive extra-mural Roman settlement beneath the large field to the east of Overy and in an area south of the road was an archaeological find of great significance which led to an extension of the conservation area in 2023.

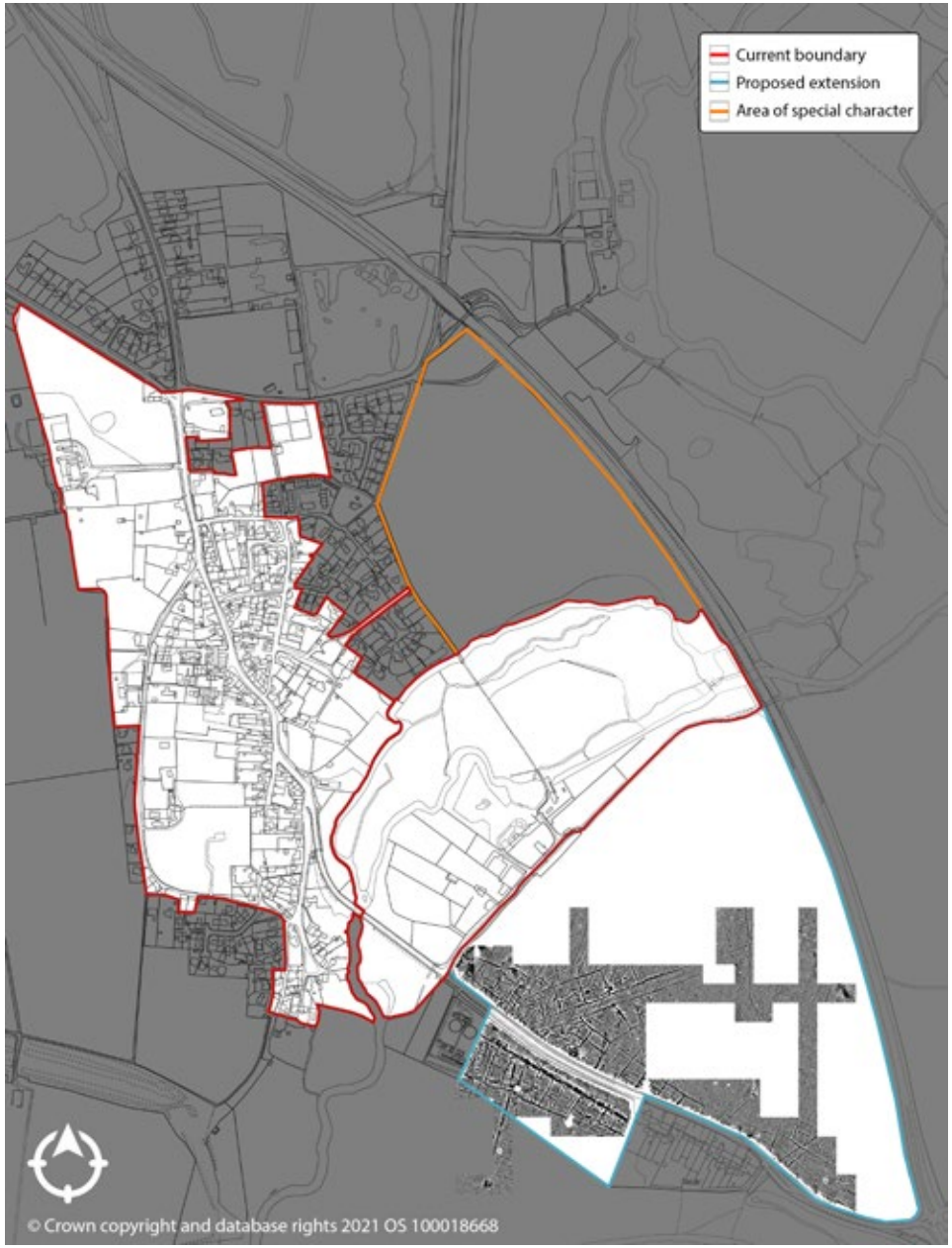
8.0 Boundary Review

Dorchester-on-Thames

No boundary revisions were proposed to the Dorchester-on-Thames conservation area as part of this review. However, the former Demesne Field which lies to the east of the village and forms part of the Heritage Zone in the NDP (2017-2033) was proposed to be identified as an Area of Special Local Character (see, *Appendix B*). Public consultation revealed a further area of interest; medieval fish ponds at the rear of Monks Close, which warrant further investigation and consideration as a possible future extension of the conservation area.

Overy

It was proposed to extend the Overy conservation area to include the field to the south and a small area to the west of the Henley Road. This area, although free of built form, holds a large number of known archaeological remains which illustrate the importance of Dorchester as a settlement on a strategic river crossing point. The presence of an extra-mural suburb in this area highlights the longevity of the settlement. There is good geophysical survey evidence of the former road and crossing that has not been disturbed by development so far. The route of the old road leads directly to the Bridge End area of the village, where the former crossing was known to have existed before the present bridge was built. This area also connects more directly to the scheduled areas of the Roman Town than the current crossing (see Section 2 and Appendix A for more detail). For these reasons, it is proposed to include this area into the designated conservation area as it enhances our understanding of the historic, archaeological and architectural interest of Dorchester and Overy and has informed their character and appearance. This boundary extension was adopted on September 29th, 2023.



Map showing the proposed extension and area of special character. Note the magnetometry scan composite overlaid on the Overy field showing evidence of historic development in the area (Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics, 2013)

9.0 Selected Bibliography

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Appendix A: Historic Environment Record Summary

The following was produced on request by the Historic Environment Record (HER) team at Oxfordshire County Council to capture in greater detail the archaeological interest of the Dorchester-on-Thames and Overy conservation areas. Records mentioned in the summary may be cross referenced with the maps on the following pages. Not all records mentioned are located within the mapped areas shown.

Archaeological understanding

The adjacent conservation areas of Dorchester and Overy are situated within a rich archaeological landscape. Dorchester itself is well known for being one of only two walled Roman towns in Oxfordshire, but activity and settlement dates from the Palaeolithic right through to modern times. This has been evidenced through cropmarks and archaeological investigations both within the conservation area itself and across its environs, although it should be noted that excavations have tended to be limited and piecemeal due to the location (often within back gardens and allotments) and the archaeological sensitivity of the area.

Prehistoric

The earliest evidence within the conservation areas is a Palaeolithic handaxe from Allen's Pit (PRN12890) and two Neolithic scrapers from Dorchester Abbey (PRN13237). While these finds probably represent nomadic and ephemeral activity, the conservation areas are surrounded by cropmark complexes indicating the importance of this region for prehistoric to Saxon ritual activity and settlement.

Just to the north of Dorchester, a nationally important Neolithic to Bronze Age ceremonial complex (PRN15323) was destroyed during the construction of the bypass. Excavations during its construction confirmed the presence of two henge monuments, a cursus, a causewayed cremation cemetery and enclosures and pits dating to the Neolithic period; and round barrows, ring ditches, pit circle and enclosures of Bronze Age date.

c.250m east of Overy, a scheduled cropmark complex (SM1006344) of an Iron Age settlement (PRN4424, 16101) appears to respect, and therefore post-date, a Neolithic cursus (PRN2950) and possible mortuary enclosure (PRN4421). Bronze Age ring ditches and further later prehistoric enclosures, ditches and trackways are also evident within the complex.

The late Iron Age 'Dyke Hills' enclosed oppidum (Scheduled Monument 1006364; PRN3150) is located c.500m to the south. Two parallel banks and an outer ditch form the northern boundary, with the rivers creating a vaguely rectangular form to the south and west. Clusters of storage pits and a very large number (50-100) of small enclosures are assumed to represent permanent settlement. Another scheduled hillfort (Sinodun Hill Camp 1006302; PRN 3153) lies 1km further on.

c.500m to the west of Dorchester prehistoric ring-ditches, a semi-circle of pits and later prehistoric rectangular enclosure representing probable ritual or funerary activity were destroyed by gravel extraction (PRN8541). Further west (c.1.5km) lies an extensive scheduled cropmarked Bronze Age to Roman settlement complex at Northfield Farm (SM1002925; PRN15318). Burials dating from the Bronze Age to

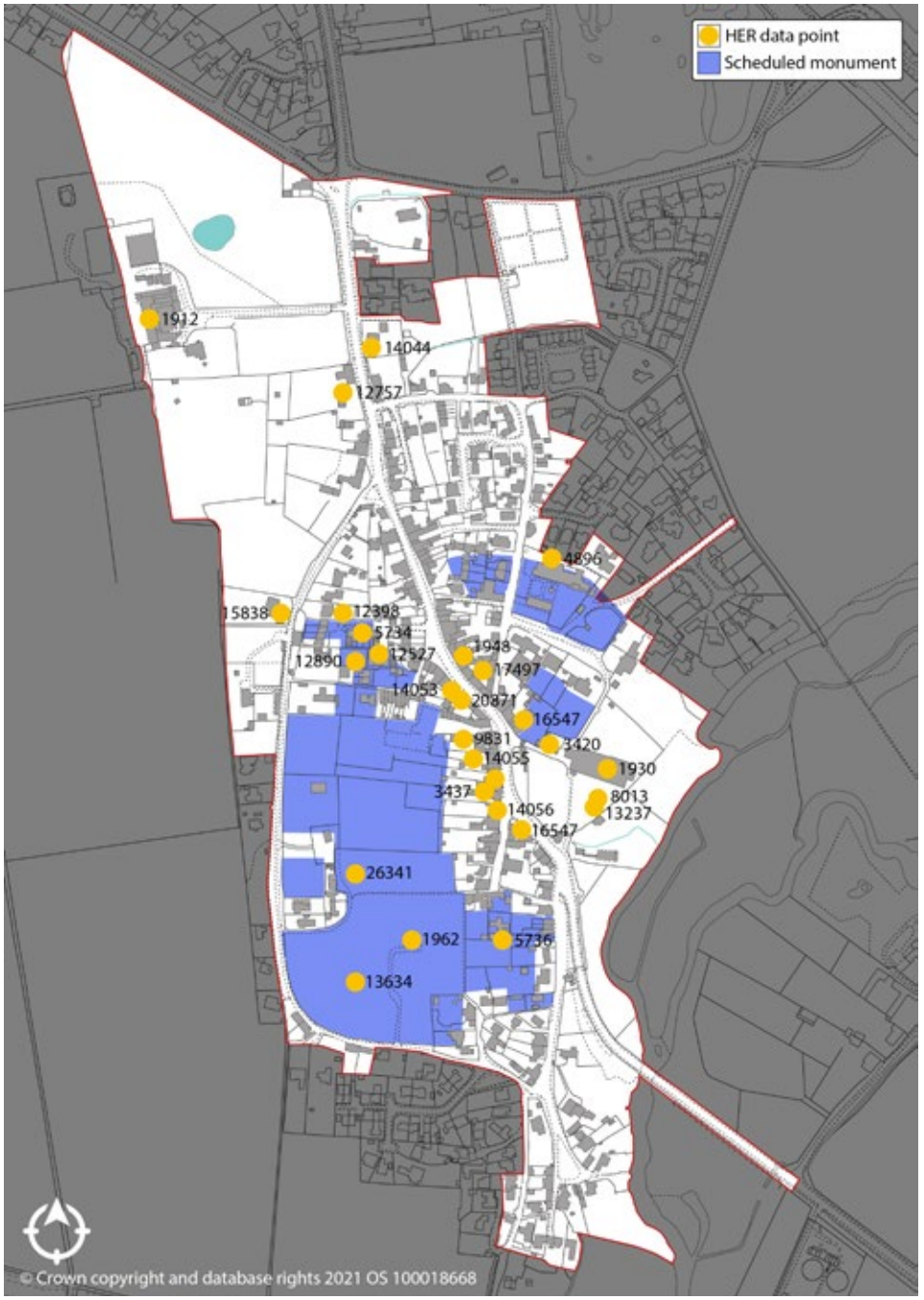
Roman period have been identified, along with trackways, ring ditches, a palisade, pits, several enclosures and wells.

Roman

Approximately 18 percent of the Dorchester conservation area is scheduled (SM1006331), which relates to the areas within the civil Roman settlement enclosed within the 2nd century earthen defences (PRN1948). As such numerous finds of Roman artefacts, burials and domestic settlement features have been identified within the Dorchester conservation area. These records are not limited to the scheduled monument, indicating significant activity beyond these areas and settlement fortifications.

A network of roads lead to or near this important early Roman settlement, including the proposed lines of the Roman roads from Alchester to Dorchester (Margary 160b; PRN8923), Dorchester to Silchester (Margary 160c; PRN8924), Dorchester to Wargrave to Henley (Margary 160cc; PRN28859), along with other identified Roman roads and trackways (PRNs 8543 and 26490). While clearly therefore an important settlement and trade centre, the name of the Roman town remains unknown (the name 'Dorchester' is first recorded by Bede in the early 8th century in the forms Dorcic, Dorciccaestræ).

Excavations, while limited, have helped to establish areas of activity and the development of the town. In the south-west corner of the allotments the town wall foundations were shown to be later (c.270-290CE) than the first rampart (c.160-185CE) (PRN13634). Robbed-out foundations of the northern defence wall were identified at Beechcroft (PRN12398) and a ditch representing the eastern defences is located at High Street (PRN16547). Wall footings of Roman buildings were found



Map of Dorchester showing HER data points and areas registered as scheduled monuments

to the rear of Penguin Cottage (PRN29564) and ditches presumed to belong to an extensive suburban development were identified north of the town (PRN12757). To the east of High Street several pits representing 1st-2nd century agricultural activity were observed (PRN17497); however, a marked scarcity of Roman material compared to other sites in the area suggests that this part of the town may not have been 'settled' for any length of time. Several isolated burials have been identified within the conservation area, but the larger (mostly late Roman) cemeteries appear to have been located outside the main town at Queenford Mill to the north (PRN5416), Wittenham Lane to the south (PRN5530, 28293, 28302, 28755), at Church Piece c.1km to the east (SM1003243; PRN10597), and at 14 Watling Lane to the west (PRN 15838). Graves are oriented east-west suggesting an early Christian religion. Settlement continued outside the fortified area. Extra-mural settlement has been identified just outside the scheduled area at St Birinus Primary School (PRN4896), south of Overy (PRN26421) and at Wittenham Lane (early Roman- later used as a cemetery (see above)). Just to the west of Bishops Court, outside the conservation area, lies a continuation of the Roman town in the form of ditched enclosures associated with a possible farmstead (PRN4437). A 4th century date is proposed for this settlement, which contained other late Roman features including post-holes, pits and possibly corn-drying ovens.

Early Medieval

Domestic occupation at west of Bishops Court continued into the Saxon period until the 6th-century, followed by use in the 7th-century as a small inhumation cemetery (PRN2893, 5733). Early Anglo-Saxon activity was also identified at Wittenham Lane in the form of pits and a possible grubenhaus (or sunken feature building). Within the conservation area evidence for Saxon structures in the form of grubenhauser and beam slots have been found at High Street (PRN29564), Beech House Hotel (PRN12527), Castle Inn (PRN5736) and the allotments (PRN1962, 26341). It has been suggested that the continuation of a sub-Roman settlement into the early Saxon period may have been a factor in Dorchester becoming the episcopal centre for the Kingdom of Wessex when Birinus chose it for his see in 634. His cathedral was originally founded in the 7th-century to the east of the area of the Roman fortified town at the location of the extant 12th-century Abbey Church of St Peter and St Paul (PRN1930). Saxon remains were identified during evaluation just to the north of church and inhumation burials were found beneath the west cloister (PRN8013). Multiple finds of Saxon pottery and burials have been recorded throughout the Dorchester conservation area but there is little recorded Saxon evidence from the Overy conservation area yet.

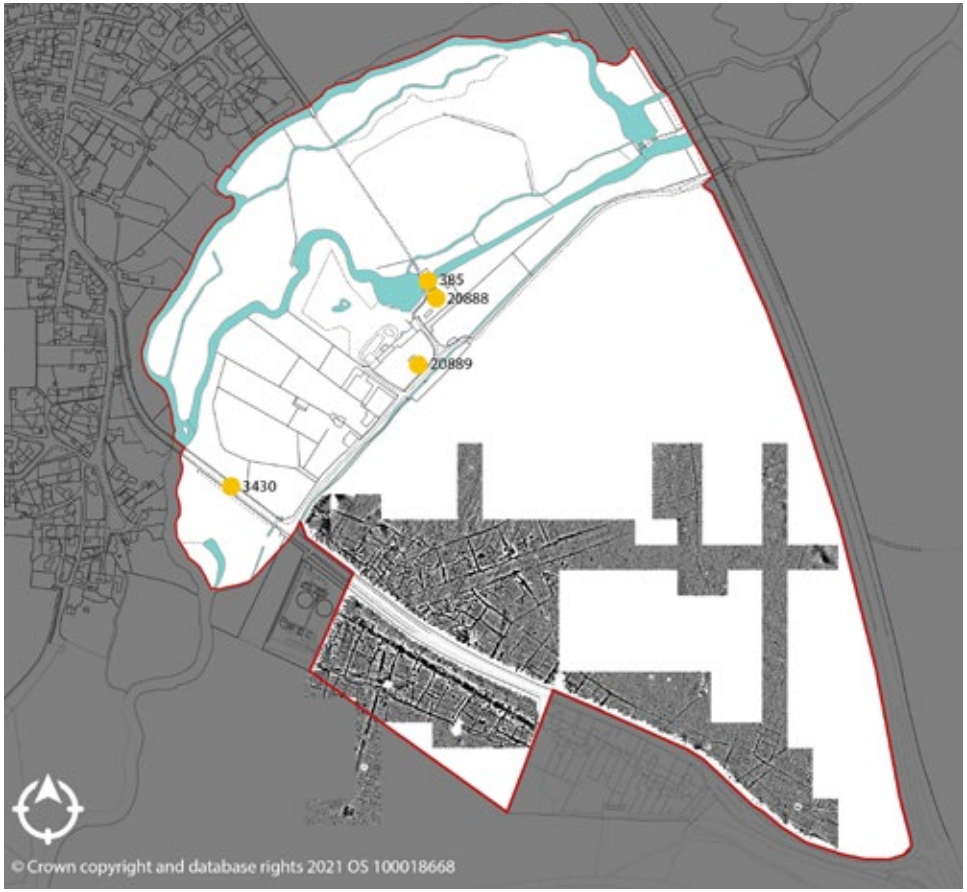
Medieval

By the time of the Domesday book in 1086 the bishopric had moved to Lincoln. Consequently, Dorchester may have experienced a decline in importance but nevertheless grew to a recorded population of 153 households, putting it in the largest 20% of settlements. The population of Overy is unclear but houses and a mill are recorded at Overy by 1146. A bridge connecting the two conservation areas was first recorded in 1146 and was replaced in the early 19th century (PRN28885, 3430). Dorchester cathedral was probably used as a church until it was re-founded as an Augustinian Monastery in 1140. It opened a tomb and shrine to St Birinus in 1225 making Dorchester a pilgrimage site. The abbey was dissolved, and the shrine destroyed in 1536. Documentary evidence suggests there were three churches in addition to Abbey Church although there are no extant remains. The present house of Bishop's Court is reputed to stand on the site of the

medieval bishop's palace (PRN1912), which was used to hold court. An associated tithe barn was demolished in the 1970s. Several buildings and structures originating in the medieval period do remain. The Abbey Church of St Peter and St Paul was altered and extended through the 12th-17th centuries and was restored on three occasions between 1845 and 1874. The churchyard cross originated in the C14/15th (PRN3427). The Abbey Guest House (PRN3420), now a museum and tearoom, was originally built in the late C15th as a monastic guest house. The George Hotel (PRN9831) is a rare intact example of a medieval courtyard inn and dates from c.1500 and is also likely to have served pilgrims coming to the town. Several houses on High Street were constructed in the late medieval period (PRN3437, 14044, 14053, 14055, 14056, 20871) forming a settlement focus near the church. A medieval well was also found at Beech House Hotel (PRN5734), where a lack of other buildings suggests this area may have been part of an extended square at the Abbey gates.

Post Medieval to modern

Many of the buildings along the main north-south route through Dorchester date to the post medieval period. The town lies on the main road between Oxford and Henley, which was turnpiked in 1736. By the early C18th a toll house existed at 6 High Street and housed a weighing engine when the new bridge (PRN3430) was rebuilt in 1813-1815. On the south side of the bridge in Overy, many of the buildings were constructed during this period, including the manor house (PRN20889) dating to 1712, and the C18th watermill (PRN385), used as corn mill, with associated millhouse (20888). Apart from alterations to earlier buildings, there has been little development in either conservation area during the 20th and 21st centuries.



Map of Overy showing locations of HER records. Magnetometry scans showing the historic extra-mural suburb have been overlaid (Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics, 2013)

Appendix B: Non-designated Heritage Assets

This following list of non-designated heritage assets (NDHA) has been compiled using the following criteria for selection as informed by paragraph 197 of the NPPF (2023) and paragraph 40 of the Historic Environment government guidance (2019), along with advice published by Historic England in Advice Note 7 (2nd Edition, 2021) on local heritage listing. The criteria are:

1. The decision to include a heritage asset on this list must be based on sound evidence of their significance. This significance may be defined by age, rarity, architectural and artistic interest, group value, archaeological interest, historic interest, or landmark status;

2. The heritage asset must make a positive contribution to the communities sustainability and economic vitality; and

3. The presence of a heritage asset on this list must not prevent them from being put to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

Please note: NDHA status is a material planning consideration, however, permitted development rights for NDHA's are no different than those of other non-statutorily listed buildings inside or outside of a conservation area.

What follows is a photographic record of each identified NDHA within the conservation area along with captioned summaries of their significance and justification for their inclusion. These are marked **blue** on the maps on pages 4 and 5.

Overy Court
Brick-built complex of single-storey farm buildings. C19. Originally associated with the Manor House and the Davey family of progressive farmers. Added for group value.

Field Barn
South-east of Overy Mill. Weather boarded with a clay tile roof. C18 Probably originally served the mill. Added for group value.

4 Bridge End
House of red brick with yellow brick dressings. Clay tile roof. Attached carriage house with timber doors and a hay loft above. Dated by inscription 1909. The house originally functioned as a sweet shop and tea room on the ground floor. Added for historic interest.

7 Bridge End
Cottage of coursed clunch with a tiled roof. One and a half-storeys high with a central entrance and two dormer windows. Roof possibly original thatched. Probably built on the waste after the demolition of the medieval bridge in 1816.

6 Bridge End, The Old Castle
Brick and clay tile with a rendered and timbered upper storey.
Early C20 in an arts & crafts idiom. Former public house for Halls Brewery of Oxford. Added for historic interest.

Plumtree Cottage, Bridge End
Rubble stone with brick dressings and a clay tiles roof. Gable end onto the road. One and a half-storeys high with a single dormer and a later lean-to along the length of the entrance elevation. Probably built on the waste after the demolition of the medieval bridge in 1816.

Loreto Cottage, Bridge End
Partly timber framed with a thatch roof. Gable end onto the road. One and a half-storeys high. Probably built on the waste after the demolition of the medieval bridge in 1816.

25 Bridge End
Brick with a tiled roof. Modern rebuild of a cottage that formed part of a terrace with the adjacent timber framed and thatched No 23. Group value.

15 Bridge End
Rubble stone and brick with a clay tile roof. Gable end onto the road. Probably built on the waste after the demolition of the medieval bridge in 1816. All rubble stone Bridge End properties are added for historic and archaeological interest.

17 Bridge End
Cob single-storey building with a slate roof to the south of the cottage. Built as the Primitive Methodist chapel and schoolroom in 1839. Despite its modern windows it is of great importance in understanding nonconformist worship in the village C19. Added for historic interest.

22 Bridge End
Brick with slate roof. Originally only one room deep with a rear outshot. Characteristic of modest C19 labourer's cottage. Added for group value.

17 Watling Lane
Painted brick cottage at right angles to the lane with a slate roof and a central entrance. Early C19 two-storeyed cottage along the roadside waste with later extensions to the rear. Added for group value.

Port House, Watling Lane
Large detached house of brick set back from the lane with its outbuildings. A C19 gentleman's house of a distinctive designed architectural character. The cob summerhouse with gothic windows is listed but there are two other outbuildings which contribute to the ensemble - a brick workshop parallel to the lane to the north (below) and a gardener's bothy of brick adjacent to the house. Added for historic and architectural interest.

47-49 Watling Lane
Semi-detached pair of brick cottages facing on to the allotments. Simple two-storeyed C19 workers cottages. Added for group value.

52-54 Watling Lane
Semi-detached pair of brick and tiled cottages parallel to the lane. C19 workers cottages. Two-storeys with a lean-to service area fronting onto the lane and the main aspect facing the open countryside to the south west. Probably built on the roadside waste to provide accommodation for the labouring workforce. Added for group value.

51 Watling Lane
Rendered and slate roofed cottage adjoining 47-9 above. A detached two-storeyed cottage with a modest extension. Added for group value.

62 Watling Lane
Brick cottage in header bond with a slate roof. Probably built on the roadside waste to provide accommodation for the labouring workforce. Added for group value.

Peppers Plot, Watling Lane
Brick cottage with a slate roof. C19 with a later extension to the west. Probably built on the road-side waste to provide accommodation for the labouring workforce. Added for group value.

Cob Cottage, Malthouse Lane
Two-storeyed cottage of cob with a slate roof parallel to the lane. Mid C19 cottage providing evidence of the continued use of cob as a building material at that period. Added for group value and architectural interest.

The Old Cottage, 69 Watling Lane
Brick with some timber and a thatched roof. Parallel to the lane. One and a half-storeys high with a central entrance and a lean-to outshot. Of late C17 or early C18 date and probably the earliest surviving labourer's cottage in the village. Added for historic interest and group value.

Garage to 3A, Malthouse Lane
Simple cob building with pitched roof and doors in gable end. C19. The last surviving structure of the forge which originally occupied the yard. Added for historic interest.

Jemmets Row, Martin's Lane
Brick-built terrace of vitrified headers with a clay tile roof. At right angles to the lane. C19 terraced housing. The rubble stone gable end fronting the lane shows evidence for the incorporation of an earlier house. Added for architectural interest and group value.

The Old School, 11 Queen Street
More restrained design in brick with segmental arched windows and a bellcote in the gable end facing the street. Built in 1896 as the Boys school. The design reflects the shift from gothic to Queen Anne at the end of the century. Added for historic interest.

Village Hall, Queen Street
Distinctive gothic building in English Bond brickwork with stone dressings. Gable end to street with two pointed windows surmounted by a rose window. Designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott as the Girls and Infants school and built in 1871. Added for historic and architectural interest.

12 Queen Street
Timber and brick cottage with a clay tile roof. Probably early C18 with later additions. Added for architectural interest.

14-16 Queen Street
Brick-built semi-detached pair of two-storeys with vitrified headers and a slate roof. Example of C19 housing away from the medieval High Street of a slightly higher status than the developments in Watling Lane. Added for group value and historic interest.

18-20 Queen Street
Brick-built semi-detached pair of two-storeys with a clay tile roof and a central chimney stack. Part of a group with 14-16 and 22-4. Added for group value.

Abbey Cottages, 22-24 Queen Street
Brick-built semi-detached pair with stone dressings and a clay tile roof with decorative ridge tiles. Decorative key stones to the windows. Dated 1889 by inscription. Part of a group of semi-detached houses with 14-16 and 18-20. Added for group value.

Cemetary Chapel
Gothic stone building with ogee heads to the mullion windows and a central archway with decorative timberwork. Unroofed. A key building in the C19 social and religious history of the community. Added for historic interest.

Cow Shed, Cloister Garden
Brick with a clay tile roof and offset door. C19. Said to have been built to supply fresh milk to the adjacent Rectory. Added for group value.

Two Pill Boxes
One at either end of the Dyke Hills*. Brick and concrete. Built in response to the invasion scare in World War II, they demonstrate the strategic importance of the confluence of the Thame and the Thames from the Iron Age to the C20. Added for historic interest and landmark status.

3 High Street
Brick-built butcher's shop and adjacent weather-boarded barn. Dated by inscription 1860. Terminates view at south end of High Street. Added for group value.

*Note that due to the distance between these pill boxes and the main settlement, they are not shown on the maps in this document.

Dorchester Demesne Field
Shown above outlined in orange. The Demesne Field forms an important part of the open landscape setting of the village and acts as a buffer to the noise and activity of the by-pass. It contains a number of known archaeological features as recorded on the Historic Environment Record (REF). It is flanked on its southern boundary by the tree-lined River Thame and on its western boundary by one of the shaded footpaths that are characteristic of the village. The by-pass along the eastern boundary is well hidden by a line of mature trees. Added as an Area of Special Local Character for archaeological and historic interest.

For further information and advice on conservation areas please contact:

South Oxfordshire District Council
Abbey House
Abbey Close
Abingdon
OX14 3JE

Tel: 01235 422600
Email: planning@southoxon.gov.uk

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