
Conservation Area Character Survey

ABBOTSBROOK



What is a conservation area?

Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, which are considered worthy of preservation or enhancement. They are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Within conservation areas there are special controls on some alterations to buildings and their demolition or partial demolition and on works to trees. The Council's guidance note on conservation areas gives further details of the specific controls that apply. Designation of a conservation area does not preclude the possibility of new development, and preservation should not be thought of as a purely negative process or as an impediment to progress. New development, where appropriate, must however be carefully designed to positively enhance the appearance and special character of the area.

The purpose of this survey

The designation of a conservation area imposes specific duties on Local Authorities to formulate and publish proposals to ensure that the special characteristics of the area are preserved and enhanced. This conservation area character survey describes the main features of the

special architectural and historic interest which justifies the designation of Abbotsbrook as a conservation area. The map defines the extent of the area of Abbotsbrook Conservation Area, and identifies many of the features which contribute to the character and interest of the area. The surrounding areas form the setting of the conservation area when viewed from both within and outside, and are thus also very important.

This survey is in accordance with Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and PPG 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment), complies with the requirements of PPG12 (Development Plans). As a Supplementary Planning Document it is intended to complement the approved policies HE6 to HE11 for Conservation Areas in the Council's adopted Wycombe District Local Plan and is consistent with para 11.38 within. It is a material planning consideration when deciding planning, listed building and conservation area applications.

This survey was the subject of public consultation prior to adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. The views of the consultees were taken into account and in some instances changes were made. A copy of all representations made to the Council during public consultation and the Council's response to those representations is available from the District Council Offices.

CONTEXT

Abbotsbrook Conservation Area is located in the area of the Abbotsbrook estate, an early 20th century planned settlement which lies between the historic hamlet of Well End and the River Thames in Bourne End. The estate covers some 45 acres (18.8 hectares). Streams from a spring at Well End run through the estate from north to south, converging to form the Stanbrook before joining the Thames at the boathouse adjacent to Bourne End marina. A railway line delineates the southern boundary of the conservation area, both physically and in terms of character. A separate conservation area covers the settlement of Well End, now merged into the larger village of Bourne End. Abbotsbrook and the wider environs of Bourne End and Well End lie south of the M40 and the conurbation of High Wycombe, joined to the eastern end of that town by a continuous ribbon of development along the River Wye Valley. The site lies within the River Thames flood plain, and to the west lies open countryside, and the Little Marlow Gravel Pits. The Bucks Landscape Plan classifies the area as Thames Valley: Valley Floodplain (Z11).

HISTORY

Bourne End and Well End were small villages until the coming of the railway. It was this event in 1854 that did more to open up the area for development, and in the course of time utterly changed its appearance. Until then Bourne End had been a small village on the road to Hedsor, with a few wharves on the riverside and Gunpowder Mill close to where the River Wye joins the Thames. The nearby village of Well End was an ancient settlement as evidenced by the number of medieval buildings that remain on this important route between Marlow and Hedsor. Until the turn of the 19th and 20th century only one small pocket of houses lay between the two settlements, and the surrounding area consisted of farmland and orchards. There was plenty of open water and streams to provide cress beds, which were in operation until well into the 20th century.

Abbotsbrook is an unusual conservation area in that it is based on a planned settlement laid out during the period 1898 to 1907 by Robert Haden Tebb, over part of the grounds of the former Abbey. The medieval history of the site is interesting although little physical evidence remains: the historic landscape pattern does however relate to the layout of the estate today.

Medieval History.

Abbotsbrook Estate is laid out to the south and east of Well End, along the banks of a trout stream that ran through the grounds of the former Benedictine St. Mary's Priory (referred to by writers as a Nunnery), latterly a farm, and now almost gone, although some of the fabric remains in the grounds of "The Abbey" and in the form of the former Tithe Barn.



The Ford

Sources refer to The Benedictine Nunnery on the site as "De Fontibus der Marlowe" (Records of Bucks Vol IV p64-73). In brief it was a small and not wealthy religious house, its name perhaps a namesake of the great Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire and a reference to the spring that fed the watercourses. Its foundation date has not been unequivocally established although references in documents of the period suggest that it dates from the 13th century, and its foundation may have been due to the De Clare family, Lords of the Manor at Little Marlow during the reign of Henry III. Glazed tiles have been found of this date on the site with the crest of the De Clare family on them.

The Priory, which never supported a large number of nuns, was suppressed on 23rd June 1538, despite the efforts of the last Prioress Margaret Vernon. She was later appointed the Abbess of Malling, a short lived appointment as that house was also suppressed in 1538. The lands and possessions were given to Henry VIII's refoundation of Bisham Abbey, and when that great house followed the fate of other monasteries shortly afterwards the site was granted to John Tytley and Elisabeth Restwold.

As the convent buildings were small and simple, the new owners did not move into them as was often the case with monastic houses. Instead they became farm buildings and a source of local building materials from the 16th century onwards. Mention by various contemporary writers chart the buildings destruction: the great hall was pulled down in 1740 (Lysons; "Magna Brittanica"); by 1797 only part of the tower remains (Langley: "The history of the antiquities of the Hundred of Desborough"). Revisiting the site in 1801 Langley writes (in "The Beauties of England and Wales") that "scarcely any part of the convent is now standing, the principal materials having been used in the construction of a farmhouse."

Post Medieval History:

The 1878 OS Map shows Abbey Farm and the Tithe Barn to the west and some cottages at the north end of the road that is now The Avenue where it joins the main road (then called Spring Gardens). These have now disappeared.

In the latter half of the 19th century development began to boom in adjacent Bourne End. In 1891 speculative housing development started on land to the east. The Abbey lands were at that time owned by Lord Carrington



footbridge on The Avenue

as part of his Little Marlow estate. When the tenant farmer died, he was keen to sell off the land, and in the mid-1890s the estate was purchased by Robert Haden Tebb, a London architect and surveyor. He realised that the streams running through the area were key to its character and ensured on the plans he drew up that most properties had access to or frontage to water. He also arranged access to the waterways from the Thames. The popularity of sailing in the late Victorian and early Edwardian period was fundamental to the development of the estate, with direct links to the Upper Thames Sailing Club and the associated regattas as well as a ferry link to Cockmarsh on the opposite bank of the Thames. Sailing Club Road and Lockbridge Road were already in place, being part of an adjacent development carried out by Aaron Williams; these in time became incorporated into the Abbotsbrook. Further details of the development of the estate are given in "The Story of Abbotsbrook", by Brian B. Wheals.

The grounds of the Abbey were excavated in 1902 when the house was owned by A. Vaughn Williams. This excavation, written up in Records of Bucks, (Vol V111, No 5) conjectures the layout of the buildings and appearance of the nunnery.

Haden Tebb did much to develop the estate along the lines seen today, although there has been much modern infill. Initially older houses were renovated and a few new ones built. By 1907 there were about 35 properties on the estate, mostly detached houses. Haden Tebb went bankrupt in 1907 and the estate was put up for sale by auction in 46 lots, both of houses and of building plots - an early plan shows a far higher density (in the region of 150 individual plots) than seen today. Many adjacent plots were sold together, and fortunately not every individual plot has since been built upon, which has done much to

retain the spacious feel of the estate and create its unique character. Furthermore a building line of 20 feet ensured that dwellings remained well within their plots and did not crowd the roadside.

Many of the "cottages" and villas were constructed as second homes for Londoners - the GWR ran to Bourne End. Press cuttings of the day describe the "village" as "an extremely rural and reposeful place for a Summer and all-the-year-round sojourn". Abbotsbrookians could enjoy a Regatta, a Venetian Fete, sailing, and had private access to the waterways that run through the estate. The streamsidings were dotted with boathouses and the recreational function of the Thames was emphasised in the sale particulars.

Since 1907 the estate has appointed Trustees to administer the estate, preserve the privacy, security, tranquillity, tidiness and good repair of the estate; this arrangement (including approval for any development) continues to this day, and has been essential in the preservation of character.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The site of The Abbey has been excavated in the past, when the remnants of the Benedictine Priory were recorded. The former Tithe Barn to the west of The Abbey is also of interest. It does not appear that any archeological excavation was undertaken during the development of the estate, nonetheless areas of the settlement are of historic interest. Opportunities for further archaeological investigation of the medieval areas would be welcomed.

Accordingly the Council will apply the principles set out



The Abbey

in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Archaeology and Planning) to ensure adequate assessment and evaluation of the archaeological implications of proposed development and, where appropriate, to secure necessary mitigation through the recording of both the above and below ground features of interest.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Abbotsbrook is entirely different from the suburbs of Bourne End, which now envelops the estate to the north and east. It is a private enclave of leafy streets, watercourses, and attractive early 20th century houses and cottages in a distinctive Vernacular Revival style, with low key modern infill development concentrated at the southern part of the Estate. The houses sit in spacious grounds, with ample off road parking, and due to the private ownership of the estate itself there is not a blight of on-street car parking so prevalent elsewhere in built up areas. This is a key part of the character of the area, enhanced by grass verges, much tree cover, and a riverine environment, with fords and locks terminating roadways. The northern limits of the conservation area, particularly north of the Marlow Road, are also affected by the heavy traffic that uses this road.

A key feature of the conservation area is the lock, believed to be the smallest working lock in England, and very picturesque.

Although the conservation area has no listed buildings,

The Village Hall



there are still a number of attractive buildings within it which present a microcosm of early 20th century style, and employ a variety of flamboyant Edwardian stylistic details - timber framing, tile hanging, balconies etc. This is a conservation area designated by virtue of how a planned layout, overlying a historic area, relates to the form of the land, streams and vegetation to create a unique locality.

The Conservation Area was first designated in 1981, and extended to the west to

incorporate more of the setting in 1989.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

The Conservation Area contains no buildings on the Statutory List of Buildings of architectural and historic interest, due in the main to the fact that the buildings that exist are either too recent, or in the case of the medieval remnants, too altered to merit statutory listing. Regardless of this many of the buildings on the estate are architecturally and stylistically interesting.

Development of an Architectural theme

The Estate contains a number of buildings in the "Vernacular Revival" style, which was informed by the Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th century. Architects of the time were inspired by the likes of Norman Shaw and Charles Voysey who developed a style which rejected classicism and foreign styles, and instead concentrated on creating a traditional local English style based on Medieval and Tudor architecture. The idiom is characterised by half timbering, steeply pitched tiled roofs incorporating gables and dormers, leaded light windows, use of roughcast, and decorative tilehanging. In many cases the character of buildings is created by the detailing, use of materials and appearance of the buildings; not created by a pattern book as such, but more by Edwardian references to earlier

Priory Ford





The Abbey

architectural styles.

As a style it became diluted through use, informing great swathes of suburban housing up until the 1920's, and earning the sobriquet "Tudor-bethan", but in its earliest incarnations, such as in Abbotsbrook, the architecture is vibrant and interesting.

Medieval remnants

The Abbey - This house was once Abbey Farm. There are remnant buildings and structures on the site relating to the former Priory; and walling is still visible. There is a stone coffin in the grounds. Some of the outbuildings appear to be in the vernacular - with flint and or clunch used as building materials - a rare occurrence in Abbotsbrook and probably reused from the Priory remains.

The present building is a large residence in manorial style with timber detailing incorporated from another site (unknown). The original building has been much altered and extended, over time, with white rendering on the front elevation and applied timberframing detailing. Of particular note are the grand canted bay windows with leaded lights, and the decorative extended porch. Originally a brick and stone house, early photographs show the original frontage to have a standard Victorian style. In the early 20th century

Streamside



it was reinvented architecturally as a grand Tudor style residence, with new wings to the eastern and western ends of the main block, which have greatly extended the main elevation. The frontage has a proliferation of bays, dormers and gables, all with decorative half timbered details, and leaded light windows. The rear wing is of brick with some clunch, probably remains or reused materials from the older buildings on the site.

To the north of the Abbey lies **Chant Cottage**, located on the site of the former farm buildings, as shown on the 1883 map, and quite possibly converted from these earlier buildings. This building has a lower roofline than many of the later houses in the locality, with a dormered upper floor, and a turret feature on the roof. Now extended, this cottage is likely to predate The Abbotsbrook estate.

Tithe Barns

A remnant monastic building with a timberframe, which is structural as opposed to decorative - the purlins in the roof can clearly be seen on the gable ends, and the timbers appear more ancient than elsewhere. The front elevation has wind braces which support the eaves. It has been converted into 4 dwellings, Tythe Barn, Ivy Bridge, Barn Cottage and Brookside, probably soon after the estate was set up - an earlier map does not show a divided boundary.

Abbots Thatch





River Thatch

The northern-most cottage, Brookside, has early 20th century outshots with catslide roofs; the whole range of cottages is most attractively sited on the banks of the stream, and accessed by wooden bridges. Of particular note are the massive decorated brick chimneys, which are prominent in the roofscape. The building is referred to in a number of architectural sources when describing the nunnery.

Original Estate Buildings

This refers to buildings that predate the 1907 auction as identified on the estate map. It has not been possible to identify the exact date of construction for these buildings, but stylistically they are turn of the century. Some are shown on the 1899 OS sheet, including Aspenden, Bourne Court, Otters Pool and River Thatch - all originally thatched cottages; also Priory Ford, The Poplars, Langholme, The Homestead (now demolished), Stanbrook Cottage, Willow Hedge and Abbots Gate.

The **Village Hall** is one of the original buildings on the estate and was included in the sales details of 1907. The detailing is pure Voysey-esque albeit on a small scale, and the building exhibits some particular influences that are picked up on other buildings within the estate. In particular the long, low continuous roof surface, low swept eaves, buttresses, and horizontal fenestration are all features used by Voysey on his Arts and Crafts buildings, and

The Birches



his stylistic influence is seen in the clean simple lines of this public building. Detail is expressed through the gablet windows at each end of the roof.

Large pre-1907 Detached Houses

Most of the houses on Abbotsbrook are substantial by today's standards, but there are two that are worth particular mention, in addition to The Abbey described above. The first of these is **Priory Ford**, built by Haden Tebb for himself and to his own design. At the time of the 1907 auction the Priory Ford gardens encompassed all the land on the west side of The Avenue between the stream and the road - there are now three houses on

this area. The gardens of Priory Ford remain large though and contain a particularly fine rustic thatched boathouse, sited on a small island at a confluence of streams. It is here that Edgar Wallace and Tom Stoppard are said to have written some of their books and plays. Priory Ford has two accesses, from The Avenue and from The Drive. The house itself is a large rambling Edwardian edifice, white painted, with applied timberframing details to the upper storeys, a proliferation of bay and oriel windows, and balconies at upper floor level overlooking the stream. The main elevation is hidden from view facing into the site.

Priory Ford Lodge is a small original lodge house sited adjacent to the bridge on Lockbridge Road and next to the lock. It is very picturesque.

The Dene lies adjacent, well situated on the banks of the stream and overlooking the lock. Similar in size to Priory Ford, it has fewer half-timbered details, mostly on dormer gables. A feature of the house is its balconies on the front elevation, and projecting glazed bays with leaded lights. There is a fine modern interpretation of a "crinkle-crankle" wall along the boundary of the property.

Thatched Cottages

A key early architectural theme of Abbotsbrook was the construction of thatched cottages, an echo of the early 18th century cottage-ornee style, with rusticated dwellings in a sylvan rural idyll. Here the cottages are well spread out over the estate, and when originally constructed would

Cherry Tree House





Bourne Court



1 Abbey Road



The Abbey

have added to the rural idyll ethos that Haden Tebb was trying to achieve.

Aspenden lies to the north of the upper ford on the Avenue. Two storeys, with a jettied elevation, bay windows, and a modern conservatory well designed to tie in with the original architecture. The lower floor is white painted roughcast, the upper floor has close studded applied timber framing, and the thatch has decorative ridgework.

River Thatch lies to the south of the lower ford, across the road from Priory Ford Cottage. One arm of the stream runs along the plot's northern boundary, and the house is set well back from the road. It is an extremely picturesque thatched cottage with thatched roof dormers, including an unusual circular one. The building has roughcast Arts and Crafts style chimneys (a feature seen elsewhere within the conservation area), and simple projecting ground floor bays. The building has been extended to the rear in a two storey half timbered style.

Otters Pool lies to the north, separated from River Thatch by a modern house, Herons Pool. This dwelling fronts the road, and has river access at the rear. A thatched, rendered building with low eaves and some tile hanging on the northern gable, it is essentially two stories, but the eaves sweep down at the front and the roof has a gable projection as well as thatched dormers. A balcony is incorporated into the thatch - not a vernacular tradition, but nonetheless an attractive architectural detail. Again the thatch has exuberant ridge detailing.

Abbots Thatch lies to the north and continues the thatched theme of some of the Abbotsbrook buildings, although this is not one of the earlier houses, and post dates 1913. It is in a more traditional style than the earlier thatched buildings.

Family Villas

There were a number of other original dwellings at the time of the Auction. These can be very loosely grouped into categories:

Houses fronting Oakfield Road:

The buildings here were originally part of a different development scheme, however their design set the tone for the rest of the estate. They can be differentiated by the narrowness of their plots. These buildings sit far closer together, although they retain large rear gardens.

Six dwellings along Oakfield Road date from the same time,

yet show a variety of architectural styles. **Countryside** is essentially a Victorian bungalow, in the colonial style, with a verandah around two sides of the building, and dormer windows providing upper floor accommodation. Much of the intricate detailing, for example the carved ornamental boards at eaves level, remains, although unfortunately this dwelling, like many others, has been retiled with concrete interlocking tiles. **Fir Trees** adjacent is similar, although lacking the verandah detail, it does nonetheless retain some particularly fine window details on the lower floor, and again has decorative carved eaves detailing. A large three storey dwelling, **The Moorings**, dominates the roadside, and utilises decorative tile hanging to great effect. This building also has a balcony, a design feature which is prevalent on original buildings within the estate. On the corner, **No 22**, a brick and white rendered house with applied timberframing on the gable ends, again a design feature picked up within the estate. Across Lock Bridge Road two more houses, **Abbotsmead** and **Homeside** also lie within the conservation area (beyond is the modern development of Thames Close) These are probably by the same builder, dating from 1896, and both with elaborate tilehanging to the front and balconies, their roofs dominated by tall end stacks.

Houses along Sailing Club Road and Lock Bridge Road are detached properties: those to the south on a more random plot layout, dictated by the line of the railway. **Abbey Way**, and **Abbey Way Cottage**, do not have stream access. The former, (formerly Abbey Bungalow), is in a very similar style to the village hall, particularly the long low roofline, horizontal dormers and chimney detail. It is set well back from the road, and has a dominant halftimbered gable. On the north side of Sailing Club Road, **Abbots Gate** (originally the poetic "Cottage by the Gate"), **Swans Way** and **Willow Hedge** all exhibit the half timbered style over white painted roughcast. Original houses on the north side of Lock Bridge Road include **Withy Cottage**, **White Lodge** and **Lock Bridge**

Details





Tithe Barn Group



Homeside



Priory Ford Lodge

House, again in a white roughcast and half timbered style. Lock Bridge House has gables and dormers enlivening its roof, in particular a Dutch Gable which adds interest, and a verandah and balcony overlooking the bridge.

Stanbrook Cottage lies to the south of Sailing Club Road, aligned to the streamside. Originally on a large plot, which was subdivided in 1907, it was for some years called The Venetian Bungalow, and is one of the few houses in Abbotsbrook to have a view of the Thames. This exhibits the fine arches seen under the houses in flood prone areas, and is a low eaved building with half timbering. It was for some years the home of Hubert Bowes Lyon, cousin to the Queen Mother.

Bourne Court, at the termination of Sailing Club Road, lies in extensive grounds with open countryside beyond, and is well screened from the rest of the estate. The brook runs through its garden, and beyond the boundary lies open countryside. It was one of the original thatched houses in Abbotsbrook, but has since been reroofed in tile. Remnants of the floodwater basement arches remain.

Semis on The Drive:

South of the Abbey, on the north side of the road, lie a number of original dwellings. **Ansty Cottage** lies close to the road opposite the Tithe Barns, and has framing details to its gables. **Creek Cottage** is a detached house set well back from the road, and to the north of the stream. To the south of the stream, a run of semi detached houses in what could be termed the definitive Abbotsbrook style,

Cherry Tree House



all half timbering and attractive gables. **Bridge End** and **Briar Holme** are cottagey, with the upper floor in the roof - the buildings have dormers to both roofslopes, and large decorative stacks which echo those at the Tithe Barn dwellings. Bridge End is important in the street scene - its gable end emphasised by a massive brick stack, which stands out on the white rendered elevation. Adjacent lie **Streamside** and **The Birches**, with a high central gable, subsidiary gables on each side, and dominant timber-framing incorporating curved decorative bracing. Both have later additions, in keeping with the gabled theme of the originals. On the river side the roofline pattern is of four gables over a verandah. **Langholme** is a detached house, one of the first to be built, and now screened by hedging. It too is in a more vernacular style, with a low eaves to part of the roof, a half-timbered gable, an unusual semicircular dormer with balcony, and a semi-octagonal bay at ground floor.

Beyond this a pair of houses, both semi-detached dwellings which are of identical plan, with dominant bays, but with varying half timbered details - **Ryder Lodge** and **Briar Hedge** have vertical elements, **Greenleaves** and **Winterholm** have arched bracework.

Houses by the Pool:

There is a cluster of original dwellings where the stream widens out into a pool, between the Tithe Barn Cottages and Aspenden. Two lie on a spur of land next to the Ford - both unusual in that they have slate roofs as opposed to the ubiquitous tile. Both "**The Ford**" and "**By the Pool**" were originally dwellings constructed over boathouses. By the Pool has a variety of interesting windows, and its lower floor remains delineated from the upper by the use of weatherboarding. The Ford has been extended to the side, the original range retains a degree of jettied over the former boathouse accommodation.

Across the water, and set back from the edge of the pool lies **Cherry Tree House**, which can be glimpsed from The Avenue. This is roughcast with half timbering to the upper floor - originally the ground floor was brick. **Cornerways** is similar in style, this together with its former boathouse, is completely hidden from view. The grounds of these houses are laid out



By The Pool



Bridge



Little Streams

to the rear and form the boundary of the conservation area.

Houses to the north:

In the northern part of the conservation area the original buildings are more scattered. There are two groupings on the north side of the Marlow Road. Two houses on the corner of Marlow Road and Abbey Road are in the half timbered style of the rest of the estate, although more closely crowded and as a result have an urban form. **Abbey View** is particularly decorative, festooned with balconies. Both have slate roofs. Between The Avenue and Farm Road the buildings may predate the original layout of the estate. **Brookhurst** dates from 1895 and is a substantial red brick villa addressing the corner with decorative gables, and a gabled porch running the length of the house. Beyond lies a run of large semis, **The Millstone, Fairfield, Rosslyn and Kingsdene** have unusual and attractive porches. These houses are different in character to the ones within the boundaries of Abbotsbrook, due to the use of brick rather than render, increased bulk and height, and proximity to each other and the main road. Opposite lies **Chesterton** in the Abbotsbrook style.

Other pre-1907 villas are **The Poplars** on Farm Road, which had a similar plan to Abbots Gate and is probably by the same builder, and Chesterton.

Post 1907 buildings

Between 1907 and 1925 some infill building had occurred within the estate, again in traditional style and in keeping with the overall architectural themes. Houses such as **Brook Cottage** (1921), **The White Cottage** (both white with close studding), **Little Abbots** and **Orchard Cottage** (chalet style with dormers) all lie on The Avenue. **Abbots Close** with its Arts and Crafts style rendered chimneys is a late addition in keeping with the theme of the estate - it dates from around 1939 and replaced the workshop buildings. A further cluster of infilling from the period lies around Stanbrook Cottage - the substantial **White Barns** remains, aligned to the stream as is the replacement dwelling Fordham House. White Barns (1914) is one of the larger houses within the conservation area and exhibits classic Arts and Crafts detailing, particularly in terms of roofline, window treatment and eyebrow dormer. The building has plain white painted brickwork and pale blue woodwork and it's clean pared down lines provide a foil to the half timbering elsewhere in Abbotsbrook. The building is well set back from the road, and it's imposing facade plays less of a role in the streetscene than other grand

houses.

The Chantry is a large, well screened villa on a corner plot by one of the entrances from Oakfield Road, with white rendered chimneys, leaded light windows and half timbered details. It was built in 1908 and is identified as one of the older buildings on the estate, although it post dates the sale.

Post 1926 houses include **Sentosa**, set well back within its plot, **Abbots Thatch** and **Woodstock**. Abbots Thatch is a later thatched cottage in domestic revival style, Woodstock has Arts and Crafts influences. **Trees** is a chalet style house with dormers, similar in character to Orchard Cottage. The village workshop site is now occupied by Abbots Close (circa 1939).

Most other houses on the estate are much later infill, the majority, particularly to the east, are modern bungalows.

The Lock





Priory Ford Lodge

These are quite low key and do not distract from the main character of the half timbered buildings. Two storey modern buildings have tended to follow the architectural themes with half timbering on the upper levels, and/or use of gables and dormers in the roof slopes.

Other buildings of note:

There are a few boathouses and ancillary structures within the conservation area - these are quirky little buildings which are not highly visible in the street scene, yet relate to the riverside environment. Priory Ford's thatched boathouse is very picturesque. White Barns has a detached garage based on a modernist boathouse style, which is architecturally interesting, and nearby is a small quaint prefab, painted in white and green. These incidental buildings all add interest to the conservation area, although they differ from the prevailing architecture. Also very different is a new build house on The Avenue, which provides an exemplar of how innovative modern design can be fitted into a conservation area. **Luccotts** is modestly scaled in character, wooden, with steeply pitched roof, and glazing to the main road side gable elevation. The design is boathouse inspired, linking the building to its context, and the materials are traditional, in keeping with conservation area requirements.

MATERIALS:

A key material in the conservation area is decorative rather than structural. Half timbering is a keystone of the Vernacular Revival style and is used to varying degrees on many of the Abbotsbrook buildings. The Tithe Barn Cottages have original timberframing, which seems to have provided a template for the rest of the buildings, elsewhere it has merely been applied as decorative detail - especially on The Abbey which has been transformed from a standard dwelling into a theatrical manorial style edifice with great effect.

Tile is the main roofing material in the conservation area; plain clay roof tiling is used on the majority of the older buildings, although some of this has unfortunately been replaced with modern concrete roofing tiles in some areas. A key feature is the sweeping roofs of some of the buildings, their

steep pitches and low eaves prominent. Spanish roof tiles have been used at Bourne Court to replace the original thatch, an approach that has worked on this particular building. Slate is rare for the period of buildings, as a result of original material guidelines laid down on the deeds, but can be seen on By The Pool and on houses along Marlow Road. Thatched buildings scattered throughout the conservation area provide a pleasing contrast; the thatch is enlivened by decorative edgings and is somewhat fancier than a traditional thatch. Roofs throughout the conservation area are embellished with dormers, gables and decorative bargeboard and ridging tiles in places.



White Barns



Otters Pool

Render is utilised extensively on the early buildings, generally roughcast, and painted white. It is used as accents on some chimneys, and it adds to the Arts and Crafts feel of the buildings, particularly when used on canted chimney stacks and the buttresses on the village hall. The use of white painted render contrasts with the half timbering detailing that is the key decorative theme within Abbotsbrook.

Brick and tile hanging tends to be employed on buildings at the edges of the original estate. Those on Marlow Road use more brick, whilst on Oakfield Road, brick and tile hanging is employed to give a decorative effect to the main elevations of the buildings. Some of the buildings are of white painted brick rather than roughcast, which continues the black and white visual theme. In fact modern rendering techniques do not generally give a satisfactory effect.

As well as the main building materials used on the houses,





details

detailing plays a key role in establishing character. Balconies are a feature on many of the houses, ranging from grand balconies that run across the whole frontage, to small ones serving individual rooms. Otters Pool has a fine one on the key thatched gable, houses such as Bourne Court, Lock Bridge House and The Dene have grander affairs that enliven their facades. Many other houses have balconies, but as they face the streamside, for example at Priory Ford, they are not as noticeable.

Porches and verandahs are also common design features, although verandahs are generally located on streamside elevations and are thus not as visible in the streetscene. Most buildings have porches, often incorporated into the buildings as part of the original design, sometimes with balconies above. The Tithe Barn Cottages have traditional tiled porches breaking up the front elevation - the porch roofs tying in with the grand sweep of the tiled roof above.

Windows in the conservation area tend, on the key historic buildings, to be plain white painted casements, some retain their leaded lights. Decorative windows are also found - from the small round windows on River Thatch, to large decorative bays and projections found on the larger houses.

Chimneys play a key role in the conservation area, and are in places particularly fine. Many are of brick with brick embellishments, the massive stacks on the Tithe Barn group break up the roofslope and are highly decorative with offset stacks. End stacks of brick punctuate the roughcast gables at Lock Bridge House and Bridge End, elsewhere chimneys dominate the roofs of Priory Ford Lodge, Homeside and Abbotsmead, and the semis on the drive. Rendered chimneys also feature, some with brick capping - River Thatch, Abbots Close, The Chantry and Abbey Way all employ render to create a contrast. Many of the later buildings also have chimneys.

LANDSCAPE, TREES AND VEGETATION:

Two key factors in the character of this particular

hedges



conservation area. The stream forms an important, although mostly hidden, link between the areas, and most of the buildings in the main part of the estate are aligned to it - fundamental for the form of layout. There are places, particularly at the bridge by The Lock, by the fords and in the area around the Tithe Barn and pool, where the stream becomes the dominant feature in the conservation area. Here the riverine environment is clear, with buildings glimpsed in their streamside setting, and reflected in the water. Around the pool, the loose grouping of buildings beyond the Tithe Barn cottages can be seen through the riverside vegetation. The Tithe Barn buildings face directly onto the stream and are accessed by wooden footbridges. Elsewhere the stream remains hidden from view in private gardens. Of major concern is the slow silting up of the waterways, which would be disastrous for the area.

Trees also play a key role. These are more important in the main area of the conservation area, whereas Lock Bridge and Sailing Club Roads have a more formal layout and fewer trees. Elsewhere the mature trees form the key element of landscape, screening properties, and lining the avenues. The entrances to the north of the area are particularly sylvan, and a belt of trees also forms an important boundary between the southern part and the railway line. The northern part of the area could be described as more wooded, and the tree groups around the grounds of The Abbey are particularly important in adding woodland character. Some trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders and all trees within the conservation area benefit from a level of additional protection by virtue of the notification process. There is however no requirement in law to replace trees that have to be felled unless they are TPO'd. Some of the key street scene trees and tree groups are marked on the map where space allows.

HEDGES AND WALLS:

The green nature of the conservation area is enhanced by hedge planting along many of the boundaries some of which is original. There was a requirement at the time of the 1907 auction that quick set hedges or rustic palisade fences were erected along boundaries. Houses are

wall to The Dene



glimpsed above hedging and through entrance drives, but at ground level the feeling is of continuous greenery, particularly in the northern and eastern parts of the original estate, helped by the tree cover that dominates here. River Thatch is bounded by very tall yew hedges which are part of the original planting layout of the estate and screen it from nearby modern development.

Fences are more ubiquitous on the outer limits of the conservation area, along Oakfield Road for example, and also by the bridge. Some fencing is backed by hedging, which softens the look somewhat. Walls are not a common feature in the heart of the conservation area, although there is an unusual modern crinkle-crankle style wall by The Dene, which is overhung by trees.

OPEN SPACE:

Abbotsbrook is a private estate and as such has no formal open space, save the grounds of the village hall, and a grassy open area near the termination of Farm Road. The wide verges and remnant building line create a feeling of openness along the main thoroughfares, and the verges in particular should be protected from additional surfacing. Many of the houses sit in large open grounds which adds to the spacious feel of the estate.

GROUPINGS:

Due to the relatively scattered nature of development within the conservation area no strong groupings emerge, although the range of buildings that comprise the Tithe Barn cottages form an important and picturesque unit which dominates the street scene in this location. Buildings tend to be aligned to streams or the pools or the roadsides rather than each other.

VIEWS:

The Abbotsbrook Conservation Area is very contained in itself. Public views into the area are limited to the entrance points on Oakfield Road and Marlow Road, and the key buildings lie well within the estate.

Given the defined boundaries of the plots, and the precedence of hedge planting, views and vistas within the conservation area are limited, although the view from the upper ford towards the Tithe Barn group is important. Other views within the conservation area include across the Pool towards Cherry Tree House, from the junction of Sailing Club Road and The Avenue down towards the railway line, from Lockbridge Road across to Priory Ford Lodge and the lock and down The Avenue to the footbridge at the lower ford. A particularly verdant view is from the Avenue South, northwards, which takes in River Thatch and the Priory Boathouse. The view from Sailing Club Bridge downstream towards Stanbrook Cottage is very picturesque.

Externally there is a view of Abbotsbrook from the area close to the Upper Thames Sailing Club.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL ADVICE:

The policies and proposals of the Wycombe District Local Plan are the primary source of reference for development control advice. In addition the Council's approved Heritage Strategy is seen as a supporting document to the plan.

This character survey is a supplementary planning document. It is intended to provide guidance of an informal nature in considering new development in the conservation area. Below is a brief checklist taking account of the above text.

To safeguard, preserve or enhance the appearance and special character of Abbotsbrook Conservation Area: -

- In the conservation area higher standards of design are required, as it is the function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance the special character as identified in this appraisal.
- Any new building works such as extensions must be designed not as a separate entity, but should be sympathetic in form and scale with the existing buildings and the conservation area as a whole. Respecting

The Poplars



Ryder Lodge and Briar Hedge





Riverine environment

the existing scale of the buildings and plot sizes in the conservation area is of particular importance as the cumulative effect of development can over time erode the character. The former building line of the original layout should be respected.

- Significant buildings are identified on the survey map and their specific qualities are described in the text above. Any new development must not harm the buildings or their settings or any special architectural or historic features that they may contain. It should be recognised that new development may not always be acceptable.
- Flooding is a major issue within Abbotsbrook, and any development will require the consent of the environment agency. Flood alleviation measures must take account of the historic character of the area and must be designed to be in keeping with the rest of the estate. Significant older buildings within the floodplain should be retained, and proposals to demolish and rebuild such houses will not be permitted.
- Materials for any new building works must be sympathetic to the special character of the area. Traditional local building materials will often be the most appropriate choice; further guidance can be provided on a case specific basis.
- Applications for development adjoining but beyond the conservation area boundary will be assessed for its effect upon its character, appearance and setting, and may be refused permission if this is considered adverse.
- Surfacing within domestic curtilages for driveways and the like should be in keeping with the semi-rural nature of the settlement and of an informal type. Large areas of tarmac and concrete are out of place in this setting. Regular paving, pavements and setts may also look discordant, and may not be appropriate. The wide grass verges in front of properties should be protected.

- Inappropriate replacement windows and doors can damage the character of the conservation area. Traditional natural materials should be used in order to safeguard the special character of the conservation area. Generally speaking painted timber windows and doors are appropriate and modern substitute materials such as UPVC and aluminium are not. Garage doors should be of timber, and field or wrought iron gates which allow glimpses through are visually preferable to solid gates.

- Areas of open space, and gaps between buildings will be carefully considered for protection from development or enclosure in order to protect the

character of the Abbotsbrook Conservation Area, the setting of significant buildings, and any important views.

- All trees in conservation areas are protected by virtue of the notification process but special consideration should be given to those trees indicated on the conservation area map to ensure that they are not harmed. New development should recognise this and not present a risk to their continued future growth and habit.
- Some agricultural hedges are protected by the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. The majority of hedges are not covered by these regulations; however in the conservation area the hedgerows indicated on the character survey map are an important element of the area's character, and should be retained and where possible enhanced.
- Special care must be taken to ensure that views looking into and out from the conservation area are not spoilt. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map.

Wycombe District Council's Planning and Sustainability Service has a number of publications which offer further

Lockbridge House





Tythe Barn, Ivybridge, Barn Cottage, Brookside

guidance. Ask the Conservation Officer for information on which Heritage Guidance Notes are currently available and appropriate.

The Conservation Officer and The Heritage Officer are always pleased to give advice on all heritage matters and can be contacted on 01494 421578/421527 or seen by appointment in the Council Offices or on site.

Development Control matters within the Abbotsbrook Conservation Area are the responsibility of the West Team who can be contacted on 01494 421531

Planning Policy matters are the responsibility of the Policy Unit who can be contacted on 01494 421545

REFERENCES:

The following references were used when researching this document, in addition to information held at the County Record Office.

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