
Conservation Area Character Survey

Ellesborough



What are Conservation Areas?

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 Heritage 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, but such development must be designed positively to enhance the special character of the area.

The Purpose of This Survey

This conservation area character survey describes the main features of special architectural and historic interest which justifies the designation of Ellesborough as a conservation area.

The survey is intended to complement the approved policies for conservation areas in the Council's Wycombe District Local Plan. These policies are the primary means of safeguarding the special character of our conservation areas. The survey is also intended to be used as an aid in development control decision making. Proposals for schemes positively to enhance the character and appearance of Ellesborough conservation area will be produced in the future in consultation with councillors, local residents and other interested parties.



HISTORY

Ellesborough lies close to the Icknield Way an ancient route linking Thetford in Norfolk with Avebury in Wiltshire. The route was developed for the purposes of communication between Neolithic centres from 3000-1800 BC. In the Domesday record it is spelt Esenberge and in later documents it is spelt Heselberge, Heselborne, Eselberg and Eselburgh. It was held by Fitz-Ansculph after the Norman invasion, and from that family it descended to those of Pagnell and Somery. In 1405 Thomas la Zouch died seized of the Manor of Eislinburgh and from him it passed to the family of Pole. Jeffrey Pole died possessed of it in 1479 and by his will it came to his son Richard; he married the Countess of Salisbury. The estate was then forfeited to the crown and Henry VIII granted the Manor of Ellesborough to Sir John Baldwin for £623. 18. 5.

The Ellesborough Manor that now exists in the conservation area is a mid 19th century building originally known as Ellesborough Rectory. Since 1950 has been a retirement home for the clergy, their wives and widows.

In 1746 eight almshouses were founded under the will of Dame Isabella Dodd, who was the daughter of Sir Robert Croke (of Chequers) and the widow of Sir Samuel Dodd, Lord Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer. Lady Dodd is buried in Ellesborough Church. The almshouses known as Lady Dodds Cottages were originally built 'for the support and maintenance of four old men and four old women of this parish'.

The prominent church of St. Peter and St. Paul is attended by Prime Ministers and their visitors due to the close proximity of Chequers the country seat of Prime Ministers. Chequers was presented to the nation by Lord Lee of Fareham in 1921. Among those who rest in the churchyard is Thomas Edwards, an 18th century lawyer-poet and Sir John Lanson Walton, an earnest reformer and Attorney-General.

ARCHEOLOGICAL INTEREST

Within the conservation area itself there are no identified sites of special archeological interest or Scheduled Ancient Monuments. However, south west of the conservation area boundary are three Scheduled

Ancient Monuments which were included in the schedule in 1995 and 1996.

On the tip of Beacon Hill, 500m south of Ellesborough Church is a small Bronze Age bowl barrow. It is thought to have been constructed using topsoil and chalk scraped from the surrounding hillside. In the centre of the mound is a conical depression which is believed to have resulted from the removal of a flagstaff which stood here in the 19th century, and perhaps from its further use as a gun emplacement during World War II. The barrow was partially excavated by a local antiquarian in 1855-6, revealing fragments of ceramic urn, charcoal, bone and a horse's tooth. Further fragments of early Bronze Age pottery with impressed decoration were discovered near the mound in 1973.

Just south of the bowl barrow is another Scheduled Ancient Monument, a pillow mound. The small pillow mound is roughly rectangular in shape and is constructed from material quarried from a surrounding ditch. The mound was first discovered in 1979 when it was thought to be prehistoric burial mound. However, when compared with other pillow mounds in the region it is evident that the mound represents an artificial breeding place associated with a rabbit warren. The tradition of warren construction and use dates from the 12th century, following the introduction of rabbits into England from the continent. Purpose built warrens were intended to centralise the colony and make catching the animals easier.

To the south-west of the conservation area is a Scheduled Ancient Monument known as Cymbeline's Castle. It is said, by unsupported tradition, that the British King, Cymbeline was buried here in the early years of Christianity. It is in fact a castle of motte and bailey type dating from Norman times with some scanty evidence of earlier occupation. The commanding location of the castle demonstrates its strategic role in the years following the Norman Conquest, in particular dominating the communication routes which followed the edge of the Chiltern escarpment.

All the recently Scheduled Ancient Monuments are well preserved and it should be noted that it is an offence to disturb or remove anything from a Scheduled Ancient Monument without first obtaining consent from the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

Given the ancient history of the hamlet there may be areas of archeological interest within the conservation area. In the event of archeological deposits being found the Council may require archeological conditions attaching to planning permissions where appropriate, including watching briefs, excavation or similar recording procedures.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The conservation area lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The historic enclave rises from the flat vale of Aylesbury to the west and to the east is the scarp slope of the Chiltern Hills. The hills are at their highest here rising to 832 feet above sea-level and provide an impressive backdrop to the conservation area. The highest point of the Chilterns is known as Coombe Hill on the summit of which is a monument to the men of Buckinghamshire who lost their lives in the Boer War.

The most striking built feature of the Ellesborough Conservation Area is the church of St. Peter and St. Paul with its tall bell tower and stair turret. The church is set in an imposing position on the crest of a small hill and presides over the small cluster of buildings surrounding it.

The view of Beacon Hill to the south, behind Lady Dodds Cottages, makes a strong visual impression. This mound with the historic barrow on top links the ancient with the present and gives a distinct historical presence to the conservation area which is an important factor in its character.

The rustic nature of this small conservation area is an essential characteristic. It is manifest in a number of aspects; the rural nature of the publicly visible buildings and their use of traditional materials and vernacular styles; the presences of groups of mature trees; and the views of the surrounding countryside. These attributes blend together to give a rural and harmonious feel to this conservation area.

This small conservation area can almost be divided in to two areas. The area around the church and Church Hill Cottages have an open feel being higher than the surrounding land and having views over the Vale of Aylesbury below. Yet the visual dominance of the church and of Beacon Hill give a sense of containment. Towards the Manor as the land drops down in to a more heavily treed area. Here there is a

much greater sense of enclosure before Church Hill plateaus out beyond the conservation area boundary allowing extensive views. This sense of containment and enclosure enable the conservation area to be distinct and visually separate from its surroundings even though development along Church Hill to the east forms a continuous ribbon.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

There are five entries in the Listed Building Directory for Ellesborough. Nos. 1 and 2 Church Hill Cottages appear as a single item. This pair of small houses are originally 17th century-early 18th century and have been altered and extended in the 19th century. Modern extensions have been successfully incorporated. No. 1 to the right has some timber framing with brick infill, no. 2 to the left is rendered over flint and chalk. This pretty pair is complete with thatched roofs which perfects the rustic picture. The thatched porch is a 20th century addition.

Lady Dodds Cottages are a block of 4 (formerly 8) almshouses. Set within the gable at the frontage of the cottages is a circular plaque bearing the date 1746. The cottages were altered and modernised in the 20th century. The building is decorated with red brick dressings and vertical strips. There is a rendered plinth and eaves with narrow brick dentils. Despite decoration the single storey cottages have a simple, humble appearance. The front of the building faces south away from the main road and the rear face of the block of out buildings is presented to the main view. Nevertheless the view of this historic building with its bowing, old tiled roof and brick walls barely rising out of the ground presents a pleasant picture.

St Peter's Cottage and St Paul's Cottage north of the church (listed as one item) are a pair of small houses built in the 17th-18th century and altered in the late 18th-early 19th century. Some timber framing survives in the left gable but is concealed below colourwashed render and a lean-to. The date 1766 is inscribed on a brick in a small wing to the rear of the left bay. There are other 20th century extensions to the rear and the gabled porch is also 20th century. The front has been rebuilt in flint with brick dressings.

The church of St Peter and St Paul is listed grade II*. Of the late 14th-15th century it was much restored and externally refaced in 1854-71. The south vestry and porch are 19th century. An individual feature of

Ellesborough Conservation Area

Character Survey Map

LISTED BUILDINGS

Grade II* - Particularly special and important buildings (some 4% of all listed buildings)

Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul - Late 14th - 15th century and externally refaced 1854-71. 14th and 15th century traceried windows. Some old stonework in window surrounds but otherwise all detail is 19th century. Inside 1901 reredos with gilt relief panels and painted shutters. Clunch piscina much reworked 19th century. Fine wall monument to Bridget Croke.

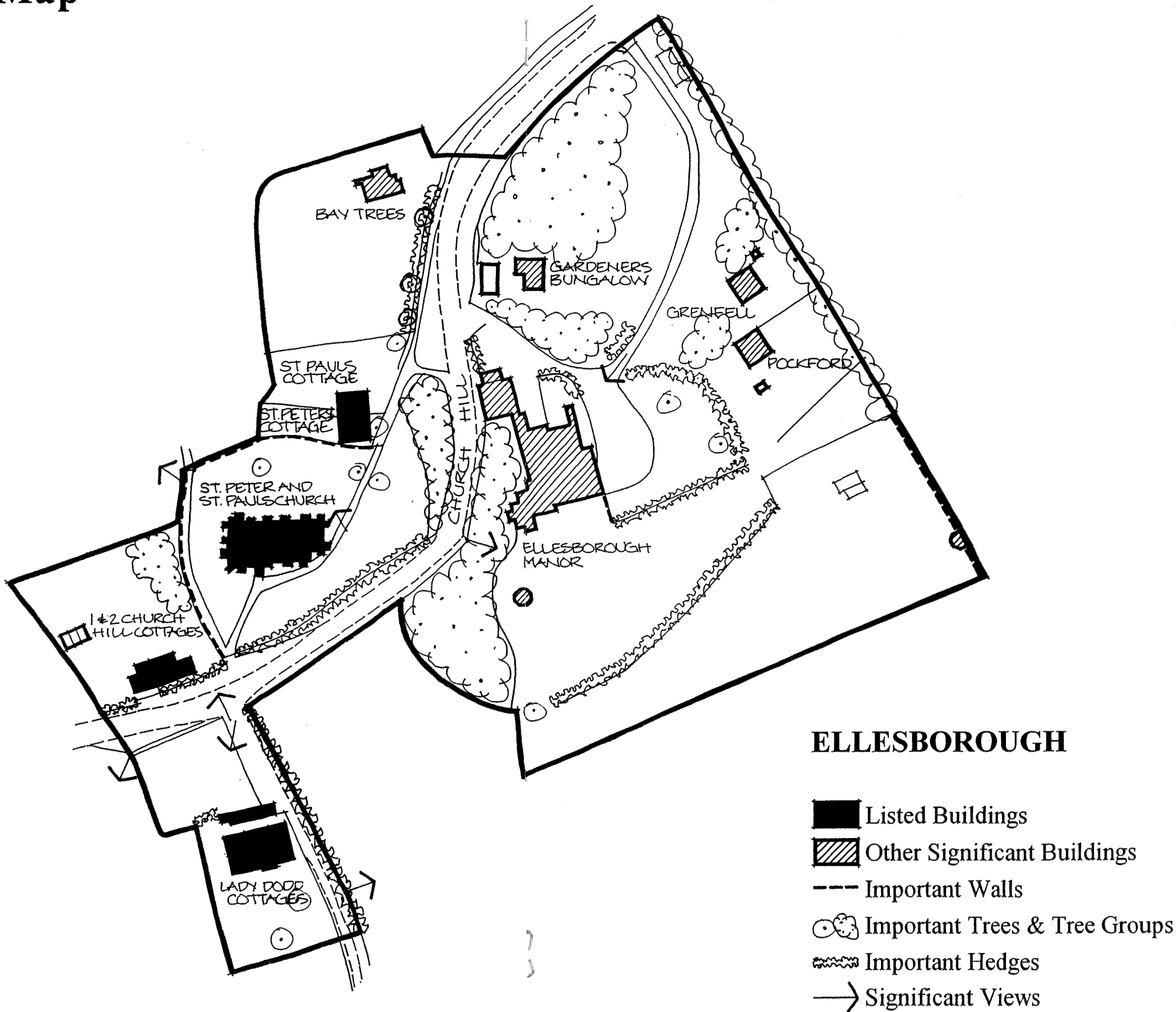
Grade II - Buildings of special interest

1 and 2 Church Hill Cottages - Pair of small houses, originally 17th century-early 18th century, altered and extended 19th century. Some timber framing to no. 1 and render over chalk and flint at no. 2. Half-hipped thatched roof.

St Peter's Cottage and St Paul's Cottage - Pair of small houses, 17th century- 18th century, altered late 18th century-early 19th century. Timber frame survives in left gable but is concealed. Front rebuilt in flint with brick dressings. Tiled roof.

Lady Dodd's Cottages - Block of 4 Almshouses, formerly 8. Dated 1746 on plaque, altered 20th century. Vitreous brick with red brick dressings and vertical strips. Hipped old tiled roof.

Outbuildings adjacent to Lady Dodd's Cottages - Row of 4 sheds. Late 18th century-early 19th century. Timber frame and weatherboarded. Old tile roof. 4 board doors.



the church is the semi-octagonal stair turret at the south-east corner of the bell tower.

The churchyard is entered through a wooden gate which bears the date 1923 on metal corner covers at the top of the gate. Just outside the churchyard is a distinctive lantern hanging from a wooden post. In the churchyard a crucifix stands close to the gate and is starkly set against the skyline. Further into the churchyard is an ornate celtic cross.

The house, Bay Trees at the north of the conservation area is nearly hidden from view by trees. It is an attractive three gabled, white washed building. Parts of the building are reputed to be 200 to 300 years old. There is some timber framing and unworked timber in the roof and sections of chalk and flint remain in the west gable. The house has 19th and 20th century extensions. It is thought that the house was once two separate cottages which were converted to a single dwelling in the early part of the 20th century.

Ellesborough Manor is completely hidden from public view by the mature trees that surround it, save for a small portion, the stables, at the back of the house which abuts Church Hill. From the private drive the manor is an impressive sight. In yellow brick with carefully gauged brick arches over the large sash windows and central doorway. The mid 19th century building has been extended over the years. These extensions are sympathetic to the parent building in style and materials yet also successfully incorporate individual detailing to distinguish them from the original house.

Gardeners Bungalow, Grenfell and Pockford are all within the grounds of Ellesborough Manor and are modern introductions to add accommodation to the retirement home. Whilst using the same yellow brick as the Manor the houses are of modern design by London architects Booty, Edwards and Partners and were built in the early 1960s.

Along the southern part of the east boundary of Ellesborough Manor is a recently constructed high brick wall probably positioned as a windbreak to shelter the garden area to the west. Within the wall is an attractive summerhouse. Also within the grounds of the Manor is a small octagonal building of flint with a felt roof. The building is south of the Manor on the edge of the wooded area. Presently used for storage, the original use of the building is not known.

Along the west and north boundary of the churchyard is an attractive low brick wall capped by half round bricks. To the west side of Church Hill and in front of Lady Dodds Cottages picket fencing usually with hedging behind is used as a boundary marker. This low impact style of rural fencing is attractive and appropriate to this rural conservation area and helps to unify this historic enclave.

MATERIALS

The striking church is of flint with stone dressings with lead roofs to the nave and south aisle the remainder are of slate.

The 17th-18th century houses (1 and 2 Church Hill Cottages and St Peter's and St Paul's Cottages) are of traditional brick and brick with flint. No. 1 Church Hill Cottage has weatherboarding to the right gable and rear. Some timber framing remains and is visible at No. 1 Church Hill Cottage. Colour washed render is also evident at no.2. Church Hill Cottages retain their attractive thatched roofs and to the rear first floor windows are attractively set into the thatch.

Lady Dodds Cottages of a slightly later date appear in contrast to the above being of vitreous-brown brick with red brick dressings under a hipped old tiled roof.

Bay Trees is of whitewashed brick under a slate roof. Ellesborough Manor is of yellow brick with a slate roof. Modern extensions to the building introduce stone dressings above the windows and in the most recent extension red brick decoration within the walls. Former stables to the house fronting Church Hill now converted to residential accommodation are of red brick. The new houses within the grounds of Ellesborough Manor are of yellow brick under slate roofs.

Fenestration throughout the conservation area varies. No. 1 Church Hill Cottage has large wooden casements to the ground floor with smaller metal framed windows above. The cottage retains a traditional board door. No 2 Church Hill Cottage has metal framed, lead light casements. Lady Dodds Cottages also have metal framed, leaded light casements inserted in the 20th century. The adjacent outbuilding has traditional, simple, board doors.

St Peter's and St Paul's Cottages have wooden, small

pane, casement windows, as does Bay Trees on a larger scale befitting the scale of the house. The large sash windows at Ellesborough Manor have been replaced with modern UPVC units which seek to replicate traditional wooden sashes.

Surfacing throughout the conservation area for driveways and garden paths is low key which is appropriate to this rural area. The introduction of large areas of hard surfacing would be likely to have an urbanising effect in this small conservation area and would appear out of character.

Traditional brick paths to the houses have been retained at Church Hill Cottages and St Paul's Cottage which add to the character of the conservation area. Gravel and shingle are predominately used for driveways and parking areas, which is again appropriate to the rural ambience of the area. Some tarmac is evident, such as the path around the churchyard and at Ellesborough Manor but it does not disrupt the rural historic feel of the conservation area as it is well balanced by the surrounding vegetation.

TREES AND VEGETATION

Trees and vegetation are a particularly important aspect of this conservation area. Tree groups and individual trees, as indicated on the survey map, make a significant contribution to the character of the area.

The large tree groups in Ellesborough Manor grounds and on the opposite side of Church Hill contribute significantly to the rural nature of the area and to the sense of enclosure in this part of the conservation area as well as providing a setting for Ellesborough Manor itself. There are some fine mature trees within the grounds including an impressive Cedar in front of the house. On either side of the driveway to the Manor are examples of topiary where trees have been clipped into geometrical shapes.

The churchyard also contains some important mature trees as indicated on the survey map.

Hedges make an important contribution to the rural character of the area. The clipped hedges in front of Church Hill Cottages are attractive with the picket gates and the listed cottages behind. The hedge continues along the edge of Church Hill along the churchyard boundary and leads in to the more wooded area around the Manor.

There are some fine clipped Yew and Box hedges in the grounds of Ellesborough Manor to the south and are part of the formal gardens. Between the hedges to the south-west of the Manor was the kitchen garden, perhaps concealed behind the evergreen hedges.

The gardens to the frontage of the listed cottages add to the qualities of the area and are tended in the spirit and character of this rural conservation area. They are of a cottage garden style with a pleasing informality.

OPEN SPACE

In this compact conservation area there are no significant areas of public open space which make a contribution to the character of the area. However the garden areas of individual properties add to the character of the conservation area in a number of respects. They provide an appropriate setting for the listed buildings, their planting adds to the rural ambience of the area and where tended for flowers they provide individuality.

The churchyard as a semi-public open space is important to the setting of the listed church which is itself a central feature of the conservation area.

VIEWS

Given its siting on a small hill between the plateau of the Vale of Aylesbury and the Chiltern Hills views out from the conservation area and long range views of the conservation area from the Chilterns are important considerations.

Some important views from within the conservation area have been indicated on the survey map. These include views from the churchyard out towards the Vale of Aylesbury; the view of Church Hill Cottages from within the conservation area; the view of Lady Dodds Cottages with Beacon Hill behind, and the view of the Monument on top of Coombe Hill from Church Hill.

Footpaths to the north and south give long range views of the conservation area.

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 also intended to provide broad guidance of an informal nature in considering new development in the conservation area. Below is a brief check list taking account of the above text.

To safeguard, preserve and enhance the appearance and special character of Ellesborough 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.
- Listed and other significant buildings are identified on the survey map and their specific qualities are described in the text above. Any new development must not harm their integrity or visual quality and it should be recognised that new development may not always be acceptable.
- Materials for any new building works must be sympathetic to the rural character of the area.
- Applications for development adjoining but beyond the conservation area boundary will be assessed for their effect upon it 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 rural nature of the conservation area and of an informal type as described in the main text.
- 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.
- All trees in conservation areas are protected but special consideration should be given to those trees indicated on the conservation area to ensure that they are not harmed. New development should recognise this and not present a risk to their continued future growth and habit.
- Although hedges cannot be specially protected through legislation those hedgerows indicated on the character survey map should be retained and where possible enhanced. As a boundary treatment hedges and picket fencing are characteristic Ellesborough conservation area.
- 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.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Wycombe District Council's Planning, Transport and Development Service has a number of publications which offer further guidance. Ask the Conservation Officer for information on which Heritage Guidance Notes are currently available and appropriate.

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

Development Control matters within the Ellesborough 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.