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# Conservation Area Character Survey

## FAWLEY GREEN

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### 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 Heritage Guidance Note on conservation areas gives further details of the specific controls that apply, while an information sheet sets out common questions and answers about conservation areas.

Designation of a conservation area does not preclude the possibility of new development, but such development must be designed positively to 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 special architectural

and historic interest which justify the designation of Fawley as a conservation area.

This survey is in accordance with Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment), complies with the requirements of PPG12 (Development Plans), and contributes to the Council's Strategic Aim 4 The Environment. As Supplementary Planning Guidance it is intended to complement the approved policies for conservation areas in the Council's Wycombe District Local Plan and is consistent with paragraphs 11.36-11.41 of the Adopted plan. It is also a material consideration in deciding planning, listed building and conservation area applications.

This survey was the subject of public consultation prior to adoption as supplementary planning guidance. The views of the consultees were taken into account and in some cases 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.

**Planning and Major Projects - 2004**





*The Green*

## CONTEXT

Fawley Village sits on a plateau between the Hambleton and Stonor Valleys, north of the River Thames. The village lies overlooking the Thames between Henley and Marlow; it is closer to Henley and is bounded to the west and the north by Oxfordshire. It is closely linked historically to Fawley Court, the grand house that is located adjacent to the Thames in the valley. Fawley Court and its grounds form a separate conservation area.

The hamlet is spread out along a chalk ridge between the Hambleton and Stonor Valleys, and is a typical ridgetop settlement as defined by the Chilterns Building Design Guide. It is a small, linear settlement, running north south along the contours of the land. The conservation area is focused on two parts of the settlement – the area around the village green, at the junction of the road from Lower Assendon, near Henley, with Benhams Lane which descends towards Fawley Court and the river; and the area south of this around the church and Rectory. There are other buildings of architectural interest in the village, but they do not form a coherent group which is necessary for

conservation area status. Fawley has not suffered the expansion seen in many other ridgetop villages, due in the main to its relative inaccessibility, and topography.

The Bucks Landscape Plan identifies the village as lying within the category of landscape known as the “incised dip slope” of the Chiltern Plateau, which describes the pattern of valleys and ridges, beech hangers and valley farmland for which the surrounding landscape, particularly the adjacent Hambleton valley, is justifiably renowned. This particular type of landscape is characterised by a high level of woodland cover, intensive arable



*Whitelocke Memorial*



*Village buildings*

farming contrasting with small scale mixed farming, narrow lanes, and areas of common or greens in villages.

## HISTORY

An in-depth and informative account of the history of the village can be obtained from “Fawley, a history of the Church and Parish” by Geoffrey Tyack (1986), published by Fawley Parochial Church Council.

The parish of Fawley (the Anglo-Saxon word “ley” refers to a clearing in a wood) may have been settled since pre-Roman times – there is evidence of Roman remains in the valleys on either side, and the name may derive in part from Old English. Certainly the presence of water in the form of a dew pond adjacent to the church may have been fundamental for the siting of the hamlet. By the time of Edward the Confessor the land was held by Tosti, Earl of the Northumbrians. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book as Falelie. After the conquest it was owned by Walter Gifford, Earl of Buckingham, and he and his descendants, the Earls of Buckingham remained as feudal overlords. However the manor was held in 1086

by Gifford’s steward Herbrand De Sackville, and it was the Sackville family who lived in the parish, possibly in a house close to the present Fawley Court, receiving rents, administering justice, and in time becoming Sheriffs and MPs for the County. The Sackvilles’ estate covered most of the parish, except for a farm called Bosmere, near the northern border, and two hides known as Mouseholes which came into the ownership of the Stonor family. The Sackvilles remained as lords of the manor until the 15<sup>th</sup> century when it passed by marriage to a family called Rokes, and then again to the Alford family. By 1617 the manor had passed into the hands of the Whitelocke family, who built the mortuary chapel attached to south side of the church where the Whitelocke memorial is to be found. Sir James Whitelocke was the author of the Liber Famelicus, and his son, Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke, was Member for Great Marlow in the long parliament and Lord Commissioner of the Great Seal and Ambassador to Sweden under the Commonwealth. During the Civil War, Fawley Court down on the river was sacked by the Royalists who were quartered there, and later rebuilt reputedly to the designs of Christopher Wren – this by the new owner Sir William Freeman. The Freemans owned the Manor until 1853, and during their ownership carried out massive alterations to the church, restyling it in 1748. John Freeman was a talented amateur architect and was responsible for the Palladian remodelling of the building, including rebuilding the chancel, replacing the nave windows, and adding a new west entrance. The interior was furnished from the chapel at Canons, the Duke of Chandos’ palace at Stanmore, Middlesex, and includes pulpit, lectern and the chancel panelling. The carvings are reputed to be by Grinling Gibbons. John Freeman also added the great mausoleum in



*Pond and open space*

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the churchyard. It was during this time that the new Rectory was built, visited by Mrs Lybbe Powys, the Rector's sister in law, and described in her diary. Fawley estate then passed to the Mackenzie family, who undertook further drastic works to the church in 1882-3, and added another mausoleum in the churchyard. In the twentieth century the estate was split up. Fawley Court, the great house by the river, became a school run by a Polish Roman Catholic teaching order, and the living at Fawley amalgamated with that of Hambleden.

## ARCHEOLOGICAL INTEREST

Roman remains have been found nearby at Yewden and at Poynatts in the Hambleden valley.



16,17,18 Fawley Green

There are no scheduled ancient monuments or any sites of archaeological interest identified within the conservation area.

However the village is clearly of an historic nature and in the event of archaeological deposits being found the Council may require archaeological conditions attaching to planning permissions where appropriate, including watching briefs, excavation or similar recording procedures.

## ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Fawley Green is a tiny conservation area, covering only a little of the village which is spread out along the chalk ridge. It is this very scattered nature which gives the village its character. The only areas where there are clusters of historic buildings are by the green and the church, and it is these two areas that comprise the separate parts of the conservation area.

The green could be said to be the nucleus of the village, when seen on plan – it lies at a junction of roads leading up from the Thames valley and from Turville Heath to the north, along the ridgeline. But in character the buildings do not immediately

give the idea of a nucleated village centre such as that in nearby Hambleden and other spring line villages along the valley bottoms. Instead the houses here are set in large plots, and quite distant from each other, except for a terrace of three on the west side of the road. Even these are set back from the road, and not highly visible. The buildings comprise the farm, the former smithy, the village hall, and other smaller domestic dwellings. They are roughly aligned around the sides of the green. The green has a well on it, which dates from the Mackenzie era, when the family gifted it to the village. Behind the building plots the landscape is set out in a mixture of arable fields and woodland – some may be a remnant of a far more ancient woodland that once covered the Chilterns. Agricultural land separates the northern part of the conservation area from that in the south, which is focused on the Church of St. Mary, the former school to the north of the churchyard, and the former Rectory, now Fawley House. Again the buildings are spread out, and the overall character is verdant and well-treed, particularly in the churchyard and the forecourt of Fawley House. As before an area of open space provides a focus for the conservation area – in this case a dew pond located to the east of the churchyard at the junction of the Fawley Bottom and Dobsons Lanes.

Fawley Green is unusual in that there is no one particular theme running through the architecture. The buildings are all unique, date from different times, and vary widely in their size and detailing. One or two vernacular cottages survive, but in the main the buildings are grander, from the Old Forge which has been extended over the last couple of hundred years, to the elegance of Fawley House.

## ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

### Ecclesiastical:

The Church of **St. Mary** dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the first written reference is from 1231 when Richard Earl of Cornwall was married here. Only the flint and stone nave remains, and the solid west tower which dates to about 1280. The Whitelocke mortuary chapel was built out from the south side in 1633 and has a



*Churchyard and West door*

particularly fine marble monument to Sir James Whitelocke, and his wife Elizabeth, its alabaster figures still retaining vestiges of colour. It is the post-Reformation alterations however that give this church its character, showing the changing architectural fashions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The chancel, rebuilt 1748, has a Palladian east window and a barrel vaulted plaster ceiling. There are fluted Ionic pilasters embellishing the sanctuary. The chancel interior is panelled with delicate gilt carved ornamental grapes and wheat ears, said to be from Canons, as is the beautifully carved pulpit with cherubs heads. The nave was also reorganised with collegiate pews from Chandos, now sadly removed. The nave was remodelled again in a traditional Victorian Gothic style in 1882-3, by the architects Paley and Austin. They raised the nave walls, replaced the roof and windows, added the north transept and vestry and opened up the Whitelocke Chapel to the nave. The tower arch was rebuilt in Gothic style, and a 19<sup>th</sup>-century parapet added to the tower.

Most of the stained glass dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and is by Clayton and Bell in the nave, and by Heaton, Butler and Bayne in the east and west windows. There are exceptions – some C18 armorial glass in the tower which may have come from the Whitelocke's house near Henley (Phyllis Court) and a Tree of Life in the vestry by John Piper. On each tower arch respond are post reformation text wall paintings from the 16<sup>th</sup> or

17<sup>th</sup> century.

The bells in the tower have recently been rehung. The treble (John Warner and Sons) dates from 1866, is a rare patent bell bearing the arms of Queen Victoria. The Second (John Saunders of Reading) dates from 1539, and the Treble (Roger Landen of Wokingham) from 1450. Both older bells have Latin inscriptions. The bells hang from a late 16<sup>th</sup> century oak bell frame of unusual design.

The churchyard is surrounded by a low brick and flint wall; the lychgate dated 1885 commemorates the Freeman's Rector of the time, Henry Almack.

At first glance it seems like a typical country churchyard, however to the west of the church are two extraordinary mausolea, which by virtue of their size and scale completely dominate the churchyard and are somewhat at odds with the rural feel of the place.



The **Freeman mausoleum**, dated 1750, was designed by John Freeman in memory of his father and as a family tomb. It is a simple neoclassical design, based on the tomb of Cecilia Metella in Rome, and is of ashlar (Portland Stone), with an octagonal base, and a rusticated drum above. There is an inscription on the south face of the base and further decoration by way of four panels on the superstructure. It has recently been restored.

The **Mackenzie mausoleum** is just beyond the lychgate, on the south side of the churchyard. It is of massive Aberdeen granite construction. It dates from 1862 and was constructed for the Mackenzie family.









*Rectory Place*

Grecian in style it is square, with a stepped pyramidal roof. The entrance is in the north side and has a projecting pediment on heavy pilasters. The whole is surrounded by wrought iron railings.

### **Secular Buildings:**

**Fawley House.** Formerly the Rectory, this is Grade II Listed. It dates from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, and was altered and extended during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was constructed for the incumbent John Stevens, replacing the parsonage which was turned into a brewhouse and stable. The house is of brick, with a moulded eaves cornice and a hipped tile roof. The original part is double pile, of two storeys and attic, and the south east (garden elevation) has original chequer brickwork and irregular fenestration, including French doors in a rusticated flint surround. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century entrance front was refronted in 1989 in a grand Baroque style by the renowned architect Quinlan Terry. It has coursed knapped flint blind arcading between Portland stone pilasters, Tuscan to the lower storey, and Ionic to the upper, a central pediment and exuberant classical detailing. The house sits within large landscaped gardens with views to the Thames. There are various outbuildings and two cottages within the grounds.

A replacement Rectory (by Hugh Vaux MA ARIBA) was built in 1956 to the south with neo-Georgian stylistic details, including a semi circular bay on the main frontage. Of red brick, it enjoys far reaching views across farmland, and sits within a well treed plot. It is now known as **Rectory Place**.

Adjacent to the churchyard lies the former **School**

building. This is a single storey building of brick and flint under a slate roof; it has now been converted to a dwelling. It dates from 1850 and had two classrooms, and remained in school use until the 1960s.

The northern part of the conservation area is focused around the Green, which holds the building line together.

The buildings here are more closely grouped and range from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mostly altered. They comprise some of the former village buildings, including the Old Forge and Smithy. A row of late 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages includes the former post office.

To the north lies the semi-detached **Green Farm Cottage** and **Marlings**. Green Farm Cottage is an attractive vernacular cottage of flint, with exposed timber framing on the gable end. It originally housed farm workers, tied to Fawley Green Farm, which used to stand adjacent in various architectural forms until 1999 when the modern Airdlair House was built. By the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Green Farm Cottage was inhabited by the village washerwoman – the wash house remains in the garden. At some stage an upper floor was introduced to the cottage and a number of eaves level dormers inserted. In 1976 the thatch caught fire, and the roof was rebuilt in tile. At the same time the agricultural building attached to Green Farm Cottage was replaced with the traditionally styled dwelling that stands today – Marlings.

The buildings are partly hidden behind traditional beech hedging and the roofline makes a pleasing

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contribution to the north side of the Green.

To the west lies **16, 17 and 18 Fawley Green**, a row of estate cottages dating from 1885, No 18 was once the post office. Of red brick, they have an unusual wide flint stringcourse at upper floor level, and a terracotta monogrammed date plaque. Two half hipped end gables face the roadside; between are two gabled first floor windows, all with decorative bargeboards.

**The Old Forge** is an attractive L-Plan building which probably dates in part from the 17<sup>th</sup> century – it has been altered and extended since, and is now a domestic residence. Certainly the rear wing is much later than the original building. It is separated from the green by a flint wall, above which can be seen a myriad of roofslopes, gables and chimneys.

Within the curtilage of the Old Forge, the building which was previously the **Smithy** sits hard by the Green and has also been converted to domestic use



*The Green*

– all that is visible of this is the tiled roof. Also within the same plot a grouping of garage blocks of traditional design and materials, and beyond these, **Grace's Cottage**, a modest cottage built in an attractive traditional style. This is not clearly visible from outside the site

To the front of the latter buildings sits the **Village Hall** – a timber single storey building, of black stained weatherboard, which dates from the early twentieth century. It remains in public use.

**Chiltern Cottage:** The plot on which this stands appears to have been in domestic use for a number of years, and there is a house shown on the 1883 OS plan. Again this was once a small vernacular cottage, the ground floor front elevation is almost entirely of flint. Within the building there is evidence of timber framing, with lath and plaster infill, suggesting a pre-18<sup>th</sup> century core. The building has been extended and is now of 5 bays with dormer windows to the road elevation. The southern gable is rendered, the northern one of brick and flint.

## **MATERIALS**

A key feature is flint, which is used in a variety of settings and contexts – from the rebuilt walls of the churches chancel, to 18<sup>th</sup>-century decorative door surrounds, as well as for humbler, more vernacular uses, such as walling. Flint is a typical Chiltern material – easily obtainable from the surrounding fields, and thus used from early times as a vernacular building material. Flint, moreover, is used on a grand scale, particularly on the new frontage to Fawley House, where it has been used creatively and combined with Portland Stone. The full range of Chiltern materials can be seen in this conservation area.

Furthermore there are some more unusual materials to be seen – in particular the Portland stone of the Freeman Mausoleum and the dark Aberdeen granite of the Mackenzie mausoleum (reflecting the Scottish origins of the MacKenzie family.)

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## TREES AND VEGETATION

There are many particularly fine specimens of mature trees in the conservation area, in the grounds of private houses, the churchyard and on the Green. These may be relics of ancient woodland, or have been planted in conjunction with the Fawley Court Estate. Particular trees of importance are indicated on the survey map,

There is a group Tree Preservation Order on the trees between the church and the pond. All trees in conservation areas are protected by virtue of the prior notification procedure.

## OPEN SPACE

There are two key areas of open space within the conservation area. The first is the Green, a historic space with the well on it – the recently restored Victorian well mechanism is still in place under a pretty little pergola. The well is 338 feet deep and is inscribed as being built by “RJ and H Wilder, Wallingford, Berks”. The Green was originally bounded on all three sides by track, the one to the south east has been grassed over and the main roads now run along the north and west sides of the Green. There are some mature trees on the green, and the view opens out onto it from the narrow enclosed lanes.



*The well*

The churchyard is another area of open space, which blurs into the pond surrounds and the triangle of the junction. The churchyard is a more formal space, with gravel paths, formal topiary yews, and old gravestones. A newer graveyard is situated beyond a tree boundary with views over the open countryside. The churchyard is delineated by flint walls which separate it from the pond environs and verges.

## GROUPINGS

Due to the scattered nature of the wider settlement, and the gaps between houses within the conservation area, there are no groupings as such – in fact the conservation area boundaries delineate the two main groups of buildings

## VIEWS

The rolling nature of the ridge upon which Fawley Green is situated means that most views are not particularly long range, and tend to be inward looking, although there are places where the view across the Thames Valley can be seen. Views of the Green are important, with the focal point of the well, and there are some fine views of the church from both within and without the churchyard. The best views are likely to be from private property across the rolling valleys towards the Thames.

Some key views in the conservation area have been marked on the survey map.

## 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 supplementary planning guidance. 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 Fawley Green Conservation Area: -

- In the conservation area higher standards

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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 existing scale of the buildings in the conservation area is of particular importance as the cumulative effect of development can over time erode the character.
- 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 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.
- Materials for any new building works must be sympathetic to the rural 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. In particular the use of an appropriate lime mortar can enhance the visual appearance of buildings. The Chiltern Building Design Guide gives general information on Chiltern building types; specific advice will depend on the immediate locality.
- 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 rural nature of the hamlet and of an informal type. Large areas of tarmac and concrete are out of place in this rural setting. Regular paving, pavements and setts may also look discordant, and may not be appropriate. Paths to front doors historically were surfaced with clay tiles or brick, and this is a tradition that could be encouraged.
- 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.
- In the event of a conservatory application not being considered to detract from the character and appearance of a building within the Conservation Area it should normally be constructed in timber, either painted or stained as appropriate.
- 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 Fawley Green Conservation Area, the setting of listed buildings, and any important views.
- All trees in conservation areas are protected 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



*Fawley House - Photo courtesy FPD Savills*

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.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE**

The following references were used when researching this document: The Victoria County History for Buckinghamshire; RCHME Monuments of Bucks; Pevsner – Buckinghamshire; The Bucks Landscape Plan; Fawley, Buckinghamshire, by Geoffrey Tyack (available in the church); information kindly provided by local residents.

Wycombe District Council's Planning and Major Projects 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 Chilterns Conference published the Chilterns

Buildings Design Guide in 1999. More recently the Chilterns Conservation Board, which superseded the Conference, has published a supplementary technical note concerned with the use of flint. This will be followed by other notes dealing with bricks and tiles. These all provide guidance aimed at conserving the outstanding qualities which make the Chilterns a landscape of national importance. Copies can be inspected or purchased at the District Council Offices. It is used by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

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 Fawley Green 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.