

HIGH WYCOMBE CONSERVATION AREA

Frogmoor

Area Study 2

This document forms part of a larger conservation appraisal for High Wycombe and should be read in conjunction with the master document which gives development control guidelines.

1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

The Frogmoor conservation sub-area is set to the extreme north west of the High Wycombe conservation area as a whole. It covers the area from the viaduct, along the railway to the junction with Priory Road. It then follows Priory Road back to the junction with Church Street before returning along Church Street and Oxford Street and finally turning right at the junction with Archway and hugging the building line to the viaduct. This sub-area abuts the Church and High Street sub-area along Church Street and there may be comments in both documents regarding this area.

Location and population

This sub-area of the High Wycombe Conservation Area constitutes part of the medieval town centre and has been a focus for retail trading for many years. The original market place incorporated Frogmoor and the burgage plot layout indicates retail activity in the medieval period. Due to the commercial nature of the area there is a very low residential population.

General character, plan form and landscape context

The area of Frogmoor was laid out in the middle ages and demonstrates the typical burgage plot layout to either side of the main part of the street. Towards the viaduct the plots are bigger, and it was here that larger houses used to stand. In more recent centuries some of the burgage plots have been amalgamated to form bigger areas for developments such as the Chilterns Shopping Centre.

Although Frogmoor is set in an urban context the landscape is classified as a Chiltern River Valley (Zone Z9 in the Landscape Plan produced by Buckinghamshire County Council). This is typified by being flat with steep sided hills close by. It is also where the main transport routes run, as the railway across the top of Frogmoor and the Hughenden Road



heading off to Hughenden Valley and Cryers Hill demonstrate.

2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Origins and historic development

In the middle ages High Wycombe was a thriving market town with a successful wool industry, from raising the sheep to weaving the cloth. It was also a prosperous corn growing and milling area. The town centre was in-filled slightly at this time by burgage plots encroaching on what was once the large market place west of the medieval parish church. The church of All Saints is still a dominant feature of the town and is the largest medieval church in the county. The market place spread as far as Frogmoor and was the centre for commerce in the town. The encroachments nearer the High Street ensured that Frogmoor hosted a larger part of the market and remained a wide open space that could host such community activities. Then, in the 13th century the planned kayout of the High Street meant that there was a shift in the focus of the town from Frogmoor and activity was moved east.

The 18th century saw a major change of direction in the towns history as the surrounding beech woods were utilised to make furniture, indeed High Wycombe became so renowned for chair making that it is now remembered for little else.

The land to the west of Frogmoor (fronting what is now Archway) was given over to sawmills and a large timber yard in the 19th century, supporting the thriving furniture industry. There was a malthouse in Frogmoor prior to the picture theatre being built where the Chiltern Centre now stands whilst a brewery occupied the site fronting Priory Road to what is now to the rear of the Chilterns centre. This brewery no doubt supplied some of the many public houses along Oxford Street and Frogmoor. There was an alleyway that linked the brewery to Frogmoor which emerged next to the Hen and Chickens.

The Borough-operated fire station was housed in Frogmoor from 1861, before being moved to Priory Road in 1899, which is where it still was during the second World War. The fire station building in Priory Road was still standing until the 1960s. In 1892 the annual tradition of weighing the mayor was revived by mayor-elect Charles Harman Hunt. This was usually carried out in front of the Guildhall but has recently moved to Frogmoor.

Priory Road, a hillside road lined with middle class Victorian villas, provided a stark contrast to the area to the south of Queen Square and Oxford Street. This area, known as Newlands, housed many of the areas poor in slums that remained until the 1960's, when they were cleared and the residents moved to modern social housing.

The 19th century town centre layout stayed very much as it was until the coming of the motor car. All the through traffic wound its way through the



The view along Oxford Street in the 1920's.



The approach towards the parish church from Priory Road in the early years of the 20th century.



Frogmoor in 1929, this view shows the Clock House in the distance and the old fountain in the foreground.



The corner of Priory Road and Church Street showing the McIlroys store where Primark now stands.

All historic photographs courtesy of SWOP, Bucks County Council and the Bucks Free Press

town centre, past the church and into Frogmoor on its way to Oxford until 1969-70 when the Wycombe bypass - more commonly known as Abbey Way - was opened to the south of the town.

The cast iron fountain that was such a prominent feature of the area was dismantled at the time of the Second World War when the ironwork was used in the war effort. A replacement fountain, although still in place, has suffered technical problems which make it redundant at present.



The view south from the base of the viaduct to The Bell public house.

Archaeology

This part of the town, comprising its medieval market place, is of obvious archaeological interest.

Historic maps

1883 OS, 1895 OS

3 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The character and inter-relationship of spaces within the area

Frogmoor is a very wide street at its town centre end, providing a large civic space that has hosted fairs and markets over the years. It tapers to the north ending in a narrow carriageway passing under an arch of the viaduct carrying the railway.

The large triangular space previously had a road running to either side of it creating a large island that in the 19th century was a private garden. The shops that now line both sides of the street face onto the paved area that replaced the garden. This currently only has vehicular access to the west side.

The paved, pedestrian area is dotted with seating, there is a sculpture opposite the entrance to the shopping centre and there is a row of pear trees to enliven the area, replacing mature trees that were removed during improvement works. Specialist markets are held in this area from time to time.

The Priory Road elevation of this sub area is taken up with a large shop that used to house Marks and Spencer (now Primark) and the entrance to the service area for the Chilterns Shopping Centre.

The building line along Archway is almost entirely the rear views to the buildings that front Frogmoor and service areas to shops and flats.

Important views and vistas

The key view of the area is from the north of Frogmoor towards Oxford Street at the southern end and the reciprocal view from Oxford Street to the visual termination of the viaduct's great arches. The view from



The fountain was dismantled in 1940 and the iron was used to supplement the war effort and was probably used for munitions.



A view of the dramatic railway viaduct arches from the north end of Frogmoor.

Frogmoor Gardens in the 1890s was privately owned but open to the public.



Frogmoor south is towards Queen Square and gives glimpses of Church Street as it winds towards towards the church.

4 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Activity and landuse

This area has always been a trading centre. The emphasis is on retail with a variety of shops, restaurants and banks and building societies. Historically this area has been home to schools and still houses a religious building. This is not a residential part of High Wycombe although there may be a scattering of flats above the retail units.

Architectural and historical quality of buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area

Starting at the northern end of Frogmoor, The Bell public house stands on the corner opposite the Clock House. This building is of the 17th century or possibly earlier and has been altered over the years. It is a two storey building with an old tiled roof. It has three modern mullion and transom lattice casement windows to the first floor and two on the ground. The whole of the external walls are stuccoed.

Next door to The Bell are No's 35, 37 and 39 Frogmoor, all under the same ownership and decorated alike. They were built in the 18th century and have colour washed brick frontages, and old tiled roofs. It has two storeys and attics with casement dormers. No. 39 has a cambered arch above its first floor window while No's 35 and 37 have flush sash windows. The shop windows are late 19th century additions. These buildings along with The Bell add extra interest when viewed as a group.

Further along the west side of Frogmoor is No. 25, this diminutive building is attached to the more imposing No's 21-31 Frogmoor (built much later). No. 25 dates from the late 18th century or early 19th and hides an earlier structure. Although small it consists of two storeys and an attic which sports a modern box dormer window in the roof. The first floor window is a sash with reveal and glazing bars while the ground floor window has a cambered arch.

The next listed building on the west side of Frogmoor forms part of the KFC restaurant and was formerly the New Moon Cafe. No. 9 Frogmoor exhibits plum coloured brick work with red brick dressings and extends to three floors. It is a four bay building with segmented arches to the double hung sash windows. The second floor windows have moulded brick cills and aprons with angle guttae. The shop fronts, however, are modern. The design is copied in the post-1914 buildings to the north, creating an imposing and effective impression along the street.

Across the square are Nos.12 and 14 Frogmoor which are locally



The diminutive No. 25 Frogmoor nestling against the dominant No's 21 - 31.



Nos. 35, 37 and 39 Frogmoor that form a group with The Bell.



The left hand KFC building is the listed building.

The view towards Church Street from the south of Frogmoor. The decorative gables of the Hen and Chickens dominate the skyline, making this a key building in the streetscene.



listed. These are 19th century, with colourwashed bricks and a Welsh slate roof. There are three storeys with cornice. The shop windows would have been 19th century. The upper storeys have two sashes with glazing bars in reveals, unfortunately there is a wide modern casement on the right of the first floor. The buildings have been altered over the years and the original shop fronts have gone. Unfortunately it is now debatable whether they still have the qualities to be on the local list.

Moving across the road to Queen Square, Nos 9 and 10 are currently home to the Bradford and Bingley Building Society and are Grade II listed. Originally two buildings, although built at the same time, (around the late 18th or early 19th century) these were subsequently knocked into one. The exterior is of colour washed brick topped with an old tiled roof with a dentilled brick cornice below. They are three storey buildings with modern shop fronts. The upper floors of each building have four modern casement windows in original reveals under flat arches.



Nos 3 & 4 Queen Square, a Grade II listed building.

The Bradford and Bingley Building Society also occupies the next building, No. 1 Oxford Road. This building turns the corner and faces onto Frogmoor. No. 1 pre-dates the previous structures as it was built in the 18th century but is, again, of colour washed brick under an old tiled roof with cornice. There are two storeys and an attic, with a tiled roof. The shop front is modern with decorative pilasters topped by the large modern signage above that follows round from the previous buildings.



The group of listed buildings bounded by Oxford Street, Bull Lane and Queen Square.

The next building along is No. 2 Oxford Road again built in the 18th century. This building, although also of colour washed brick, is set over three storeys with a hipped roof of old tiles and a dentilled brick cornice. The west elevation is of brick and flint and abuts Bull Lane. The first and second floor windows are flush sashes with glazing bars, the first floor windows have slightly curved arches, the second floor has flat arches. The ground floor has a modern shop front and a large sign above.

Towards the parish church on the north side of Queen Square is Nos 3 and 4. These were built in the 18th century of red brick with a parapet hiding the roof structure. There are three storeys with a cement rendered 2nd floor band and a moulded brick eaves level cornice. The upper floors have four flush sash windows to each floor with 19th century glazing. The first floor windows are enhanced with segmental arches. The ground floor has a modern shop front of good quality with mullions and pilasters retained.



The buildings on the west side of Frogmoor, viewed from Oxford Street.

All of the statutorily listed buildings within the Frogmoor sub area are Grade II.

Key unlisted buildings

The Hen and Chickens building at Nos 7 - 8 Church Street supplies a substantial focal point as one looks from Oxford Street towards Church Street. This was a former tailors shop and premises, rebuilt by J G Peace Wholesale and Retail Clothiers in 1888, shortly after taking ownership of the building. It is of three storeys of red brick, with five pargetted gables to the front elevation, and return gables to the ridge. It has rubbed brick corbels to the eaves-cornice. Gable pargetting states "Hen and Chickens Rebuilt 1888" to the front, and "Peace" to the side (after owner). The original sash windows with curved mullion details



The view towards Oxford Street from the north of Frogmoor.

remain on the first and second floor, with moulded sills and ornate rubbed brick detailing to 2nd floor windows. The ornate oriel window over the carriage arch is a key detail as is the terracotta plaque "established 1785". This is a good early Arts and Crafts style building for a well known local businessman, although the architect is unknown. It is hoped that this building will be added to the list of locally significant historic buildings in the near future.



Nos 6 - 8 Frogmoor is an unusual building for High Wycombe. Probably built in the 1930's and of white stone, this is of two storeys with a stepped parapet to the front. There are five metal casement windows set in reveals. Between the two outer windows and the inner ones there are fluted column details. Above the windows there is a decorative ziggurat in the same white stone which is typical of Art Deco whilst the outer sections of the parapet frontage are ornamented with linen fold stonework. There is a section in the centre of the parapet that is undecorated and seems to have been left for a fascia advertising the occupiers business, perhaps. At ground floor level are two modern shop fronts.

View from the top of the church tower of Priory Road where the fire station used to be. The building that can be seen from this perspective now is Primark.

Further along the east side of Frogmoor, towards the north end there is the Salvation Army Citadel which was opened in 1909. This is a large two storey building in red brick with white stone detailing around the doors and windows. It originally had a small yard to the front enclosed by a low brick wall but now there are brick and flint banks topped with blue metal railings to house the ramp and steps to the door. Unfortunately the building has also lost the decorative features that ornamented the top of the parapet roof. These features survived until the late 1970s. At present the parapet is a stepped facade. The white stonework provides decoration to the facade of this attractive building.



The Bell towards the north of Frogmoor, the charming public house that has survived from the 17th century.

The building, presently called the Clock House which is the imposing building to the north end of Frogmoor standing proudly in front of the viaduct, was built in 1893 as the School of Science and Art. The school moved in 1919 and the building has had a chequered history since then. It is a sturdy building of dark red brick with red brick arches over the windows and doors, surmounted with a lead ogee dome with the clock face below. The windows themselves are large paned sash windows with fine glazing bars.

Nos 6 & 8 Frogmoor, an unusual Art Deco addition to High Wycombe's variety of building styles. The modern shop fronts are an unfortunate addition.

The most dominant building on the west side of Frogmoor is the imitation half timbered building that was built in the early 20th century for Parker Knoll. No's 21 to 31 Frogmoor was originally a furniture showroom but has been converted to a bar and restaurant



more recently. It is a four storey building with attractive timber detailing and creamy yellow render to the infill at the front, brick infill to the sides. There is an extended gable to the front of the property. The windows are replica Tudor style with small paned leaded lights in wooden frames. It has a red tiled roof.



Local details

The most prominent detail in the Frogmoor area is the prevalence of period sash windows in the 18th and 19th century buildings. The styles may vary slightly but most are small window panes with glazing bars.

Many of the buildings have parapets giving a more commercial or civic feel to the area, these buildings were generally built during the prosperous late 19th or early 20th century.

The Salvation Army Citadel, the inset shows how the gable looked originally. The white painted detailing provides a vivid contrast to the red brick.

Prevalent and traditional building materials

Red brick forms the majority of the buildings in this area. Not only is it a local material but it also gives a solid and dependable impression of the business area of the town. This material is found in modern developments such as the Litten Tree public house, as well as older buildings.

The blue engineering bricks that make up the viaduct arches have a dominant impact on the area but are limited to the industrial infrastructure of the railway.



The older, more vernacular buildings tend to be of white painted brick and lend some variety to this part of the town.

Nos 21 to 31 Frogmoor, an impressive building built in the early 20th century, in the half timbered style. This was built as a furniture show room.

Contribution made by the natural environment

As a town centre area there is little opportunity for the natural environment to flourish. In the 19th century there was a garden set in the middle of Frogmoor, which was, indeed, called Frogmoor Gardens leading to Frogmoor Street. All the green space has more recently been incorporated into the hard landscape. There is, however, a line of pear trees and recently large containers of plants and shrubs have been placed in Frogmoor to try to soften the hard angles of the buildings.

The gloriously gabled facade of the Hen and Chickens, a fine early example of Arts and Crafts. This building, although not listed, is considered to be a landmark building in the Frogmoor area due to exuberance of its design.

The extent of loss, problems and pressures

Loss of historic fabric is one of the key issues affecting this part of the conservation area. On unlisted buildings there are no controls over the removal or replacement of windows, with the subsequent loss of historic character. The insertion of modern shopfronts, and inappropriate signage has a major effect on the historic character of Frogmoor, with a plethora of inappropriate fascia signs with garish colours and lettering. As this area is becoming an important link between the old town and the newer Eden development there is a real opportunity to visually improve the area through the development control process.



Frogmoor

Area 2 Study Appraisal



KEY



WYCOMBE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

- Listed Buildings
- Buildings of interest/designed or civic buildings
- Local List
- Open Space
- Trees and tree groups
- Railings
- Views
- Sub area Boundary



For illustrative purposes only; not to scale