



INTRODUCTION

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.

High Wycombe was designated as a conservation area in 1970 by Buckinghamshire County Council. The conservation area boundaries were extended in 1976, 1992 and 1994 by Wycombe District Council to include the formerly separate conservation areas of Saffron Platt and Frogmoor, parts of Castle Street, Crendon Street and the railway station, and parts of the Amersham Hill conservation area. Government Guidance states that conservation areas should have an up-to-date appraisal.

Within conservation areas there are special controls on some alterations to buildings, their demolition or partial demolition; and on works to trees. More details on the specific controls that apply can be found in the Council's guidance note on conservation areas.

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, however must be carefully designed to positively enhance the appearance and special character of the area.

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 conservation area are preserved and enhanced. This conservation area appraisal describes the main features of the special architectural and historic interest that justify



the designation of High Wycombe as a conservation area.

Due to the size of the High Wycombe Conservation Area, and the diversity of various sub areas within it, this document has a number of attachments, one for each of the nine sub areas. These detail the particular characteristics of each locality.

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National regional and local policy

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Bibliography, Development Guidelines

AREA STUDIES:

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- 2 Frogmoor
- 3 Easton Street
- 4 Civic Area and Crendon Street
- 5 The Railway and Victorian Expansion

CONTACT DETAILS

Listed building consent is required for works to the listed buildings in the conservation area, whilst planning permission is needed for all changes to their fences, gates and other means of enclosure.

There are additional **planning controls** on non-listed buildings within conservation areas, in addition to usual planning permission requirements.

Wycombe District Council Contacts

For general planning enquiries contact the Duty Officer on 01494 421539.

For policy issues contact the Policy team on 01494 421581.

For queries regarding this appraisal contact the Conservation section on 01494 421527.

Most new development requires **Building Regulation Approval**.

For further information on Building Regulations Approval.

For further information on Building Regulations please contact a Building Control Surveyor on 01494 421403, or see the District Council website www.wycombe.gov.uk

- 6 Saffron Platt and London Road
- 7 The Rye
- 8 Bassetsbury
- 9 Marsh Green

CHAPTER 1 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The designation of a conservation area influences the way in which a Local Planning Authority applies its planning policies to the area. It ensures that any alterations or extensions to buildings within or adjacent to the conservation area are constrained to respect the special characteristics identified in this document, and local planning policies.

National policy and guidance is contained in:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) + Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (2010)
- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2004)
- English Heritage: Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (2005)
- English Heritage: Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (2005)
- English Heritage: Conservation Principles; Policies and Guidance (2008)

Regional guidance on design issues is contained in **The Chilterns Building Design Guide**. This was reissued in 2010 in order to ensure that new building within the AONB respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, reinforcing the sense of place and local character. This guidance has been supplemented by Advice Notes on flint, brick and tile. It provides useful guidance on materials which can be applied to High Wycombe Conservation Area even though it lies adjacent to, not within the AONB

Local policy: The Wycombe District Local Plan was adopted in 2004 and as a result of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act is gradually being replaced by a series of new planning documents that make up the Wycombe Local Development Framework (WDF). In 2008 the Council adopted the first part of the WDF – the core strategy, which replaces a number of policies. The Council is in the process of producing the rest of the WDF and until this is complete the following policies relating to conservation areas in the local plan are still in place: HE6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15. More information on the status of the Local Plan and the production of the WDF is available on the Council website

Conservation appraisals are a material consideration in deciding planning applications



Glossary of architectural terms:

Some architectural description requires the use of specialised terms and phrases to describe particular details of a building. A useful glossary can be found in Pevsner's "The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire"

CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST

The town of High Wycombe occupies the floor of the narrow valley of the River Wye and grew up around and east of its confluence with the Hughenden Stream. Although the chalk hills to the north and south west have been substantially built on over the years the grounds of Wycombe Abbey and the wooded hills to the south east conserve valuable elements of the town's setting. The town itself is focussed around two market places, Frogmoor and the High Street, with the tower of the parish church of All Saints linking the two. To the east the town gives way to The Rye, formerly where the town's cattle grazed but now public open space, and Holywell Mead. Two minor settlements at the east complete the conservation area, Bassetsbury Manor and its mill, and Marsh Green, the former a manorial complex, the latter a hamlet.

The conservation area only covers this central part of the wider settlement of High Wycombe. Four others lie close by – Amersham Hill to the immediate north, Priory Road adjacent, and Wycombe Abbey to the immediate south. The recently designated Leigh Street Furniture Heritage conservation area lies to the west of the town centre.

CHAPTER 3 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

Location and population

The town lies 29 miles northwest of London, and immediately north of the M40 motorway. The population of the un-parished area (i.e. the town centre) is 62,500. The population of the wider urban area is 118,229.

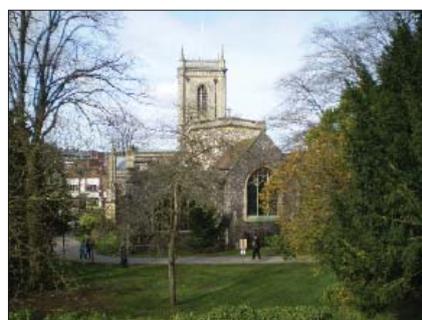
General character and plan form

High Wycombe is the largest town in the District, and it spreads in an east-west direction along the valley floor, constrained by the surrounding hills. The wider environs encompass a number of smaller settlements, particularly east along the river valley towards the Thames – Loudwater, Wooburn and Bourne End are now all physically linked to High Wycombe by urban sprawl. Likewise former small settlements on the northern hillsides at Downley and Hazlemere are also linked to Wycombe by suburban development.

High Wycombe is an ancient town, and dates back to the pre medieval period. Its current layout is dependent upon the changes wrought in the 13th century, when, as a burgeoning market flourished, the owners of the Manor "planted" a new wide High Street to increase their revenues, and set out burgage plots to either side. This pattern



The Little Market House, and (below) buildings to the rear. This area was formerly The Shambles.



All Saints church, and details. This is the largest medieval parish church in Buckinghamshire.



remains, despite centuries of infill and rebuilding. The original London to Oxford Road runs out from the historic core along the valley bottom, and the landscape has to some extent created the settlement form. Smaller settlements grew up at river crossing points or around mills along the valley, these have been swallowed up by modern urban sprawl. The main cross-valley route from Marlow to Amersham, is again aligned on a much older track, and runs close to the historic core.

The conservation area only covers part of the wider town of High Wycombe. The boundaries of the conservation area are tightly drawn to include the medieval core of the town, and the historic pasture of The Rye, with two small mill complexes. Later Victorian expansion up Amersham Hill and to the east and west are partly included within this conservation area: much of the Victorian expansion is included in the separate Amersham Hill and Priory Avenue conservation areas to the north. To the south of the town centre lies the historic Wycombe Abbey - this is covered by a separate conservation area, joined to High Wycombe at The Rye

Landscape context

High Wycombe lies in a river valley cutting through southern slopes of the Chiltern Hills. Development has spread along the valley bottom from West Wycombe to the confluence of the Wye with the Thames at Bourne End. Much of the surrounding countryside is designated as part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is an area of high quality landscape of national importance which was designated in 1965.

The Bucks Landscape Plan identifies the area as type Z9: River Valleys. The Wye Valley has a characteristic landform of steep sided valleys with protruding spurs and a strong convex profile to the upper slopes. The Wye valley has long been one of the major routes through the Chilterns. Road and rail routes hug the contours of the valley bottom. Access to the valley side is generally limited to narrow winding lanes enclosed by woodland, with the exception of the A404 which connects High Wycombe with Amersham in the Misbourne Valley. At Wycombe significant areas of the upper slopes and side valleys remain undeveloped but the valley is dominated by the town. There is a strong sense of enclosure which is emphasised by remaining woodland and green areas on the valley sides, although there is evidence to show that some of the woodland is 20th century, and previously parts of the hillside were more open in character.

The geology consists of valley gravels overlying the middle chalk of the Cretaceous period. The chalk creates the steep hillsides that encircle the town. These chalk hills form part of the southern dip slope of the Chiltern Hills. Some of the chalk is overlain with clay with flints, used extensively as a vernacular building material in the local area.



Roof gables on the Hen and Chickens play a vital role in adding interest to the roofscape.



Normanesque arches at St. Johns Hospital.



Vernacular 17th century architecture on The Falcon.

2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Origins and historic development

High Wycombe has a long history, having been settled for at least the last millennium. Its growth as a town was a result of its location midway between Oxford and London, on the River Wye which formed an early industrial base linked to milling activity. A number of excellent books on the town's history have been produced, including the recent 'High Wycombe, a History and Celebration' by Martin Andrew, and 'High Wycombe Past' by James Rattue. The High Wycombe Society regularly produces newsletters on aspects of the history of the town. Other sources are noted in the bibliography. A brief overview of the history is included here, however the focus in this study is the impact of certain historical aspects on the layout and form of the town itself.

A prehistoric valley track ran along the Wye which linked eventually with the Icknield Way, a cross country route lying below the Chiltern scarp. Neolithic flint arrowheads and burial urns have been found in the vicinity of the early settlement, along with sarsen stones. Of further importance are the three Iron Age hillforts that commanded spurs of the valley sides – Desborough Castle, Keep Hill, and West Wycombe. These were built on earlier sites of significance. A number of bodies thought to date to Celtic times were found by workmen on The Rye in 1929 while carrying out excavations near the Dyke indicating possible early settlement on or near the site.

The Romans colonised parts of the Chilterns with villa complexes, farming estates that were dotted at strategic intervals along the river valleys of the Chilterns. One such villa was located at Holywell Mead, and excavated in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is thought that Holywell Mead villa was abandoned in the early 5th century, shortly after the collapse of Roman rule. It appears however that the Romans upgraded the former trackway along the valley into a proper road, and other Roman remains have been found along the valley floor.

After the Romans left, the Chiltern area proved difficult to bring under control, and there are few references or remains linked to the Wycombe area. A road line marked on old OS maps running from Wycombe over the heaths towards Amersham is marked as the British Way. The earliest written reference to Wycombe is in a document of AD 970.

The Manorial history of Wycombe is set out in the Victoria County History, available in the Reference Library and on the internet.

By 1066 Wycombe was a large village situated at a strategic crossroads. There is a written description of it in Domesday, when it was held by Robert D'Oilly. Six mills are mentioned in the manor of Wycombe itself, a further eleven are referred to in neighbouring West Wycombe and Wooburn, indicating that milling was already a



Views of the grandest domestic frontages on the High Street, both Grade II. Now in business use, these buildings are of the highest quality, and utilise the finest materials.*



A Victorian building designed to be in keeping with the grander listed buildings on the south of the High Street. The use of chimneys enlivens the roofscape.



commercial interest by the 11th century.

St. Wulfstan, the Anglo Saxon bishop of Worcester, dedicated the parish church between 1072 and 1092, and possibly resided in Wycombe for six years. All Saints Parish Church was built in the 1080s and rebuilt in stages thereafter. There were close links between the town and Godstowe Abbey at Binsey, near Oxford.

Wycombe was an important enough settlement to have a castle, indicating that the settlement had grown from a village to a town. The motte remains in the Museum gardens. During the wars of King Stephen's reign (1153) the castle was besieged, as it was held by the Empress Matilda.

Markets and through-travel were hugely important during the medieval period. The Borough Charter was confirmed by Edward I in 1325, Henry IV in 1440 and Philip and Mary in 1553. Queen Elizabeth I reconfirmed the charter in 1589, as did the Stuart Kings.

The market was, together with milling activity, the underlying factor in Wycombe's growth during the Middle Ages. Wycombe's location, and the presence of corn mills, meant that there was a ready supply of goods to be sold, and as a result the market place developed. There are references to it as early as the 1100s, and originally it lay in the large space between the churchyard and Frogmoor. By about 1160 the Lords of the Manor decided to encourage additional trade by laying out a wide High Street with long narrow burgage plots facing onto it. This is a traditional planned town layout– the area was dominated by the corn market to the west. A "Gild" Hall was built in the early 1300s; this lay to the west of the Church, although it was later superseded by the Market House (later the Guildhall) that was constructed at the end of the High Street. By the 1200s the huge market place that ran from the church to Frogmoor began to be filled in, as stall holders and traders constructed permanent buildings. This created Bull Lane, Queen Square and Church Street, a tightknit medieval street pattern which remains today, and the main market moved onto the wide High Street. Immediately south of the church, where the Little Market House is located, was the Shambles.

By the 14th century the town was known as Chepping Wycombe (chepping means "market") to distinguish it from West Wycombe. The earliest surviving building in the town (apart from the Church) is the ruin of the Hospital of St. John, which dates from the 1180s.

The Leper hospital of St. Margarets and St. Giles was granted a charter in 1229 and is thought to have been located on Desborough road, close to the Green Street end, outside the medieval boundary.

Wycombe's location midway between the capital and Oxford made it an ideal stopping off point for coach travel. It also lay on the ancient route from Windsor to Hatfield. As a result a number of travellers'



Two views of the Guildhall and the adjacent former coaching Inn. The Guildhall is a Grade I landmark building. Paving to the front adds to the setting of this important grouping.



The ground floor of the former Red Lion Hotel echoes the elegant arcading of the Guildhall.



institutions grew up in the town, including St. John's Hospital, as well as the secular inns and taverns. There are a number of early references to taverns in the town, and a number of the establishments remain today along the High Street, some of which have sadly lost their original names. The Beaconsfield to Stokenchurch part of the London-Oxford route was turnpiked in 1718 which only added to the prosperity of the town. The Crendon Lane section of the route to Hatfield was turnpiked in 1768. Coaches continued to stop in the town up until the 1900s.

The importance of the River Wye in the development of the town should not be underestimated. The six mills mentioned in Domesday were the basis of the town's commercial growth – of these, Ash, Bridge and Pann Mills were close to the borough centre, Marsh, Loudwater and Hedge Mills were located further down the valley. Bassetsbury Mill and Temple Mill were probably built after 1203 when the Manor was split up. Rye and Bowden Mills date from the mid 13th century. The mills were initially used for corn – the grain trade was an important aspect of the town's early prosperity.

By the medieval and Tudor era cloth making was the main industrial focus of the town. There are references in records to weavers, dyers and wool merchants. Several of the Wye mills were fitted with fulling hammers, and the main output was in linen, hemp and wool. By the 17th century the cloth industry was in decline, and many mills had reverted to corn milling. Papermaking was also important – Glory Mill and Hedge Mill down the valley were producing paper from the 15th century, and Rye Mill converted to paper making in the 1700s.

Wycombe is famed for furniture making, particularly the chair industry, and was at one time the principle producer of the Windsor Chair. The extensive clearing of beech wood in the late 18th century to make way for cornfields led to the expansion of what had been a cottage industry, by making available supplies of raw material. Small furniture workshops became factories, still hand-craft based, until mechanisation in the 1860s. Specialisation developed in the industry in the early 19th century. Boddgers made the legs and stretchers for chairs, but there were also seat makers, back makers and framers. Their parts were assembled in the pre-mechanised factories. By the second part of the 19th century Wycombe was expanding rapidly as a result of the furniture industry. Powered sawmills ensured a steady supply of timber and furniture factories appeared all over the town. By 1875 it is estimated that Wycombe was producing 4,700 chairs a day, a figure that increased consistently until the end of the century. By 1895 there were over 100 chair making factories in the town, employing 5000 people. A key result of this industrial activity was the construction of large numbers of artisan housing and cottages on the outer edges of the former Borough and beyond. Newlands became a working class suburb (and renowned for its squalor) and terraces of cottage grew up to the east and the west, including at Saffron Platt, and North Town. Cottages were also built along Hughenden, Benjamin and Roberts Roads. The middle classes moved out of



The sole remaining jettied building in the High Street; other timberframed buildings remain but most have been refronted.

The Union Baptist Church of 1908 on Easton Street. This has strong 16th century Italianate design references, and contrast well with the built up frontages to either side.



the town centre into newly laid out villa developments in places like Amersham Hill, and the domestic functions of the fine town centre houses changed to business uses. Larger chair factories were built, mostly to the west of the town centre, and some of these have been included within a newly designated conservation area. Wycombe was socially and economically dominated by the industry, and there was considerable unemployment when it declined in the 1960s.

As well as the economic development of the town, mention should be made of some of those who had an effect on the development of the historic character that we see today, in particular the roles of The Earls of Shelburne and Lords Carrington, both of whose benefices added architectural gems to the town. For a more detailed examination of the role that these men played in High Wycombe please refer to David Snoxell's articles (see Bibliography).

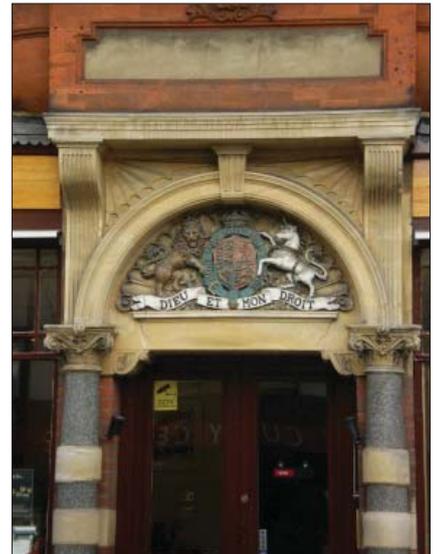
Archaeology

There is significant potential for important archaeological discoveries within the conservation area. Areas of known archaeological potential are identified on an "archaeological notification map" which is supplied to the local planning authorities and regularly updated. Where development may affect archaeological remains the Council may request that applicant supply an archaeological evaluation report as part of their planning application, and may seek preservation in situ or impose a condition requiring archaeological investigation in accordance with national and local planning guidance and policies.

High Wycombe Town Centre conservation area has a Scheduled Ancient Monument: The Hospital of St. John the Baptist is a rare survival of a 12th century hospital, some of which remains upright. Further buried archaeological remains related to the history of the site will survive in the locality as well as the remains of collapsed walls in raised area to the east of the site.

The Rye: Holywell Mead Roman Villa remains were excavated and recorded in 1862, 1932 and 1952. Although not a scheduled ancient monument it does indicate the historic importance of the town dating back to Roman times.

The Bucks Historic Towns Project: In order to better understand the evolution of our towns and with a view to contributing towards their future management, the County Archaeological Service, in conjunction with the Milton Keynes Design and Conservation Team, is undertaking a survey of the 30 historic towns in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. This project, largely funded by English Heritage, is part of a national programme of urban characterisation which aims to examine historic towns from their earliest origins up to the present day. The project method uses archaeological data, maps, photographs and documentary sources, as well as information gathered from visits to each town. On completion, the project will have compiled the information into an easily accessible database for all the towns. There will be a series of digital maps that will

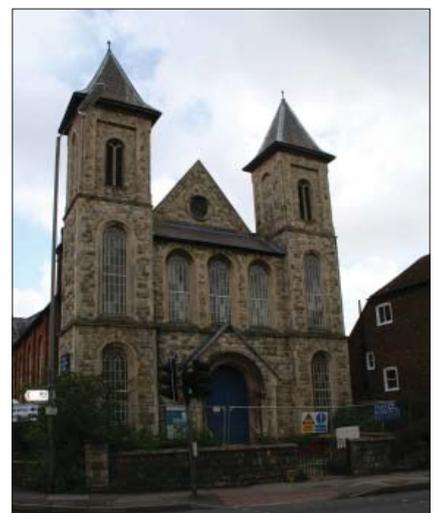


The ornate door of the former Post Office on Easton Street.



The ruins of the Hospital of St. John on Easton Street, the oldest structure in the conservation area.

The twin towers of Trinity Congregational Church (formerly Chapel) are a local landmark, visible in views across The Rye.



characterise each townscape and its development. The project will also produce individual illustrated reports for each town.

The data for the project will be held by the Historic Environment Records (HER) for Buckinghamshire. The project covers the whole town as opposed to this appraisal which deals with the historic core conservation area.

Buckinghamshire County Council's Archaeology Service has recently completed the Bucks Historic Landscape Characterisation. The Historic Landscape Characterisation project has assessed the various components of the landscape such as fields, woodland and settlement, and maps the results into a Geographical Information System (GIS); this is a flexible, digital mapping system that enables other aspects of the landscape to be recorded and updated when necessary.

In the case of High Wycombe the landscape characterisation can add an understanding of the wider historic landscape. Some of this information has been incorporated into the appraisal text above, further information can be obtained from the Archaeology pages on the Buckinghamshire County Council website - www.buckscc.gov.uk

Historic maps

OS 1875/76, and 1899 are the key historic maps used.

3 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

Whilst many of the spaces within the conservation area are dealt with in greater depth in the sub area studies, mention should be made of the main areas here, particularly where they link zones together. The High Street and Frogmoor lie at the heart of the conservation area, and were important market places (the High Street retains this function). Both spaces are now lined with historic buildings. Other key spaces within the built up centre are the churchyard, a verdant oasis of greenery immediately adjacent to the High Street, and the library gardens (adjoining the old library building). A smaller area remains on Castle Street, where the relief of the land creates enclosure. The key open space in High Wycombe is of course The Rye, formerly the towns common pasture. The Rye and Holywell Mead Management Plan (2008-2018) gives further information and guidance.

Important views and vistas

Views into the conservation area: The key views are from the surrounding hillsides, particularly down Marlow Hill, and down Amersham Hill, the main routes across the valley. These views show a pleasing jumble of roof tops and chimneys nestling in the valley bottom, somewhat overshadowed by later large scale development around the town centre. Views along the valley floor are constrained



Church Street, on the corner with Frogmoor.



1-3 Church Street, a rebuilt building on the site of a medieval house.

A view of the Guildhall and the Falcon glimpsed through the arches of the Little Market House.



by urban buildings.

Views within the conservation area: These are identified more fully in the sub area texts. However key focal points such as the Church tower play an important role in setting and place.

Views out of the conservation area: Again these are dictated by the topography, so the tree covered hillsides to the south across The Rye are key.

4 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Definition of character areas or zones

Each character zone within the conservation area has its own area study appended to this main document. The separate areas are:

1 The Town Centre: Parish Church, Old Core, and High Street

This sub area is the most complex and architecturally diverse in the conservation area, and is what gives Wycombe its overriding character as a market town. The parish church of All Saints, the largest medieval church in the county, is set within its churchyard behind Church Square. Its west tower dominates views both within and from around the town. To the west, the island of buildings between Church Street and White Hart Street, probably a medieval market encroachment, has a complex plot pattern and a very high density. This area, which includes the west end of Castle Street and Castle Place, is the oldest part of the town. The High Street, a wide straight street, was laid out in the 13th century as a planned market and seven hundred years later is still filled with market stalls three days a week, although without sheep and cattle any more. Some of the town's finest historic buildings line the street which terminates in The Cornmarket, with the Little Market House to the north and the vista west closed by the superb Georgian Guildhall, built for Lord Shelburne in 1759.

Also included in this area is the Victorian expansion of Castle Place of 1877-79 which overlies a much earlier settlement pattern and Church Farm. This has its own distinctive architecture and visually links to the churchyard area

2 Frogmoor

Frogmoor to the west, is a triangular market place, surrounded by buildings, some listed on the south and west side. The east side has been substantially rebuilt and is largely occupied by the Chilterns Shopping Centre.

3 Easton Street

This was originally a continuation of the High Street, until Crendon Street was widened and Queen Victoria Road laid out across the original burgage layout. Here Georgian and later frontages at the west end give way at the east to the Victorian former grammar



Victorian terraces at Castle Place.



Open space at Frogmoor, a former market place.



Georgian frontages along Easton Street.



The Town Hall.



Brunel's Station building.

school and the 12th century ruins of St. John's Hospital.

4 The Civic Area, and Crendon Street

Originating with Queen Victoria Road and its Edwardian Queen Anne style Town Hall of 1903-4, and Neo-Georgian Council Offices, Library Police Station and Post Office, the civic and public buildings area spreads east to include the modern Magistrates Court and west to include the Wycombe Swan Theatre. This area fronts Abbey Way and forms the southern boundary of the town centre.

Crendon Street was rebuilt in Neo-Georgian style from the 1930s to the 1960s in brick with stone enrichments and barred sash windows. Its character is remarkably consistent and a good example of such a street.

5 The Railway Station and the Victorian expansion

The railway arrived in 1854 as a branch line from Maidenhead which was extended to Thame in 1862 and Oxford in 1864. Some of the station buildings which are of a high quality date from this period (including the original Isambard Kingdom Brunel train shed), while the Edwardian ticket office and platform buildings belong to the Great Central/Great Western Joint Railway buildings programme.

The Victorian expansion of Castle Street of 1877-79 and the other smaller houses to the west represent an artisan housing expansion of the town while the lower part of Amersham Hill has much larger late Victorian villas and houses. Each has distinctive architecture: Castle Street with small scale pairs and terraces in late Georgian tradition, mainly yellow stock and red brick; Amersham Hill has larger and more enriched architecture, some in late Victorian Gothic style and in a variety of materials. Much of Amersham Hill has been designated a separate conservation area.

6 Saffron Platt and London Road

Starting with the 1850 Trinity United Reform Church (formerly the Congregational Chapel) a fine terrace of Georgian and early 19th century buildings gives way to single villas and houses, all on the north side of London Road, and fronting The Rye.

Saffron Platt lies to the rear of London Road and is named after an area where autumn crocuses were grown to produce saffron. This is a compact area of terrace housing, some dating from 1865, and a public house, The Mason's Arms (now called The Sausage Tree). It exhibits in places a planned layout of artisan and workers cottages.

7 The Rye

The Rye is an extremely valuable open space which was formerly the common pasture of the town burgesses. The long artificial lake, The Dyke, was laid out as part of the grounds of Wycombe Abbey, and is included within the Wycombe Abbey Registered Historic Garden. The rebuilt remnants of Pann Mill lie on the northern part of the open space, close to the Trinity United Reform Church: this



Grand Georgian buildings facing The Rye on London Road provide a strong contrast with the planned workers cottages of Saffron Platt behind.



The Dyke provides an open area of water along the southern edge of The Rye. To the north east Bassetsbury Manor's setting is enhanced by the greensward.



utilitarian building, funded and restored by The High Wycombe Society houses some of the rescued mill machinery.

8 Bassetsbury

Bassetsbury is a small manorial group of historic buildings to the east of The Rye, including the manor house, watermill and barns. These form a very fine group bisected by the river.

9 Marsh Green

Marsh Green is a hamlet lying further east, which retains a rural character and is focussed around a former watermill, farm, and houses. The green was formerly the header pond for the watermill.

Each area study covers the following topics:

- Location and landscape setting
- Specific history to the sub area.
- Activity and land use, and influence of these on the plan form and building types
- Architectural and historical quality of buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area
- The contribution of key unlisted buildings
- Local details
- Prevalent and traditional building materials
- Contribution made by the natural environment

Green spaces

The key green space within the conservation area is The Rye, a large expanse of parkland in the heart of the urban area. Other smaller incidental green spaces are also key, in particular the churchyard, and on a much smaller scale the Library Gardens (adjoining the old library building). Frogmoor is a large urbanised open space, with some slowly maturing trees which will in time soften the outlook.

Trees and vegetation

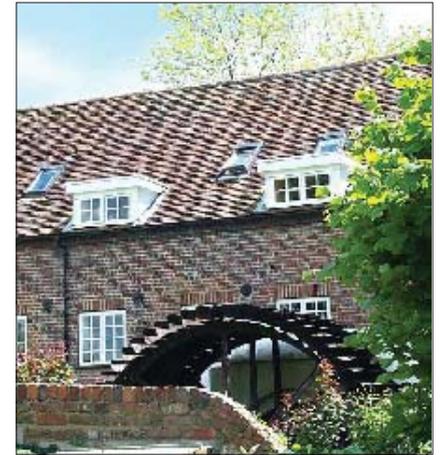
Key trees in the conservation area are those on The Rye, in the churchyard, incidental street trees and those in gardens. Trees along the River Wye also play a key role in greening this very urban conservation area and are identified in more detail in the individual study areas.

The extent of loss, problems and pressures

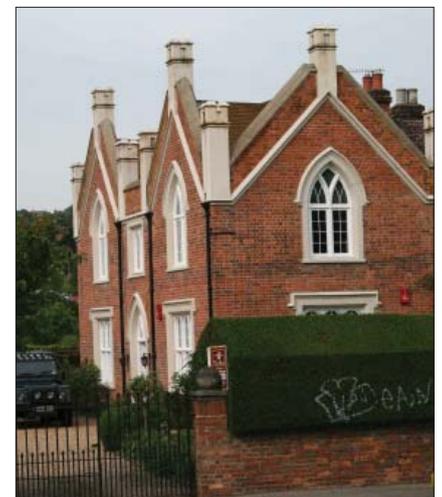
These are discussed in more detail in the individual study papers. In short they consist of high traffic levels and noise thereof, the loss of historic fabric mainly through the replacement of historic wooden windows with uPVC, and the proliferation of inappropriate signage along some shopping frontages.



Rural charm at the Old Mill Cottage complex, in the Marsh Green sub area of the conservation area.



A remnant of the working past of the wider town, Bassetsbury Mill has retained its waterwheel.



The gothic detailing on Marsh Green House, built by the second Lord Carrington for his mother.



The view across The Rye.

CHAPTER 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

1 *The Conservation Area Appraisal and possible boundary amendments*

Revision of the northern boundary along the Railway Line from the station to Archway will be investigated as a result of comments received. This is subject to a separate process.

2 *Buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area*

A number of buildings have been identified on the conservation area maps which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, by virtue of their age, design, massing, scale, and enclosure. Where possible these buildings should be retained.

3 *Proposals for the enhancement of the Conservation Area*

Incremental improvements will be made through delivery of the development control process; more specific or proactive projects will require additional funding. A key aim would be to re-open parts of the river where it is culverted and make it accessible to residents, and create stronger links between the town centre and The Rye.



A historic view along Easton Street; the foreground buildings were demolished.



The Town Hall soon after construction in 1902.



Crendon Street prior to redevelopment in the 1930s.

CHAPTER 5 NEXT STEPS/FURTHER INFORMATION

1 *Public consultation and community involvement*

Following publication of the draft Conservation Area Appraisal on 23 August 2010, six weeks were allowed for public consultation: the closing dates for comments was 4 October 2010. Copies of the draft were be available on the Council's website, and at other local public facilities including the Council offices, and the High Wycombe Library.

Following the completion of the consultation period and the revision of the document to take account of public responses, the Conservation Area Appraisal was formally adopted by Wycombe District Council. The amended document was then published.

Public consultation could identify proposals for preserving or enhancing the conservation area, and any further or detailed work that is required in order to implement the recommendations above.



The Red Lion hotel, with the Guildhall in the background.

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

2 Monitoring

Changes in the appearance and condition of the Conservation Area should be monitored regularly. A photographic survey was undertaken at the time of the appraisal work, and this could be updated every two years or so subject to resources. From time to time an update on the progress of the management strategy should also be published

3 Design guidance

The policies and proposals of the Wycombe District Local Plan/Wycombe Development Framework are the primary source of reference for development control advice. In addition the Council's approved Conservation Areas guidance note is seen as a supporting document to the plan. The Chilterns Conservation Board republished the Chilterns Building Design Guide in 1999/2010. This provides guidance aimed at conserving the outstanding qualities which make the Chilterns a landscape of national importance. Copies can be inspected at the District Council Offices.

Appended to this document is a series of development control guidelines, covering both new development and the protection of existing character, and identifying sites for improvement. This forms the basics of a management plan for the conservation area.

APPENDICES

A Conservation area maps

The conservation area boundary map shows the boundaries of the area and the sub divisions within it. Each sub area has its own more detailed map indicating features of interest, views, listed and other important buildings, trees and green spaces. The maps are indicative only.

B Listed Buildings

These are indicated on the individual sub area maps. Further information on listed buildings can be obtained from the English Heritage website www.english-heritage.org.uk.

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D Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Julia Wise for access to the Historic Environment Records at Bucks County Council, and David Snoxell for his articles on the history of High Wycombe.

E DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The following guidelines have been drawn up for the management of change in the High Wycombe Conservation Area to allow for development and alterations that keep the conservation area vital, without losing the characteristics that make it special:

Preservation of existing character

The maintenance of historic buildings in Conservation Area

- The use of traditional materials and detailing can have a considerable positive effect in enhancing the conservation area. The owners of historic and prominent properties should be encouraged to remove unsympathetic modern materials, such as concrete tiles and plastic rainwater goods, and to reinstate traditional materials such as plain clay tiles, local Bucks brick, painted timber windows and cast iron guttering.
- Repointing should only be carried out when structurally necessary, and kept to a minimum. Variations in colour and the application of excessive amounts of mortar in a non-traditional manner detracts from brickwork and obscure it. Inappropriate mixes can cause brickwork to deteriorate.
- Modern windows can appear very out of place, particularly if surrounded by more traditional types. Dark staining of timber is a modern technique which does little to enhance windows.
- The use of modern machine made roof tiles as a replacement for traditional handmade tiles should be avoided. Concrete or artificial slate should not be used as these materials are visually detrimental.

The maintenance of trees and green spaces

- Trees make a significant contribution to the area and property owners should manage existing trees sensitively. Within the conservation area, consent is required to fell, lop or top trees. Consideration should be given to important views into and out of the conservation area when planting or undertaking tree works, as should the setting of historic buildings.
- The green spaces in the conservation area consist of The Rye, the Churchyard and the Library Gardens (adjoining the old library building), as well as smaller incidental areas such as those at the junction of Easton Street and London Road, and on Castle Street. Private gardens play a role in the character of the less built up areas around The Rye, Marsh Green, and London Road.

Design Guidance for new development

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.

Contextural design

- Some planning applications within the conservation area are required to have Design and Access Statements accompanying them, in order for local authorities to evaluate the impact of the scheme on the wider locality, and understand the design process behind the proposal. Applications for listed building consent also require a Design and Access Statement.
- Within High Wycombe Conservation Area new development or proposals should respect the character of the town and respond to the immediate environment, particularly in terms of scale, density,

form, materials and detailing. Building works such as extensions must be designed not as a separate entity but relate to the original building.

- Listed and other significant buildings are identified on the area appraisal survey maps and their specific qualities are described in the accompanying text. 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.
- Development opportunities in High Wycombe conservation area are limited, unless sites come up for redevelopment, and many of the buildings are listed. Proposals for new development within the conservation area should include a detailed analysis of the locality and townscape, and show how this has developed (see Design and Access Statements above). Proposals on backland sites should always be secondary to the more important buildings that face main thoroughfares.

Scale and density

- Scale is the combination of a building's height and bulk when related to its surroundings. The scale of any new buildings should respect surrounding development. Some modest changes of scale may be appropriate as this reflects the variety of form in the town centre, where buildings have developed over time. Applicants should provide accurate elevations of surrounding buildings showing how new development will relate to them. Density is the amount of development related to the site area. Government guidance states that high density development can make good use of land, provided it is carefully chosen and sensitively sited, although in a conservation area a balance must be sought between the sensitive historic environment and the requirements of developers, to ensure that sites are not overdeveloped.
- Applications for development adjoining but outside the conservation area will be assessed for their effect upon the its character, appearance and setting, and may be refused permission if this is considered adverse.

Height and massing

- Within the conservation area there are a number of buildings that are already prominent because of their height – the church tower, although the rest of the building is hidden, and some of the development on the High Street, particularly commercial buildings. Domestic buildings are historically of lesser importance within the townscape and new development should reflect this hierarchy. The height of new development should match that of adjoining buildings – in High Wycombe this is usually either three or two storeys, depending on whether the location is central or not.
- Where extensions to existing buildings are proposed, the extension should be subservient to the main buildings, with a lower roofline.

Appearance, materials and detailing

- The emphasis in conservation areas is to provide high quality design. Conservation area status does not preclude good modern design provided that it takes account of the prevailing form of existing development, scale, density, height and massing. Innovative modern design can be successfully integrated into historic areas and can provide vitality and interest to the streetscene. Natural materials and high quality detailing should be incorporated into any proposals.

- Where a more traditional approach is appropriate buildings should be designed in a traditional form (including plan form, roof spans etc) and include pitched roofs. Dormers and rooflights should be modestly sized and situated on rear facing roofslopes. Use of historic detailing such as stringcourses, eaves details, fenestration pattern etc, will be acceptable if they are appropriate to the design of the new building. Such detailing, or a modern interpretation of it, can do much to break up facades of buildings. Chimneys are essential in roofscapes and should be incorporated into designs.
- Materials for any new building works must be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area. Where possible local traditional material should be used – good quality traditional brick for walling and sand faced clay roof tiles, and slate, or if appropriate traditional London stock bricks. Although some of the buildings with the conservation area are rendered or have painted brickwork, the modern interpretation and techniques are not always visually successful and should thus be used with care. Where traditional materials survive they should be retained. The Chiltern Buildings Design Guide gives general information on Chiltern building materials; specific advice will depend on the immediate locality.
- 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. Windows should be timber (painted, not stained) and their design should reflect local styles, usually sliding sashes or side hung casements. If windows are to be double glazed these must be carefully designed to reduce the bulkiness of glazing bars. Joinery details should be submitted with planning applications. Top hung lights and modern materials such as UPVC and aluminium are inappropriate in the conservation area. Doors vary throughout the conservation area, but where they survive in original form tend to be wooden, sometimes embellished, and in keeping with the formerly domestic buildings.

Extensions to existing buildings

- Extensions to existing buildings require the same approach as to new build in that they must take into account the prevailing forms of development and complement the form and character of the original house. This is of particular importance when designing extensions to listed buildings. Design should be of high quality, and take account of rooflines and shape, eaves details, fenestration patterns, architectural detailing and the creation of new chimneys. Extensions should not dominate the original buildings or result in the loss of historic plots.

Boundary treatments

- Traditionally properties in the heart of the conservation area have no formal front boundaries and are accessed directly off the pavement. In the outer areas such as Castle Place, London Road, Bassetsbury and Marsh Green, boundaries are traditionally brick walling or hedging. Where new boundaries are proposed in the public realm in these more open areas, they should be in keeping, and the use of panelled fencing should be avoided.
- 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 survey maps are an important element of the area's character, and should be retained and where possible enhanced.

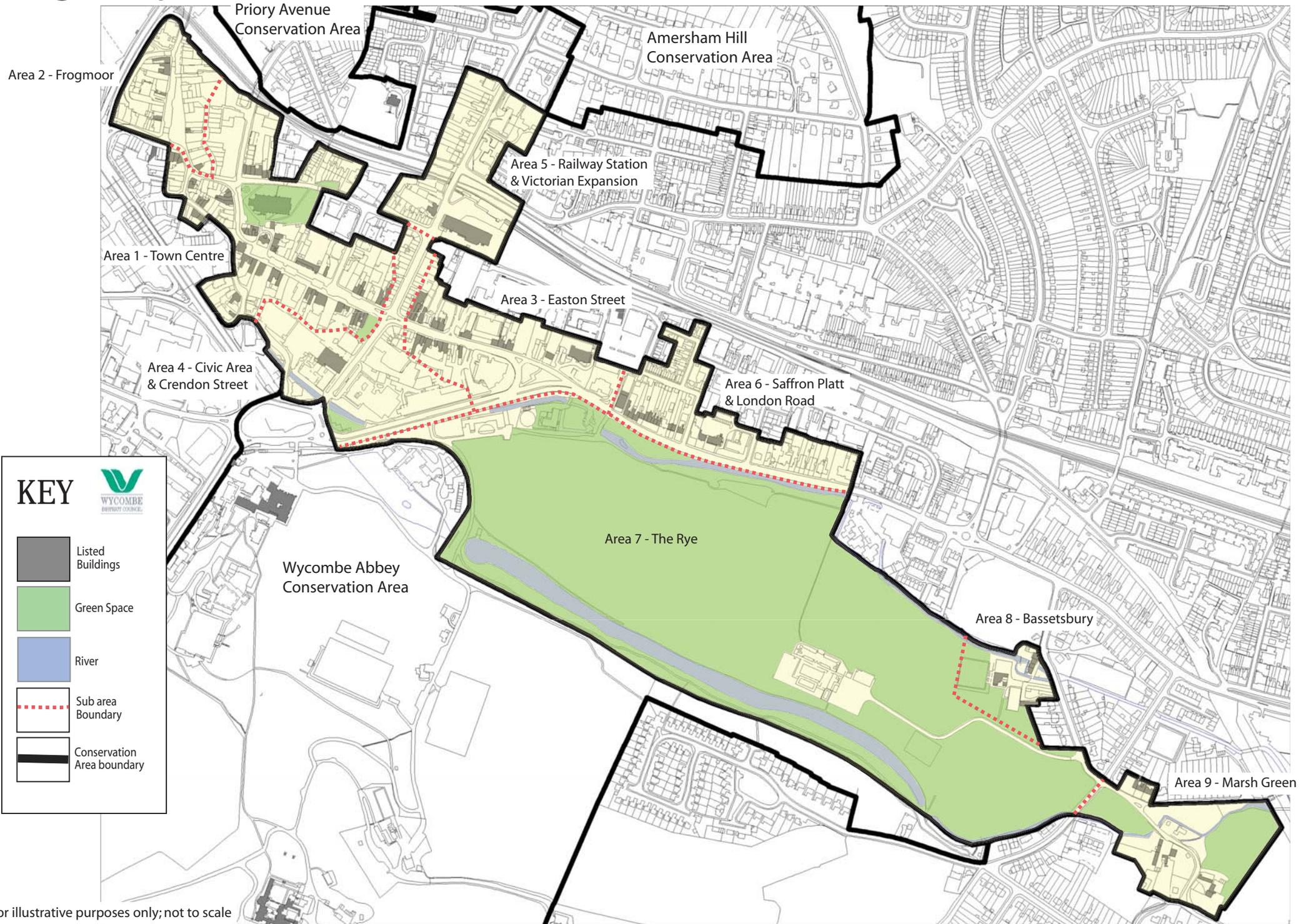
Public realm

- Street furniture, lampposts, CCTV camera mountings and posts, telephone boxes and other public works which are beyond planning control can have a disproportionate impact on the streetscape and character of the conservation area and those responsible need to bear in mind the advice in

Planning Policy Statement 5 Note 15: Planning for the Historic Environment, (Section HE3.1, HE 7.5, HE9.5, HE10) and the English Heritage publication "Streets for All" (2005). Traffic signs, road markings and street lamps add to the clutter in the town centre and consideration should be given to the overall effect when installing such items.

- Little historic surfacing remains in the High Street except the setts around the Little Market House, and on some carriageways through the frontage buildings in The Town Centre and Easton Street. The pavements along the High Street have been replaced with modern yorkstone as opposed to tarmac and this adds to the quality of the environment. However this has at times been repaired with non appropriate materials which detracts visually from the quality. Frogmoor has been redeveloped with more appropriate surfacing.

High Wycombe Conservation Area



For illustrative purposes only; not to scale