

Conservation Area Character Survey

BERGHERS HILL



What are Conservation Areas?

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest which are considered worthy of preservation or enhancement. They are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Within conservation areas there are special controls on some alterations to buildings and their demolition or partial demolition and on works to trees. The Council's Heritage Guidance Note on conservation areas gives further details of the specific controls that apply.

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

The Purpose of This Survey

This conservation area character survey describes the main features of special architectural and historic interest which justifies the designation of Berghers Hill as a conservation area. The survey is intended to complement the approved policies for conservation areas in the Council's Wycombe District Local Plan. These Policies are the primary means of safeguarding the special character of our conservation areas.

The survey is also intended to be used as an aid in development control decision making. Proposals for schemes positively to enhance the character and appearance of Berghers Hill Conservation Area will be produced in the future in consultation with councillors, local residents and other interested parties.



HISTORY

Berghers Hill, situated in Wooburn Parish and known as Beggars Hill in the 18th. century, is a hamlet roughly half a mile to the south-east of Wooburn Green and to the east of Wooburn. Several of the buildings have 17th. century work so the settlement clearly predates its earliest reference. Berghers Hill lies just behind the escarpment of the valley of the River Wye and the footpath from Wooburn climbs nearly 200 feet to it.

The Conservation Area was designated in May 1994 by Wycombe District Council's Planning and Development Committee following extensive public consultation. The boundary identifies the historic hamlet which is a coherent and tight knit one.

To the east are fields on the plateau and to the south-west are woods. To the north-west are houses in spacious grounds.

The whole settlement is within both the Metropolitan Green Belt and an Area of Attractive Landscape.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

There are no known sites of special archaeological interest or Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the conservation area. However 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

Berghers Hill is an inward looking hamlet situated at a track crossroads. Only the east one is now a road, and indeed the only vehicular access, while the north, south and west approaches are now footpaths.

The hamlet is along a north-south axis with the

oldest cottages on the west side. There was further building in the late 18th. and early 19th. century, again of a cottage and small house type. Later in the century some larger houses were built, Coachman's Cottage and Staplegrove House. The former chapel was built at this time and the last significant buildings in the hamlet were the 1905 Edwardian pair of Lynwood and Millwood Cottage.

In physical terms the hamlet has three distinct areas. At the south there is an open triangular area with the oldest cottages, including Jasmine Cottage and The Old Cottage set back from the road. Moving north, the houses are close to the road, including Bentinck Cottage and the terrace south of the Pheasant. Beyond this pinch point the buildings are set further away from the lane and their boundaries to it defined by iron railings.

The layout and positioning of the buildings and their fences and enclosures give an interesting and varied character to the hamlet and, despite its small size, the hamlet has considerable streetscape interest.

To the south-west the approaches are through or alongside woodland with fine hedges to the conservation area boundary and the views of, in particular, Jasmine Cottage, from the south and west are quite delightful. The hedges focus onto the path between The Old Cottage and The Heights which passes almost below the jettied corner of the former.

Emerging into the conservation area from the north along the narrow footpath or from the west along the path beside The Old Cottage, or indeed from the eastern access road, accentuates the change in scale and the almost urban quality of the north-south spine lane with its variety of houses and their positioning.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

Within the conservation area only Jasmine Cottage is statutorily listed Grade II. This is listed as 'Cottage to The Heights and Jasmine Cottage'

and was added to the list in January 1987. It is mainly 17th century with 18th. and 19th century alterations and a key building in the conservation area with its sweeps of tiled roofs.

The Old Cottage has 17th. century origins but is particularly characterised by the 19th. century timber framing to its north elevations. The main expansion of the settlement took place around 1800, with the housing on the east side of the lane being all of that date, from the late 18th. century The Pheasant, a pub until the 1950s, the terrace cottages, Merry Thought and Clematis Cottage, built in 1835, to the villa style Staplegrove House of about 1870. Immediately north the Edwardian Millwood Cottage and Lynwood were the last major buildings within the hamlet.

On the west side 19th. century building predominates from Bentinck Cottage northward, terminating with Coachmans Cottage, in villa style of about 1860. Along the short spur lane to the west is the former chapel of later 19th. century date.

From Merry Meadow north to Staplegrove House and north of Appletree Cottage and to the south and east boundaries of the Old Chapel the road boundary is defined by iron railings about a metre high of a distinctive and uniform pattern. These consist of spearhead railings alternating with hair pin railings and these form an important element in the character of this north and central part of the conservation area. Some of the railings have hedging behind or even growing around them.

MATERIALS

Jasmine Cottage contains 17th. century timber-framing but this is not seen from the outside, except on the south gable. The Old Cottage also conceals timber-framing. However the materials that contribute to the conservation area's public character are discussed below.

The village has a range of building materials which contribute to its character with red brick and sand-faced plain clay tiles to the older

buildings, including at the south Bentinck Cottage, Merry Meadow, Hilltop, The Old Cottage, Jasmine Cottage and the terrace south of The Pheasant. The Heights has colourwashed roughcast elevations over brick and is the only such house at the south end while The Old Cottage also has 19th. century timber-framing to its upper storey, some decorative and some functional.

Moving north the predominant materials are colourwash or colourwashed roughcast with plain clay tiled roofs to Flint Cottage and The Pheasant. North of the lane opposite The Pheasant the houses are slated, Staplegrove with a hipped roof and Coachmans Cottage with shaped bargeboards. The Old Chapel is brick with cement dressings and slated roof.

At the south some of the houses are in picturesque cottage style with cross-lattice leaded-light casements, while The Heights has cast-iron lattice windows. Generally speaking there has been little intrusive use of substitute materials for windows and doors, with painted timber casements or sliding sashes predominating, with a scattering of leaded lights.

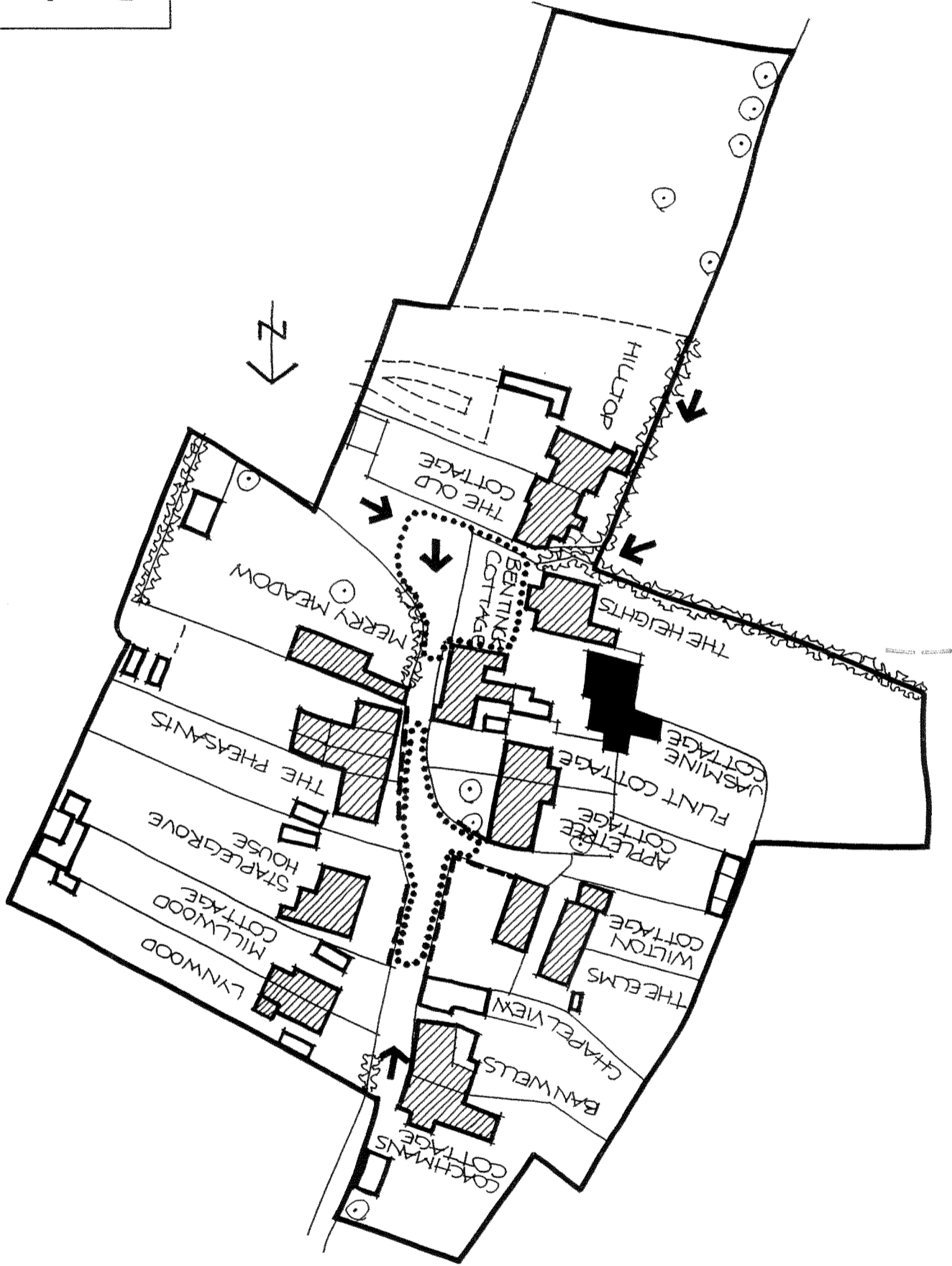
Unusually there are no boundary walls of any importance in conservation area views.

Surfacing within domestic curtilages for driveways and the like should be in keeping with the rural nature of the village and of an informal type, predominantly shingle. Tarmac and concrete are out of place in this rural setting. Regular paving, pavours and setts can also look discordant and may not always be appropriate. Paths to front doors historically were surfaced with clay tiles or brick and this is a tradition that could be encouraged.

TREES AND VEGETATION

There are relatively few significant trees within the conservation area and these are marked on the character assessment map. Hedges are, however, of considerable visual significance, particularly along the south-western boundaries. Here a high

Berghers Hill Conservation Area Character Survey Map



Berghers Hill

Listed Buildings	
Other Significant Buildings	
Important Railings	
Important Trees	
Important Hedges	
Important Groups	
Some Significant Views	

mixed laurel/holly and privet hedge forms the south curtilage to The Heights and a high box hedge the west curtilage to The Old Cottage and much of Hilltop. These hedges form an attractive 'green' boundary to the open wooded countryside here. They also converge on the path between The Heights and The Old Cottage.

Within the heart of the conservation area the high box and privet hedge to Merry Meadow is important. On the eastern road approach to the east conservation area the thorn hedge to the east curtilage of Merry Meadow is visually significant.

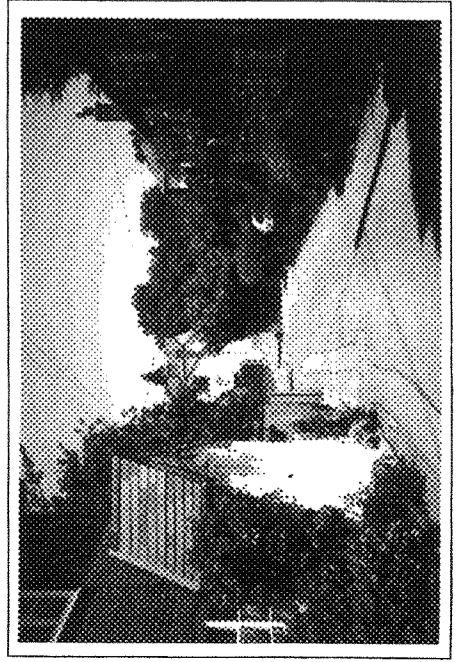
There are no public open spaces or greens within the hamlet. Only private open space is significant, including in particular the southern garden to Hilltop with its oak and ash trees along the west boundary and the garden east of The Old Chapel.

The use of laurel, box and privet species for hedging is appropriate in this conservation area with traditional native hedge species such as thorn, hazel and holly most effective along the eastern boundary with the fields.

Coniferous hedging, mostly planted for its fast growing nature for screening purposes is visually out of place in this type of environment and should be firmly discouraged.

OPEN SPACE

There are areas of open space other than the two described above which are significant factors in the establishment of the character of the



conservation area, which will be important to the setting of an individual building (for example the grounds of The Heights) or to the character of the conservation area as a whole (for example The Old Cottage grounds).

Collectively, such unmarked open spaces are considered very important to the character of the conservation area.

GROUPINGS

There are two major groupings or foci within the Berghers Hill conservation area, a southern one around the triangular roadway area framed by Merry Meadow, Bentinck Cottage, The Old Cottage and The Heights. This is a looser knit area.

The other grouping is further north and is defined partly by the iron railings alongside the road. This is framed by The Pheasant and the terrace cottages to its south, Appletree and Flint Cottages, The Old Chapel and Staplegrove House.

From the woodland paths Jasmine Cottage, The Old Cottage and Hilltop form a less regular casual grouping which has not been marked on the map.

VIEWS

There are important views within the conservation area and some of these are indicated on the survey map. There are also significant views of the village from the countryside, particularly from the south and west along the public footpaths from Hedsor and Wooburn respectively. Within the hamlet the map shows three significant views, but these are to be considered indicative. Good views are produced in all directions as a walker heads north or south along the spine lane and this constant variety and changes in the relationships between buildings is one of the factors that make this small conservation area one of considerable quality and character.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL ADVICE

The policies of the Wycombe District Local Plan are the primary source of reference for development control advice. In addition the Council's approved Heritage Strategy is seen as a supporting document to the Plan. This character survey is also intended to provide broad guidance of an informal nature in considering development within the conservation area. Below is a brief check list taking account of the above text.

To safeguard, preserve and enhance the appearance and special character of Berghers Hill Conservation Area:-

- 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.
- Materials for any new building works or surfacing must be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area.
- All trees in conservation areas are protected but special consideration should be given to those trees indicated on the conservation area survey 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.
- Although hedges cannot be specially protected through legislation those hedgerows indicated on the survey map should be retained and where possible enhanced. As a boundary treatment hedges will generally be preferred to walling or fencing.
- Areas of open space and gaps between buildings throughout the hamlet will be carefully considered for protection from development or enclosure in order to safeguard the character of Berghers Hill and any important views.
- Important groups of buildings are identified on the survey map and their specific qualities are described in the text above. Any new development must not harm the integrity or visual quality of these important groupings and it should be recognised that new development may not be acceptable.
- Special care must be taken to ensure that views looking into and out from the hamlet are not spoilt. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map.
- 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 conservation area higher standards of design are required in planning applications as it is the function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance the special character identified in this appraisal.

NOTES

FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

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

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

Development Control matters within Berghers Hill are the responsibility of the **West Team** who can be contacted on 01494 421517.

Planning Policy matters are the responsibility of the **Policy and Environment Unit** who can be contacted on 01494 421545.