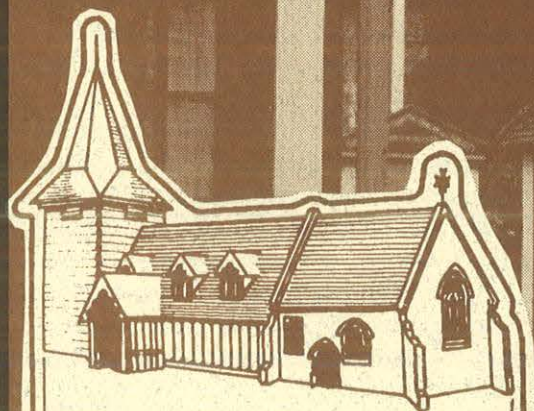


CHIPPING ONGAR

Conservation Area



*Heritage and
Environment*

in Epping Forest District

Historic Background

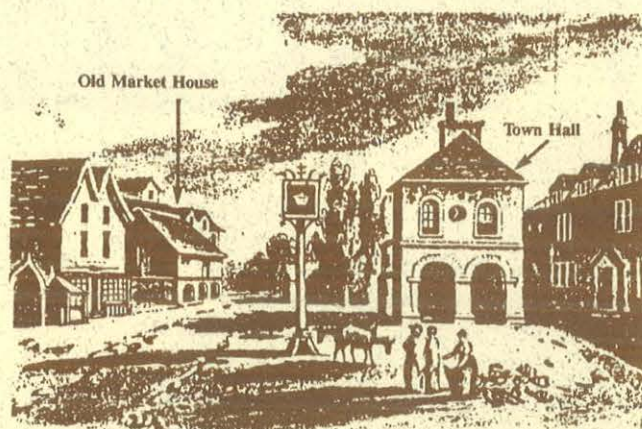
Chipping Ongar has been an important town and administrative centre for more than 1,000 years. The River Roding to the east of the town and Cripsey Brook to the west formed natural barriers against attack, so making it an obvious place to settle. It became the principal settlement in the Saxon "hundred" and was originally known as Castle Ongar because of its fine "motte and bailey" castle, which was built in the 11th or 12th century. The name Chipping dates from the 14th century and relates to the ancient market of the town - it is derived from Saxon words which mean "market" and "grassland".

After the Norman Conquest, King William gave the Manor of Ongar to Count Eustace of Boulogne, an important Essex landowner, who began to strengthen some of the Saxon defences including Chipping Ongar Castle. Over the succeeding hundred years the castle was enlarged, its final building phase occurring during the ownership of Richard de Lucy, Justicar of Henry II.

Today, good views of the well preserved ramparts of the inner bailey and the water filled ditch surrounding the "motte" can be obtained from the Pleasance car park. It is also possible to trace the northern arm of the town enclosure down to where it meets the High Street just south of Hermitage Cottage. The houses and work places of the 12th century town lay within the town enclosure which can be traced, at least in part, along Castle Street and the escarpment of Cripsey Brook. The entrances into the town enclosure were probably gated and evidence of their location can still be seen today in the narrowing of the High Street just north of Castle Street (the southern gate) and to the south of Central House (the northern gate).

The oldest surviving building in the town is St. Martin's Church (dedicated to St. Martin of Tours), the chancel and nave dating from the 11th century. The spire was added in the 15th century and the roof is mainly of 17th century origin. The White House and Castle House are the largest houses in the town and date from the 16th century.

The only other building from this period which still stands within the town enclosure is the Old Market House - number 171 High Street. This property is so named because it housed the market in the 1840s. Later in the 19th century the market transferred to the Town Hall which stood in the centre of the High Street, although this building was demolished in 1897.



Chipping Ongar High Street

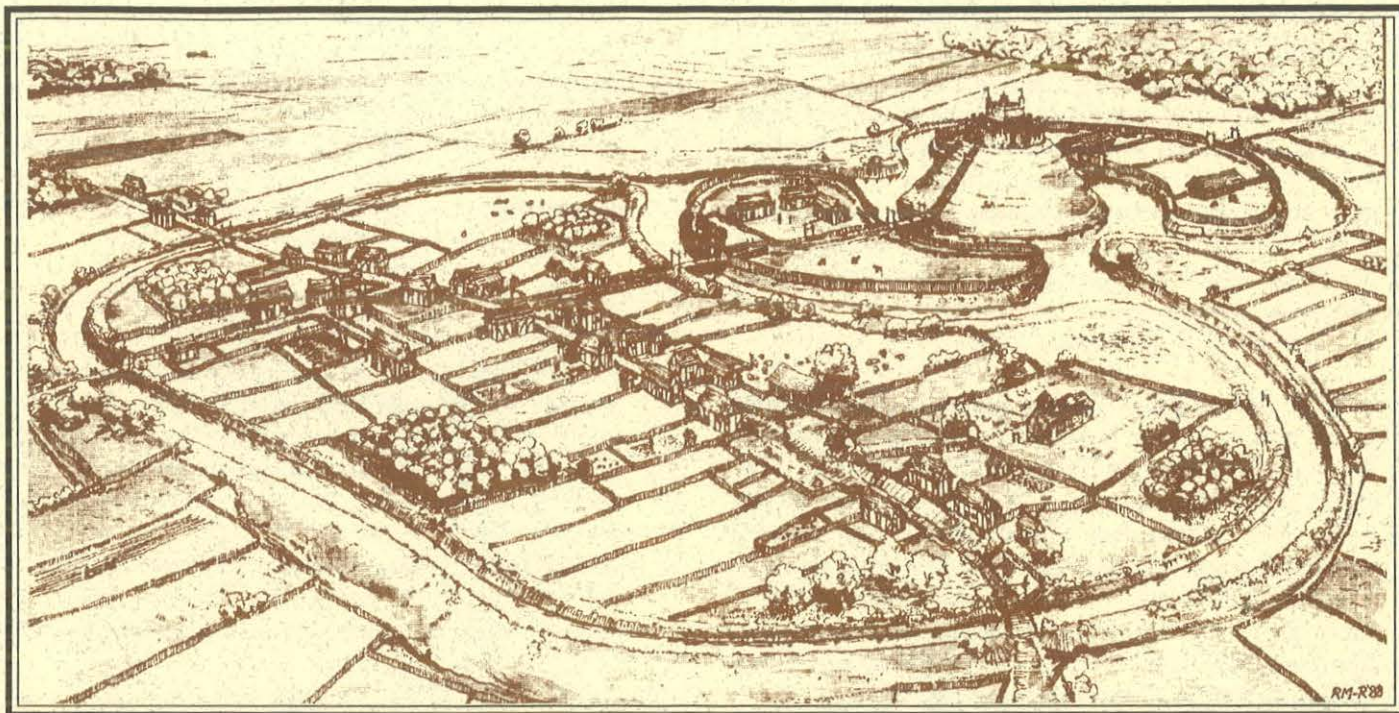
c.1818 (Courtesy of Essex Record Office)

The picture above shows Chipping Ongar High Street (looking north), in about 1818. The Old Market House (171 High Street) still survives today, but the Town Hall, which also housed the market, lock-up and school at various times, was demolished in 1897.

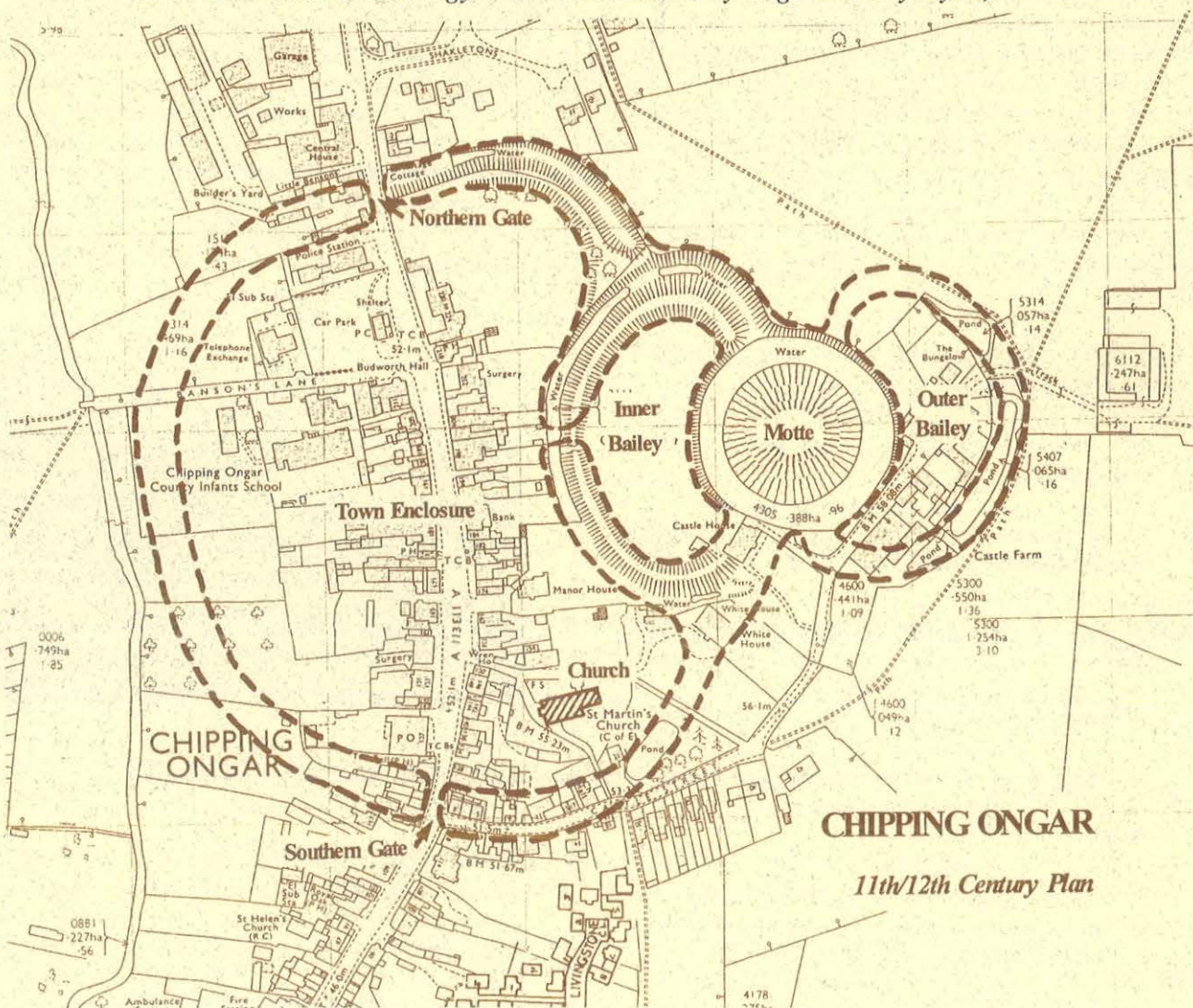
An historic association exists between the town and one of the nation's most famous explorers. Livingstone Cottages are so named because of their associations with Dr. David Livingstone (a plaque over the central passageway records that "in this room David Livingstone lived in 1838 just before proceeding to his great work in central Africa").

The town was an important staging place for travellers from London to East Anglia and by 1848 coaches departed on a daily basis from the King's Head Inn. The railway service between Chipping Ongar and London was opened in 1865. This brought greater prosperity and change to the town with a wealth of Victorian buildings, including a police station and the local waterworks. As a memorial to Captain P.J. Budworth of Greensted Hall - a local historian and prominent in local affairs - Budworth Hall was erected in 1886. It originally contained assembly rooms, reading rooms and coffee rooms, and a clock was added in 1887.

By the turn of the century the population of the town had almost reached one thousand. Much of the inter-war and later residential development took place outside the "old town" at Shelley and Marden Ash. The historic core of the town has remained relatively free from modern residential development and separated from such areas by Cripsey Brook to the south and by the railway, chapel and playing fields to the north. "Backland" development within the Conservation Area is also limited and an important characteristic is the enclosed built up High Street frontage and relatively open undeveloped land to the rear.



An artist's impression of the 11th century town with its new defences. (Reproduced courtesy of Essex County Council's Archaeology Section and drawn by Roger Massey-Ryan).



This plan shows the location of the original town defences in relation to modern day Chipping Ongar.

Character and Appearance

Conservation Areas were created in the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, the first legislation to deal with the civic design value of groups of buildings and their settings. The statutory definition of a Conservation Area is ... "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance." The key point to stress is that it is areas rather than individual buildings which the legislation seeks to preserve or enhance.

New developments will take place in Conservation Areas and one of the main purposes of designation is to ensure that these proposals will not have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the Areas. This means that "character and appearance" must be carefully defined and fully described for each Conservation Area. The purpose of this leaflet is therefore to provide a detailed appraisal of townscape features, buildings and spaces which characterise Chipping Ongar Conservation Area.

The historic core of most towns and villages consists of a number of separate and well-defined areas which may be termed "identity areas". Examples include linear streets, market squares, commons or greens. The character of these areas may be created by the nature of the space between buildings, the degree of enclosure, the massing, materials and detailing of the buildings, or the uses to which the buildings are put. Chipping Ongar has a definable character, derived from a number of essential elements:-

- i) dominant building lines which strongly enclose the High Street;
- ii) the gentle curve of the High Street which provides sub-division;
- iii) "pinch points" created by certain buildings which mark entry/exit points;
- iv) views out from the High Street to open countryside beyond;
- v) commercial activity;
- vi) the range of traditional building materials and the variety of facade detailing and roofscape which provide interest and character;
- vii) prominent public buildings which form landmarks or focal reference points to the wider area (e.g. Budworth Hall and St. Martin's Church).

The following sections provide an appraisal of each of these "identity areas."

Area 1 - The Car Parks

The northern entrance to the area is marked by the "pinch-point" created by two prominent Listed Buildings - Central House (the former Grammar School which dates from the early 19th century), and Hermitage Cottage (in fact a pair of late 18th century cottages). This is reinforced by the large trees on the east side of the High Street.

The enclosed views through Basons Yard and down Basons Lane reveal the fine landscape on the western side of Cripsey Brook. These views, framed by traditional buildings, are a significant feature of the west side of the High Street (see the plan) and emphasise the context of the town and its proximity to open countryside. The east side benefits from a footpath leading from the Pleasance car park round the inner and outer baileys of the castle. This pleasant walk allows good views of the "motte" (or mound) and connects with the Essex Way to the north.

The area itself is dominated by the visual impact of the two car parks. They are poorly enclosed although the trees delineating part of the town bailey of the castle form an important backdrop to the eastern car park (The Pleasance). Their appearance has been improved by the recently planted trees along the High Street frontage and the new public library. The red-brick wall to the front of the Pleasance car park forms an important townscape feature leading the eye south towards the High Street proper. The new public library also helps to define the entrance into the town centre with Budworth Hall on the opposite side of the High Street.



The photograph above dates from about 1910 and shows part of the building known as *The Wilderness* behind the Cock public house. It became known as *'The Pleasance'* following its acquisition by the local authority and was demolished in the 1950s to provide a car park.

Area 2 - The High Street (north)

The character of the area derives mainly from its commercial activity and from the dominant building lines which strongly enclose the gently curving High Street. Variations in the building lines emphasise the widening of the High Street towards the centre, marking the site of the former market and old market house.

There is a pleasing variety of building facades and roofscapes which is reinforced by the range of materials - plain clay tiles, Welsh slate, soft Essex red bricks, render and weatherboarding. Although most buildings are only two storeys high, the difference in storey heights between adjacent buildings adds variety and interest to the streetscene. It also serves to give greater prominence to those three storey buildings, such as 181 High Street.



This view of the High Street circa 1912 has changed little over the years. The King's Head Inn is on the extreme left and the Ongar Post Office is next door (181 High Street). The ancient oak pollard on the right was situated outside the building that is still Barclays bank.

Building plots are quite long on the west side of the High Street with the areas behind the shops mostly in use for parking and servicing. The plots on the east side are much shorter, being constrained by the inner bailey of the castle. The areas at the rear are mainly used as private gardens.

There are two significant visual gaps in the otherwise built frontage on the east side - the "manorial" ground in front of Manor House, and the area in front of Wren House at the entrance to Church Approach. The latter space provides an interesting glimpse of St. Martin's Church which encourages further exploration. (See photo on front cover).

South of the site of the market, the High Street narrows again to the pinch-point created by the projecting bay of the former Ongar Bell public house and by the other building frontages which enclose the space. This is the site of the southern gate to the medieval town. The termination of this central area is also emphasised by the drop in street level south of the pinch-point.

This part of the Conservation Area was the subject of an environmental enhancement scheme during 1997 which involved the resurfacing of pavements and parking areas, as well as new streetlighting and street furniture. The physical narrowing of the road and introduction of a new pedestrian crossing and areas of block paving has helped to "calm" traffic and create a more pedestrian friendly environment.

Area 3 - The Castle

This area is dominated by the inner bailey of the original defences and by the motte on which the castle originally stood. The inner bailey is ringed by a line of mature trees which completely enclose it while the motte is covered with mature trees and still surrounded by water. The best preserved sections of the defences to the town enclosure run north from the inner bailey to the High Street and consist of a wide ditch and rampart - also covered with

trees. The line of the outer bailey can also be traced in the remaining ponds and other water features around Castle Farm (see previous plan). The motte and other earthworks are believed to date from the 11th or 12th century.

The area contains two significant Listed Buildings. Castle House, the sometime "Manor House" of Chipping Ongar, is the remaining part of a much larger 16th century house. It was the home of Congregational Minister Isaac Taylor whose daughter Jane wrote many childrens poems, including "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star". The White House also originates from the 16th century, although the original plan form of the house has been obscured by 18th century and more recent alterations.



The photograph above shows the imposing gabled front elevation of Castle House, a Grade II Listed Building which dates from the 16th century. Although altered in c.1840, many original 16th century features survive including tie beams and panelling.

Area 4 - Castle Street/St. Martin's Church

Church Approach and Castle Street form the two principal entrances into this area. Church Approach is tightly enclosed by the facades of buildings on each side which illustrate fine examples of the use of traditional materials such as rendering, half-timbering, clay peg-tiles, and shingles (wooden tiles). At its junction with the High Street, Castle Street is tightly enclosed by terraced houses (Nos. 1-9 and 4-8) and Essex House which are all situated at the back edge of the pavement. This effect is enhanced by the fine red-brick house (10 Castle Street), which acts as a focal point in views from the High Street.

The enclosed nature of these two approaches, which each reveal attractive yet different views of St. Martin's Church, and the relative quiet and calm of the churchyard, help to give this area its particular character.

The centre of Castle Street is open and dominated by an area of service yards and car parking which detract from the character of this part of the Conservation Area. The enclosure of Castle Street is regained by the line of mature trees along its northern boundary.

St. Martin's Church is the oldest remaining building in the town and dates from the 11th century. It is listed Grade I. The present building is largely early Norman and of flint-rubble construction, although Roman bricks are also present. The bell-turret and spire were added in the 15th century. The spire is a focal point for most of the town and is also visible from many points in the surrounding countryside. Within the church there is a marble slab to Jane Pallavicini, the daughter of Sir Oliver Cromwell, and there is a fine table tomb in the churchyard which dates from the 18th century.

Area 5 - The High Street (south)

The character of this area is created by:- (i) the long, straight nature of this part of the street; (ii) the strong building lines; and (iii) the proximity of building facades to the street. The effect of a corridor is especially well developed towards the town centre where the attractive group of 18th century cottages on the east side (Livingstone Cottages) is balanced by the plainer frontages of the 19th century terraced houses on the opposite side.



This view of the High Street, taken around the turn of the century, shows Livingstone Cottages on the left hand side. The ground floor of one of the cottages was removed to create the arched accessway through to the United Reformed Church which was built in 1833. Included in one of the cottages is a room in which the missionary and explorer David Livingstone spent some time as a lodger in 1838 before departing for Africa.

Minor variations in the building lines provide more visual interest and give additional character to the area, as well as helping to emphasise individual buildings - numbers 35, 37 and 39, and Jessamine House and Cottage (Nos. 115-117) being particular examples.

The visual gap in the streetscene caused by the lack of building frontage at the Ongar Bridge Garage (number 24), detracts significantly from the general sense of enclosure experienced further along the High Street. The Fire Station, which is set back from the pavement, has a similar, if lesser, effect. The townscape importance of frontage buildings in this area is therefore increased - even minor pinch-points, such as those created by the forward positioning of numbers 82-90 High Street, 25-27 High Street, and 32-36 High Street, are significant features.



A number of significant buildings have disappeared from the High Street over the years. The Lion Hotel (above) was demolished in 1953 to make way for the new Fire Station.

The High Street curves slightly at the north of the area towards the junction with Castle Street. This emphasises the brow of the hill and essentially marks the division between the commercial part of the High Street and the mainly residential area to the south.

Area 6 - East bank of Cripsey Brook

The western boundary of this area is positively defined by the line of mature trees along Cripsey Brook. The land rises sharply to the east towards the High Street and contains no buildings. It is relatively inaccessible in public terms, with some large rear gardens and other plots being used for parking or rear servicing. It is a substantial buffer zone between the countryside and the developed part of the town and enhances the views westwards from the High Street. In this respect, the area is an important landscape element and forms an essential part of the setting of the Conservation Area.

Area 7 - Stanley Place

This 1980s estate is the only significant new extension of the town within the Conservation Area. It contains a mix of house types and the layout follows the "urban principles of spatial organisation" established in Essex County Council's "Design Guide for Residential Areas". This means that buildings are set close to the edge of the street to provide a sense of enclosure in keeping with the general character of the Conservation Area. Car parking areas and garages are carefully located between and to the rear of dwellings to reduce their visual impact. The use of "private drives" to small clusters of houses (e.g. Battle Court, Crossbow Court, and Turret Court) helps to enhance the tight enclosed feel typical of older urban areas.

Materials include red bricks, render, weatherboarding and plain tiles and are therefore appropriate to Chipping Ongar. The design and layout of the estate compare favourably with earlier additions to the town such as Marden Ash and Shelley.

Area 8 - Bushey Lea

The character of this small close of semi-detached houses is created by:- (i) the tightly defined entrance between numbers 30 and 32 High Street; (ii) the absence of defined paved footpaths; and (iii) the gaps between the houses.

Only the houses on the north side of the road are within the Conservation Area. These are semi-detached Victorian cottages with low slate roofs, yellow "stock" bricks and sliding sash windows. Numbers 6 and 7 contrast with this general form in that they have rendered elevations, plain-tile roofs and different plan, although they are still semi-detached.

Several front gardens are contained by hedgerows, although cars parked in front gardens detract from the character of the area. The rear gardens of these properties are very shallow making the spaces between the houses valuable areas of private amenity space.

Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest in Chipping Ongar Conservation Area:

Castle Street:

No.10
Castle House
Castle Farm : Granary to NE of Castle House
Castle Farm : Barn to NE of Castle House

High Street (East):

Hermitage Cottage
The Cock Tavern
No.212 Ongar House
Nos.198-204 (even)
Nos.190-194 (even)
Nos.180 and 182
Telephone Kiosk (west of Nos.180 and 182)
Manor House
Nos.174,176 and 178
No.152 Wren House

Church Approach:

Old Drill Hall (premises of G.R.Mullender Assocs.)
White House
Outbuilding to west of White House
St.Martins Cottage
Iron Railings to St.Martins Cottage
Church of St.Martin
Iron railings to Churchyard
Tomb in Churchyard (approx.15 yds SE of church)

High Street (East):

No.150 (Old Corner Shop) & attached buildings to rear
Nos.146 and 148
Nos.134-140 (even)
No.114 (Homelea)
Railings and gate to front garden of No.114 Homelea
No.108
No.106
No.104
Iron gate and railings to front garden of No.104
No.102
Iron railings and gate to front garden of No.102
No.96
No.90
Nos.82-88 (even)
Nos.1 to 6 (consec) Livingstone Cottages
United Reformed Church
No.60 (Barncroft)
No.40

High Street (West):

Central House
Little Bensons
Bansons Yard: outbuilding to rear of Little Bensons
Bansons Yard: building to south of Little Bensons

High Street (West):

Budworth Hall
Nos.199-205 (odd)
Nos.191-195 (odd)
No.181
The King's Head Public House
No.171 (originally the Market House)
Outbuilding to rear of No.171
George Yard: outbuilding at rear of No.171
No.165
Nos.161 and 163
No.159 (Greylands)
Brick garden wall to rear of No.159 (Greylands)
Nos.151 and 153
Nos.147 and 149
The former Bell Public House
No.129
Nos.121-127 (odd)
No.117
No.113
Nos.107 and 109
The Royal Oak Public House and Nos.101 and 103
No.87 The Presbytery
No.85
Nos.53 and 55
No.51
No.39
Nos.31 and 33

All the above buildings are Listed Grade II, except for St. Martins Church which is Grade I.

Facts About Conservation Areas

What is a Conservation Area?

A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. A Conservation Area may be the historic centre of a town or village, an older unspoilt residential area, or an important country house in large landscaped grounds. Conservation Areas are designated by the District Council in recognition of their special character and to protect an important part of our heritage.

What does this mean to residents in practical terms?

Conservation Area designation aims to ensure that the special architectural or historic character of the area is properly preserved and enhanced. Buildings, paved areas, trees, hedges, walls, open spaces and other landscape and architectural features can all contribute to the character of an Area. Designation of a Conservation Area does not mean that changes cannot occur, but rather that any changes should preserve and enhance the special character of the Area.

Are there any special restrictions?

There are several special restrictions that apply to Conservation Areas. These are in addition to normal planning controls:

- * The size limit for extending your home without obtaining planning permission is 50m³ or 10% of the house's original volume, up to a maximum of 115m³.
- * Consent must be obtained from the District Council for the demolition of any building within the Conservation Area - this may also include gates, walls and fences.

- * You must give the District Council six weeks' notice in writing before felling or cutting back any tree unless the tree is:

- dead, dying or dangerous;
- causing a nuisance in law;
- a cultivated fruit tree; or
- less than 236mm (9¹/₂") in girth around the trunk when measured 1.5m (4' 10") above the ground.

- * Some additional restrictions apply to the siting of advertising hoardings or other advertisements and satellite dishes.

Apart from these special restrictions, the rights and obligations of the property owner are not affected.

Are there any benefits?

Protecting the special character of the Area will be of benefit to residents, businesses and visitors alike. The designation of a Conservation Area places a duty on the District Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing its character and appearance in carrying out its planning functions. Enhancement schemes may be prepared and implemented as resources permit. In special cases, English Heritage, in partnership with the District Council, may be prepared to give grant aid for the structural repair of specific buildings which add to the special character of a Conservation Area.

Where can I obtain further information?

More detailed information can be obtained by contacting: The Conservation Section, Planning Services: Tel: (01992) 564119.

