



CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

CHARACTER AREA 02: HEADINGTON HILL NORTH



GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

This document covers the Conservation area of Headington Hill North. Because the area has already been assessed by Oxford City Council in a Conservation Area Appraisal we have not undertaken a separate character assessment. The City's Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) can be seen here: www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Headington_Hill_occw.htm

We have, however, reviewed the 'issues' listed in the CAA and noted the extent to which these have been addressed or have changed. This review is shown in the next section, and lessons for new development arising from the issues is shown in the following section of this document.

ISSUES

The CAA identified five issues / vulnerabilities / opportunities for enhancement. See section 3.7 of the Conservation Area Appraisal (pages 37-39). The following table lists these, and shows in the right hand column what, if anything, has changed since the CAA was completed. The left hand column of the table below contains an extract of the Conservation Area Appraisal section 3.7.

<p>Loss of residential character</p> <p>.... The growth of institutional uses, particularly on Pullens Lane, has begun to erode this character ..., resulting in a loss of green space and the development of increasingly visible buildings of institutional character in high densities. The use of these buildings has also increased the intensity of activity within the area, with a resultant loss of tranquillity to Pullens Lane. The infill housing development built in this area both in the 1960s/70s and more recently have further reduced the spacious feel of the Victorian and Edwardian suburb,</p>	<p>The litter problem seems to have grown.</p> <p>Further infill development has taken place at the Thornhill site in Harberton Mead which backs on to Jack Straw's Lane (south). This was approved prior to the endorsement of the Conservation Area Appraisal in December 2012.</p>
<p>Loss of Tranquility</p> <p>....., the increase in student numbers in recent years, has seen a rapid increase in the use of Pullens Lane by large groups of pedestrians, causing congestion for other users. The lane has also become heavily used in the morning and mid afternoon by parents delivering and collecting children from schools in the area, creating congestion for other users, as well as resulting in damage to grass verges and trees. Local residents report that use of the lane for coaches and taxis delivering students to Cotuit Hall has increased since its change of ownership. Local residents have expressed concern that late night use of the road by pedestrians and taxis has increased and that disturbance by noisy activity has become more frequent, affecting the area's tranquillity. Disturbance and littering by language school students in the nearby parks during the summer of 2011 was reported in the local media and required the involvement of the Police.</p> <p>Another cause of increased motor traffic noted in the area has been rising domestic use by residents, in line with national patterns of increasing car use and use by home delivery lorries for shopping.</p>	<p>No change.</p>
<p>Poor Condition of Pullens Lane South</p> <p>The condition of Pullens Lane South, including the footpath, grassed verge and road has been a prominent issue since, at least 2005 ..</p>	<p>A 2013 agreement between a number of institutions, residents' associations and the Council, resulted in funding sufficient to resurface this orphan stretch of road to a high standard. Speed humps effectively control traffic</p>



<p>The road surface has deteriorated considerably as a result of a prolonged period without adequate long term maintenance and as a result of increasing use by motorised traffic.....</p> <p>The footpath is also in need of repair and improvement and is currently in very poor condition, forcing pedestrians onto the grassed island or verge that separates it from the road, or onto the road itself. Erosion of the verge by this increased pedestrian activity is illustrated by the exposure of the concrete bases of posts that formerly supported palings or trees guards within the verge. Whilst the tree guards have been removed, up to an inch of remaining iron bar projects from the tops of some these concrete blocks, which may be regarded as a hazard to pedestrians.</p> <p>The condition of the lane detracts from the appearance of the area, as well as having a significant impact on the amenity of users of the lane ...</p>	<p>speeds. Most pedestrians walk on the road rather than the often muddy path on the unimproved grassed area to the western side of the road. As a pedestrian thoroughfare and meeting point, Pullens Lane South attracts significant amounts of food- and drink-related litter.</p>
<p>Need for Management of Trees</p> <p>Issues affecting the trees seem to be contradictory in that management of trees, including thinning is needed to prevent the loss of the views that have made the hilltop a special place, whilst new planting may be needed for replacement of over mature and diseased trees to ensure the continuation of a healthy stock of trees with a scale and canopy spread that maintains the area's sylvan character.</p> <p>Without management of trees surrounding the Pullens Lane Allotments, views of the city from this point will be lost. The view from the former area of allotments, has been lost as a result of the growth of self-generated woodland. Reopening this view through tree thinning would be an opportunity to restore an important feature of the conservation area.</p> <p>An area identified as having a particular vulnerability to disease is the 'avenue' of horse chestnut trees on Jack Straw's Lane.</p> <p>When considering replanting of trees in formal garden settings it will be necessary to consider whether native species should be used or whether ornamental trees that reflect historic planting schemes should be preferred.</p>	<p>No change.</p>
<p>Loss of historic houses and their garden settings</p> <p>Two of the area's Victorian or Edwardian houses ... were demolished in the 1970s and their gardens subsequently developed for higher density institutional or residential use resulting in a loss of the area's historic or architectural interest and its open character. Infill development over western part of the garden at High Wall also resulted in the loss of openness and elements of this garden of special historic interest. Further infill development included the development of the Paddock at Pullens</p>	<p>No change.</p>

Field and several properties on Harberton Mead. Concern over the impact of intensification of use, including the loss of the spacious qualities of the area and increasing pressure of traffic on the area's narrow lanes is evident in the principles the Council adopted in 1973 and 1977. Further development since the 1970s has further raised the vulnerability of the area's significance.

In summary, Section 3.7 of the Appraisal remains accurate in its description of the issues and vulnerabilities facing this area, the most significant of which relate to more intensive institutional activity. The Appraisal as adopted by the City Council was tested by the proposal for a 55-bed care home at 1, Pullens Lane, which was declined by the area planning committee in 2014.

GUIDANCE FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

None