



CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

CHARACTER AREA 05: OLD HEADINGTON



This document covers the Conservation area of Old Headington. 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:

http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Old_Headington_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 section titled 'Issues', and lessons for new development arising from the issues is shown in the final section of this document.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The village, now known as Old Headington to distinguish it from the modern suburb and shopping centre, lies within the ancient bounds of the royal forest of Shotover and Stoward and has its origins in a royal manor belonging to the Saxon Kings. The boundaries of the present village are clearly defined; on the south by Cuckoo Lane; on the west by the grounds of the former Manor House estate, now John Radcliffe Hospital; on the north open agricultural land (and of course the A40), and on the east by Bury Knowle Park.

Although the original royal manor house was already ruinous in medieval times and successive fires destroyed the ancient crofters cottages, many of the more substantial postmedieval stone houses and the medieval Church of St Andrew have survived.

Old Headington is one of the three Conservation Areas which the Headington Neighbourhood Plan covers, and is currently seeking to apply for Article 4 Directions.

Date of designation: 4 January 1971

Date extended: 16 July 1976, 21 October 1985, and 9 December 1998.



ISSUES

The CAA (page 3) summarised eight vulnerabilities and eight negative features. The following tables list these, and shows what, if anything, has changed since the CAA was completed.

Vulnerability

<p>1. Development that undermines the distinctive character or appearance of the area</p>	<p>The development of the City Council depot within Bury Knowle Park to provide social and affordable housing in a reasonably unintrusive development to be known as Lock’s Court sparked a debate about the installation of solar panels within the conservation area, and their negative effect on the distinctive character or appearance of the area in general and of roofs in particular. A wider implication is that views out of Bury</p>
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	<p>Knowle Park towards Emden House have now changed, and that a precedent for building within the park boundaries has been set.</p> <p>The visual impact of Ruskin College's large pale new block constructed to adjoin the 18th century Rookery has been greater than expected.</p>
2. Loss of historic architectural features and detailing, such as traditional doors and windows, roofing materials and features, or locally distinctive construction materials	The extension to Bury Knowle House to enable a lift for wheelchair users to be installed was carried out as sensitively as circumstances permitted. It emphasizes the vulnerability of this distinctive building, however, to change nearby, and extra care should be taken to monitor the impact of any local building work either in prospect or in progress.
3. Loss of tranquillity and pedestrian environment through increasing traffic	Traffic and congestion at the core of the Conservation Area continues to increase significantly.
4. Loss of green and leafy character through depletion of the mature tree stock and hedgerows	See note on Bury Knowle Park at 1 above
5. Loss of rural character through depletion of green open space, roadside verges and hedgerows and views out to rural setting	The increase in traffic has eroded green verges (notably in Stoke Place, where large delivery vehicles churn up the green verges, and the fragments are swept downhill by rain or by other vehicles).
6. Loss of quality in the public realm through poor quality interventions	No change
7. Loss of boundary definitions including locally distinctive high stone walls	No change
8. Loss of locally distinctive materials	The recent concentration of building work in North Place and Bury Knowle Park has resulted in damage to and loss of the cobbles characteristic of the conservation area.

Negative features

1. Visual impact of traffic management and enforcement	The addition of double yellow lines in inappropriate settings (such as the Croft) and traffic signage continue to have a negative effect.
2. Condition of No. 29 Old High Street	This has continued to deteriorate unchecked over the 5 years since the Appraisal was completed, with the owner or City Council continually engaged in legal processes which effectively prevent any action being

	taken.
3. Highway dominated spaces	No change
4. Some architecturally unsympathetic rear extensions	No change
5. Intrusive appearance of security fencing at Cuckoo Lane	No change
6. Intrusion of hospital chimney in key views	No change
7. Clutter in the public realm, e.g. commercial wheelie bins and traffic signs	Some increase in signage with the establishment of a CPZ; double yellow lines and parking bays in the Croft. Increased on-street parking detracts from views.
8. Some boundary treatments are considered out of keeping with the character of adjacent buildings or detracting from the quality of spaces such as Cuckoo Lane	No change

GUIDANCE FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

- Infilling and minor changes to existing buildings are alterations which occur most frequently in the conservation area, and of these, those which have most potential for causing concern when visible from the public roadway are
 - The installation of windows with plastic frames and/or without glazing bars
 - The installation of solar panels
 - The building of loft extensions with roof-lights

The Friends of Old Headington are currently consulting on whether the trustees should apply for Article 4 directions in order to increase the opportunity for consultation on alterations currently allowed under the Permitted Development regulations.

- Open spaces in the area (the various small greens and triangles here and there) should be regarded as potential planting areas and prohibited from being transformed into parking plots.