



## CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

### CHARACTER AREA 07: HEADINGTON HILL SOUTH



### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

This document covers the Conservation area of Headington Hill South. 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](http://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 nine issues / vulnerabilities / opportunities for enhancement. See section 2.7 of the Conservation Area Appraisal (pages 24, 25). The following table lists these in the left hand column, and shows in the right hand column what, if anything, has changed since the CAA was completed.

<p><b>Poor quality entrance to Cheney Lane</b></p> <p>The western end of Cheney Lane has a low wall built across part of its entrance from Headington Road, with planting and bicycle barriers covering the rest of the entrance and only a narrow footpath providing access into the lane. This has been undertaken to prevent motor vehicles turning into the lane from Headington Road and to prevent cyclists and walkers accidentally getting into the path of vehicles coming down the hill. However, views into the lane from the west have been screened by trees planted in this area. This has disguised the attractive character of the lane and its significance as an historic route down the hill to the city centre. From the end of the lane there is no footpath or cycleway on the southern side of Headington Road that might allow pedestrians to continue towards the city centre and only the minor concession of a dropped curb on the raised walkway to help pedestrians to cross to the raised walkway on the north side.</p> <p>The landscape setting of the flats at Granville Court, at the western end of Cheney Lane has spilled over into the lane due to the absence of a formal boundary. This has eroded the lane's character as a distinct landscape feature and creates a more urban character despite the predominance of grassed surfaces.</p>	<p>The suggested off-road footpath between Cheney Lane and Marston Road on southern side of Headington Road has not been adopted.</p>
<p><b>Bus stops and street furniture</b></p> <p>Modern bus shelters stand out as an incongruous feature on Headington Road, partly as a result of the use of brushed steel as a main material but also due to the intrusion to the street scene of advertising posters supported within the shelters. The bus shelter on the south side of Headington Road has recently been moved away from the fronts of private houses, removing an area of untidy street furniture and reducing the crowding and littering that was affecting a narrow section of pavement.</p>	<p>Location problems of bus shelter on south side of Headington Road only partially resolved. Crowding and littering (due to intense usage by schools and university, and retention of public telephone booth within bus shelter parameter) continues in front of two other private houses in the new location. In addition, vehicle exit from Headington Hill lane east often has blocked vision by crowded pavement, bus shelter and queuing buses.</p>
<p><b>Parking on Cheney Lane</b></p> <p>Use of Cheney Lane for car parking has a negative impact on views along the lane and its character as an historic country lane.</p>	<p>Problem unresolved and slightly worse.</p>
<p><b>Condition of Pullens Lane</b></p> <p>The condition of the road surface at the entrance to Pullens Lane is particularly bad, partly as a result of recent heavy use for construction traffic. This detracts from the use of the lane by pedestrians and cyclists and negatively affects</p>	<p>Resolved by recent road resurfacing.</p> <p>Litter clearance has been an issue, as the City council does not take responsibility for this section. Residents have previously</p>

<p>its appearance.</p>	<p>picked up most of the litter, but Brookes and EF have recently stepped up their own cleansing efforts: the road and adjacent grassed area at the junction with Headington Road are walked by large numbers of their students commuting to/from Gipsy Lane/ Clive Booth Hall and nearby bus stops to/from EF Language School.</p>
<p><b>Impact of Schools' traffic</b> Local people report that traffic created by parents delivering children to Schools in the area is a serious problem on Pullens Lane during the school rush hours.</p>	<p>No change.  The passing place next to the allotments is frequently parked in despite the signage, restricting space for vehicles to wait for oncoming traffic to pass.</p>
<p><b>Crossing Headington Road</b> The entrances to South Park and Headington Hill Park from Headington Road face each other, creating a natural desire line for crossing the road. However, there is currently no provision for a crossing at this point, whilst the traffic here is very busy, with vehicles travelling fast down the hill from the east or accelerating up it from the west.</p>	<p>Although speed limits have been reduced to slow down traffic, the signage could be made more prominent to that end.</p>
<p><b>Intrusive impact of buildings and landscaping of Pergamon Press / Helena Kennedy building and car parking on the Headington Hill Campus</b> The former Pergamon Press building is a particularly unattractive building in poor materials with an uncomfortable 'boxy' design that detracts from the mature woodland garden setting created by the historic tree planting of the grounds. The surrounding area appears to be dominated by car parking, with cars lining the access roads throughout the campus and further detracting from the surviving elements of the woodland garden.</p>	<p>During 2015 Oxford Brookes expects to vacate the Helena Kennedy building with a view to demolishing it and replacing it with a purpose designed academic building, of the same floor area, that sits more comfortably within its surroundings. If planning approval is not given then the University would consider re-modelling the interior of the building and re-cladding it to make some improvement to the exterior appearance.  Oxford Brookes has no intention to use the car parks for anything other than car parks.</p>
<p><b>Condition of the raised walkway</b> The stone wall retaining the raised walkway was noted as being in poor condition and in need of maintenance to remove self-sown saplings and to consolidate the verge. The tubular metal hand rail that runs along the edge of the walkway is also considered to be of poor quality and either in need of repair and maintenance or of replacement with a more sympathetic alternative.</p>	<p>Retaining stone wall and verge has been repaired in most neglected parts.</p>



**Street Lighting on Cuckoo Lane**

Provision of lighting in this area detracts from its special historic character but is considered necessary for the safety of users. This illustrates the tension in managing the area as a conservation area in recognition of its historic character whilst ensuring it remains an active part of the city's environment.

Resolved.

**GUIDANCE FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT**

None