

Eynsham

Village Design Statement



ALL WHO LIVE IN EYNESHAM WERE INVITED TO HELP WITH THIS PROJECT

WHY DO WE NEED A DESIGN STATEMENT FOR EYNESHAM?

- THERE ARE CONTINUING PRESSURES FOR DEVELOPMENT AROUND EYNESHAM
- THERE ARE CHANGES IN THE PATTERN OF THE VILLAGE, LOSS OF OPEN SPACE, AND TRAFFIC PROBLEMS
- CURRENT PLANNING PROCEDURES MAY NOT ALWAYS PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE CHARACTER AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF EYNESHAM

AN EFFECTIVE DESIGN STATEMENT

- IS APPLICABLE TO ALL THE VILLAGE NOT JUST THE CONSERVATION AREA
- IS DEVELOPED, RESEARCHED, WRITTEN AND EDITED BY LOCAL PEOPLE
- IS A REPRESENTATIVE VIEW OF LOCAL PEOPLE OF THE VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE
- SETS OUT THE CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE IN A WAY THAT WILL ENCOURAGE LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE DESIGN
- SUPPORTS AND STRENGTHENS THE ROLE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL WHEN CONSULTED OVER PLANNING APPLICATIONS
- ENABLES LOCAL PEOPLE TO BE ABLE TO RESPOND IN AN INFORMED AND PROFESSIONAL MANNER TO PLANNING PROPOSALS IN THE VILLAGE

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS OBJECTIVES

- TO DESCRIBE THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE
- TO SHOW HOW CHARACTER CAN BE IDENTIFIED AT THREE LEVELS
 - THE LANDSCAPE SETTING CAN BE IDENTIFIED
 - THE SHAPE OF THE SETTLEMENT
 - THE NATURE OF BUILDINGS
- TO DRAW UP DESIGN PRINCIPLES BASED ON THE DISTINCTIVE LOCAL CHARACTER
- TO WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY IN THE CONTEXT OF EXISTING LOCAL POLICY, AND TO INFLUENCE FUTURE POLICIES

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We wish to thank the many other Eynsham residents who also contributed to the preparation of this document.



Eynsham Village Design Statement describes those characteristics which are important to the community, and which should be considered if any new building or changes to existing buildings are contemplated.



Exhibition of photographs in the Bartholomew Room

Eynsham Village Design Statement

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A typical doorway in Eynsham

'The historic and beautiful village of Eynsham is singularly fortunate in the number of people who take a serious interest in its past and who care deeply for its future.' – Peter Ridley, Vicar of Eynsham, July 1981.

• *Would like the village "to stay as it is" and "as a working community".* Recommendations for Action, Eynsham and Barnard Gate Village Appraisal (May 1994).

'Eynsham was, and still is, a simple quiet countryside village, yet in the 90s image of great bustling cities, Eynsham has had its own problems with litter and overdevelopment. I personally think that Eynsham is big enough already.' – Christina Le Galloudec, age 10, Eynsham Primary School, July 1999.

'We learn from historical mistakes as we learn about Eynsham's history. But we can not change the past, we can only change the future.' – Jenny Higgins, age 10, Eynsham Primary School, July 1999.



Queen Street

1. Introduction

1.1 This Village Design Statement has been prepared to describe the village and its characteristics as they are today at the start of the new century, and to indicate how its character and individuality can be preserved and enhanced for the future. It has been written by groups of residents after wide consultation, including the opinions of local business, which helped with the statistical survey. The purpose was to ensure that local knowledge, views and ideas might contribute both to the prosperity of the village and to the quality of its environment.

1.2 The aim of the Statement is to draw attention to the distinctive elements which are important to the residents, and which should be considered if any change is proposed. The intention is for it to be used as Supplementary Planning Guidance by West Oxfordshire District Council.

1.3 The initiative for the Design Statement came from the Eynsham Society (CPRE) with the support of the Parish Council. Every household in the village was notified, and two successive exhibitions were mounted. Questionnaires gave villagers an opportunity to express opinions and to volunteer for working groups. These researched various aspects of Eynsham and contributed the initial draft material to the VDS.

1.4 Eynsham is the fourth largest community in West Oxfordshire. Though clearly a village, it has a population of 4,800 (1991 Census), which makes it larger than some nearby small towns. Unlike a small town, however, it has no commercial centre. The centre of the village is predominantly residential, with its main features the church and the square, and the shops and services are scattered. This has two effects, both of them valuable to the life of the village. The first is that the spread of shops, pubs, schools, and other amenities across the village ensures that all parts mix and interact, giving Eynsham a vibrant sense of community and its residents a firm feeling of belonging. The second is that the village enjoys a safe environment where children and older people can feel a sense of security.

1.5 In the 20th century, the main influence on the village has been its nearness to Oxford, and its position on the edge of the Oxford Green Belt. Oxford needs more housing, and this puts pressure on communities just outside the Green Belt to accept development. One outcome has been that the population of the village has doubled since 1960. Nevertheless, Eynsham has not developed the kind of centre which characterises Woodstock and Chipping Norton, and it remains a village. It has a strong village identity, which prevents it from becoming a dormitory for Oxford.

1.6 Eynsham is thus already an expanded village. To expand it further would destroy the balance which has evolved over time, and make the community unsustainable in its present form. As the *West Oxfordshire Local Plan (1997)* states, 'Eynsham has already fulfilled its role as a major contributor to new housing in West Oxfordshire'.

Eynsham village hall 2003



2. History

2.1 Eynsham ['Egonesham'] is an ancient place which is founded on a gravel terrace above the flood plain. It owes its existence to its proximity to a strategic point where the River Thames could be crossed by ford. Evidence of Bronze Age and Roman occupation is widespread. By Anglo-Saxon times, Eynsham was the seat of a sub-kingdom, a more important place than Oxford, with vast properties and a minster church. It entered recorded history in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, where it is described as one of four towns captured by the Saxons from the Britons in AD 571.

2.2 In 1005, Æthelmaer, kinsman of King Æthelred II ('The Unready'), founded here a well-endowed Benedictine Abbey and appointed as its first abbot Ælfric, the most distinguished scholar of his time. A succession of Kings held councils here, the most famous of which involved the election of Hugh of Avalon as Bishop of Lincoln in 1186.

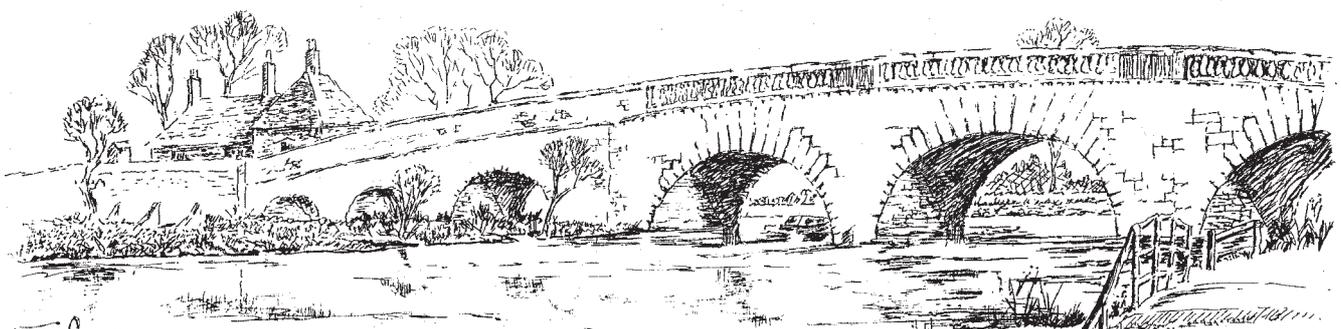
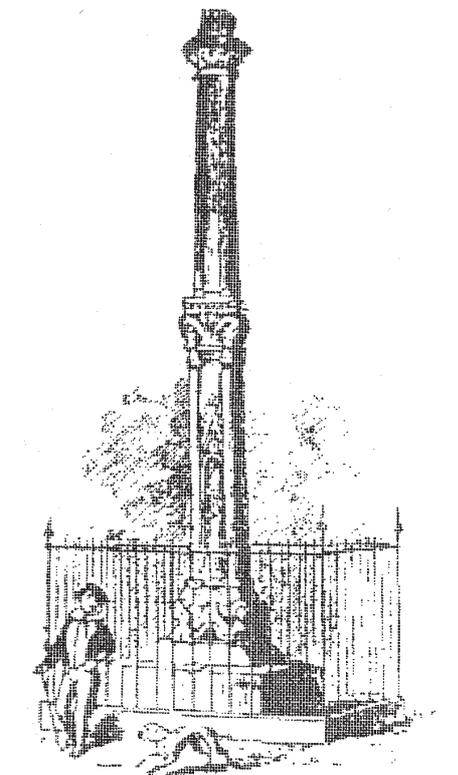
2.3 The Abbey was dissolved in 1538. The great buildings were rapidly used as a local 'quarry', and fragments are incorporated in some older buildings in the village. Recent excavations on a part of the site will form the basis of a major monograph by the Oxford Archæological Unit.

2.4 The oldest surviving building, which stands foursquare in the centre of the village, is St Leonard's parish church, its origins dating back to the 12th century. Nearby in the Square are a market house, now the Bartholomew Room, and a Market Cross. The former, dating from 1703, has housed a wonderfully diverse range of village activities; and the latter is a fine replica of the decayed mediæval preaching cross which survived in situ until 1990.

2.5 By 1650 the population was about 600, and this remained fairly constant until 1750. It then climbed to about 2,000 by 1850, and, with fluctuations, maintained this level up to 1950. Since then, the population has risen to over 4,800 with new housing to the north, east, and west. With each expansion there has been a loss of heritage and evidence of the past, such as mediæval ridge and furrow fields.

2.6 Eynsham has always been an important place in the local and wider economy:

- In the 12th century King Stephen granted it the privilege of a market.
- The wharf stream was used for hundreds of years to transfer goods from carts into barges for transfer downstream. Many of the building stones for Oxford colleges went by this means.
- East-west road routes between London and Wales have passed through Eynsham via Oxford, Wytham Hill, and Swinford, which in its turn has been served by a ford, a ferry, and finally a bridge, built in 1776 and still in busy use.
- The railway came in 1861 and vanished a hundred years later, and the old track is today valued by walkers and naturalists.



3. Village Setting

Landscape and wildlife

3.1 The village of Eynsham lies where the Eynsham Vale meets the Thames valley. The landscape is influenced by the nearby River Thames and its tributaries, the Chil Brook to the west, and the River Evenlode to the east. The land to the east and south of the village forms part of the Thames flood plain, and the fields along the Chil Brook valley are also subject to flooding. Eynsham village is built on rising ground overlying the gravel terraces of the River Thames. When the river is in flood, the landscape changes and the fields between the village and the river are a mass of flat water creating dramatic scenes.

3.2 To the north, the built-up edge of the village is sharply bounded by the A40. The new Eynsham Wood to the north of the A40 will soften the impact of the traffic on this congested road. Further planting along the north of this road would enhance the landscape and further reduce the impact of traffic. Any development north of the A40 would be poorly related to the village.

3.3 A bypass (B4449) swings round the village to the east and south. East of it lies the Oxford Green Belt, and east and south along the Thames valley is an area of High Landscape Value (HLV). Inside the bypass are meadows forming part of the Eynsham Conservation Area and providing two sports fields. The open land of which these are a part enhances the setting of the village and should be retained [WODC Local Plan, 1997].

3.4 To the west of the village is pasture and arable land, with some rough grassland, and it is an area greatly valued by the community for its immediate access to open country. When an application to build to the west was declined, the inspector said that development would cause 'significant harm to the character of the area' and would be 'severely



Extensive flooding around Eynsham: (top) South of B4044, March 1982; (middle) From Cassington Lane, December 2000; (bottom) Chil Brook, December 2000



detrimental to the character and setting of the village' The Chil Brook valley in that area, and to the south of Eynsham, provides a range of fragile habitats which in addition to their visual quality are important to flora and fauna.

3.5 Around the village there are many footpaths, both circular and radial, some of them featured in Oxfordshire County Council's 'Circular walks around Eynsham'. Cassington Lane is one such important amenity, much appreciated by walkers and cyclists for its tranquillity and wildlife. Chilbridge Road is another, and this is a favoured starting point for a circular walk via Twelve Acre Farm and South Leigh without the need to use or cross any major roads. The Village Appraisal established that many people regularly use these public footpaths and bridleways.

3.6 There are important views from the footpaths, looking back into the village. From the footpaths on the gently undulating farmland to the north and west, we see attractive roofscape views over the village to Wytham Woods and Beacon Hill, both of which offer fine views of the village in return. From the Thames towpath and the popular walks over the southern floodplain, and from Mead Lane and the old Cassington Lane, there are pleasant views from a lower perspective. There are also many interlinking footpaths within the village itself, all of them valued for the easy access they give to the various parts of the village, both for residents and for visitors. One leads to the well-tended allotments, on the fertile alluvial soils near the Thames.

3.7 The gravel deposits to the east of the village are repeatedly considered for inclusion in the County Structure plan as possible sites for gravel extraction. These sites are separated from the built-up area by the B4449 bypass and stretch either side of the A40. The area is designated an area of High Landscape Value. Widespread local opinion is that gravel extraction would have an adverse impact on the community and the environment, and that it would destroy an important walk between Eynsham and Cassington, and an ancient bridleway. Endorsing this view, a public meeting concluded that this would diminish the link between the countryside and the historic centre of the village.

3.8 Between the village and the Thames, the large flat cattle pastures, intersected by willow-fringed watercourses, create a framework for most beautiful riverscapes, beloved by artists and photographers. Colourful boats, interesting lock structures, a weir, and a beautifully proportioned 18th century stone bridge are a focus of visual interest for visitors and villagers alike. This land between the village and the bridge, forming a green corridor, is one of the most important landscape features of the area and should be preserved.

'Another point about development is keeping a balance with nature. As an example, I live down Fruitlands, and so directly behind my garden wall is a very small orchard. Now small as it may be, I have seen rabbits, deer, rat holes, badger and fox dens, woodpeckers and more, yet some people (I do not know who) want to build over it, and if they had their way they would happily tear up the trees. This upsets me' – Jenny Higgins, age 10, Eynsham Primary School.



Cassington Lane: an all-weather walk



Aerial view of Eynsham from the south



River Thames at Swinford bridge and Eynsham lock



Queen Mother's clumps. The footpath leads to the Abbey fishponds



Fields denuded of their hedgerows to the west of Eynsham



View of St Leonard's from south east

'Work and employment is fine but if more houses are going to be built it will cause problems like more traffic, more shops, bigger library and crowded streets.' – Jenny Rossiter, age 11, Eynsham Primary School.

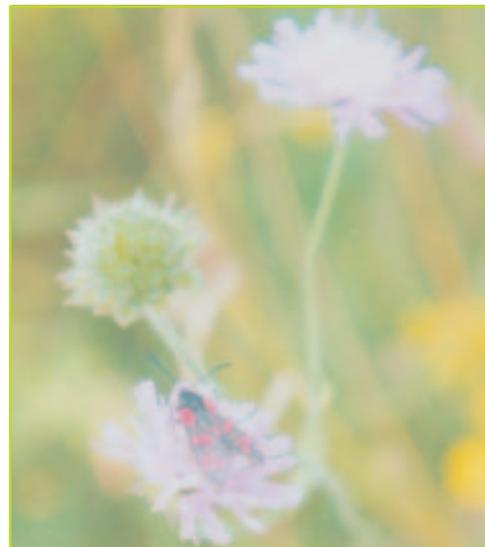
3.12 The area immediately to the south of the churches is the site of the old Abbey fishponds, a valuable and popular green haven which is important for wildlife. English Heritage is considering scheduling part of this site as an historic monument. In 1991 the area was surveyed by BBOWT, who concluded that it would make an ideal place for nature conservation. This use would be compatible with the conservation of the historic fishponds.

3.9 On the periphery of the village many flowering plants are found, particularly in the south, in the mediæval fishpond area; to the west, where there is land not under the plough; to the north of the A40; and along the track of the old railway. The Chil Brook, which floods into nearby land, is the closest river to the village, skirting the western edge and forming the boundary of the Conservation Area to the southwest. It makes an important contribution to the flora and fauna of the village.

3.10 The plants are those familiar to all country lovers. There are kingcups, dog mercury, scabious, lady's bedstraw, meadow sweet, horsetail, field pansy and poppies, while the tracks across the fields are pink with lesser bindweed and red bartsia. The plants support a wide variety of insect life—everything from tortoiseshell and painted lady butterflies to humming bird hawk moths, six-spotted burnet moths, and cockchafers.

3.11 The village also enjoys a fairly rich variety of bird life—from raptors to kingfishers, woodpeckers to spotted flycatchers, and hirundines to barn owls, a nationally endangered species. Foxes and muntjac deer are bold enough to come into village gardens, whilst roe deer and badgers are found on the outskirts, and there are many indications of such small mammals as shrews and water voles. Loss of habitat for flora, particularly that of old hedgerows, meadows, open fields, and verges, would affect the bird and insect life, with long-term depletion of species. It is therefore very important that these sites should be protected from development.

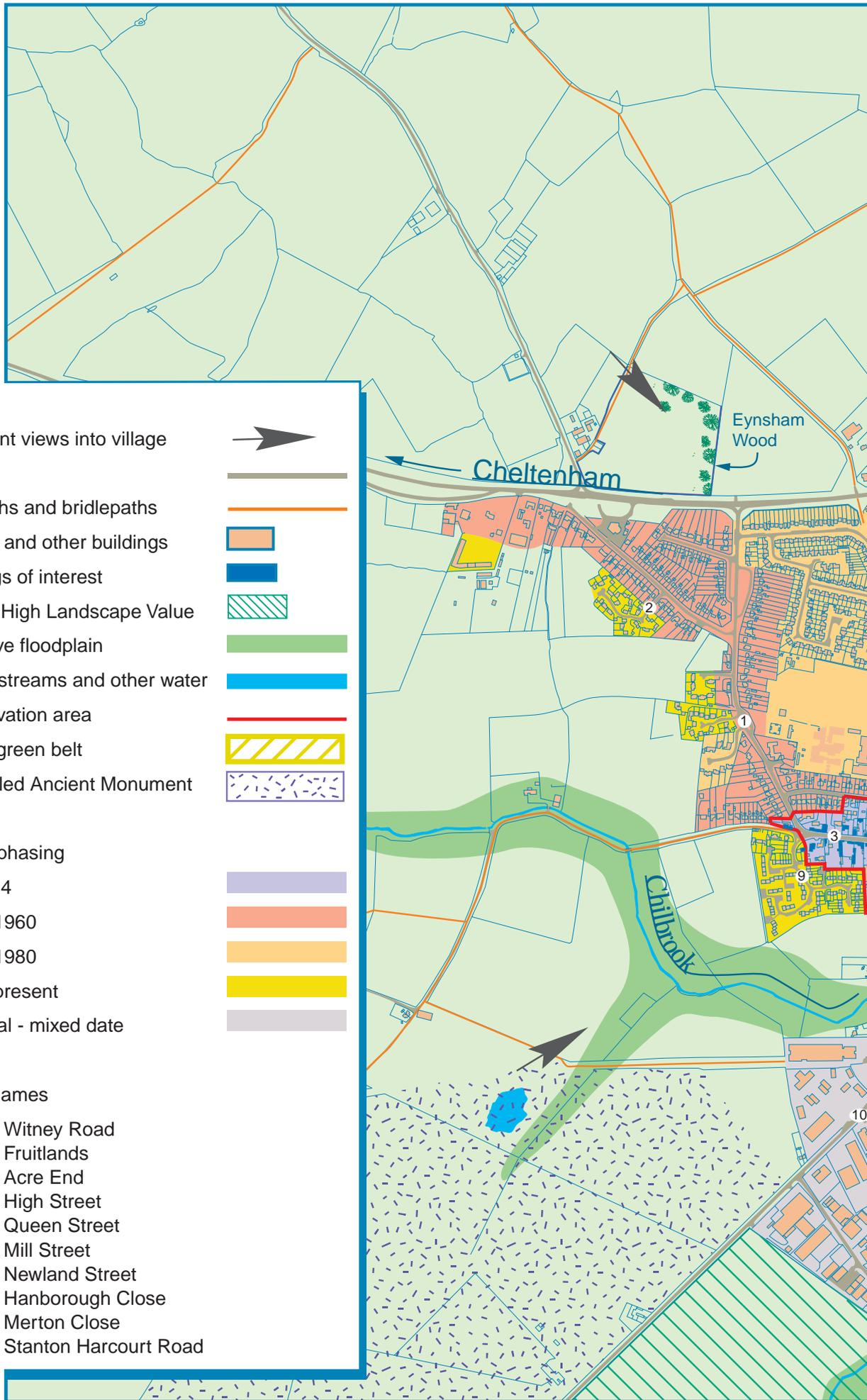
3.13 The hedgerows around the village are important to the landscape. Some are ancient double hedges. A variety of plants grow here, including hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, honeysuckle, wild rose, spindle, field maple, wild plum and crab apple. Ash, sycamore, oak and willow are common, and many fine trees exist in and around the village thanks to a long history of tree planting by the Eynsham Society. On the other side of the coin, intensive farming practice has meant that many hedgerows have been grubbed up, and this has been a factor in the acceleration of the run-off of water. The biggest contributor to this, however, has been development in inappropriate places. The flood plain needs to be allowed to do its job, and it is a prerequisite of planning permission that nothing be built which might increase the risk of flooding [PPG25 Development and flood risk].

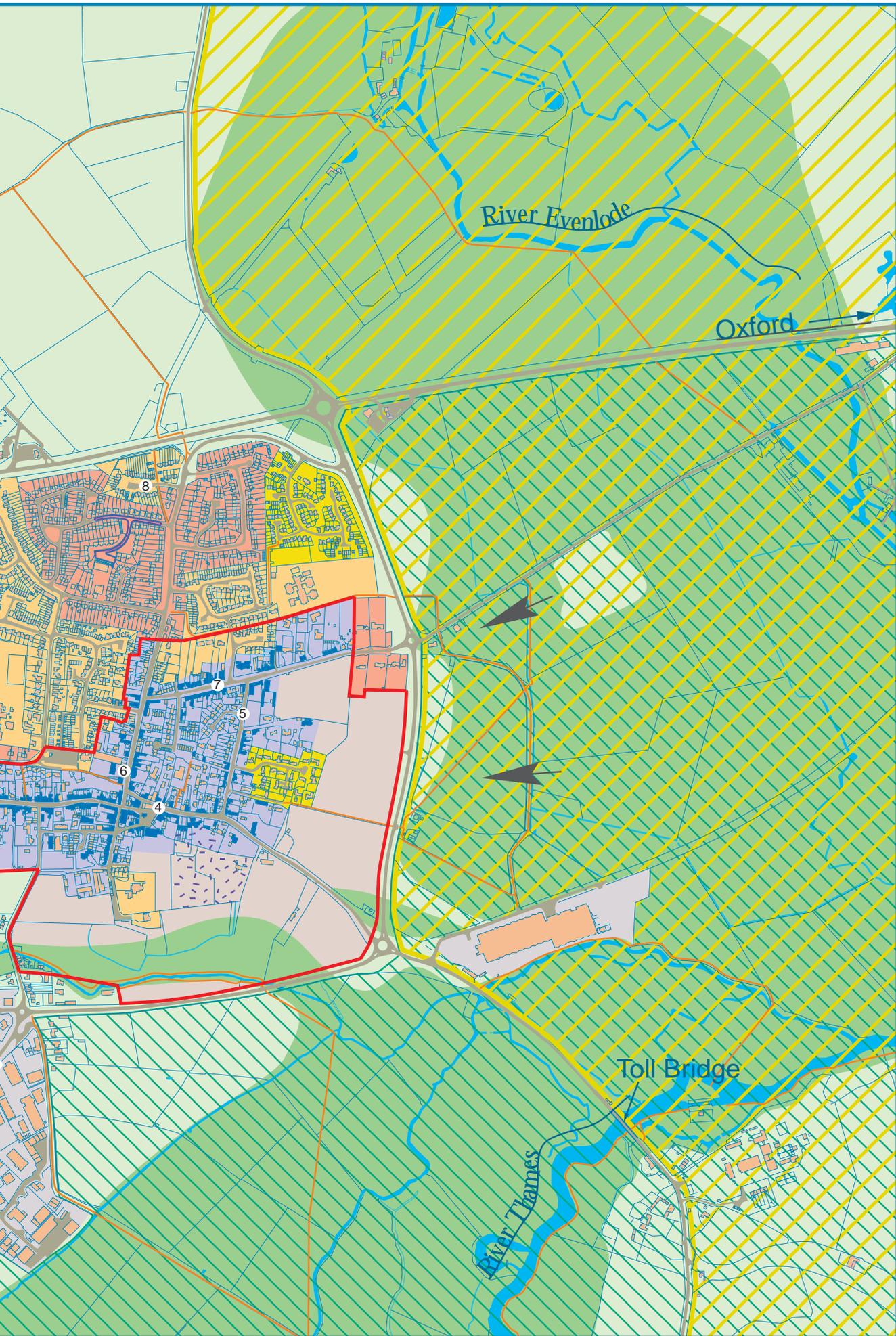


Six-spotted burnet moth taken on the old railway line site to the west of Eynsham

Recommendations: Landscape

- 3.100 Avoid intrusion into the landscape, and adhere to the present village boundaries. [EYN4, BE8, H4]
- 3.101 Ensure that any new developments are small, and screened by strong landscape features. [BE1]
- 3.102 Protect the green corridor between the village and the Thames, most of which is Green Belt or of High Landscape Value, or lies within the Conservation Area. [BE8, BE10, CO7, CO8, CO9]
- 3.103 Permit no development on the fields to the east and west of the village, which would extend the hard edge of the village. [EYN4, CO1, CO2, H4, H7]
- 3.104 Strengthen the landscape, particularly by
- retaining and extending existing hedgerows, especially along road ways, and in particular along Stanton Harcourt Road and to the north of the A40;
 - screening the industrial estate from view by planting trees. [BE3D, CO13, CO16]
- 3.105 Maintain views in and out of the village, as shown in the West Oxfordshire District Council Key Settlements map,
- to and from Wytham Hill
 - to and from the west of the village
 - over the roofscapes of the village from higher ground to the west and north. [BE3D, CO13, CO16]
- 3.106 Preserve and improve the village's access to footpaths, as follows:
- Maintain the use of Cassington Road as a pedestrian and cyclist link between the villages of Eynsham and Cassington, and to serve visitors to the caravan and camp site at Cassington Mill. [R10, T3]
 - Create a new footpath linking Twelve Acre Farm to the Chil Brook and then on to Barnard Gate, or along the Chil Brook and the field boundaries.
 - Put up new signposts to show off-road paths for tourists using the moorings at the locks, or for those using the Thames Footpath, and provide footpath maps at Eynsham Lock and Pinkhill Lock.
- 3.107 Protect the untouched Chil Brook valley and adjoining fishponds to preserve the plant and wildlife habitats. [CO1, CO14, CO16]
- 3.108 Preserve historic settlement patterns and open spaces. [EYNI, EYN3, EYN4, BE1, BE2]







Aerial view of industry buildings to south of village: landscape features on southern boundary need strengthening



Oxford Magnets factory located between the village and Swinford tollbridge



Moorings by tollbridge



Angling is a popular pastime

Economic Aspects

3.14 Because of its position, and the power exercised by the Abbey over many centuries, Eynsham has played a prominent role in the economy of the area. Agriculture was the chief industry until the 20th century, with its subsidiary businesses of milling, blacksmithing, saddlery, etc. In mediæval times there were two weekly markets, and as late as 1900 there were over 40 different shops or trades catering for a much smaller population than today.

3.15 By the late 1970s the village had expanded greatly in population because of new housing, but employment opportunities were lacking. Since then the industrial zones east and south of Eynsham have seen changes. For example, the British Leyland store depot off Oxford Road has become Oxford Magnets; Station Yard now houses Oxford Instruments; and off Stanton Harcourt Road a redundant agricultural vehicle depot now forms part of the Oasis Employment Park.

3.16 Eynsham now provides employment in a wide variety of ways and attracts workers from surrounding areas and from Oxford. Many premises have been converted, sympathetically, to offices and small businesses, and this has been a factor in the decline in the number and variety of shops in the village. The traffic problems to which it has added are dealt with in a later section.

3.17 Tourists are noticeable in the summer months in the village shops, pubs and restaurants. The village is easily reached on foot from the River Thames where there is mooring for boats and a campsite. Visitors also use the footpaths around the village which are advertised in Oxfordshire County Council leaflets and other widely distributed publications.

Social and Recreational Facilities

3.18 Nobody has dominated Eynsham since the dissolution of the Abbey. The village has developed down the

centuries into a vigorously independent community, with a warm welcome for newcomers and an equally strong aversion to anything which might threaten its identity. While it has good links with Oxford and Witney, it is beholden to neither.

3.19 A number of amenities contribute to this sense of self-sufficiency. They include a primary and a secondary school, Baptist, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, two playing fields, nine pubs, two playgroups, library, health centre, day care centre, youth centre, community education centre, a good range of shops and restaurants, and many educational, sporting and recreational clubs and societies. All these are likely to be enhanced by the new community centre in Back Lane, and by the commitment of the secondary school's governors to develop its role as a community school.

3.20 One of the most attractive features of the historic village was the way in which labourers' cottages nestled cheek by jowl with more upmarket housing. In the 20th century, economic and social pressures have escalated the price of these smaller dwellings beyond the reach of first-time buyers, including those who would like to go on living where they grew up.

Traffic

3.22 A week long parking survey carried out for the VDS confirmed that traffic and parking already cause problems in Eynsham, a concern reflected in the responses to the VDS questionnaire. Clearly, the level of traffic generated by the amenities, shops and bus services must be weighed against what is environmentally and socially acceptable to residents. This balance is particularly delicate in the village centre and Conservation Area, where the visual and historic value is paramount. It goes without saying that a major effect upon traffic would result if plans were to go ahead for the gravel extraction mentioned above, in the section on Landscape and Wildlife. Even the most modest calculation points to a steady flow of lorries.

3.23 There is barely sufficient on-street parking space to meet the needs of shops and businesses within the village. This results at times in some quite hazardous parking, though the congestion this creates does at least reduce vehicle speeds, so that there is a fine balance between nuisance and benefit. Some minimal improvements could be made to prevent dangerous parking at junctions.



Local football teams in action



A40: the morning rush hour



Queuing for the Swinford tollbridge during the morning rush hour



Mill Street clogged with lorries, buses and cars

3.24 The shops, businesses, and pubs within the village centre are a vital part of what makes the village a lively, well-resourced community. These need support and encouragement, and any attempt to restrict parking must not have a detrimental effect on them. Too much of the parking appears to be long-term, often by non-residents, and motorists who intend to park for an hour or more should be encouraged to use the Car Park in order to release spaces for shoppers.

3.25 Traffic speed is still an issue, especially at the approaches to the village centre. A 20mph limit would be welcome, but would probably need to be backed up with more physical limitations on speed. In this

case, width restrictions are probably safer and less visually intrusive than humps, and would fit better with the desire to improve cycle and pedestrian access.

3.26 Increasing the volume of traffic in the village centre would exacerbate the problem, and any more demand for parking space would cause chaos.

3.27 Superficially, it would appear that Eynsham has good road communications. But in practice this is not the case. During peak periods all the roads around the village are heavily congested, and any increase in the village population would add to this congestion.

Recommendations: social, economic and traffic

3.200 In order to maintain the social mix of the community in the 21st century, further large-scale development must be avoided. To provide for local need, any new housing, as defined in the Buildings and Architecture section, should offer a greater variety in terms both of size and tenure. [EYN1, EYN3, EYN4, BE1, BE2, BE3C, CO2, H7, EYN2, E7, T1]

3.201 Because of traffic congestion and lack of parking space in the centre of the village, change of use from houses or shops to offices should be considered only in exceptional circumstances. [BE3, R10, T3]

3.202 Throughout the village a network of footpaths links various areas and contributes to the sense of community.

These are an important feature of Eynsham and must be retained. [BE4A, T2]

3.203 Priority should be given to pedestrians and cyclists within the village when the flow and patterns of traffic are being considered. [EYN1, T1]

3.204 Through traffic, which currently represents a danger in the village streets, should be discouraged. [T6]

3.205 On-street parking should be controlled, though it would not be appropriate to restrict it completely. [EYN1, R10]

3.206 Safe crossing of the A40 should be assured for pedestrians, to give them access to the countryside and villages to the north. [EYN12, R10]

4. Buildings & Architecture

Introduction

4.1 Archæological evidence reveals that human occupation of Eynsham dates back to prehistoric times, but the special character of the present village arises from the pattern of growth since mediæval times.

4.2 The Market Square is a survival of the settlement established at the gates of the great Benedictine Abbey dating from the beginning of the eleventh century. From this core, the village expanded in stages by the addition of four mediæval planned streets: Acre End Street, Mill Street, Newland Street and High Street, each composed of a series of narrow-fronted, deep burgage plots with service lanes at the rear.

4.3 The unusual width of these mediæval streets is emphasised by the small scale of the cottages which line them. These cottages are good examples of local vernacular building, important for their historic siting and group value rather than for their architecture. The predominant building material is stone which was quarried locally, although the 18th century fashion for rendering the main facades introduced an alternative treatment, and this in turn led to the painting of some earlier cottages. In the 19th century, alien materials such as Welsh slate were introduced, as a result of the improved transportation made possible by the railway.

4.4 In the 20th century, modern expansion took place mostly to the north of the mediæval settlement, and infill development took place, which cut across and destroyed the form of many of the old burgage plots. This expansion is clearly indicated on the map (pages 8–9), where the pattern of growth during the 20th century can be seen as relating to three distinct periods: 1900–1960, 1960–1980, and 1980 to the present day. Each has a clearly identifiable style or character that dominates throughout its building stock.

4.5 Prior to the expansion, the historic core of the village had developed slowly over several centuries, and in 1975 it was designated as a Conservation Area. In 1980 the Conservation Area was enlarged, following public consultation.

4.6 The extent of the Conservation Area is indicated on the map (pages 8–9). Its character, and that of the three periods of 20th Century building, mentioned above, is summarised in the following sections.

The Conservation Area

The Market Square

4.7 The Market Square is the focal point for many village activities. It is surrounded by relatively unspoilt historic buildings and incorporates the two most important



Acre End Street showing buildings tight up to the back edge of the pavement



East side of Mill Street



Old vicarage on Mill Street



North side of Newland Street



Market Square with St Leonard's Church and the Bartholomew Room



Queen Street: stone and brick terrace typical of Conservation Area



Queens Lane: a narrow vehicular road



Conduit Lane: a typical pedestrian footpath

buildings in Eynsham: St Leonard's Church and the Bartholomew Room. Recent improvements have made the area safer for pedestrians.

Listed Buildings and Ancient Monuments

4.8 Listed buildings are those with special architectural or historic interest and are often fine examples of their period in terms of technology and innovation in construction. A unifying theme in Eynsham is the use of local materials, limestone, Stonesfield slates, thatch, lime mortars, renders, and lime washes.

4.9 There are 92 listed buildings in the Conservation Area, all of which are Group II apart from St Leonard's Church, which is Group II*. The location of these buildings and further details on the statutory list can be obtained from West Oxfordshire District Council. Two sites of ancient remains are scheduled by English Heritage as Ancient Monuments, one adjoining the churches of St. Leonard's and St. Peter's, the other on the north-west side of the Stanton Harcourt road near the industrial estate.

Buildings in general within the Conservation Area

4.10 The designation of a Conservation Area does not imply that no further development or change will be permitted within that area, but rather that any development which does take place shall be in sympathy with the established character and should have the ultimate aim of enhancing the environment.

4.11 The building types include stone cottages, stone and brick terraces, and larger houses, some of which were originally farmhouses with associated barns. There are six public houses, three churches, and a number of meeting halls and other miscellaneous buildings.

4.12 The buildings within the Conservation Area are nearly always built up to the back edge of the footpath, and face the street. Where this does not occur, there are generally high stone walls which define the front boundary. Newland Street is an exception, with grass verges separating the road from the footpath.

4.13 The buildings are usually all domestic in scale, mostly one and a half to three storeys high, the majority being two storeys. The variation in heights and styles along street frontages has been successfully combined, because of their sympathetic relationships in terms of scale, proportion, materials, and windows.

4.14 Walls are predominantly built from limestone rubble which was quarried locally, with timber lintels over door and window openings. Higher status buildings are commonly built with larger pieces of stone, with regular coursing, quoin dressings and stone lintels.

4.15 Roofs are predominantly Stonesfield Slate, which was also quarried locally, and there are occasional thatched roofs. Blue Welsh slate is common on many of the later buildings.

4.16 Windows are generally two or three light casements, with vertical sash windows usual in the larger houses. Small dormer windows in roofs are also frequently found.

4.17 Tall chimneys, rising from the ridge line of roofs, are a very common feature. Occasional breaks in the road frontage add further variety to the street scene.

4.18 Road signs, street lighting, and overhead wires have grown without control over many decades and detract from the visual quality of the Conservation Area.



Small dormer window in Stonesfield slate roof and casement window with timber lintel

Outside the Conservation Area

1900–1960 Developments

4.19 The majority of buildings in this period were either semi-detached or terraced properties, with occasional groups of detached properties. They were mainly built along the two main roads leading out of the village to the north—Hanborough Road and Witney Road. Land was less valuable in this period, with the result that most properties possess good-sized gardens at the front and the rear. Fences, walls, or hedges generally bound the front gardens.



Stratford Drive: typical 'national' style unrelated to Eynsham

4.20 Walls are predominantly finished in render/pebbledash or buff-coloured facing bricks. These were a cheap alternative to natural stone, as reconstructed stone was not yet in common use. Roofs are generally at 35°–45° pitch, and covered in small plain tiles.

4.21 The buildings of this period still had some relationship with earlier periods, mainly because the overall buff/grey colours blended with the weathered stone. The steepness of the roof pitches also related to earlier periods, but hipped ends were a new and incongruous feature.

4.22 The industrial estate on the south-western edge of the village began to develop with a variety of uninspiring buildings.

1960–1980 Developments

4.23 During this period the village expanded rapidly, with large estates of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses. Land was becoming more valuable, so plot sizes tended to decrease and small open-plan front gardens predominated.

4.24 Walls were mainly in facing brick, and roof pitches became lower, with larger, interlocking, concrete tiles which were more economical than the plain tiles of the earlier period.

4.25 The expansion in car ownership was not adequately predicted. Consequently, there are considerable car parking problems within these housing estates, with only occasional groups of lock-up garages.

Recommendations: buildings and architecture

4.100 Housing and employment opportunities have clearly expanded greatly in Eynsham since the 1980s. Although there remains some scope for additional housing, this should only be in small pockets which do not extend beyond the present village boundary, as set out in Section 3. [EYN1, EYN3, EYN4, BE8, CO1, CO2, H7]

4.101 There are a number of potential infill/development sites which are currently undeveloped, or are occupied by inappropriate uses. If any of these should become available for housing or for other desirable uses, proposals should be welcomed but must be carefully controlled. There are however, many statutory restrictions and other recommendations which apply to the Conservation Area. It is most important that these be taken into account before any change or development is considered. West Oxfordshire District Council's leaflet 'Conservation Areas in West Oxfordshire' provides an excellent summary and must be adhered to. [BE3, BE10, BE11, H4b, h7b, H8c]

4.102 Within the conservation area, new buildings, and extensions to existing buildings, must be well designed and in sympathy with the character and materials of the area. They should reflect the form, siting and scale of surrounding buildings. This does not restrict the use of imaginative and original design, which can be successfully blended with earlier periods. Throughout history, building designers have worked to the limits that technology and innovation would allow, and have not always sought to imitate past styles. [BE3, BE10, BE11, BE12, BE14, BE15]

4.103 Historic or architectural features of interest must be protected or retained. Large extensions, or an accumulation of extensions, must not obscure the simple form of the original building. [BE10, BE14, BE15]

4.104 Any new buildings should not harm existing views into and out of the Conservation Area, as well as views within it. [BE10, CO7, CO8]

4.105 Seemingly small but nevertheless inappropriate alterations can damage the appearance of a wider area. In the Conservation Area the following should be avoided:

- Replacement windows and doors with different fenestration, and/or with modern materials substituted.
- Timber stains, varnishes, or paint of unsuitable colours.
- Inappropriate re-pointing of stonework.
- Repair or replacement of render and roofing with inappropriate materials. [BE3C, BE3D, BE10, H8c]

4.106 Signs should be carefully considered and kept to an absolute minimum. No new poles for overhead wires should be permitted, and the existing ones removed. [BE5, BE6, BE7, BE7A]

4.107 The market square should retain its present character as a focal point for the community, and any changes to the ground surface should be in keeping with this traditional use. [BE10]

4.108 Most existing housing areas have little or no variety in the type or size of the properties. The mix of such features in the conservation area works well, and should be followed elsewhere. Subtle variations of design and materials should be adopted to avoid the repetition and monotony of one housing type. [BE3D, BE12]

4.109 Good, imaginative design is just as important outside the conservation area as within it, and should be encouraged. [BE12]

4.110 Stone boundary walls, often 2 metres or more in height, are an attractive and important element in the character of the Conservation Area, especially where they front on to public highways and footpaths. They must be retained and prevented from falling into disrepair. Any rebuilding or repair work must follow the established character in detail. [BE3D]

4.26 This period shows a stark contrast with the previous periods. The style of house building was very much influenced by the 'national' style at the time, with little regard for the existing local character.

1980 to Present Day Developments

4.27 The majority of buildings in this period consist of small groups of detached or semi-detached houses, generally infilling or rounding off the village, and with a mixture of styles, some of which are alien to the character of the village. An exception is Merton Close, which is marked by a simplicity of form and materials, and a variety of house types.

4.28 Walls vary from reconstructed stone of different types to facing brickwork of different colours and occasional areas of render. Roofs vary between about 20° and 40° and are generally covered with interlocking concrete tiles, or occasionally with plain tiles.

4.29 Frontages are predominantly open-plan and rear gardens are small, reflecting the increasing value of land. There is also more off-street parking catered for, and in many areas the houses have double garages.

4.30 Industrial and commercial premises continued to expand to the south-west of the village, and included a number of 'high-tech' office and manufacturing developments. For the first time, the importance of landscaping began to be appreciated when such buildings were contemplated.



Merton Close: simplicity of form and materials



Orchard Close: weathered reconstructed stone improves integration into the Conservation Area

5. Conclusion

Eynsham has an exceptionally long history of human occupation, and over the centuries it has remained a thriving village. The narrow medieval streets contribute to the essential character of the village, and the varying styles and heights of the buildings enhance it. Any new development within the village should be sensitive to this character. That is not to suggest that no new design be introduced, but that any new buildings should be in harmony with the existing architecture. It is also a plea for the village to be seen as not open to further expansion, not least because of traffic congestion, but in particular because the countryside on its borders adds greatly to the quality of the life of the villagers.

Eynsham has more than doubled its population in the last 30 years. In the words of the West Oxfordshire District Plan, '...Further significant development would be extremely difficult to accommodate without diluting the character of the settlement and its setting in the countryside.'



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