
Conservation Area Character Survey

Wheeler End Common



What is a Conservation Area

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, which are considered worthy of preservation or enhancement. They are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Within conservation areas there are special controls on some alterations to buildings, on their demolition or partial demolition, and on works to trees. The Council's Heritage Guidance Note on conservation areas gives further details of the specific controls that apply.

Designation of a conservation area does not preclude the possibility of new development, but such development must be designed positively to enhance the special character of the area.

The Purpose of This Survey

The designation of a conservation area imposes specific duties on local authorities to formulate and publish proposals to ensure that the special character of the area is preserved and enhanced. This conservation area character survey describes the main features of special architectural

and historic interest which justify the designation of Wheeler End Common as a conservation area.

This survey is in accordance with Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and PPG15, complies with the requirements of PPG12, and contributes to the Council's strategic Aim 4 The Environment. As supplementary planning guidance, it is intended to complement the approved policies for conservation areas in the Council's Wycombe District Local Plan and is consistent with paragraphs 11.36 - 11.41 of the Wycombe District Local Plan to 2011, adopted 2004.

This survey was the subject of public consultation prior to adoption as supplementary planning guidance. The views of the consultees were taken into account and in some cases changes were made. A copy of all representations made to the Council during public consultation and the Council's response to those representations is available from the District Council Offices

Planning and Major Projects - 2003



Context

The area known as Wheeler End Common is situated in south west Buckinghamshire high in the Chiltern hills. To the west lies the Chilterns scarp rising about 180 metres above the Vale of Oxford, to the east is the village of Lane End, beyond which is the built up area of High Wycombe. The hamlet shares a boundary with Cadmore End Common to its south.

The surrounding landscape is of a type identified in the *Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire* as the Incised Dip Slope of the Chilterns. The Chilterns belt runs from Goring in Oxfordshire, through Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Hertfordshire, containing some of the highest quality landscape. The hills are formed by an outcrop of chalk which forms a plateau, abruptly terminating to create the dramatic north west face of the Chilterns escarpment. Wheeler End also lies within the Green Belt and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In terms of settlement pattern the hamlet exhibits characteristics of a ridgetop village, a particular type of form found in the Chilterns. It has retained large areas of common at its centre, around which further development has occurred. Regardless of this development, the hamlet has remained relatively small – the entire parish of Piddington and Wheeler End containing between them only 247 households in 1996. Commercial activity is therefore minimal, with only one pub in the conservation area, and no local shops.



The Methodist Chapel, now a private residence



Wheeler End Common - once known for its geese

History

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Cadmore End, Cadmore End Common and Wheeler End Common would have formed a series of scattered linear settlements with similar physical characteristics and history, shared to some extent with Lane End to the south east. Cadmore End Common and Wheeler End Common are located on the heath land to the north, with the more fertile agricultural and pastoral land of Cadmore End to the south. The growth of Cadmore End Common was most likely influenced by its connection with the brick making industry, while Wheeler End Common has connections with the chairmaking industry.

The hamlet of Wheeler End lies on the south western fringe of the old ecclesiastical parish of West Wycombe. This parish was originally very large in area and included Downley, Sands, Booker, and Castlefield in addition to the village of West Wycombe at the centre of the parish. This parish system followed closely on the manorial system established in the times of the Saxons, who divided the counties into hundreds. Wheeler End Common lay in the Desborough Hundred, the only real link with Desborough being the earthwork ring of Desborough Castle which the late Sir John Dashwood gave from the manor to the old Borough of Chepping Wycombe in the 1930's.

In the Domesday Book of 1086, the West Wycombe Manor was held by the Abbey of St. Peter at Winchester, now the Cathedral. Among the 19 hides of land at West Wycombe, the village of Wheeler End doubtless provided some of the listed revenue. The



A woodcut of a mummery play from *Countryside Moods* (1943)

Dashwood family acquired West Wycombe Manor in the early 1700's and the Common at Wheeler End and most of the arable land behind the properties lining the common are still owned by West Wycombe Estates of Sir Edward Dashwood.

The workhouse buildings served the entire parish, and on the site of 'Galamina' stood a small building known locally as the 'Pest House', which was used as a mortuary for the workhouse. The house known as Chipps, originally two cottages occupied by Dashwood Estate workers, was for many years the home of Granny Vernon, and was famous for its geese - Wheeler End Common was known as a 'goose common'.

There has never been a church at Wheeler End, but the Primitive Methodist Chapel, now a private dwelling, was built in 1861 and was the smallest Methodist Chapel in the Wycombe Circuit. Services ceased on 23 August 1987 and members were forced to transfer to the nearby Lane End Methodist Church. In the 1930's the late Mrs. Marie Manton had part of her home, Buis Cottage, turned into the Sacred Heart Oratory, serving the Roman Catholic Faith in the local area. Buis cottage was first a public house, (the Wheatsheaf), and then a bakery before becoming a dwelling and oratory.

Local industries in the area included both chairmaking and brickmaking. Wheeler End was also home to a group of mummery who toured the area performing their 'rough musick' until the mid 1900s. Horace Harman best records their performances in *Sketches of the Bucks Countryside*. The word mummer is

derived from an old French word meaning 'mask' and refers to the local acting group which would travel to surrounding villages to perform plays in pubs or homes. The Wheeler End Mummery performed in the winter months and rehearsed in the brick kiln at Cadmore End Common, in use until 1939 when the clay ran out, and now a Grade II listed building.

Although there was once a bakery in Wheeler End Common, there are no longer any shops. In the 1930's a butcher, fishmonger, baker and milkman had weekly or daily rounds in the area, and in the 1950s as many as five different milk vans served Wheeler End daily, although now the milk man visits only three times per week. Water mains were installed by the Marlow Water Company in the 1920s and main drainage was installed in the 1970s, although some isolated homes are still not connected.

While the origin of the 'Wheeler' part of the name is unclear – possibly referring to a local family- the 'End' portion is common to a number of villages and hamlets in this area, possibly derived from 'inne' meaning 'a place of residence' or more likely referring to an end-ship at the end of an older parish. Wheeler End Common was designated as a conservation area in 1989

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Most larger settlements in the Chilterns are located in the valleys, while the plateaux are scattered with woods, heath, grazing land and isolated dwellings and hamlets. Until relatively recently Wheeler End was a much smaller hamlet made up of a loose group of farmhouses scattered around the common. These are the oldest structures in the conservation area, dating



The Old Crown, once a pub but now a private residence



Chapel Row, the linear development to the west of the common

from the 16th to 17th century and providing anchor points for subsequent development which has lined the edges of the common.

This development has occurred in two distinct periods, the first likely corresponding with the growth in the chairmaking industry in the 18th and 19th centuries, and general population and industrial growth in the Chilterns which followed the construction of the railway in the 1850s. Even remote settlements experienced a population increase in this period and a number of the buildings in Wheeler End, mostly along the western edge of the common, date from this time.

Growth in private transport from the mid 20th century onward placed further pressure on such settlements as potential sites for housing development, and this period is represented by development along the eastern edge of the common primarily from the late 1950s to early 1970s. Despite this development the hamlet has retained a rather remote character, due in part to the somewhat narrow lanes leading to and through the hamlet, and in part to the barriers created by the escarpment, and the M40 which cut through the area in 1978.

Archaeological Interest

There are no scheduled ancient monuments or sites of archaeological interest identified within the conservation area.

The hamlet is clearly of a historic nature and in the event of archaeological deposits being found the Council may require archaeological conditions

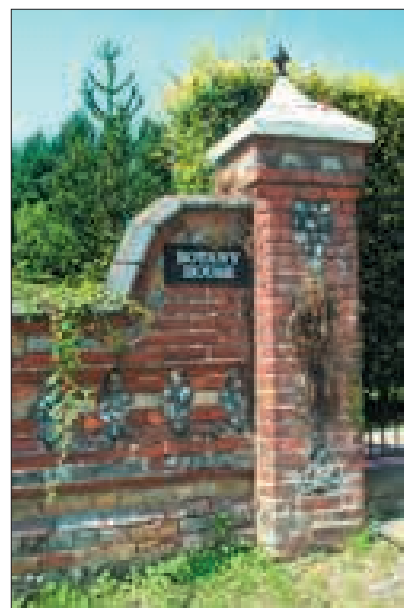
attaching to planning permissions where appropriate, including watching briefs, excavation or similar recording procedures

Essential Characteristics

Wheeler End Common exhibits many of the characteristics of a Chiltern ridgetop settlement: buildings and common land strung out along the ridge, older holloways to the valley bottom, farms within and at the edge of the settlement, and minor roads and tracks giving access to groups of houses. Although development in Wheeler End Common actually encloses the common, changes in elevation minimises the impact of modern development to the east and result in a much more linear appearance.

Within Wheeler End Common Conservation Area are two areas which can be identified as having characteristics unique from one another: the linear development along the common to the west, and the more dispersed and irregular grouping to the north of the common. The area along the west side of the common is relatively dense, low and linear, and set close to the common on long narrow plots with walled front gardens. These characteristics of siting, along with similar use of materials and style, make this the dominant area in Wheeler End Common.

Larger and more irregular plot sizes, and variety of setback, orientation, and style are common to the second area within Wheeler End Common. These characteristics are associated with the older buildings which formed most of the original settlement to the north of the common, and with the more modern infill which has occurred between these older structures. These scattered groups of cottages and terraces are accessed via minor roads and tracks and are



Walled front gardens are characteristic of Wheeler End Common, that of Botany House is one of the most attractive



Grade II listed Laurel Farmhouse

somewhat hidden from view by surrounding trees and tall hedges. Also within or adjacent to this area are five Grade II listed buildings.

Newer development outside the conservation area is located mostly to the east of the common and dates from the mid to late 20th century. They are primarily detached or semi-detached dwellings on large regularly-shaped plots with minimal walls or hedges. The impact of these on the conservation area is minimised somewhat by the gradient and the vegetation which has developed on the common.

Architectural Character and Quality of

Buildings

As mentioned previously, the architectural character of the conservation area is determined primarily by the terraces which line the west side of the common. These are from 1 ½ to 2 stories in height; those to the north are lower with the height gradually rising to the south. These terraces are mostly of brick and flint with gabled roofs, some hipped on the end, covered with either slate, plain tile, or tile in alternating bands of square and scalloped ends. Chimneys are simple, generally of substantial size, with corbeling at the top and simple clay chimney pots. Windows are wood casements, those on the second floor pushed up to the eaves. Many of these dwellings have enclosed gabled porches and are surrounded by either brick and flint walls or clipped hedges. Although a few exhibit dentil eaves, detailing is effected almost entirely through the patterns of brick dressings against the flint walls.

SMALL COTTAGES

GRADE II LISTED

Chipps Cottage was built in the 17th century and altered in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is 1½ storeys, of timber frame with brick infill and some flint. Chipps was originally two cottages, extended then combined into a single dwelling, although the upper floors are still separate. The interior exhibits many exposed beams.

Sharron Cottage, The Old Workhouse and Gordon Cottage were originally the workhouse, instituted in 1754. It was built in the 17th century with 18th, 19th and 20th century extensions. Materials include timber framing, brick and flint, and colourwashed render.

Laurel Farmhouse is the most dominant of the listed buildings in Wheeler End Common, due to its siting. It is a 16th century farmhouse which was partly rebuilt in the mid 19th century when extensions were added. It is two storeys, of brick and flint with a first floor band course to the north gable.

Woodmans Nap is a 17th century house of whitewashed brick and timber framing, 1½ storeys with 19th and 20th century alterations.

Denham Farm is dated 1794, with some 20th century alterations. It has a brick façade with brick and flint sides and a hipped roof. The barn, built of flint with brick stringcourses, has been converted to a dwelling. These buildings indicate the north east corner of Wheeler End Common, marking the



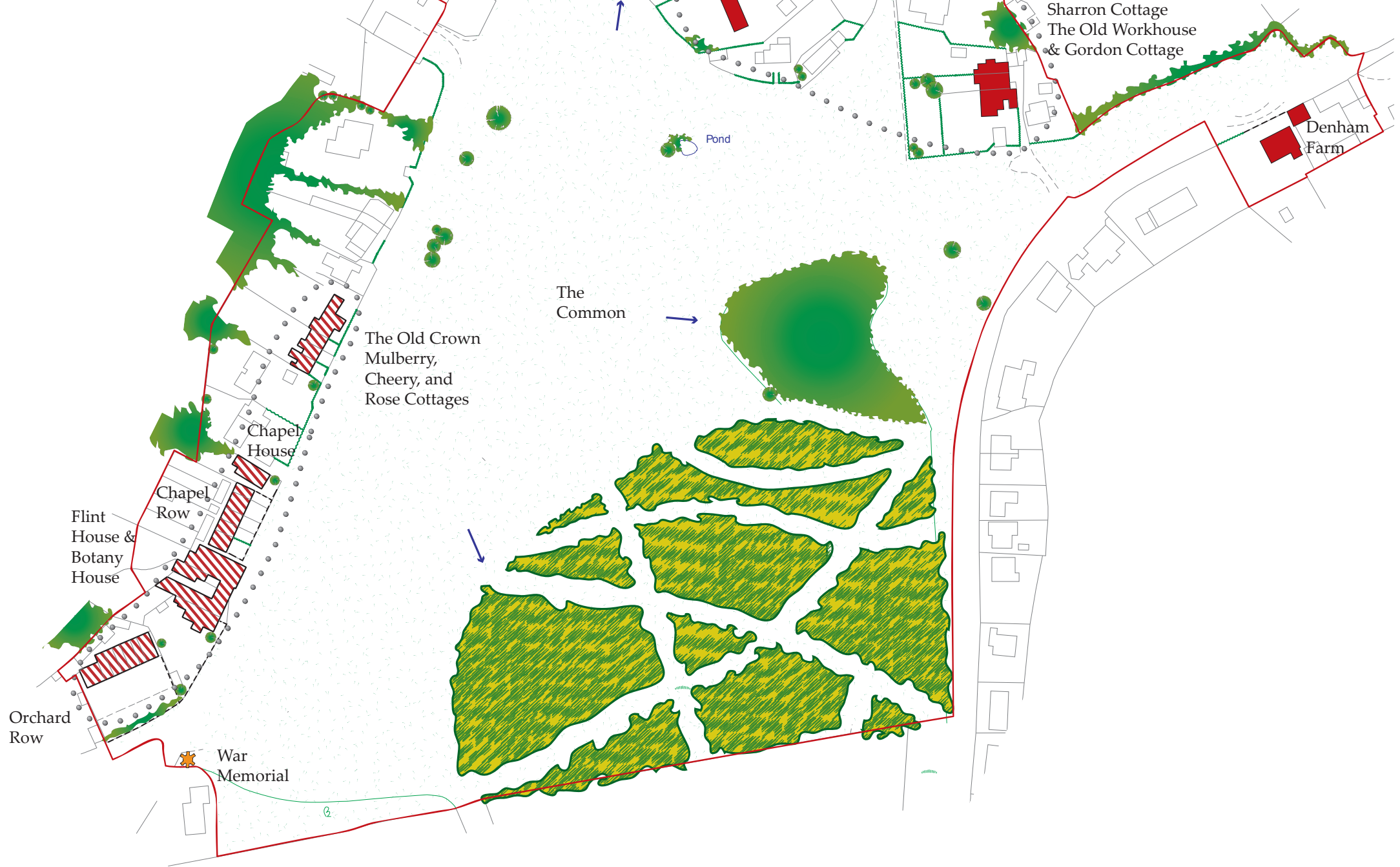
Denham Farm, one of the original farmhouses in the area

Wheeler End Common Conservation Area

Key

- 9.69
- Listed Building
- Significant Building
- Important Views
- Important Trees
- Tree Groups
- Scrub
- Significant Hedge
- Significant Wall
- Important Grouping
- Public and Semi-Public Open Space





Sharron Cottage
The Old Workhouse
& Gordon Cottage

Denham
Farm

Pond

The
Common

The Old Crown
Mulberry,
Cheery, and
Rose Cottages

Chapel
House

Chapel
Row

Flint
House &
Botany
House

Orchard
Row

War
Memorial

entrance to the hamlet from Bullocks Farm Lane, and are quite visible from the common. Barns associated with Denham Farm are of brick and flint or weatherboard, and are important remnants of original industry in the area.

SOME OTHER SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

Botany House and **Flint House** are quite prominent when entering the hamlet from the south on Bolter End Lane, and indeed throughout the south end of the conservation area; it is the focal point of the important grouping at the south of the conservation area. They are of knapped flint with blocked brick dressings, and exhibit tiled roofs in alternating bands of squared and fish-scale ends. These features, repeated in surrounding terraces, create cohesion within the group.

Botany House and Flint House are made distinctive within this group by further features such as the height, a full 2 storeys, and the positioning which gives it more presence, tall window bays, large double hung windows, and more finely knapped and coursed flint. The polychromatic wall surrounding Botany House also lends distinction, laid in red, yellow and vitrified brick with flint diapers. On the east elevation is a large elliptical arch over a carriageway, one of the



The Brickmakers Arms, the only pub in the conservation area

finest architectural features in the conservation area, to the left of which is an area of newer brick and flint work under a long lintel, indicating alterations which have taken place. This archway is said to have been intended to form the gatehouse to the estate of Frederick Burnham, a brickmaker at Huckenden Farm at Cadmore End Common. The origin of the name Botany House could not be ascertained, although both Botany House and neighbouring Orchard Row overlook an area of the common, which appears on the 1883 Ordnance Survey map to have been cultivated.

Also important to this grouping and sharing many of the above features are **Orchard Row**, **Chapel Row**, **Chapel House**, and **The Brickmakers Arms**, which has previously been both a coaching house and a bakery. Although elements such as a lower pitched roof finished in slate rather than tile, and irregular chimneys sets them apart, **Rose Cottage**, **Cheery Cottage**, **Mulberry Cottage** and **The Old Crown** have also been included in this group as they share other characteristics of height and mass, materials, and siting.

The other important grouping includes **Chippis**,



Botany House, one of the more attractive and prominent buildings in the conservation area



The archway of Flint House, and a detail of the knapped and coursed flint



Flagstones, located in the important grouping to the north

Sharon Cottage, The Old Workhouse and Gordon Cottage, all listed. It also includes cottages identified as significant to the character of the conservation area: **Wheeler, Flagstones and Lanford Cottages**. The significance of the group is as much to do with siting characteristics such as irregular plot sizes and shapes, variation of setback and orientation, as it is to do with features such as height and materials such as brick, flint, and tile roofs. This grouping developed slowly over time anchored by the farms which are the original buildings in the hamlet. Subsequent cottages were fitted into the remaining spaces between these buildings resulting in irregular plot size and shape, and are accessed via undeveloped tracks through the common. This group also includes some cottages which do not contribute so positively to the conservation area and are therefore not indicated as significant in this survey. These are generally more modern structures and tend to exhibit characteristics such as modern casement windows, greater height, hipped roofs with broader spans and greater use of slate or concrete tile. Siting characteristics do however



Roofs in alternating bands of squared and scalloped tiles are characteristic of the important group to the south

minimise the impacts of these features.

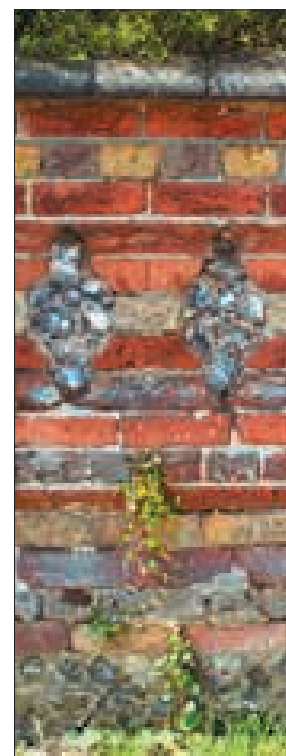
The war memorial at the south west corner of the conservation area across from Orchard Row is an attractive wooden cross, an extremely rare survival of this type.

Materials

The Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire characterises the soil around Wheeler End Common as pebbly clay and sand clay with flints, all of which were utilised as construction materials in the hamlet. As mentioned previously, the brick kiln in Cadmore End Common dates from around 1830 and likely supplied much of the brick and tile for local construction needs. Flint began to be used for houses by the 17th century, where it was combined with brick dressings.

Buildings in Wheeler End Common are most frequently of flint with brick dressings and tile roofs punctuated by chimneys, although some less significant buildings have slate roofs. The only externally visible example of half-timbering in the hamlet is at grade II listed Chipps Cottage and weatherboarding is evident only on a 20th century lean-to extension to Gordon Cottage.

Windows are wood, either casements or in the case of more important buildings, double hung, and are set in flat or cambered openings. Sadly, some windows have been replaced with PVCu, altering the proportions and appearance of the window openings. More modern buildings in the conservation area generally tend to be taller and constructed solely of brick with either clay or concrete tile roofs and often have few or no chimneys, although this standard is no longer as acceptable as it once was. Boundaries are delineated with either low brick and flint walls or hedges, with a few detrimental deviations such as modern wrought iron or weatherboard fencing.



The striking wall of Botany House, utilising red, yellow, vitrified brick and flints



The common, now used primarily for walking



Views of the Chiltern hills looking north of the common

Trees and Vegetation

Tree cover is around 20-26% in the Chilterns Dip Slope but Wheeler End Common has a much more open character. There are a few trees and some scrub on the common and the groups of cottages to the north are surrounded by trees and tall hedges but generally the hamlet has a clear aspect. Previously used extensively for grazing, and for village cricket, the common is now used primarily for walking dogs. The vegetation on the common works in concert with the change in elevation to lessen the impact of much of the modern development on the conservation area. Individually significant trees or tree groups are indicated on the conservation area map, but all trees in conservation areas are afforded special protection and care should be exercised to ensure their maintenance.

Although hedges are not specifically protected, there are a number throughout the village which make a significant contribution to its character, some of which are indicated on the map. A number of these hedges have achieved great heights, completely hiding many listed or significant buildings from view. Reduction in the height of some of these hedges would open up views of these structures, benefiting the conservation area.

Open Space

Although the commons are no longer used as a source for brickmaking materials, farming, or agriculture, it remains important as amenity space. Because it is no longer grazed, one-third of the common is now covered with scrub, with footpaths winding through. Cottages and terraces along the west of the common are afforded views over the common to

the ridges beyond, views mostly unobstructed by the modern development which is hidden by gradient and vegetation.

Settings and Views

Some of the important views within and around the conservation area are indicated on the map. Most involve wide ranging views of the surrounding hills from the common, although the view of Botany House as one enters the conservation area from the south on Bolter End Lane is quite striking. The nearby M40 is thankfully mostly hidden, with the occasional glimpse of a tall lorry from a few locations on the common, and the all-pervading roar of constant traffic indicating its presence.

Opportunities for Enhancement

One area of concern identified by residents in consultation was gradual loss of open areas on the common due to encroachment of trees, shrubs, and bracken. A management plan for an area of common land can often be negotiated between the property owner(s) and commoners, and could also be eligible for matching grants. Such a management plan for Wheeler End Common would certainly be viewed favourably.

Another concern raised by residents was the increase in light pollution, which originates from both the motorway and from individual buildings. This can have a detrimental effect to a rural area and consideration should be given to the impact of lighting on the conservation area when determining planning applications.

Development Control Advice

The policies of the Wycombe District Local Plan are the primary source of reference for development control advice. In addition the Council's approved Heritage Strategy is seen as a supporting document to the plan.

This character survey is also intended to provide broad guidance of an informal nature in considering new development in the conservation area. Below is a brief checklist taking account of the above text.

To safeguard, preserve and enhance the appearance and special character of the Wheeler End Common Conservation Area:

- In the conservation area higher standards of design are required, as it is the function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance the special character as identified in this appraisal.
- Any new building works such as extensions must be designed not as a separate entity, but should be sympathetic in form and scale with the existing buildings and the conservation area as a whole.
- Significant buildings are identified on the survey map and their specific qualities are described in the text above. Any new development must not harm their integrity or visual quality, and it should be recognised that new development may not always be acceptable.
- Materials for any new building works or surfacing must be sympathetic to the rural character of the area.
- Applications for development adjoining but beyond the conservation area boundary will be assessed for its effect upon it, and may be refused permission if this is considered adverse.
- Surfacing within domestic curtilages for driveways and the like should be in keeping with the rural nature of the hamlet and of an informal type. Large areas of tarmac and concrete are out of place in this rural setting. Regular paving, pavements and setts may also look discordant, and may not be appropriate. Paths to front doors historically were surfaced with clay tiles or brick, and this is a tradition that could be encouraged.

- Inappropriate replacement windows and doors can damage the character of the conservation area. Traditional natural materials should be used in order to safeguard the special character of the conservation area. Generally speaking painted timber windows and doors are appropriate and modern substitute materials such as PVCu and aluminium are not.

- Flint and brick walling is a particular feature of the Wheeler End Common Conservation Area. New sections of walling or repairs to existing walling should respect and be equal in quality and appearance to the workmanship of original sections of walling. In particular the use of an appropriate lime mortar will enhance the appearance of walling.

- Areas of open space, and gaps between buildings will be carefully considered for protection from development or enclosure in order to protect the character of the Wheeler End Common Conservation Area, the setting of listed buildings, and any important views.

- All trees in conservation areas are protected but special consideration should be given to those trees indicated on the conservation area map to ensure that they are not harmed. New development should recognise this and not present a risk to their continued future growth and habit.

- Although hedges cannot be specially protected through legislation, those hedgerows indicated on the character survey map should be retained and where possible enhanced.



Use of inappropriate bricks and satellite dishes on the fronts of buildings detracts from the appearance of the conservation area

- Special care must be taken to ensure that views looking into and out from the conservation area are not spoilt. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map.

Further Information and Guidance

Historic sources used in the preparation of this document include Pevsner's *The Buildings of England. Buckinghamshire* 2nd edition (1994), *The Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire* (Buckinghamshire County Council) and *The Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and Flint Technical Note* (the Chilterns Conference). Descriptions of architectural terms can be found in many dictionaries, or in publication such as *Harris' Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture* (1977) or *Harris's Illustrated Glossary of Architecture* (1966).

Wycombe District Council's Transport and Major

Projects Service has a number of publications which offer further guidance. Ask the Conservation Officer for information on which Heritage Guidance Notes are currently available and appropriate.

The Conservation Officer and Heritage Officer are always pleased to give advice on all heritage matters and can be contacted on 01494 421578 or 01494 421578, or seen by appointment in the Council Offices or on site. Development Control matters within the Wheeler End Common Conservation Area are the responsibility of the West Team who can be contacted on 01494 421517. Planning Policy matters are the responsibility of the Policy Unit who can be contacted on 01494 421545.

Many thanks are given to Alfred Plumridge, the parish council, and the residents of Wheeler End Common who made invaluable contributions to the preparation of this document.

