

4.0 Surviving Historic Features within the Conservation Area

Summary of historical features

4.1 Berkhamsted Conservation Area has an extensive and varied list of historical features / buildings that have survived primarily due to the size and nature of its different character areas along with the ten centuries of growth and development (eleventh to twenty-first century).

- The linear character of the High Street
- St. Peter's Church and adjacent walled burial ground, and the large walled cemetery on Three Close Lane with gate piers
- The War Memorial
- The old Market Place and Court House
- Public houses and old coaching inns
- Berkhamsted Collegiate School site on Castle Street / Mill Street including former residential blocks (boys and girls) on Chesham Road
- Other historic school buildings (e.g. 12A Chapel Street; Victoria Church of England School, Prince Edward Street; The Bourne School, 222 High Street)
- Victorian non-conformist chapels and churches
- The Old Rectory and its coach house
- Georgian town houses; both detached and rows of properties
- Nineteenth century terraces and semi-detached villa housing
- Long established shops and old shopfronts
- Banks
- Municipal / public buildings (e.g. the old Town Hall, Civic Centre)
- Almshouses
- The Rex Cinema (recently restored, including the flats and restaurant, The Gatsby)
- The Railway Station and railway line
- Berkhamsted Castle and earthworks
- River Bulbourne and the Grand Union Canal, including canal side housing terraces (e.g. 1 – 4 St. John's Well Lane & Londrina Terrace) and public houses that served the industrial history of canal area
- Canal bridges and footpath bridges (waterways heritage)
- Industrial heritage: e.g. Cooper House, Ravens Lane; Berkley Gallery, Lower Kings Road; Kings Road Garage, Elm Grove; The Warehouse, Castle Wharf; the former maltings, Chapel Street / Bridge Street; the barn to the rear of 50 / 52 Charles Street
- Locks and lock keepers cottages on the Canal and the historic landscape through which the watercourses pass including their amenity areas
- Telephone boxes and post boxes
- The castle and its surroundings
- The general topographic character with views across the valley
- Front boundary walls, and steps on terraced streets
- Old stone kerbs and paving
- Alleys and paths (e.g. Angle Place path; the alley around Victoria Church of England School; the footpath from Chesham Road to Kings Road across Butts Meadow)
- Narrow paths at the end / between terraces
- Field boundaries (e.g. west of Shrublands Avenue and Charles Street alignment)
- Nineteenth / early twentieth century road layout

Street pattern and building plots

Area 1

- 4.2 The main route through Berkhamsted Conservation Area, the A251, known as the High Street (Area 1), runs in a southeast to northwest direction. It is a busy route crossed at approximately its half-way point by Lower Kings Road / Kings Road running in roughly north to south creating a staggered crossroad with traffic lights. Lower Kings Road heads south from the railway station / castle (Area 2) becoming Kings Road at the traffic lights and continuing southwest past the turning to Charles Street (Area 3) and onto the A41 bypass road.
- 4.3 Buildings line along the edge of and face onto the High Street pavements. They occupy narrow medieval burgage plots and post-medieval larger but regularly-sized plots, some of which have been later joined together to form wider street frontages. In a few cases historic building plot sizes have been removed, re-developed and more modern structures erected. Buildings along Lower Kings Road / Kings Road are similarly laid out as the High Street with the exception of Waitrose supermarket; it lies behind Lower Kings Road and the High Street on back land next to the River Bulbourne and occupies the site of the former Bulbourne (Clothing) Factory. The in-fill buildings of the old Market Place (Middle Row / *Graball Row* and Back Lane) to the west of St. Peter's Church still mostly retain their late medieval plot sizes and overall triangular shape.
- 4.4 In most cases the rear plots of High Street properties survive and extend behind the building on the street front following old boundaries. However, it is common for extensions to project into the rear plot thereby reducing the open space / garden area. In some cases later in-fill buildings have been constructed into the rear plots.
- 4.5 There are five main historic routes that lead off from the High Street. These are quieter than the High Street and are mostly residential streets with pavements: Castle Street, Ravens Lane, Swing Gate Lane, Chesham Road and Cross Oak Road. Castle Street and Ravens Lane head northwards down to and over the River Bulbourne and Grand Union Canal, and continue under / over the railway line onto New Road and Gravel Path respectively, leading northeast to Frithsden and Potten End. Swing Gate Lane ascends directly south towards the A41 bypass road, while Chesham Road and Cross Oak Road ascend southwest towards the bypass. Only Chesham Road joins the A41 while Swing Gate Lane runs over the bypass and Cross Oak Road (Dennys Lane) continues under it. However, Chesham Road is a very narrow route and cannot be used to access the High Street from the A41; there is a no entry sign at the junction with Hilltop Road and so Kings Road provides the main route to the A41 along Kingshill Way.
- 4.6 A small number of gaps between properties on the High Street are used as pedestrian routes leading through to rear car parks, such as from High Street Central to Water Lane car park and High Street West to Waitrose car park off Lower Kings Road. A narrow alleyway between adjoining properties is found along the High Street leading through to Church Lane (High Street Central, between 150 & 152 High Street).
- 4.7 Buildings of Castle Street, Ravens Lane and Chesham Road mostly face onto the street frontage, while those on Cross Oak Road commonly stand back from the roadside behind small front gardens with low brick walls. The multi-period buildings along Castle Street are a mixture of older style properties (houses and shops) dating between the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The school buildings of Berkhamsted Collegiate School have a different plan form as they face towards St. Peter's Church (the Old Grammar School Hall of 1544) and also face into the centre of the late nineteenth century school yard. Modern developments situated along Ravens Lane (west side) have small front gardens with low brick walls unlike the mid-nineteenth century properties opposite on the east side.
- 4.8 In most cases the small rear plots of Castle Street (east side) properties survive and extend behind the building on the front following old boundaries. However, it is common for extensions to project into the rear plot thereby reducing the open space / garden area.

In some cases later buildings have been constructed on former open ground or where non-residential buildings stood, usually on larger un-divided plots, such as Manor Close, the Fire and Ambulance Station and William Fiske House (site of the former Congregational Church). The Berkhamsted Collegiate School (west side) has also undergone some in-fill development and demolition / re-development.

- 4.9 The small rear plots of Ravens Lane (east side) properties survive and extend behind the building on the front following old boundaries. However, it is common for extensions to project into the rear plot thereby reducing the open space / garden area. The rear plots are walled (as seen on Holliday Street), some have original outbuildings attached while others have removed them and timber fencing / new walls erected on the boundary. Most properties on the west side are modern and replace Cooper's sheep dip powder factory that extended back to Manor Street.
- 4.10 The layout and size of historic plots along Chesham Road survive, except for St. John's (former boarding house to Berkhamsted Collegiate School) on the east side; it extended its northern boundary by taking land from the rear plots of High Street properties during the 1960s / 70s. Despite the construction of the modern flats on the west side of Chesham Road, Deans Lawn (new build) and Cavalier Court (demolition and re-development), the boundaries of these plots remain roughly the same size.
- 4.11 Leading eastwards off Chesham Road is an historic footpath that continues on to Butts Meadow and then Kings Road (shown as a footpath on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map). It forms part of the conservation area boundary and lies between Area 1 and Area 3. Passing through trees it continues along behind the allotments and Victoria Church of England School, before opening out into Butts Meadow (the meadow does not currently lie within the conservation area boundary). A further pedestrian route joins Prince Edward Street with Butts Meadow via a footpath around the plot of Victoria Church of England School.
- 4.12 There are a series of historic nineteenth century but more minor, and often narrower, residential roads leading away from the High Street that run roughly northeast (north side) and southwest (south side):

South side

- Highfield Road: very straight, ascending to edge of boundary meeting Victoria Road / Holly Drive. Mixture of nineteenth and twentieth century housing that mostly face onto the road. Nineteenth century plot sizes remain. Later development has sub-divided large plots.
- Victoria Road: very straight, ascending to edge of boundary where it then curves east to meet Holly Drive. Nineteenth century housing remains within original plot sizes and faces the street; houses to the east line the street frontage while those to the west have small front gardens behind low brick walls. The houses to the west side have a rear brick wall boundary and some outbuildings in the rear plots; rear extensions are also common. There is a narrow alley on the west side of Victoria Road leading through to Three Close Lane. It lies beyond a row of three nineteenth century houses with two-storey bays (nos. 34 – 38) along the side wall of no. 38.
- Three Close Lane: straight, ascending to edge of boundary where it then curves east to meet Beech Drive. Most of the land lies within the walled cemetery (access also from Rectory Lane) and remains intact. Land fronting the High Street, formerly Egerton House, is entirely occupied by The Rex Cinema (the 1930s cinema, adjoining flats and restaurant, The Gatsby), while there has been modern development within the rear plot of the High Street property opposite.
- Rectory Lane (extended in the late twentieth century when Priory Gardens was built upon the Green Lane access): very narrow single lane, straight, ascending

to edge of boundary where it meets The Old Rectory (no pavement). Much sub-division of plots for new properties (Cloister Garth), development within High Street rear plots and car parking. Cemetery boundary and walls remain.

- Prince Edward Street: narrow, straight, short, gently ascending where it meets Victoria Church of England School. Buildings line the street front, even the modern properties. Many of the old boundaries have been lost / altered through demolition and re-development. The nineteenth-century school has been extended eroding adjacent historic plots.
- Elm Grove: very narrow single lane, straight, ascending to meet Grove End. Mixture of housing, but mostly nineteenth century with small front gardens and low walls. New development, Elm Court (west side), has shortened the rear plots of High Street properties. Small re-development of 'St Albans' is in-keeping with the street surroundings. Sub-division of a larger plot at Grove End with new build and electric gates.
- Cowper Road: straight, ascending to meet Charles Street. The buildings and plot layout at the High Street end (north of Torrington Road) has been much altered and re-developed, including alterations to rear plots of High Street properties leading to large open car parking areas. Some nineteenth century housing and a former Wesleyan Methodist Church (1923) survive facing the road with low brick walls and small front gardens. Small re-development of terrace-style housing (east side) has sub-divided a larger plot but is in-keeping with the surroundings.
- Park View Road: straight, ascending to meet Charles Street. The modern buildings at the entrance (High Street properties) and developments in their rear plots have both altered their earlier boundary layout. The early twentieth century former RC Chapel (no. 1) and semi-detached villa-style and detached housing (south end, west side) remain along with their boundaries. The demolition of the school and erection of Park View Court and car park set back from the road is uncharacteristic of the street character.
- Boxwell Road: straight, ascending to meet Charles Street. Most of the nineteenth and early twentieth century houses towards Charles Street face the street front with small gardens and low walls (east side and part of the west side). Later detached twentieth century houses closer to the High Street (east side) are in larger plots, are more centrally positioned and stand back from the street behind low brick walls. Some of these stand in a former rear plot of a High Street property.
- Kitsbury Road: straight, gently ascending to meet Charles Street. Much of the housing is nineteenth and early twentieth century facing the street front behind small gardens and low walls. Some of the later 1930s housing towards the High Street (north) was built on the Poor Law Institution land and open land; these boundaries survive.

North side

- Londrina Terrace: pedestrian route between High Street buildings with access over a foot bridge across the Grand Union Canal. A 1930s secluded group of six joined houses at a right angle to the canal and set in the mid-plot position facing east. Modern development to rear (Londrina Court) and in front on the High Street.
- Robertson Road: modern very straight road with a wide aspect leading into a recent housing development comprising a crossroad and curving cul-de-sacs (McDougall Road and Cooper Way). Leads down to the canal. Various building types including short terraces (three or four properties), townhouses (up to eight properties), groups of adjoining semi-detached houses (four properties) and

blocks of flats (Augustus Smith House; Thomas Bourne House; Glassmill House). Many parking bays and fore courts throughout the development, some en-block garaging. Most townhouses have integral ground floor garages. There are large open views across the street layout over parking areas. Most properties face onto the street front, apart from those on Coopers Way and also the properties facing towards the canal. All house-types have rear garden plots.

- Holliday Street: narrow, straight, descending to meet Chapel Street / Ravens Lane and the River Bulbourne. Mostly nineteenth century terraced houses or semi-detached houses face the street front with rear garden plots of different lengths. Rear of Cooper House (east side) backs directly onto street. Rear plots of Ravens Lane terraced housing have rear brick wall boundaries and outbuildings (west side). At the north end is a modern six block flat development, Waterside, facing the canal over the River Bulbourne with parking bays. A series of older en-block garaging lies to the south. New Provident Place is a modern terraced development facing towards the canal and is accessed between houses (by no. 13 Holliday Street) occupying land with a former industrial use (saw mill).
- Manor Street: narrow, straight, descending to meet Chapel Street. A mixture of nineteenth century terraces and detached houses face the street front with very small front gardens and larger rear plots, together with a long row of modern flats with a large interior courtyard for parking. Construction work for housing is underway (small groups of semi-detached houses facing the street front and road through to main off-street development).
- Chapel Street: partially curved street running east to west joining Castle Street to Ravens Lane. Mostly nineteenth century semi-detached and detached houses, some forming a row of four properties face the street front with very small front gardens and larger rear plots (especially those on the north side). The street includes a small industrial unit and attached scout hut (the scout hut is located within a former maltings on the corner of Bridge Street) and a Victorian school, now a house (12A Chapel Street). A modern mews development, Castle Mews, stands in a formerly open rear plot (the garden of a demolished house located off Manor Street). Masons Yard is a small development situated in the rear plots between 4 and 5 Chapel Street. Larger plots line the south side.
- Bridge Street: very narrow, straight to the River Bulbourne and Bridge Court new development. Lined by nineteenth century houses mostly in groups of three or four, facing onto the street with rear garden plots. The Scout hut (a former maltings) extends along Bridge Street up to the corner with Chapel Street.
- Mill Street & Water Lane & The Wilderness: joins Castle Street to Water Lane car park and comprises mostly school buildings of various periods that stand back from the roadside in a single large plot on each side of the street; most buildings face the street. At its south end lies Adelbert House that faces southwest along the roadside. The modern flats and offices, Berkley Court and Amersham House, form the end of Mill Street and Greenfield Road. A workshop building runs along the south side of Mill Street on the corner plot by The Wilderness into the car park (part of the school site). Beyond is a boundary wall behind which stand other buildings, also belonging to the school. The plots of The Wilderness and car park are now virtually one area, but had formerly been divided up into smaller plots with buildings and gas works. Water Lane is a very narrow lane between buildings leading from the High Street to the car park and led to the water works. Water Lane car park is a wide open space that backs onto modern High Street properties, offices, water works, flats and school

buildings. A former burial ground lies to the east of The Wilderness, now within Berkhamsted Collegiate School (Wilson House).

- Greenfield Road: is a 1920s / 30s development to reach the water works. It runs east from Lower Kings Road to Berkley Court and Water Lane car park. On the south side is the River Bulbourne with access to the large plots of the pump house and 'Waterworks Bungalow', and rear plots of properties on Lower Kings Road. The 'Waterworks Bungalow' lies close to the edge of its corner plot, with a garden to the side and rear. A former burial ground lies on the north side of Greenfield Road (now under Berkley Court).
- St. John's Well Lane: straight, wide but short road descending to the River Bulbourne and canal before turning to the east into St. Johns' Well Lane a car park and onto the rear of Waitrose supermarket (Lower Kings Road car park). The east side was the site of a former nineteenth century nursery, but is now occupied by two large modern buildings on one large plot; the Royal Mail Offices, on the High Street and to the rear the Telephone Exchange. On the west side are the rear gardens on houses on the High Street, the car park of St. John's Veterinary Surgery and St John's Well Court (flats with a surrounding car park). At the end of the road, beyond the existing conservation area boundary, is a footpath that leads to a narrow bridge over the River Bulbourne to a tow path by the canal.
- Park Street: straight, descending down to the Sacred Heart Church, the River Bulbourne and the canal. Mostly nineteenth century semi-detached houses that form a row of terraces facing the street front with very small front gardens and larger rear plots (east side). Some new development (modern houses), older style townhouses with integral ground floor garages (possibly 1970s). Small industrial unit / offices (east side) attached to the corner property, 352 High Street.

Area 2

- 4.13 George Street developed in a long but narrow plot that runs alongside the north bank of the canal downstream from where Ravens Lane / Gravel Path cross the bridge near The Boat public house. This gave rise to the construction of numerous small houses on narrow but long-shaped plots and mainly in terrace rows and predominantly on the north side of the street. As these developments progressed farther to the east, Cambridge Terrace was built as a short street leading off to the north with Little Bridge Road, William Street and Bedford Street also as short streets to the south in the direction of the canal's banks.
- 4.14 Although the general axis was west-east, the same area of terraces was crossed by short cuts consisting of the path down to the canal near the Rising Sun and its lock as well as another short cut that emerges from between houses mid-way along the length of George Street to allow access to Ellesmere Road and New Street. The permeability of the area is increased due to these alleys that also include private access ways to rear gardens from the street and the rear access to gardens that leads off from Paxton Road.
- 4.15 Ellesmere Road also grew from west to east to produce terrace housing of the same type but facing north towards the railway and with New Street and Paxton Road as short streets leading off at right-angles. The railway is situated opposite the fronts of the Ellesmere Road properties and the road is therefore built up on one side only. Extensions that have been made at the rear of houses in Ellesmere Road and roof-lights added to rear roof slopes in some properties may be viewed across the rear gardens from Paxton Road and from the end of George Street. Such extensions might give rise to concerns about the development pressures here causing householders to enlarge their properties at a cost to original character.

- 4.16 Ellesmere Road contains at its far end from New Street onwards the only significant number of front boundaries within this sub-area. They consist of low brick walls or picket fences, hedges or a few instances of railings and there are no examples of these small front areas being used for car hard-standings.
- 4.17 Across Gravel Path from Ellesmere Road is another area of mainly terrace housing. Station Road faces on to the railway to give another one-sided street with the exception of one semi-detached red brick house immediately next to the line. The rest of the houses stand on narrow but very long plots that stretch down to the towpath of the canal giving large rear gardens with a pleasant aspect on to the open space of the canal's banks.
- 4.18 Contrasting with the west-east orientations described above, the central part of Area 2 is characterised by streets laid out on an axis that runs north-south. These routes are believed to be the descendants of historic approaches to the castle as used since the middle ages to join up the parish church and High Street with the feudal castle. When the bridges across the Bulbourne and the canal were constructed these also were placed on a North-South axis. Today, Mill Street and Castle Street join up at their far end from the town centre to cross the canal bridge that is placed near to the station's former and current sites. Only the later bridge, the nineteenth century Lower Kings Road example, varies from this pattern as it crosses the canal at an oblique angle enabling it to align with the road that approaches the central High Street crossing.
- 4.19 The railway is crossed by bridges at Gravel Path and Ivy House Lane but a tunnel passes beneath the tracks near the station and at the narrower New Road tunnel that leads to the castle perimeter.
- 4.20 At the western end of Area 2 another route exists in the form of the footpath extension to St. John's Well Lane that crosses the watercress beds and joins up to the canal towpath. The towpath itself is a major route for pedestrians and cyclists interconnecting numerous parts of Area 2. The towpath with its many ramps and steps has immense significance in contributing to the character of the town along its entire length.

Area 3

- 4.21 This area lies to the south of the High Street from which generally straight residential streets running roughly north-south, ascend the valley side and meet Charles Street which runs parallel to the High Street. Cross Oak Road and Kitsbury Road cross Charles Street and continue uphill. Other roads start at Charles Street. The nineteenth / early twentieth century road layout is a loose grid layout with roads generally at right angles. That it is not entirely regular reflects the fact that parcels of land for development were not all available at the same time. Earlier field boundaries (e.g. west of Shrublands Avenue and Charles Street alignment) provided some structure to the layout.
- Kings Road was a route pre-existing the Victorian housing development south of the town (see the 1841 Tithe Map). It follows a curving line away from the High Street with extensive views to the east. Doctor's Commons Road later followed its line. The latter is notably sloping so that houses on the west side are at higher level than buildings on its east side.
 - Charles Street is the main east-west linking road between the north-south streets. Consequently, it has many junctions and the treatment of each segment in terms of building form is important. It affords extensive views northward across the High Street and onto the valley slope beyond. From some positions the roofs and rears of houses on the streets joining Charles Street are readily visible.
 - Cowper Road rises to meet Charles Street. Nightingale Lodge disrupts the surrounding earlier housing layout but the corners of the junction with Torrington Road retain period buildings.

- Montague Road comprises both consistent terraces and beyond these, individual larger houses. The southern end is cut across by the old Angle Place path.
- Park View Road. Park View Court has been built on what was previously garden land. Earlier pairs and detached buildings are retained and inter war houses were erected on plots on the south east side.
- North Road was developed with terraces to the northern end of the road and larger single houses to the south as far as The Pines. With the addition of an access road to Pine Close, it retains these buildings and layout and the Angle Place footpath opening.
- Boxwell Road curiously features a curve at the southern end with Charles Street. It retains original terraces though at the north eastern end where land remained open for many years several incongruous bungalows have been built.
- Kitsbury Road is straight and ascends to cross Charles Street before continuing uphill. 1930s housing towards the High Street was built where earlier, a workhouse stood. The Charles Street junction is marked by an early three storey block with shops (and former Post Office) at ground floor. This is one of the earliest components of the Charles Street area.
- Middle Road is also an early feature and was a back road with cottages, stables or stores / workshops. This character remains, some buildings having been converted to dwellings, and with garages to the northern end.
- Cross Oak Road formerly Gilhams Lane, was initially (up to the 1898 Ordnance Survey map) only built up on the north eastern side up to about no. 93. Subsequent development was with larger individual and pairs of houses. Rothesay Court at the Charles Street junction has replaced two large houses on Shrublands Road. At the southern end, the pairs of houses either side of the Greenway junction are a gateway feature to this pre-1925 development.
- Shrublands Avenue is the straightest and most regular of the streets in this area. Its less regular, western back boundary follows an old lane. There are runs of several designs of two-storey terraced houses whose roofs and chimney scapes provide a strong feature along the skyline.