

3. CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISALS AND POLICY STATEMENTS

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(I) BERKHAMSTED

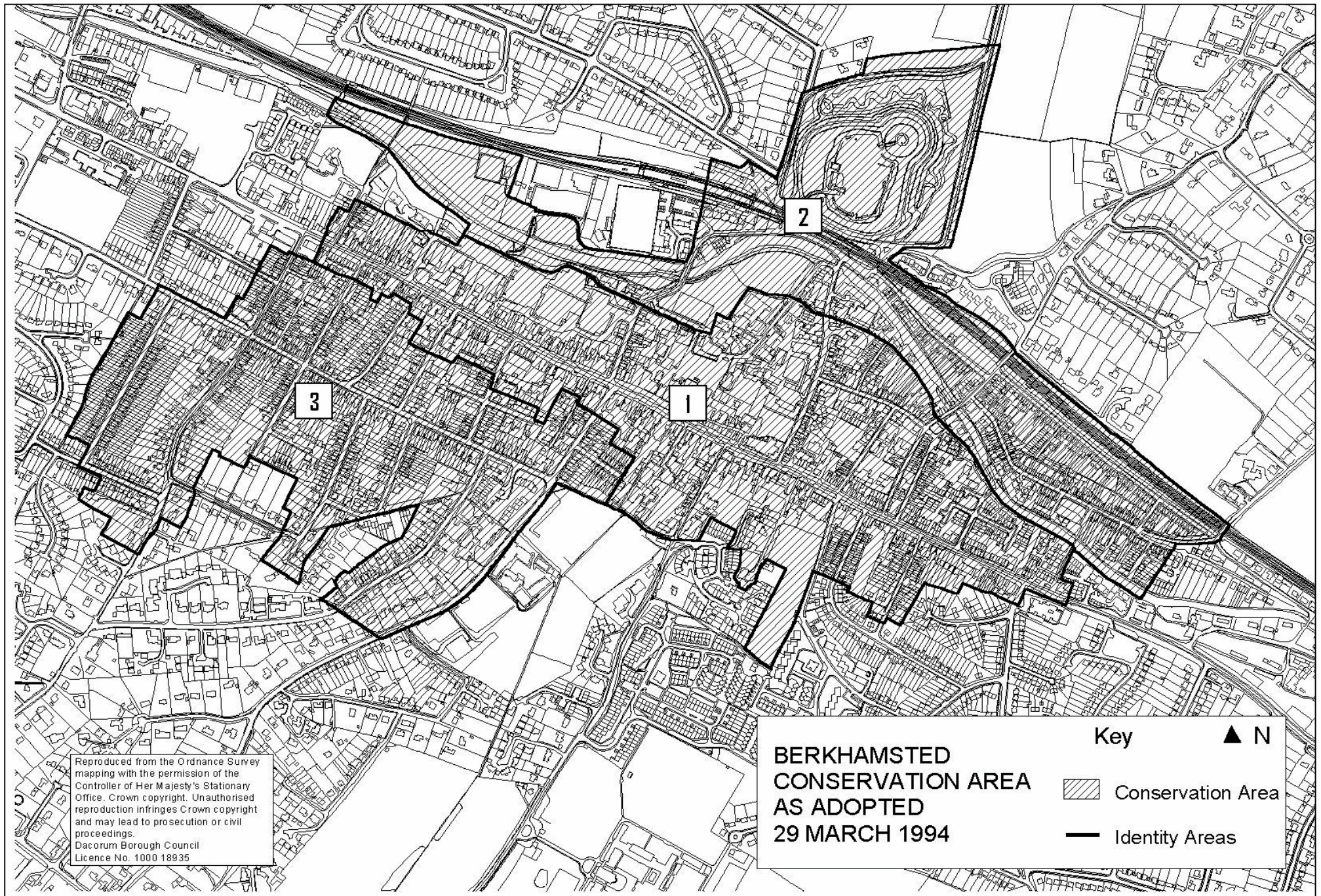
POLICY B1 CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER AND POLICY

Within the Berkhamsted Conservation Area planning powers will be applied in accordance with the guidelines established by the Berkhamsted Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Conservation Area Policy, (Annex 1).

POLICY B2 CONTROL OF PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS TO DWELLINGS IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

Application of appropriate powers (including Article 4 Directions) controlling minor permitted development alterations to residential properties within the conservation area will be investigated through the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and English Heritage. Priority will be given to achieving control and thus environmental improvements in the following streets:

- (i) Chapel Street, Castle Street and Manor Street (boundary to be defined by detailed study); and**
- (ii) Charles Street area (boundary to be defined by detailed study).**



ANNEX 1: BERKHAMSTED CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND POLICY STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Basis of Statement

- 1.1.1 In designating a conservation area attention must be paid to identifying features which contribute positively to the area and make it distinctive or special. This process is normally termed character appraisal; though in fact it involves appraisal of both the appearance and character. As part of appraisal particular features which are harmful to the appearance or character of the area must be identified.
- 1.1.2 Appearance is readily defined. It is the overall visual impression created by topography and the layout, design, materials and colours of buildings within it. Character is however difficult to define. It is more than just the visual appearance of a group of buildings, and relates instead to the juxtaposition of land uses, activities and physical characteristics which together create a feeling of place.
- 1.1.3 By defining attributes which contribute to and detract from the appearance and character of the conservation area, qualitative assessment of new proposals by local planning authority can be made more rationally and openly, and thus be better understood by applicants for planning permission and the general public.
- 1.1.4 *Character appraisal* provides a sound basis for identifying detailed area *specific problems and opportunities*, and then formulating *conservation policies*. These headings are therefore used to structure the policy statement.

1.2 Identity Areas

- 1.2.1 Due to the size and complexity of the conservation area it has been divided into three 'Identity Areas' for the purposes of character appraisal of problems and opportunities, subsequent analysis and policy formulation.
- 1.2.2 The three identity areas are:
- High Street
 - Grand Union Canal
 - Charles Street

Each area has its own distinctive characteristics as part of the overall conservation area.

1.3 Boundaries

- 1.3.1 Map 1 shows the boundary of the whole conservation area and the identity areas referred to in this statement. The old conservation area boundary (1968 designation) is also shown.

1.4 General Conservation Approach

- 1.4.1 This is defined in Policies 120 and 121 (in Part 3 of the Plan) and Environmental Guidelines (Supplementary Planning Guidance). The purpose of this policy statement is to add complementary policies addressing the specifics of conservation in Berkhamsted.

2. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The present day townscape of Berkhamsted is inextricably linked with the importance and development of the castle and of transport links in the form of Akeman Street, the canal and the London to Birmingham Railway, all of which follow the valley of the River Bulbourne.
- 2.2 There is evidence of extensive Iron Age occupation spread along the valley of the River Bulbourne.
- 2.3 Akeman Street, part of which became High Street, was an important Roman Road which ran along the valley and it is possible that a Roman settlement may have existed along side it. Remains have been found of a Roman building to the north of the castle.
- 2.4 Not much is known of Saxon Berkhamsted, but it is likely that a settlement existed.
- 2.5 After the Battle of Hastings in 1066 the Norman forces travelled over the Chilterns and camped at Berkhamsted. Shortly before Christmas, the Saxons came out of London and swore their loyalty to William the Conqueror at Berkhamsted, in return for the promise of just government. William granted Berkhamsted and the surrounding manors to his half brother Robert, Count of Mortain. It was he who commenced work on the motte and bailey of the castle and constructed the first timber buildings. The earliest stone structures were probably constructed in the period 1155 to 1165 when Thomas A Becket was overlord of the castle. In its final form the castle consisted of an impressive complex of flint buildings and fortifications, the remains of which can still be seen today. Its importance has been recognised by its designation as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 2.6 Berkhamsted was an important medieval borough and was given a Royal Charter which decreed that no other market town was to be set up within eleven miles.
- 2.7 In the 16th Century, the mansion of Berkhamsted Place was built on the hill to the north of Berkhamsted. Into its building went faced stone

and flints from the castle, which Sir Edward Carey held from his queen, Elizabeth I, for the rent of one red rose, payable on the feast of St John the Baptist.

- 2.8 In 1762, the Sparrows Herne Trust was formed and used the turnpike systems to improve the maintenance of the roads and ease transport from Bushey, through Watford, Berkhamsted and Tring and on to the outskirts of Aylesbury.
- 2.9 As the 17th Century advanced, brewing, which has largely been a domestic industry, became an important feature of Berkhamsted's economy. The expansion of coach travel and improvements to road maintenance, as a result of the turnpike system, led to the growth of hostelries, such as the King's Arms.
- 2.10 In the 18th and 19th centuries the timber industry flourished around Berkhamsted, famous for the supply of tent poles and other equipment for the Crimean war forces. Straw plaiting and lace-making were crafts which had been practised for a considerable period as cottage industries, but in the early 19th century, straw plaiting became a significant feature of the local economy and lace-making declined.
- 2.11 Along the river and canal, conditions favoured the cultivation of water cress beds, evidence of which still exist.
- 2.12 The Grand Junction Canal Company was formed in 1793 to link the Thames with canals in the Midlands. By 1798 the Grand Junction Canal was open from Brentford to Berkhamsted and was complete to Braunston on the Oxford Canal by 1805. The route favoured Berkhamsted as it, in effect, bypassed Hemel Hempstead and made the transportation of corn and timber much easier. The new form of transport meant that, for the first time, coal could be brought into the area in large quantities. Also dung, night soil and street sweepings were brought out of London for use on local farms and on the return journey, hay and straw were sent back to London, thus relieving the roads of heavy wagon traffic. The canal was successful and continued to flourish for many years but, with the advent of the railways, was unable to compete. In 1929 the controlling company amalgamated with the Grand Union Canal Company in an attempt to economise and as a result of this the canal was re-named. Improvements were made but decline had set in. In 1948 the waterways were nationalised and twenty years later the Grand Union Canal was classified a 'cruising' canal as opposed to a commercial waterway.
- 2.13 By 1801, Berkhamsted was still a small town with most of the 1,690 inhabitants of the parish of St Peter's living in High Street, Castle Street, Mill Street, Water End and Frithsden. The map of Berkhamsted, produced by Dury and Andrews as part of the County Survey in 1766, gives some indication of the size of the town before

the larger increases in population during the construction of the railway to London between 1831 and 1841. By 1851, the population had risen to 3,395.

- 2.14 The first large scale development of artisans' dwellings commenced in 1851. The Pilkington Manor Estate, east of Castle Street, was sold and the area developed with streets of terraced cottages. This district also developed as an industrial area with chemical works and saw mills, including the buildings between Manor Street and Ravens Lane where Cooper's world famous sheep dip was produced.
- 2.15 The original Elizabethan style railway station, which had no platforms, was replaced in 1875 by the present station buildings. At the same time, a fourth track and extensive sidings were added, making further expansion of the local economy possible.
- 2.16 By the late 1890's the population in the Parish of St Peter's was triple that of the 1801 figure and continued to grow past the turn of the century. This led to the development of land for housing throughout the Victorian and into the Edwardian period, mainly to the south of High Street and on the wedge between the Grand Union Canal and the railway.
- 2.17 In 1909, the area of Sunnyside was included within the Urban District Council of Berkhamsted. Despite this, the number of houses in the Urban District remained almost static for the first twenty years of this century. In 1935 Northchurch was also included in the Urban District, but another significant increase in population did not occur until the development of the Council estates at Gossoms End, Swing Gate Lane and Highfield.
- 2.18 After the sale of the Ashridge estate, before the Second World War, building also started on the north side of the railway.
- 2.19 By 1971, the population of Berkhamsted had grown to 15,400.
- 2.20 The town of Berkhamsted, including the urban area of Northchurch, is now surrounded by the Metropolitan Green Belt where there is a presumption against building development. Although the expansion of Berkhamsted has been limited since the designation of Green Belt around it, infilling and the redevelopment of sites within the town centre and residential areas have continued to take place, applying increasing pressure upon the character of the historic town of Berkhamsted.
- 2.21 With the re-emergence of road traffic as the primary method of transportation in this century, there has been a decline in the use of the railways for the transportation of goods, materials and people. This has resulted in a large number of cars and heavy lorries lumbering through High Street. Unlike in previous centuries this traffic makes little contribution to the prosperity of the local population. The congestion and new forms of pollution it has caused have been harmful to the character of Berkhamsted and the quality of

its environment. The new road, constructed in 1993 to bypass Berkhamsted, alleviates some of the congestion and pollution. It will also cut Berkhamsted off from the main route which was responsible for its existence, leaving High Street disconnected from its historical origins.

3. OVERALL CHARACTER APPRAISAL

- 3.1 Berkhamsted is a provincial market town containing areas of varying character and appearance. The long High Street is its spine, with narrow medieval burgage plots and roads running at right angles to it down to the river and up the steep valley side which encloses the town to the south. The railway line forms a physical boundary to the north of the historic town centre, with only the castle and some modern housing beyond. The centre of the town contains a mixture of commercial and residential buildings and uses and the busy centre contrasts with the tranquillity of the areas around the castle, the canal and the quieter Victorian and Edwardian residential areas on the hillside. Trees are an important feature of Berkhamsted both along High Street and in some of the residential areas, as are the views of open countryside which can be gained from a number of vantage points within the town. There are few open spaces within Berkhamsted and where they do exist they are precious. The Moor is of particular importance in terms of its contribution to the setting of the canal.
- 3.2 There are a significant number of buildings along High Street which contain remains of timber framed buildings. Not surprisingly, the majority of Berkhamsted's sixty-nine listed buildings are in High Street and the medieval core of the town. One is Grade I, four are Grade II*, fifty-nine are Grade II and the remaining five are churches which are either Grade A, B or C.

4. HIGH STREET IDENTITY AREA

- 4.1 Character Appraisal and Identification of Problems and Opportunities**
- 4.1.1 The High Street Identity Area incorporates the commercial centre of the town which is interspersed with residential areas of varying size. This identity area has been drawn using the River Bulbourne as its northern boundary and includes the town's medieval core and burgage plots to both the north and south of High Street, acknowledging their historical and archaeological importance. High Street follows the valley of the River Bulbourne and is, therefore, relatively flat, but to the south of High Street, the land immediately slopes steeply upward creating a feeling of enclosure and an intimacy with the surrounding countryside.

- 4.1.2 High Street is made up of buildings which span eight centuries, from the 13th century Church of St Peter to the present day. The buildings are in many different styles including gothic, classical and pseudo-Elizabethan. There is a wealth of timber-framed buildings along High Street which date from the 17th century and earlier, but many have been disguised by later re-facings. Two examples are 125 and 152 High Street, neither of which are at present listed. Another example is 207 to 209 High Street, which was recently rebuilt. This building contains remnants of a crown post roof structure, a unique survival of this form of construction in Berkhamsted, which was carefully dismantled, preserved and reconstructed.
- 4.1.3 Berkhamsted School occupies a large site in the identity area, between Castle Street and Mill Street, behind the Church of St Peter, and many of its buildings, including the Grade I listed Tudor hall, are of great architectural and historic interest. The hall was built by John Incent, lawyer and Dean of St Paul's, after obtaining permission from Henry VIII in 1544, to build it as a school for 144 pupils. Funds from the school were taken to form a girls school which opened in 1888 with 14 pupils, at 222 High Street. This school moved to its present site in Kings Road in 1962.
- 4.1.4 A large palette of walling materials can be found within the Identity Area including painted smooth render, red, brown, buff and painted brickwork. In addition, flint masonry and stone dressings are to be found on the Church of St Peter and exposed timber framing is found on buildings such as Dean Incent's house in High Street.
- 4.1.5 Despite the variety of suitable materials available, many of the recent buildings within this area have been constructed of modern wire cut and drag-faced bricks of inappropriate colour, texture or both.
- 4.1.6 Until the arrival of slate, brought by canal, the traditional roofing material in this area was clay peg-tiles. The Red House, built on High Street in the 18th century, has a steeply pitched clay peg-tile roof, whilst the adjoining 19th century wing, the White House, has a lower pitched slate roof. This demonstrates the transition from clay peg-tiles to the use of slate.
- 4.1.7 Clay peg-tiles are suited to roofs with a pitch of 45 degrees, or more, whilst the arrival of slate allowed lower pitches to be accommodated. In the 19th Century, machine made plain clay tiles were generally used in place of hand made peg-tiles, and were used as an alternative to slate on steeper pitched roofs. Lead and copper are other materials that can be found, for example on the roof of the Church of St Peter, but are not common.
- 4.1.8 There are a number of examples of buildings in the identity area which have been roofed or re-roofed in unsympathetic modern

materials such as felt, artificial slate, interlocking and plain concrete tiles or modern colour coated metal sheet roofing.

- 4.1.9 Roof form is just as important as the materials with which they are covered. There are a number of relatively modern buildings within the identity area which have flat roofs and pseudo-mansard roofs which are not in keeping with the simple pitched roofs which give Berkhamsted much of its character. Roofs are particularly important due to the position of the High Street Identity Area in the bottom of the valley where it can be viewed from above.
- 4.1.10 The traditional design of windows and doors made a significant contribution to the appearance and character of individual buildings and to the area. Painted timber sash and casement windows predominate although, some 19th century metal casements and earlier metal framed leaded-light casements also survive and are historically important. There are few precedents for rooflights.
- 4.1.11 Modern materials, such as uPVC and aluminium have been used in the area, but are not in keeping with its general appearance or character. Powder coated aluminium has been used with success, for example in shopfronts to modern buildings and the windows to the new offices to the rear of 107 High Street. Stained timber is also generally out of character but can be used successfully as part of a good modern design. A good example of its use are the windows to the Social Services building in Manor Street.
- 4.1.12 Where rooflights have been used in new buildings they have invariably been harmful due to the disruption of the roof with large areas of glass. An example of this is the roof to Salter House, which also displays the use of artificial slate and drag-faced bricks, all of which are inappropriate to the character and appearance of the area. The adjacent, 269 High Street, also demonstrates the inappropriateness of both rooflights and pseudo-mansard roof forms.
- 4.1.13 There is a great variety of scale as well as design within this identity area, from the diminutive 17th century Sayer Almshouses to the impressive buildings of Berkhamsted School. Relatively tall buildings are frequently to be found sitting side by side with much lower ones. However, some modern buildings have broken the intimacy of scale of the buildings which immediately surround them. The Outspan building in High Street is one such example. Generally, buildings are set at the back edge of the footpath, but occasionally have small front yards. Notable exceptions are the listed 1930s Rex Cinema, which is set back behind a service road, and the houses, 320 to 338 High Street, which have front gardens.
- 4.1.14 The trees which exist within the footpaths along High Street provide a welcome relief to the urban environment and provide a valuable amenity.

- 4.1.15 There are some ugly gaps in the generally continuous built-up frontages in the area. One of these gaps is occupied by Startrite Tyres, on the north of High Street, which is only bridged by a galvanised mesh fence that provides no visual screening of the concrete forecourt and ugly buildings behind. Another is at the visual entrance to High Street from the east and is occupied by a forecourt for used cars. A third example is the gap between the Citizens Advice Bureau and Peaches Patio Cafe in Prince Edward Street. Only bridged by a low open metal railing, the ugly parking area, refuse bins and flat-roofed structures to the rear of the Civic Centre are exposed to full view.
- 4.1.16 There is no precise start or finish to High Street. However, the corner of Swing Gate Lane and High Street provides an identifiable start to the south-east. The forecourt site on this corner is very prominent and strongly associated with the adjacent buildings. Enhancement would be desirable.
- 4.1.17 From the west, the 19th century building on the corner of Park Street and High Street is of considerable architectural and historic interest with its rendered walls, slate roof, sash windows and charming shopfronts. 352 High Street to the west of Park Street is also a relatively attractive turn of the century building. Although the houses 320 to 338 provide a visual and functional interruption in High Street, they are themselves of architectural and historic interest. Built in the 1890s of red brick with steeply pitched slate roofs, projecting square bays and stone lintels over doors and sash windows, to a restrained but refined design they warrant inclusion in the conservation area in their own right. On the south side, the modern parade of shops, 333 to 339 High Street, are an eyesore and do not possess any architectural or historic interest. 329 High Street is a relatively attractive rendered building and the conservation area boundary justifiably includes it.
- 4.1.18 The 19th century, Old Rectory, Rectory Lane is of both architectural and historic interest and deserves to be within the conservation area. The nearby Rex Cinema on High Street, was specifically excluded from the Conservation Area when it was first designated but, in 1988, it was recognised as a building of special architectural and historic interest, when it was given the status of a Grade II listing. The cemetery to the rear of the Rex is historically important and provides an attractive open space which is valuable to the appearance and character of the area.
- 4.1.19 Although approximately 36% of the terraced houses in Victoria Road and 50% of those in Highfield Road have had their original windows replaced, there is still a sense of character in these streets. This is partly due to their steeply climbing site. 47 Highfield Road is a Grade II listed building and number 58 is a particularly attractive detached

property, retaining much of its original charm. Although the appearance of these streets has been eroded, on balance, they still possess sufficient architectural and historic interest to warrant inclusion within the conservation area. It is also desirable that their appearance be enhanced.

- 4.1.20 Shopping is an important function of High Street and Lower Kings Road. The shopping frontage is broken in a number of places by housing, banking, building societies and estate agents, as well as by civic buildings and the Church of St Peter. This is part of the richness of Berkhamsted. A mix of uses should be encouraged. However, High Street acts as a barrier to pedestrians between the majority of the car parking provision, which is on the north side, and the uses which exist on the south side. Although the traffic lights, at the junction of High Street and Lower Kings Road, and pelican crossings help to alleviate this problem, there is still a strong feeling of separation between the two sides. The reduction in traffic along High Street, which will result on the opening of the bypass, should provide an opportunity to improve this situation.
- 4.1.21 There are some excellent examples of traditional shopfronts within the identity area, including the 19th century shopfronts to 84 to 86 High Street, and 224 High Street, which are elegant and well proportioned. In contrast, the shopfront to the Thresher Wine Shop at 88 High Street was designed in a neo-Georgian style, with bowed windows subdivided by glazing bars and is not appropriate to the design of the upper floor which is clearly from a later period. The depth of the fascia is excessive, as it does not respect the proportions of the building, and the illumination of the fascia, in the form of cowl lights is inappropriate as there is no historical precedent for this form of illumination to shopfront fascias.
- 4.1.22 There are two examples of fascias where they have been used to unite the shopfronts of buildings which are from different architectural styles and ages, to the detriment of the appearance of the buildings and the area. These are the fascias to McIlroys and Brown and Merry, the estate agents.
- 4.1.23 279 and 283 High Street provide examples of shopfronts and advertisements which are not in keeping with the general appearance and character of the area. Number 279 has a poorly designed aluminium shopfront which does not have any pilasters, cornice or corbels which would be appropriate for the building and would help to integrate the fascia within the design of the shopfront. The illuminated fascia is constructed of shiny plastic and adorned with garish poorly designed graphics. There is also an over proliferation of secondary signs, including posters in the window. Number 283 retains parts of a traditional shopfront, with pilasters, corbels and cornice. The fascia sign is integrated with the design of the shopfront. However, the overall appearance is still poor and

inappropriate, due to the pilasters being stained instead of painted, the horizontal proportion of the shop window, the bland and ugly stained plywood stallriser and fanlight over the door and the use of garish colours in the fascia advertisement and applied to the window and door.

- 4.1.24 One of the sites which best illustrates the harmful effect of an over proliferation of advertisements is that occupied by Berkhamsted Motor Co Ltd, with their fascia sign, pole sign, flags, bunting and other painted signs. This is damaging to the appearance and character of the area and is self defeating as the signs obscure each other and blur any message. The disruption of High Street with this forecourt used for the display of vehicles is itself out of character and harmful to the appearance of the area.
- 4.1.25 There are very few security shutters to shops within the area, with the notable exception of the roller shutter which was permitted on appeal to the Secretary of State at 250 High Street. However, metal or plastic roller shutters are alien and would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
- 4.1.26 The street furniture in the area is nondescript. The same components can be found in nearly every town up and down the country. There has been little attempt to provide street furniture which would be suited to the identity of Berkhamsted and help increase a sense of place. The area lacks carefully designed or selected bus shelters, signage, street lights, seating, bins and railings. The floorscape is also poor, consisting mainly of tarmac, with some areas of concrete block pavements and lacks high quality traditional surfaces. The only exception is the cobbled Church Lane.
- 4.1.27 The car parks off Lower Kings Road and to the rear of Tesco's in High Street are poorly laid out and lack high quality hard surfaces and planting. The toilet building and signage in the car park to the rear of Tesco's are also very poor and detract from the character and appearance of the area.
- 4.1.28 There are two major sites in this study area which have been redeveloped. The first is the car park off Lower Kings Road, which has been redeveloped for shopping and the second is the chemical works site occupied by Roussel Uclaf, between High Street and the canal which has been redeveloped for housing.

4.2 CONSERVATION POLICIES

4.2.1 GENERAL APPROACH

The diversity of uses, design, heights of buildings, roofscape and materials within this area all contribute to create the distinct character and appearance of this busy market town. This diversity should be maintained and encouraged, whilst targeting

resources to achieve the enhancement of buildings and elements which presently detract from the overall character and appearance of the area.

4.2.2 FLOORSCAPE AND STREET FURNITURE

The floorscape within the area is poor. A progressive programme of enhancement should be developed using materials which are sympathetic in colour and texture to the character and appearance of the area. Key sites should be selected for the use of high quality natural materials.

Well co-ordinated and designed or selected signage, bus shelters, bins, seating, street lighting and railings should be introduced to replace the existing street furniture and signage which is ugly and utilitarian. The emphasis should be on quality rather than on historicism.

4.2.3 MATERIALS AND ROOFSCAPE

The use of wire cut and drag-faced bricks, artificial slate and plain or interlocking concrete tiles, including pantiles, should be discouraged.

The use of clay-peg tiles, plain clay tiles and natural slate should be encouraged. Where a roof is already covered in one of these materials, its replacement with a substitute material will be resisted. Where changes in external appearance can be controlled, as in the case of listed buildings, commercial premises and flats, applications to use substitute materials should be refused.

The adoption of non-traditional roof forms has eroded some of the architectural importance of the area. Flat roofs, mansard and pseudo-mansard roof forms are not in keeping with the pitched roofs which predominate and which contribute to the character and appearance of the area. Proposals which incorporate these roof forms should be refused.

Unless used with great skill as part of a well designed building, the use of uPVC, powder coated aluminium or stained timber windows and doors are rarely successful and their use is harmful. The use of uPVC within the identity area should always be resisted. The use of powder coated aluminium and stained timber windows should normally be resisted, unless their use is appropriate to an existing building or can be shown to be essential as part of the design of a sympathetic, well-designed, modern building.

The common use of dummy glazing bars, placed within double glazed units to mimic traditional glazing patterns, is

inappropriate and can make an otherwise satisfactory new development discordant with its neighbours and with the character and appearance of the area. The use of windows which contain dummy glazing bars of this kind should always be resisted.

4.2.4 SHOPFRONTS, ADVERTISEMENTS AND SECURITY

The design of a new shopfront, including materials and finishes, should always take into account the age and architectural composition of the building to which it relates. If a shopfront is to be fitted in a traditional style, then it is important that it is historically accurate and appropriate to the building.

Generally, discreet modern lighting of advertisements is to be preferred to cowl lights (i.e. lighting fixed to the top of advertisements or signs with a hood-shaped fitting/attachment to direct the illumination downwards) or fluorescent lighting incorporated into the design of the fascia, as there are no historical precedents for these types of illumination. Garish colours in advertisements should be refused.

Fascias should never aim to unite shopfronts to buildings of different architectural styles and ages.

The over proliferation of signs and advertisements should be avoided.

External security shutters should be discouraged. Where appropriate, street furniture should be used to discourage ram-raiding. Stallrisers, reinforced to withstand ram-raiding and internal shutters should always be investigated as an alternative to external shutters.

4.2.5 PROTECTING THE HISTORIC CORE

High priority must be given to protecting the historic core area around the Parish Church, the School and Castle Street. This is the 'heart' of the conservation area. Floorscape, street furniture and physical traffic control measures in this area must be designed to a very high standard, and use of high quality traditional materials will be necessary. The setting of this area is capable of improvement, particularly in respect of Church Lane and the relationship to the High Street (see enhancement priority, under 4.2.7 below).

4.2.6 PROTECTING THE CHARACTER OF THE VICTORIA ROAD RESIDENTIAL AREA

This is a relatively self-contained enclave of housing closely associated with the High Street, but with a distinctive character of its own. The houses are late 19th century early 20th century closely spaced two storey terraces, with some isolated later infill. There is a strict building line with dwellings close to and fronting the footway. There is little space for public landscaping giving an urban feel and strengthening the association with the town centre. The slope of the streets and views across the valley area are an important part of the area's character. On street parking and through traffic creates congestion and clutter in the area.

New development proposals should follow the principles set out below:

- * Redevelopment of existing dwellings is not generally acceptable unless a benefit to the appearance or character of the area can be demonstrated.**
- * Infill development at a high density and at two storeys is acceptable.**
- * Small terraced buildings are encouraged.**
- * Communal parking areas are preferred.**
- * Proposals must follow the established building line.**

Development within existing plots should follow the principles set out below:

- * The conversion of dwellings into smaller residential units and flats will not normally be acceptable.**
- * Extensions to dwellings should generally be subordinate to the parent building in terms of scale and height.**

4.2.7 ENHANCEMENT PRIORITIES

- The setting of the main High Street area and the Church, School, Castle Street, Church Lane area (see 4.2.5 above).**
- Improving the appearance of details on residential properties (consideration of Article 4 Direction control and grant assistance combined with information provision).**
- Public off-street and on street parking locations should be improved by redesign of layout and introduction of practical hard and soft landscaping.**

- **Development and redevelopment sympathetic to the appearance and character of the area has been completed on the following sites:**
 - (i) **Land at rear of High Street, Lower Kings Road and St Johns Well Lane [Proposal Site S1].**
 - (ii) **Roussel Uclaf [later AgrEvo] site.**
- **Small sites with open frontages or in use for car sales forecourt display should be enhanced. Redevelopment should be considered or frontage improvements encouraged. Brick walls, normally with half round brick copings are an attractive feature of the area and could be used to improve the appearance of open frontages.**

5. GRAND UNION CANAL IDENTITY AREA

5.1 Character Appraisal and Identification of Problems and Opportunities

- 5.1.1 This identity area has the River Bulbourne as its southern boundary and embraces the castle, the Moor and the 19th Century artisans' housing between the canal and the railway.
- 5.1.2 The canal is important both historically and environmentally. Its construction had a direct influence on the prosperity and growth of Berkhamsted. The setting of the canal in the form of open spaces and associated buildings and structures is one of the environmental assets of Berkhamsted. The towpath provides a charming walk from one end of the town to the other, away from the bustle of High Street. The locks, Lock Cottage, the Castle Mill and public houses, such as the now redundant Castle, the Crystal Palace, the rebuilt Boat and the Rising Sun, provide architecturally and historically interesting punctuations along the canal, whilst the Moor and Canal Fields provide important and picturesque open space.
- 5.1.3 The rear of the site was occupied by Roussel Uclaf, and is now a modern housing development. On the northern bank, there is a redundant builder's yard, between the playground off George Street and the footbridge, which is untidy.
- 5.1.4 The buildings on the site occupied by Alsford Timber Ltd are not as harmful to the canal setting as those on the Roussel Uclaf site but they do not relate well to the canal and their bulk and blank elevations are harmful to the setting of the canal.
- 5.1.5 More scope for improvement of the setting of the canal and the River Bulbourne exists along the boundary of the car park, accessed from St Johns Well Lane, and at the household waste disposal site. Both are eyesores in an otherwise picturesque setting.

- 5.1.6 The canal is important but is partially hidden from the town. It only really reveals itself as it passes around the Moor. It is by foot or canal boat that it can be truly appreciated. The canal, its setting and the buildings and structures associated with it are, nevertheless, a proper part of the conservation area.
- 5.1.7 Without Berkhamsted Castle and its royal associations, it is doubtful that the town of Berkhamsted would ever have gained its significance and importance. It may not have existed. The historical significance of the remains of the castle are therefore, reflected in the conservation area designation. The ruins of the castle and the surrounding trees also provide a setting to the town and make a significant contribution to its character and appearance.
- 5.1.8 The railway is also of great significance due to the massive increase in wealth, building and population which it brought to Berkhamsted. Although the present station is a replacement of the original, it still possesses historical as well as architectural interest. The additional line and sidings which arrived at the same time still further enhanced Berkhamsted's chances of prosperity.
- 5.1.9 The area of artisans' dwellings contained in the wedge between the canal and the railway, are of considerable historic interest. The houses are of simple design and are generally in two-storey terraces constructed of brick with slate roofs and sash windows. The architectural interest of this area and its visual quality has however been significantly eroded. Excluding new development, 65% of the houses in Ellesmere Road have had their original sash windows replaced and 50% have had them replaced in George Street. A similar proportion of properties have had their original slate roofs replaced with either artificial slate or interlocking concrete tiles. It is clear that the enhancement of this area is both desirable and urgent and every effort should be made to prevent its appearance from being eroded further and to encourage a return to traditional timber sash windows and slate roofing.
- 5.1.10 Although some of the houses in Station Road have had their original slate roofs replaced with artificial slate, only one has had its timber sash windows replaced and their architectural integrity has generally been maintained. However, the corrugated iron fence around the yard adjacent to 3 Station Road, is not in keeping with the generally high quality of this street and the appearance of this site should be improved.
- 5.1.11 The vacant garage site, adjacent to the station, in Lower Kings Road is at present occupied by modern buildings which, due to their design and disposition on the site, are not in keeping with the character or appearance of the area. The site is important due to its prominent position and the view of the site which is gained when

crossing the bridge over the canal, as one approaches from the south.

5.2 CONSERVATION POLICIES

5.2.1 GENERAL APPROACH

Whenever and wherever possible, opportunities should be grasped for the enhancement of the canalside environment. As with all areas to be included in the conservation area, new development should seek to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. The quality of the canalside residential areas is crucial to the overall value of the conservation area. It is important to retain the character of the small scale highly packed terraced housing.

5.2.2 PROTECTING THE CHARACTER OF THE RESIDENTIAL AREA

Original late 19th/early 20th century residential design is of a simple but very high quality. Most dwellings front onto the road, many directly abut the footway on strict building lines. This makes for a very urban feel with little street landscaping. The housing is predominantly two storey. Some infill development has occurred, particularly of flats exploiting the canalside setting. Traffic flows are high on some roads. There is little off-street parking. This creates on street congestion and clutter.

New development proposals should follow the principles set out below:

- * The demolition of existing dwellings which contribute to the appearance or character of the area for residential redevelopment is not acceptable.**
- * New development by the amalgamation of rear garden areas is not encouraged, but may be acceptable where the site can be accessed from the rear of the existing garden area, and without the need for demolition of any of the existing dwellings. Backland proposals involving the puncturing of existing terraces or lines of buildings to form access roads are unacceptable.**
- * Infill proposals are acceptable where the high density pattern of development typical of the area can be maintained, the building line is followed and the bulk and mass is at the scale of adjacent and nearby development.**
- * Development should not exceed two storeys in height unless it can be demonstrated to be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area.**

- * **Alongside the Grand Union Canal, very high density, (and exceptionally up to three storey development) is acceptable where it is not injurious to the character and setting of adjacent and nearby development and it would enhance the setting of the canal.**
- * **The use of communal areas for parking is encouraged.**
- * **The loss of visually important and public and private amenity spaces to development will not be acceptable.**

Development within existing plots should follow the principles set out below:

- * **The conversion of dwellings into smaller units and flats will not normally be acceptable.**
- * **Extensions to dwellings will be expected to be subordinate to the parent building in bulk and not exceed the height of the original building.**

5.2.3 ENHANCEMENT PRIORITIES

- **Improving the appearance of detail on residential properties (consideration of Article 4 Direction control and grant assistance combined with information provision).**
- **Improving the appearance of unmade roads in the area.**
- **Canalside views of any redevelopment sites.**
- **Providing appropriate canal related facilities.**

6. CHARLES STREET IDENTITY AREA

6.1 Character Appraisal and Identification of Problems and Opportunities

6.1.1 The area to the north and south of Charles Street is mostly residential. Much of the area is steeply sloping as the land rises from High Street out of the valley. Many of the houses are in terraces built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with some elegant detached houses at the upper end of North Road and on the western side of Doctors Common Road. The upper half of Cross Oak Road is made up of mainly semi-detached properties.

6.1.2 Brickwork, dry dash render, natural slate and plain clay tiles are the materials which feature most strongly in the Charles Street Identity

Area. Many houses have had their original roof coverings replaced with artificial slate, and plain or interlocking concrete tiles. However, because of the relatively narrow width of the roads and the sloping nature of the area, the replacement of materials on the lower pitched roofs is not as critical to the character of the area as might be expected. Far more serious is the erosion to character which has taken place due to stone cladding or the painting of attractive brickwork and the replacement of timber sash windows with uPVC or aluminium.

- 6.1.3 There are some poor examples of modern development which detract from local character, particularly flatted infill.
- 6.1.4 Most of the houses in the area have small front yards or gardens behind low brick walls but do not have any scope for off-street parking. Where off-street parking has been achieved in the form of integral garages in extensions, these have not been successful as they are not part of the character of the area.
- 6.1.5 The houses on the eastern side of Doctors Common Road are modern and are not of architectural or historic interest. This also applies to the modern developments on the corner of Doctors Common Road and Charles Street, and to Ilex Court at the top of Montague Road which are particularly out of keeping with the character of the area.
- 6.1.6 There are some substantial and attractive detached houses and buildings on the western side of Kings Road, which is an important and historic route into Berkhamsted. The footpath to the south of these houses, linking Kings Road and Graemesdyke Road is also important to the character of the area and provides a defined boundary for the conservation area. Clarence Road and the Victoria Church of England School are integrated with the centre of the town and provide a part of the transition from central area to early suburbs.

6.2 CONSERVATION POLICIES

6.2.1 GENERAL APPROACH

This is an area of diverse residential appearance and character which is gradually changing as a result of infill, redevelopment pressures and the cumulative affects of alteration to building details. These changes need to be controlled in order to conserve the southern suburban context for the central areas. This identity area divides into two main parts, each of a somewhat different character, see paras 6.2.5 and 6.2.6 below.

6.2.2 MATERIALS

New development should be sympathetic to its neighbours. Materials are an essential part of this process and should be carefully vetted.

The use of wire cut and drag-faced bricks, artificial slate and plain or interlocking concrete tiles, including pantiles, should be resisted within this area.

Window and door replacement with uPVC or aluminium should be discouraged. This process has by far the greatest impact on the character of the area.

Greater control needs to be combined with education to encourage and argue the case for the repair of windows or the use of sympathetic replacements.

Stone cladding now requires planning permission and should always be refused in this area.

Painting of attractive and good quality brickwork should be discouraged. Often the motivation behind painting is to alleviate damp penetration through solid brick walls. However, this can often be overcome by the careful control of heating and the provision of adequate ventilation. In many cases, condensation is more of a problem than damp penetration and this can be worsened by the application of paints which are impervious to water vapour.

6.2.3 BOUNDARY TREATMENT

Generally, boundaries adjacent to roads should be constructed as brick walls, preferably with a brick coping. Close boarded timber fences are to be preferred to interwoven timber fence panels, but should only be used in less prominent locations.

6.2.4 PARKING AND GARAGING

Integral garages are not a characteristic of this area. They should only be permitted in exceptional cases, especially if adjoining a terraced property.

New buildings should respect the building line of existing development and car parking should either be hidden behind buildings or well screened from view. Sight lines, in accordance with standards, are rarely achievable in this type of area and should be relaxed if a satisfactory development can be achieved by doing so.

6.2.5 PROTECTING THE CHARACTER OF THE CORE AREA - SHRUBLANDS AVENUE/ROAD, GREENWAY, KITSBURY ROAD, MIDDLE ROAD, BOXWELL ROAD, NORTH ROAD, PARK VIEW, MONTAGUE ROAD, COWPER ROAD, CLARENCE ROAD, CROSS OAK ROAD (NORTHERN END)

Original development in the area is early 20th century, mainly terraced and two storey. The density is high to medium but reduces to the south where the identity area begins to change character (see 6.2.6). The almost grid iron road pattern on the sloping valley side is a predominant feature. Overall density is actually lower than suggested by character due to the large gardens hidden behind the terraces. The terraces are built close to the streets on a tight building line with limited space for frontage landscaping. There are interesting differences in terrace styles. Recent infill development pressures have begun to change the character of the area, but its essential qualities remain. On street parking and congestion affect the northern points of the area.

New development proposals should follow the principles set out below:

- * Development by the amalgamation of rear garden areas is not acceptable.
- * Infilling proposals will be acceptable if they are compatible with the layout, pattern, density and scale of adjacent development.
- * Two storey development with gardens front and rear is encouraged, although in terms of height, a third floor in the form of dormer windows in the roof space will be acceptable.
- * In redevelopment proposals, medium to high density terraced or semi-detached proposals are acceptable.
- * Large scale bulky development of flats are not encouraged.
- * The building line must be maintained.

Development within existing plots should follow the principles set out below:

- * Extensions to dwellings will be expected to complement the parent building in terms of its design features and architectural style. They should also be subordinate in bulk and general scale and not exceed the height of the original building.

6.2.6 PROTECTING THE CHARACTER OF THE SOUTHERN FRINGES OF THE AREA - KINGS ROAD, DOCTORS COMMON ROAD (SOUTHERN END)

This area is characterised by lower densities and a variety of large interesting, turn of the century houses, laid out in informal style in well landscaped settings. There is a strong suburban feel marking the real edge of older Berkhamsted. Mature planting and spaciousness add to the quality of the environment. There is adequate space within plots for off-street parking. The large plots can be subject to redevelopment pressures.

New development proposals should follow the principles set out below:

- * Loss of existing buildings of architectural character to redevelopment is not normally acceptable.**
- * A low density must be maintained throughout.**
- * Wide spacing should be provided between dwellings.**
- * All redevelopment and infill schemes should retain existing planting where possible and supplement it where necessary in order to achieve a densely planted environment.**
- * Innovation in design is acceptable throughout: new dwellings are not required to match or complement the designs of adjacent or nearby development.**
- * Parking provision should be made within the curtilage of each individual dwelling.**
- * Two storey detached houses with gardens front and rear are encouraged.**
- * Landscaping to the roadside frontage is encouraged.**
- * The conversion of buildings to flats is encouraged where landscaping provision can be retained or improved.**
- * The use of hard kerbing materials in roads or parts of roads where an unkerbed grass verge exists is discouraged.**

6.2.7 ENHANCEMENT PRIORITY

- Improving the appearance of detail on residential properties (consideration of Article 4 Direction control and grant assistance combined with information provision).**

7. DEALING WITH THE CAR IN THE RESIDENTIAL PARTS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

On street parking is one of the problems in the residential area surrounding the town centre which cannot be easily addressed. To solve the problem would inevitably cause more harm to the character and appearance of the area than the on street parking. New development should seek to follow the existing building line and where appropriate, sight lines to new accesses should be relaxed in order that a development which is sympathetic to the character and appearance of an area can be achieved. Where appropriate, flexible application of the car parking guidelines (ref Section 6 : Environmental Guidelines in Part 5 of the plan) will be considered if this would favour conservation aims. In order to compensate for the reduction in normal highway standards, and to improve highway safety generally, well designed physical measures to reduce the speed of traffic in residential area should be considered.