

CHRISTCHURCH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



Reading Borough Council

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CHRISTCHURCH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the appraisal

This appraisal seeks to record and analyse the various features which give the Christchurch Conservation Area its special architectural and historic interest. The area's buildings and spaces are noted and described, and marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map (Appendix 1) along with listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit, significant trees and spaces, and important views into and out of the conservation area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced," as required by legislation.

This appraisal builds upon national policy, as set out in *PPS5 - Planning for the Historic Environment - and associated guidance* and local policy, as set out in the *Reading Borough Local Plan 1991-2006*. It provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Christchurch Conservation Area can be assessed. It also forms a basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals for the area.

This appraisal follows the suggested format contained in Appendix 2 of the English Heritage document "Guidance on conservation area appraisals," August 2005.

1.2 Summary of special interest

The Christchurch Conservation Area comprises a tightly drawn, essentially Victorian/Edwardian suburb of Reading, loosely centered on Christchurch itself, a Grade II* listed building. It has street frontages to Christchurch Road which runs east-west to the north of the area, and the north side of the parallel Christchurch Gardens to the south of the area, together with the north-south frontages of Vicarage Road, Glebe Road and the east side of Basingstoke Road which link them. Small portions of Sutherlands Avenue and the southern end of Kendrick Road on the north side of Christchurch Road also fall within the area. The recently designated Kendrick Conservation Area lies just to the north of the Christchurch Conservation Area and, nearby to the east along Christchurch Road, lie The Mount and Redlands Conservation Areas. The immediate area, therefore, has a rich architectural and historical heritage.

The boundaries of the area are indicated on the Appraisal Map appended to this report. It was formally designated on 13 November 1987, following a period of public consultation, which resulted in the amendment of the originally proposed boundary in a number of areas. Firstly, the Planning Committee meeting of 11

September 1987, which approved the Conservation Area for public consultation, requested the addition of 2-14 Christchurch Road (ostensibly for their group value), as a result of which it was decided that the remainder of the street block of which they formed part, i.e. 3-19 Christchurch Gardens and 2-14 Glebe Road (should also be added, as these had equal, if not greater architectural and visual merit. Secondly, on the advice of the Council's then Conservation Advisor, numbers 117 and 119 Kendrick Road were also included. Finally, as a result of the public consultation itself, numbers 43-49 Christchurch Road, a small group of Edwardian detached and semi-detached houses in plain red brick with some interesting detailing/ornamentation were added because of the value of the group.



43-47 Christchurch Road

Incidentally, other properties were nominated for inclusion, including properties on the east side of Glebe Road and its corner with Christchurch Gardens (which would have essentially “squared off” the area), but these were considered to be modern houses and bungalows of no particular merit in conservation area terms. 11 Glebe Road, the corner property, was also excluded because its architectural merits were marred by “pebble dash” on all its elevations. 12 Christchurch Gardens, albeit a large late Victorian house, was also excluded because it was considered to be rather plain in appearance, and lacking in the architectural, visual and decorative qualities of similar sized properties in Christchurch Road. A

case was also made for including the small enclave of cottages at “Two Ways” and 1 and 3 Vicarage Road.

There was therefore some debate about the delineation of the boundaries of the Christchurch Conservation Area, which in itself raised (and still raises) an issue about whether these boundaries fitted the concept that new Conservation Areas, i.e. those designated after the Planning Committee resolution of 20 February 1987, should be small, easily definable and manageable.

Further, even after the formal designation, a request was made to add Cintra Avenue and Warwick Road to the conservation area, but it was considered that this would make the conservation area over large, difficult to manage effectively and would dilute the status of the designated conservation area (contrary to Reading Borough Council’s agreed parameters for defining conservation areas boundaries - see previous paragraph). Although quite attractive, the buildings and their settings in these streets, were also not considered to measure up to the quality within the duly designated conservation area. Indeed the principal feature of this area was (is) the avenue of trees on the eastern side of Cintra Avenue and leading to Cintra Park itself, but because these were (are) in direct Reading Borough Council control, any threat to the area was otherwise manageable.

The designated area therefore contains a wide variety of house types and architectural styles from the Victorian and Edwardian periods, the majority of which retain their original character.

1.3 The area described

The central core of the Conservation Area is the 1860s Grade II* listed Christchurch and the adjoining former Vicarage, now in use as part of the Abbey Junior School. In addition, on the north side of Christchurch Road, are a number of other listed and unlisted properties dating from the 1840s. These are briefly summarised below:

Christchurch. Grade II*. 1860s by Henry Woodyer. Early English style of course pennant rubble, with ashlar corners and tiled roof. The distinctive high steeple (164ft/50m) is a Reading landmark. Flint wall to Christchurch Road. Low wall and railings to Vicarage Road.

2 Vicarage Road. Grade II. Designed by Alfred Waterhouse. Mixture of 2 and 3 storeys in height. Of grey brick with corners and dressings of red brick, and with a tiled gabled roof. Little altered. Brick infill to garage wall not strictly in keeping. Front boundary walls retained.

1 Christchurch Road. Grade II. Early C19 two storey detached property of red brick with grey brick headers. Low brick wall and railings at front.

3-9 Christchurch Road. Grade II. Group of pre-1840 three storey and basement terraced properties. Rendered stucco and painted front elevations. Some walls and railings intact.

11-25 Christchurch Road. Grade II. Further group of pre 1840 terraced properties. Two storey. Brick elevations with slate roofs. Original distinctive features, which in part remain, are: small pane sash windows; six panel front doors (only 2 remain); radiating fanlights over doors; trellis verandah (now only to 15, 17, 23 and 25); and arrow head railings in front of 15-25.

27-33 Christchurch Road. Grade II. Group of 1840s three storey terraced properties similar to 3-9. Front and flank elevations stucco rendered and painted white, therefore highly visible in the street scene. Little in the way of adverse alteration. Interesting front doors. Frontage railings intact.



27-33 Christchurch Road

The above properties, together with part of the Abbey Junior School (number 30 Christchurch Road) are the only ones in the area which can be seen on the 1877 OS map. Numbers 35-39 Christchurch Road appear on the 1899 OS map, as do

numbers 117-119 Kendrick Road. Number 41 Christchurch Road dates from about 1910. The remaining properties in the conservation area are clearly of 20th century dates, which may partly explain why they were not originally proposed as part of the conservation area.

35-37 Christchurch Road. Not listed, but an important semi-detached pair of late Victorian Houses in grey and red brick, with steep tiled roofs. Number 35 has a prominent corner turret feature with a pointed hexagonal roof. The other main features are three large gables, projecting bays and a massive decorated chimney stack facing Christchurch Road. All windows and doors are picked out in contrasting brickwork with terracotta panels at high level on the turret and above second floor windows. Currently boarded up and something of an eyesore. No front wall. Hedge in part hides railings. Important tree cover. A site in need of attention.

39 Christchurch Road. Not listed, but highly ornate and decorative late Victorian detached house. Double fronted with projecting bays having distinctive “dutch” gables containing interesting terracotta relief panels. Multi-coloured glass panels/lights in the upper parts of the windows and around the main entrance are another particular feature. Rebuilt wall and railings at front. Important frontage trees.



39 Christchurch Road

41 Christchurch Road. This is a large, attractive two storey early 20th century detached house in the “Arts and Crafts” style. It has a circular turret on its south-east corner and two paneled gables fronting Christchurch Road. The main decorative features are timber framing with brick infill panels, and twisted “Tudor-inspired” chimney stacks. The house was built for William Poulton, a major Reading brick maker, who also made the chimneys. Low wall. No railings. Laurel hedge.

43-49 Christchurch Road. This pleasant group of buildings is marred by varied frontages. 43 has railings in front. 45 and 47 have open parking. 49 has modern wall and railings in front of frontage parking.

30 Christchurch Road (Abbey Junior School). This is very large late Victorian property, with a mix of two and three storeys. Its slate roof contrasts with the predominantly tiled roofs which surround it. The main elevation to Christchurch Road is grey brick with cream detailing and terracotta panels. Good tree cover, but Christchurch Road and corner frontage marred by close boarded fence. High brick wall with cast iron Vicarage Road sign on Vicarage Road side partially hides modern extensions at the rear of the site.

117-119 Kendrick Road are a pair of large three storey semis in grey and red brick with terracotta details. They have tall ground floor bay windows with elegant mullions with balustrade above them. Curved bays fill the recessed corners of the properties. Boundary walling matches the houses. Wall intact but gates (and southern gate piers) are in need of repair.

Sheringham Court, Kendrick Road is a relatively new building, not a particularly successful attempt at architecturally matching its neighbours. The frontage wall and gates are however retained.

4 Vicarage Road is a modern detached house built in the 1970s as a replacement Vicarage. The grounds are still enclosed by a high brick wall and it has important tree cover, including a large Wellingtonia that are important elements of the character of the conservation area.

2 Christchurch Road. Later house now subdivided into flats. Shows influence of arts and crafts style. Gate piers and railings in front.

4-14 Christchurch Road comprise a group of turn of the century three storey gable fronted houses with large bay windows on the ground floor. The front elevations are in light grey brick with red and dark grey decorative details. The centre pair have lancet shaped entrance arches, which motif is repeated in the timber entrances porches of the outer pairs. Gate piers retained at 4, 6 and 8 (4 rebuilt).

Walls and railings retained where no frontage parking. Latter tends to coincide with houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), which also tend to be exemplified with a typically unattractive plethora of refuse bins.

1, 1A Christchurch Gardens. This was the site of an electricity sub station at the time of designation, since redeveloped for two houses incorporating architectural elements reasonably in keeping with their neighbours on the same side of Christchurch Gardens. Marred by a close boarded fence on the road frontage.

3 and 5-19 Christchurch Gardens and 10-14 Glebe Road comprise a group of little altered three storey semi-detached houses (3 is detached) with fine patterned brickwork. The roofs are slate with red ridge tiles and finials on the front gables. The front chimneys have the same brick work pattern in grey and red as 4-14 Christchurch Road. Front boundary walls reasonably well maintained but quite a lot of frontage parking. Day nursery and some HMO's evident.



Christchurch Gardens

6-8 Glebe Road are slightly later houses showing some influence of the “Arts and Crafts” style.

2/4 Glebe Road is a two storey detached house in red and dark grey chequered brickwork. It has a hipped slate roof with red ridge tiles, and the eaves are supported on several courses of moulded bricks. The two storey front bays are

interesting in that they project through the eaves. Close boarded fence on frontage behind railings.

There is therefore a considerable variety, exuberance and blending of architectural styles of the Victorian/Edwardian period in close proximity in the core of the area centered on Christchurch itself, which makes the area attractive and worthy of Conservation Area status. This is reinforced by the retention of boundary walls and railings throughout the area, which together with mature tree cover, give the area its coherence.

At the time of its designation, there were no Tree Preservation Orders in the proposed conservation area. Nevertheless trees are an important element of the character and quality of the area, as can be seen on the Appraisal Map attached at Appendix 1 to this report. In declaring a conservation area however, no trees within it can be removed without prior notice being given to the local planning authority, thereby affording an opportunity if necessary to make such an order.

2.0 The planning policy context

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. It is the quality and interest of an *area*, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly *PPS5 - Planning for the Historic Environment*, plus associated guidance. The layout and content of this conservation area appraisal follows guidance produced by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the English Historic Towns Forum 2005 published in February 2006.

2.1 Local planning policy

The Reading Borough Core Strategy was found to be “sound” in December 2007 and it was adopted on 29 January 2008. Policy CS33 provides a strategic level policy that indicates that the historic environment including their settings will be preserved and enhanced. This policy will, in part, replace the Reading Borough Local Plan policies, including some of the saved policies discussed below. Proposals will have to have regard to the provisions set out in PPS5 and various associated guidance.

The Local Plan policies which seek the preservation and enhancement of archaeological sites, historic parks and gardens, listed buildings and conservation areas are set out in Chapter 6 of the *Reading Borough Local Plan 1991-2006* which was adopted on 14th October 1998. The majority of these policies were “saved” by Direction of the Secretary of State on 24 September 2007 (with effect from 27 September 2007). The saved policies of particular note are Policies CUD 6 (Demolition of Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas) and CUD7 (New Development in Conservation Areas), which outline Reading Borough Council’s approach to development in Conservation Areas. Copies of these policies can be found at Appendix 2 of this document. With regard to listed buildings in the Conservation Area, Policies CUD 1 ((Works Affecting Listed Buildings), CUD 2 (Change of Use of Listed Buildings), CUD 3 (Maintenance of Listed Buildings) and CUD 4 (Setting of Listed Buildings) also apply.

The Local Plan’s conservation objectives are stated as:

- (i) to conserve or enhance the Borough’s stock of listed buildings and other buildings of architectural quality or historical significance;
- (ii) to identify protect or enhance areas of character;
- (iii) to identify and conserve areas of archaeological significance and to protect or enhance finds and sites for the education and enjoyment of Reading residents.

3.0 Location and setting

3.1 Location, topography and setting

The boundaries of the Christchurch Conservation Area are shown at Appendix 1. The area lies about 2km south of Reading centre, and lies immediately to the east of Basingstoke Road, the former main A33 road from the M4 to Reading Town Centre. Christchurch Road, in the north of the Conservation Area, runs eastwards

from the Basingstoke Road towards Shinfield Road which is part of the main A327 out of Reading.

The properties in the Conservation area tend to be slightly more recent developments than those of the Victorian terraces to the west, and the larger properties to the east in The Mount and Redlands Conservation Area, and in the recently designated Kendrick Conservation Area. Indeed Christchurch itself was originally commissioned to serve these aforementioned areas.

The area is situated at the top of a rise southwards “up” Kendrick Road, which affords good views of Christchurch. Otherwise the area is generally flat, which otherwise limits views into and out of the area, except at close quarters.



Looking east along Christchurch Road

4.0 Historic development

4.1 History

Reading is named after the Readingas, Saxon followers of Reada, ‘the Red’, who settled in the spit of land in the fork of the Thames and Kennet in the 6th century. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Reading belonged to the king and included a small borough and two manors. Reading Abbey was founded by Henry I in 1121. The abbey dominated the town and became one of the richest religious

houses in England making Reading a wealthy place, and a centre of religion and pilgrimage.

Wool and leather were Reading's principal trades in the 16th and early 17th centuries, making good use of the town's road and river links. In the 18th century Reading was an important market and coaching town; new industries developed, notably brewing, iron-founding and brick and tile making. Early 19th century maps show the town had hardly extended beyond its medieval core but a fast town expansion was stimulated by the development of new transport links. The Kennet and Avon Canal was opened in 1810 bringing London and Bristol, two major sea ports, into direct communication by water. Of much greater significance, however, was the construction of the Great Western Railway which reached the town in 1840. The coming of the railway resulted in a rapid growth of major industries, notably Huntley & Palmers and Suttons Seeds, which provided work for a rapidly increasing population.

Between 1850 and 1900 the population of the Borough more than trebled from 21,456 to 72,217 and the housing stock increased accordingly. Development in the Christchurch Conservation Area was a later part of this post-railway late 19th century expansion of the town during which period large numbers of houses were built and growing civic pride was celebrated in the building of Reading's Town Hall (1875), the Concert Hall (1882), and the Museum and Library (1883-4). Reading Grammar School, to the south of the Conservation Area is of the same period, built between 1865-71, to the designs of Alfred Waterhouse, a local resident of Reading from 1868. The Christchurch Conservation Area, like the neighbouring Conservation Areas, represents a middle-class area, untouched by commerce and industry, and was clearly designed as such (that is after the date of the earlier terraced housing at 3-33 Christchurch Road) to be a more spacious and leafy area than the artisans' terraces which lie closer to their employers to the north and west of this general area.

4.2 The effect of historic development on plan form

The designated Conservation Area is essentially defined by the grid of roads comprising the parallel west-east Christchurch Road and Christchurch Gardens, and the north-south Basingstoke, Glebe and Vicarage Roads. The 1877 Edition OS Map shows these roads to be in existence at that time, but sparsely developed compared with, for example, further east along Christchurch Road. This remained true even on the 1899 OS Map. However the area was soon to be developed with larger properties on good sized plots, echoing those farther to the east along Christchurch Road.

It would therefore be difficult to describe this area as a planned development in any strict sense, although clearly the area forms part of the post-railway expansion and development of Reading.

The exception to the rule of larger properties on larger plots in Christchurch Road is the terrace forming 3-33 Christchurch Road, which are the earliest in the area (pre-1840). Although themselves quite large, and in some cases quite ornate for terraced properties, they are clearly more related to the large terraced housing areas to the north and west.

Whitley Street and the terrace at 3-33 Christchurch Road can clearly be seen on the 1899 OS map of the area, as can the terraces at the northern end of Basingstoke Road, but many other properties were yet to be built within the ultimately designated conservation area. The principle exception was of course Christchurch. As the population of this aforementioned terraced area grew, and also the areas to the east of what is now the Christchurch Conservation Area, a new church was required to cope with the growing congregation of St Giles in Southampton Street. Hence Christchurch was built in 1861/2 and enlarged in 1874. The architect of the church was Henry Woodyer. The vicarage (1871) was by Alfred Waterhouse (who also designed Reading Town Hall). The 164ft spire of Christchurch is a Reading landmark.

5.0 Spatial analysis

5.1 Key views and vistas

Although most directly approached by a rise up from the north along Kendrick Road, the area is relatively flat and there are no special focal points. Apart from the already mentioned Christchurch, no individual building stands out in each street in the Conservation Area. Corner buildings tend to be prominent in the street scene, but not from any distance. Views out of the Conservation Area are similarly limited.

5.2 The character of spaces within the area

The conservation area is, generally speaking, a tightly knit mixed urban and suburban area composed of continuous frontages of two- and three-storey buildings with front gardens to the back of pavement edge. The size of plot and length of front garden do vary of course from those of the terrace at 3-33 Christchurch Gardens, through the short front gardens opposite at 2-14 Christchurch Road, and the more substantial, but varied, plots elsewhere in the area.

Christchurch and its churchyard is the main area of open space in the area, but even this does not comprise a large churchyard setting for this important church. A small public sitting area has been developed at the northern end of Kendrick Road which affords good views of Christchurch. Otherwise, the Conservation Area does not comprise any significant areas of open space per se.

The area does however benefit from good tree cover, particularly in the grounds of Christchurch itself and the larger residential properties. Properties are also typically bounded by brick walls and railings which prove a good setting for individual properties and the character of the Conservation Area as a whole.

6.0 Definition of the special interest of the conservation area

6.1 Definition of character areas

The Conservation Area can be divided into three character areas as follows:

Area 1: Christchurch and surrounding larger properties.

This area is centered on Christchurch itself and otherwise characterised by large detached and semi-detached houses standing in extensive and well-treed grounds. Architectural styles vary from fairly ornate Late Victorian villas to a good example of an Arts and Crafts inspired dwelling and one more modern building designed to echo the features of the original buildings in this part of the area. These buildings are described in more detail in paragraph 1.3 above.

The properties in this part of the area, and indeed throughout the Conservation Area are “linked” by frontage brick walls and/or low brick walls with railings above, and good tree cover.

Area 2: Christchurch Road terraced properties.

This is an impressive terrace of three different types. It is of an earlier date (pre 1840) than Area 1. It is described in more detail in paragraph 1.3 above. A great deal of its original character remains, but with a few recent unsympathetic alterations. The general character of this part of the area is of plain red brickwork (although the eastern end of the terrace is stuccoed), with low pitched slate roofs, paneled doors with arched fanlights and glazing bar sash windows (9 and 12 panes).

Again, properties here are “linked” by frontage brick walls and/or low brick walls with railings above.

Area 3: Western street block bounded by Christchurch Road; Glebe Road; Christchurch Gardens and Basingstoke Road.

The houses in these streets date from the 1890s and comprise larger semi-detached and detached houses. Each detached house or pair of semi-detached houses is different in their detailing, with extensive use made of decorative mouldings and patterned brickwork. The main colour here is grey, with cream and red brick detailing. Other interesting features include: large bay windows; red ridge tiles and finials to front gables; and some stained glass. These properties also have distinctive red clay roofs.

Again, properties here are “linked” by frontage brick walls and/or low brick walls with railings above.



Basingstoke Road (west side)

Generally.

Features that make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:

- Retention of original buildings and their settings with few detrimental changes by way of new development and/or addition of non-traditional materials;

- Retention of original brick walls and/or railings (original and replacement) throughout the area;
- Good tree cover within the grounds of individual properties;

Features that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:

- Some (limited) use of non-traditional materials: e.g. upvc windows;
- Some (limited) loss of original brick walls and/or railings e.g. replacement of railings with brick walls and/or timber fencing;
- Some walls in need of repair;
- Some loss of front boundaries to accommodate frontage parking (e.g. HMOs);
- Whilst not inherently unattractive in itself, some overgrowth of railings with hedges;
- Incomplete coverage of green conservation area signs;
- Lack of traditional street furniture, including street lighting;
- Over-reliance on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses within it;
- Plethora of street furniture associated with the important road junction at the southern entrance to the Conservation Area;
- Ongoing problems with 35/37 Christchurch Road.

Surrounded by buildings of a similar age immediately outside it, including those in nearby Conservation areas, the Christchurch Conservation Area itself and the buildings within it have generally retained their Victorian/Edwardian charm (despite some pressures to redevelop certain sites in the past). However there is clearly scope to redress some quite modest failings apparent in the foregoing list.

6.2 Activities and uses

Historically and currently, the Conservation Area was/is essentially a residential area of detached, semi-detached and terraced residential properties in three slightly different character areas as previously described, but the larger properties on Christchurch Road (in Character Area 1) have been taken over by a variety of commercial and educational uses. In addition some of the properties in Character Area 3 have experienced problems related to multiple occupation. Otherwise the properties appear to be retained in single family occupation with no obvious signs of subdivision or multiple occupation. The properties in the area are generally fully occupied and in a good state of repair. The main problem is with frontage boundary treatments rather than the buildings themselves. The notable exception is 35/37 Christchurch Road.

The area generally has a quiet residential atmosphere within its core, except for Christchurch Road itself and Basingstoke Road, which are busy primary through routes in the Borough. There is some evidence of daytime parking for commuters and/or people working in the locality, but there are few parking restrictions in the locality (except near road junctions) and no reported requests for a resident's parking scheme for the area. A number of properties do not have their own parking provision, but the area does benefit from good accessibility to local amenities by foot, public transport and is close to significant major employers, making this an attractive area to live.

6.3 Architectural and historic character: building methods and materials

The Conservation Area is essentially a Victorian/Edwardian residential suburb of Reading. It contains essentially Victorian and Edwardian buildings. The Area retains its historical character and special architectural interest.

With the exception of a few stucco buildings, the buildings in the Conservation area are generally of brick, which is one of the distinguishing features of Reading's architecture. There are examples of good quality brickwork throughout the conservation area. Brick was a popular building material in the 19th and early 20th centuries and the ready availability of different coloured bricks provided the opportunity for the lively polychromatic brickwork found throughout this part of Victorian/Edwardian Reading. The town had several brickworks, the most notable being S & E Collier Ltd at Water Road and Elgar Road and two brick works in the Tilehurst area.

6.4 Buildings of Townscape Merit

Buildings identified as having "townscape merit" will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered 19th century and later buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area.

Buildings of Townscape Merit help create a conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape. As recommended in PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment " In considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, local planning authorities should take into account the particular nature of the significance of the heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations. This understanding should be used by the local planning authority to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposals."

Clearly, all the buildings within the Conservation area are important to its “townscape”, but it is generally unlisted corner buildings which strictly have a more commanding presence. The terrace at 3-33 Christchurch Road would fall in to this category, because of its open aspect to Christchurch Road, but is actually listed in its own right. The Grade II listed Christchurch and the larger corner properties such as the unlisted 35/7 and 39 Christchurch Road are also of townscape value, although not visible from any great distance, being somewhat screened from certain views by other buildings, walls and the abundant tree cover in the Conservation area. 35/7 Christchurch Road is however prominently located on a corner and, as previously stated, would benefit from special attention. Christchurch, because of its magnificent spire, is of course visible from much greater distances.



Christchurch Road from east

6.5 Public realm. Floorscape, street lighting and street furniture.

Road and footway surfaces are predominantly modern i.e. tarmac, with kerbs of concrete products. Whilst generally in average condition (there is evidence of repairs by “utilities” throughout the area), these surfaces are not attractive and not “traditional” in conservation area terms.

Street lighting columns, signage and street furniture are modern, and this is another area with considerable potential for improvement. There are no examples of traditional lighting in the Area.

Properties in the Conservation Area rely on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses.

Some streets are missing green Conservation Area signs.

Brick walls and railings are to be found throughout the area and are clearly an essential part of the public realm and character of the Conservation Area.

6.6 Local details and features

The pre-eminent local detail throughout this Conservation Area is the presence, with few exceptions, of brick walls and/or brick walls and railings at the front of the properties.

6.7 Historic associations

Except for direct connections with Christchurch itself, local histories do not tell us very much about the area, but further research is intended in respect of historical associations here.

6.8 Green spaces, trees and other natural elements

Apart from the small churchyard area surrounding Christchurch, there is only one small area of green space at the southern end of Kendrick Road. The Conservation Area is epitomised by a mixture of properties, which except for the terrace at 3-33 Christchurch Road, benefit from mature gardens and with tree cover, giving a general verdant feel to the area of buildings and trees in harmony.

Trees therefore make a significant contribution to this suburban Conservation Area's special character and sense of identity. Significant tree groups are shown on the Appraisal Map at Appendix 1.

Because of their importance to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, where they are not already protected by a Tree Preservation Orders (and there appear to be three of these in this Conservation Area at 35/37 and 39 Christchurch Road, and 4 Vicarage Road, plus a number immediately outside the Conservation Area which also contribute to its setting) it is necessary to give the local planning authority 6 weeks notice of any intention to cut down, top or lop any tree in a Conservation Area, which also enables a local planning authority to

consider whether the trees should be formally protected by the making of a Tree Preservation Order.

6.9 General condition of the area: The extent of loss, intrusions or damage i.e. negative features.

The general state of repair of the properties in the Conservation Area varies, but is generally good. There are some properties in multiple occupation in Christchurch Road and Christchurch Gardens, with their associated problems of frontage parking and numbers of refuse bins, but no obvious signs of properties remaining vacant for any length of time.

The open space at the southern end of Kendrick Road is also a generally well maintained seating area, with close views of Christchurch compensating for its location close to a busy road junction.

However, in common with many of Reading's Conservation Areas, the Area is lacking in the quality, not helped by the state of repair of the of the highway environment (roadways, footways and street furniture).

All of these areas would benefit from continued monitoring, and the seizing of opportunities for improvement as they arise.

6.10 Problems, pressures and issues

Design of new development

Within the Conservation Area itself there are few recent developments, but these have generally sought to respect the character, scale of buildings and materials used in the Conservation Area, thus maintaining its character and appearance. The redevelopment of the former electricity sub station site on the corner of Christchurch Gardens and Basingstoke Road is a case in point, though spoilt by the use of close boarded fencing on the frontage. A small number of elements within the Conservation Area detract from its character, for example the more recent school buildings at the rear of the Abbey Junior School, albeit behind a high retaining wall which has a partial screening effect when seen from the Vicarage Road frontage. Even the larger new developments immediately outside the Conservation Area pay regard to their context adjoining or near the Conservation Area and do not have a notably negative effect on its character and appearance e.g. site on the south side of Christchurch Gardens, although this contrasts with adjoining British Telecommunications site to the west. Some smaller developments closer to the conservation area (e.g. Christchurch Gardens and the east side of Glebe Road) and within it (on the Basingstoke Road frontage) are not

however strictly in keeping in architectural terms with the character and appearance of the conservation area. The design of new development within and adjoining/near the Conservation therefore remains a major issue.

Loss of original architectural details

The loss of original features, particularly front elevation features is fairly limited, although there are examples of non-traditional windows in the buildings in the Conservation Area. The situation with regard to boundary features varies as is indicated in paragraph 1.3 above. There is a clear issue here in terms of respecting the setting of individual buildings as well as enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, in accordance with policies contained in PPS5 and accompanying guidance and policies contained in the Reading Borough Local Plan/Local Development Framework.

Traffic noise and pollution

The character and environmental quality of the main streets are spoiled by noise and pollution of traffic using Christchurch Road and Basingstoke Road. “Rat runs” to these roads through the area are limited by traffic management measures, e.g. on Glebe Road.

Street clutter

This is not generally an issue with regard to the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area, except at the Christchurch Road/Basingstoke Road junction/entrance to the Conservation Area as a consequence of its function as a main road junction.

Attention has also been drawn to the detrimental impact of individual telegraph poles and wires radiating out from them.

Although it is not a matter of “clutter”, it would be helpful if all the existing street name signs in the conservation area were green Conservation Area street name signs as found elsewhere in this conservation area and other conservation areas in Reading.

7.0 Areas for further work

7.1 Consideration of conservation area boundary changes

Despite the original convoluted deliberations over the boundaries of the conservation area, given that there are no material changes in circumstances

since the conservation area was originally designated, no changes are recommended to the Conservation Area boundary.

7.2 Opportunities for enhancement

Floorscape and street furniture improvements should be considered in this area, including replacing telegraph poles. An immediate priority might however be to replace the existing street name signs in the area which are not green conservation area signs with green conservation area street name signs as found in other conservation areas in Reading.

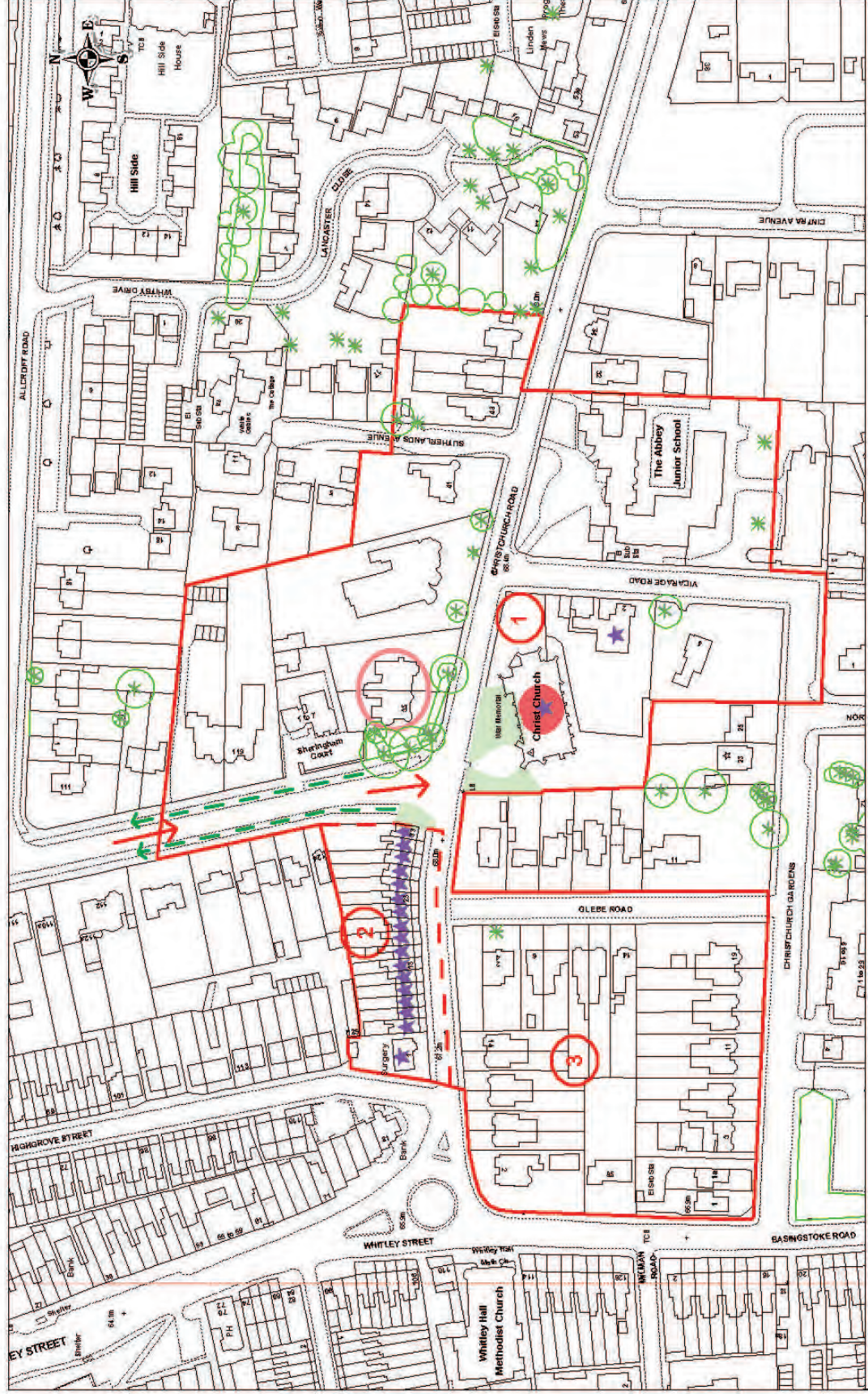
Notwithstanding the current (varied) appearance of the Conservation Area, it may be expedient, as has been proposed in other conservation areas in Reading, and subject to the requisite publicity and the views of local people, to consider whether the local planning authority should consider using its powers to withdraw permitted development rights which affect the external appearance of dwelling houses in the Conservation Area, namely alterations to doors, windows, roofs and frontages, but particularly frontages. However, a better approach might be to seek mechanisms whereby original features can be repaired and/or restored, although inevitably this will have funding repercussions.

7.3 Monitoring and review

This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the area to identify changes in its character and appearance;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;
- A detailed building/property condition survey;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.

Appendix 1 - Townscape Appraisal Map












TITLE Christchurch Conservation Area



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Christchurch Conservation Area Townscape Appraisal Map

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Building
-  Tree Preservation Orders
-  Character Areas
-  Landmark building
-  Other building of townscape value
-  Street trees
-  Green space
-  Important view

Appendix 2 - Relevant Local Plan Policies

The following policies from the Reading Borough Local Plan (1991-2006) are relevant to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area:

POLICY CUD 6: DEMOLITION OF UNLISTED BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

CONSENT TO DEMOLISH IN A CONSERVATION AREA WILL NORMALLY ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT IT IS WHOLLY BEYOND REPAIR, INCAPABLE OF REASONABLY BENEFICIAL USE, OF INAPPROPRIATE STRUCTURE OR DESIGN, OR WHERE ITS REMOVAL OR REPLACEMENT WOULD BENEFIT THE APPEARANCE OR CHARACTER OF THE AREA. DEMOLITION WILL BE MORE FAVOURABLY ASSESSED WHERE THERE ARE APPROVED DETAILED PLANS FOR REDEVELOPMENT AND A CONTRACT FOR CARRYING OUT THE WORKS HAS BEEN ENTERED INTO.

POLICY CUD 7: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS

AS APPROPRIATE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS SHOULD MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE AREA BY RESPECTING OR ENHANCING ITS ARCHITECTURAL AND VISUAL QUALITIES AND ACHIEVING A HIGH STANDARD OF DESIGN. DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS WILL NORMALLY BE PERMITTED ONLY WHERE THE PARTICULAR HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE AREA WILL BE PRESERVED AND THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD OF HARM BEING CAUSED TO THE AREAS CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE.

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL AS APPROPRIATE SEEK TO PRESERVE THE EXISTING BALANCE OF USES IN CONSERVATION AREAS.

Because of the high percentage of listed buildings in the Conservation Area. Policies CUD 1 ((Works Affecting Listed Buildings), CUD 2 (Change of Use of Listed Buildings), CUD 3 (Maintenance of Listed Buildings) and CUD 4 (Setting of Listed Buildings) also apply.