

Chesham Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

July 2026, V2.4



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1. Introduction

1.1 Chesham Conservation Area

Chesham Conservation Area was designated in 1970 and revised in 1987 and 2026. The boundary includes the town centre and surrounding residential areas and park and landscape.

Chesham is 14 miles from Aylesbury and 37 miles from London. Amersham Town Centre is a few miles to the south. Chesham station is at the end of the Metropolitan Tube Line.

1.2 What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas are ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’, designated under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

1.3 What does Conservation Area designation mean?

The designation of a Conservation Area has various implications:

- It introduces control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, similar to those for listed buildings;

- It modifies certain permitted development rights, for example extension size, satellite dishes, chimney removal and boundary treatments;
- It controls the removal of trees;
- It places special statutory duties on decision makers – ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.

The additional controls, such as demolition, are dealt with through the planning application process.

More detail on the range of permitted development rights is given on the Planning Portal. Buckinghamshire Council also offers initial planning advice (details on the web site).

National policy and guidance on heritage assets, including conservation areas, is contained in Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 (or any later version) and Planning Practice Guidance.

1.4 Benefits of Conservation Area Designation

The historic character and quality of environment of Chesham are factors in its ability to attract shoppers and visitors, so are important to the vitality and viability of the town centre. Similarly, quality of place is a factor in attracting people to live, spend recreational time and invest in the area. So, protection of the area’s character is important culturally, but also economically.

Quality of environment, including public spaces, is also important to quality of life and health.

Conservation of historic areas and buildings can deliver more sustainable forms of physical and economic development, by maintaining the embodied energy of buildings and enhancing the town as a mixed use and walkable place.

1.5 Purpose and Scope of the Document

This document includes a character appraisal for the Chesham Conservation Area (Chapters 2-5), which seeks to describe the ‘special architectural or historic interest’ and ‘character or appearance’ of the Conservation Area. This is essential in supporting development and investment, ensuring changes are beneficial.

The document also includes a management plan (Chapters 6-7), which addresses the requirement under Section 71 for local authorities to ‘formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas’. This includes design guidelines for development.

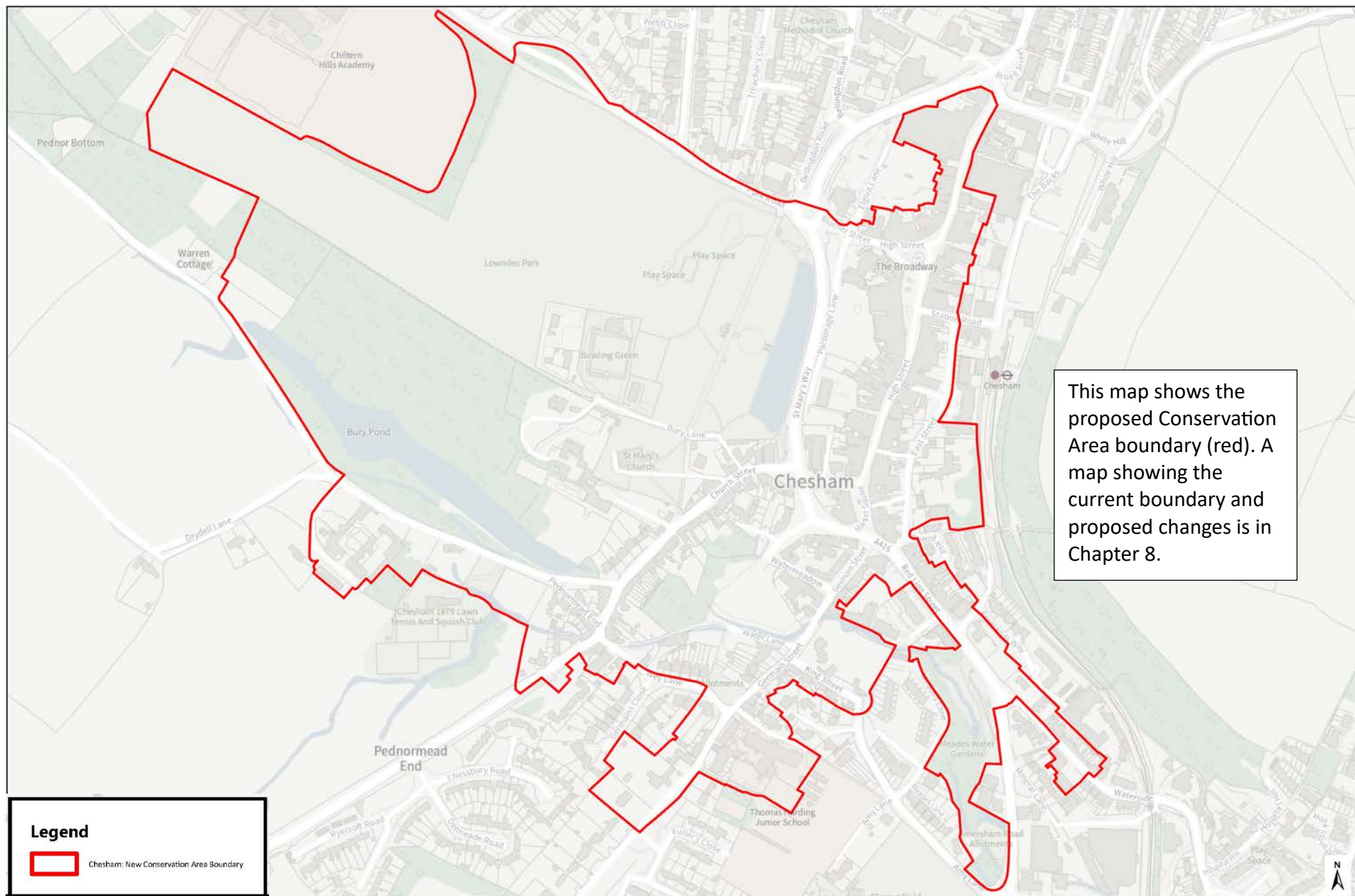
Amendment to the boundary of the Conservation Area is proposed in Chapter 8.

The document is intended to inform planning decisions, planning policy making and other planning and regeneration activities and projects.

The document seeks to describe the special architectural or historic interest and character of the conservation. It deals with some individual buildings, but also townscape, spatial character, landscape, public spaces and other elements. The omission of any building, structure, feature or space does not imply that the element is not significant or does not contribute positively to the special interest or character of the Conservation Area.

1.6 Consultation

This document will be subject to consultation, including meeting the requirements of Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and consultation case law.



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Chesham: New Conservation Area Boundary

Author: GIS Team - Buckinghamshire Council

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2. Summary of Special Interest and Character

2.1 Overview of Special Interest and Character

The special architectural or historic interest and character of the Conservation Area is based on a range of factors including high level of survival of Medieval fabric, with later development and significant contributions through the Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and later periods. The spatial and townscape characteristics in the commercial streets are based on rear-of-pavement conjoined building frontages as the predominant urban form (some buildings are set back). In residential areas, some buildings set back behind front gardens. The area's topography is another key factor. The Park and other green landscape areas, mature trees, river and other water features are also important parts of the special interest and character.

Architectural diversity and contrasts (including formal and distinctive architecture and more functional or vernacular buildings) are a key part of the character of the Town Centre and this includes a varied palette of traditional and historic materials and architectural detailing including shopfronts, chimneys, doors, windows, signage and other details.

2.2 Key Elements of Special Interest and Character

The following is a list of key elements of the special architectural or historic interest and character of the Chesham Conservation Area:

- a. The history of the settlement, with evidence of prehistoric and Roman occupation, and based the Anglo-Saxon settlement around the church and the Bury;
- b. The historic town centre, with a concentration of historic buildings from different periods, and a high level of survival of Medieval buildings and fabric, with much altered and refaced in later centuries;
- c. There is also significant development from Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and later 20th century period;
- d. The High Street as a core feature;
- e. Commercial streets and spaces enclosed and defined by rear-of-pavement, conjoined building frontages, including High Street, Market Square and Red Lion Street (predominantly of 2-3 storeys, but with some variation);
- f. Residential streets with domestic scale buildings, some with rear of pavement building frontages and some set back behind front gardens;
- g. Architectural diversity and contrasts, created by buildings of different periods of construction and including formal and distinctive architecture and domestic, functional or vernacular buildings;
- h. Openings between and through buildings, linking to rear yards and streets;

- i. The Church of St Mary and its churchyard as a key landmark and space;
- j. Topography, including the slope of Lowndes Park and the elevated position of the Church of St Mary, which is visible from multiple locations;
- k. The Town's Park, Lowndes Park and the adjacent Bury Pond landscape, both of which formed part of the landscape grounds of Bury Hill Gate (now demolished) and the Bury;
- l. The River Chess and other features;
- m. Mature trees, hedges, allotments, and gardens throughout the area;
- n. Boundary treatments, including historic walls, metal railings and hedges;
- o. The varied palette of traditional and historic materials including timber frame construction with render and brick infill, red or brown brick, flint rubble walling, roughcast render, terracotta, stone, plain clay tiles and some use of slate; and timber doors, windows, and other building features;
- p. The range of architectural detailing, including shopfronts, chimneys, doors, windows, and other detail;
- q. The River Chess valley setting of the Conservation area.

More detail on all of these elements of special interest and character is contained in Chapter 5 of this document.



Special Architectural or Historic Interest: The Conservation Area includes a range of distinctive buildings.



Key Elements of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and Character: The special architectural or historic interest and character of the Conservation Area is based on diverse buildings and architecture dating from different centuries, with strong townscape characteristics, and trees and landscape.

Heritage Assets



3. Heritage Assets

3.1 Types of Heritage Asset

There are designated and non-designated heritage assets. Designated heritage assets include listed buildings, conservation areas (including the buildings within them), and scheduled monuments. More details of these designations are given below.

Non-designated heritage assets are defined in planning practice guidance as ‘buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets’ This would include buildings on a local list (unless they are within a designated conservation area). Identified archaeological remains can also be non-designated heritage assets.

Details of all listings and scheduled monuments are available on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

3.2 The Conservation Area

Conservation areas are designated under Section 69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the statutory definition is: ‘areas of special architectural or

historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

Section 74 provides protection for buildings in designated conservation areas.

The local planning authority has a statutory duty under Section 72 when considering development proposals affecting a Conservation Area: ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.

Planning applications are required for development in conservation areas, including demolition.

3.3 Listed Buildings

There are numerous listed buildings within the Chesham Conservation Area. There is one Grade 1 listed building, which is the Church of St Mary, and two Grade II* listed buildings (Great Germaines in Fuller’s Hill and 54-56 Church Street). All other listed buildings are Grade II.

Listed buildings are defined in Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as ‘buildings of special architectural or historic interest’. All listed buildings contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the conservation area.

Section 66 relates to development which affects a listed building or its setting, and requires decision makers to have: 'special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.

Works to listed buildings require planning permission to be obtained and, for some works, 'listed building consent'.

3.4 Scheduled Monuments

There is one Scheduled Monument within the conservation area: Bowl barrow in Lowndes Park (a well-preserved mound), known as the 'Rolling Pin'.

Scheduling is done under the Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

3.5 Other Statutory Designations

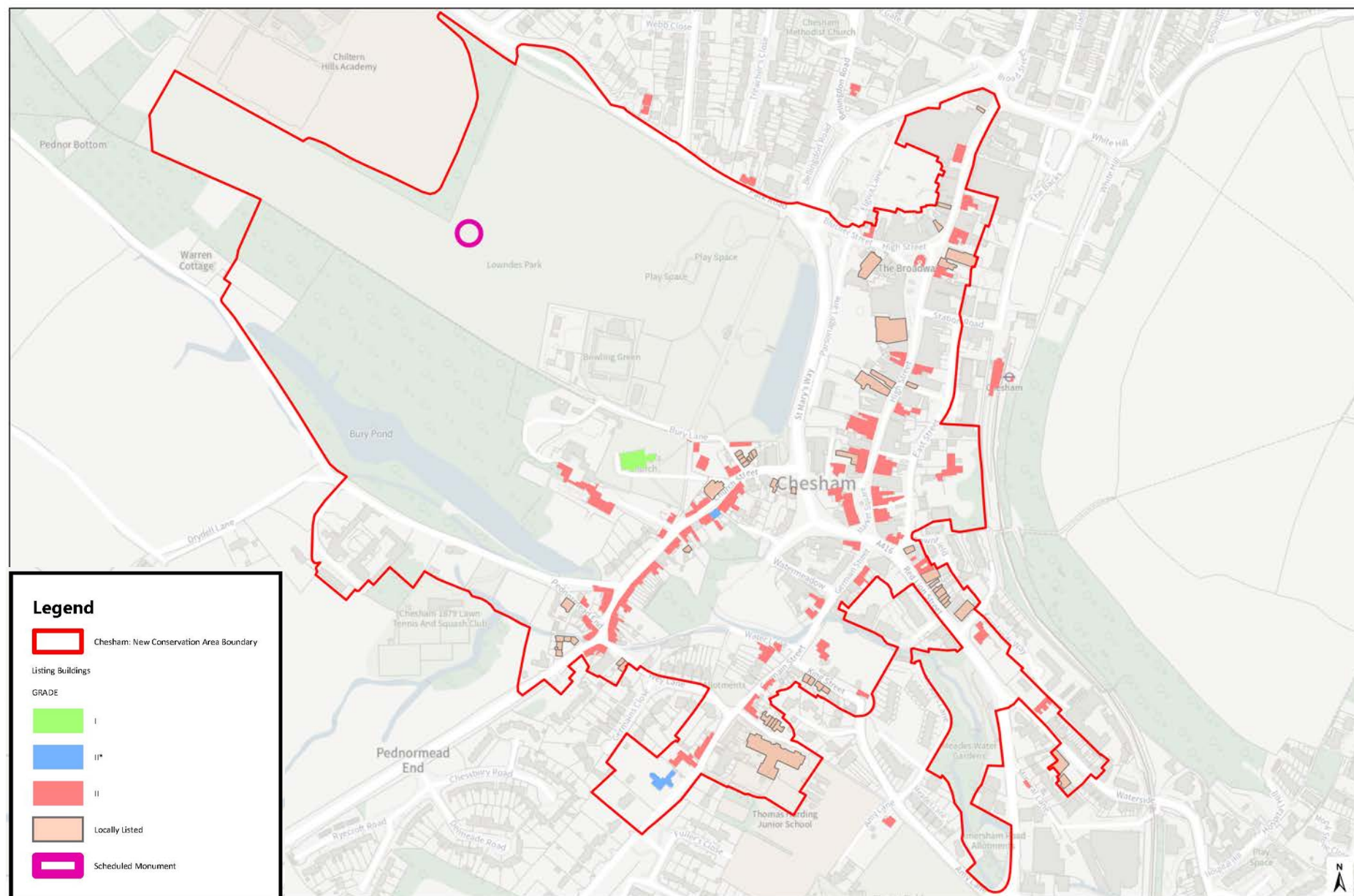
There are no Registered Parks and Gardens in the Conservation Area.

There are some Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area status means that all mature trees, including those without a TPO, are protected (trees are protected if they have a stem diameter of 75mm at 1.5 meters above the ground).

3.6 Local List

There is a county-wide local heritage list, which includes buildings, landscape features, archaeology and other structures in the Chesham Conservation Area. The local list is considered by Buckinghamshire Council to be an important and successful project.

Local lists have no statutory basis, so inclusion on a local list has limited implications for the importance of a building or other feature to the 'special architectural or historic interest' and 'character or appearance' of the Conservation Area. However, the evidence and analysis underpinning a local list may be very helpful in informing judgements.





Heritage Assets: All buildings, structures and landscapes within the Conservation Area are part of a designated heritage asset. In addition, many buildings are also listed buildings, which brings a higher level of protection.



History & Archaeology



4. History and Archaeology

4.1 History

This history is focused on the Conservation Area, but does include references to the development of the wider Chesham area, where relevant.

The earliest documentary reference to Chesham in 1012 records it as 'Caestaeleshamme'. The English Place Name Society suggests the name means 'settlement of a small fort'.

The name of the historic town of Chesham is derived from the River Chess. The town is located in the River Chess Valley. The earliest documentary record of Chesham is from the second half of the 10th century, but there is archaeological evidence for prehistoric and Roman occupation.

The River Chess is a chalk stream and flows through Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, running through the Conservation Area. The river is culverted through the town, which was part of industrialisation and urbanisation.

Chesham was probably part of a royal manor (recorded in AD 957), and it is thought that the Anglo-Saxon settlement was around the church and the area known as the Bury.

Development of the medieval period was based on mills along the Chess (mainly outside of the current conservation area) and the

Market, which was granted in 1257. The High Street is thought to have been laid out at this time. Quite a lot of the medieval town survives, often much altered in later periods.

Many of the historic buildings on the High Street date from the 16th – 18th centuries, but some contain medieval fabric. Many Georgian frontages and exteriors conceal or partly conceal underlying older timber frame fabric.

By the 16th century the majority of Chesham's mills had converted from corn milling to other industries, including cloth and leather trades, supplying goods to London. Smaller craft industries included straw plaiting, wood working, chair bodging, lace making, turning and chair making.

In the 18th century many of the watermills were converted to paper making. There was growth of domestic industries in the 18th century and factory-based growth in the 19th century, in particular tanneries, boot and shoe factories, the Chesham Brewery, and specialist wood-based products such as brushes and children's toys.

In the 19th century the town expanded southeast along Waterside and Newtown developed north of the town centre. The railway station opened in 1889, giving better access to London markets and attracting more people to settle in the town.

The 19th and early 20th century brought a more eclectic mix of architecture, including gothic, Romanesque, classical and

domestic revival buildings. The early to mid-20th century saw the continuing development of the town centre.

In the 21st century, local employment includes small business engaged in light industry, technology and professional services, and many people commute to London for work. There is a noticeable lack of significant architecture from the late 20th or 21st centuries, despite them being periods of considerable innovation elsewhere.

4.2 Archaeology

There are archaeological remains from prehistoric periods, and more extensive finds from Roman and medieval periods. The Historic Town report for Chesham 2012 includes detailed history of the town and its development.

Excavations at Stratford's Yard in East Street found a late Mesolithic (7000-4000 BCE) flint-working or camp site, used by hunter-gatherers in processing wild cattle, deer and boar carcasses. Mesolithic flint tools have also been found at Thomas Harding School.

Later Neolithic and Bronze Age flint and pottery have also been found at Stratford's Yard and at the nearby Chessvale Bowling Club, where Early to Middle Bronze Age (1900-1730 BCE) pits and a barrow ditch were excavated. The scheduled barrow in Lowndes Park may also be Bronze Age in date, reused as a parkland prospect mound in the 18th or 19th century.

Pits, a floor and finds of Roman pottery from Wright's Mill, Fuller's Hill, Missenden Road and Germain's Close suggest there was a Roman farmstead or possibly a small villa in the vicinity of Pednormead End.

Excavations at the Sainbury's site on the High Street revealed evidence for 2 phases of Medieval houses, dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. Medieval and post-medieval backyard rubbish pits were found in the excavations at Stratford's Yard and Chessvale Bowling Club on East Street.

A complex of 16th century tanning pits with wooden water pipes were excavated at the Sainbury's site. A demolished 16th century timber-framed house was recorded in the Stratford's Yard excavations. 16th to 17th century pottery kilns were found in excavations at Emmanuel Church, north of the Conservation Area.

There is one Scheduled Monument:

Bowl barrow in Lowndes Park.

The oldest surviving building is The Church of St Mary (Listed Grade I). The oldest secular building probably 54-56 Church Street (Listed Grade II*), which was built in the fourteenth century.

Other heritage designations are described in Chapter 3.

There is an Archaeological Notification Area:

Historic town core of Chesham (DBC9657)

This covers the historic core of the town - High Street, East Street, Church Street, Germain Street, Wey Lane and Red Lion Street (an approximation of the extent of the original medieval settlement).



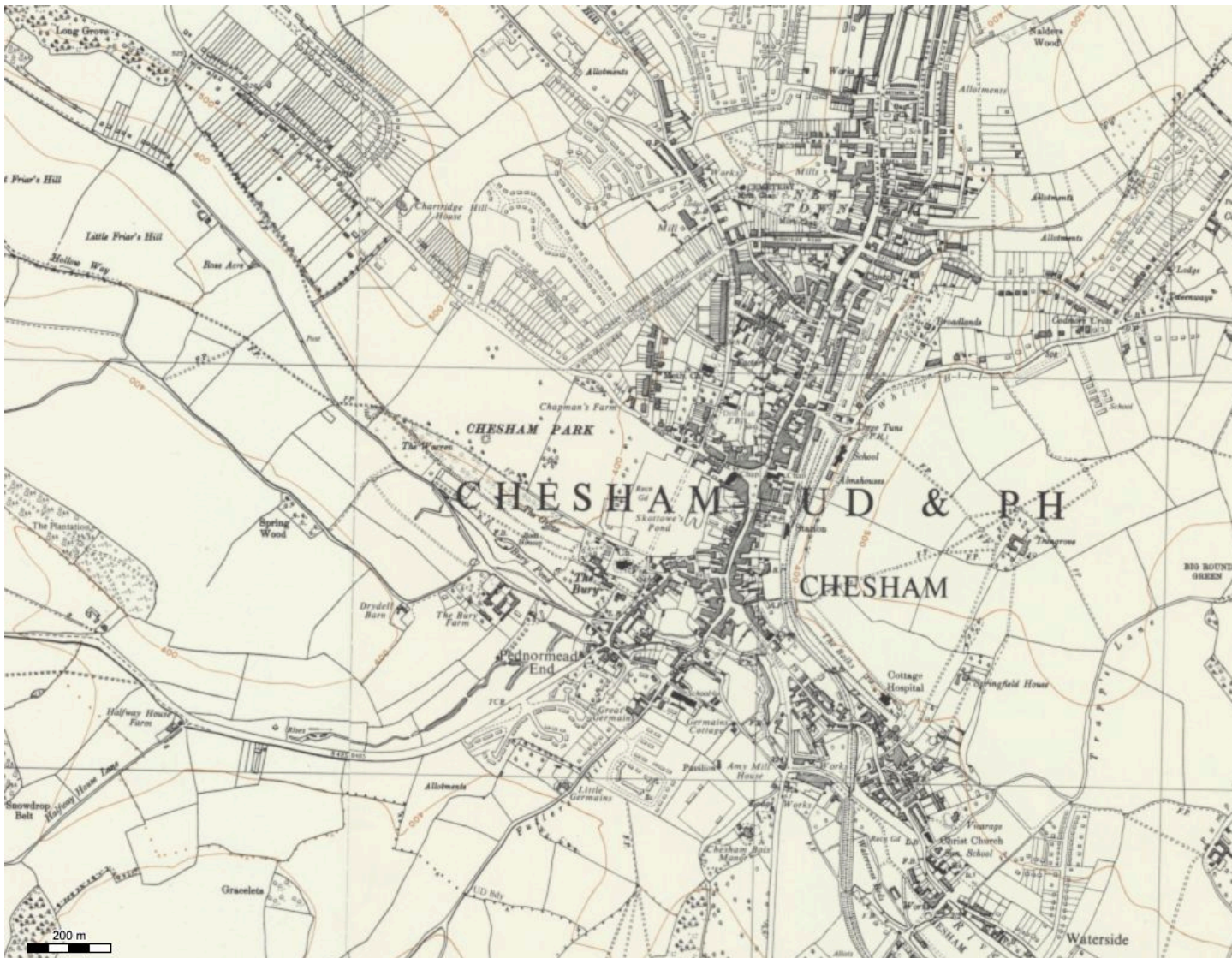


Historic Image: View looking east from Lowndes Park towards the centre of the town (top right).



Historic Image: View towards the tower of the parish church, visible above the rooflines (bottom right).

Historic Images: Church Street (above top) and High Street (above bottom).



HM OS 1-10,000 1949-1974: Shows the development and expansion of the Town in the 20th Century.

Special Interest & Character



5. Special Interest and Character

5.1 Methodology

This chapter describes the key elements of the Conservation Area's 'special architectural or historic interest' and 'character.'

For a Conservation Area, consideration of special architectural or historic interest and character includes (but is not limited to) townscape, spatial qualities, streets and spaces, landscapes and the juxtaposition of diverse, contrasting buildings and architecture from different periods. This includes formal (polite) architecture and more functional or vernacular buildings.

References to 'special interest' relate to the 'special architectural or historic interest' of the Conservation Area.

5.2 Spatial Character (Layout, Townscape, Topography)

Commercial Streets

The main commercial streets and spaces are characterised mainly by rear-of-pavement conjoined building frontages, predominantly between 2-3 storeys. These provide a strong sense of enclosure and definition to those streets and spaces.

The rears of commercial properties mainly comprise service and storage areas, generally of poor urban quality, but of limited visibility from much of the Conservation Area.

A notable characteristic of commercial streets is the openings through some buildings, or gaps between buildings, which give access to the rear yards or spaces and links to other streets.

Residential Streets

The residential areas have a more domestic scale and a more village-like character.

Some residential streets have a similar character to the commercial streets, based on building frontages directly on to pavement edge, for example in much of Church Street.

Other residential streets comprise detached, semi-detached and short terraces of houses set-back behind front gardens of differing depths, such as those in Wey Lane. Many residential streets have a mix of rear-of-pavement and set-back properties.

At the edges of the Conservation Area, for example in Pednor Road and Fuller's Hill, the layout is less dense and more informal, creating a semi-rural character.

Topography

In terms of topography, the urban part of the conservation area is in the valley floor, and fairly flat.

There is an upwards slope to the northwest, created by the valley side and apparent in Lowndes Park, Pednor Road and the elevated position of St Mary Church and differences in levels within the Churchyard (see next section on Landscape Character). This provides views towards the church from various locations, and from the elevated areas towards the town centre and beyond towards the valley landscape setting of the conservation area.

The images and captions on the following pages illustrate key elements of spatial and townscape character.



Topography: Varied topography is an important part of the spatial character, including the valley setting and elevated St Mary's Churchyard.



High Street: The townscape character of the High Street is based on conjoined rear-of-pavement building frontages. Differences in height and roof profiles create a very varied profile and skyline.





Church Street: The properties to the southeast side of Church Street have a similar townscape character to the High Street, based on conjoined rear-of-pavement building frontages, but with a more domestic scale. This strong townscape quality and the concentration of Georgian ‘cottage style’ properties give Church Street a very distinctive character.



Residential Areas: Some properties in Fullers Hill (top, above) have a townscape character based on rear-of-pavement frontages. The houses in Wey Lane (bottom, above) are set back behind smaller front gardens.



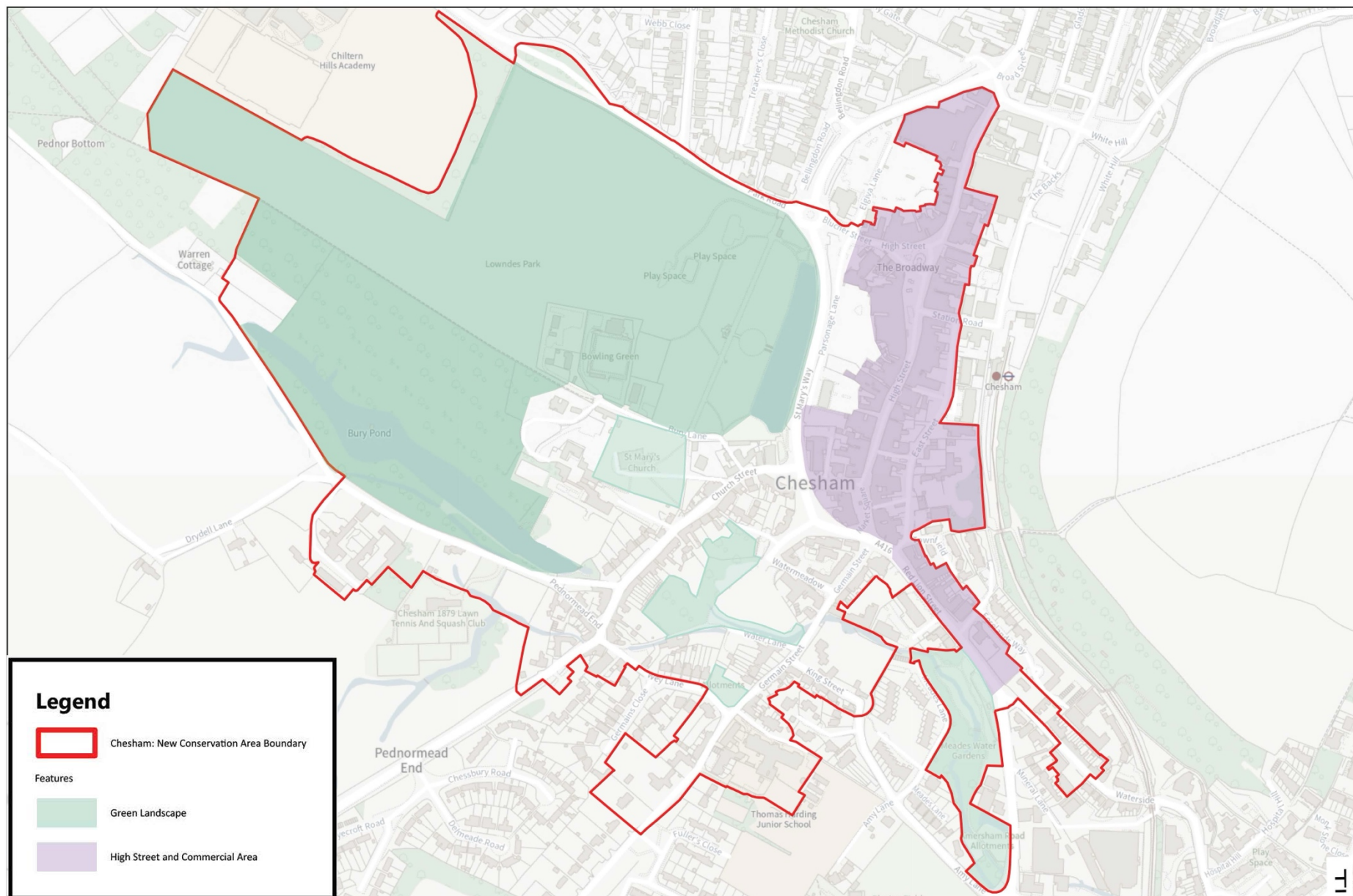
Germain Street has a mixed townscape character, with some residential properties fronting directly onto the road (left) whilst others are set back behind front gardens (above). The front walls help to provide a more immediate enclosure and definition to the street frontage.



Townscape and Spatial Character: Townscape and spatial qualities are key elements of the character of the Conservation Area. The rear-of-pavement buildings (above) give a strong urban character to the junction between Missenden Road, Church Street and Wey Lane.



The built form (top above) on the edge of Lowndes Park delineates the edge of the park and creates an entrance into Bury Lane. The war memorial (bottom above) and public square are enclosed by the surrounding buildings and townscape.



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Chesham: New Conservation Area Boundary

0 100 200 Meters
Scale: 1:3,750

Author: GIS Team - Buckinghamshire Council

Date: 22/06/2026



5.3 Landscape Character

Whilst the core of the town centre is very urban in character, there are significant landscaped areas and landscape features around the urban centre. These contribute to the area's special interest and character and are also important resources in terms of biodiversity, ecology, climate resilience, recreation and supporting physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

Bury Pond and Landscape off Pednor Road

The landscape around Bury Pond (off Pednor Road) is part of the former grounds of Bury Hill Gate (now demolished) and the Bury, which survives and is an early 18th century Georgian 'grand' house with two classical entrance lodges fronting Church Street.

The main features of the landscape are the Bury Pond and its environs, including a stream that also feeds the River Chess and coverage by mature trees and foliage.

Lowndes Park

Lowndes Park was also part of the former grounds of Bury Hill Gate (now demolished) and the Bury.

Lowndes Park was redesigned as a public park in the mid 20th century and in 1953 the majority of the park was conveyed to the Urban District Council. The Park has a clear functional

relationship to the Town and is part of the landscape setting of the historic town centre and the Church of St Mary.

The main features are the open grassed areas, manmade lake, paths and mature trees. The mature trees are an important part of the character.

Church of St Mary Churchyard, graves and monuments

The Churchyard is a key green space and provides the immediate setting for the Grade I listed church. The sloping topography and mature trees are part of the landscape character, together with various graves and monuments and the boundary wall.

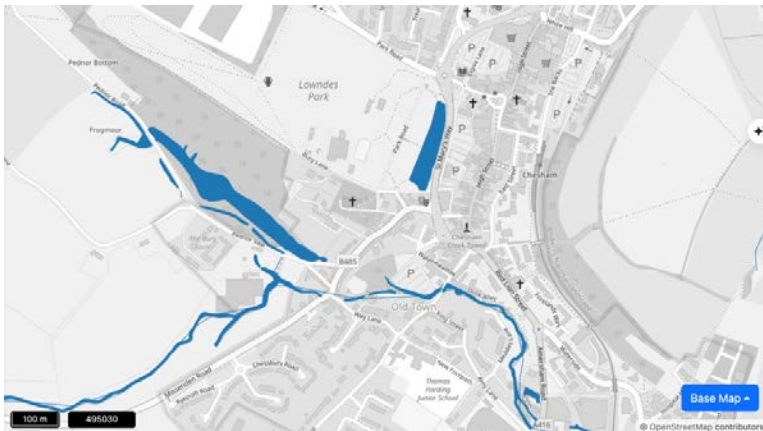
River and Ponds

Significant water features that contribute to the character of the conservation area include:

- The River Chess and its flanking paths, environs and related structures, including the bridge in Germain Street;
- Streams that feed the River Chess, some visible above ground and others culverted through the town centre.
- Bury Pond (there are glimpses of the pond from Pednor Road);
- Skottowe's Pond (the main water feature in Lowndes Park);

- Streams, springs and smaller ponds, such as those which surface as Vale Brook (mainly underground), from Bury Pond, and alongside the Missenden Road near Pednor.

These are part of the landscape character of the area, and the river is a fundamental part of the historic interest and the reason for the establishment of the Town in this location.



Extract from Natural England Blue Infrastructure Map

Other Green Infrastructure

Chesham is located in the Chess chalk river valley. The Conservation Area is in the wide flat valley floor, beyond the Conservation Area are rolling valley hills with mature tree belts, defined fields and wooded areas.

Within the Conservation Area there are areas of mature woodland or extensive tree belts, often adjacent to notable water features mentioned earlier.

Front and rear gardens are part of the character of residential parts of the Conservation Area, and these are often surrounded by brick walls or hedges. This helps to give a more domestic and less urban character to some residential streets. The collective contribution of garden spaces is a key part of the character in some streets.

The Meades Water Gardens is a significant green space, created in the 1970s, just outside of the town centre. The Gardens are on the site of a mill pond and later watercress beds. The area includes the remaining historic features of a sluice gate and Chalybeate Spring.

Mature trees and hedges throughout the area are fundamentally part of the Conservation Area's character. This includes street trees, garden trees, and trees that form part of more formal landscaped areas (such as the park) and more natural landscapes, such as off Pednor Road. There are also small, grassed areas and also the allotments at the junction of Germain Street and Wey Lane.



Church of St Mary Churchyard: The churchyard (above) is a key space green within the Conservation Area, forming the immediate setting for the grade I listed Church, and including various monuments.



Topography: The sloping topography (valley side) means that St Mary Churchyard and parts of Lowndes Park are in an elevated position, allowing views over the townscape of Chesham, towards the landscape valley setting beyond (above).



Lowndes Park: Lowndes Park (above and right) is of historic interest as it originally formed part of the grounds of Bury Hill Gate (now demolished) and the Bury. It was redesigned as a public park in the 20th century.





Bury Pond Landscape and Pednor Road: The landscape area around Bury Pond (above left) is part of the former grounds of Bury Hill Gate (now demolished) and the Bury. The main features of the landscape area are the Bury Pond and mature trees and foliage. The landscape flanks Pednor Road (right), which has a semi-rural character.



Green and blue features: mature trees, hedges, green spaces and water features are important part of the special interest and character of the area, including the culverted River Chess.

5.4 Architecture and Buildings

As with most urban towns, the character of Chesham is based on architectural diversity, reflecting the different periods of building and types of construction. This includes a variety of formal or 'polite' architecture, which reflects wider national and international influences (for example classical, gothic and Modern styles).

These are interspersed with lower-key buildings which are more functional or vernacular in character, but an essential part of the character of the Conservation Area.

The character is based on the combinations and contrasts of vernacular and functional buildings and distinctive and formal architecture.

Medieval Buildings

There is a large extent of surviving medieval fabric, of timber frame and plaster construction, though much of it altered over the centuries.

Some medieval fabric is still apparent in the building exteriors, for example in Numbers 54 and 56 Church Street and Great Germaines.

However, in many cases, the medieval fabric is concealed behind Georgian frontages, for example in many properties to the southeast side of Church Street and 1-3 Germain Street.

Georgian Buildings

Chesham has a range of red brick Georgian buildings, such as the extensive conjoined frontages to Church Street, with its Georgian 'cottage' character. Often this involved the remodelling and 'modernisation' of earlier medieval buildings, so medieval fabric survives behind the Georgian frontages. So, there was a shift in character from more informal and vernacular buildings to more formal architecture, reflecting the fashions of the time and enhanced wealth of the town and some of the population.

There are some more formal Georgian houses, including The Bury (Church Street) and The Meades (32, Germain Street). These include neoclassical features, such as the porticos to The Bury gatehouses or the entrance porch to the Meades.

Victorian Buildings

Chesham's Victorian architecture includes a more eclectic range of styles, reflecting wider trends and debates on 'style'.

Notable examples include a commercial property at No 44 Church Street (remodelling an earlier building) and gothic revival

churches such as the Trinity Baptist Church in Red Lion Street and the United Reformed Church in The Broadway.

The Church of St Mary was extensively 'restored' in the 19th Century by George Gilbert Scott.

Edwardian and Early 20th Century

Edwardian architecture includes school and commercial buildings and housing, including development off Germain Street, Wey Lane and various parts of the High Street and Red Lion Street.

The Thomas Harding School (top left) is a fairly typical example of a freestyle school. The War Memorial is a key monument and nearby, the Broadway Baptist Church and Hall are a landmark building, with distinctive domed turret.

The properties at 7, 9, 11, 13 & 15 Missenden Road are designed in an Arts and Crafts style (and are potentially listable).

Late 20th and 21st Century

There is a notable lack of significant architecture from the later 20th and 21st centuries.

The frontage of the former M&Co shop premises does make some contribution to the special interest and character of the area. This includes the white tiling, aggregate panels and projecting bay.



Church of St Mary: The Church of St Mary (left) is the only Grade I listed building in the Chesham Conservation Area, standing in an elevated position above the town. Parts of the building are medieval, though the appearance of the church today owes much to the extensive restoration made by George Gilbert Scott in the 19th century. The nearby vicarage (right), and gates and gate piers are also listed.



Medieval Chesham: Numbers 54 and 56 Church Street (gables property, above left) is a 14th Century Medieval timber framed house, in contrast to the flanking Georgian fronted properties. The building is listed Grade II*. Like many Medieval buildings, this has been altered over the centuries, but the original house is still very apparent.

Elsewhere in Church Street, Medieval structure is still apparent in the gable wall of 42 Church Street, whilst the frontage of the property is Georgian (bottom left). Many of the Georgian frontages and exteriors in Church Street conceal underlying medieval fabric.

The other Grade II* listed building in the Conservation Area is Great Germans (above centre) in Fuller's Hill, which also has Medieval origins and.

The short terrace of houses at 66 and 70-76, Germain Street (top right) is 16th and 17th century in origin, and the timber frame construction is still apparent in the exterior (listed Grade II).



Georgian Chesham: The Bury (above left) is an early 18th Century house (with later additions) built for William Lowndes, with two gate houses to Church Street (top right). All are Grade II listed buildings. The properties at 1-3 Germain Street (centre left) are a Georgian remodelling of a 17th century timber-framed house (Listed Grade II). Quite a lot of Chesham's surviving Medieval fabric is now hidden behind Georgian external remodelling. The Meades, 32, Germain Street (bottom left) is a symmetrical Georgian House, with Ionic portico (listed Grade II).



Victorian Chesham: The United Reformed Church in The Broadway (left) is a distinctive gothic revival building (1885-6), with polychromatic detailing.

No 44 Church Street (above-right) has a 19th Century mixed Romanesque Byzantine frontage and extensions, added to an older building. Note the entrance on the right hand side.



Edwardian and Inter-War Chesham: The Thomas Harding School (1911, top left) is a multi-gabled freestyle school, of brick, tile and roughcast construction.

The Broadway Baptist Church and Hall (1901-02) in The Broadway (top centre) are an important landmark building, with its red brick and cream stone walling and domed turret.

The War Memorial (Grade II listed) is the focus for the space at the junction of The Broadway and High Street.

The early 20th Century residential properties at 7, 9, 11, 13 & 15 Missenden Road (left) have a distinctive L shape plan, with triangular front garden space.



Later 20th and 21st Centuries: The projecting, tiled bay to a former M&Co premises in High Street (above) contributes to the character of the area.



Functional and vernacular buildings: The area includes some industrial, agricultural and other vernacular buildings (immediate left), of different ages. These are functional in character, in contrast to the more formal architecture.

The special architectural or historic interest and character of the area is based on architectural and building diversity and contrasts, including formal architecture from different periods and more functional and vernacular buildings.



5.5 Views and Glimpses

Views and glimpses are part of the character of the Conservation Area.

Landmarks

The elevated position of the Church of St Mary makes its spire visible from a number of places in the Conservation Area.

Other church buildings also provide key landmarks due to their height and distinctive characteristics, including:

- The Broadway Baptist Church and Hall, The Broadway;
- The United Reformed Church in The Broadway;
- Trinity Baptist Church in Red Lion Street.

Street Views

The streets in the area provide enclosed street views, defined by built frontages.

Landscape Views and Vistas

The landscape character and topography of the area provides longer and wider views and vistas, for example into and across Lowndes Park. The mature trees in the park and elsewhere in the

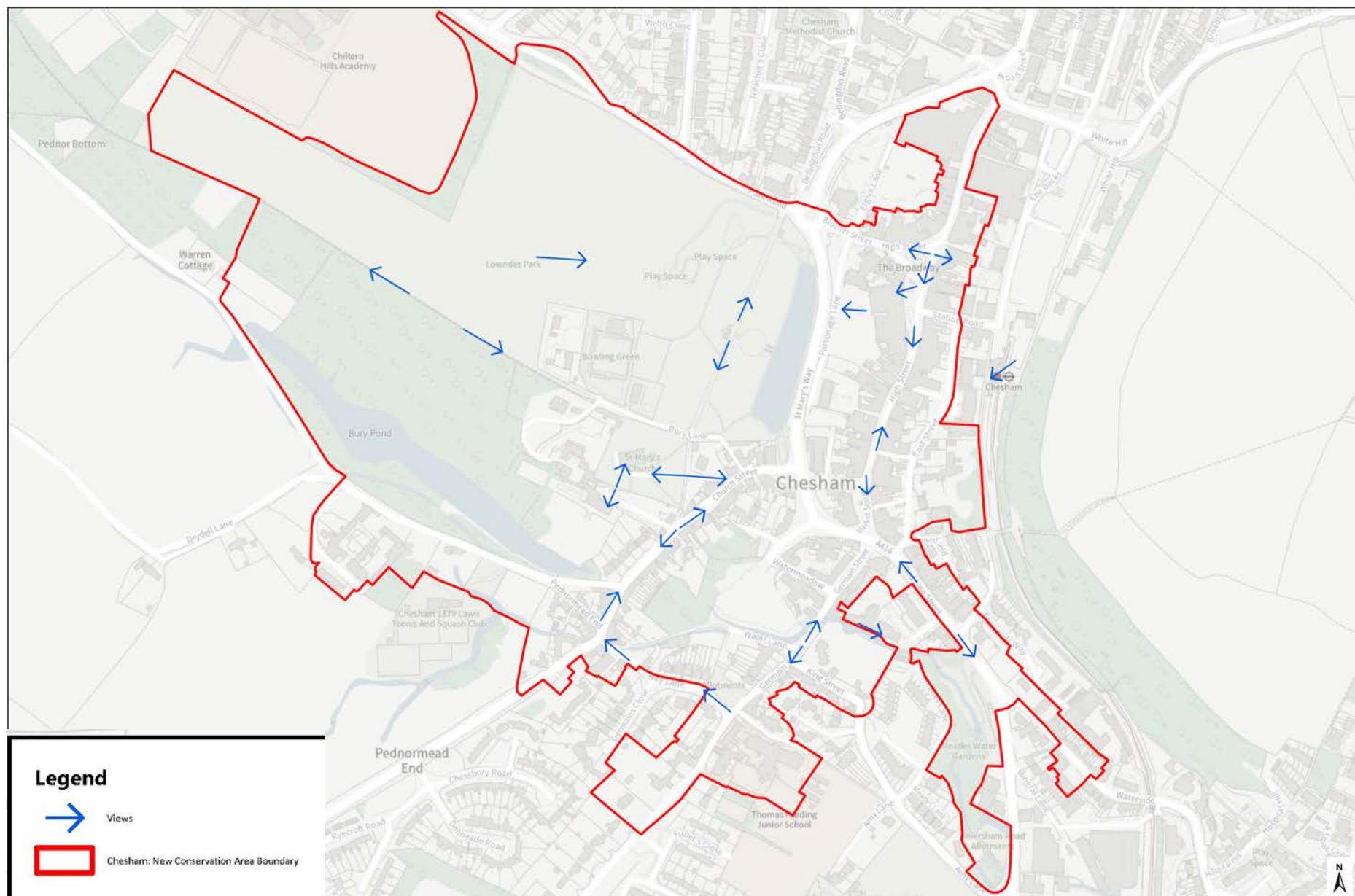
area restrict views at some times of year, but are an important part of the character of the area.

Glimpses

Openings through or between building frontages give glimpses of yards or streets behind, for example in High Street and Church Street.

Glimpses through trees occur throughout the area, for example towards the Bury Pond from Pednor Road.

The following map shows example views and the illustrations give examples of different kinds of views and glimpses.



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Chesham: New Conservation Area Boundary

Author: GIS Team - Buckinghamshire Council

Date: 22/06/2026





Glimpses: The High Street (above images) and Church Street (left) include a number of openings through buildings or gaps between buildings, allowing access to and glimpses of rear streets, spaces or yards.

This is a key part of the character of the Conservation Area. The openings and gaps are also part of the area's Historic Interest as rear areas were often used for work purposes.



Landmark views: The images on the left and above show close and distant views of the spire of the Church of St Mary, in its elevation position. Such views can vary seasonally, depending on whether the trees are in leaf. Above is The Bury, viewed from within the churchyard.

Street Views: There are street views throughout the area (right). The quality of such views is based on enclosing townscape and the resulting spatial quality of the street. In addition, rooflines, chimneys and landmark features in the streets or visible from the streets are all important characteristics.





Views and Glimpses: Chesham has quite complex areas of townscape, where streets, buildings and topography allow views and glimpses along streets, towards landmarks and into landscaped areas, as these examples show.

Historic ground surfaces, buildings and townscape can help to frame these views, such as the Denner Hill stone setts, kerbs and gullies illustrated.

5.6 Materials and Detailing

Materials

There is a very wide palette of historic materials used in the area. This includes:

- Timber frame construction with render and brick infill for Medieval buildings;
- Predominantly red brick, with some brown, grey and other brick, used in many Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings, some painted or colour-washed;
- Some buildings use brick detailing, some in contrasting colours, and terracotta or stone detailing and dressings;
- Some use of brick and flint rubble walling or roughcast render;
- Predominantly red plain clay tiles and some Welsh slate tiles;
- Timber doors, windows, gables details, and other building features;
- Denner Hill stone setts, kerbs and gullies, used for entrances and some historic lanes.

Traditional boundary treatments include red brick walls, brick and rubble walls and some metal railings, for example around Thomas Harding School.

Historic ground surfaces include stone setts (some original, but some appear to have been recently installed).

Denner Hill Stone cobblestones (Denner Hill Setts) are a local material were commonly used in the historic town. Denner Hill stone is a form of sarsen, local to Buckinghamshire. It was quarried in the 19th century and much used locally and regionally for street surfacing materials. However, it is no longer commercially available, so its protection is important.

Windows and Doors

There is a very diverse range of window types and styles, and many buildings retain their original windows, or historic windows from later periods.

Georgian and some later properties (or properties remodelled in the Georgian period) have sash windows, some with large openings.

Many properties have casement windows of various types and sizes. There are some distinctive examples in Missenden Road, with diamond lattice glazing.

Original timber doors are similarly diverse (see later images).

Architectural Features and Detailing

Original building and architectural features and details are important features, and incremental loss part can erode the special interest and character of the Area.

Architectural features and detailing include constructional details, such as exposed timber frames in older buildings. Walling detailing includes polychromatic coloured brickwork, stone quoins and dressings, render and terracotta detailing.

Many properties have stone and brick window and door surrounds. Some properties have decorative roofing details, including ridges. Many properties have cast iron rainwater goods.

Masonry chimneys are a common feature to most historic properties, but with a variety of profiles and chimney pots designs

A high proportion of properties have original timber doors and windows, including Georgian and later sash windows and a variety of casement and other styles.

A few properties have porticos and porches, including use of neoclassical features. Other architectural devices include towers, cupolas, and turrets, and artistic or decorative panels.

There are several historic shopfronts and some signs, though loss of historic shopfronts and poor quality replacements is common.

The following illustrations give some examples of materials, doors and windows and architectural features.



Materials and Detailing: The special interest and character are based strongly on the palette of materials and architectural detailing, including doors, windows, chimneys, and constructional detailing.



Historic Shopfronts: The High Street (left) and other commercial streets and properties (above) have some surviving historic shop fronts, and these contribute to 'special interest' and 'character'.



Windows and Doors: Historic timber doors and windows and their surrounds are a fundamental part of the character of the area. There is a diverse range of window and door types and styles, as these examples show. Note also the window heads and surrounds and classical portico and porch details.



Architectural Detail: There is a rich variety of architectural detail in buildings from different periods, including chimneys, cupolas, signage, porticos and porches and decorative features.





Ground Surfaces: Denner Hill stone setts survive in some lanes, pavements, and entries through or between buildings and these contribute considerably to the historic character of the area. It should be noted that some stone sett surfaces in building entries are more recent reinstatements, apparent by them being set into concrete (which should be avoided in future).

5.7 Features that Detract

There are some elements that detract from the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, as follows (also see the following images):

Main car park: The main car park between the rear of High Street properties and St Mary's Way/Parsonage Lane is a large utilitarian hard-surfaced area of poor visual quality. The open nature of the facility creates wide views of the unattractive rear and service elevations of High Street properties.

Sainsbury's Car Park: The Sainsbury's car park, although outside of the Conservation Area boundary, forms part of the immediate setting. It is an unattractive hard surfaced area.

Unsympathetic Alterations: Some properties have been altered in an unsympathetic way, including loss of original windows and doors in residential properties and poor-quality shop fronts and signage in commercial properties (see images).

Poor Quality Buildings: There are some prominent buildings of poor quality in High Street (see images).

Servicing areas: There rear servicing areas and rear elevations of properties fronting High Street are clearly visible from some locations, for example when viewed from

the approach to the Railway Station or across the main car park. These are generally unsightly and would benefit from screening.

Poor quality site enclosures: There is corrugated fencing around a site on High Street.

Vacancy: There are some vacant and boarded-up commercial properties in or just off High Street, harming the character and appearance of those properties.

Maintenance and repair: Some properties are in need of maintenance and repair, though none are such poor condition that there is loss of historic fabric or danger of collapse.

Traffic Impacts: Church Street in particular is extremely busy at times, making crossing of the road difficult and creating harm through noise and disturbance.

Bins: Lack of bin storage areas means that some bins are stored in the public realm.



Car Parks: The main car park is asphalt surfaced and creates a poor quality of environment in the town centre. It also means that the rear, servicing elevations of commercial properties are on view. The car park is one of the most negative and harmful features in the Conservation Area.



Rear Service Areas: The topography and layout of the centre mean that some of the rear service areas of commercial properties are on view.



Poorly maintained building: The building on the right shows signs of weathering. Repair, painting and a well-designed full-width sign could improve the appearance of the property.



Traffic: Busy roads and parking create visual intrusion and noise and disturbance, in addition to making it difficult to cross the road in Church Street (above left).



Vacancy: Vacancy often involves the removal of signs and boarding up of properties, creating dead and unsightly frontages (above centre).



Bins: Lack of bin storage space is a common problem in historic areas (above).



Shopfronts and signage: There are numerous poor-quality shopfronts and signs (left). The example on the right has poorly designed and over-dominant signage, but the Modernist shopfront, with its glass corners, is of some architectural interest.



Management Plan



6. Management Plan Preservation and Enhancement

6.1 Statutory Basis for the Management Plan

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas.

Chapters 6 and 7 of this document comprise a Management Plan, responding to this requirement.

6.2 Key Principles

The key principles underpinning this management plan are:

- Chesham Conservation Area is based on a town centre and contains a concentration of shops and other commercial properties at its core;
- The continuing vitality and viability of the town centre is of fundamental importance to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;
- Conversely, the conservation of the historic environment is part of what makes Chesham attractive as a place to live, work, visit or invest;

- Most buildings are in productive use, including a range of town centre and commercial uses, community uses and residential accommodation;
- though there are vacant units and upper floors; which need to be brought back into productive use;
- Good conservation is about finding creative solutions to reconciling preservation and enhancement with realising the cultural, economic and social potential of the area.

6.3 Economic Value and Sustainability

- The historic environment creates competitive advantage for Chesham, making the town centre more attractive as a place to shop or spend leisure time, so enhancing its vitality.
- The quality of the historic environment helps to create a positive image of the town, which is an important factor in creating business confidence and attracting investment.
- Quality of environment is a factor for many people and businesses in deciding to locate in the town.
- The diverse nature of historic buildings provides varied floorspace, which is important in accommodating a range of retail, business, enterprise and other uses.
- Conservation of historic buildings retains the carbon used in their construction and avoids landfill. It also avoids use of carbon for replacement buildings. Historic materials tend to be more durable, sometimes surviving for centuries.

- The Conservation Area is effectively a walkable neighbourhood with a mix of uses in close-proximity (residential, commercial and community facilities) and good pedestrian connectivity and permeability, so supporting more sustainable live/work patterns.
- The Conservation Area includes green areas, water features, mature trees and other landscape features, providing valuable habitats and supporting biodiversity (in addition to local food growing).
- Research shows that historic environments support a higher proportion of independent businesses, and this is the case in Chesham.
- Conservation of historic fabric preserves the embodied energy invested in their materials and construction and avoids landfill and investment of carbon in new materials and construction.
- Terraced building forms provide natural insulation to adjoining properties.
- Maintenance of historic properties creates more skilled and higher-paid job opportunities in the construction sector.

Recommendation 1: Future planning, regeneration and economic development plans and strategies should recognise and seek to enhance the economic and cultural values of historic centres like Chesham.

6.4 High Street Vitality

There are some shop unit vacancies within the main shopping area, but overall a relatively low level of vacancy.

Local property values and rentals are reasonably healthy, but lower than in the nearby Amersham. Whilst this indicates a higher level of demand for commercial premises in Amersham, the lower rentals in Chesham are useful in attracting and retaining independent businesses, and this is reflected in the variety of businesses in and around the High Street.

The Conservation Area includes a variety of residential properties in easy walking distance of the Town Centre, and this catchment population is useful in supporting the vitality of the High Street. Further residential development within or close to the centre could enhance vitality further.

Recommendation 2: Future planning policies and site allocations, including any update to the Chesham Neighbourhood Plan, could seek to increase the residential catchment of Chesham town centre, to enhance high street vitality.

6.5 Enhancement

Public Realm

The High Street and main shopping areas have been subject to public realm works in the past, using red and brown paving bricks.

This is relatively unfussy, but the choice of red bricks means that the contrast between the ground and red brick buildings has been lost. Although not a priority, at some point it will be necessary to update the public realm and consideration could then be given to using high-quality contrasting materials, and perhaps reinstating curbs, subject to engaging with businesses and stakeholders.

The War Memorial is in a small-landscaped area. However, this is flanked by roads, creating an unattractive setting. The wider setting comprises a variety of building frontages and two distinctive churches. The road setting could be improved considerably by using alternative surfacing materials.

Market Square at present is fairly uncoordinated in terms of seating, planting containers, street furniture and bins. Market Square could be redesigned to create a multi-purpose public square of exemplary quality, to fully realise its social, community, cultural and economic potential.

An integrated approach is encouraged for the public realm, and liaison between the various agencies involved and the Conservation Team is encouraged. This includes coordination of street furniture, seating, ground surfaces, signs, bins, street lighting, information and interpretation boards, cycle and scooter parking, road markings, and planting.

Traditional, durable and permeable materials should be used for paving and public realm work.

Opportunities should be taken to enhance parking, including ground surfaces, pedestrian paths and landscaping. Where possible, traffic management should seek to relieve traffic congestion and reduce heavy traffic use from sensitive locations, including Church Street.

Main Car Park

The main car park provides a poor quality of environment in the town centre and provides clear views of unattractive rear servicing elevations.

Options to address this could include resurfacing and landscaping or a more comprehensive approach involving redesigning parking on part of the site and redevelopment of the other part (potentially increasing the residential population).

Vacant Units

Meanwhile uses for empty retail units will be encouraged and supported, where appropriate.

Where units are vacant, historic image or other films on windows could help to maintain attractive street frontages.



Market Square: Market Square does not fulfil its potential. This could be a key space for social, community, cultural and economic activities. At present it comprises an uncoordinated assembly of seating, planting containers, street furniture and bins. Comprehensive redesign of the space could deliver benefits in terms of character, but also culturally and economically.



War memorial: The immediate setting of the War Memorial is reasonably attractive, but the wider road setting could be improved considerably by using better surfacing materials.



Main Car Park: The main car park could provide an opportunity for enhancing the character of the Conservation Area, whilst improving parking provision, and providing a development opportunity.

Alterations

Various properties have been altered over the years, including loss of timber windows and doors and historic shopfronts. Poor quality shopfronts have been installed into several commercial units. Reinstatement of missing features and better shopfronts would enhance the character of the Conservation Area and the quality of the built environment.

Ensuring owners are aware of heritage protection creates many benefits, including awareness of works requiring consent and promoting good practice in the maintenance and management of properties.

Maintaining buildings in full productive use helps to ensure that they have a sustainable future and are maintained. This can include ‘meanwhile’ uses for commercial premises.

Use of conservation skilled and experienced professionals and craft persons is really important, to ensure that repairs and maintenance are properly specified and carried out, so that they enhance the building and do not cause additional problems and associated costs in the future.

Regular inspection, maintenance and repair, using conservation techniques and specifications, save money in the longer-term. Dealing with defects early prevents them from becoming more major and more expensive defects. Conservation standard repairs generally do not require consent, though the Conservation Team can provide advice.

In particular, defects that allow water penetration should be dealt with quickly, to avoid damp and other rapid deterioration. This can include roof and walling defects (such as slipped tiles), and blockages or vegetation growth to rainwater goods.

Regular painting of timber, using appropriate paints also help to avoid deterioration. Care is required with painted walls or plaster, for example in the use of breathable paint. Use of non-breathable paints can actually create damp problems by locking moisture into the wall. Natural brick, stone and other materials should not be painted. For brickwork, repointing using suitable lime mortar is necessary, to allow the wall to ‘breath’.

Defective features should be repaired where possible, rather than being replaced, to retain historic fabric as much as possible. Any new elements should be like-for-like in terms of materials, finishes, form, and profiling. This requires careful specification. Inappropriate and poorly finished materials should be avoided, for example replacement of timber features with uPVC (including doors and windows) or use of concrete roof tiles.

For many buildings, their energy performance can be improved, without significant harm to their significance. But care is required to maintain air movement and circulation, to keep the buildings in good condition and avoid issues like condensation. Upgrades can include carefully designed internal secondary glazing, installation of more energy efficient boilers, installing insulation in lofts and between floors, and correcting window defects, including draft-proofing.

Solar panels are an option where they can be discretely located on rear roof slopes, ensuring that they do not dominate the roofscape, and are carefully installed to be reversible at the end of their life.

Biodiversity enhancements can include installation or reinstatement of hedges and trees in boundaries and gardens, and minimising hard surfaced areas. Tree planting can enhance historic character and also provide shade and support surface water management.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has some useful guidance notes on maintenance:

<https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/technical-advice-notes>

Recommendation 3: Opportunities should be taken to enhance the quality of the public realm, as described above.

Recommendation 4: The reinstatement of missing architectural features and historic shopfronts is encouraged, including replacement of uPVC windows with timber windows with historically accurate profiles and glazing bars. When planning or listed building consents are required, reinstatement of missing architectural features and historic shopfront details should form part of the scheme.

Recommendation 5: Opportunities to obtain heritage or other funding to support repair, enhancement and bringing buildings back into use will be examined from time to time.

6.6 Protection

The Conservation Area provides a level of protection, including control over demolition, protection of certain trees and a duty to consider impacts of development on special architectural or historic interest and character or appearance. (Trees are only protected if they have a stem diameter of 75mm (or 3 inches) or more at 1.5 meters above the ground).

Many buildings are individually listed as buildings of special architectural or historic interest, so this creates a higher level of protection.

Article 4 Direction

Should the Council choose to do so, an Article 4 Direction could be made in the future to restrict permitted development rights.

One of the reasons for an Article 4 Direction could be to protect the stone setts ground surfaces, which are an important part of character.

Listing

Where appropriate, unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area which could be contenders for listing could be submitted to Historic England for consideration.

Recommendation 6: Additional protection will be considered, where appropriate, for example for surviving historic surfaces,

6.7 Effective Planning

The local planning authority has a statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, when considering development proposals affecting a Conservation Area, as follows:

‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.

There are also special duties relating to listed buildings (Sections 16 and 66).

In practice, this means ensuring that there is specialist design and heritage advice to inform decisions on planning applications affecting this and other conservation areas. It also means ensuring that decision-makers are aware of the special duties and have a good level of awareness of design and heritage issues.

Where unauthorised works are undertaken, formal enforcement will be considered in line with the public interest.

It should also be noted that undertaking works to listed buildings without listed building consent, where it is required, is a criminal offence, so care should be taken to seek advice and ensure any necessary consents are in place.

6.8 Commercial and Residential Owners (Advice)

The Council’s Heritage Team offers a pre-application service. This provides feedback which can help identify issues and suggest creative solutions to enhance the design quality of a scheme and help in obtaining necessary consents. This service can also be used to check the suitability of repair work and whether planning permission or listed building consent is required for proposed alterations or repair. Other Planning Pre-Application services are also available to cover specialisms such as Planning or Environment.

[https:// www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/conservation-heritage-and-archaeology/heritage/get-heritage-advice/](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/conservation-heritage-and-archaeology/heritage/get-heritage-advice/).

Management Plan: Design Guidelines

7.1 Analysis of Recent Development

The following pages comprise an analysis of late 20th and 21st century development in Chesham.

The special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area is based on different periods of construction, with significant elements from medieval to early 20th century. However, there are no architecturally significant buildings from the later 20th or 21st centuries in the Conservation Area.

The following design guidelines seek to improve the standard of design in development.

Residential development Germain Street

This scheme complements the character of the Conservation Area in its townscape characteristics (scale, massing, rear-of-pavement frontage). The materials complement the character of the area.

The stepping of the elevations and variation of the roof form works to some extent in breaking down the massing, though greater variation in materials may have been helpful.

Architecturally, the scheme is adequate, but not outstanding, so it preserves character, but does not add to the special architectural or historic interest of the area.



Commercial development east of High Street

The two schemes above are close to each other, both fronting High Street. Although they are commercial schemes, they have strong similarities to housing estate standard house styles. Both are characterised by crude detailing and generic design, which owes little to the historic context. Both detract from the character of the Conservation Area.



Commercial development west of High Street

The schemes below complement the character of the area in terms of their townscape (scale, massing, enclosure) and have a better standard of detailing than the above schemes. The materials used also complement the character of the area. However, both are architecturally inconsequential, so they add nothing to the special architectural interest of the area.



Development in Wey Lane

The scheme on the top left is immediately adjacent to the group of historic buildings shown top centre. The set-back of the building behind parking spaces ignores the historic townscape character, which is based on rear-of-pavement frontages. The generic design and crude detailing fail to respond to the historic context. This scheme very clearly harms the character of the Conservation Area.



Other Development

The schemes below are generic and crude in their form, materials and detailing.



7.2 Design Guidelines Overview

The local planning authority has a statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990) when considering development proposals affecting a Conservation Area:

‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.

The following design code and guidance should be helpful for developers and decision makers in responding to this requirement. The guidance should apply to development in a Conservation Area or affecting its setting.

The guidance could be incorporated or adapted into future planning policy documents, including Local and Neighbourhood Plans.

The aim of the guidance is to make sure that the design of development, including new build, alterations and extensions, is based on an understanding of the ‘special architectural or historic interest’ and ‘character’ of the area.

The intention is not to impose stylistic parody or imitation or to prevent creative or green design. Indeed, the intention is to positively support high quality contemporary architecture.

7.3 Character of the Conservation Area

Development, including new build, extensions and alterations, should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Chesham Conservation Area, including by responding to the following key elements of special interest and character:

- a. The history of the settlement, with evidence of prehistoric and Roman occupation, and based the Anglo-Saxon settlement around the church and the Bury;
- b. The historic town centre, with a concentration of historic buildings from different periods, and a high level of survival of Medieval buildings and fabric, with much altered and refaced in later centuries;
- c. There is also significant development from Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and later 20th century period;
- d. The High Street as a core feature;
- e. Commercial streets and spaces enclosed and defined by rear-of-pavement, conjoined building frontages, including High Street, Market Square and Red Lion Street (predominantly of 2-3 storeys, but with some variation);
- f. Residential streets with domestic scale buildings, some with rear of pavement building frontages and some set back behind front gardens;
- g. Architectural diversity and contrasts, created by buildings of different periods of construction and including formal and distinctive architecture and domestic, functional or vernacular buildings;
- h. Openings between and through buildings, linking to rear yards and streets;

- i. The Church of St Mary and its churchyard as a key landmark and space;
- j. Topography, including the slope of Lowndes Park and the elevated position of the Church of St Mary, which is visible from multiple locations;
- k. The Town's Park, Lowndes Park and the adjacent Bury Pond landscape, both of which formed part of the landscape grounds of Bury Hill Gate (now demolished) and the Bury;
- l. The River Chess and other features;
- m. Mature trees, hedges, allotments, and gardens throughout the area;
- n. Boundary treatments, including historic walls, metal railings and hedges;
- o. The varied palette of traditional and historic materials including timber frame construction with render and brick infill, red or brown brick, flint rubble walling, roughcast render, terracotta, stone, plain clay tiles and some use of slate; and timber doors, windows, and other building features;
- p. The range of architectural detailing, including shopfronts, chimneys, doors, windows, and other detail;
- q. The River Chess valley setting of the Conservation area.

Development should respond positively and creatively to the elements of character relevant to the site and context, to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Area.

Design and Access Statements and/or Heritage Statements provide an opportunity to explain how character has been considered in the design of the scheme.

7.4 Site and Context:

Development should complement the specific site and surrounding context in terms of:

- a. Height, scale and massing;
- b. Set-back of frontages from the road;
- c. The spacing between properties;
- d. Any established pattern of front or rear garden spaces.

This applies to new build and extensions. The predominant height of buildings in Chesham is 2-3 storeys, with a few taller buildings. Care is required not to overdevelop sites, for example by building excessively over garden space or using excessive height or massing compared to historic properties in the surrounding context.

7.5 Materials

Development, including new build, extensions and alterations, should use high quality and durable materials with a good standard of finish, including:

- a. **Traditional materials (new or recycled) to complement the local context: or**
- b. **Combining traditional materials with high-quality modern materials, including materials with low embodied energy or materials and construction with superior environmental performance;**
- c. **Avoiding unsustainable, imitation or substitute materials, such as wood-grained plastic.**

The existing built environment uses a wide palette of materials, including timber frame construction with render and brick infill, red or brown brick, flint rubble walling, roughcast render, terracotta, stone, plain clay tiles and some use of slate; and timber doors, windows, and other building features. Traditional ground surface materials include Denner Hill stone setts, kerbs and gullies.

For new build and extensions, combining traditional and more contemporary and green materials can be an effective way of complementing historic character, whilst also representing the 21st Century. For very small scale additions and alterations, it makes more sense to use matching traditional materials.

7.6 Extensions and Alterations

Extensions and alterations should be designed to complement the specific building and context, including:

- a. **Extensions should be subservient in its scale and massing, so that they do not dominate the original building and should take account of the historic urban grain and spacing between buildings;**
- b. **Alterations should minimise the impact on the building's historic fabric and detailing;**
- c. **Opportunities should be taken to reinstate original features, like replacement of uPVC windows with traditional timber windows, with original style glazing bars;**
- d. **Works should use traditional materials to complement the building, or combine traditional materials with very high-quality modern materials;**
- e. **Unsustainable, imitation or substitute materials, such as wood-grained plastic should be avoided;**
- f. **Work to improve environmental performance should be sensitively designed to minimise visual impacts and adverse impacts on historic fabric.**

Sometimes, it can be better to use contrasting materials for extensions. Extensions need to sit well with the existing property, and sometimes simple contemporary solutions can work well. However, for very small extensions, matching materials may be better.

Air extraction equipment and vents should be discretely located on rear elevations, where possible invisible from the public realm.

Care is required with external works to improve environmental performance, for example by positing photovoltaics on rear roof plains and ensuring that the works are reversible.

7.7 Creative and Green Design

Creative and green design solutions may be supported where they are designed for the specific site and context and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

The character of the Conservation Area is strongly based on architectural quality and diversity, with many contrasts. Some buildings and rows of properties have elements from different centuries.

Adding a high-quality 21st century contemporary building, designed for the specific site and context, would respond to this in a more meaningful way than crude historical parody or generic 'anywhere' design.

Crude imitation of distinctive listed buildings can be particularly harmful, as they start to merge with their setting, so should be avoided.

7.8 Shopfronts and Advertisements

Development to commercial frontages should be designed for the specific buildings and context and:

- a. Retain historic shopfronts or surviving features from historic shopfronts;
- b. Take opportunities to repair and reinstate historic shopfronts to their original state;
- c. Complement the individual identity of each shop and building;
- d. Use high quality materials, to complement the wider building;
- e. Design and position signs to fit and complement shop front facias and features;
- f. Avoid over-dominant, over-lit or insensitively positioned fascia or projecting signage.

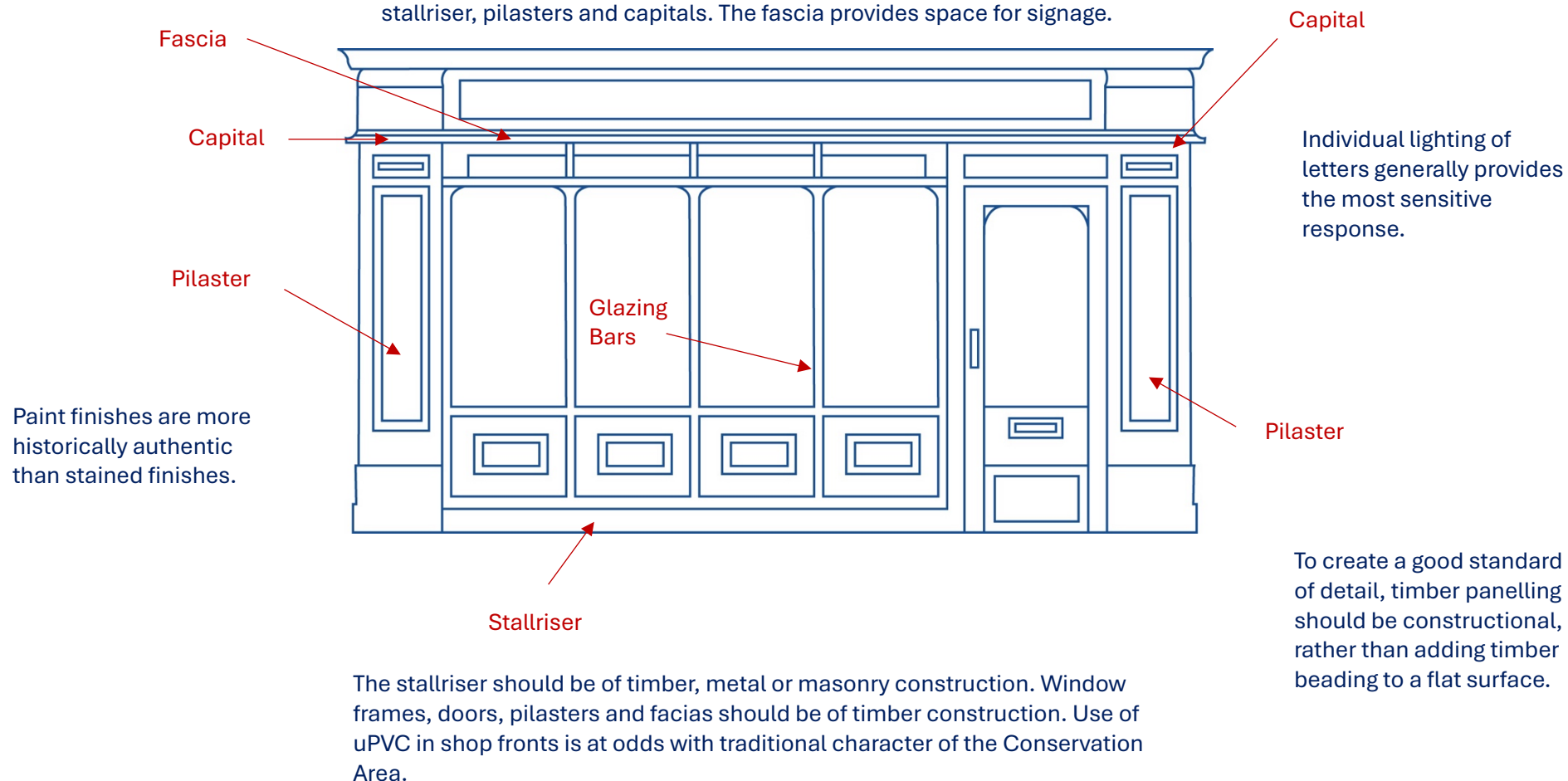
Development involving the conversion or alteration of commercial historic buildings should take opportunities to reinstate historic shopfronts and reverse any previous unsympathetic alterations.

Shopfronts should complement the building frontage above, for example in the use of traditional materials.

Plastic and high gloss back boards, strip lighting and strip lighting should be avoided. Preference will be given to individual lettering.

The following diagram describes the main features of traditional shopfronts.

The main elements of a traditional shopfront are the fascia, door, windows, stallriser, pilasters and capitals. The fascia provides space for signage.



7.9 Trees and Landscape

Development should incorporate soft landscaping wherever appropriate and preserve or enhance the area's green and blue features, including:

- a. The open and green character of Lowndes Park, and Bury Pond and its environs;
- b. The churchyard of the Church of St Mary;
- c. The allotments off Germain Street and Wey Lane;
- d. Mature trees and hedgerows, also taking care to ensure that development does not cause harm to roots;
- e. The River Chess, ponds, streams and other water features.

Green and blue features (infrastructure) include grassed and landscaped areas, trees, hedges, gardens, and water features. These are all fundamental parts of the character of the Conservation Area.

The policy is not intended to impede the management or adaptation of the park, to meet the community's needs, but to ensure that its open and green character is maintained.

7.8 Hard Surfaces

Hard surfaces within development should be minimised and should use high-quality and water-permeable materials, with appropriate landscaping.

The reinstatement of historic surfaces is encouraged, including retaining and re-using Denner Hill stone setts and kerbs.

7.10 Pedestrian Environment

Development should take opportunities to provide safe and convenient pedestrian links to surrounding streets, paths and spaces, to complement the historic character and also to create sustainable and walkable neighbourhood.

Chesham Town Centre was developed historically as a mixed use and walkable places (centuries before cars were introduced). This includes pedestrian links through and between buildings. By complementing the existing layout and providing convenient links, development can enhance the character of the area, and also improve pedestrian permeability and connectivity.

It is important to maintain the Conservation Area as a walkable neighbourhood, with mixed uses and good pedestrian permeability and connectivity.

Local authority highways guidance should be taken into account.

7.11 Views

Development should take opportunities to enhance and not cause harm to the views throughout the Conservation Area, including:

- a. views of the spire of the Church of St Mary and other landmark buildings;
- b. views to the surrounding valley landscape.

Development sometimes offers the opportunity to frame views to surrounding landmarks and features, which can make schemes more distinctive and attractive.

- e. Taking opportunities to use or reinstate historic ground surface materials, where possible;
- f. Taking opportunities to reduce traffic impacts, through traffic management well-designed parking.

Close liaison is encouraged, to reconcile transport needs with complementing the character of the Conservation Area.

7.12 Street Furniture and Infrastructure

Street furniture and transport infrastructure should be designed to preserve or enhance the area's character, including:

- a. Retaining and repairing Denner Hill stone setts, kerbs and gullies and relaying them using traditional techniques and not setting them in concrete;
- b. Avoiding street clutter, as far as possible;
- c. Carefully designing and positioning charging points and other infrastructure;
- d. Using historic designs for street lighting, or high-quality contemporary designs;



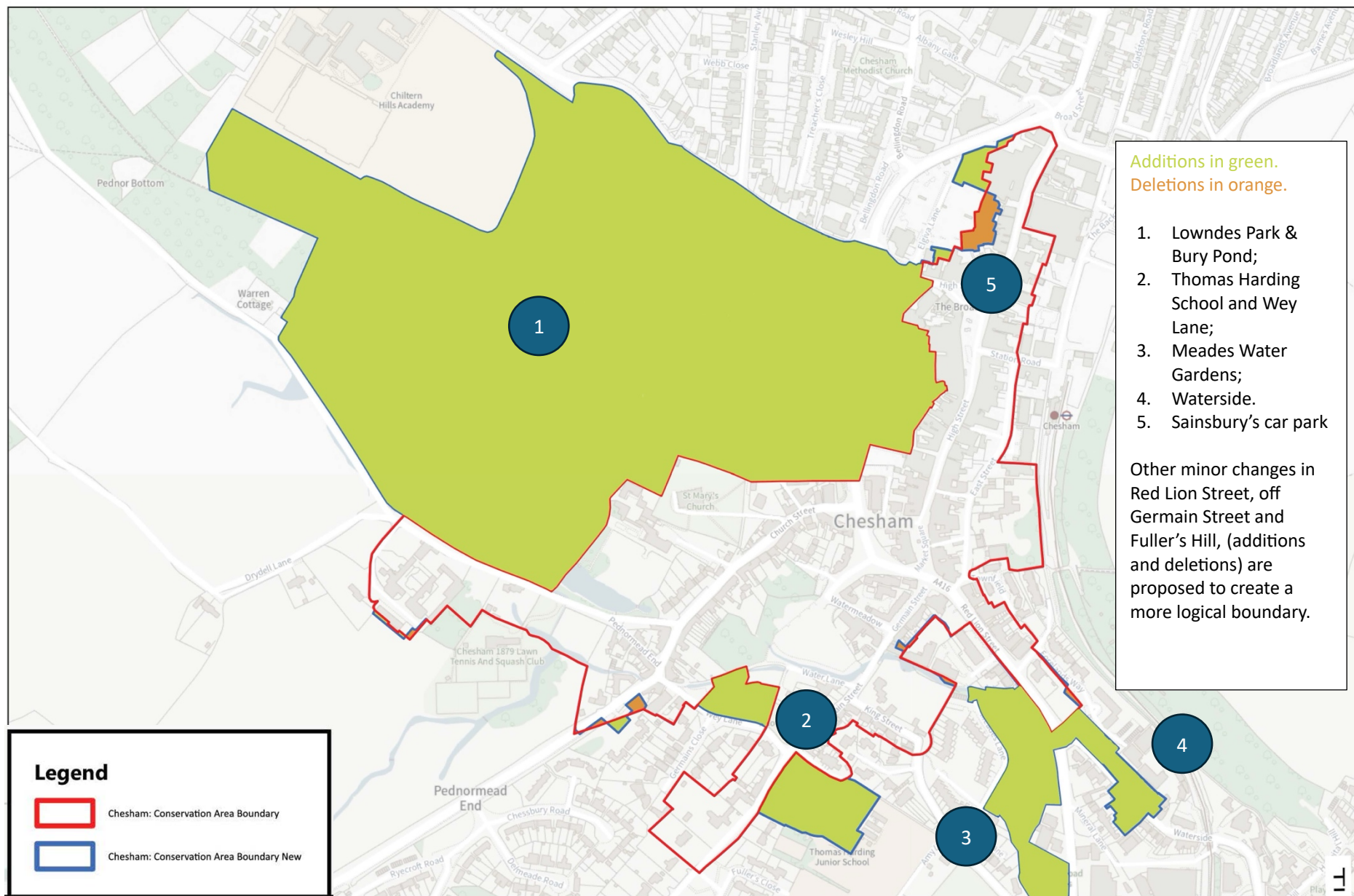
7. Boundary Review

8.1 Statutory Duty

Chesham Conservation Area was last revised in 1987. Perceptions of heritage change over time and characteristics which underpin their 'special architectural or historic interest' and 'character' can be enhanced or eroded.

Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires and enables local authorities to review whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas.

Following Public Consultation, proposed changes to the boundary will be taken forward for formal designation by Buckinghamshire Council. This section of this document provides justification. This character appraisal and management plan document will be adopted at the same time as the designation of the amended boundaries.



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Chesham: New Conservation Area Boundary

0 100 200 Meters
Scale: 1:3,750

Author: GIS Team - Buckinghamshire Council

Date: 22/06/2026



8.2 Proposed Changes

For the Chesham Conservation Area, the following changes to the boundary have been identified.

Lowndes Park and Bury Pond Landscape (1)

Lowndes Park originally formed part of the grounds of Bury Hill Gate (now demolished) and the Bury.

The park was redesigned as a public park in the 20th century, and in 1953 the majority of the park was conveyed to the Urban District Council.

Bury Pond and its environs (off Pednor Road) was also part of the former grounds of Bury Hill Gate and the Bury. The main features of the landscape are the Bury Pond and its environs, including mature trees and foliage.

As part of the historic grounds to Bury Hill Gate and the Bury, both Lowndes Park and Bury Pond landscape areas contribute to the special historic interest of the Conservation Area. They are also part of the wider landscape setting of the Town Centre and the Church of St Mary.



Landscape Area: Lowndes Park (above left) and Bury Pond and its environs (above right) are proposed as extensions to the Conservation Area.

Awaiting image

Thomas Harding School and Housing in Wey Lane (2)

The Thomas Harding School is a multi-gabled Edwardian school, of brick and tile construction with roughcast gables and large timber windows to the frontage. The building is asymmetrical and an example of the freestyle architecture of the time.

The nearby housing in Wey Lane is of red brick and plain clay tile construction, with stone dressings, decorative ridge tiles and brick chimneys. Some properties have dormers and front bays. There are shallow front gardens and low brick walls to the front of properties.

Edwardian architecture has been undervalued in the past. Both the school and housing represent the development of Chesham in the Edwardian period, contributing to the special architectural or historic interest and character of the Conservation Area.



Edwardian Extensions: Thomas Harding School, Fullers Hill (above) and housing in Wey Lane (below).



Meades Water Gardens, Red Lion Street (3)

The Meades Water Gardens is on the site of a former mill pond and watercress beds. The focus of the area is the River Chess, which is a key feature though the wider Conservation Area.

The area includes remaining historic features in the form of a sluice gate and Chalybeate Spring. The latter dates from 1820 and is a distinctive small red-brick and flint structure with castellations.



Meades Water Gardens: Landscaped area, based around the River Chess and former mill pond.

Waterside (4)

Waterside is a road leading to and from the Town Centre, on the southeast side. Part of the road is flanked by brick or brick/flint walling. Further out, the road is flanked by red brick terraces, much altered and some with painted or rendered frontages.

Across the road from these is the former John Hayes & Son boot factory, now the Bagnall Centre. This is a three storey brick building, with contrasting colour brick detailing, and camber headed windows and openings. The building, together with the terrace opposite, has a distinctive industrial townscape character and is part of the special architectural or historic interest of the area.

Awaiting image

Sainsbury's car park, off High Street (5)

The development of Sainsbury's and the associated car parking have created an anomaly in the boundary of the Conservation Area, which runs through the middle of the car park.

The car park does not contribute to the special interest of the Conservation Area and harms its character. The boundary is proposed to be amended to include buildings and exclude the car park, to create a more logical boundary.

Other Changes (unnumbered)

Other minor changes are proposed in Red Lion Street, off Germain Street and Fuller's Hill, to make the Conservation Area boundary coincide with physical features on the ground, to create a more logical and definable boundary.

8. Frequently Asked Questions

Does the Conservation Area restrict the development of the town?

To the contrary, heritage often forms a basis for regeneration and is helpful in attracting people to the Town, so it enhances vitality.

Does the Conservation Area designation prevent properties from being altered?

The character of the Conservation Area is based on change over the centuries. Conservation Area status does not prevent properties from being changed and adapted, but does ensure that buildings, extensions and alterations take account of the 'special architectural or historic interest' and 'character or appearance' of the area.

Does Conservation Area designation remove permitted development rights?

There are still permitted development rights in conservation areas, but they can be more restrictive. More information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/when-is-permission-required#What-are-permitted-development-rights>

Is permission required for maintenance works to properties?

Repairs and like-for-like maintenance works would not normally require planning permission. Advice should be sought if maintenance works involve building alterations.

Does the Conservation Area status protect trees?

Similar protection applies as to Tree Preservation Orders, so the local authority would need to be notified of any proposed works involving trees. Please note, some trees in the area are also subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

Is permission required for works to the interior of a building?

Consent would not normally be required for internal alterations, unless the works involved partial demolition of the building, or subdivision associated with a material change of use, for example converting upper floors above shops. If a building is listed, then 'listed building consent' may be required for some works, including interior works.

How would I find out if my building is listed?

You can check whether a building is listed here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

9. Information and Sources

National Planning Policy Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Planning Practice Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

Conservation Professional Practice Principles 2017, IHBC, Historic Towns and Villages Forum, Civic Voice.

<https://ihbc.org.uk/Conservation-Professional-Practice-Principles/>

Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management, Historic England

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/>

National Design Guide

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

Sharing Wycombe's Old Photographs (web site)

<https://swop.org.uk>

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (advice)

<https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/technical-advice-notes>

National Record of the Historic Environment

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/support-and-collaboration/heritage-information-access-simplified/data-transfer-to-historic-environment-records/>

The Buildings of England – Buckinghamshire, Pevsner and Williamson, Yale University Press, 2003.

Buckinghamshire's Heritage Portal

<https://heritageportal.buckinghamshire.gov.uk>

The Victoria County History

<https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history>

Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/conservation-heritage-and-archaeology/archaeology/historic-environment-record/>

Buckinghamshire Local Heritage List

<https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/buckinghamshire>

Historic Town Survey Report for Chesham 2012

<https://media.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/documents/chesham-final-report.pdf>

10. Selected Glossary

Planning Terms are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The following is a selected glossary.

Casement Window: A hinged opening window.

Conservation Areas: Areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, designated under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Dormer Window: A type of window that projects from the slope of the roof.

Formal (Polite) Architecture: This refers to formally designed architecture, usually using a set of principles associated with a particular style, such as Classical, Gothic or Modern.

Gable: The pointed section of wall at the ends of a pitched roof.

Listed Buildings: Building of special architectural or historic interest, which benefit from additional controls and have different grades (1, II* and II).

Polite Architecture: See Formal Architecture.

Rainwater Goods: Guttering and downpipes.

Rear-of-pavement frontage: Building frontage directly onto the back of the pavement, rather than being set back behind a front court or garden.

Sash Window: A window type with two sliding elements in a frame, often with fine glazing bars.

Spatial Character: Character derived from the combination of layout, townscape and topography and the way they define streets and spaces.

Terrace: A conjoined row of buildings, either developed together in a uniform style, or developed incrementally, with contrasting styles.

Tree Preservation Order: An order made by a local planning authority in England to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity.

Vernacular Buildings: Buildings using local and traditional materials, not architect designed.

11. Authorship

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