



PRIORY AVENUE

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

INTRODUCTION

Priory Avenue Conservation Area was first designated in 1976 as a part of the High Wycombe Conservation Area and later extended in 1989 where it was also designated as a separate conservation area. It is characterised as a Victorian suburb of High Wycombe, a part of the town's rapid expansion during the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century, and contains several examples of late Victorian Gothic style semi-detached houses, as well as the impressive Hamilton School, an example of an 1870's board school by notable local architect Arthur Vernon. Castle Hill House, a late 17th century manor house, also lies within the area.

Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, which are considered worthy of preservation or enhancement. They are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Government Guidance states that conservation areas should have an up-to-date appraisal.

Within Conservation Areas there are special controls on some alterations to buildings and their demolition or partial demolition and on works to trees. More details on the specific controls that apply can be found in the Council's guidance note on conservation areas.

Designation of a conservation area does not preclude the possibility of new development, and preservation should not be thought of as a purely negative process or as an impediment to progress. New development, where appropriate, must however be carefully designed to positively enhance the appearance and special character of the area

The designation of a conservation area imposes specific duties on local authorities to formulate and publish proposals to ensure that the special characteristics of the conservation area are preserved and enhanced. This conservation area appraisal describes the main features of the special architectural and historic interest that justifies the designation of Priory Avenue as a conservation area, and proposes amendments to the conservation area boundary to better reflect this special character.



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Listed building consent is required for works to the listed buildings in the conservation area, whilst planning permission is needed for all changes to their fences, gates and other means of enclosure.

There are additional **planning controls** on non-listed buildings within conservation areas, in addition to usual planning permission requirements.

Wycombe District Council Contacts

For general planning enquiries contact Development Management on 01494 421219.

For policy issues contact the Policy team on 01494 421581.

For queries regarding this appraisal contact the Conservation section on 01494 421527.

Most new development requires **Building Regulation Approval**. For further information on Building Regulations Approval. For further information on Building Regulations please contact a Building Control Surveyor on 01494 421403, or see the District Council website www.wycombe.gov.uk

CHAPTER 1

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The designation of a conservation area influences the way in which a Local Planning Authority applies its planning policies to the area. It ensures that any alterations or extensions to buildings within or adjacent to the conservation area respect the special characteristics identified in this document, and in local planning policies.

National policy and guidance is contained in:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- National Planning Policy Framework (published March 2012)
- English Heritage: Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (2005)
- English Heritage: Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (2005)

Regional guidance on design issues is contained in the Chilterns Building Design Guide. This guidance has been supplemented by Advice Notes on Flint, Brick and Roofing materials, which provide useful guidance on materials.

Local Policy: The Wycombe District Local Plan was adopted in 2004 and as a result of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) is gradually being replaced by a series of new local plans. In 2008 the Council adopted the Core Strategy, which replaces a number of policies in the 2004 Local Plan. The Council is in the early stages of producing new Local Plans. Until these are completed the following policies relating to Conservation Areas in the 2004 Local Plan are still in place: HE 6,8,10,11,12,13, 14 and 15.

More information on the status of the Local Plan and production of the WDF is available on the Council website.

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST

The Priory Avenue Conservation Area is based on a mid Victorian residential layout immediately north of High Wycombe town centre, built on sloping land as an enclave for the middle classes. It includes the grade II listed Castle Hill House with fine flint work which is currently the town's museum. In the grounds lie the remains of a motte and the museum gardens provide a green space in an otherwise built up area.

Most of the residential development along Priory Road and Priory Avenue is two and three storey Victorian semis, mainly in brick with slate roofs.

Hamilton County Combined School's building on Priory Road is an imposing building within the conservation area, in red brick and slate. A new housing development has replaced Lady Verney School, although



Glossary of architectural terms:

Some architectural description requires the use of specialised terms and phrases to describe particular details of a building. A useful glossary can be found in Pevsner's "The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire"

the frontage of the original main school building has been retained and incorporated into the new development.

The area also contains 24 Priory Avenue, which between 1930 and her death in 1942 was the home of Dame Frances Dove, founder of the Wycombe Abbey School and first woman town councillor of High Wycombe.

A key feature of the area are the wide roads with avenues of trees, which makes for a leafy environment which adds to the attractiveness of the area. There is only one listed building within the Priory Avenue Conservation Area, the aforementioned Castle Hill House.



CHAPTER 3 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

Location and population

The area is located to the north of the historic core of High Wycombe, on the lower slopes of the hills that rise to the north of the town. The development was based around Priory Road, then known as Cemetery Road, which arcs from the town centre near the church of All Saints to the Amersham Hill following the curve of the hillside. Priory Avenue largely follows the path of an earlier track that wound its way northwards from Castle Hill crossing Priory Road. The earlier network of tracks was by and large retained as the area built up, centred on the crossroads where Priory Road and Priory Avenue meet.

The area covers 7.69 hectares and includes 62 buildings (119 units) and ancillary structures.

General character and plan form

Priory Avenue Conservation Area is primarily residential in character. Now, as one hundred years ago, the area is a middle class suburb of the town of High Wycombe; it initially developed as a part of the Victorian expansion of the town. The character of the area changes from the south east of the area to the north west. This is a roughly chronological development of the area, illustrating how building practises and styles changed in the space of the 50 or so years between the initial houses of Priory Avenue and the later houses of Benjamin Road, culminating in the modern development on Lady Verney Close. The effect is diminished somewhat by modern alterations made to some of the properties on Benjamin Road.

Landscape context

The Bucks Landscape Plan identifies the area as type Z9: River Valleys. Priory Avenue Conservation Area is on the side of the river valley slope, and lies to the north of the ancient watercourse of the Wye and east of its tributary, the Hughenden Stream (both now diverted and culverted beneath modern development).



2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Origins and historic development

Priory Avenue developed as a Victorian suburb of High Wycombe during the Victorian expansion of High Wycombe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The earliest ordinance survey maps for the area show Priory Road itself already laid out in 1875. On this map it was named Cemetery Road. By 1899 the road was renamed Priory Road, for a priory that was thought to be located toward the bottom of the road in Castle Street.

The earliest origins of the area though go back much further, to the castle which is thought to have once been situated within the conservation area at the site of Castle Hill House. The existence of Wycombe Castle is a subject of some scholarly debate. One school of thought believes that it was besieged during the Civil Wars of King Stephen's reign, based on two charters that were issued during this time ending with the words 'at Wycombe during the siege'. The castle was otherwise rarely mentioned and by 1420 was described as an 'old castell' having fallen into disuse in the intervening years. Confusion arises from the lack of archaeological evidence at the site, which coupled with the use of "apud" in the charter which can be taken to mean "in the region of" rather than merely "at", suggests that the castle under siege may have been Desborough Castle, or another local fort. Castle Hill House was erected on the site in the late 17th century, by which time the true origins of the site were lost to history.

The area's development – apart from a few scattered earlier buildings – commenced in the latter part of the 19th century with the construction of Hamilton County Combined School in 1873. By 1899, the Victorian expansion of High Wycombe was in full swing with many of the wealthy upper and middle class residents of the town relocating to new properties outside the town centre. The wealthiest relocated to large villa-style houses on Amersham Hill, while the middle classes occupied new houses on the lower slopes of the hill or on Priory Avenue. At this time a few houses were also erected along Priory Road.

The completion of the direct railway link to London in 1906 brought with it further expansion of the town, with the northern stretch of Priory Avenue, Benjamin Road and the roads beyond it all dating from this period or later. Priory Avenue may also owe its expansion to the furniture industry with Glenisters furniture factory and 8 Temple End amongst others within the locality providing employment for workers within the chair industry. Hence while the earlier stage of development was seemingly for the middle classes, this part of the area would appear to have been provided for artisans and lower class residents.

Education also plays a key role in the history and character of the area as until 1988 the area was home to two schools. Hamilton County Combined School as mentioned was erected in 1873 and remains largely unaltered from its original construction. The former school buildings in Benjamin Road were the home of Wycombe High School from 1906, after the



1901 photo showing the original Victorian development on Priory Avenue, Francis Dove's house prominent to the left. Note the lack of the characteristic avenue of trees.



The later development on the northern part of Priory Avenue, 1923. The avenue of trees is very much present and correct in this photo.

All historic photographs courtesy of SWOP, Bucks County Council and the Bucks Free Press

girl's classes were relocated from the Clock House in Frogmoor. The High School relocated in 1956 to new premises on Marlow Hill and the Benjamin Road site remained in educational use as the Lady Verney High School until 1988-9 when it moved to larger premises in Kingshill Road (and in 1993 amalgamated with Wycombe High School). With the site vacated by the school, it was redeveloped to provide housing.

Archaeology

The supposed site of Wycombe's 12th-century castle, the motte and bailey within the grounds of the Wycombe Museum, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and its English Heritage description also refers to it having been the site of a Saxon burial. As the castle was besieged during the civil wars of King Stephen's reign there may be archaeological remains elsewhere within the conservation area related to this siege. This presents significant potential for important archaeological discoveries within the conservation area. Areas of known archaeological potential are identified on an "archaeological notification map" which is supplied to the local planning authorities and regularly updated. Where development may affect archaeological remains the Council may request that applicant supply an archaeological evaluation report as part of their planning application, and may seek preservation in situ or impose a condition requiring archaeological investigation in accordance with national and local planning guidance and policies.

The Bucks Historic Towns Project

In order to better understand the evolution of our towns and with a view to contributing towards their future management, the County Archaeological Service, in conjunction with the Milton Keynes Design and Conservation Team, is undertaking a survey of the 30 historic towns in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. This project, largely funded by English Heritage, is part of a national programme of urban characterisation which aims to examine historic towns from their earliest origins up to the present day. The project method uses archaeological data, maps, photographs and documentary sources, as well as information gathered from visits to each town. On completion, the project will have compiled the information into an easily accessible database for all the towns. There will be a series of digital maps that will characterise each townscape and its development. The project will also produce individual illustrated reports for each town.

The data for the project will be held by the Historic Environment Records (HER) for Buckinghamshire. The project covers the whole town as opposed to this appraisal which deals with the historic core conservation area.

Buckinghamshire County Council's Archaeology Service has recently completed the Bucks Historic Landscape Characterisation. The Historic Landscape Characterisation project has assessed the various components of the landscape such as fields, woodland and settlement, and maps the results into a Geographical Information System (GIS); this is a flexible, digital mapping system that enables other aspects of the landscape to be recorded and updated when necessary.



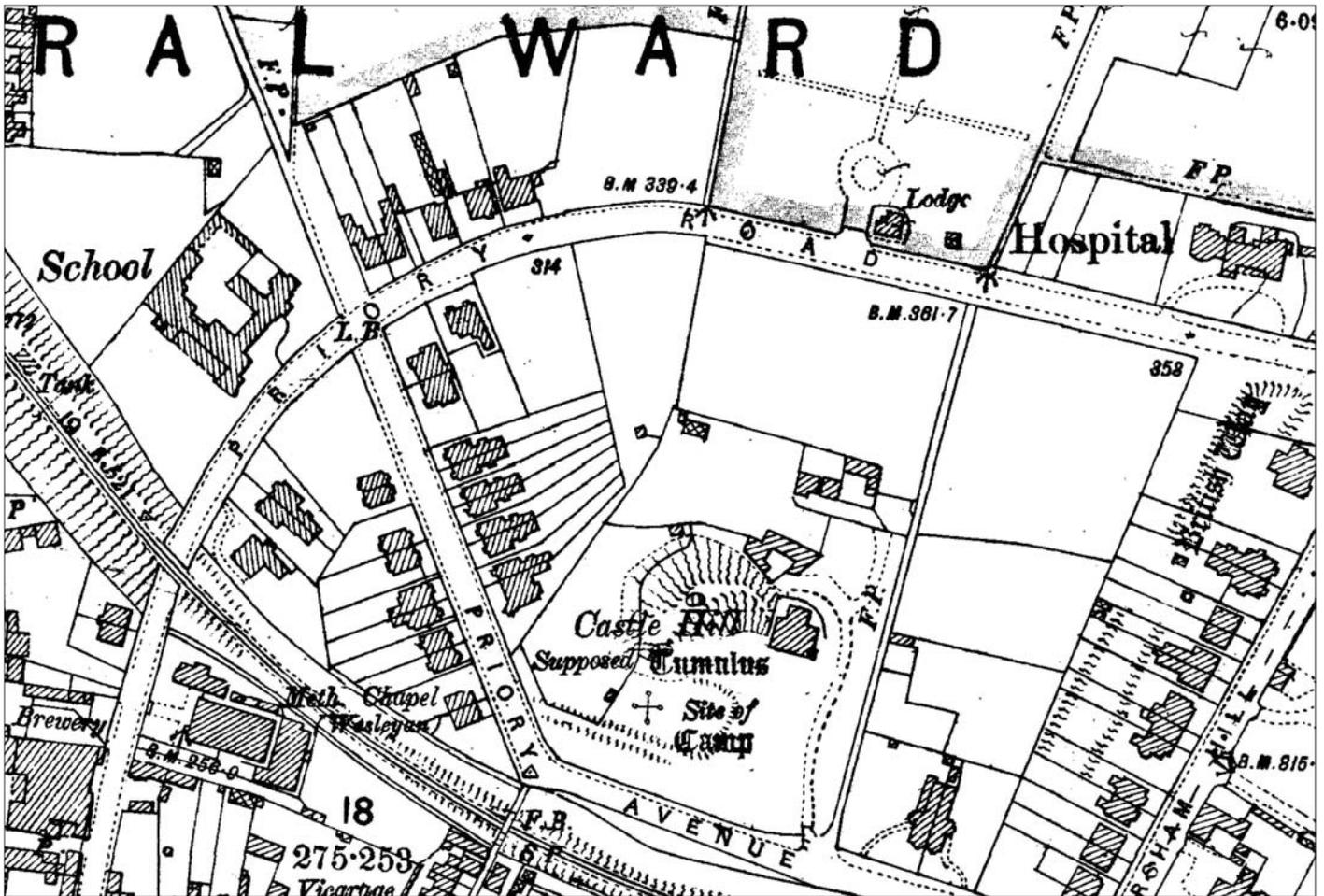
Castle Hill House in 1890.



Priory Road School in 1890. The pyramid spire seen to the right of the photo was later taken down and replaced with balustrading.



Wycombe High School, later Lady Verney School, in 1923. The frontage of the original school building remains following the site's conversion to housing, however the other buildings on the site were demolished.



1899 OS showing the early development of Priory Avenue and Priory Road. At this time the road north of the school was just a track with no housing. Also indicated are the former Borough hospital and a fine Victorian semi-detached pair, both of which were later demolished.

In the case of High Wycombe the landscape characterisation can add an understanding of the wider historic landscape. Some of this information has been incorporated into the appraisal text above, further information can be obtained from the Archaeology pages on the Buckinghamshire County Council website - www.buckscc.gov.uk

Historic maps

1899 / 1925 Ordnance Survey (OS). 1899's OS map shows the original Victorian development in the area. 1925 shows the expansion of the next quarter century northwards. For comparison, the 1876 OS shows the original layout of tracks in the area which would eventually provide the road network.

3 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

The area is mostly characterised by Victorian and Edwardian era housing, with building lines close to the line of the streets. This means that the gardens, which form the majority of spaces in the area, are concealed from public view. They can occasionally be glimpsed through alleys between buildings. A key space within the area is Castle Hill House, whose grounds provide a pocket of green space in the otherwise suburban street scene. This area, screened from the street by walls and a line of trees, is open to the public for recreation and is a valuable

asset. The playground of Hamilton County Combined School is another open space, albeit not one generally available to public use except intermittently as a car park. The playground does serve together with the railway to separate the area from the town. Outside the area to the north is the town cemetery, which provides green views when looking north, and also separates and screens the area from modern developments on the west side of Amersham Hill beyond. The Victorian portion of the development at the south feels more enclosed, due to the imposing height of the buildings and their tight-fitted layout. The Edwardian and Georgian era buildings to the north are lower by comparison and some feature driveway access (or potentially given the workshop at rear of 8 Temple End, cart access?) to rear yards, lending the area a slightly more open feel.

Important views and vistas

Views of the area are generally limited in part due to the curved road layout, the changes in elevation, and the height of the buildings within the area. However several pleasing views of the area are clustered around the crossroads of Priory Avenue and Priory Road. Standing here, the view north gradually gives way to the green of the cemetery, the view east presents an impressive view of the Victorian housing and the rows of trees outside, and the south-west grants a view of Hamilton County Combined School. Standing beneath the railway bridge to the south of the area affords an excellent view of the south facing elevation of the school with its row of buttresses.

4 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Activity and land use

The original character of the area was residential, with each dwelling being home to multiple generations of a single family. This persists to this day, although with some degradation as some buildings have been converted to multiple occupancy. Commercial use has crept in as some buildings have been repurposed for business use, although they retain the original character of the buildings. The other main activity that characterised the area was education; the loss of the Lady Verney School has diminished this aspect of the area somewhat.

Architectural and historical quality of buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area

Castle Hill, site of the Wycombe Museum, is the only listed building within the area, the rear range dating from the late 17th century. Grade II listed, the frontage block is in flint with pilasters at angles and between bays. The flint range probably dates from 1778, according to a date stone on the west side. The door features a traceried elliptical fanlight. The roof is a hipped Welsh slate roof, with a wide eaves cornice. The rear portion of the building is roughcast with a tiled roof and painted white, with a rear wing dating from the 18th century. The building was the residence of the Clarkes until it was sold to the Council in 1962.

A cluster of outbuildings are located to the rear of the main building. Mostly rebuilt in recent years, one has flint elevations, and is a windowless



View of the cemetery, looking north from Benjamin Road. The cemetery provides a green backdrop and a natural division between Priory Avenue and Amersham Hill.



View from the cemetery lodge, looking west down Priory Road. The local vegetation creates a pleasing view.



View looking south along Priory Avenue from the junction with Benjamin Road. This view illustrates how important the trees in the area are to the street scene.

structure originally used as a stable block. The second is single storey, of red brick and partially clad to its south in flint rubble. The third is two storeys and completely boarded in timber. All three while not included in the listing have excellent character of their own and add to the grouping that exists on site. Old maps indicate that there may have been further outbuildings to the rear of the site, although these have since been demolished to make way for encroaching modern development which is excluded from the conservation area.

The grounds of Castle Hill House are also home to the what is thought to be the motte of Wycombe Castle, mentioned in charters issued during the reign of King Stephen. Archaeological evidence from several investigations is scant so the accuracy of the belief that there was a castle on the site is in doubt. Regardless of the uncertainty, the area is recorded as a scheduled ancient monument.

The site is surrounded by high walls of red brick in traditional English bond. The walls have more recently been raised by six courses, again in English bond although the recent additions have not yet blended in due to the comparative newness of their brickwork and mortar. The walls to the east with The Greenway are more modern and of a different style, although they too have been raised by six courses of English bond brickwork.

Key unlisted buildings

The Cemetery Lodge, one of the oldest buildings in the conservation area, is the sole building within the grounds of the cemetery. It is a small building of undeniable charm and character, of flint rubble and red brick, with a hipped gable roof. Two storeys in height, the second storey includes rooms in the roof. The main entrance is below a porch lean to which is in keeping with the general character of the building. The building's materials match those of the cemetery's walls providing a strong visual link. Built on higher ground beyond the cemetery walls it has a prominent position in local views looking north although modern development and the hilly nature of the area means that longer distance views are obscured. The date of building is uncertain but is presumably around 1875, and was most probably erected when the land north was dedicated as a cemetery.

The former Lady Verney School, which was redeveloped for housing in the 1990's, was one of two school sites in the area. When converted to housing, many of the buildings on the site were demolished but the original 1906 building was retained. The conversion to housing caused the building to lose some character – such as the use of UPVC windows – but the original frontage and roof with its belltower are all still intact. It is a single storey building of red brick and stone courses. The bay windows, with their set forward gables, to either side of the main entrance are an interesting feature, and these nicely frame views of the frontage of the former school building when viewed from the junction with Benjamin Road.

The locally listed Priory Road School, variously known throughout its lifetime as Cemetery Road School, the Central School, and Hamilton



View of the frontage of Castle Hill House. This part of the building dates from the late 18th century, except for the window on the right hand side, which is a much more recent addition.



Above, the roughcast rear section of Castle Hill House. The photos below show the outbuildings located at the rear of the site, which are unlisted but have good character.



County Combined School, sits on the south edge of the conservation area, with the site's southern edge abutting the railway line. It is one of the early Board Schools that were erected between 1870 and 1904 by locally elected school boards. Eminent local architect Arthur Vernon is responsible for the design. At three stories high it dominates views when approached from the railway bridge or Priory Avenue. The view from the south consists of a central range of seven windows recessed between pavilions on either side. The windows of the central range are divided by buttresses, six in total, which extend out to the front level with the pavilions. Three raised gables are present at the top of the central range, above alternating windows. These gables, and the pavilions, feature quatrefoil style windows, each one set at an angle when compared to its neighbours. The rightmost of the pavilions features a bay window, and this corner of the school features a turret containing a spiral staircase. The foundation stone is located here.



The former Lady Verney school site was cleared for housing and redeveloped in 1998. The original 1906 building frontage, above, was retained in a highly altered form.

The wing that projects northwards from this side is the main element visible from Priory Road and shares many of the same basic architectural features with the south elevation, although the buttresses give way to more modest pilasters and the quatrefoil details are oriented the same way. The central range also only features six sets of windows, not seven, and this portion of the school is two storeys in height due to the site climbing uphill from the railway. On the south side of this range is the main entrance, with its tower which originally ended in a pyramid spire, which in the inter-war years was replaced with an iron balustrade. The building is primarily of red brick, with blue-black brick used mostly for decoration on the buttresses. The windows are framed in stone. The building's size and imposing façade make it a key part of the conservation area.



The cemetery lodge as viewed from the highway. Note also the brick and flint wall, in the same style as the Lodge itself, and the stone gateposts.

Further north to the rear of 41-7 Priory Avenue is the machine shop to a surviving furniture factory at 8 Temple End. The machine shop is in a poor state of repair, but retained its original machinery as of 2004. Original wooden windows are also still in place. The remains of a brick drying kiln can also be found on the site. 8 Temple End itself lies outside the Conservation Area, but is an equally interesting survival with much of the original glasswork and timber fittings still intact. The building is locally listed in recognition of its rarity and connection to Wycombe's chairmaking past. Restoration of the building for industrial use should be encouraged, using sympathetic materials. On the nearby Fairacre site there is the entrance to a surviving air raid shelter.

24-26 Priory Avenue, sited on the south east corner of the junction of Priory Avenue and Priory Road, is currently in use as a single



Below, a view of the south-facing side of Hamilton County Combined School on Priory Road with its six buttresses.

unit but historically was two separate units until 26 Priory Avenue was acquired and converted by the Doctor's surgery at No 24 in 1983. It is an imposing late Victorian Gothic style building, with four gables to the front elevation. It is of yellow brick with a brick string of four courses between storeys, and stone window dressings, particularly on the bay windows at either side of the front elevation. The design of the building clearly establishes it as a higher class building than the other yellow brick buildings on this side of the road. 24 Priory Avenue was the home of Dame Frances Dove between 1930 and her death in 1942. Dame Frances Dove was the founder of the Girls' Education Company who opened the school at Wycombe Abbey in 1896. In 1907 following the Qualification of Women (County and Borough Councils) Act, she was elected as the first woman town councillor of High Wycombe and one of the first female councillors in the country. She was also a justice of the peace for Buckinghamshire, and but for two votes in 1908 would have been the first woman mayor of High Wycombe. A plaque commemorating her time at Priory Avenue was unveiled in July 1995.

In addition to the buildings outlined above, the other buildings within the area and particularly those located on Priory Avenue south of Priory Road are of good character. On the south half of Priory Avenue the buildings are in late Victorian gothic style. They all tend to be three storeys in height, with basements dug into the sloping hillside. The primary building material is red or yellow brick with slate roofs. The doors and windows of the houses are adorned with fine sculpted stone detailing such as foliate capitals and key stones. The front doors in particular typically feature some very impressive sculpted details above the door frame. All the buildings of this part of the road feature bay windows – on the north side of the road, these are squared bay windows, on the south side they are generally similar, but there is a little variation in styles.

The north section of Priory Avenue and Benjamin Road, which mostly dates from after the 1906 expansion, is less impressive visually with Edwardian style buildings. These tend to be smaller scale and two storey, typically of red brick or red brick with yellow brick to the front elevation only, and most feature mock timber framing to the gables above their bay windows. There is generally less use of sculpted detailing. These buildings have also suffered more erosion by modern developments and modern additions than those on the south side of Priory Avenue. Traffic is more of a problem on this section of the area, due to the roads being used as a shortcut between Hughenden Road and Amersham Hill.

The buildings of Priory Road are a mixture of Victorian and Edwardian styles. The majority, particularly those to the east near the cemetery, are Edwardian additions but generally of higher quality than those on the north portion of Priory Avenue and hence a much better fit for the character of the conservation area. One of the Victorian period houses, Grace Court, 6 Priory Road opposite Hamilton County Combined School is an especially appealing building of dark brown brick, with ornate gables and exquisite detailing to the frames of the bay windows. It forms an appealing group with the adjacent 8-10 Priory Road, which shares its style with the houses to the south of Priory Avenue.



Surviving machine shop at rear of 8 Temple End, lying within the Conservation Area. It is a rare surviving example of Wycombe's industrial heritage, and for this reason is a part of the Local List along with the surviving chair factory it is attached to.

Below is the brick drying kiln, the main structure of which is still intact on the site.



24-26 Priory Avenue, which occupies a key location at the junction of Priory Avenue and Priory Road. 24 Priory Avenue was the home to Dame Frances Dove, the founder of Wycombe Abbey School, between 1930 and 1942.

Local details

Prevalent and traditional building materials

The oldest buildings in the area, which predate the 1876 OS, make use of a mixture of flint rubble and red brick, with the exception of the Hamilton County Combined School which uses London red brick and blue-black engineering brick. The late 19th-century housing uses local yellow brick for entire buildings. Early 20th-century buildings make greater use of cheaper red brick, some having frontages of more expensive yellow brick but using red brick for the rest of the building, others are entirely of red brick including the frontages. This shift in materials, from yellow brick to red brick, is indicative of the wider change in dominant building materials over this period from the yellow bricks delivered by railway truck from the 1850s onwards to cheaper local red bricks.

Contribution made by the natural environment

The area is enclosed to the north by the town cemetery which provides to some extent a green backdrop to the conservation area and a screening from the development further up the hill. To the east, west and south is all varying degrees of urban sprawl. Trees along the roads, particularly Priory Avenue, make a vital contribution to softening the otherwise harsh and imposing Victorian frontages.

Significant protected trees – There are two major groups of protected trees within the area. The main group is a band of trees surrounding the former Lady Verney site, consisting mainly of Limes and Sycamores. These trees screen the site from the road corridor to the east which occupies higher ground, and is a remnant of the original Lady Verney School site. These trees also screen views of the more modern development down hill from the town cemetery.

A second and equally significant group of protected trees are located at the boundary of The Rectory. These trees obscure the more modern development from view, maintaining the otherwise Victorian character of the street. They also help to transition Priory Avenue from a built up street lined with trees to one with dense trees to the north side and the railway to the south. They mark the transition point, beyond them are the tree-lined grounds of The Rectory.

Other important tree groups within the area are the trees surrounding the grounds of Castle Hill House, which contribute greatly to the appeal of the house and its grounds, and the trees lining Priory Avenue and Priory Road, which play a vital role in softening the appearance of the street scene and providing an otherwise almost oppressively built up area with some much needed greenery.



An example of the Victorian stage of the development, on the south half of Priory Avenue.



An example of a typical post-Victorian dwelling from a later stage of the area's development on the northern part of Priory Avenue. Note the comparatively lower height and lack of details around the windows and doors.



The grounds of Castle Hill House are a key green space within the conservation area, and include some of the most important tree groups within the area.

The extent of loss, problems and pressures

The majority of the buildings within the area are still the original buildings, many retaining the original basic frontages, although some have been altered beyond recognition. Due to their period origins, there is a pressure from homeowners or landlords to renovate the houses of the area to meet modern needs, which can be accomplished sympathetically but can also lead to much loss of character if the renovations are unsympathetic. Traffic is another issue that is present within the area – both in the form of a lack of parking for houses, and the use of the area’s roads as an unofficial bypass to the town centre for traffic travelling between Amersham Hill and Hughenden.

The Victorian era buildings in the area feature a selection of pleasing carved details around the windows and doors which greatly contribute to their character. Some examples of these details are presented here.



CHAPTER 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 *The Conservation Area Appraisal and possible boundary amendments*

It is proposed to amend the conservation area boundary to follow the rear boundaries of Hamilton County Combined School and the properties on Priory Road, so that the conservation area incorporates the original Victorian development as designated in 1976, the surviving historic portion of the former Lady Verney School and the significant wall and tree belt to its north-east. The more modern portion of the area in the north part of Priory Avenue and Benjamin Road would be removed from the conservation area and the constraints that accompany it. This will be subject to a separate process and further consultation at a later date.

To protect the rear portion of the furniture factory at 8 Temple End, it is proposed to incorporate this area into a proposed extension of the adjacent High Wycombe Conservation Area. Any trees in the area to be removed from the conservation area which make a significant contribution to the local amenity will be protected with Tree Preservation Orders.

2 *Buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area*

A number of buildings have been identified on the conservation area map in appendix A that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, by virtue of their age, design, massing, scale, and enclosure. Special care should be taken in the retention and enhancement of these buildings.

3 *Proposals for the enhancement of the Conservation Area*

Where possible buildings should be retained in their original residential uses. Any alterations to the historic frontages of the buildings, especially those indicated on the 1899 OS, should be carried out as sympathetically as possible to ensure consistency with the street scene. In the rare instances where it is not possible to retain a building or its frontage, the replacement should be designed to match the style of its neighbours as far as possible. Felling of trees visible from the public highway should also be resisted, unless the reasons for removal on grounds of public health and safety outweigh the desire for retention.

CHAPTER 5

NEXT STEPS/FURTHER INFORMATION

1 *Public Consultation and Community Involvement*

The draft Priory Avenue Conservation Area Appraisal was published in April 2012 with six weeks given for public consultation. Following the public consultation comments received have been assessed and appropriate revisions made to the appraisal. This appraisal was formally adopted in November 2012 as a material planning consideration.

A further consultation concerning the proposals to reduce the conservation area's boundary, outlined above, will be held in due course. This is expected to take place in early 2013.

2 *Monitoring*

Changes in the appearance and condition of the Priory Avenue Conservation Area should be monitored regularly. A photographic survey was undertaken at the time of the appraisal work, and this could be updated in the future.

3 Design Guidance

The policies and proposals of the Wycombe Development Framework (WDF) are the primary source of reference for development management advice. In addition the Council's approved Conservation Areas guidance note is seen as a supporting document to the plan.

The Chilterns Conference first published the Chilterns Building Design Guide in 1999, and this guidance was fully revised and re-issued in February 2010. The Chilterns Conservation Board, which superseded the Conference, has published Supplementary Technical Notes concerned with the use of flint and brick and, more recently, roofing materials. These all provide guidance aimed at conserving the outstanding qualities which make the Chilterns a landscape of national importance. Copies can be inspected at the District Council Offices. It is used as a supplementary planning document.

Appended to this document is a series of development guidelines (Planning), covering both new development and the protection of existing character, and identifying sites for improvement. This forms the base of a management plan for the conservation area.

Most new development requires Building Regulations Approval. For further information on Building Regulations please contact a Building Control Surveyor on 01494 421403, or see the District Council Website www.wycombe.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix A Conservation Area Map

The Appraisal map defines the extent of the area which is regarded as possessing those qualities of townscape, character or historic interest which designation is intended to protect. It identifies particular areas, vistas, views, buildings, etc, that are considered essential to character.

It has not been possible to gain access to all areas within the conservation area boundary. There may be individual structures, features, trees or views of importance which are not visible from the public domain and which have therefore not been annotated on the conservation area map or referred to in the text. However these may also warrant protection in the evaluation of individual development proposals. The listed buildings are shown on the designations map.

As it has not been possible to gain rear access to the properties there may be inaccuracies in the recording or the extent of their curtilage. Where buildings are shown on the conservation area map as being of local importance, they are considered to make an especially positive contribution to the historic interest or architectural character of the conservation area. Other buildings within the conservation area also play a key role in the character of the settlements, and although they are not individually identified on the map, this does not necessarily mean that they are not of interest

Appendix B Conservation Area Boundary Amendment Plan

This map illustrates and clarifies the area proposed to be deleted from the existing conservation area and the proposed new conservation area boundary.

Appendix C Conservation Area Historic Development Plan

This map indicates the various stages of development of Priory Avenue as identified by old maps, as justification for the proposed reduction of the Conservation Area boundaries as outlined in Appendix C above.

Appendix D Listed Buildings

There is one listed building in the conservation area: The Wycombe Museum, Castle Hill House, as indicated on the conservation area map. Further information on listed buildings can be obtained from the English Heritage website www.english-heritage.org.uk

Appendix E Bibliography

Andrew, Martin	High Wycombe: A History & Celebration	Frith 2005
Pevsner, Niklaus	The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire	Penguin 2000
Rattue, James	High Wycombe Past	Phillimore 2002

Appendix F Local Generic Guidance

The following guidelines have been drawn up for the management of change in the Priory Avenue Conservation Area to allow for development and alterations that keep the conservation area vital, without losing the characteristics that make it special.

In conservation areas, the Council has a duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. Many seemingly minor alterations, if insensitively carried out, can have a cumulative and highly damaging effect on the overall appearance of the area. Such alterations not only damage appearance, but reduce the value of houses as historic features and attractive areas, all of which are highly desirable in today's property market.

Preservation of existing character

The maintenance of historic buildings in Priory Avenue Conservation Area

- The use of traditional materials and detailing can have a considerable positive effect in enhancing the conservation area. The owners of historic and prominent properties should be encouraged to remove unsympathetic modern materials, such as concrete tiles and plastic rainwater goods, and to reinstate traditional materials such as plain clay tiles, local Bucks brick, painted timber windows and cast iron guttering.
- Repointing should only be carried out when absolutely necessary, and kept to a minimum. Variations in colour and the application of excessive amounts of mortar in a non-traditional manner detracts from brickwork and obscures it. Inappropriately hard mixes cause brickwork to deteriorate rapidly.
- Modern window materials, such as PVCu and aluminium usually appear out of place and unsympathetic, particularly if surrounded by more traditional types. Dark staining of timber is a modern technique which does little to enhance windows and has no historical precedent in this conservation area.
- The conservation area has a mix of modern machine made plain clay roof tiles and traditional handmade tiles with many roofs also in natural slate. Where roofs are renewed this palette of natural roofing materials should be used and concrete or artificial slate avoided as these materials are visually detrimental.

The maintenance of trees and green spaces

- Trees make a significant contribution to the area and property owners should manage existing trees sensitively. Within the conservation area, consent is required to fell, lop or top trees. Consideration should be given to important views into and out of the conservation area when planting or undertaking tree works, as should the setting of historic buildings.

- The key green space in the conservation area consists of the grounds of the Wycombe Museum / Castle Hill House. Private gardens play a minor role in the character of the area. Immediately outside the area lies the cemetery, a second major green space in the locality.

Design Guidance for new development

In the conservation area higher standards of design are required, as it is the function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance the special character as identified in this appraisal.

Contextual design

- The majority of planning applications made within the conservation area are required to have Design and Access Statements accompanying them, in order for local authorities to evaluate the impact of the scheme on the wider locality, and understand the design process behind the proposal. These should specifically address the impact of any proposal on the conservation area's special character as a heritage asset. Applications for listed building consent also require a Design and Access Statement.
- Within Priory Avenue Conservation Area new development or proposals should respect the character of the area and respond to the immediate environment, particularly in terms of scale, density, form, materials and detailing. Building works such as extensions must be designed not as a separate entity but relate to the original building.
- Listed and other significant buildings are identified on the area appraisal survey maps and their specific qualities as heritage assets are described in the accompanying text. Care should be taken to ensure that any new development does not harm these buildings or their settings or any special architectural or historic features that they may contain. It should be recognised that new development may not always be acceptable.
- Development opportunities in Priory Avenue Conservation Area are limited, unless sites come up for redevelopment. Any infill development where permissible should respect the special character of the conservation area which can be summarised as two or three storey semi-detached houses in later Victorian style. Proposals for new development within the conservation area should include a detailed analysis of the locality, and show how this has developed (see Design and Access Statements above).

Scale and density

- Scale is the combination of a building's height and bulk when related to its surroundings. The scale of any new buildings should respect surrounding development. Some modest changes of scale may be appropriate as this reflects the variety of form in the area, where buildings have developed over time. Applicants should provide accurate elevations of surrounding buildings showing how new development will relate to them. Density is the amount of development related to the site area. National and local guidance states that high density development can make good use of land, provided it is carefully chosen and sensitively sited. In a conservation area the historic environment will be considered as a positive defining characteristic. The Wycombe Housing Intensification SPD (Update 2011) requires that any scheme brought forward in this context improves or reinforces the special qualities of the area. Developers should be aware that high intensity urbanised forms of development may not be able to satisfactorily improve or enhance the special qualities of a conservation area, and would therefore be unacceptable as being out of character with the surrounding heritage assets.
- Applications for development adjoining but outside the conservation area will be assessed for their effect upon its character, appearance and setting, and may be refused permission if this is considered adverse.

Height and massing

- Within the conservation area there are a number of buildings that are already prominent because of their height or location within the street scene. Smaller houses are historically of lesser importance within the streetscape and new development should reflect this hierarchy. Generally the height of new development should match that of adjoining buildings – in Priory Avenue this is usually two or three storeys depending on the location.
- Where extensions to existing buildings are proposed, the extension should be subservient to the main buildings, with a lower roofline.

Appearance, materials and detailing

- The emphasis in conservation areas is to provide high quality design. Conservation area status does not preclude good modern design provided that it takes account of the prevailing form of existing development, scale, density, height and massing. Innovative modern design can be successfully integrated into historic areas and can provide vitality and interest to the street scene. Natural materials and high quality detailing should be incorporated into any proposals.
- Where a more traditional approach is appropriate buildings should be designed in a traditional form (including plan form, roof spans etc) and include pitched roofs. Dormers and rooflights should be modestly sized and situated on rear facing roofslopes. Use of historic detailing such as stringcourses, eaves details, fenestration pattern etc, will be acceptable if they are appropriate to the design of the new building. Such detailing, or a modern interpretation of it, can do much to break up facades of buildings. Chimneys are essential in roofscapes and should be incorporated into all designs.
- Materials for any new building works must be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area. Where possible local traditional material should be used – good quality traditional local yellow stock brick for walling and sand faced clay roof tiles or natural slate as appropriate. Although some of the buildings within the conservation area are rendered or have painted brickwork, modern interpretation and techniques are not always visually successful and should thus be used with care. Where traditional materials survive they should be retained. The Chiltern Buildings Design Guide gives general information on Chiltern building materials.
- Inappropriate replacement windows and doors can damage the character of the conservation area. Traditional natural materials should be used in order to safeguard the special character of the conservation area. Windows should be timber (painted, not stained) and their design should reflect local styles, usually sliding sashes or side hung casements. If windows are to be double glazed these must be carefully designed to reduce the bulkiness of glazing bars. Joinery details should be submitted with planning applications. Top hung lights and modern materials such as PVCu and aluminium are inappropriate in the conservation area. Doors vary throughout the conservation area, but where they survive in original form tend to be wooden, sometimes embellished, and in keeping with the formerly domestic buildings.

Extensions to existing buildings

- Extensions to existing buildings require the same approach as to new build in that they must take into account the prevailing forms of development and complement the form and character of the original house. This is of particular importance when designing extensions to listed buildings. Design should be of high quality, and take account of rooflines and shape, eaves details, fenestration patterns, architectural detailing and the creation of new chimneys. Extensions should not dominate the original buildings or result in the loss of historic plots.

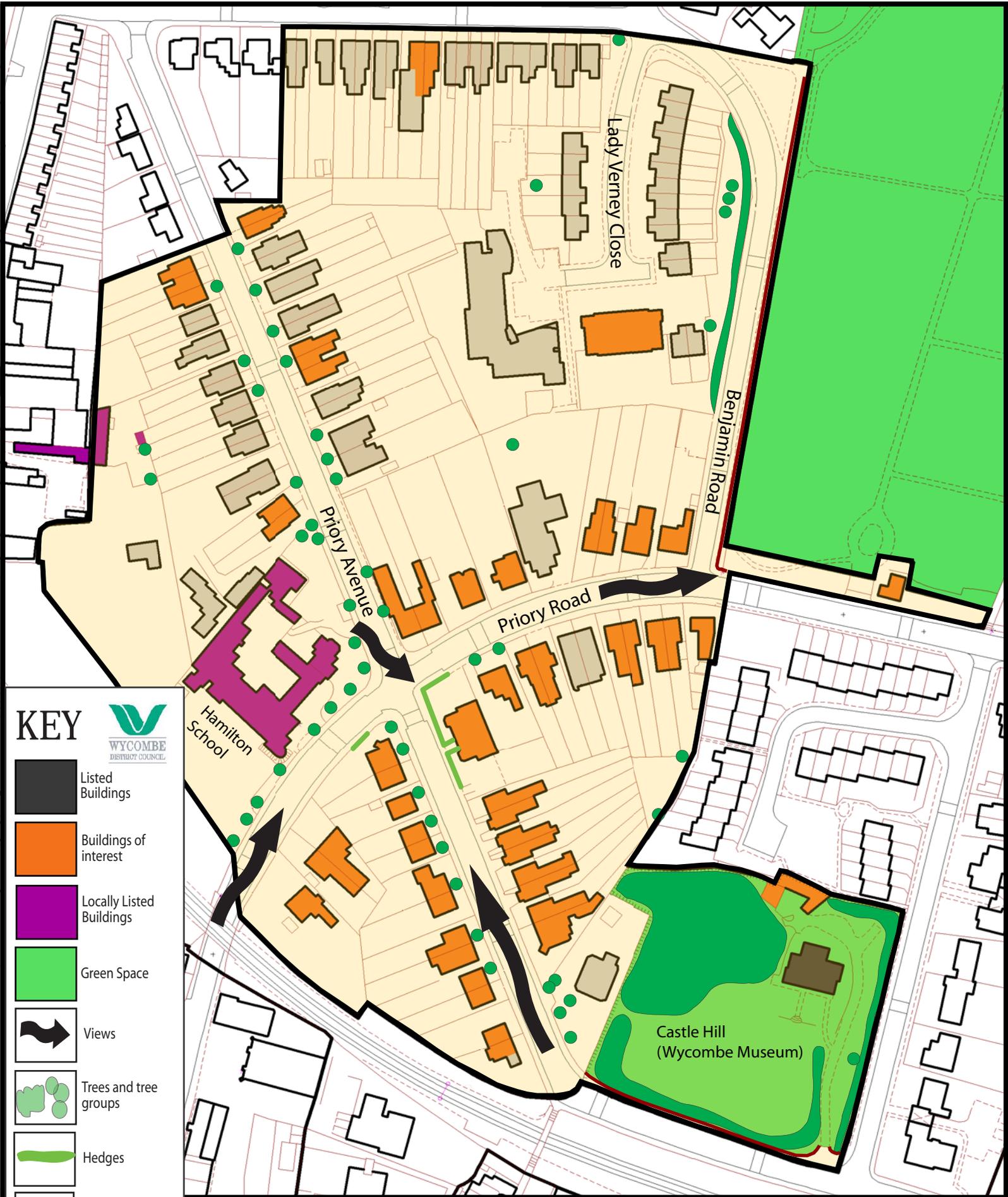
Boundary treatments

- Traditionally properties throughout the conservation area have either no formal front boundaries and are accessed directly off the pavement, or have informal low front walls to the front area of the property. Other boundaries in the public realm are generally brick walls.
- In the conservation area the hedgerows indicated on the survey maps are an important element of the area's character, and should be retained and where possible enhanced.

Public realm

- Street furniture, lampposts, CCTV camera mountings and posts, telephone boxes and other public works which are beyond planning control can have a disproportionate impact on the streetscape and character of the conservation area and those responsible need to bear in mind the advice in the English Heritage publication "Streets for All" (2005). Traffic signs, road markings and street lamps can add to clutter and consideration should be given to the overall effect when installing such items.
- Solar panels where possible should be positioned to minimise the effect on the appearance of the building and the amenity of the area. Where possible they should be sited in back gardens or on elevations that do not face the street. Within the conservation area solar panels are not allowed on frontage elevations. Permission will be required for solar installations for listed buildings including non-listed buildings within their grounds, generally they will not be acceptable in publicly visible locations.
- Satellite dishes and other antennae where possible should be positioned as inobtrusively as possible and be of a modest size. Care should be taken to ensure that the dish or antenna is not affixed to a chimney, wall or roof slope that is visible from the road unless express permission is first granted by the local Planning authority. Satellite dishes are generally not acceptable affixed to listed buildings in publicly visible locations.

Priory Avenue Conservation Area



KEY



Listed Buildings



Buildings of interest



Locally Listed Buildings



Green Space



Views



Trees and tree groups



Hedges



Significant Walls

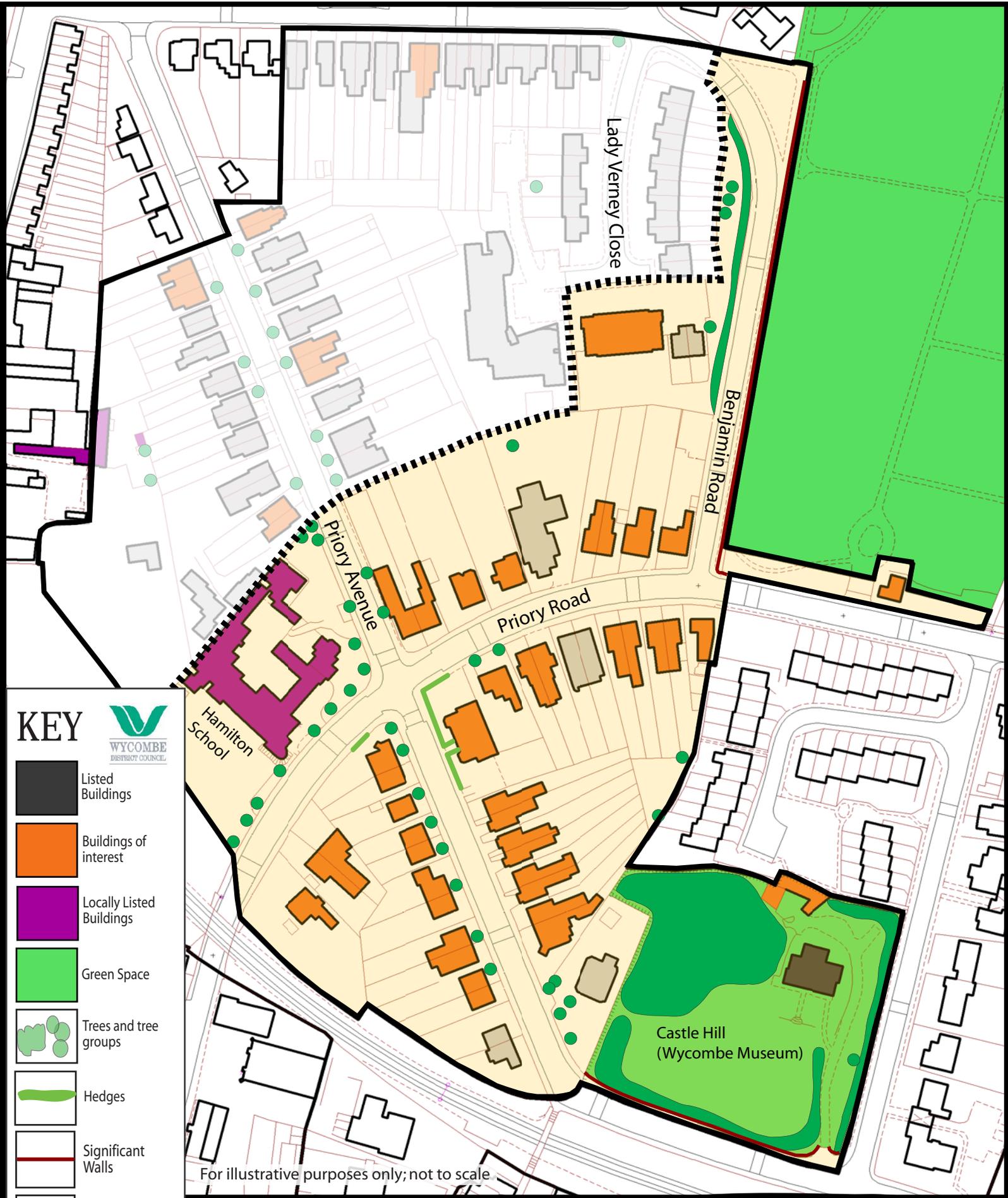


Existing Conservation Area Boundary



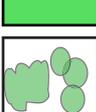
Priory Avenue Conservation Area

Proposed Boundary Amendment



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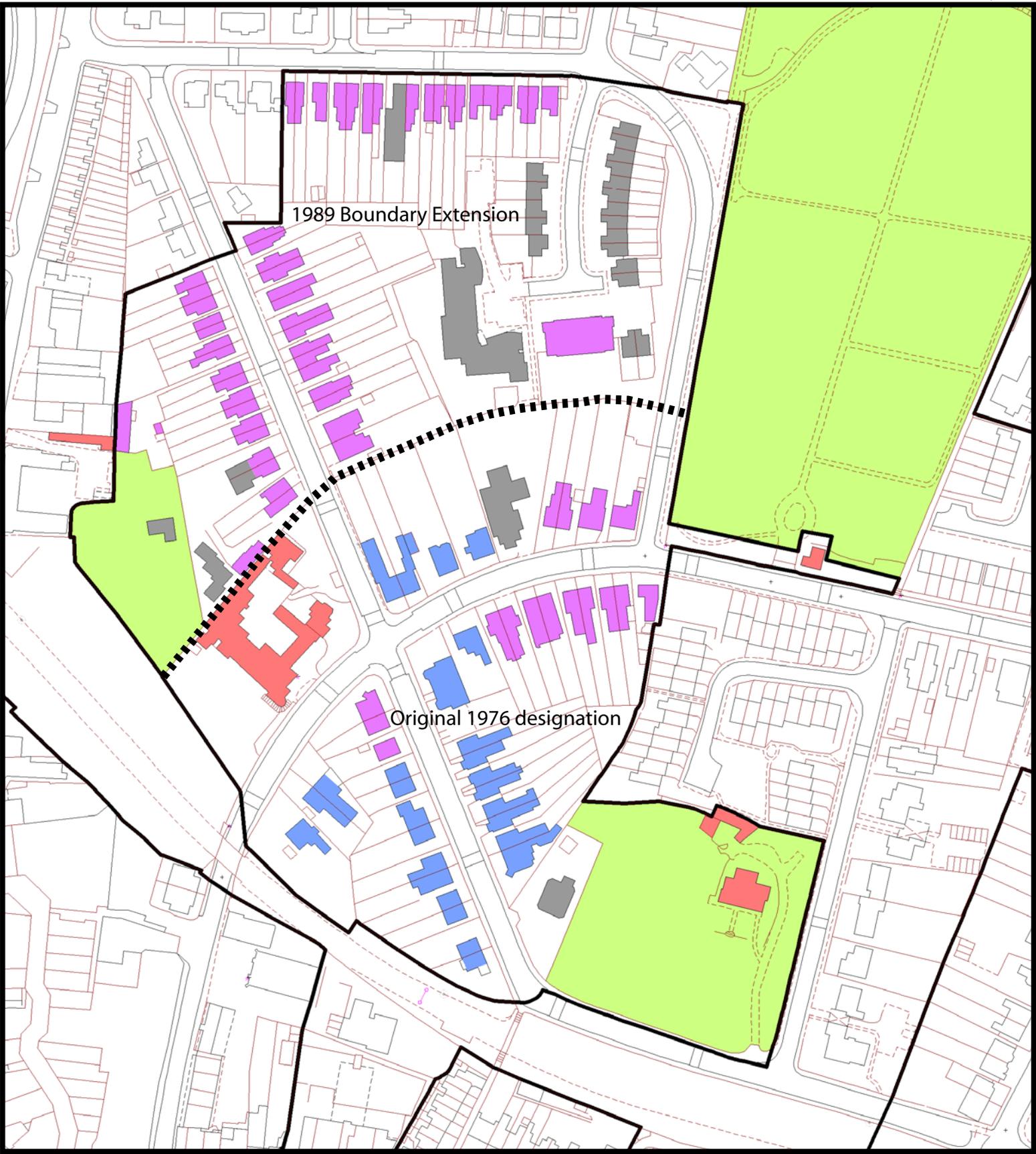


-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of interest
-  Locally Listed Buildings
-  Green Space
-  Trees and tree groups
-  Hedges
-  Significant Walls
-  Existing boundary
-  Proposed boundary

For illustrative purposes only; not to scale

Proposed amendment to Conservation Area boundary to focus on original Victorian late 19th century suburb - proposed new boundary to follow rear boundaries of Hamilton School & the properties on Priory Road, and incorporate former Lady Verney School & historic wall to the cemetery (yellow shaded area on map above)

Priory Avenue Conservation Area Historic Development Plan



1989 Boundary Extension

Original 1976 designation

KEY

-  Shown on 1876 OS
-  Shown on 1899 OS
-  Shown on 1925 OS