



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Langford

What are Conservation Areas?

Conservation Areas are places of special architectural or historic interest, which have a particular character or appearance worthy of preservation or enhancement. Groups of buildings, walls, trees and hedges, open spaces, views, and the historic settlement patterns all combine to create an individual sense of place. It is this character, rather than individual buildings, that Conservation Area status seeks to protect. The first Conservation Areas in the District were identified in the late 1960s. Since then, there has been a rolling programme of designations. Recent Conservation Areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Langford Conservation Area was designated in 1992, following a process of public consultation.

The purpose of this document

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal describes the main aspects of character or appearance which contribute to the special interest and quality of the area. This document is intended to complement the approved policies for Conservation Areas contained in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. In Conservation Areas there are controls over the demolition and minor alterations of unlisted buildings, and on works to trees. Full details can be obtained from the Planning Service. The Preservation and Enhancement document for Langford accompanies this Character Appraisal and describes strategies for the future maintenance and improvement of Langford, as well as providing development advice and guidance on conversions, extensions and the design of new buildings within the Conservation Area.



Location and setting

Langford lies in the south-west of the District, close to the Gloucestershire border. The settlement is located at an important medieval crossroads, which connects Langford with the old Thames river crossing at Radcot Bridge three miles to the south-east. Langford has an attractive compact form, with houses and cottages clustered along the Filkins and Lechlade roads. To the south, slightly apart from the main settlement, lies an earlier core that includes the church of St. Matthew.

Langford occupies a low-lying and essentially flat landscape setting between the limestone wolds to the north and the expansive Thames floodplain to the south. This pastoral clay vale landscape is characterised by a pattern of large fields drained by slow-moving streams. The geology underlying Langford is dominated by Oxford Clay, but overlying this are localised deposits of alluvium and terrace gravels.



Historical development

There is a long history of human activity in the parish. A Bronze Age ring ditch (a feature surrounding a barrow or burial mound) lies to the south-east of Langford village, and a second ring ditch to the north-east is supplemented by a later Romano-British enclosure. Both are Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

If parts of the church of St. Matthew (i.e. the tower and the sculpture over the doorway in the south porch) do indeed belong to the late-Saxon era then there was evidently a pre-Conquest settlement at Langford. However, the dating of this fabric has proven contentious and Pevsner, for one, suggests that construction of the church may have been carried out by Saxon masons *after* the Norman Conquest.

The earliest documentary reference to Langford occurs in the Domesday survey of 1086, and indicates that Langford was a Royal estate. In the 12th century the parish came into the possession of the Diocese of Lincoln. Following this the church was enlarged and partly remodelled. Aisles were added in around 1200 and the chancel rebuilt in the mid-13th century.

While early settlement was concentrated around the church, the post-medieval era saw settlement shifting north and north-west alongside the Filkins road, and clustering at the crossroads with the Lechlade road. Subsequently, the portion of the medieval settlement immediately to the north of the church became deserted, resulting in the church and adjacent buildings being set adrift from the main body of the village.

Historically, the economy of Langford was dependent upon both agriculture and the location of the village. The ancient road between Burford and Radcot Bridge formed an important trade route which linked the Cotswold wool towns with Thames river traffic. Today the road is little more than a country lane, but its boundary hedge between the village and Broadwell has been identified as Saxon or early medieval in origin. Within Langford itself, the bulk of the Listed buildings date from the later part of the 17th century, following the end of the Civil War.

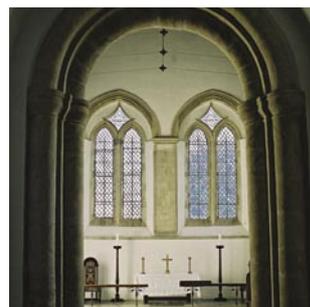
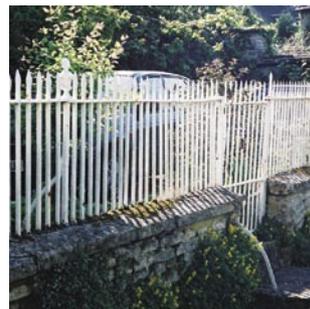
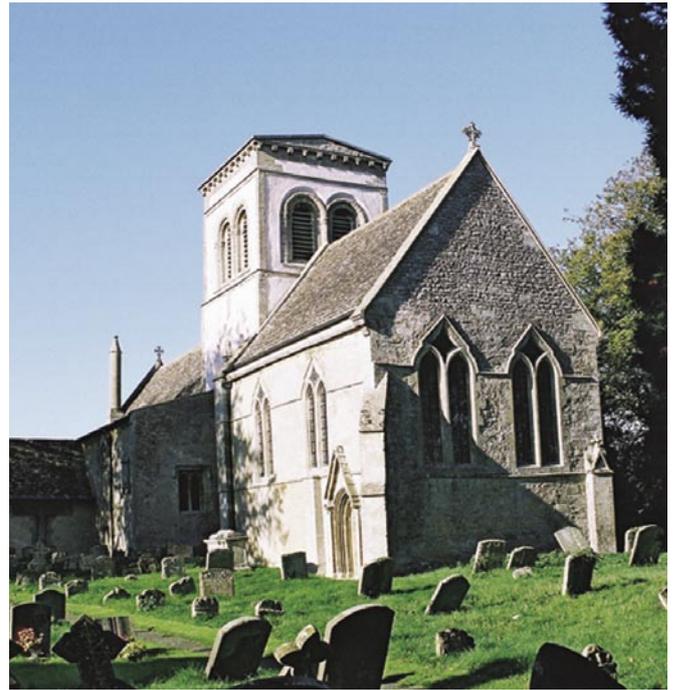
The parliamentary Enclosure of the village in 1810 prompted another burst of building activity. Ten principal allotments were awarded and, of these, three farms survive. From 1861 to 1963 Langford was served by the branch railway line which ran between Oxford and Fairford. The village became a thriving rural community with numerous shops and workshops. As agricultural employment declined, however, the population diminished and changed in character. By 1991, the population stood at 291. To this day the village remains largely free from recent development, and retains a tranquil and unspoilt semi-rural character.

Settlement pattern

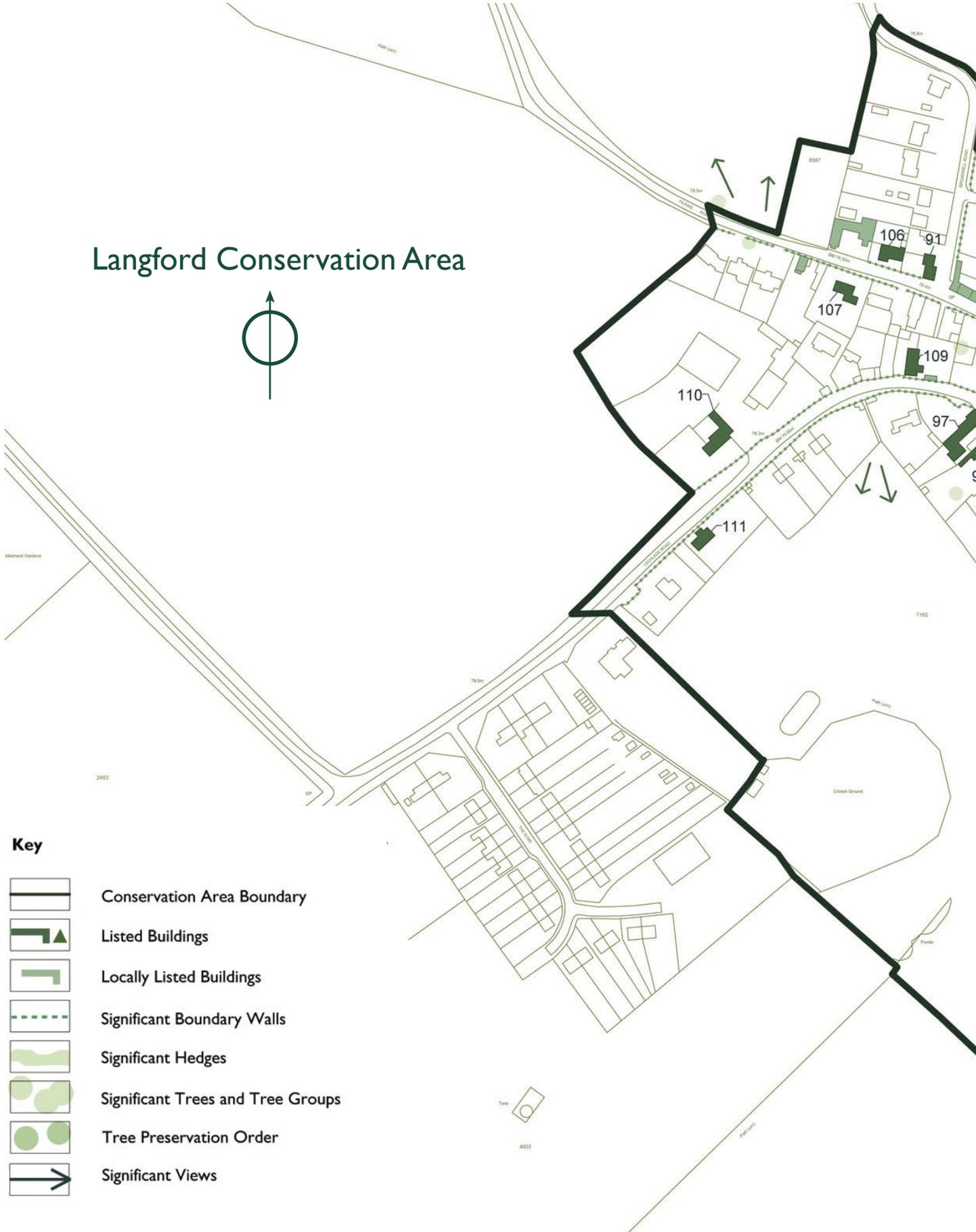
For its earliest settlers Langford possessed the dual attractions of being both ideally suited to farming (thanks to its flat and rich alluvial meadowlands) and being situated just to the north-west of an important early Thames river crossing at Radcot.

Today, Langford is essentially polyfocal in form, with the two distinct portions of the village separated by areas of pasture. The focus of the early settlement was the church of St. Matthew. The field north of the church (known as 'the Vineyard') and that north-east of the Finstock road together comprise the now-deserted part of the settlement. The buildings to the south of the church overlie the southern part of the early settlement. The church has, since the early 17th century, been accompanied by Rectory Farmhouse and its associated agricultural buildings, giving to this portion of Langford a loose-knit, rural character.

With the abandonment of the sites north of the church, the village centre shifted to the north-west. Here a distinctive island in the grain of the settlement was created by the lane that curves between the Lechlade and Filkins roads. This part of the village took on its current built character during the 17th century. Here, the buildings are of mixed status and function, from substantial farmhouses to humble cottages and agricultural buildings. Whilst the southern portion and the core of Langford are largely free from recent development, some does exist, both in the form of detached houses at the north-western tip of the village and terraced houses off to the west ('The Elms').



Langford Conservation Area



Key

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Buildings
-  Locally Listed Buildings
-  Significant Boundary Walls
-  Significant Hedges
-  Significant Trees and Tree Groups
-  Tree Preservation Order
-  Significant Views



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Listed Buildings

There are 31 Listed structures of architectural or historic interest in the parish, all of which lie within the Conservation Area. Listed Buildings are classified in grades of relative importance.

Grade I – Buildings of national importance and exceptional interest (2% of Listed Buildings).

6/98 CHURCH LANE (North side) Church of St. Matthew

Grade II* - Particularly special and important buildings (4% of Listed Buildings).

6/99 CHURCH LANE (North side) Churchyard cross approx. 50m East of Church of St. Matthew (Formerly listed as Churchyard Cross)

Grade II – Buildings of Special Interest.

- 6/91 BROADWELL ROAD (West side) The Crown Public House
- 6/92 CHAPEL LANE (North side) Corner Cottage and Baytree Cottage
- 6/93 CHAPEL LANE (South side) Post Office and Lane Hatch
- 6/94 CHAPEL LANE (South side) Pember House (Formerly listed as Homefield)
- 6/95 CHAPEL LANE (South side) Pember Cottage (Formerly listed as Grove House)
- 6/96 CHAPEL LANE (South-west side) Lockey House and attached railings (Formerly listed as Cotswold House)
- 6/97 CHAPEL LANE (South-west side) Cotswold Cottage and Pear Tree Cottage with attached barn (Formerly listed as Cotswold Cottage and Cottage adjoining Cotswold Cottage)
- 6/100 CHURCH LANE (North side) Chest tomb approx. 6m E of chancel of Church of St. Matthew
- 6/101 CHURCH LANE (North side) Chest tomb approx. 1m S of chancel of Church of St. Matthew
- 6/102 CHURCH LANE (North side) 2 chest tombs approx. 11m S of chancel of Church of St. Matthew
- 6/103 CHURCH LANE (North side) Group of 4 chest tombs approx. 4 to 9m S of S porch of Church of St. Matthew
- 6/104 CHURCH LANE (South side) Rectory Farmhouse
- 6/105 CHURCH LANE (South side) Dovecote approx. 40m SW of Rectory Farmhouse (Formerly listed as Dovecot at Rectory Farm)
- 6/106 FILKINS ROAD (North side) The Manse (Formerly listed as The House)
- 6/107 FILKINS ROAD (South side) The Laurels
- 6/108 LECHLADE ROAD (North-west side) Dunford House
- 6/109 LECHLADE ROAD (North-west side) Cook's Farmhouse
- 6/110 LECHLADE ROAD (North-west side) Ansell's Farmhouse
- 6/111 LECHLADE ROAD (South-east side) Castle Cottage
- 6/112 LECHLADE ROAD (South-east side) Wellbank and Greystones with attached barn to rear
- 6/113 MAIN STREET (North side) Threeways (Formerly listed as Short's Farmhouse)
- 6/114 MAIN STREET (North side) Bridgewater House (Formerly listed as Trevor House)
- 6/115 MAIN STREET (North-east side) The Grange
- 6/116 MAIN STREET (South-west side) Blenheim Cottage (Formerly listed as Blenheim Cottage and attached former Smithy)
- 6/117 STATION ROAD (East side) Lower Farmhouse
- 6/118 STATION ROAD (East side) Vicarage
- 6/119 STATION ROAD (West side) Stonecroft
- 6/120 STATION ROAD (West side) The Bell Inn
- 6/121 STATION ROAD (West side) Lime Tree Cottage

Note: The numbers indicate the unique identification number by which Listed Buildings are referenced

Architectural character and quality of buildings

The architectural character of Langford is highly consistent: a factor which, when combined with the compact form of the settlement, adds greatly to the visual cohesion of the village.

An unusually high percentage of Langford's Listed Buildings date from the 17th century. Most have simple plan forms and are built from uncoursed limestone rubble. The majority of properties are topped with stone slate roofs. Casement windows beneath wooden lintels predominate; but stone mullion windows can be seen on a number of the earlier houses, and sashes on some 19th-century properties.

Although most of the houses and cottages conform to a humble vernacular type in both form and detail, a more formal architectural vocabulary can be read on several of the higher status houses, manifesting itself in such features as moulded window surrounds, coped verges and ashlar quoins and chimneys. Rectory Farmhouse and the Vicarage, both built in the early-17th century, are good examples of Langford's secular architecture. Externally they boast fine windows (chamfered mullions with drip moulds in the case of the Vicarage, and tripartite Gothic sashes in the case of Rectory Farmhouse); while internally both have Tudor-arched stone fireplaces and notable early staircases.

Despite its current setting to the south of the main settlement, the church of St. Matthew – by virtue of its monumental silhouette and raised churchyard setting – remains the village's dominant landmark. It was built in the 11th century on an earlier site, and incorporates arguably the most significant Saxon remains in the county. The three-stage tower belongs to the mid- to late-11th century, and although not tall is pleasingly sturdy. Re-set in the outer wall of the 14th-century south porch are two late-Saxon Roods (depictions of the Crucified Christ). The first over the outer doorway is flanked by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist; while the second and much larger figure in the east wall stands alone, headless and with arms outstretched. These relief carvings are said to have influenced the 20th-century sculptor Eric Gill.

Boundary treatments

Langford's historic boundary features are fundamental to the visual cohesion of the village. Houses, cottages and barns stand at the roadside and are linked by stretches of stone walling, so that the core of the village seems bound together by stone. This walling varies in height but includes significant stretches of semi-formal coped walling (for example, that enclosing Langford Grange).

The narrowness and tighter curvature of the loop of road that links the Filkins and Lechlade roads gives to this part of the village a noticeably more quiet and intimate character. On the outskirts of Langford the walling becomes low and mainly drystone in nature, and the houses and cottages begin to stand back from the road behind verges of varying depth.

Landscape, trees and views

The unusual degree of visual unity found at Langford's core is unbroken by, for example, grass verges or formal open areas, such as a village green. The only significant area of open land is that lying between the main settlement and the church and farms to the south (and the adjoining churchyard). The former is the site of a now-lost portion of the village.

Trees do not play a major role in the overall villagescape, though valuable tree groups border the churchyard and stand prominently in the grounds of Langford Grange.

Set in flat countryside, Langford is clearly visible from the surrounding landscape. However, the compact nature of the main settlement to the north means that views out into the landscape beyond are rarely possible here. Only along the road to the church, and within the looser cluster of buildings around the church, do views out into the surrounding fields become possible. Internally, the vista provided by the Filkins Road, as it steers its curved course through the village, sets up a sequence of attractive and memorable internal views.

West Oxfordshire District Council - Planning Service
Elmfield, New Yatt Road, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 1PB

General planning enquiries and application forms

List entries and grant enquiries

Trees and landscape enquiries

Architectural and technical enquiries

01993 861683

01993 861666

01993 861662

01993 861659

