



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Proposals for Preservation & Enhancement

Ducklington

The village of Ducklington lies in the southern part of the District, just to the south of Witney and separated from the town by the A40 trunk road running east-west between. Ducklington's plan shows an elongated, tapering form: a legacy of linear growth out from an earlier nucleated core north-west along the Witney Road. The village occupies a slightly raised floodplain terrace within the lowland landscape of the Upper Thames Clay Vale, with an underlying geology dominated by alluvium and terrace gravels.

Introduction

Ducklington Conservation Area was designated in 1988, following a process of public consultation. Conservation Areas are places of special architectural or historic interest, which have a particular character or appearance worthy of preservation or enhancement. It is this character, rather than the individual buildings, that Conservation Area status seeks to protect. A separate document, the Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Ducklington, describes the main features of the area which contribute to its special interest.

The purpose of this document

West Oxfordshire District Council has a duty under section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas after consideration at a public meeting. Changes to the character or appearance of Ducklington, including opportunities for new development, are expected to be limited in future years.



Development Advice

The primary source of reference for development advice is the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (adopted June 2006). Copies of the Plan can be inspected at: www.westoxon.gov.uk, or by visiting the Council's offices at: Elmfield, New Yatt Road, Witney.

The Local Plan contains specific policies for development in Conservation Areas, but other policies are also relevant to Ducklington. In relation to housing provision, Ducklington is classed as Group B (medium-sized) village, and is covered by policy H5, which allows some new housing through a) infilling; b) rounding off within the existing built-up area; and c) the conversion of appropriate existing buildings worthy of retention.

Policy H12 allows small-scale affordable housing schemes which meet local needs and that cannot be met in any other way.

Within the Ducklington Conservation Area the existing buildings, land uses, historic settlement patterns and open spaces should remain largely undisturbed. Where development is allowed, the following guidance is offered in order to preserve and enhance the appearance and character of the Conservation Area.

Any new buildings, and extensions to existing buildings, must be well designed in themselves and must be sympathetic to the established character of the area. They should respect the form, setting and scale of the adjoining and surrounding buildings.

Special care must be taken to ensure that views into and out of the Conservation Area, as well as views within the Conservation Area, are not harmed. New development must incorporate existing features of historic, visual or natural importance, such as trees, hedgerows, ponds, stone walls, paths and tracks.

Materials for new building works should be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area. In particularly prominent or sensitive sites natural stone will usually be the most appropriate material. The conversion of redundant historic buildings should respect the original character of the building and its setting, and any historical features of interest should be retained.

Large extensions or an accumulation of extensions can easily obscure the simple form of traditional buildings, and should be avoided. Important groups of buildings often have a special value and historic character which can be harmed by new development (however well designed). It should be recognised that in these instances extensions may not be acceptable.

Trees and hedgerows which make a contribution to the Conservation Area should not normally be removed unless dead, dying or dangerous. Anyone wishing to prune or remove a tree must first notify the Planning Service. When planting new trees local character should be considered, and species selected to suit their context and the wider landscape character. For example, willow, alder and poplar are generally appropriate to the surrounding area.

West Oxfordshire Design Guide

The West Oxfordshire Design Guide provides additional guidance on: local characteristics; new development; sustainable building design; Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings; alterations, extensions, conversions and repairs to traditional buildings; the District landscape context; and a range of other design related issues.

Detailed design advice, with lists of practitioners, is contained in the appendices and includes material on: stonework, thatching, paintwork, joinery, and barn conversions;

The Design Guide is available online at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/DesignGuide.cfm. Copies can also be purchased from Planning Services on: 01 993 86 1420.



Architectural character and quality of buildings

The vernacular houses and cottages of Ducklington are mostly humble structures of one-and-a-half or two storeys with simple, often two-unit, plan forms. Some are linked together in short terraces; others are detached. While most of buildings front the road, a number of houses and short cottage terraces are arranged at 90 degrees, gable-end on to the road.

Most of the houses and cottages in the Conservation Area are constructed from local grey limestone, with coursed rubble for the humbler properties and ashlar or worked stone dressings for those of higher status. Brick appears only intermittently as a main walling material. There is considerable variety in roofing materials, with thatch and stone slate on a number of 17th- and 18th-century structures, and blue slate and plain tile employed on later structures. Chimneys may be of brick or stone.

Characteristic Building Materials in Ducklington:

Roofs

- Thatch, long straw or combed wheat reed, with a plain, flush wrap over ridge with spar work at the ridges, eaves and verges
- Stone slate
- Welsh slate
- Clay tile

Walls

- Oolitic limestone in narrow beds
- Cornbrash limestone for field and boundary walling, laid in narrow beds
- Ashlar or worked stone dressings
- Occasional brick, including for chimneys



Alterations and extensions

Traditional but often unlisted buildings are vital components of the character of Conservation Areas. Seemingly small but inappropriate alterations to these buildings can easily damage the appearance of the wider area.

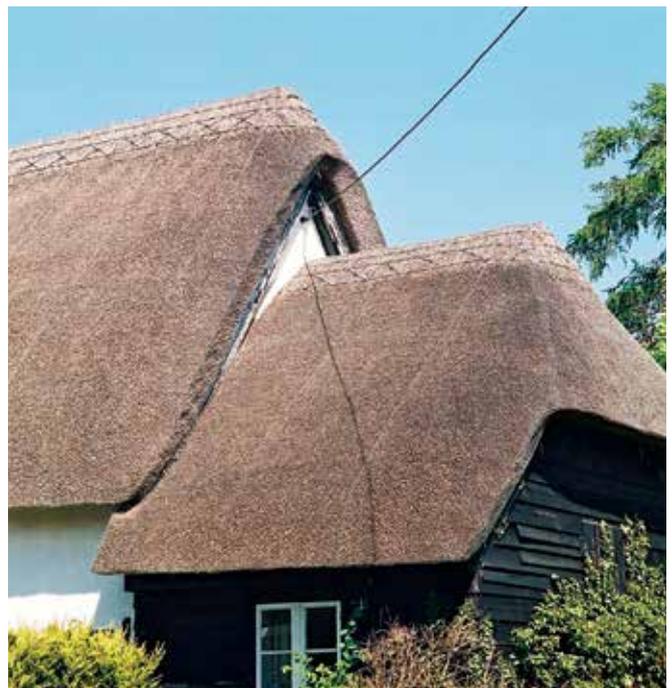
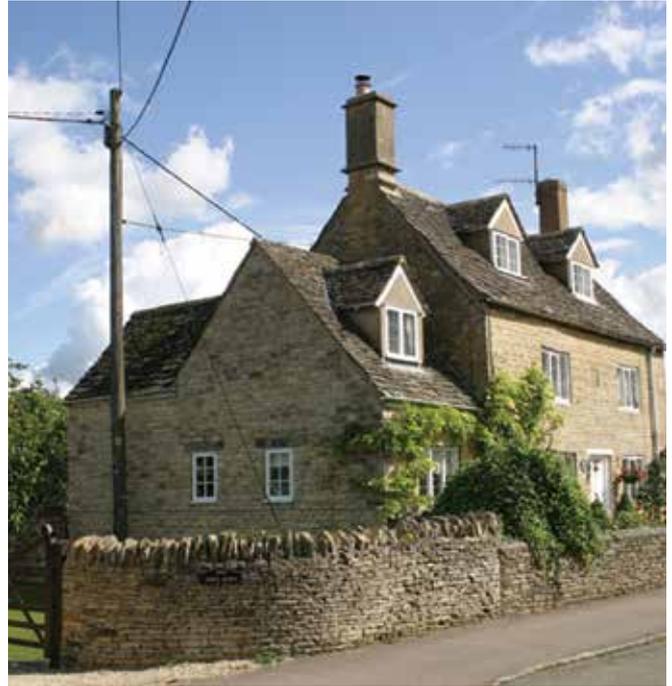
Buildings may need altering or enlarging from time to time to meet the evolving needs of successive owners. However, many existing buildings in Ducklington have a scale and character worthy of retention. Whilst the Council recognises that many buildings have the potential to provide additional space, this should not involve damage to the special character of the Conservation Area.

Listed Building Consent is required for any work that will affect the character or appearance of a Listed Building or structure, either externally or internally, regardless of that building's grade. Demolition, extensions, and internal or external alterations all require Listed Building Consent. The administration of Listed Building Consent is the responsibility of the District Council, and applications for Listed Building Consent should be made on forms available from the Planning Service.

Apart from general planning and highway considerations, it is expected that in all cases the basic size of the existing property will be respected and that alterations and extensions will take into account the scale and character of the original form.

Within the Conservation Area extensions will not be allowed to fill private gardens or create sub-standard living conditions. Similarly, extensions which lead to a loss of daylight to neighbouring dwellings or create problems of loss of privacy will not be supported.

All development activity should be sustainable, with the aim of preserving energy and resources and reducing pollution. Factors such as building orientation, re-use of materials, insulation, solar shading, water conservation and innovative heating and power generation systems can all help to further these aims.



Repairs to traditional buildings

The repair of traditional windows and doors is often a better and cheaper alternative to wholesale replacement. Draughty and ill-fitting windows and doors often only need stripping of old paint layers. For reducing noise and draughts, secondary glazing and draught proofing are very effective alternatives to sealed unit double glazing.

Traditional window designs are fundamental to the character of local buildings. When replacement windows are installed these should match the original designs. Modern top hung night vents and large sheets of fixed glazing are rarely appropriate. Timber windows and doors are generally appropriate.

Modern substitutes such as PVCu and aluminium do not look the same, and generally have poor environmental consequences. Modern Georgian style doors with integral fanlights have no historical basis and should be avoided.

Paint is the traditional finish for external joinery. European hardwoods such as oak and elm were usually left unfinished to weather naturally. Timber stains and varnishes are modern introductions, and need to be chosen with care to avoid inappropriate colours.

The repointing of stone walling and brickwork should always be undertaken with great care, as the visual character of a building or boundary wall can be destroyed by ill-advised work. Hard cement-rich mortars and raised ribbon pointing should be avoided. Bagged mortar joints are the traditional finish in the District.

Roughcast render on stone buildings is a traditional finish, and should be retained where existing. Removal of stucco or render finishes can expose poor quality porous stone to unacceptable weathering. External finishes of this kind were often an essential part of the original architectural concept, and they should be retained or restored wherever possible.

Stone or brick walling should not be painted as this can lead to damage of the walling materials, as well as resulting in dramatic visual alteration.



Boundary treatments

The most conspicuous boundary feature within the Conservation Area is provided by the buildings themselves, many of which – most notably along Church Street and Back Lane – either directly front the road or stand just back from it.

Stretches of walling often stitch the buildings together, albeit fairly loosely. These walls vary in their height, but are usually of dry-stone construction, with copings of rough-racked rubble, mortar or dressed stone. Longer stretches of walling, deeper verges and pavements are characteristic of the Standlake and Witney Roads.

The bounding wall that encircles the raised churchyard of St Bartholomew's church is a key feature of the Conservation Area.

Highways and public spaces

The County Highways Authority, District Council, Statutory Undertakers and Ducklington Parish Council will be encouraged to exercise particular care to ensure that where work does take place within the Highway or public spaces, that the design of materials and details positively preserves and enhances the visual character of Ducklington.

All proposals for new or replacement poles, masts, streetlights, overhead cables, utility boxes, traffic signage and traffic calming measures should be subject to consultation with the Parish Council and Local Planning Authority. The use of standard fittings or components is unlikely to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

All new work should be fitted sensitively into the existing context. Physical measures should involve minimal visual interference with the established villagescape. The installation of any new overhead cables will not be supported.

The landscape context of Ducklington Conservation Area

The West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment provides an analysis of the landscape context of Ducklington Conservation Area. Ducklington lies within the Lower Windrush Valley and Eastern Thames Fringes landscape character area.

Principal factors threatening the landscape setting of the Conservation Area:

- Agricultural intensification, particularly drainage and conversion of pasture to arable;
- Removal of natural vegetation cover;
- Poor maintenance and loss of field boundaries;
- Extensive sand/ gravel extraction within floodplain;
- Intrusion from built development, traffic on main roads and overhead power lines;
- Expansion of rural settlements and 'suburbanization' of the wider countryside.

Enhancement priorities for the landscape setting of the Conservation Area:

- Retain and manage areas of floodplain pasture, water meadows and riparian vegetation;
- Promote traditional practices of willow pollarding and ditch management;
- Introduce new planting along watercourses and in lines within floodplain farmland, using typical riparian species such as willow and alder;
- Within open clay vale landscapes, restore a stronger structure of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and belts of woodland;
- In semi-enclosed clay vale farmland, retain and extend existing hedgerow network and allow mature hedgerow trees to develop;
- Encourage conversion of arable land to pasture;
- Plant large blocks and belts of native woodland, to link with existing woodlands and restore a more mixed pattern of woodland and farmland;
- Strengthen landscape structure around the main settlements to soften the urbanising effects of existing or proposed peripheral development;
- Maintain rural character of secondary road network and, where possible, avoid urbanising influences of street lighting, kerbs and footpaths, signage etc.

Landscape, trees and views

For any development activity, the existing landscape, vegetation and wildlife context must be carefully considered. Established plant and animal communities must be conserved during and after construction, and provision must be made for such assets into the future. Biodiversity enhancements may be possible through the creation or restoration of habitats, which support rare or protected species. Planting schemes should reflect not only the broad landscape character, but also the specific local context as described in the West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment and elsewhere.

As well as being important natural components in their own right, trees and hedgerows form vital habitats for wildlife, and can provide important corridors between isolated habitats. Some hedgerows and trees are protected by law, so if your application involves the removal of a part or the whole of a hedge or tree, you should first contact the District Landscape and Forestry Officer. If the application involves planting, careful attention should be paid to the species used. Whilst the planting of local, native species (including traditional fruit tree varieties) will be encouraged, non-indigenous ornamental species may sometimes be appropriate (though ornamental conifers are generally not appropriate within Conservation Areas).



Typical indigenous species for Ducklington (River Meadowlands):

Key species

Willow	<i>Salix spp.</i>
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Poplar	<i>Populus spp.</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>

Significant species

Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
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West Oxfordshire District Council - Planning Service
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General planning enquiries and application forms
Trees and landscape enquiries
Architectural and technical enquiries

01993 861420
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