
Conservation Area Character Survey

Skirmett



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION 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.

Within conservation areas there are special controls on some alterations to buildings and their demolition or partial demolition, and on works to trees. The Council's Heritage Guidance Note on conservation areas gives further details of the specific controls that apply.

Designation of a conservation area does not preclude the possibility of new development, but such development must be designed positively to enhance the special character of the area.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY

This conservation area character survey describes the main features of special architectural and historic interest which justifies the designation of Skirmett as a conservation area.

The survey is intended to complement the approved policies for conservation areas in the Council's Wycombe District Local Plan. These policies are the primary means of safeguarding the special character of our conservation areas. The survey is also intended to be used as an aid in development control decision making. Proposals for schemes positively to enhance the character and appearance of Skirmett conservation area will be produced in the future in consultation with councillors, local residents and other interested parties.



HISTORY

Danish settlers in the 9th century are thought to have named the village from two words "shire" and "meeting place". In 1307 the name is recorded as "la Skiremote", "mot" being the Old English word for meeting and the first element being a Scandinavianised form of Old English "scir" meaning, shire. The Shire of Buckingham came into being in the 10th century. In the Charter of 903 the estate was described as being in Mercia, but soon after this Edward the Elder divided the Midlands, which he was wresting from the Danes, into shires or areas for military concentration on special centres.

In former times the hamlet of Skirmett was an offshoot of Poynants Manor which derives its name from the Poynants, the 14th century holders of Skirmett Manor. Thomas Poynants first held it as a sub-tenant in 1302. The present Manor is modern with a 17th century nucleus; the foundations of an older house, burnt down in the 14th and 15th century, lie about 15 metres east of the present structure. Among the materials discovered were some Roman brickbats, probably re-used from the ruins of a Roman villa in the neighbourhood. Mr Cocks, once an owner of Poynants Manor in the early 1900s, thought that there were once four Roman Villas in the valley in addition to the one he discovered in his garden in 1912. Mr Cocks was renowned locally for keeping otters, wild cats, and other beasts in the grounds of the Manor. The Manor was also the home of a branch of the widespread D'Oyle family who feature prominently in the valley's history.

Opposite Poynants Manor stands a Victorian church. This has an interesting link with the distinguished Labour politician, Sir Stafford Cripps, for it was his grandfather, Mr H. W. Cripps, of Parmoor, Frieth, who gave the land for the church and contributed to its construction.

Once Skirmett boasted a thriving community: a butcher, a bakers, blacksmiths, a church, a congregational chapel, a wheelwrights and an infants school. These facilities have now disappeared, and most of the buildings that housed them have been converted to residential use. One of the three Public Houses, 'The Late Crown' has also gone.

There has been an influx of modern development in the village, particularly the houses between the north and south sections of the conservation area, which were built in the 1960s on land once attached to The Old Forge. There has also been some new infill development on land around the Stud Farmhouse and within the former farmyard, which occurred before the conservation area was designated. There has also been new development between All Saints and The Old Chapel.

The conservation area was first designated in 1982, when only The Old Crown House and Isabel Cottage were listed (June 1955). All of the other listed buildings were added in 1986.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or any sites of archaeological interest identified within the conservation area. However, there is an identified site of archaeological interest adjoining the south boundary of the southern part of the conservation area, and the evidence of a Roman villa at Poynants Manor.

The hamlet is clearly of an historic nature, and in the event of archaeological deposits being found, the Council may require archaeological conditions attaching to planning permissions where appropriate, including watching briefs, excavation, or similar recording procedures.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Skirmett is set in the Hambleden Valley, one of the most delightful valleys in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is sheltered by beech hangings for its whole length from the hills of Fingest to the River Thames, 6 kilometres to the south.

Skirmett is just 1 kilometre to the south of Fingest and the tower of St Bartholomew's church can be seen from Skirmett. Yet the villages are very different in their character.

Skirmett is set at the base of the valley with the course of the Hamble Brook, which occasionally flows, along the western side of the village. The village developed along the road and there is no central focus. This is at variance with other Hambleden Valley villages, including nearby Fingest, which are compact, and often set around a central space. It is the Brook and the many springs in the area around Skirmett which have influenced its development. After a wet season, the springs around Skirmett well up, filling the fields and flooding the lane that leads to Turville, the aptly named Watery Lane. Skirmett runs parallel to the stream, and had it been built to a compact layout like its neighbours, it would surely have reached too far into the damp land.

There are two distinctive historical cores to the village, which results in a conservation area which is presented in two parts. In the southern portion of the conservation area, most buildings are listed and look out westwards over the fertile meadows and the line of the Hamble Brook, with beech hangings as a backdrop. The conservation area boundary continues to the east along Shogmoor Lane to encompass Crooked Chimney and Peartree Cottage, two listed buildings. The boundary of the conservation area is drawn close in to the curtilages of the buildings. It encloses one of the most delightful and unspoilt group of dwellings of its period in the District, including a fine example of a cruck-framed cottage.

The houses in the southern part of the conservation area front hard on to the road, leaving no space for a footway, and give a strong sense of containment where the built form dominates. This is one of the essential characteristics of this part of the conservation area. Also the use of traditional building materials is important here, particularly clay tiles and soft red/orange bricks. Small pane casements predominate throughout the area.

The northern part of the conservation area has a more expansive boundary, which includes a cluster of historic dwellings at the southern edge, and then stretches out northward to include Poynants Manor to the west and the former ecclesiastical buildings to the east.

The southern part of the conservation area is concentrated on the built form and many buildings are listed. The northern part of the conservation area has a wider purpose and encompasses a cluster of listed buildings and buildings that contribute to the historical development of the conservation area. There is a strong feeling of enclosure in the identified grouping, as views outward are restricted. The group has a variety of styles and dates, although all the buildings are of a small scale and are less close to the road than those of the southern part of the conservation area leaving room for a front garden and decorative railings in some cases.

Beyond the identified grouping lie the grounds of Poynants Manor to the west and the converted churches to the east. Here, the emphasis is altered to the landscape and mature trees which dominate the view, with only glimpses of the Manor in the distance and the buildings to the west set within gardens, and views of the countryside beyond.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

There are thirteen listed buildings within the Skirmett conservation area, although some entries include more than one dwelling. All listings are grade II.

Starting at the southern portion of the conservation area, Peartree Cottage is a 17th century - early 18th century listed house, part rebuilt in the 19th century. The frontage is very attractive, with its timber frame exposed and old brick infill, and a flint plinth. The rear is flint with brick dressings. The gable end fronting the road has been rebuilt, and has modern weatherboarding. The house retains its board door to the centre.

Next is Inkerman Cottage, an unlisted building which is identified as significant to the conservation area. The frontage, although altered, has fine flint work with red brick dressings. The cottage has large extensions to the rear, which together with the driveway surfaced extensively in block pavements, tends to give a rather urban appearance, however the older frontage of the building and its garden remain. The wall fronting on to the road can be dated as 18th century.

The Shildaig, a house of the 1970s, sits in the former farmyard of the Stud Farm. The house has a pleasant elevation of brick with flint panels.

Opposite is Crooked Chimney Cottage, a 16th century dwelling with 20th century alterations (1955). The timber frame of the building is exposed, and the rare cruck trusses at the gables can be seen. The infill is of whitewashed brick, flint and plaster, and there is an old board door to the front. The old tiled roof has flanking brick chimneys with crooked shafts. The chimney to the right was rebuilt to replace the original in 1990.

Next to The Shildaig, forming its west boundary, are the former outbuildings and stables to The Stud Farmhouse. They make an attractive contribution to the conservation area and its historical context. The former farmyard now encloses a new infill dwelling called Little Warren, which received planning consent in 1979, prior to the designation of the conservation area.

To the west is the Stud Farmhouse and its attached range of outbuildings. The whole is listed. The single storey outbuildings, in flint with brick dressings and eaves detailing, curve around the corner from Shogmore Lane. Three stable windows have been blocked-in along the Shogmore Lane frontage. The house itself is mid-18th century with alterations. It must be the finest in the village, with its classic Georgian elevation and restrained decoration. The frontage has large three pane sashes, the two to the centre of the first floor are old, the remainder altered. The central door is now blocked. The high garden wall to the left maintains the built frontage.

Next to the Stud Farmhouse is a modern dwelling called Gite Adeline, which is set back behind a frontage wall. This allows the dwelling to be set some distance from the road and provides car parking space off the road, yet the high roadside wall maintains the built frontage which is important to the character of this part of the conservation area. The dwelling is unobtrusive in its design.

Cobblers Cottage was once called Bartram's Cottage until the mid 20th century. It is originally early 19th century, with 20th century alterations. The attractive front elevation retains some 19th century detailing, such as the brick dentil course at the eaves and the brick arches over the windows. Over the first floor windows is a course of alternate red and vitreous bricks. There is a flint plinth which is a common feature in Skirmett.

Old Crown Cottages look as if they may once have been a pair of farmworkers' cottages. They front directly onto the roadside, as does Cobblers and the weatherboarded, single storey outbuilding to its left maintaining the built frontage. Old Crown Cottages are whitewashed with small pane wooden casements and a central door. The Old Crown Public House is also whitewashed, as country pubs often are, in order to draw attention to the building. This listed building has two 17th century bays either side of the large central chimney. This part is timber framed, and has brick infill to the left gable. The front was rebuilt in the late 18th-early 19th century in flint with narrow brick dressings and narrow first floor band course. The right bay has a rough-cast gable. The second bay is hidden behind a circa 1900 front projection. The original chimney is unusual in its design, having a recessed panel with a flat brick arch and a key block. The roofs are all tiled except for the circa 1900 projection, which is of slate.

Next is Woodlea and Coombe View, a pair of listed houses. The two mid-to-late 18th century bays to the left and the early 19th century bay to the right hide a 17th century range to the rear. The frontage is of brick, with the left bays in red and vitreous brick and coved eaves, the right bay a dentil brick eaves. The old tiled roof is hipped to the left, with flanking brick chimneys. The rear bay is gabled with a brick chimney between the north bays. The paired barred casement windows and panelled doors are 20th century, but fit appropriately to the historic frontage.

1 and 2 Meadow View appear rather discordant in their setting and styling. Built circa 1950, they regrettably do not maintain the built frontage characteristic of this part of the conservation area.

Walnut Tree Cottage is a listed house of some refinement dated circa 1800. This attractive residence is of red and vitreous brick on a flint plinth under a steep old tiled roof. The centre bay is slightly projecting, and includes a 6-panel door with a flat hood on shaped wooden brackets over. The large horizontal sliding, small pane, sash windows are a feature of the property. To the front is a flint wall with brick dressings. To the left of Walnut Cottage and projecting forward is a single storey, formerly an outbuilding. This building has an interesting frontage to the road. The attractive old tiled roof is half hipped, with white painted weatherboarding below. There is then a continuous wooden hood across a flush panel door to the left, and a large barred wooden window. This was once the butcher's shop. In front is a mounting stone, of which there are a few along the road side.

Keepers Cottage, which adjoins the old butcher's shop, is a listed house of the late 18th century. The frontage has been much altered, and is of red and vitreous brick with red brick dressings, and the remains of soft red brick vertical bands. There is a flint plinth below, and a boarded eaves. There was once a passage entry to the left. The windows appear to have been altered, evidenced by the surrounding brick work. The central door is under a flat wooden hood on shaped brackets.

Adjoining Keepers Cottage is a pair of tiny cottages, Mouse Cottage and Post Office Cottage. Mouse Cottage has flint to the ground floor with rendering above. Post Office Cottage has a rendered frontage and an old board door. Both have old tile roofs and small pane casements. Set back from Post Office Cottage is The Old Post Office, a listed house of the 16th century with a cross wing, rebuilt in the 17th century and altered in the 19th century. It was once used as the village bakehouse. The lower bay to the right was possibly once a hall and is now one storey with an attic. The two storey projecting gabled cross wing to the left has a 20th century rear extension. To the left side, the timber frame can still be seen below the shingle hung gable. The cornerpost rests on a large flint pad. The frontage has been rebuilt in brick, part rendered and whitewashed. Opposite The Old Post Office is a listed K6 telephone box.

Skirmett Conservation Area Character Survey Map

LISTED BUILDINGS

Grade II - Buildings of special interest

Pear Tree Cottage - Late C17 early C18 house, brick and timber on flint plinth on front and side, with later rebuild in flint with brick dressings.

Crooked Chimney Cottage - C16 with later additions. Timber frame with exposed cruck trusses to gables, and whitewashed brick, flint and plaster infill. Old tile roof, brick chimneys with crooked shafts.

Cobs Cottage - C17 house, timber frame with whitewash render infill to front and whitewashed brick infill to gable. Left gable shingle. Old tile roof.

Ramblers and the Old School House - originally 2 houses. The Old School House; mid C19, flint with brick dressings, steeply pitched tiled roof. Ramblers is C17, remodelled early C19, flint with brick dressings, whitewashed, old tile roof.

The Old Crown House and Isabel Cottage - Semi detached former public house and cottage, C15 - C16, remodelled C17. Flint and brick with dentil eaves, roughcast whitewashed front. Old tile roof.

Water pump adjacent to The Old Crown House and Isabel Cottage - 1877, cast iron, stand with narrow flutes.

The Old Forge - C17 - to early C18. Timber frame with whitewashed timber infill and white washed flint plinth. Plain tile roof.

The Old Post Office - C16 with cross wing rebuilt in C17, altered C19. Left side has frame of irregular timbers with one curved brace and white washed brick infill, remainder built in brick, part rendered and white washed.

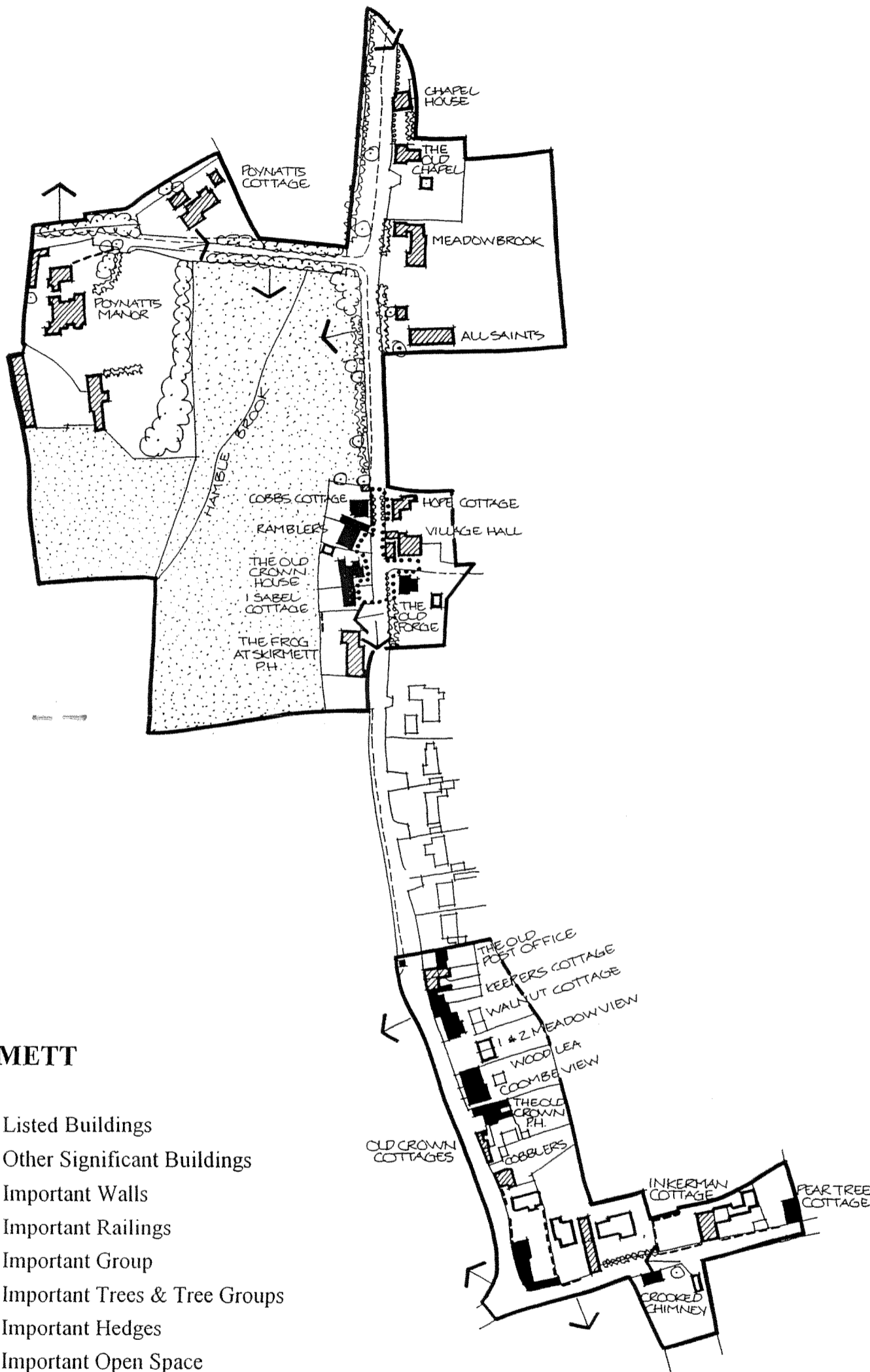
Keepers Cottage - Late C18 house, altered. Red and vitreous brick with red brick dressings and remains of red vertical strips. Flint plinth, boarded eaves, old tile roof.

Walnut Cottage - Circa 1800, red and vitreous brick with offset eaves and flint plinth. Old tile roof, brick chimneys.










Wood Lea and Coombe View - two houses, C17 rear range, rendered and colour washed. 2 mid to late C18 bays to front left, early C19 bay to front right. Front range of brick, with left bays in red and vitreous brick, the right with dentil brick eaves. Side walls rendered. Old tile roof.

The Old Crown Public House - 2 C17 bays with chimney, later C17 cross wing to right all refronted late C18 - early C19. C19 cottage wing across front. 1900 projection in front of left bay. Original building timber framed with whitewashed brick infill, front rebuilt in flint with narrow brick dressings. C20 tiled roofs, slate roof to left projection.

Stud Farmhouse and attached range of outbuildings - Mid C18, altered, red and vitreous brick dressings, flint plinth.



SKIRMETT

-  Listed Buildings
-  Other Significant Buildings
-  Important Walls
-  Important Railings
-  Important Group
-  Important Trees & Tree Groups
-  Important Hedges
-  Important Open Space (private ownership)
-  Important Views

The northern section of the conservation area begins with 'The Frog at Skirmett' a public house once known as the King's Arms. This early 19th century house has a whitewashed brick frontage with a brick course at the eaves, and an old tiled roof above. Each gable end has a chimney and a 20th century single storey extension with dormer. The central door has a flat hood over, and the 20th century windows have metal frames. There is a large old lantern hanging over the door. To the rear is an original wooden casement window.

Next, Isabel Cottage and The Old Crown House (formerly The Late Crown and the Crown Inn until the early 1900s) form part of an identified important group. This pair of listed houses is originally 15th-16th century, altered in the 17th century and later. The large central stack has a lintel dated 1618. The houses have been externally rebuilt in flint and brick with dentil eaves. The front is rough cast and whitewashed. An early 19th century gabled extension projects in front of the right bay. This is of whitewashed flint and brick with narrow dentil eaves. All windows are 20th century. To the left bay are paired wooden casements, the centre bay has a bow window with leaded casement above. In the front garden is a listed water pump made of cast iron and dated 1877 on the cap.

Ramblers and the Old School House are both listed and are now occupied as a single dwelling. Ramblers is 17th century, remodelled in the early-mid 19th century. The thin brick chimney is 17th century, with a smaller later chimney to the right. Like its neighbour, the Old Crown House, Ramblers is whitewashed flint and brick, with dentil eaves. There is a board door to the front which fits appropriately to the dwelling, and modern wooden frames which, to have a traditional appearance, should be painted rather than stained. In the front garden is a water pump dated 1826. The Old School House was built as a chapel of ease in the mid 19th century, then became a school when the church of All Saints was built a short way along the road. The school was for infants only, and older children had to walk to Frieth School. The building became a private residence in 1978. The flint church is richly decorated in a Gothic style.

Cob's Cottage is a delightful 17th century listed house and retains many 17th century external features, such as the external chimney to the right, and the upper storey oriel windows which are supported on 17th century single shaped wooden brackets. The original timber framing remains exposed. The 4-light wooden casements are 19th century, and there is a central old board door with leaded hood. Above is a Phoenix Fire Insurance plaque. To the north of Cob's Cottage, on the edge of its garden boundary, is an old waggon shed.

Opposite is Hope Cottage, a late 19th century pretty Victorian villa, unlisted but significant to the conservation area. The house is in flint, decorated in red and vitreous brick banding, with brick dressings around the windows and a hipped old tiled roof above. The sash windows are original and have slender glazing bars. The central panel door is protected by a gabled porch with decorative bargeboard.

To the right of Hope Cottage are two outbuildings fronting to the road, one of flint, the other weatherboarded, both with old tiled roofs. Behind them is the Village Hall, built in a soft red/orange brick with blue headers and a slate roof. The stone plaque above the arched doorway is engraved with 'Village Hall 1977 Jubilee'. The Village Hall, which lacks decoration, was originally built as a Methodist chapel circa 1830, and once had a gallery.

Opposite the Village Hall and completing the group is The Old Forge, a listed 17th century-early 18th century house. The timber

frame is exposed, and the brick infill and flint plinth are whitewashed. There is a 20th century porch which is appropriate to the dwelling, and unobtrusive rear extensions.

Beyond the important grouping to the north is All Saints, a former chapel built in 1886 for £700 by Alfred Mardon Mowbray. The land for the chapel was donated by Mr H W Cripps of Parmoor, Frieth (the grandfather of Sir Stafford Cripps). The gable end faces the road displaying a large arched window and ornamental white-painted bargeboards. There are buttresses to the angles of the gable elevation, and a cross on the chimney. The finely-coursed knapped flint has red brick banding. At the apex of the gable is some chequer flint work behind the remnants of the bell hanging on shaped wooden brackets. To the rear of the building are decorative ridge tiles including two decorative crosses. The church became a residence in 1975. To the left is a modern garage which has been attractively designed to complement the conservation area and All Saints. It has coursed flint and brick banding, and specially designed garage doors. The open covered way to the side also presents a complementary design feature.

Next is a modern dwelling called Meadowbrook, built in 1981. Further north is yet another former chapel, the third in the village. The Old Chapel, built in 1896, is of red brick with yellow brick dressings, and a slate roof. The original building has been extended to the rear, and large dormers inserted in the slate roof. On the stone tablet above the porch in the south gable of the building is carved 'Skirmett Gospel Mission Hall'. There are other memorial stone tablets set in the west wall of the chapel, and an old stone seat remains. The Mission Hall became a dwelling in 1976.

North of The Old Chapel is Chapel House dating from the early 18th century. Possibly once two cottages, this pretty house is of flint scattered with red header bricks and with red brick dressings. There is a large stack to the rear. The house has been sympathetically extended.

On the opposite side of the road is Poynants Manor and estate. Westward along a tree lined avenue to the right is Poynants Cottage, once two estate workers' cottages. This building is well decorated in flint with red brick dressings. There is a moulded brick band course at first floor level and dentil course at the eaves. There is a decorative timber porch at the south-west elevation, and each gable elevation has an original oriel window. Modern extensions have occurred to the right, and are set back from the frontage and in matching materials. The modern garage (1990) and covered area to the rear are sympathetic to the style of the original building. A date stone bearing the date 1887 and initials W D in a shield is set into the front elevation. The initials are those of the Deane family who owned Poynants Manor in the latter part of the 19th century.

Poynants Manor is mostly hidden from view behind tall trees to the frontage, and various outbuildings and walling on other sides. The east and frontage elevations are tile hung with large sash windows. There is an impressive central columned porch surrounding a central doorway constructed in 1982. The house has an older core with alterations occurring in successive centuries. To the south of the manor is an 18th century weatherboarded barn with a tiled roof sweeping down over a lean-to and a hipped wagon porch. To the west are 19th century brick and flint outbuildings.

MATERIALS

In the southern part of the conservation area the predominant building material is red brick. This is used with a vitreous brick for decoration at the finer houses such as at Stud Farmhouse and

Walnut Cottage, and in the brick course above the windows at Cobbler's. The use of flint is evident, particularly along Shogmore Lane, where it has been the principal building material for elevations at Peartree Cottage, Inkerman Cottage and the Stud Farm outbuildings. Along Shogmore Lane and the main Skirmett road, flint is used as plinth to many of the buildings.

Windows in the southern part of the conservation area are mostly of the small-pane casement type in wooden painted frames which are appropriate to the conservation area. The Stud Farmhouse has large sashes, some of which are original, and Walnut Cottage has sideways sliding sashes. Fortunately, there has been no use of inappropriate materials for replacement windows and doors to the historic dwellings. The traditional use of painted timber window frames and wooden board or panel doors are preferred by residents.

Throughout the southern part of the conservation area, the roofing material is old clay plain tiles (with a small instance of slate at The Old Crown). The continuity of clay tiling is an attractive feature of the conservation area.

The important group in the northern section of the conservation area shows an extensive use of whitewashing over either brick or flint. Six of the nine principal buildings in the group have whitewashed elevations. The Old School House and Hope Cottage introduce flint elevations with red or red and vitreous brick dressings. The Village Hall elevation is mostly hidden behind the flint and weatherboarded outbuildings fronting on to the road. As in the southern part of the conservation area, the extensive use of old clay tiles is an attractive feature of the grouping.

Small-pane casement windows in traditional painted timber frames are prevalent and appropriate to the historic group. Hope Cottage has particularly attractive sash windows with narrow glazing bars which appear to be original, and the windows at Cob's Cottage are a special feature. Use of inappropriate materials has, thankfully, been avoided. Doors also appear appropriate to the parent building, and are mostly simple board doors.

Further north, fine flint work with red brick dressings and clay tiled roofs are the principal building materials and are displayed at Poynatts Cottage, outbuilding to Poynatts Manor, Chapel House and All Saints. The Old Chapel, however, is of red brick with yellow brick dressings under a slate roof. Windows are again mostly small-pane casements, where painted timber frames are appropriate.

As the majority of the residences in Skirmett front directly on to the roadside, driveways are not a feature of the area. However, where they do occur they are generally have a surface dressing of shingle, a material which works well in rural conservation areas of this type. Large areas of concrete, tarmac, and even setts, can appear discordant in an informal rural setting and can tend to give an urban appearance.

TREES AND VEGETATION

The southern part of the conservation area is compact and the boundary is drawn close around the buildings which are of particular significance. As such, trees and vegetation do not appear as a significant feature within this part of the conservation area boundary.

The important grouping in the northern part of the conservation area is again very compact, and there are no significant trees identified in the group. Further north, the scene becomes more

expansive, and here trees, hedges and front gardens make an important contribution to the character of this part of the conservation area. The avenue of trees leading to Poynatts Cottage and Manor and the trees to the south within the grounds of the Manor and the surrounding paddocks are specifically protected by a group Tree Preservation Order. Roadside hedges also make a valuable contribution to the rural qualities of this part of the conservation area.

OPEN SPACE

As already identified, there are no areas of public open space within the conservation area such as a village green. In the southern section of the conservation area and the identified group in the northern section, the emphasis is on enclosure, where the historic dwellings dominate the scene, and therefore open space is not a feature. However, beyond the boundary of the conservation area the open countryside and the beech-hung hillsides provide a fine rural setting for the village.

To the north, the fields/paddocks through which the Hamble Brook flows, although not public open space, do provide a positive contribution by affording a rural backdrop to the identified group, and an appropriate setting to the historic buildings of Poynatts Manor and Cottage. This open space also allows views of the rear of the west side of the identified group from the public footpath to the north.

GROUPING

There is one identified group in the conservation area comprising Isabel Cottage, The Old Crown House, Ramblers, The Old School, Cob's Cottage, Hope Cottage, the Village Hall, and The Old Forge. The group forms a visually coherent association at the heart of the village. The buildings are of a similar scale, with small front gardens, and some with railings to the front. The railings at The Old Forge are recent installations, and it seems likely that they may have existed here in the past. Larger extensions to the properties have judiciously been kept to the rear of the buildings, so that the historic frontages remain. Architecturally and historically, the group makes a vital contribution to the character of the village.

VIEWS

There are many attractive views within the conservation area, some of which are marked on the conservation area survey map. From the southern section of the conservation area, there are outstanding views of the countryside, west to the Beech-hung slope of the Chilterns, south along the Hamble Valley, and north across fields to Poynatts Manor. There are also glimpses of the Chilterns via a gap by the village hall. From within the conservation area there is an attractive view of the Stud farmhouse outbuildings from Crooked Chimney Cottage.

In the northern section of the conservation area, near the Frog at Skirmett, there is the important view of the identified grouping with a glimpse of the open countryside beyond. At the northern entrance to the conservation area, the view of Chapel House is appealing. From the footpath by Poynatts Manor, there are views across the paddocks to the south with the identified group in its rural setting. From the edge of the conservation area there is a long range view across the countryside, revealing Turville windmill in the distance.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL ADVICE

The policies and proposals of the Wycombe District Local Plan are the primary source of reference for development control advice. In addition, the Council's approved Heritage Strategy is seen as a supporting document to the plan.

This character survey is also intended to provide broad guidance of an informal nature in considering new development in the conservation area. Below is a brief check-list taking account of the above text.

To safeguard, preserve and enhance the appearance and special character of Skirmett conservation area:-

- 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.
- Listed and other significant buildings are identified on the survey map, and their specific qualities are described in the text above. Any new development must not harm their integrity or visual quality, and it should be recognised that new development may always not be acceptable.
- Applications for development adjoining but beyond the conservation area boundary will be assessed for their effect upon it, and may be refused permission if this is considered adverse.
- Any new building works, such as extensions, must be designed not as a separate entity, but should be sympathetic in form and scale with the existing buildings and the conservation area as a whole.
- Materials for any new building works must be sympathetic to the character of the conservation area. In Skirmett there is a predominant use of red brick and clay tile. There is also use of flint with brick dressings.
- Surfacing within domestic curtilages for driveways and the like should be in keeping with the rural nature of the village, and of an informal type. Large areas of tarmac and concrete are out of place in this rural setting. Regular paving, pavements and setts may also look discordant, and may not always be appropriate.
- 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. Generally speaking painted timber, small pane windows and timber painted doors, either vertical plank or panel doors, are appropriate to historic dwellings and modern substitute materials such as uPVC and aluminium are not.
- Areas of open space, and gaps between buildings will be carefully considered for protection from development or enclosure in order to protect the character of the Skirmett Conservation Area, the setting of listed buildings, and any important views.
- All trees in conservation areas are protected, but special consideration should be given to those trees indicated on the conservation area to ensure that they are not harmed. New development should recognise this and not present a risk to their continued future growth and habit.
- Although hedges cannot be specially protected through legislation, those hedgerows indicated on the character survey map should be retained and, where possible, enhanced.
- Special care must be taken to ensure that views looking into and out from the conservation area are not spoilt. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Wycombe District Council's Planning, Transport and Development Service has a number of publications which offer further guidance. Ask the Conservation Officer for information on which Heritage Guidance Notes are currently available and appropriate.

The Conservation Officer is always pleased to give advice on all heritage matters and can be contacted on 01494 421578 or seen by appointment in the Council Offices or on site.

Development Control matters within the Skirmett conservation Area are the responsibility of the West Team who can be contacted on 01494 421531.

Planning Policy matters are the responsibility of the Policy Unit who can be contacted on 01494 421545.