Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal
August 2011

Planning, Housing and Economy

Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL NORTH OXFORDSHIRE
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1.1 This document is an appraisal of the character and appearance of Bicester Conservation Area, first designated in 1969. The Conservation Area was reviewed in 1992 with an appraisal being produced in 1998. This appraisal is an update and review of the 1998 document. It provides a comprehensive review of the current character and appearance of Bicester and the Conservation Area. It also provides a basis for providing informed judgements on Bicester’s future conservation and management.

1.2 Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. However, it is the 1990 Act (Section 69) which places a duty upon local planning authorities to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest through an appraisal process and to designate them as Conservation Areas. Since 1967 some 9,600 Conservation Areas have been designated in England, including 59 in Cherwell District.

1.3 The planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides legislation for the protection of the nation’s heritage of buildings and places of architectural and historic interest, ‘the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’

1.4 Local planning authorities have a duty under the Act to consider boundary revisions to their Conservation Areas ‘from time to time’.

1.5 This document is based on a standard recording format derived from advice contained in documents published by English Heritage (2011). By writing a full Conservation Area appraisal for Bicester, the special character and appearance can be identified and protected by ensuring that any future development preserves or enhances that identified special character.

Fig. 1 Location map with Conservation Area boundary
2. Location

2.1 Bicester lies 18Km (11 miles) north/northeast of Oxford astride the Oxford to Buckingham Road. The Conservation Area covers the majority of the historic settlement. Despite Bicester’s rapid 20th century growth it retains its pre-18th century historic core which still acts as the town’s commercial centre.

2.2 Phases of the town’s development from the burgage plots and old London Road to the railway and 1970s shopping centre are clearly visible in the settlement plan. The Garth and Bicester House are also apparent as patches of greenery at the far east and west of the Conservation Area.

Fig. 2 2009 Aerial photograph including conservation area boundary
2.3 Figure 3 shows the identified significant heritage assets for Bicester. These include statutory listed buildings (Grades I, II* and II), the designated and conservation area boundary, the location of trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order, the Area of Archaeological Interest and buildings identified as worthy of local listing.

2.4 Protection for listed buildings, conservation areas and identified trees is conferred under primary legislation, backed-up with policies within the Cherwell Local Plan and within Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5).

2.5 Local listing is advocated by PPS5 and its supporting document Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide in relation to the contribution non-designated heritage assets make to the character of the historic environment.

Fig. 3. Area designations
3. Geology and Topography

3.1 The town sits on the northern edge of the Otmoor lowlands next to the band of limestone and Cornbrash, which runs north-east to south-west across Oxfordshire. The land is flat, rising very gently from 70m to 80m (approx. 230ft to 260ft) south to north.

3.2 The River Bure and its various minor tributaries flow north-west to south-east through the town towards the River Ray but the watercourse is never a significant feature in the town, being canalised for much of its length through the developed area. (Cobham Resource Consultants, 1995).
3.3 The topology of Bicester town is flat. The map clearly illustrates the route of the River Bure and the location of the rail embankment. The geology of the area is to some extent expressed by the topography of the area.

3.4 Topographic features are few and far between. The only one within the Bicester environs is Graven Hill which is located south-east of the town. It has been suggested that this was the site of an Iron Age encampment, although it is now believed that the earthworks discovered were possibly linked to a later battle between Saxons and Danes.
4. Archaeology

4.1 Situated on an ancient route and at a river crossing, Bicester has a wealth of archaeological sites. Central to the Conservation area, and highlighted in Fig. 6 are:

1 - Historic core and Saxon settlement areas; St Edburg’s church; Site of St Edburgh’s Augustinian Monastery – founded 1180s; 17th century dovecote; Site of St John’s Chapel associated with medieval hospital; Post-medieval pits; Cemetery chapel 1861; Post-medieval vicarage 16th century; Domestic building listed; Post medieval pits and pottery; Post-medieval bell foundry; Medieval churchyard cross; Medieval manor house; Chapel, Dovecote and fishpond; Medieval causeway; Post-medieval congregational church 1728.

2 - Medieval shrunken settlement and village green; site of Medieval monastic grange and manor house; post medieval manor house on site of monastic grange; medieval settlement.

Fig. 6 Archaeological sites within and around Bicester
5. History and Development of Bicester

5.1 Origins

5.1.1 This section provides a brief history of the development of Bicester. A more detailed account is given in The Victoria County History: A History of Oxfordshire, Vol VI (Lobel, 1959). Other key sources can be found in the Bibliography.

5.1.2 There has been a settlement at or near Bicester since Roman times. In the middle of the first century AD the Romans established and fortified the town of Alchester at the intersection of Akeman Street (Cirencester to St Albans) and a road from Towcester to Dorchester, a location approximately 1.5 kilometres south of the present town. The 26 acre site was very low lying, necessitating extensive raising of levels and drainage works. When the Romans left in the 5th century their drainage system collapsed and the site reverted to marsh land. There have not only been several finds of Romano British pottery around the site but also a tombstone, coin hoard and gate-posts which have provided important details and dates for the site.

5.1.3 There is debate about the origin of the name of the town. The Domesday Book, 1086, records the town as Bernecestre which means ‘the fort of the warriors’ or ‘of Beorna’ who was believed to be an Anglo-Saxon Warlord. It is possible that the settlement was a frontier garrison town for the west Saxons against the Mercians. There is no evidence of a defended site, although it was believed locally that earthworks may have been found adjacent to the River Bure at Crockwell (located at the north end of Sheep Street). Others cite the Saxon for granary (bern) and the Latin for town (ceaster) to reflect the market place. Other variations of the name include Burincester, Burencester, Birincastre, Birincestre, Burincestre. As late as 1757 it was known variously as Burchester, Burcester or Bissiter and in 1793 as Burcester or Bicester, the present spelling only becoming standard in the nineteenth century.

Fig. 7 John Speed’s map of 1605
5.2 Development

5.2.1 Bicester is a market town formed from the coalescence of three, originally separate, settlements - King’s End, Market End and Crockwell - the social standing and architectural character of each of these settlements being noticeably different, reflecting their separate social histories. The form of the town settlement is very much dictated by the presence of the River Bure and from examination of historic maps can be seen to have changed little throughout the 18th to mid-20th centuries. It is only in the later decades of the 20th century that the town under-went rapid expansion with the construction of successive waves of housing estates in-filling and around the periphery of the historic core.

5.2.2 The modern settlement evolved with the Anglo-Saxon farmers who settled on the Combrash, a flaggy type of limestone, either side of a ford over the River Bure and close to the existing Saxon Minster of St Edburg’s. The first group of farms were established in the vicinity of what became the Manor of King’s End followed by a later settlement on the east side of the Bure which became the Manor of Market End.

5.2.3 Tradition has it that the religious settlement at King’s End was founded by Birinus, the seventh century Bishop of Dorchester and subsequently destroyed by the Danes about 912. The nuns of Markyate, Bedfordshire obtained land here at the beginning of the 13th century and their grange and the cottages of their tenants constituted most of the settlement. By 1316 the Manor was known as King’s End and in 1377 a licence to hold a three day annual trade fair was granted. Markyate Priory was dissolved in 1536 by Henry VIII’s First Suppression Act and in 1542, ‘the Manor of the nuns place’ was

Fig. 8 Development maps
sold into private ownership. In 1584 the Manor was conveyed to the Coker family, whose origins were in the West Country. Bicester House remained in the ownership of the Coker family for nearly four centuries until the 1970s, during which time the family played a leading role in the life of the town.

5.2.4 The later settlement on the east of the River Bure known as Market End, or Bury End throughout the middle ages, was fortified by King Edward the elder. The Saxon Minster is dedicated to St Edburga, his daughter or granddaughter, who died in 924. The site of the Manor House of the Lords of Bury End is not known. It could have been in or near the site of the priory, because in 1182 Gilbert Bassett, the Lord of the Manor, gave land to the Augustians to found a priory. Records suggest that Market End was the more successful settlement. In 1239 a charter was granted to William de Longspee to hold a weekly market; in 1252 a licence to hold a fair for three days on and around the feast of St Edburg on the 18th July was given and in 1441 Robert Brooke was granted a Friday market which possibly included a livestock fair. The Priory was a major influence on town development and economics.

5.2.5 However the markets sustained a community larger than an ordinary agrarian village and leases of houses suggest a prosperous merchant community in the thirteenth century. Land was sold by William de Longspee at that time and two storey houses with cellars and solars (with-drawing rooms) were built contiguously on long narrow burgage plots along Market Square and the Causeway. Although the buildings were replaced in the 16th and 17th century, the medieval town plan can still be identified by the limestone walls of the burgage plots.

5.2.6 The success of the market was due to the old Roman road being closed after local traders petitioned the lord of the manor to close the road. This pulled traffic into Market End via Causeway and Sheep Street. The roads were maintained by the monks of the Priory because it was in their interests to have good communications between their scattered properties. It is believed that Causeway was constructed by the monks probably with a ford and a wooden footbridge for pedestrians across the River Bure. Following the dissolution of the monastery the roads fell into disrepair.

Fig. 9 Aerial photograph taken in 1974 showing Market Square. The lines of medieval burgage plots are still visible.
This comparison shows the extent to which Market Square has become dominated by cars and their associated signage and clutter. The central listed buildings of Numbers 46, 48 & 51 look in much better repair and are still occupied by businesses on the ground floor. To the left of the photograph it is clear that the George Hotel at the end of Sheep Street has been demolished to be replaced by the HSBC bank (Originally London & Midland Bank) and the Quadrant building.

This photograph of Market Hill looks at first glance to display few differences; the same buildings are recognisable. However the old photograph shows the buildings which have now been demolished fronting Sheep Street and also the extent to which shop fronts design has changed during the last century. The smaller divided glass and timber framed frontages have been replaced in many places by large single glazed panels with bulky and brightly coloured box signs. Awnings have been removed taking shops back off the pavements and some of the brick buildings have been gentrified with render and, on Number 5 London Road, a pediment doorcase.
Sheep Street is one of the areas that have changed most since the early 1900s. The street has returned to a pedestrian dominated space but the open character has been lost by the insertion of planters and street furniture. Sheep Street has replaced Market Square as Bicester’s commercial focus. The old photographs show the rows of small traditional shops but many of these buildings have been lost and have been replaced with modern frontages in the mid 20th century.

In contrast to the changes seen above in Sheep Street, the Causeway has been remarkably constant. The road has retained its historically narrow and constricted character and even retains some of its shop fronts. The last appraisal was written in 1998 when a number of properties were in a poor state of repair; the 2009 photo shows there has been some restoration although a few buildings remain vacant.
By 1753 the pattern of medieval streets and spaces in the Conservation Area that still exist today has been established. The surrounding countryside is semi-enclosed with the open areas of Bicester Moor and King’s End Mead distinct from the thin strips of individual burgage plots. The water mill is visible next to Chapel Street (previously Water Lane) and to the north a piece of marshland labelled Gibbet Slade indicates the location of the gallows.
By 1887 the majority of surrounding land has been inclosed and the railway has arrived in Bicester. The main route to London runs through King’s End, Market Square, Sheep Street and London Road but Queen’s Avenue is still an informal path. There are a large number of Inns and Hotels along the main route serving the passers-by. The Poplars (now known as The Garth) was built in the 1870s occupying a site to the east of the town centre. There are many signs indicative of an active Victorian town such as smithy’s, weighing machines, gas works and single unit workers’ cottages lining Chapel Street.
By 1913 more housing has appeared at Crockwell, King’s End and Priory Road. Queen’s Avenue is still an unsurfaced lane and remains so until 1938. The cattle market has relocated to the east of Sheep Street to a purpose built area. The majority of the town still lies within the Conservation Area boundary at this stage and there is a mix of residential and commercial property in the town centre.
Fig. 13 Phases of house construction in Bicester
An analysis of house construction by date, illustrated above, show very clearly that until the 20th century building was restricted to the redevelopment of Bicester town centre. The 20th century has seen the massive expansion of the town with successive development schemes extending the perimeter.
5.2.7 A settlement developed at Crockwell to the north. The name is likely to have originated from ‘the well at the cross’ and also appears in the context of a Walter Crockwell mentioned in the 1211 Priory annals. A spring was located at Crockwell, adjacent to the Roman road and flowing into the River Bure. It was reputed to have medicinal properties. A hermitage and chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist was located at Crockwell but a field survey of 1399 makes it clear that it lay in open countryside. White Kennett identified a settlement called Bigenhul between Crockwell and King’s End with its own small church of which no trace remains, but others report this as the King’s End settlement.

5.2.8 Very little remains of the Priory now but it is known that the grounds extended west from the River Bure to St Edburg’s Church and south from the Causeway to the confluence of the two parts of the River Bure. Plans have been reconstructed from documentary evidence (excavations in 1819 and 1968 and building work in 1965) to show a church significantly larger than the parish church with lodgings, cloisters, chapter house, dovecote, mills, barn and stables. Three gates gave access through the walls from what are now Piggy Lane, Church Lane and Priory Road. The monastery was never rich and the Priory had to enclose land and sell jewels in the 14th and 15th centuries. Three gates gave access through the walls from what are now Piggy Lane, Church Lane and Priory Road. The monastery was never rich and the Priory had to enclose land and sell jewels in the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1526 King Henry VIII visited the monastery and it was one of the first to be dissolved by him ten years later. The Priory Church was immediately demolished, the cloister buildings were demolished in 1673 and the grounds lay largely unused until redeveloped in 1965.

5.2.9 Bicester continued to comprise the two townships of King’s End and Market End, never seeking the status of a borough, until the Urban District Council was created in 1894. The division between the two townships is demonstrated by a house which is known both as Number 2 King’s End and Number 28 Church Street.

5.2.10 The two townships always shared a parish church however. According to tradition the Church of St Edburg was established in the 7th century; certainly as a Minster church it was in existence before the Norman Conquest. The existing church reportedly incorporates some late Saxon work but most of the fabric dates from the 12th to the 15th centuries. The importance of the church at Bicester is evidenced by the formation of the Bicester Deanery comprising 33 churches before the end of the 12th century.

5.2.11 The 14th and 15th centuries saw economic decline exacerbated by the Black Death in 1349, floods in 1412 and poor harvests.

5.2.12 The 16th and 17th centuries were prosperous times and the town saw much rebuilding including the use of stone from the dissolved Priory. Sheep Street developed at this time when the livestock market outgrew Market Square. Burgage plots extended from the Causeway, northwards either side of Sheep Street, bounded on the west by the River Bure. This pattern was still clearly discernible until the construction of Manorsfield Road.

5.2.13 Development at Market End was encouraged in 1596 when the Earl of Derby, the Lord of the Manor of Market End, leased parts of the town to 31 of his tenants. Shortly afterwards he conveyed the Manor at an annual rent of one penny for 9999 years in trust for these tenants. Further leases led to the town becoming a bailiwick where effectively the holders were granted absolute freehold. The bailiwick was only extinguished in the 20th century by the tenures passing to Bicester Urban District Council.

5.2.14 A town house was erected in the Market Place before 1599 forming part of the encroachments in the Market place which have survived from this period within the island block Nos. 44 to 57 Market Square. Adjoining this was a wooden arcade known as The Shambles. In 1662 this comprised an upper room raised on wooden pillars with an outside staircase, a clock and bell on the western gable. It was used for the storage of stalls and market equipment and also, for a time, for the slaughter and sale of livestock. It was demolished in 1826 by rioting agricultural workers. The Market Square also contained a weighbridge, a fountain, a house
known as the Town House, a pillory, stocks and a whipping post (which can now be seen in the entrance hall of the Garth). In 1605 it was ruled that no further development would be allowed within the Market Square.

5.2.15 A block of buildings to the north of the existing central block in Market Square used to split Market Hill into two, east and west, sections. This was three storey and restricted vehicles to a narrow opening known as ‘the Narrows’ or ‘the Opening’. The block was demolished in 1963 for road widening.

5.2.16 Major fires in 1718, 1724 and 1730 led to further rebuilding. A serious fire at Chapel Street (then Water Lane) in 1728 led to an extension of the town northwards to Crockwell which was called New Buildings.

5.2.17 The main route from the Midlands to London passed through the town via St John’s Street, Sheep Street, Market Square, and Chapel Street. London Road did not become the main route until the Bletchley to Oxford railway line was constructed in 1850. The route of the former road can still be traced by following the line of mature trees south east from the end of Chapel Street. There were toll gates at the northern entrance where Twitchers Alley and Crumps Butts meet North Street and also at Priory Cottage. The latter was replaced after 1850 with one on London Road beyond the junction of Launton Road. The first post chaises were advertised at The Crown Inn in 1793. The Great Western Railway line through Bicester, now served by Chiltern Railways, was opened in 1910.

5.2.18 King’s End retained a rural atmosphere compared with the commercial activity of Market End. Two farms remained until well into the 20th century, Manor Farm and Home Farm, still working until 1955 and the late 1960s respectively. There was a green in front of Bicester House until the grounds were extended in the 1780s. Properties may have been demolished at this time and rebuilt along the alignment of the Old Roman Road. The main entrance to Bicester House was at the corner of King’s End opposite The Fox Inn. The Old Roman Road had fallen into disuse and only a field path connected King’s End to Field Street along its route until Queen’s Avenue was constructed in 1938. The garden monument centre on the undeveloped plot to the north of The Fox Inn is the site of the former Pound.

5.2.19 Nineteenth century development focused beyond the northern end of Sheep Street at Crockwell. Terraces of small houses were built fronting North Street and St John’s Street and in alleyways to the side. Many of these have been demolished including Victoria Row, Albert Terrace and Ladysmith Terrace on the junction of St John’s Street with Manorsfield Road and some, including earlier thatched cottages, along North Street. However, others remain adjacent to the Plough Inn, North Street and off Crumps Butts.

5.2.20 At the end of the 19th century/turn of the 20th century speculatively development on Victoria Road was undertaken by George Layton, a prominent townsman, with the building of terraced housing at Bath Terrace, Manchester Terrace and Newport Terrace (all in the 1890s) as well as the relocation of the Cattle Market to Victoria Road from Sheep Street in 1910. He was also involved with developments on Priory Lane (1890), Priory Road (1903, 1905 & 1907), London Road (1910) and Field Street (1890s).

5.2.21 In 1863 a drainage scheme was initiated starting in Market Square and Water Lane/Chapel Street. In 1891-2 it was ordered that earth closets should be emptied weekly. In Chapel Street previously these had discharged directly into the River Bure. This together with frequent flooding particularly of the Causeway and Chapel Street caused several outbreaks of cholera and typhoid. A Pest House was erected near Priory Road and later replaced by a fever hospital at Highfield. Piped water arrived in 1905 and gas supply in 1845. The River Bure was culverted and partially built over at the Causeway in the 1860s. Electricity was introduced in 1929.

5.2.22 There was a decline in the population in the early years of the 20th century from the peak figure reached in 1891 and this continued until 1918 when the population again started to rise.
Fig. 14 Map combines 1753 map by Thomas Williams, the ordnance survey map of 1876 and a map of 1956 by the Surveyor of the Bicester U.D.C., Victoria County History.
albeit fairly slowly until 1945. In 1921 the principal employment was still in agriculture, followed by people engaged in trade and commerce. Largely due to the permanent establishment of the R.A.F Station and other businesses, the pattern of employment had by 1945 considerably altered encouraging a rapid rise in the population from that time. Building commenced in 1930s along Bucknell Road at Highfield. Post-war building continued on the western development at King’s End, primarily to house civilian workers from the Ordnance Depot.

5.2.23 Bicester continued to expand rapidly, described as the fastest growing town in Oxfordshire by the South East Rural Towns Partnership. The population has risen from 5,512 in 1961 to an estimated 29,000 in 2008 and is projected to reach 36,098 by the end of 2011. In the light of current building in South West Bicester and the proposed North West Bicester Eco Town further growth is predicted for the period from 2011 to 2026.

5.3 Historical Associations and Events

5.3.1 In the 17th century the town was often the headquarters of the contending armies in the Civil War. In 1643 the Royalists and the King stayed a night in the town on 21 June, possibly at no 17 Market Square. However by mid 1644 the Parliamentarians were in control.

5.3.2 The town became well known in the 18th and 19th centuries for the quality of its horse racing, held from 1718, and local hunts, particularly The Bicester and Warden Hill Hunt from 1778. Bicester Hall and The Garth were both built as hunting lodges, The Garth for the Keith-Falconer family, and this enticed London gentry to the town.

5.3.3 The Coker family, Lords of the Manor of King’s End from 1584 played a significant part in the life of the town, contributing to the wellbeing of its inhabitants through providing land for the construction of schools etc.

5.4 Trade, Industrial and Agricultural Interest

5.4.1 The development of the market town from an agrarian community can be charted. At the beginning of the 17th century the settlement was almost entirely dependent on agriculture with few tradesmen. By 1622 however a traveller described Bicester as ‘a very good market for all manner of cattle supplied with all kinds of trades’. Analysis of wills of the period reveals that tanners, glovers, saddlers, clothiers, weavers, fullers and maltsters all traded in the town. By the 18th century over a quarter of the townspeople were suppliers of goods including meat, bread, shoes and clothing. By 1851, although agriculture was still the greatest source of employment in the town, there were also labourers, carpenters, masons and, amongst the women of the poorer classes, lace makers, dress makers, tailors and milliners. By the 18th century Bicester had established a reputation for rope, lace, baskets, sackcloth and combing wool and plaiting straw.

5.4.2 The Black Death in 1349 affected the town and this, with economic decline, poor harvests and floods, created harsh times. Much land was
uncultivated and sheep farming and early land inclosure (especially of the Priory’s land in the outlying hamlets of Wretchwick and Bignell) took over from arable farming. Market End fields and commons were finally inclosed in 1758 and King’s End in 1794; after inclosure rents trebled. Until that time open fields existed as far as Chesterton and Middleton Stoney. Thomas Williams’ 1754 map prepared just before the Inclosure Act clearly shows the division of land into furlongs. The agricultural industry of the area is varied. By the 1820s there was severe depression caused by the Napoleonic wars. However by the end of the 19th century Bicester district was well farmed and the area was noted for its butter and cheese production.

5.4.3 Improved communications came with the construction of turnpikes (Stratton road was turnpiked in 1768–9; the Caversfield road, a part of the coach road from London to Birmingham, was turnpiked in 1790–1 along with the Bicester—Aynho section of this road. The Bicester to Aylesbury section of the route having been turnpiked in 1770), the Oxford Canal in the late 1780s, (with a wharf at Lower Heyford), the London and North Western Railway line from Bletchley to Oxford in 1851 and the Great Western Railway in 1910. The industrial revolution affected Bicester less than many other towns. The decline of the market and through coaching traffic in the 19th century did not result in ruin, due to the prosperity which was brought to the town by the horse races and hunts. Horse races were initially held at King’s End but later transferred out of town.

Beesley, A. History of Bicester (1821), Vol. 15, pg 36
6. Architectural History

6.1 The three areas of Bicester – King’s End, Market End and Crockwell – advertise their origins and developmental history through their differing architecture, the type of buildings and the social status of these buildings. King’s End has a preponderance of ecclesiastical buildings, buildings with religious connections and buildings of higher status demonstrated by the use of polite architectural detailing. Market End has more of the Georgian market town about it; a greater preponderance of vernacular styles (although polite architecture is also found), a busier street frontage, greater coverage of backland in burgage plots with ancillary buildings associated with storage and trade. Crockwell on the other hand began as a religious founding, a small chapel and (medicinal) well located in the countryside but this fell into disuse and by the 19th century the area had been incorporated into Bicester with the building of terraces of smaller artisan houses constructed along narrow lanes or formed into yards.

6.2 Very little remains of the Priory complex. The present parish hall may have been a tythe barn; the dovecote, which dates from the late 17th century, may stand on the site of the original; the dwelling named The Old Priory is claimed to be 15th century/early 16th century and thought to have been a guest house or hospice within the Priory, possibly called The Bell. Old Place Yard House, now a guest house, is mid/late 16th century incorporating medieval elements is thought to be part of the gatehouse to the Priory. Existing boundary walls run along the route of the Priory Wall, some of which are believed to be original.

6.3 The Church of St. Edburg is the oldest remaining building in the town. It dates approximately from the 11th to 14th centuries, was altered in the 15th and 16th centuries and restored in 1862. It is a large church with late perpendicular tower and windows in the transepts and chapel. Early details include the 12th century buttresses of the chancel and fragments of zigzag string course on the north transept which suggests that the original church was aisleless. A south aisle was built in the early 13th century. The east window of the south chapel by Morris and Co is dated 1866 with Faith, Hope and Charity designed by Burne-Jones and tracery lights by Philip Webb.

6.4 The Old Vicarage dates from around 1500 and was altered and extended probably in the 18th century and in 1882.

6.5 Bicester House dates from the early 18th century, incorporating 17th century elements. It lies on the site of the Manor House of the Nuns of Markyate but the earlier house was destroyed by fire. Much reconstruction took place in the 1780s and again about 1820.

6.6 There was much rebuilding in the town in the 16th and 17th centuries and many buildings remain from that period particularly along Church Street, Causeway and Market Square. Of particular interest are the following:-

- The group 7-13 Church Street, including The Six Bells Inn and The Swan Inn have datestones of 1682, 1676 and 1681.
- The group of buildings which sit in the centre of Market Square, Numbers 46, 48, 51, comprise a former substantial town house of jettied timber frame construction and with extremely fine mid 17th century details such as Oriel windows with enriched carving, scalloped barge boards and wood mullioned and transomed windows. It is likely that the building has medieval origins. Number 47 is a striking building of stucco and rusticated stucco quoins and a three storied porch with an ogee-shaped roof surmounted with a lead ball and weather vane with datestone B/IM/1698
- Number 30 Market Square was refronted with chequer brick but has a datestone of 1751 and is probably partly earlier.
- Number 34 is a 17th century partially timber framed building containing 17th century oak

St. Edburg’s Church
panelled doors which may have been part of the adjacent Inn.

- The King’s Arms dates from the 16th and 18th centuries and is a three storied stucco and rendered building with a Venetian window with oak mullioned windows fronting London Road.

6.7 In the 18th and 19th centuries, Market Hill and Church Street were the fashionable parts of town and the emerging middle classes built their homes here. For example Number 4 Market Hill is early 18th century building, of 3 storeys with a symmetrical 5 window front of chequer brick, part of which is now incorporated into the adjacent supermarket. Number 1 Market Square, Claremont House, is a rendered 3 storey building with attic and elaborate timber detailing. Number 5 Market Square, is a 3 storey double depth plan house with a 5 window front. Further out of town, Number 17 London Road, The Hermitage and 17a were originally one dwelling and are of additional interest as the old gaol is attached to Number 17. Number 18 Church Street, Northampton House, is a mid 18th century house with a symmetrical 4 window front and Number 20, The Limes, is a substantial mid 18th century 3 storey house with a 5 window front. At King’s End, Oxford House, is a substantial early 18th century house with a hipped slate and plain clay tile roof.

6.8 Buildings dating from this period but of more modest proportions can be found further along Sheep Street. A notable group are Numbers 24-30. Number 24 is the earliest, having a datestone of 1689 but the others are 18th century of rendered limestone and slate roofs. Further along, Numbers 86-88, The Hobgoblin and adjacent properties, date from the early 18th century, and share a massive brick chimney stack.

6.9 Following the fire at Chapel Street houses were cleared and in 1728 the Congregational Chapel was constructed, later extended in the 19th century. It is of limestone rubble and chequer brick with ashlar dressings and round arched windows with tracery.

6.10 Other chapels in the town include the chapel built by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1841 in North Street, now known as Weyland Hall, with school room added in 1885 and later extensions of 1892. Subsequently a new church was constructed on the north side of Sheep Street and opened in 1927.

6.11 A schism in the Methodist Movement gave rise to the United Methodist Free Church, who built its own chapel in Sheep Street in 1863. The chapel was subsequently taken over by the Wesleyans and was known as Wesley Hall. The building has now been converted to commercial premises. The Roman Catholic Church of The Immaculate Conception in Causeway was constructed in 1963 in Italianate style. St Edburg’s Hall, London Road, was designed in 1882 by the architect E.G. Bruton.
6.12 There are several school buildings of note remaining. The Blue Coat School, so called because of the uniform of the boys, opened in 1721 possibly in the Free School House adjoining the Church of St Edburg. The building called Bluecoats, now 1 Church Terrace together with the adjoining Tysul House, was remodelled in the late 18th century but includes interior panelling and staircase dating from the mid 17th century to around 1700.

6.13 The National School now St Edburg’s Primary School, was opened in 1858. It was designed by the architect Thomas Nicholson of Hereford in the gothic style. The primary school will move to South West Bicester in the near future and the original school is likely to be converted to residential use.

6.14 Some of the largest buildings in the town have been used for education from time to time, for example Oxford House at King’s End was a ladies’ Collegiate School in the 1870s and The Limes, 20 Church Street was a similar establishment. Bicester Hall, now Hometree House, was used to house the County Grammar School from 1924 and in 1946 this expanded to include Claremont House, 1 Market Hill. St Mary’s Roman Catholic School was opened in King’s End in 1883, and expanded in 1939. In 1998 planning permission was given to demolish and redevelop the derelict building and the site is now a health centre.

6.15 Twentieth century buildings which display architectural features of interest include terraced housing at Priory Road and Numbers 36-44 London Road, Numbers 6-12 Field Street, Bath Terrace, Victoria Road, Priory Terrace, Priory Lane and of lesser interest Manchester Terrace, Newport Terrace, Victoria Road.

6.16 Rented houses were built by the Bicester Urban District Council at Priory Road some of which remain close to their original appearance. Amidst them, Number 14 Priory Road is an individual single storey dwelling influenced by the modern movement and this retains its original design including the flat roof.

6.17 Although the town has expanded greatly during the second half of the 20th century there has not been a corresponding level of new building within the historic core. Somerfield Supermarket and the Crown Walk Shopping Centre are examples of late 20th century retailing which have been integrated into the historic street scene with varying degrees of success.
7. Established Character

7.1 Land Use

7.1.1 The Conservation Area is based on the historic core, which comprises much of the commercial focus of the town. Sheep Street and Market Square are predominantly retail with some financial services, restaurants and cafés. In the three storey properties on Market Square many buildings appear to be in residential or financial services use on the upper floors. In Sheep Street where the buildings are mostly two storey, upper floors are more commonly used as storage space.

7.1.2 In several locations along Sheep Street backland buildings (buildings at the rear of burgage plots) and yards have been brought into productive small scale retail and service use (for example Evans Yard). The Causeway contains a mixture of retail, restaurant and residential uses. The northern end of Sheep Street and beyond,
being essentially out of the commercial heart of the town, is more ‘down at heal’ than the more vibrant Market Square and southern end of Sheep Street. Consequently there are a number of vacant retail units in North Street and Wesley Lane, although that said restaurants and takeaways do predominate in this area. The remainder of the Conservation Area is predominantly residential.

7.1.3 In 2009 a scheme to re-invigorate the commercial centre of Bicester was approved by the Local Planning Authority. This includes wholesale redevelopment of the land East of Manorsfield Road. A further scheme to redevelop Wesley Lane and land adjacent has also been given approval and this is also the reason why retail units in Wesley Lane have been closed.

7.2 Settlement Pattern

7.2.1 Bicester is remarkable in that its central area retains intact the medieval street pattern and the relationship of urban spaces associated with a small market town despite its extensive 20th century growth. The Conservation Area covers the centre of Bicester where the post-medieval development of the settlement is still discernable. The building lines within the town centre are continuous and very strongly define the public realm contrasting with the jagged irregular form of the rear, generally private areas. This is particularly noticeable on the eastern side of Sheep Street. Occasional carriageway arches and lane openings are the only breaches of continuity.

7.2.2 The parish church, cemetery and associated uses dominate the area south of Church Street; The Garth grounds occupy the south east corner of the Conservation Area. Old coaching inns occupy dominant positions, for example former Fox Inn at King’s End and the King’s Arms at Market Square. The centre consists of densely developed (burgage) plots, particularly along Sheep Street and Market Square arising from the historic use of backland areas for activities such as brewing, tanning etc. The commercial re-use of these outbuildings not only encourages their good maintenance and strengthens the range of services the town offers but increases the permeability of the linear routes (e.g. enables shoppers to short-cut between the shopping street/areas and the carparks).

7.3 Building type and style

7.3.1 Bicester contains a diverse range of building types. The majority of buildings are cottages and town houses with many of those on major thoroughfares having been brought into commercial use. But there are also examples of other specific building types which include inns, churches, chapels, schools, toll houses, a manor house, an old jail and a purpose built police station complete with cells and a courthouse; a number of these buildings including the jail, the police station and the courthouse have now been converted to residential use. Service buildings such as stables, privies and barns remain, for example, in rear yards off Sheep Street, Causeway and Market Square. Other building types such as slaughter houses and dairies also survive to the rear of Sheep Street. However, often, these ancillary structures have been swept away by more modern development. This is particularly noticeable between Sheep Street and Manorsfield Road. Similarly the outlook from Victoria Road is degraded along much of its length as a result of no strong and unifying building line and the disjointed development of the space as a result of modern commercial uses.

7.3.2 The town was never particularly rich and the bulk of the early historic core of buildings consists of two or three storey vernacular buildings. These ranges are typically multi-gables e.g. London Road frontage of the King’s Arms Public House and Numbers 48-57 Market Square. Classical influences are largely restricted to re-fronting and rebuilding particularly

The King’s Arms from the London Road  
Barn in Crumps Butts
along the route of the old London Road where a number of timber frame buildings were refronted to appear more fashionable. A number of Gothic Revival buildings from the 19th century such as The Old Court House, St Edburg’s School and St Edburg’s Hall survive. The residential areas around the town centre contain a large number of Victorian terraces predominantly constructed in local brick or those brought by the railway.

7.4 Building Construction, Materials and Elevations

7.4.1 The white limestone and blueish grey limestone of the Cornbrash have been quarried locally at Caversfield and Crockwell and are a characteristic of the older buildings. The heavy Oxford clays have also been used for brick making; clay pits east of London Road were worked until the end of the 19th century.

7.4.2 The predominant building material is limestone rubble brought to courses. Years of lime washing has been followed by a number of buildings being rendered and painted, sometimes scored to give the appearance of ashlar. From Church Street to Market Square there are now few buildings not rendered. Coursed squared limestone is in evidence in some of the more imposing buildings e.g. The Church of St Edburg, Bicester House, the Old Vicarage and on some properties constructed around the mid 19th century such as the former Magistrates Court House and Numbers 2 and 4 Church Street. Ashlar is generally restricted to quoins and window surrounds with the exception of the early/mid 19th century building now occupied by Barclays Bank which is now painted. Some of the earliest buildings are timber framed but are now mainly rendered over.

7.4.3 In the early 19th century some buildings were re-faced in brick, as was the fashion. Commercial premises within these buildings tend to have a greater number of divisions in their shop fronts as structural support. This is in contrast to the more modern commercial buildings, particularly those on Sheep Street which have larger expanses of plain glazing due to the structural support given by their concrete construction.

7.4.4 By the end of the 19th century most buildings were entirely constructed in brick as the cheaper and easily obtainable alternative to stone e.g. at North Street. The predominant brick colour is red but (due to the local prevalence of lias clays) yellow and blue engineering bricks are also found, often used decoratively as string courses and window surrounds e.g. Priory Road.

7.4.5 Very frequently the bricks are laid in Flemish bond with either the vitrified header or blue header laid alternatively with red stretchers to create a chequer bond effect e.g. North Street. Early 20th century residential terraces have been constructed from yellow/buff brick, sometimes with terracotta detailing.

7.4.6 Some brick residential properties have been altered to insert commercial premises into the ground floor. This can create an unsympathetic front elevation. In contrast, on The Causeway, buildings which have been originally constructed as shops maintain the same proportions and materials as the adjoining residential properties.
7.5 Roofs

7.5.1 Original roofing materials such as stone slate or thatch are now little in evidence. Thatch survives on two properties, one in Church Street the other in King’s End. Combed wheat straw now replaces the more traditional longstraw thatch on these buildings. Handmade red clay tiles are found in the 16th century roofs of the King’s Arms, which fronts London Road, and on properties such as Numbers 48-51 Market Square. Welsh slate became a common roofing material particularly in the 19th century with the introduction of railways; this material is widely used as a replacement covering together with concrete tiles. Examples of 19th century ornamental ridge tiles are found at The Old Court House, Sheep Street and the Congregational Chapel in Chapel Street.

7.5.2 Historically the earliest chimneys were constructed in stone. Examples of early stone bases with later brick shafts may be seen at the King’s Arms, London Road where several chimneys have unusual diagonally mounted brick shafts. Brick chimneys predominate from the 19th century onwards. The Courtyard Centre has strikingly decorated chimneys constructed with multiple decorative brick string courses and patterning. The roofscape in Market Square is also an impressive feature of the Conservation Area. The variety in heights, materials and design is key to its special character.

7.6 Windows, doors and porches

7.6.1 Panelled and plank doors are in evidence in Church Street, Chapel Street and London Road. Notable windows include the oak mullioned windows in the King’s Arms, (London Road range), the Oriel windows on the yard elevation of Numbers 48-51 Market Square and the Venetian windows with original ‘bull’s-eye’ glass in the King’s Arms, London Road. Elsewhere the Conservation Area has good examples of sash windows and casement windows. Stone mullions are found on the Old Priory and the Old Vicarage. Hipped or flat roofed dormer windows are found on 2 or 3 storey buildings, set well back in the roof space. Unfortunately replacements in uPVC are diluting much of the quality of the area e.g. in North Street and Chapel Street. Manor Farm and Number 9 King’s End have slated wooden porches with flanking settles, but porches are not a feature of the Conservation Area generally.

7.6.2 Staircase turrets are found at Numbers 63-67 Sheep Street, Numbers 5-7 Causeway and Number 44 Market Square. Photographs from the turn of the 20th century show shop fronts with elaborate awnings and porches but the majority have lost these additions. Many modern shop fronts have recessed entrance doors rather than projecting over the pavement. The commercial premises on Sheep Street in particular have very open frontages with wide expanses of glazing to show off the window displays. This is in contrast with the panelled shop fronts on Numbers 44 and 45 Market Square.
7.7 Means of Enclosure

7.7.1 Most buildings are built at the back of the pavement and so only the rear curtilages are enclosed.

7.7.2 Limestone rubble walls are a dominant feature of the Conservation Area, generally about two metres in height. Capping stones, stone on end, mortar, tile and mortar, and blue or red ridge tile on clay tiles or Stonesfield slates are all found, the latter in significant proportions. Boundary walls are a major influence in the character of the area south of King’s End/Church Street, in denoting the line of burgage plots on the east side of Sheep Street and in lining the alleyways such as Twitcher’s Alley and Crumps Butts. Low brick walls with brick gate piers enclose the front gardens of most of the brick Edwardian terraced housing. Railings and hedges are not a particular feature now although examples of railings remain outside Coral Bookmakers, Sheep Street.

7.7.3 Rear courts and yards, accessed through archways off Sheep Street (e.g. Wesley Lane, Evans Yard, Deans Court), have been brought back into productive use and add significantly to the special character of the town.

7.7.4 Some of the most important boundary walls within the conservation area are those within the curtilage of listed buildings such as those to Bicester House, The Old Place Yard Guest House and the Church of St. Edburg’s. However, there are many unlisted boundary walls which make a particularly significant contribution. These include those of the Littlebury Hotel, Hometree House, Piggy Lane, Cemetery Road, Crumps Butts and Twitcher’s Alley.

7.7.5 Narrow alleys or lanes running along the back of burgage plots occur at Piggy Lane and Crumps Butts, which links to Twitcher’s Alley. These are predominantly pedestrian routes and are contained by 2-3m high limestone walls.
7.8 Features of Special Interest

7.8.1 A large part of Bicester’s special interest relies on the historic settlement pattern, in particular the burgage plot widths of individual buildings and rear service yards. However more specific features of special interest within the Conservation Area include the Church of St Edburg and churchyard, buildings remaining from the Priory and stone boundary walls. There are datestones on The Six Bells Inn (1682) and The Swan Inn (EME 1681) and Numbers 9 and 11 Church Street (TNI 1676). Number 47 Market Square has a four storey turret with ogee cupola dated 1698. 75 Sheep Street displays a fire plaque; other properties have bay windows and multi-gabled frontages. The Old Court House and other houses retain their boot scrapers.

7.8.2 Wrought iron signs remain at the King’s Arms, London Road and The Swan, Church Street. There are listed K6 telephone kiosks in the Market Square.

7.9 Carriageways, pavements, lanes, footpaths and rear yards

7.9.1 Tarmac has replaced traditional carriageway and footway materials almost totally throughout the central area. Rear service yards are either limestone hoggin, if in low key use, brick or tarmac. Stone kerbs have mainly been replaced by concrete.

7.9.2 Sheep Street was surfaced in a mix of buff and pale pink brick as part of the pedestrianisation scheme completed in 1994. The access to Dean’s Court is also surfaced in brick pavers.

7.9.3 Remnants of earlier floorscape may be found within some alleyways e.g. stone setts and pitching under the coaching arch at the King’s Arms, stone setts and irregular stone blocks between Numbers 17 and 18 Market Square and blue square stable block pavers in the Courtyard, Launton Road.
7.10 Trees, hedges and open spaces

7.10.1 The green spaces within Bicester provide valuable relief from the densely built town centre. Notable areas of greenery are Garth Park, the churchyard and cemetery and the verge and trees at King’s End.

7.10.2 While some trees such as those within the former grounds of Bicester House are covered by Tree Preservation Orders, trees within Conservation Areas are offered some protection through the planning acts. However, the contribution that some mature trees without Tree Preservation Order protection make to the townscape is immensely valuable. Some such tree groups include those in the churchyard, in Garth Park, within the grounds of St Edburg’s House, Hometree House and those lining the highway verge at King’s End.

7.11 Key views

7.11.1 Some of the key views are outlined below:
- from King’s End west to King’s End east
- from King’s End east to Church Terrace and St. Edburg’s Church
- Causeway to Market Square and to St. Edburg’s Church
- from Market Square to St. Edburg’s Church
- from Market Hill to The Church of the Immaculate Conception
- from Sheep Street to the former King’s Head Public House
- from Pingle Field to St. Edburg’s Church
- from Church Lane to the dovecote
- the setting of Bicester House
- the setting of The Garth

7.11.2 Key external views of the Conservation Area from beyond its boundary which contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area:
- views north-eastwards across the sports ground from the A421 towards the rear curtilages of King’s End and Church Terrace and to the tower of St. Edburg’s Church

7.11.3 There are no major ‘eyesores’ within the Conservation Area. However, there are many individual sites or properties which detract from the appearance of the Conservation Area.
7.12 Threats

7.12.1 Accommodating the vehicle has had the biggest single impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area. This includes:

- the loss of the burgage plots and sense of enclosure through the construction of Manorsfield Road and adjacent car parks.
- the speed and volume of traffic which squeezes through the medieval dimensions of the King’s End to Market Square route.
- the intrusive signage associated with vehicle movement
- the erection of barriers and other measures to protect pedestrian safety.
- parked cars which occupy what could be civic spaces.
- the dominance of traffic on A421 King’s End, London Road, Launton Road and North Street.

This results in the enjoyment of the conservation area by people living in it, working in it or visiting it, being less than it should be.

7.12.2 The impact of traffic in the Conservation Area has been reduced by the pedestrianisation of Sheep Street but it still dominates the town. The aim of the proposed redevelopment of the area between Sheep Street and Manorsfield Road is to provide a mixed retail, leisure, office and parking facilities.

7.12.3 The visual integrity of identical terraces can be ruined by ad hoc replacement of original windows, e.g. parts of North Street and King’s End, addition of satellite dishes to the front elevation and removal of front boundary walls, e.g. Field Street.

7.12.4 The insertion of shop fronts and fascias of alien scale, design and materials into historic buildings detract from the quality of the streetscape. Many such examples remain despite several high quality restoration schemes which have taken place in recent years including the Independent Chapel in Chapel Street, Number 1 Causeway, Chancellor’s and A Plan Insurance.

7.12.5 Overhead power lines intrude in many key views, most notably when looking west down King’s End.

7.12.6 The number of vacant properties around the town has decreased since the 1998 appraisal but they are still found in Crown Walk, North Street, Wesley Lane and Causeway and are detrimental to the character of the streetscape.

7.12.7 The River Bure is not a feature within the Conservation Area, being either canalised or built over. Opportunities are being taken in redevelopment proposals at Bure Place and Chapel Street to enhance this as a visual resource.
8. Character Areas

Although Bicester has a general established character as described in the previous chapter, areas within it display specific characteristics which differentiate them from each other. By dividing the conservation area into character zones the special interest of the whole can be better understood and protected.
8.1 King’s End

8.1.1 The King’s End character area includes four closely interrelated areas that merit inclusion together either through similar physical layout and appearance or through function. These are:

- The old Roman road, the A421;
- King’s End east of the junction with the A421 to the junction with Church Street;
- Bicester House and its environs;
- The house and former yard of Manor Farm.

8.1.2 The old Roman road

8.1.2.1 The old Roman road, the A421 is a linear highway bounded by a mixture of mostly 19th century terraced dwellings, but buildings from the 18th and 20th centuries are represented. The road is the southern gateway into Bicester town and is consequently dominated by traffic, much to the detriment of the area’s general character. Looking beyond the traffic, the historic character and appearance of the area is defined by the intermix of terraces of vernacular stone-built dwellings and more polite and formal rendered ones which create strong buildings lines, either fronting straight onto the back of the pedestrian pavement or separated by a short strip of garden, on both sides of the road. The properties fronting the A421 are not all well kept, although the heavy volume of passing traffic and the recent extensive use of salt to counteract winter weather could have contributed to their ‘down at heal’ appearance. Unfortunately, the historic integrity of the area is disrupted by the extensive installation of uPVC windows the design of which more often than not compromises the general appearance of the building. The early 18th century Oxford House is a pivotal building that dominates views into King’s End from the A421.

8.1.3 King’s End Road

8.1.3.1 From the junction at the former Fox Inn the road turns east to provide a series of views of high quality townscape along the route King’s End, Church Street, Causeway and Market Square. The space created by the wide verge and the vegetation gives the area a relaxed genteel air, reinforced by the presence of the grander listed farmhouses and the more formal politeness of the setting of Bicester House. This is a linear space created by the almost continuous southern frontage to King’s End and on the north side by the walls of Bicester House, reinforced by the line of mature trees and those within the grounds of Bicester House. The old Fox Inn and Numbers 4-6 King’s End provide visual enclosure, gently leading the eye around to the next in a succession of views.

8.1.3.2 The high quality streetscape of the eastern end of King’s End which widens briefly before entering Church Street is in contrast to the old Roman road streetscape. The properties closer to the church of St. Edburg have higher quality elevations indicative of the role of the street as the main entrance to Bicester. This area includes two listed farmhouses, Home Farmhouse to the south and Manor Farmhouse at the north eastern end of the character area.
8.1.4 Manor Farm

8.1.4.1 This agricultural holding which has been subsumed within the town remained a working farm until beyond the mid-20th century. It still retains a rural character due to the survival of the barns and other outbuildings. The land to the north and east has been developed. The main house dates from the early 18th century and is constructed of limestone rubble. It has a distinctive front porch with settles, a large number of timber sash windows to the front elevation and is in a good state of repair. It contributes significantly to the streetscape by forming a partial visual stop to the view down King’s End towards the town centre.

8.1.5 Bicester House

8.1.5.1 The house is on the site of the manor house of the nuns of Markyate. The current building dates from the early 18th century and was linked with the Coker family until 1978.

8.1.5.2 The visual influence of the former manor on the public domain is restricted due to the screening effect of its boundary wall. The limestone rubble wall rises to 2m and is a prominent feature along King’s End and Queen’s Avenue. The grounds are private but a view of the house may be enjoyed from Coker Close and in winter through the gates from King’s End.

8.1.5.3 The mature trees within the grounds, by contrast, have a significant impact on views along Queen’s Avenue and from Manorsfield Road. The extent of the setting of the former Manor House in landscaped grounds is now restricted to a small area at its front. The building is historically of significance to the town but by being set-back as it is only plays a limited role in the streetscape.

8.2 Church Precinct

8.2.1 This area includes the Church of St. Edburg and cemetery, the Old Vicarage, Church Terrace and those parts of Church Lane and Church Street which front the churchyard.

8.2.2 This area contains townscape of high quality, including some early 17th century buildings, and provides the second and third of the sequence of linked views towards Market Square. Most of the buildings within this area are listed.

8.2.3 Moving east, the tower of the church of St Edburg comes into view, dominating the cluster of buildings below, creating an interesting streetscape with the road curving between the buildings. This view characterises the small market town and suggests a smaller scale settlement than the present day Bicester. Overhead power lines obtrude into this view.

8.2.4 The church dominates this zone largely
No. 1-5 Church Lane are brick terraced properties that contribute to the character of the area.

The view towards the Church of St. Edburg from Church Lane is one of the key views within the Conservation Area.

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Church Street viewed from the Church of St Edburg showing the Old Courthouse and Police Station in the centre. This row of buildings have high quality facades indicating that when they were built this was the main route into Bicester.
due to the presence of mature trees in the churchyard. These trees make a visual link across Church Street to the vegetation in the grounds of Numbers 2 and 4 Church Street and contrast with the Market Square which is treeless. The Roman Catholic Church and the presence of church-associated buildings contribute to the ecclesiastical character. The southern part of the cemetery relates visually to Pingle Field and the quiet and stillness of the cemetery contrast with the sound of traffic in Church Street. This open townscape enables views to be enjoyed from Pingle Field of the church tower which have remained unspoilt for centuries. From the churchyard the Market Square is on a direct line of vision via the Causeway.

8.2.5 There are two public houses within this small area and both buildings date from the 17th century. The area also contains the one of the two remaining thatched buildings within the Conservation Area, Number 22 Church Street (the other is nearby at 3 King’s End). Number 24 is an example of unsympathetic infill which is found across the Conservation Area. Number 8 Church Street (the Old Magistrate’s Courthouse and county police station which were purpose built in the 1850s and 1870s) has a cart entrance with stone setts leading of the main street (see below).

8.2.6 Little has changed in the view towards the church of St Edburg from Church Street. The building frontages remain similar with single storey bay extensions to both public houses. The most obvious change is the narrowing effect of car parking on the street and the intrusion of overhead power lines.

8.3 Causeway character area

8.3.1 The Causeway is an historic route which channels movement and views from the parish church of St Edburg and the site of the old priory to Market Square, through the town centre to the old London Road. This indicates the historic importance of the space which is belied by its current character and appearance.

8.3.2 The Causeway is a bottleneck for traffic which enters a one way system from Church Street through to the Market Square. Bollards have been installed to protect pedestrians from traffic mounting the pavements in this narrow stretch of road.

8.3.3 Although the buildings lining the Causeway are only 2-3 storeys in height, their proximity and strong building line creates a feeling of enclosure.

8.3.4 The character area has no trees or other vegetation although open canalised sections of the River Bure can be seen at the eastern end where the Causeway joins Chapel Street.

8.3.5 The majority of the buildings are rendered limestone rubble with timber frames, although some are constructed of local brick. The brick, 20th century, overlarge Nat West Bank dominates the Market Square end of the Causeway while the other buildings on the street date from the 16th to the 18th centuries. There are some impressive examples of early sash windows, although most are in a poor state of repair. Many of the buildings appear to be timber framed with slightly jetted fronts and parapets disguising the characteristic steeply pitched roofs. Number 8 is the most obvious and highest
Looking east down the Causeway, three storey buildings at the narrowest point add to the feeling of enclosure.

Traffic bottleneck, looking west

Open section of River Bure

No. 7 Causeway, timber framed building in poor state of repair which has inappropriate lighting attached to the front elevation.

No. 10 Causeway

Vacant premises at no. 5 Causeway

A surviving shop front at no. 9 Causeway

Looking east down the Causeway, three storey buildings at the narrowest point add to the feeling of enclosure.

Jettied no. 8
quality timber framed and jettied 17th century building on the Causeway and is key to views within this character area. The building plays an important role in creating the character of the streetscape at pedestrian level.

8.3.6 The majority of the buildings are in retail, commercial or restaurant use although there are a small number of residential units at the western end of the Causeway.

8.3.7 Number 10 has now been converted to a courtyard complex of flats. Where the commercial buildings are three storey there appears to be offices or residential on the upper floors, whereas the two storey buildings tend to have storage on the first floor. A number of buildings have been vacant for over 10 years or have a very fast turnover of occupying businesses, particularly those on the southern side. This is likely to be a result of the volume of traffic as well as the lack of available parking.

8.3.8 The Causeway has retained some of its historic shopfronts with timber panelled stall risers and pilasters although many are in poor repair. The Causeway character area has had some of its rear service buildings eroded by development. The Chapel Mews and The Willows are both developments which have replaced the service outbuildings once associated with The Causeway.

8.3.9 The character area has no trees or other vegetation although open canalised sections of the River Bure can be seen at the eastern end where the Causeway joins Chapel Street.

8.4 Market Square character area

8.4.1 This character area includes Market Square, Market Hill and part of the London Road up to and including the King’s Arms.

8.4.2 Market Square is actually not square at all but a triangular shaped space historically used for livestock and general markets and even the hire of domestic staff. To the west the Causeway funnels traffic into Market Square and round a gyratory one way system which is particularly unsympathetic to pedestrians trying to cross the square. At the eastern end the pedestrianised Sheep Street branches off to the north while the Old London Road leads out of town to the south across the railway tracks. This end, known as Market Hill, relates visually to Sheep Street rather than Market Square.

8.4.3 The space is tightly defined by a continuous building line of commercial properties which are predominantly two storey at the western end and increase in scale at Market Hill. Market Square is a visually interesting place due to the eclectic mix of buildings, styles and materials which also creates an interesting rooftscape. Most buildings are rendered limestone rubble with timber frames although there are also brick structures and two buildings with exposed timber frames. There are some impressive sash windows, some bays visible and also an oriel window on the central block. The inherent interest of the area is however marred by the extensive use of tarmac and the heavy and persistent presence of vehicular traffic.

Sash windows on the Causeway

Fig 20 Market Square
8.4.4 A strong building line encloses the space. In recent times there have been no trees in this area however the square could certainly benefit from the introduction of street trees as part of environmental improvement. As it is the young trees on Sheep Street can been seen at the eastern end.

8.4.5 Glimpses of space to the rear of the buildings are possible through the coaching arches of the King’s Arms, the entrance to the Crown Walk shopping centre and the lanes leading off the main square, to Deans Court.

8.4.6 Almost all the buildings in this character area are listed. An important characteristic of the area is the block of buildings which stand in the centre of the square to the east. These are some
of the oldest properties in Bicester and dominate the area. In 1964 a similar group of freestanding buildings (the Hedges Block) at the south of Sheep Street were demolished. The George Hotel situated adjacent on the corner was demolished in 1920 to make way for the Midland (HSBC) Bank.

8.4.7 These demolished buildings were partially replaced by two unlisted structures, Number 11, an incongruous 1970s flat roofed structure that protrudes from the building line and the more impressive brick HSBC bank that adjoins it.

8.4.8 In general the buildings date from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, with the previously mentioned buildings being the 20th century additions. Many of the buildings around the square have had 20th century shop fascias attached and some have been gutted at ground floor level to accommodate offices and retail uses.

8.4.9 At night the footfall is kept up by the number of public houses, restaurants, and takeaways around the Square and on Sheep Street and The Causeway. The taxi rank and kebab van ensure that there is activity on Market Square until late into the night.

8.4.10 However the area has lost some of its vibrancy and character with the transfer of markets to Sheep Street and the volume of traffic. The square is entirely devoted to vehicle movement and parking. The amount of traffic has now become one of the Market Square’s main characteristics with the area being dominated by vehicle movement. In general the square has lost its character as a destination or thriving centre and now appears to merely form a central car park. It is also subjected to a plethora of signs and A-boards.

8.4.11 There are plans to bring parts of Market Square back to use as a public space which will represent a substantial enhancement to the Conservation Area.

8.5 Sheep Street character area

8.5.1 Sheep Street is effectively the high street of the town, containing the prime retail outlets. The street has a continuous frontage of predominantly 3 storey buildings.

8.5.2 To the east the original burgage plots are still discernable, although Victoria Road exposes rear service yards and fringe town centre uses not appropriate for Sheep Street such as those associated with the motor trade. The burgage plots on the west side of Sheep Street were lost in the construction of Manorsfield Road and Bure Place car park and are excluded from the Conservation Area.

8.5.3 Pedestrianisation in 1994 has created a relaxed atmosphere which contrasts with the vehicle domination of Market Square. It has also increased footfall over pre-pedestrianisation days. The land use is predominantly retail with some evidence of residential on the second floors. Crown Walk shopping centre occupies the area behind the building line between Sheep Street and Market Square and although this has disturbed the historic burgage plots in this area, it has extended the commercial floorspace without damage to the medieval street pattern. Some breaks in the strong building line remain on the west side of Sheep Street linking to the major car park and bus station. This land between Sheep Street and Manorsfield Road has recently been the subject of a commercial redevelopment application. In contrast on the east side there are no breaks between Market Square and North Street although there is access via The Ashton Club yard to Victoria Road.

Fig 22 Sheep Street
8.5.4 The street is wide due to its historic use as a livestock market and is linear, becoming North Street at one end and running into Market Hill to the south. The gentle curve of the street creates a series of views, which are further divided by the raised planters which were introduced in the 1990s. This planting installed as part of the pedestrianisation scheme adds vegetation to the street, softening the impact of the paving and helping to break the space up into smaller areas of more human scale. However it does remove some of the characteristic openness of the street.

8.5.5 The continuous frontage is mainly 3 storey with some lower 2 storey elements towards the centre of the street. The majority of larger and grander buildings are found at the Market Hill end where the Old Court House and the 20th century HSBC bank are dominant in views. There are large numbers of listed properties lining the street with many timber framed buildings hidden behind more modern facades.

8.5.6 Shop fronts have been integrated into the buildings with mixed success. Smaller local businesses and charities such as the Helen & Douglas House generally present a more sympathetic natural frontage while the generic high street shops tend towards large areas of bland signage.

8.5.7 The majority of buildings date from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, with occasional earlier origins and 20th century additions. The 20th century shop fascias to many of the buildings are detrimental to the character of the area. As elsewhere in the study area most buildings are rendered limestone rubble, timber framed, with some brick fronted or brick constructed buildings. A notable brick building is the 20th century Methodist Church at the far north of the character area which, unusually for Sheep Street is set back to create a meeting area in front of the building.

8.5.8 The varying roof levels of Sheep Street resulting from a variety of different periods of development is a key feature in its character.
8.6 Lanes and yards character area

8.6.1 This character area comprises four different sections interspersed with the other character zones. Locations include Wesley Lane, Evans Yard, Deans Court and Crumps Butts although other unnamed lanes lead off these. The permeability that these lanes create in the town centre is one of the key characteristics of this area.

8.6.2 The survival of so many rear service buildings and their conversion to active commercial use, particularly on pedestrian links to car parks such as Wesley Lane and Deans Court is a very positive feature of the Conservation Area. Retaining minor historic structures and broadening the range of retail offer in the town centre for specialist or start up businesses.

8.6.3 Historically these back buildings would have been home to many craftsmen and subsidiary small industries as well as the animals that would have been usual in the centre of a market town.

8.6.4 Wesley Lane is to be found at the north-west end of Sheep Street. Wesley Lane is part of the settlement of Crockwell. From the late 19th century until the mid 20th century it was one of a number of tightly intermingled lanes and yards lined by short terraces of small artisans’ houses in an area bounded by St John’s Street to the north, the River Bure to the south-west and Sheep Street to the north-east. This closely-knit enclave of small terraced houses and yards and lanes has now all but gone as demolition has preceded redevelopment and the construction of Manorsfield Road. Wesley Lane has always been vibrant but in the last few years leases have come to an end as plans to redevelop the area along side the Bicester Town regeneration scheme have been approved. The area is now in limbo with little trade and no obvious signs of impending redevelopment.

8.6.5 Crumps Butts is also historically on the boundary with Crockwell and is almost entirely residential. An examination of the 1887 OS map for the area shows that at its southern end Crumps Butts was the service road to the outbuildings and ancillary buildings of the much larger properties on Bell Lane. At its northern end Crumps Butts provided access to a number short terraces of small cottages, the front gardens of which lined the lane. Modern housing development has obliterated much of this historic pattern by building groups of houses that relate to each other rather than the original buildings - the settlement pattern now appears *ad hoc*. The remaining historic cottages do however sit in their own curtilage with their front elevation or gable referencing Crumps Butts lane.

8.6.6 The yard buildings are often single storey and the spaces small scale, complex and intimate compared to Sheep Street. Several of the yards link Sheep Street to car parking areas and this, together with outdoor displays and cafés, creates a lively character. The accesses from Sheep Street to these areas add significantly to the character of the town by retaining the historic settlement pattern. Although few of the original back yard buildings remain the scale mimics those that would have once stood in these areas. Wesley Lane in the north, with more historic collection of buildings than those in lanes to the south, which appear to date from the 18th and 19th centuries, is the subject of a redevelopment scheme and has therefore been vacated by tenants although still frequently used by pedestrians to access Sheep Street.

8.6.7 The buildings sit close together giving a strong feeling of enclosure. The entrances to Dean’s Court and Evan’s Yard from Sheep Street are through carriageway entrances, Dean’s Court in particular then winds, creating deflected views, before emerging into very open ground in the form of car parking to the rear. From archaeological evidence uncovered when Dean’s Court was reopened it has been surmised that the passage was an ancient right of way that has been enclosed. The extent of the medieval town went further east than the burgage plot layout indicates (medieval artefacts

Fig 23 Lanes and Yards
Sympathetic Informal character of Wesley Lane

Successful mix of old and new buildings in Deans Court

Unsympathetic hard surfacing on Deans Court

Entrances to Evans Yard and Deans Court

Deans Court

The entrance to Crumps Butts
were discovered at the rear of Rose Cottage, London Road). It therefore maybe the case that Dean’s Court could have been part of the medieval plan of Bicester; it is certainly in the right place being in line with the exit from Market Square but currently there is no concrete evidence to say definitively one way or the other.

8.6.8 The lanes and yards area has an almost continuous flow of pedestrians during the day due to forming lines of travel between car parking and Sheep Street shopping. This lively character is enhanced by small cafés and shops lining the lanes. However at night some lanes take on a slightly threatening nature due to lack of lighting and therefore could be better lit.

8.6.9 There is very little vegetation in this character area. The buildings span the 17th to the 20th century and vary greatly in style and material, although as elsewhere brick and limestone rubble are mostly used. Render is less prevalent, the simpler buildings to the rear being more likely to be lime washed historically.

8.7 North Street character area

8.7.1 This is the northern entrance to the town centre, a linear route which leads visually straight into Sheep Street. The North Street frontage lacks the coherence of other streets, because it is composed of a variety of building ages, styles, materials and uses and it also contains gaps in the frontage created by vacant plots and minor vehicular accesses.
8.7.2 Buildings range from timber framed limestone rubble cottages at the northern end of North Street to red brick Victorian terraces at the start of Buckingham Road and Field Street. Some buildings such as The Plough public house and 31 North Street retain small outbuildings to the rear.

8.7.3 There are many buildings with commercial use on the ground floor on North Street particularly close to the junction with Sheep Street. The shop frontages are mostly unsympathetic additions to historic buildings. There are a number of empty properties and some leases change fairly regularly due to the peripheral town centre location with the lower foot fall this entails.

8.7.4 Some of the buildings display interesting features such as the Masonic Hall which has an imposing front elevation. Twitcher’s Alley provides a link between North Street and Field Street and is bounded by 2m high limestone walls which are mostly in a poor state of repair.

8.7.5 There is little greenery visible in this character area apart from glimpses of back gardens viewed from Twitcher’s Alley. Otherwise the North Street area is dominated by car movement, especially at the join with Field Street, Banbury Road and Buckingham Road.
8.8 Chapel Street/Priory Lane

8.8.1 These two streets are interlinked because redevelopment has destroyed the original plot boundaries and some buildings are visible from and accessed from both streets.

8.8.2 Priory Lane is an unmade lane which meanders through the former Priory grounds. Despite references in the names of properties there is little remaining of the Priory itself and the lane gives access to a disparate collection of residential and grouped residential buildings.

8.8.3 The informal character is reinforced by the trees in the grounds of St Edburg’s House and views south to Pingle Field. The land to the south of the Causeway has been occupied by new residential properties since the last appraisal in 1998. The Willows development is a significant addition to the area and although constructed of brick is generic in design. Chapel Mews are also new additions which appear to blend into the character area more effectively by reflecting the scale and massing of historic buildings nearby.

8.8.4 Chapel Street gives no hint of its former importance as the route to London, being narrow with a broken frontage where properties have been demolished to reveal gaps through to car parks and vacant land. However the refaced brick fronts of some of the properties along the street give an indication of its previous role. The presence of the canalised River Bure is hardly apparent. There is no common theme to the buildings which range from 17th/18th century cottages to 20th century bungalows, although the Congregational Chapel recently converted to a restaurant stands out as a building of particular interest. An opportunity to restore the broken frontage of both Chapel Street and Priory Lane is provided by the redevelopment of Bryan House by the Council working in collaboration with the registered social landlord.
8.9 Priory Road/London Road/Victoria Road

8.9.1 Other than a cluster of 17th century buildings at the corner of Launton Road, this character area consists predominantly of turn-of-the-19th/20th-century extensions of the town. To the south this residential area stretches towards the railway station and further north runs along the start of Victoria Road.

8.9.2 Priory Road is a planned residential street with homogeneity in the use of bricks and a suburban character emphasised by small front boundary walls and gates. The contrast between the closely packed terraces fronting the road with long gardens to the rear and semi-detached 20th century homes set within their gardens to the north gives a insight into residential layout fashions of the early-mid 20th century. Bath Terrace, Victoria Road has a similar character, although many houses have seen alterations to front doors and windows including the installation of uPVC which breaks the visual rhythm of the terrace.

8.9.3 Between London Road and The Garth the recent unsympathetic development of Garth Court has intruded into views both from and to Garth Park.

8.9.4 Number 2 Launton Road at the north of the character area is an impressive early 19th century building on a trapezoidal plan, which is a pivotal property highlighted by its unusual pink/purple colour.

8.9.5 London Road is a busy route dominated by traffic and views south to the level crossing and employment development around the railway station. The road curves south of the junction with Launton Road which provides a visual break and a sudden entrance into Market Square. The buildings are larger than those elsewhere in the character area and consist of a mix of detached, semi-detached and, to the south, the terrace of 36-44 London Road. This area is also greener with glimpses of the trees of Garth Park visible behind houses in the foreground and mature gardens.

8.9.6 Means of enclosure are important within this character area with boundary walls of different heights associated with all residential properties. The larger buildings on London Road have 1.5-2metre high limestone walls, while in Priory Road and Bath Terrace low brick walls are integral to the character of the street.

Fig 26 Priory Road

Greenery in streetscene on London Road

Priory Road looking west

Boundary wall to 23 London Road
8.10 Piggy Lane

8.10.1 The character of Piggy Lane as an ancient route from the west along the rear of the burgage plots to the former Priory is discernable at its eastern end where it is bounded by 3m high limestone walls on the north enclosing the historic properties.

8.10.2 The openness of this area ensures that important views from the south west towards the church and the historic core remain largely intact. Views towards the church are glimpsed across the gardened strips which lie behind the high walls which bound Cemetery Road. The area of Cemetery Road within this character area is very enclosed enhancing its narrow width.

8.10.3 To the east are several 17th and 18th century buildings along Cemetery Road. Notably Number 7 where a break in the continuous frontage allows a glimpse through to an original stable outbuilding which remains largely intact. At the southern end of Cemetery Road, north east of St Edburg’s Primary School there are a number of modern bungalows which although not in keeping with the area do allow views over towards the church from this point.

8.10.4 At the western end of Piggy Lane there are two 19th century properties (Nos. 1 & 2 Piggy Lane) of some interest which form a visual pivot point to King’s End.

8.10.5 However, buildings have been constructed within the last twenty years which, to the north, have destroyed the enclosure afforded by the boundary walls and, to the south, interrupted the open character and relationship of Piggy Lane with the sports ground and Pingle Field.

8.10.6 The Gothic Revival St. Edburg’s primary school creates a landmark at the south east end of the character area. The truncated spire is balanced by the tower of the church of St Edburg’s which lies to the north east.
8.11 Garth Park

8.11.1 This character area contains the western part of the Garth grounds, now a public park, the main house and also what is now The Courtyard Centre north of Launton Road.

8.11.2 The Conservation Area boundary was extended in 1998 to include Garth Park the building and grounds being deemed worthy of preservation and enhancement. The building itself has a close historical connection with the town and its park is well used by the people of Bicester.

8.11.3 Garth Park is visually self-contained oasis of green, and, in summer, colour, bounded by Launton Road and the Oxford to Bletchley rail line but affected by neither. The entrances to the park are tight and sudden and the impact of the park is restricted to views of the evergreen trees from the north. There is a bandstand to the south-west which emphasises the role of the area as a space for the people of Bicester.

8.11.4 The main house is a Bicester landmark and forms the centrepiece of the character area. It was built in Queen Anne style as a gentleman’s hunting lodge some time before 1879, with terracotta detailing and local brick with stone surrounds. When first built the building was known as ‘The Poplars’. The building is currently occupied by Bicester Town Council but was bequeathed to the people of Bicester in 1946 by Lord Bicester, The Hon. Arthur Child Villiers, Major Adrian Keith-Falconer (owner of the Garth) and Major Philip Laming.

8.11.5 The 2 metre high limestone wall along Launton Road encloses Garth Park creating a tranquil oasis within but separating the public open space from the main town centre.

8.11.6 There is a small group of brick and limestone outbuildings to the north east of the Garth which form a courtyard which add interest and character to the area.

8.11.7 The Courtyard Centre, housed in the former stables of Bicester Hall (now Hometree House), is similarly inward looking but a built form of particular architectural detailing and charm. The curving edge of the building leads the eye round into Victoria Road. It is now occupied by a Youth Arts Centre which helps create an active feel to the space.
8.12 Visual Analysis

8.12.1 The lie of the land means that there is no vantage point from which long distance or wide ranging views may be obtained. Other than at Manorsfield Road most views are framed within the tightly defined building line and deflected or stopped by changes in the alignment of the building line. The relationship of the historic core with the surrounding area is largely intact.
9. Materials and Details
10. Unlisted Buildings that make a positive contribution

10.1 A number of unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area make a significant positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration of the heritage asset [conservation area] (PPS5). Therefore, the retention of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area is preferable to demolition and redevelopment.
11. Management Plan

11.1 Policy context

11.1.1 The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas. In line with English Heritage guidance, page 69 (2005b) Conservation Area Management Proposals are to be published as part of the process of area review. The Conservation Area appraisal document is designed to inform planning decisions, and other actions that the Council and/or property owners within the designated area take. Its role is to identify special character and actions that could contribute to the enhancement of the area both by the Council, owners and other stakeholders.

11.1.2 The main threat to Bicester Conservation Area is the cumulative impact of numerous alterations, some quite small in themselves, to the traditional but unlisted buildings within the area. The most noticeable and damaging changes are evident on the commercial properties in the town where unsympathetic changes have eroded the original features of historic buildings. These changes include the insertion of inappropriate shop fronts, rendering of limestone frontages with cement render, addition of obtrusive lighting, unsympathetic signs and badly installed upper windows. The lack of general maintenance and repair of the commercial properties in the town is also a threat to the general aesthetic character and appearance of the conservation area.

11.1.3 In residential properties the replacement of traditional window casements, usually with uPVC double-glazing, replacement of original doors, additions such as non-traditional porches and erection of satellite dishes on the front elevations of properties are all changes that threaten the character and appearance of the conservation area. Such alterations to unlisted properties are for the most part permitted development and therefore do not require planning permission.

11.1.4 Despite the pedestrianisation of Sheep Street, traffic is still threatening the character and appearance of sections of the Conservation Area. In particular Market Square and the Causeway are dominated by vehicles detracting from the appearance of the town centre.

11.1.5 Unauthorised alterations and additions are also a cause for concern and are often detrimental to the appearance of a property. Both unsympathetic permitted development and unauthorised development cumulatively result in the erosion of the historic character and appearance of the conservation area.

11.1.6 The aim of management proposals is not to prevent changes but to ensure that any such changes are not only sympathetic to the individual property, but sympathetic to the streetscape and enhance the overall character and appearance of the conservation area.

11.1.7 The principal policies covering alterations and development of the historic built environment are given in Appendix 1.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
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| Provide information on the importance of the Conservation Area to the local community. | • Publish Conservation Area appraisal and management plan and make readily available.  
• Provide supporting information and guidance via the Council web site and staff. | CDC  
CDC |
| Improve the quality and amenity value of the public realm in Bicester Conservation Area. | • Consider whether the impact of traffic can be mitigated to prevent damage to the historic core.  
• Encourage OCC’s highway maintenance programme to undertake repairs within the Conservation Area that respect the historic materials palette.  
• Promote the retention of historic paving materials (e.g. stone setts on Market Square).  
• Review the level of highway signage, its location and necessity to remove street clutter.  
• Promote the use of a co-ordinated range of street furniture to encourage harmony.  
• Promote the retention and reinstatement of traditional shop frontages.  
• Encourage good maintenance of shop frontages.  
• Promote the harmonisation of appearance within the individual terraces or pairs of properties, e.g. on Field Street, Buckingham Road, Bath Terrace and on Priory Road. | OCC  
CDC and OCC  
CDC and OCC  
OCC  
CDC  
CDC  
CDC and Property Owner |

*Traffic dominated Market Square*

*Bath Terrace, one of the Victorian terraces in Bicester*
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<th>Objective</th>
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| Preserve and enhance features that contribute to the character and appearance of Bicester Conservation Area. | • Encourage appropriate repair and maintenance of all properties within the Conservation Area by providing advice to property owners.  
• Encourage maintenance of characteristic features and details that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.  
• Promote the use of traditional building and roofing materials and retention of historic details.  
• Encourage owners of historic properties to replace inappropriate modern with the appropriate traditional materials.  
• Ensure traditional styles of pointing and the use of lime mortar.  
• Promote new alterations and extensions that are sympathetic to the existing buildings in scale, materials and design.  
• Promote the enclosure of rear access to plots where boundary walls have been demolished.  
• Require satellite dishes and solar panels to be located on rear elevations or within rear gardens to prevent visual pollution. | CDC and Property Owners  
CDC  
CDC  
CDC  
CDC  
CDC and Property Owners  
CDC and Property Owners  
CDC and Property Owners  
CDC and Property Owners |

*Piggy Lane characteristic high stone walls*

*uPVC windows are unacceptable on listed buildings*
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<th>Objective</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensure the retention of important areas of open land at The Garth, The churchyard and grounds of Bicester House.</td>
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<td>OCC, Town Council, Parochial Church Council and Property Owners</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Open land at the Garth" /></td>
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<td>• Encourage the retention of traditional boundary walls and gateways.</td>
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<td>CDC and Property Owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protect positive views into and out of the Conservation Area, in particular from the south west towards the Church of St Edburg.</td>
<td></td>
<td>CDC, OCC and Property Owners</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Preserve the setting of the Conservation Area as required by the 1990 Act.</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Protect views between key landmark buildings in the town (e.g. the Church of St Edburg and Market Square)</td>
<td></td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="View towards church from south west" /></td>
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<td>Monitor planning approvals to make sure that works preserve or where possible enhance the character and appearance of Bicester Conservation Area.</td>
<td>• Take specialist Design and Conservation Team advice on significant planning applications which affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.</td>
<td>CDC</td>
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<td>• Promote high quality design in capital environmental improvement schemes.</td>
<td>CDC /OCC</td>
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<td>• Ensure that all new developments use appropriate materials, scale and massing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unauthorised works</td>
<td>• Ensure that the Planning Enforcement team take appropriate action against unauthorised works in line with the Council’s enforcement policy.</td>
<td>CDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor the loss and gain of buildings within the Conservation Area through surveys, including photographic.</td>
<td>• Review the building stock at the next review of the Conservation Area, due in 2014.</td>
<td>CDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain important trees and encourage the planting of appropriate species.</td>
<td>• Ensure the preservation of important trees. All trees have some protection under the Conservation Area designation. The Council’s arboricultural officers will, where appropriate, make tree preservation orders if a tree that makes a positive contribution is under threat. • Encourage the reinstatement of a tree lined avenue at Kings End</td>
<td>CDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserve and enhance the landscape, and green public spaces</td>
<td>• Require appropriate landscaping schemes to accompany planning applications • Seek the retention of historic green spaces of the Garth and the Pingle Fields and encourage their protection through discouraging piecemeal erosion.</td>
<td>CDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and maintain a relationship with service providers and other agencies in order to ensure that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is retained.</td>
<td>• Seek to rationalise any street furniture and ensure it is in keeping with the character of the area. • Seek to simplify any new traffic schemes to reduce unnecessary clutter. • Encourage underground power cables to reduce the visual pollution. • Promote a working relationship with Bicester Vision and Town Council to encourage the enhancement of the Conservation Area.</td>
<td>CDC, OCC and service providers CDC, OCC and Town Council CDC, Bicester Vision and Town Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Conservation Area boundary and its architectural and/or historical importance.</td>
<td>• To be reviewed and amended where necessary at the time of the Conservation Areas next review, due in 2014.</td>
<td>CDC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The objectives set out above are specific for Bicester Conservation Area. The Council will also continue to apply policy guidance, both generic (Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning and The Historic Environment) and the local saved policies of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and the adopted Cherwell Local Plan to planning and Listed Building Consent applications and ensure consistent decision making. The policies covering alterations and development of the historic environment are given in Appendix 1.
12. Conservation Area boundary

12.1 The Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and covers Bicester’s historic core. The 1998 appraisal made a small revision to the boundary to include Crumps Butts.

12.2 This review proposes extensions to the boundary to include notable 19th Century artisan housing at Field Street and the former Crockwell School, and also a minor revision to include Pingle Cottage at Priory Lane.
13. Effects of Conservation Area designation

13.1 Conservation areas are designated by the Council under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. There are different planning controls in conservation areas and anyone proposing development should seek advice from Development Control and Major Developments at an early stage. The main effects of designation are as follows:

13.2 Development should preserve or enhance the area

Development should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, the special architectural or historic interest of which it is desirable to conserve or enhance. This enables the achievement of higher standards of design in new developments and secure the conservation of existing important features and characteristics. Information supporting planning applications must demonstrate the proposal, and its impact on the conservation area, in sufficient detail to enable a thorough assessment.

13.3 Control over demolition of buildings

Conservation Area Consent is required from the Council, as the Local Planning Authority, for the demolition or substantial demolition of unlisted buildings in the conservation area. Where a building is of demonstrable architectural or historic interest, consent for demolition will only be given as a last resort.

13.4 Control over trees

The Council must be notified of any intention to carry out works to fell, lop or top any tree over 75mm (3 inches approx.) in diameter not already the subject of a tree preservation order. This provides the Council an opportunity to consider making a tree preservation order. This provides an extra degree of control over the many trees that are important to the appearance of the conservation area.

13.5 Protection of important open spaces and views

There are a number of open spaces within the town that it is important to protect because they are integral to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The inclusion of these open spaces in the designation of the conservation area is specifically to ensure that the character of these spaces are preserved.

13.6 Control over the demolition of enclosures

Consent is also required to demolish any means of enclosure over 1 metre in height abutting a ‘highway’ (including a public footpath or bridleway), waterway or open space; or above 2 metres in height in any other case. This means that walls not relating to listed buildings, that add so much to the character and appearance of the street scene, are afforded protection.

13.7 Powers to seek repair of unlisted historic buildings

The Council has powers to seek the repair of unlisted (as well as listed) buildings in a poor state of repair where the building makes a valuable contribution to the street scene or is of local importance as a building type.

13.8 Reduced permitted development

There are no permitted development rights for commercial properties.

Within conservation areas there are restrictions on the size of extensions to domestic properties that may be carried out without specific planning permission including:

- A two storey rear extension of any dimensions
- A single storey side extension of any dimension
- A building, enclosure, pool or container at the side of a dwelling
- Cladding in any material;
- Any alteration or extension to the roof;
- A satellite dish on any chimney, wall or roof slope that faces onto or is visible from a highway.
- A flue, chimney, soil or vent pipe on a wall or roof slope that fronts a highway or can be seen from a highway and forms the principal or side elevation of the house.

13.9 Enhancements should preserve and enhance the area

Land use planning policies in the Cherwell Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework aim to ensure that special attention is given to the preservation or enhancement of designated conservation areas, and proposals for new development will be acceptable if they assist in the achievement of that objective.
Appendix 1: Policies

There are a number of policy documents which contain policies pertaining to the historic built environment. The main policies are summarised in this section. Other policies of a more general nature are also of some relevance. These are not listed here but can be found elsewhere in the specific documents mentioned below.

**Cherwell Local Plan 1996**

**H5** Where there is a demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, the district council will negotiate with developers to secure an element of affordable housing in substantial new residential development schemes. The district council will need to be satisfied that such affordable housing: (i) is economically viable in terms of its ability to meet the need identified; (ii) will be available to meet local needs long term through secure arrangements being made to restrict the occupancy of the development; (iii) is compatible with the other policies in this plan.

**S13** Within the primary shopping frontages of the town centre, as defined on the proposals map, changes of use at ground-floor level to non-retail uses will not normally be permitted.

**S15** The council will permit the comprehensive development of the area at Franklin's Yard shown on the proposals map for retail and financial and professional services development, or other development appropriate to a town centre, provided that satisfactory proposals are made for car parking, both for the development and to replace existing parking spaces, and servicing, subject to the other policies in the plan.

**C18** In determining an application for listed building consent the Council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. The Council will normally only approve internal and external alterations or extensions to a listed building which are minor and sympathetic to the architectural and historic character of the building.

**C23** There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

**C30** Design control will be exercised to ensure: (i) that new housing development is compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity; (ii) that any proposal to extend an existing dwelling (in cases where planning permission is required) is compatible with the scale of the existing dwelling, its curtilage and the character of the street scene; (iii) that new housing development or any proposal for the extension (in cases where planning permission is required) or conversion of an existing dwelling provides standards of amenity and privacy acceptable to the local planning authority.

**Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011**

**EN34** The council will seek to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape through the control of development. Proposals will not be permitted if they would: (i) cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside; (ii) cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography; (iii) be inconsistent with local character; (iv) harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features; (v) harm the historic value of the landscape.

**EN39** Development should preserve listed buildings, their features and settings, and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas, as defined on the proposals map. Development that conflicts with these objectives will not be permitted.

**EN40** In a Conservation Area, or an area that makes an important contribution to its setting, planning control will be exercised to ensure, *inter alia*, that the character or appearance of the area so designated is preserved or enhanced. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. A new development should understand and respect the sense of place and architectural language of the existing but should seek to avoid pastiche development except where this is shown to be clearly the most appropriate.
EN42 Sympathetic consideration will be given to proposals for the change of use of a listed building, provided that the new use minimises damage to the character, fabric, interior or setting of the building, and does not adversely affect the reasons for its statutory listing.

EN43 Proposals that would result in the total or substantial demolition of a Listed Building, or any significant part of it, will not be permitted in the absence of clear and convincing evidence that the market testing set out in PPG15 paragraphs 3.16 to 3.19 has been thoroughly followed with no success.

EN45 Before determination of an application for planning permission requiring the alteration, extension or partial demolition of a Listed Building, applicants will required to provide sufficient information to enable an assessment of the likely impact of the proposals on the special architectural or historic interest of the structure, its setting or special features.

EN45A The inclusion of a building in a local list of buildings of architectural or historic interest adopted by the council for planning purposes will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications that would affect it.

EN47 The Council will promote sustainability of the historic environment through conservation, protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage and its interpretation and presentation to the public. In particular it will: (i) seek to ensure that scheduled ancient monuments and other unscheduled sites of national and regional importance and their settings are permanently preserved; (ii) ensure that development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desk-top study, and where appropriate a field evaluation; (iii) not permit development that would adversely affect archaeological remains and their settings unless the applicant can demonstrate that the archaeological resource will be physically preserved in-situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals; (iv) ensure that where physical preservation in-situ is neither practical nor desirable and sites are not scheduled or of national importance, the developer will be responsible for making appropriate provision for a programme of archaeological Investigation, recording, analysis and publication that will ensure the site is preserved by record prior to destruction. Such measures will be secured either by a planning agreement or by a suitable planning condition.

EN51 In considering applications for advertisements in Conservation Areas the Council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.
Appendix 2: Listed Buildings

- Station House Approximately 15 Metres North West Of Level Crossing, London Road, (II)
- 44, Market Square (II)
- 45 And 52, Market Square (II)
- 46, 48 And 51, Market Square (II)
- 47, Market Square (II)
- 49 And 50, Market Square (II)
- 12, Market Square (II)
- Thames House 14, Market Square (II)
- 15 And 16, Market Square (II)
- 17, Market Square (II)
- 18, Market Square (II)
- 20, Market Square (II)
- 22 And 23, Market Square (II)
- 24, Market Square (II)
- 25 And 25a, Market Square (II)
- 7 And 8, Market Square (II)
- 5 And 6, Market Square (II)
- 4, Market Square (II)
- 2, Market Square (II)
- Claremont House 1, Market Square (II)
- King’s Arms Hotel, London Road (II)
- 39, Market Square (II)
- 38, Market Square (II)
- 37, Market Square (II)
- Barclays Bank 36, Market Square (II)
- 35, Market Square (II)
- 34, Market Square (II)
- 33, Market Square (II)
- 31, Market Square (II)
- 30, Market Square (II)
- 29 And 29a, Market Square (II)
- Lairg House 28, Chapel Street (II)
- Old Place Yard House (II)
- Dovecote Approximately 50 Metres South Of Old Place Yard House (II)
- The Old Priory and Attached Garden Walls (II)
- Stables Approximately 10 Metres to South of The Old Priory (II)
- Garden Walls of the Old Priory and Bassett Lodge (not included) (II)
- 88, Sheep Street (II)
- 86, Sheep Street (II)
- Bell Inn 84, Sheep Street (II)
- 40, Sheep Street (II)
- 36 And 38, Sheep Street (II)
- Emlyn House 28, Sheep Street (II)
- 26, Sheep Street (II)
- 24, Sheep Street (II)
- 20, Sheep Street (II)
- 10, Sheep Street (II)
- White Hart Inn 4, Sheep Street (II)
- 75, Sheep Street (II)
- 65 And 67, Sheep Street (II)
- 29 And 31, Sheep Street (II)
- 27, Sheep Street (II)
- The Old Court House 5, Sheep Street (II)
- Pair of K6 Telephone Kiosks, Market Square (II)
- 8, Causeway (II)
- 10, Causeway (II)
- 1, Causeway (II)
- 3, Causeway (II)
- 5, Causeway (II)
- 7, Causeway (II)
- 9 And 11, Causeway (II)
- 13, Causeway (II)
- 23, Causeway (II)
- 25, Causeway (II)
- 27, Causeway (II)
- 29, Causeway (II)
- Trinity Restaurant, Chapel Street (II)
- 1, Chapel Street (II)
- 1-5, Church Lane (II)
- 2 And 4, Church Street (II)
- Reynard Cottage 6, Church Street (II)
- 8 Including Former Magistrates Courthouse, Church Street (II)
- 10 And 12, Church Street (II)
- Northampton House 18, Church Street (II)
- The Limes 20, Church Street (II)
- 22, Church Street (II)
- Church Of St Edburg, Church Street (I)
- War Memorial Approximately 15 Metres North West of Church of St Edburg, Church Street (II)
- Chest Tomb Approximately 20 Metres North of Tower of Church of St Edburg, Church Street (II)
- King Memorial Approximately 12 Metres North of Porch of Church of St Edburg, Church Street (II)
- Chest Tomb Approximately 10 Metres North of Chancel of Church of St Edburg, Church Street (II)
- Sundial Approximately 22 Metres South of Church of St Edburg, Church Street (II)
- Kirby Memorial Approximately 14 Metres South of Tower of Church of St Edburg, Church Street (II)
- The Old Vicarage, Church Street (II*)
- Tysul House 3, Church Street (II)
- Crick House 5, Church Street (II)
- Six Bells Inn 7, Church Street (II)
- 9 And 11, Church Street (II)
- Swan Inn 13, Church Street (II)
- 5 And 7, Field Street (II)
- 6, King’s End (II)
- The Old Manor House 16, King’s End (II)
- Bicester House, King’s End (II)
- Wall to Grounds of Bicester House from Junction with Queens Avenue to Approximately 150 Metres, King’s End (II)
- The Fox Inn, King’s End (II)
- 20, King’s End (II)
- 22 And 24, King’s End (II)
- Stow House 1, King’s End (II)
- 3, King’s End (II)
- Home Farmhouse, King’s End (II)
- Stable Approximately 5 Metres to South West of Home Farmhouse, King’s End (II)
- Clifton Villa 11, King’s End (II)
- Oxford House, King’s End (II)
- 41, 45 And 47, King’s End (II)
- 2, Launton Road (II)
- Lamsdale Cottage, Launton Road (II)
- 1 And 3, London Road (II)
- Bicester Hall 5, London Road (II)
- 9, London Road (II)
- The Hermitage and Attached Lock Up 17 and 17a, London Road (II)
- 2, London Road (II)
- 4, London Road (II)
- 6, London Road (II)
Appendix 3: Locally Listed Buildings

- 43 Buckingham Road
- 45 Buckingham Road
- 1 Cemetery Road
- 3 Cemetery Road
- 5 Cemetery Road
- 7 Cemetery Road
- Bicester Cemetery Chapel, Cemetery Road
- 86 Priory House, Chapel Lane
- Bicester North Railway Station, Chiltern Approach
- Waiting room, Bicester North Railway Station, Chiltern Approach
- 6 Field Street
- 8 Field Street
- 10 Field Street
- 12 Field Street
- 1 Henley Gardens
- 2 Henley Gardens
- 3 Henley Gardens
- 4 Henley Gardens
- 5 Henley Gardens
- 6 Henley Gardens
- Bicester Community Hospital, King’s End
- The Courtyard Centre, Launton Road
- 21 London Road
- 23 London Road
- 36 London Road
- 38 London Road
- 40 London Road
- 42 London Road
- 44 London Road
- Hometree House (formerly Bicester Hall), London Road
- St Edburg’s Hall, London Road
- 1 Priory Road
- 2 Priory Road
- 3 Priory Road
- 4 Priory Road
- 5 Priory Road
- 6 Priory Road
- 7 Priory Road
- 8 Priory Road
- 9 Priory Road
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- 35 Priory Road
- 37 Priory Road
- 39 Priory Road
- 41 Priory Road
- 43 Priory Road
- 45 Priory Road
- 47 Priory Road
- 49 Priory Road
- 51 Priory Road
- 53 Priory Road
- 55 Priory Road
- 57 Priory Road
- 59 Priory Road
- 1 Priory Terrace
- 2 Priory Terrace
- 3 Priory Terrace
- 4 Priory Terrace
- Bicester Magistrates Court, Queen’s Avenue
- Bicester Police Station, Queen’s Avenue
- 58 The Black Penny, Sheep Street
- Wesley Hall, Sheep Street
- HSBC Bank, Sheep Street
- The Garth
- Pet Cemetery, The Garth, Launton Road
- Depot, The Garth, Launton Road
- Lodge, The Garth, Launton Road
- Band Stand, The Garth, Launton Road
- Bell, The Garth, Launton Road
- 2 The Priory
- 3 The Priory
- 3 Remains of mill race, The Priory
- 1 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 2 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 3 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 4 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 5 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 6 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 7 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 8 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 9 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
- 10 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
• 11 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
• 12 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
• 13 Bath Terrace, Victoria Road
• 1 Manchester Terrace, Victoria Road
• 2 Manchester Terrace, Victoria Road
• 3 Manchester Terrace, Victoria Road
• 4 Manchester Terrace, Victoria Road
• 5 Manchester Terrace, Victoria Road
• 6 Manchester Terrace, Victoria Road
• 7 Manchester Terrace, Victoria Road
• 8 Manchester Terrace, Victoria Road
• 1 Newport Terrace, Victoria Road
• 2 Newport Terrace, Victoria Road
• 3 Newport Terrace, Victoria Road
• 4 Newport Terrace, Victoria Road
• 5 Newport Terrace, Victoria Road
• 6 Newport Terrace, Victoria Road
• 7 Newport Terrace, Victoria Road
• 8 Newport Terrace, Victoria Road
• St Edburg’s Primary School
Appendix 4: Public Consultation

Public consultation took place on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal with the approval of the Lead Member for Planning. The draft appraisal was available to download from the Council’s website and in hard copy from Bodicote House and available to view at Bicester Library, The Council Offices at 38 Market Square, Bodicote House and the Central Area Mobile Library. Letters were sent to all properties proposed to be included within an extended conservation area, setting out the implications of inclusion and seeking the views of the occupiers. Letters were also sent to all Bicester members advising them of the proposal. There were no objections to the proposed extension to the Conservation Area.

A public exhibition was staffed as part of the Bicester Local History Society Day on the 21st May 2011 followed by the display of the exhibition 23rd May to 2nd July at Bicester Library.
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Acknowledgements and Contacts

This document has been produced as part of the District Council’s ongoing programme of conservation area appraisals.

Images used are sourced from the Victoria County History Vol IX. and from the Oxfordshire Studies Library unless otherwise accredited.

Many thanks to Bicester Local History Society, in particular Bob Hessian and Peter Chivers. Also thanks to Friends of the Earth (Bicester) particularly Donald Robinson.

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Recommendation of the Executive
Delegate authority to Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development

Further recommended changes to the document

Amended document approved by Date approved