
Conservation Area Character Survey

WHITELEAF



What are Conservation Areas?

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest which are considered worthy of preservation or enhancement. They are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

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

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

The Purpose of This Survey

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

The survey is intended to complement the approved policies for conservation areas in the Council's Wycombe District Local Plan. These policies are the primary means of safeguarding the special character of our conservation areas.

The survey is also intended to be used as an aid in development control decision making. Proposals for schemes positively to enhance the character and appearance of Whiteleaf Conservation Area will be produced in the future in consultation with councillors, local residents and other interested parties.



HISTORY

The name Whiteleaf is a modern corruption. The hill and cross must have been named from the white chalk hill in which Whiteleaf Cross is cut. Whiteleaf having been corrupted from Whitecliff, which is recorded as 'Whytleyff' in 1540. The 1841 Census records the village as Whitecliff.

The area has an ancient history. An original Charter in the British Museum dated AD 903 describes land in the vicinity of Monks Risborough ("Eastern Hrisanburge"). The description makes no mention of Whiteleaf as the hamlet was probably of a much later origin. However reference is made to a King's Street which marked the boundary of King Ethelgth's kingdom. The line of the ancient road is believed to exist in the grounds of Whiteleaf House. It is now just a hollow but sufficient to be marked on the Ordnance Survey map. It joined the Upper Icknield Way at a point where Whiteleaf Cottage now stands.

From Sheehan's "History of Buckinghamshire" published 1861 there is reference to a large Saxon burial place near Whiteleaf. In about 1830 a chalk pit was dug to provide chalk and flints when the Upper Icknield Way was metalled. The pit revealed ancient human remains. Evidence of burials have also come to light in the many foundations of houses that have been built in the village over the years.

Towering above the village, visible from more than 30 miles away, the gigantic Whiteleaf Cross is cut into the hillside chalk. The purpose of the cross is uncertain. Some suggest that it was an Anglo-Saxon waymarker for travellers along the Icknield Way, others think it had a religious significance. However the first known reference to it is as late as 1742.

Whiteleaf village straggles along a metalled stretch of the Upper Icknield Way (known as the Hackney Road to local people). The Icknield Way was a track linking Thetford in Norfolk with Avebury in Wiltshire. It was developed for communication between neolithic centres between 3000 and 1800 B.C.

Whiteleaf was first designated as a conservation area in 1970.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

The Whiteleaf Cross is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Permission is required from the Secretary of State for National Heritage before any works can be carried out on a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It is an offence to carry out any works without the necessary consent. In planning terms the Wycombe District Local Plan states at Policy HE1 that planning permission will not normally be granted for any development likely to have an adverse effect upon the site or setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The conservation area is rich in ancient history and therefore care must be taken when planning consents are implemented. The Council may require archaeological conditions attaching to planning permissions where appropriate, including watching briefs, excavation or similar recording procedures.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Whiteleaf Conservation Area is of considerable charm and character situated on the well treed, steep slopes of the Chiltern scarp. The undulating curved main street is an interesting feature of the village. It follows the ancient route of the Upper Icknield Way and is for some distance enclosed by grassed banks and high brick and brick and flint walls. The historic dwellings front closely on to it.

One of the essential characteristics of the conservation area is its rural ambience. The presence of trees and other vegetation is vital in this aspect. The undeveloped open fields and woodland rising to the east from the Upper Icknield Way act as a backdrop and an appropriate setting for the historic dwellings.

The village lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Metropolitan Green Belt.

There are two groups of historic buildings in the village which are well unified in terms of their materials and juxtaposition. At the southern end of the conservation area is a group of small, mainly timber framed cottages and at the northern end a more open group of historic dwellings, both make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area. These identified groups will be described in greater detail in a following section of the text headed 'Groupings'.

Other important attributes of the village include the panoramic views across the Vale of Aylesbury to the west and above the village of the protected ancient monument of the Whiteleaf Cross.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

There are twelve listed dwellings in the conservation area, however the official list records seven items as the two terraces are listed as two items and Wood Cottage and Thatchers are listed as one item. All the listings are grade II.

Approaching the conservation area from the west along The Holloway on the left is Whitecliff a very attractive building of circa 1860 of brick and flint under a tiled roof. The gable ends have decorative barge boards and some of the windows have leaded lights. This pretty Victorian cottage provides a fitting introduction to the conservation area.

At the junction of The Holloway with the Upper Icknield Way is a group of mainly listed buildings. Bakers Cottage has two original 16th century bays which are timber framed

with white washed brick infill. The building was originally jettied but has now been underbuilt with whitewashed brick. A small 16th century 3-light window with chamfered mullions, now blocked, can still be seen on the elevation fronting the road.

Highrood and Cavall to the south are elevated above the road. This pair of unlisted cottages were rebuilt on the site of two cottages which burnt down some 30 years ago yet are characterful with interesting windows on the ground floor in a Gothic Revival style.

Further along is Paxtons Cottage a 17th century house, timber framed with whitewashed brick infill and thatched roof. The left chimney is external and has a small lean-to to the front which is likely to have been a bread oven.

Opposite Paxtons Cottage is another 17th century cottage of the same materials and construction which has now been converted to a pair of houses. The eaves-line dormers are later 19th or 20th century additions and have attractive fishscale shingles in the gables.

The Red Lion PH is of a later period, late 18th century to early 19th century. The whitewashed walls conceal vitreous brick with red brick dressings. The board shutters to the first floor windows are 20th century.

A little further along are Whiteleaf Cottage and Whiteleaf House. Neither are listed yet both make a positive and characterful contribution at the heart of the conservation area. Whiteleaf Cottage is thought to have been the dairy to Whiteleaf House. The cottage was originally L-shaped and possibly 16th century. The building was added to in the mid 19th century. The frontage of the dwelling is in an ornate Victorian style with a large gable end to the road side displaying a handsome carved barge board. Decorative timbering has been applied to the frontage echoing the older buildings in the village. The upper stories of the cottage are colourwashed leaving the ground floor brick exposed. Whiteleaf House also 19th century is of a less ornate style and is only glimpsed from behind the decorative walling in front which extends to the south enclosing the garden. The house is colourwashed like its neighbour and has the only slate roof in the village. It has an interesting octagonal garden building which can be seen from Peters Lane.

Opposite is Whiteleaf Way a development of modern detached houses which is setback from the Upper Icknield Way.

At the southern end of the Upper Icknield Way is a cluster of historic dwellings mostly small cottages. Oak Cottage and Berry Cottage are unlisted and as characterises this part of the conservation area they are unfussy and simple in their appearance. Oak Cottage has a reused date stone bearing the date 1682 with the initials 'HE' below.

Barn Cottage next door is a listed timber framed house of the late 17th century - early 18th century. The two terraces on the opposite side of the road are also listed. The first of

the terrace, Library Cottage, is a 20th century extension which has been sympathetically modified from its original modern and rather jarring appearance so that it pays greater respect to its historic neighbours. Felix Cottage and Box Tree Cottage are 16th century and are part timber framed with brick, plaster and render infill. The upper storey is jettied on a moulded bressumer. The Other Cottage is late 18th century - early 19th century.

The next row of three are early 17th century. Middle Cottage has a timber frame with one curved brace. Both terraces have simple board doors and small pane casement windows which are entirely in keeping and add to their attractiveness.

MATERIALS

The village has a range of building materials which contribute to its character. Of particular prominence in the village is the whitewashing or colourwashing over brick or render and the presence of exposed structural timber framing at the historic properties. There are also a number of thatched dwellings which is a special characteristic of the village.

Red brick and sand faced plain clay tiles are predominant throughout the village for the older properties. The use of traditional flint is also evident and can often be seen on the side elevations of historic buildings and is much used for walling.







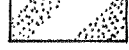
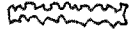
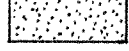

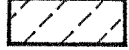
Windows throughout the conservation area are predominately small pane, casement type. The smaller historic cottages correspondingly have smaller pane sizes. The two terraces at the southern end of the village have small casements each with six panes divided by glazing bars. Historic cottages to the northern end of the conservation area mostly have leaded-light casements. Whiteleaf House has larger pane sizes befitting its proportions and later construction date. Fenestration at the northern end of the conservation area also displays a few instances of Gothic Revival style windows at Highrood and Cavall on the ground floor, at Whiteleaf Cottage using both glazing bars on the ground floor and iron framed lights on the upper floors and one window at Baker Cottage. This is an individual characteristic of the village.

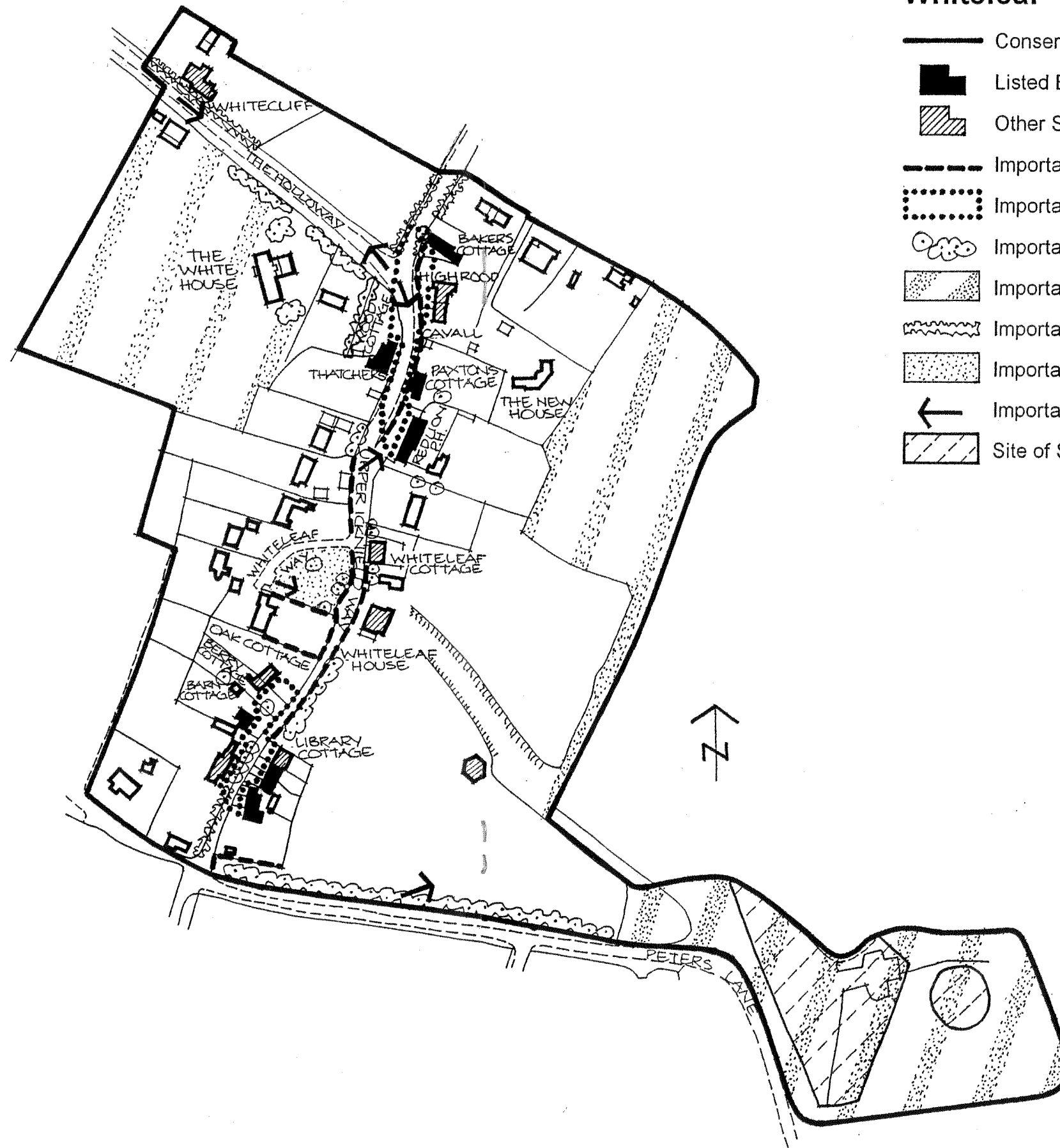
Some of the older dwellings retain their original wooden casement windows. To the benefit of the character of the conservation area there appears to be little use of substitute materials for windows. Where doors have been replaced they are mostly of traditional materials and in character with the property.

Boundary walls are a feature of the conservation area and occur flanking the Upper Icknield Way on both sides. Around Whiteleaf House garden walling is used for privacy and decorative purposes. The high walling directly in front of the house includes a striking diamond pattern in blue headers and is interspersed with gate piers. On the opposite side is a lower wall repeating the diamond design and on

Whiteleaf Conservation Area Character Survey Map

Whiteleaf

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Buildings
-  Other Significant Buildings
-  Important Walls
-  Important Groups
-  Important Trees & Tree Groups
-  Important Woodland
-  Important Hedges
-  Important Open Space
-  Important Views
-  Site of Scheduled Ancient Monument



LISTED BUILDINGS (All Listed Grade II)

- Wood Cottage/Thatchers
- Barn Cottage
- Bakers Cottage
- Paxtons Cottage
- The Red Lion Public House
- Felix Cottage/Box Tree Cottage/The Other Cottage
- Lacey's Cottage/Middle Cottage/End Cottage

either side a traditional flint wall with brick dressings and topped in part by iron railings. Further north the walling is more functional as a means of retaining high banks and is predominately of red brick.

The low brick walling from Bakers Cottage to Paxtons Cottage is attractively topped by half round blue bricks.

Surfacing for driveways and the like is mostly tarmac that has weathered in and do not appear obtrusive in the street scene.

TREES AND VEGETATION

Trees in particular make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area. Trees in the sloping rear gardens of the properties to the east of the Upper Icknield Way and beyond provide the leafy backdrop to the village and give a context for the historic properties and the conservation area as a whole. The predominately whitewashed and colourwashed buildings contrast attractively against the tree lined scarp slope as if echoing the contrast of the Whiteleaf Cross, its chalky whiteness set against the steep grassy incline.

Significant individual trees and groups of trees are marked on the character survey map. Large areas of trees and woodland extend into the margins of the conservation area and are indicated on the survey map. Trees along the Upper Icknield Way add interest and character to the streetscape and ensure that the village sits comfortably within its heavily treed surroundings. There are a number of specimen trees, three of which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order opposite the Red Lion PH. The Yew trees which occur in the grounds of Whiteleaf House by the road frontage wall are impressive and make a positive contribution to the street scene. Individual Yew trees occur all along the west side of the Upper Icknield Way up to Bakers Cottage and appear particularly striking in winter when other trees have lost their leaves.

Trees flanking The Holloway within the conservation area are also significant and make a notable distinction from the open fields at the base of the scarp slope to the tree clad hill above. In Summer the village of Whiteleaf can hardly be seen within the trees from the roads below.

Important hedgerows are also marked on the character survey map. Most of the boundary treatments fronting on to the Upper Icknield Way are walls or, to the south of the conservation area, low picket fences but where hedges are present they contribute to the greenery and rural appearance of the area. Of particular interest is the splendid clipped and sculpted yew hedge at Whitecliff fronting The Holloway at the entrance to the conservation area. Informal field hedges near Bakers Cottage maintain the sense of enclosure and rural feel at the northern edge of the conservation area.

OPEN SPACE

Along the Upper Icknield Way the dwellings, walls and embankments give a feeling of enclosure. However, in the vicinity of Whiteleaf Way near the centre of the conservation area the enclosure feeling gives way to greater openness with a small area of open space in front of Whiteleaf House. This open space allows for views of the historic houses and decorative walls.

The large rear gardens of many of the properties and open fields particularly to the east are important to the setting of the historic buildings and to the Ancient Monument of Whiteleaf Cross at the southern most point of the conservation area boundary. This area is not marked on the map as it is large and its boundaries are indistinct, but its value as open space should be recognised.

GROUPINGS

There are two important groupings identified on the survey map. At the southern entrance to the conservation area is a close knit cluster of small historic cottages and terraces most of which are listed. The dwellings share a commonality in their scale. Materials are traditional showing use of brick and flint, structural timbering and some whitewashing. Roofs are either old clay tiles or thatched. The window styles are also similar and all display small pane casements. Doors too remain simple and true to their rural origins; the terraces having simple vertical plank doors which are fitting to the historic dwellings. The grouping is attractive in its simplicity and in the use of traditional materials.

The second grouping is more informal and loose-knit at the northern end of the conservation area and extends from the Red Lion PH to Bakers Cottage. The cottages front closely on to the Upper Icknield Way and are elevated above the road level. They are all historic dwellings and only Highrood and Cavall are unlisted. All are whitewashed with the oldest cottages, Bakers Cottage (16th century) and Wood Cottage, Thatchers and Paxtons Cottage (17th century) displaying structural timbering. At the northern entrance to the conservation area the dwellings make a unified and attractive grouping. Small decorative details such as the fishscale shingles at Wood Cottage and the Gothic revival style windows at some properties add individual character to the group.

VIEWS

Some of the important views are marked on the survey map. Views of the historic dwellings and groupings at various points along the Upper Icknield Way are shown, as are views out from the conservation area to the open countryside beyond from Peter's Lane and from the junction of the Upper Icknield Way and The Holloway.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL ADVICE

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

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

To safeguard, preserve and enhance the appearance and special character of the Whiteleaf Conservation Area:-

- In the conservation area higher standards of design are required as it is the function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance the special character as identified in this appraisal.
- Any new building works such as extensions, must be designed not as a separate entity, but should be sympathetic in form and scale with the existing buildings and the conservation area as a whole.
- Materials for any new building works must be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area. Use of traditional materials such as red brick, flint, clay tiles and thatch are most appropriate. The use of white-wash which is a particular feature of the Whiteleaf Conservation Area should not be over-looked. For surfacing informal materials should be used such as shingle. Tarmac and concrete are generally out of place in a rural setting. Over use of regular paving, pavements and setts can also appear discordant and may not always be appropriate.
- Two important groups of buildings are identified on the survey map and their specific qualities are described in the text above. Any new development must not harm the integrity or visual quality of these important groupings and it should be recognised that new development may not be acceptable.
- Inappropriate replacement windows and doors can damage the character of the conservation area. Traditional natural materials should be used in order to safeguard the special character of the conservation area. Generally speaking painted timber windows and doors are appropriate and modern substitute materials such as UPVC and aluminium are not.
- All trees in conservation areas are protected but special consideration should be given to those trees indicated on the survey map to ensure that they are not harmed. New development should not present a risk to their continued future growth and habit.
- Although hedges cannot be specially protected through legislation those hedgerows indicated on the survey map should be retained and where possible enhanced.
- Areas of open space, and gaps between buildings will be carefully considered for protection from development or enclosure in order to safeguard the character of Whiteleaf and any important views.

NOTES

FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

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

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

Development Control matters within the Whiteleaf Conservation Area are the responsibility of the **West Team** who can be contacted on 01494 421517.

Planning Policy matters are the responsibility of the **Policy Unit** who can be contacted on 01494 421551.