



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal

# Cassington

### What are Conservation Areas?

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

### The purpose of this document

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



## Location and setting

Cassington lies in the east of the District, five miles north-west of Oxford, in an open landscape which forms part of the Oxford Green Belt. Until the construction of the A40 from Oxford to Witney in 1935, the village was only accessible via the network of country lanes between Yarnton and Eynsham.

The landscape surrounding Cassington is one of subdued relief and forms part of the lowland landscape of the Upper Thames clay vale, with floodplain grassland to the south and a pattern of small- to medium-sized fields enclosed by gappy hedgerows.

Worton Heath and Burleigh Wood – both areas of ancient woodland – lie north of the village. The landscape has witnessed some significant changes, with major gravel extraction works occurring in the north and south-west, and some replanting of native woodland blocks.



## Historical development

There is extensive archaeological evidence for a number of early settlements on the gravel terraces near the village. Significant sites have been uncovered dating from the Iron Age through to the Romano-British period. The Anglo-Saxon era which followed gave to the village the name from which Cassington ultimately derives: 'Caersentun' meaning 'the tun where cress grows'. Cassington is recorded in the Domesday Book in the 11th century as 'Cersetone'.

The substantial Romanesque church of St. Peter was constructed around 1123 by Geoffrey de Clinton and Eynsham Abbey. Godstow Abbey built up an estate in the area during the 13th century. However, from the 14th century onwards the local economy seems to have declined, mainly through problems associated with absentee landholders.

At the Dissolution in the 16th century the monastic properties reverted to the Crown. This factor contributed to a loss of prosperity for Cassington. Subsequently, landholdings in the parish were gradually broken up and sold off, most significantly to Christ Church, Oxford and the Blenheim Estate.

Cassington had an almost exclusively agricultural economy until well into the 20th century. There were, however, some small-scale and short-lived industrial enterprises, including cloth working and weaving at Cassington Mill in the 17th and 18th centuries, and canal and railway construction in the 19th century.

Commercial gravel extraction to the north and south of the village began in the 1930s and signalled a new phase in the development of the village. Cassington grew substantially during the inter-war period, and more significantly still in the 1960s and 1970s.

As a result of population pressure from Oxford the village became a modest dormitory settlement for the city. However, while there is some light industrial activity in the north of the village today, Cassington retains a rural character, with low-density vernacular housing and a spacious and informal landscape setting.



## Settlement pattern

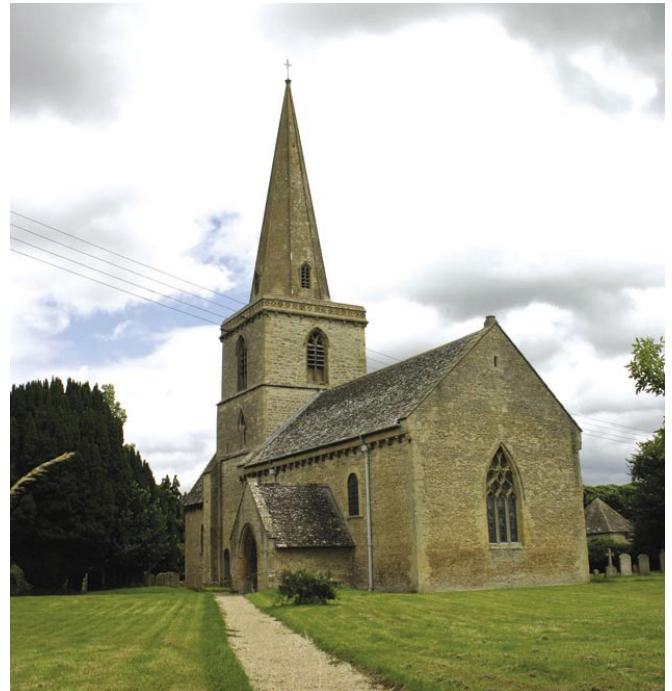
Cassington village is divided into two parts by a small stream running from north to south. Since the 20th century these individual parts have been known as 'Upper' and 'Lower' Village. However, in the 16th century they were known as the 'West' and 'East' Ends. The main village streets - Yarnton Road and Bell Lane - form a V-shape pointing northwards. A footpath links the upper village (West End), with the lower village (East End).

The upper village retains fragments of what was once a much larger village green, now encroached upon by the vicarage, the old school house, the old post office, the village primary school, the village hall and the recently-constructed terrace of new cottages and public house. On the western side of the green is a row of 18th- and 19th-century terraced cottages, which includes the Red Lion Inn and the post office. Another (Listed) terrace lies off to the north.

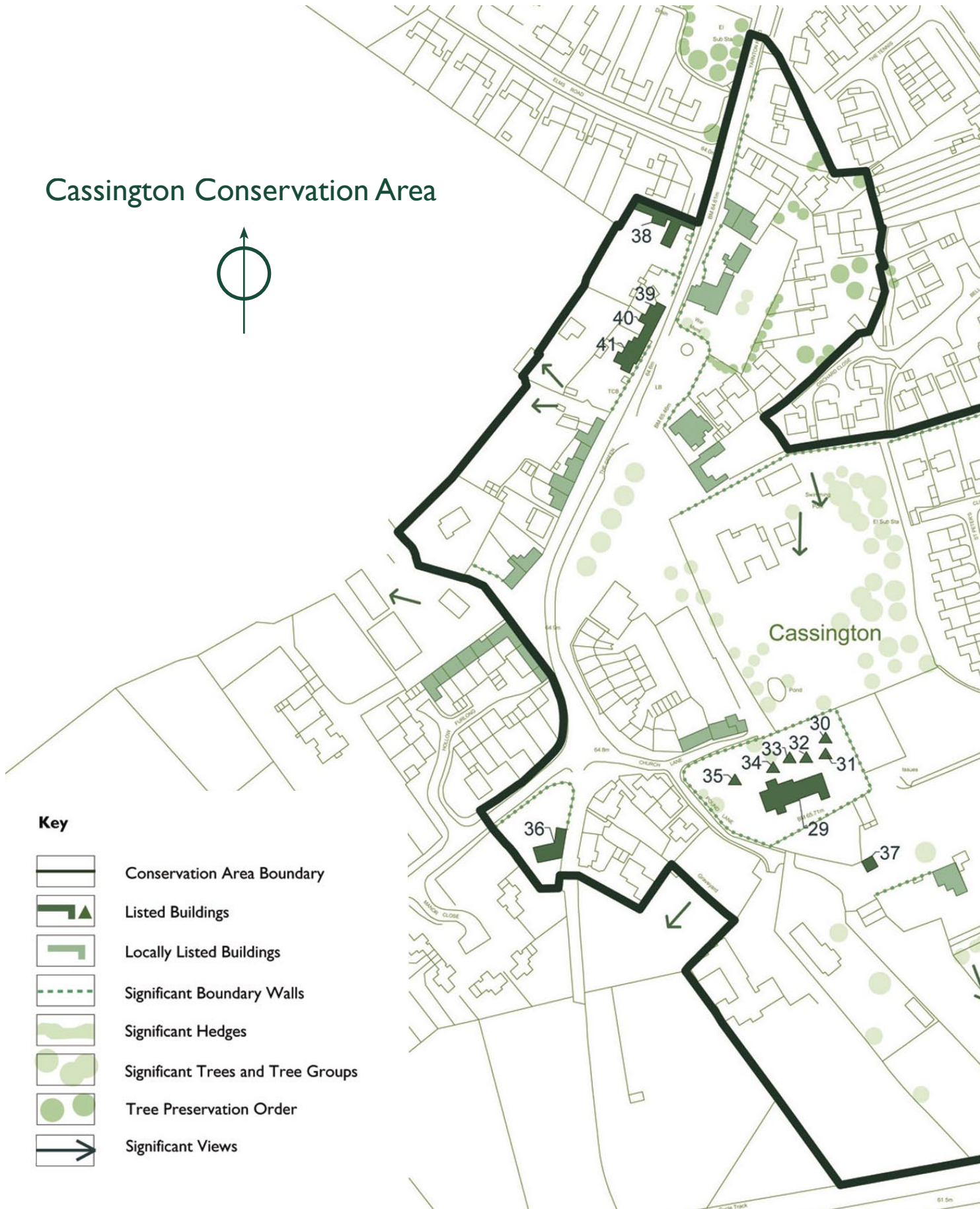
The church lies on the southern edge of the upper village, north-west of the former Manor House and Reynolds Farm. On the north side of Church Lane is a short terrace of almshouses.

The lower village centres on a small green at the end of Bell Lane. On the east side of the green is the former Bell Inn, with Old Manor to the south. Horsemere Lane leads south from the green and contains a number of 18th-century cottages, including Bell Cottage and Thames Mead Farm (which was the former Manor House of Godstow).









The location of Cassington's surviving early buildings suggests the essentially piecemeal establishment of cottages and houses along the lane-side. Later development within the Conservation Area includes St. Peter's Close, with its houses variously arranged along a curved cul-de-sac. Other recent development in Cassington has seen houses set back from the lane-side behind verges of varying depth, or further back still behind front gardens.



# Cassington Conservation Area



**Key**

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





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## Listed Buildings

There are 19 Listed structures of architectural or historic interest within the Conservation Area. Listed Buildings are classified in grades of relative importance.

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

25/29 CHURCH LANE (South side) Church of St. Peter

### Grade II – Buildings of special interest

25/22 BELL LANE (East side) Ivydene

25/23 BELL LANE (East side) Old Manor

25/24 BELL LANE (East side) Outbuilding approx. 5m SSE of Old Manor (Formerly listed as Cottages)

25/25 BELL LANE (West side) Willow Dene

25/26 BELL LANE (West side) Lyme Regis

25/27 BELL LANE (West side) Thames Mead Farmhouse and Bell Cottage

25/30 CHURCH LANE (South side) Graveboard approx. 13m NE of chancel of Church of St. Peter

25/31 CHURCH LANE (South side) Chest tomb approx. 6m NE of chancel of Church of St. Peter

25/32 CHURCH LANE (South side) Group of 5 headstones approx. 3m N of chancel of Church of St. Peter

25/33 CHURCH LANE (South side) Headstone approx. 4.5m N of chancel of Church of St. Peter

25/34 CHURCH LANE (South side) Chest tomb approx. 4m NE of N porch of Church of St. Peter

25/35 CHURCH LANE (South side) Base of churchyard cross approx. 12m WNW of nave of Church of St. Peter

25/36 EYNSHAM ROAD (East side) Phoenix Cottage

25/37 POUND LANE (East side) Reynolds Farm, Dovecote approx. 30m NW of Farmhouse (not included)

25/38 THE GREEN (West side) Hampton House

25/39 THE GREEN (West side) Osborne Cottage

25/40 THE GREEN (West side) Stork Cottage

25/41 THE GREEN (West side) The Cottage

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

## Architectural character and quality of buildings

The buildings of Cassington are typically vernacular, and are characterised by their small scale and their simple form and detailing. The surrounding farmland was cultivated by labourers housed in the village, often in humble terraced properties. There were no outlying farms until after the Enclosure award of 1801. The majority of the buildings are modest cottages which exhibit a number of common features: most notably their uniform height of two storeys (sometimes with dormers); their plain timber lintels, gable-end chimneys, and small squared timber casement windows.

The local pale limestone is the traditional building material, and is generally employed in coursed rubble form. However, there are a few examples of squared coursing in the higher status buildings. There are some remnants of Stonesfield slate roofs, and one remaining example of thatch (The Laurels). However, these traditional roofing materials have largely been usurped by concrete tiles. There is also some use of red brick, principally in the chimney stacks.

The church is the most impressive building in the village. It dates from the 12th century and features a wealth of fine details externally, and high quality fittings within (most notably its west window and rood-screen). In terms of domestic architecture, Hampton House and The Old Manor House stand out within the village for their size, high quality construction, and more refined architectural detail.

Much of the 20th-century infill found in the village (most notably The Tennis and St. Peter's Close) has not responded with sensitivity to the appearance and aesthetic quality of Cassington's historic core. However, the recent corner development on the east side of the street between the upper green and St. Peter's Church is entirely in keeping with the form, scale and detailing of the village. This terrace positively contributes to (indeed, enhances) the special character of the Conservation Area.

## Boundary treatments

The spacious and open character of much of the village derives from the wide grass verges with stone kerbs and soft borders, which define the informal nature of many boundaries within the settlement. However, drystone walls are a significant feature elsewhere, frequently running parallel to the road and in line with the adjacent buildings. These walls are capped either by vertical stones or a variety of flat crowns. On the edges of the settlement are a number of 20th-century agricultural style iron-bar gates (usually parallel with the roads), through which views out of the settlement into the open countryside beyond may be glimpsed.

## Landscape, trees and views

The upper green is characterised by mature trees and a significant avenue of limes that draw attention to the view of St Peter's church. The semi-formal character and the large-scale of the trees provides a marked contrast to the informal and open appearance of the rest of the village and the surrounding landscape. The lower green is more intimate in scale, and linked to the upper green by a narrow walled footpath. The domestic gardens, grass verges and trees, especially in the central area, combine to emphasise the rural and open character of the village.

Cassington's setting, in a relatively flat and expansive landscape setting - together with its containment - generally precludes long views from within the settlement out into the countryside beyond. However, such views are possible from the western edge of the Conservation area. Within Cassington itself the winding main street and the small greens together allow for a variety of attractive internal views.



**West Oxfordshire District Council - Planning Service**  
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General planning enquiries and application forms  
List entries and grant enquiries  
Trees and landscape enquiries  
Architectural and technical enquiries

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