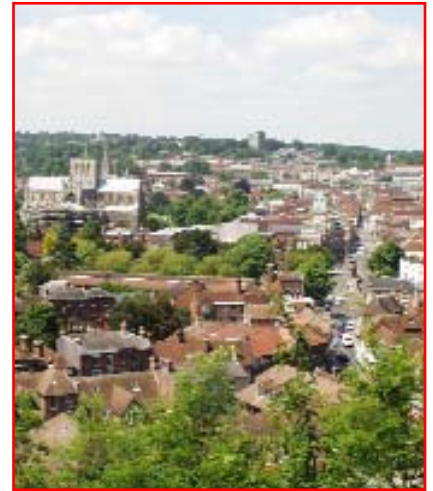


Winchester Conservation Area Project

The Winchester Conservation Area Project contains a Conservation Area Appraisal, Review and Strategy. The Project was commissioned by Winchester City Council with the support of English Heritage, Hampshire County Council and the City of Winchester Trust. The Project has been subject to extensive public consultation and relevant recommendations have been incorporated into the Winchester District Local Plan Review (Revised Deposit 2003). The Conservation Area Strategy provides Winchester City Council with a tool for the management of the Conservation Area and contains specific guidance on new development, and this has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.



Copies of the Winchester Conservation Area Project are available for inspection or purchase at the address below during normal opening hours. Copies can also be inspected at Winchester Library and viewed on the Council's website.

Robin Cooper,
Director of Development Services,
Winchester City Council,
Avalon House,
Chesil Street,
Winchester,
SO23 0HU.

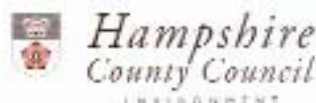
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Adopted June 2002

This study was prepared for Winchester City Council
by Urban Initiatives and Alan Baxter Associates.



Introduction

Winchester Conservation Area Project

The Winchester Conservation Area Project has been informed by a three-part analysis of Winchester's Conservation Area (CA). The first part is formed by a Conservation Area Appraisal, the second part is a Conservation Area Review, and the third a Conservation Area Strategy. Together these three parts form the Winchester Conservation Area Project that will provide Winchester City Council with a tool for the management of the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area **Appraisal** assesses the quality and character of the Conservation Area, it describes the City's development and its formative influences and identifies the City's historic assets, their contribution to the environmental quality of Winchester and their potential for enhancement. The Conservation Area **Review** highlights the issues raised in the Appraisal including detracting features and opportunities for enhancement. This part of the project also includes a review of boundary issues. The Conservation Area **Strategy** sets out a strategy for the management of the CA and identifies a range of policy vehicles for its implementation.

This study has been undertaken for Winchester City Council with the support of Hampshire County Council, the City of Winchester Trust and English Heritage. The project has involved a range of specialist expertise and extensive consultation with local interest groups and the general public. The study has been put on public exhibition and published on the Internet. The work will also provide a permanent resource in conjunction with the Urban Archaeology GIS Database developed by the Winchester Museums Service and the emerging Winchester Archaeology Strategy, which is being developed in parallel with the Winchester Conservation Area Project.

Throughout this project, the emphasis has been as much on the wider context of streets and spaces as it has been on individual buildings or artefacts. The network of public spaces is an essential part of the distinctive character of Winchester. "The historic environment is seen by most people as a totality. They value places, not just a series of individual sites and buildings." (Power of Place, English Heritage 2000).

The aim of the Winchester Conservation Area Project has been to identify the key qualities that the Conservation Area contributes to the City and Winchester's international heritage status.

It is not the underlying intention to freeze Winchester so that it is unchanging and deprived of the ability to continue to evolve. Neither is it intended to 'wind back the clock' to some arbitrary point in the past. Instead, this project has attempted to identify what is valuable in Winchester here and now - qualities that should be protected and enhanced. Along with identifying these qualities, this project has identified where detractors could be removed or mitigated and where opportunities lie for enhancement.

Structure of Document

Part 1: Conservation Area Appraisal

The Conservation Area Appraisal assesses the quality and character of the Conservation Area, describes the City's development and its formative influences; and identifies the contribution made by the City's historic assets to the environmental quality of Winchester and the potential for its enhancement.

Part 2: Conservation Area Review

The Conservation Area Review follows on from the Appraisal that assessed the Conservation Area as eight Character Areas. It highlights the issues raised in the Appraisal including detracting features and opportunities for enhancement. It also includes a review of boundary issues.

The intention of this part of the study was to identify the essential characteristics and qualities that make Winchester unique in heritage terms and to assess these qualities in terms of the assets of the Conservation Area. The Review identifies the pressures on these assets and, with the aid of examples, illustrates some of the dilemmas which must be faced if the needs of Winchester as a 21st century city are to be reconciled with the true importance of its architectural and archaeological heritage.

Part 3: Conservation Area Strategy

This Strategy section sets out a strategy for the management of the CA and identifies a range of policy vehicles for its implementation:

- Development planning policy including policy recommendations, supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Article 4 directions;
- Integrated planning policy;
- Public information and advice; and
- Management and organisational structures & procedures.

1 Conservation Area Appraisal

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this Appraisal

This Conservation Area Appraisal is the first of three parts of this document which together will provide Winchester City Council with a tool for the management of the Conservation Area. It will assess the quality and character of the Conservation Area, describe the City's development and its formative influences; and identify the contribution made by the City's historic assets to the environmental quality of Winchester and the potential for its enhancement.

The Appraisal was undertaken in the Summer of 2000, so any references to sites or commercial premises, etc. reflects an accurate record at time of survey.

1.2 The city of Winchester

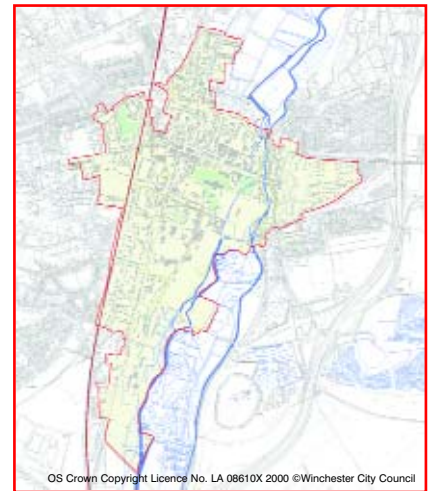
Winchester is a unique cathedral city. It has some of the richest historical associations and finest historic buildings to be found anywhere in Britain and a number of sites of international status, including the cathedral. The City has a distinct and harmonious relationship to the surrounding landscape and a compact urban form. Shops and employment are within easy reach of residential areas.

Winchester is the 'county town' of Hampshire and a centre for County administration, the headquarters of organisations including the Hampshire Constabulary, and the location of major hospital services for the area. The City also has long-standing associations with education: Winchester College, founded in the Middle Ages still remains as a major part of the City's historic fabric; Winchester School of Art and King Alfred's College are major centres for higher education.

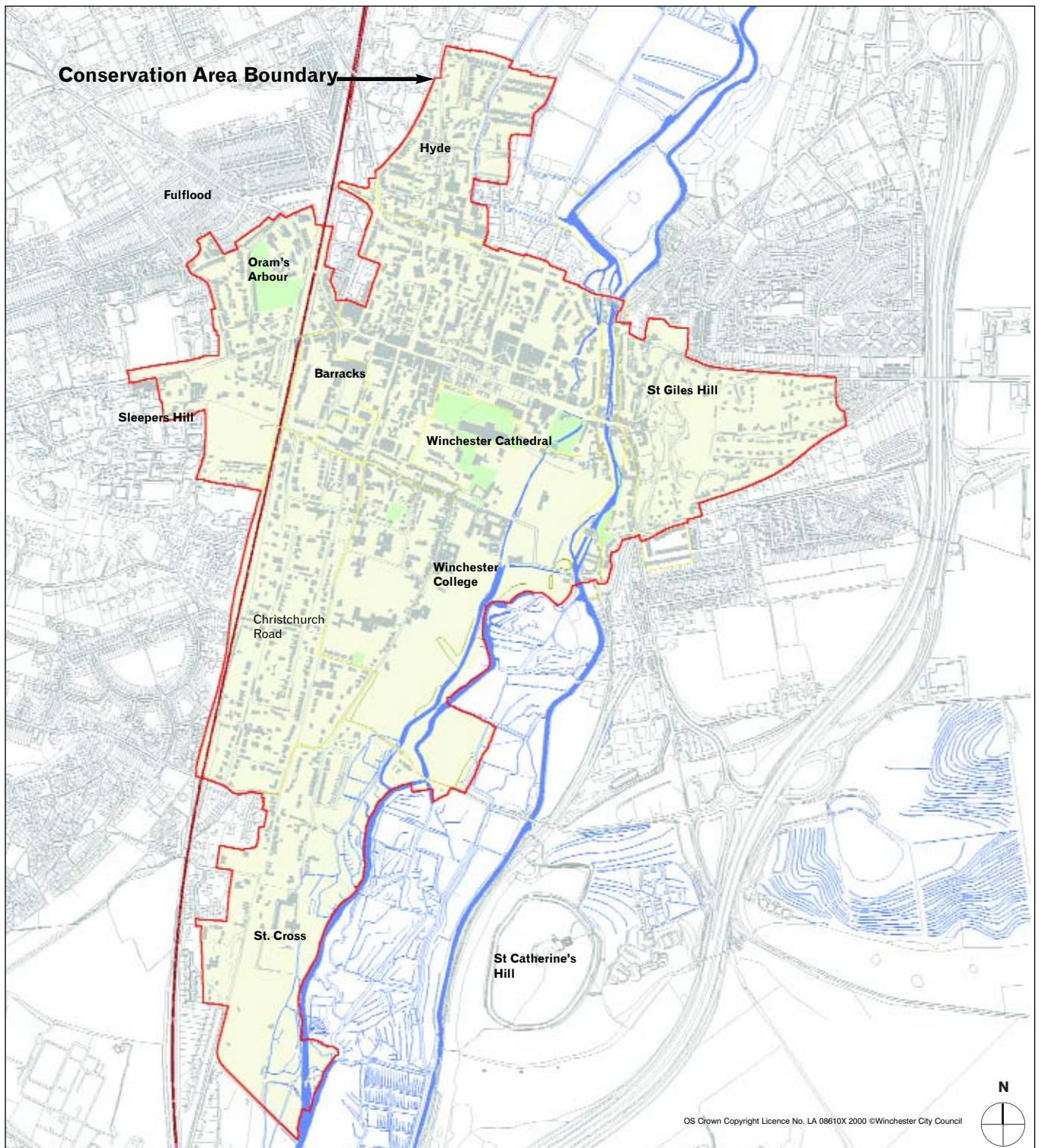
Small-scale industries including brewing and milling have, in recent years, given way to commercial uses. Winchester has a thriving retail centre, despite facing competition from Basingstoke, Southampton and out-of-town shopping centres such as Hedge End.

Historically a base for the military, the army's presence in the City is now greatly reduced but five regimental museums are open to the public.

The rail service to London and Southampton/Bournemouth and the M3 motorway provide excellent links to London and the region. These links, together with the attractions of the City and good housing, have helped to establish Winchester as a commuter satellite for the capital.



Top: Winchester Cathedral
Bottom: The Square



Above: The Conservation Area

1.3 The Landscape and Topographic Setting

The City is set in the valley of the River Itchen, between two hills overlooked by surrounding high chalk downland with a series of prominent escarpments including Magdalen Hill Down, Deacon Hill, Telegraph Hill and Fawley Down, and the steep escarpments surrounding St Catherine's Hill.

The earliest form of settlements on the site of modern Winchester was a direct response to the natural topography and geology of the site. Winchester grew around a strategic crossing point on the Itchen, a low chalk spur providing a safe route across the marshy river valley to the higher ground on either side.

A variety of semi-natural habitats—the river, chalk downland and ancient woodland—penetrate the urban area, providing social and recreational benefits and continuing enjoyment.

The Itchen valley is the most extensive area of semi-natural vegetation within Winchester. The river meadows are a major component of the City providing the setting for many of the City's historic buildings, including Winchester College, Wolvesey Palace and the Hospital of St Cross.

The 18th century saw the opening of a navigable stretch of canalised water running alongside the Itchen to the east.

Beyond the City walls lie the nuclei of historic suburbs. St Cross, with its Norman church, hospital and associated lodgings represents a unique group of buildings. Other important sites include Hyde, Oram's Arbour, St John's, St Giles' Hill, West Hill, Peninsula Barracks, Weeke, and the buildings of Winchester College.

The valley landscape setting distinguishes Winchester from many other English cathedral cities: Winchester and its cathedral are subservient to the landscape. The City and cathedral form a significant focus for long distance views, particularly from the south. However, because of the tight, narrow streets and the landform restricting mid range views, the Cathedral is experienced as a fragmentary series of partial views and 'rediscovered' when emerging into the Cathedral Close.

There is a remarkably distinct sense of arrival at Winchester's urban area with clear-cut divisions between city and country on most approaches; reinforced by mature tree cover beside the roads.

Water is an ever-present phenomenon in Winchester, appearing and disappearing from view, often in surprising and delightful ways. The historic development of the City, beginning in the Roman period, has seen the partial concealment of the water ways below ground and has resulted in this unique relationship between buildings and urban watercourses.



Top: View from St Giles' Hill
Centre: The river Itchen
Bottom: The relationship between buildings and topography—Magdalen Hill

1.4 Planning context

The Planning Context for this Appraisal is set out in the following documents:

- The Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Review) as adopted Sept 2000;
- Winchester District Local Plan (adopted 1998);
- Winchester District Local Plan Review 2001;
- Relevant Planning Policy Guidance documents (e.g. PPG 15 and PPG 16) are covered in more detail in Part 2 (Conservation Area Review); and
- 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act;

The Act requires Local Planning Authorities to identify "Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The Act also requires Local Planning Authorities to review and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas.

1.5 The Conservation Area

Location and boundaries

Three Conservation Areas were designated in response to the Civic Amenities Act of 1967: Town Centre (1967), Hyde Abbey (1967) and St Cross (1969): these were amongst the first to be designated in the country. These initial areas were extended and united in 1981 to include the following:

- St Giles' Hill and environs;
- North Walls;
- City Road and Staple Gardens;
- Oram's Arbour and environs;
- Christchurch Road;
- Romsey Road, St James' Lane and West Hill Cemetery;
- Winchester meadows; and
- The Hyde Abbey Conservation Area was also united with the larger Town Centre/St Cross Conservation Area in 1990.

The current Conservation Area covers the entire city centre and a substantial portion of its inner suburbs. The western boundary of the Area is defined in large part by the railway, including Oram's Arbour and part of Fulflood and West Hill, up to but not including the Royal Hampshire Hospital. The eastern boundary is largely formed by the western branch of the river Itchen with St Giles' Hill south of Alresford Road. The Conservation Area extends north as far as Hyde and south as far as St Cross including the Hospital of St Cross.

The Conservation Area therefore includes a variety of landscape and topography, including the undulating ground to the west, the steep St Giles' Hill and the varied landscape of the river valley. This topography is an essential characteristic of the Conservation Area, providing elevated views onto the city and a natural backdrop (see Strategic Views Plan). The Conservation Area also includes a variety of patterns and periods of development; from the underlying Saxon street pattern, the close-knit medieval Cathedral Close and High Street, individual pockets of Georgian building; to extensive Victorian suburbs.



Top: Winchester and the surrounding landscape
Above: Public art—Barbara Hepworth's sculpture in the Cathedral precinct
Centre: The river Itchen supports a varied landscape and natural habitats
Below: Avenue of trees in the Cathedral precinct
Opposite top: St Catherine's Hill seen from St Cross
Opposite right: Key views

1.6 Nature conservation

The River Itchen is of international importance for its wildlife. It includes four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). St Catherine's Hill SSSI, lies immediately to the south-east of the City.

Other areas are also of value for wildlife and provide valuable amenities for local people, including the:

- Cathedral precinct, Winchester College and the Hospital of St Cross;
- combination of mature trees and buildings in the older areas of the City, such as Abbey Gardens and the Cathedral Close; and
- mature trees, particularly beech, and associated wider grass verges, which line many of the routes into the City.



From Easton Down

