

St Bernard's School Conservation Area Character Appraisal



2026

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1.0 Introduction

The St Bernard's School Conservation Area was designated on 17th April 1984 by Slough Borough Council. Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

A conservation area is *“an area of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”*.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Proposals should be publicised and incorporate public comment. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Paragraph 39 of the NPPF 2024 provides an overarching planning framework to which local planning policy must relate. The Framework notes that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations. The Framework also places certain responsibilities upon Local Planning Authorities in that they should have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.

The Framework states:

When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest. (Paragraph 204)

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas ...and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably. (Paragraph 219)

New development and change will always take place in conservation areas, and the main purpose of designation is to ensure that any proposals will not have an adverse effect upon the overall character and appearance of an area.

Development within Conservation Areas is underpinned more broadly by Slough Borough Council's Core Strategy 2006-2026 (December 2008)¹

¹ Policy EN13 (Conservation Areas) in the Slough Local Plan Saved Policies (adopted 2004) has not been a saved policy since 2007. The new Local Plan (to 2045) for Slough is in preparation at the time of publication.

CORE POLICY 9 (NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT) Development will not be permitted unless it:

- *Enhances and protects the historic environment;*
- *Respects the character and distinctiveness of existing buildings, townscapes and landscapes and their local designations;*

This Appraisal highlights the special qualities and features that define the character of St Bernard's School Conservation Area and justify its designation. It is written in accordance with the methodology recommended by Historic England, in its 2019 Advice Note 1, *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*, on how to define and record the special architectural and historic interest of Conservation Areas. This appraisal will provide a firm basis on which future planning and listed building consent applications can be assessed.

This appraisal is intended to be comprehensive in its scope and content. However, omission of any specific building, structure, site, landscape feature, space, feature or aspect located in or adjacent to the St Bernard's School Conservation Area should not be taken to imply that it does not hold significance and positively contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a designated heritage asset.

A detailed review of the existing boundaries of the St Bernard's Conservation Area has also been undertaken to determine if areas should be included or removed from the designation, no changes are proposed.

2 Location and Setting

2.1 Location

St Bernard's School lies within the large town and Unitary Authority of Slough, Berkshire; it lies approximately 1 mile to the east of the town centre. Slough is located 20 miles west of central London and 2 miles north of Windsor, Heathrow Airport lies approximately five miles to the southeast. Historically Slough was within the county of Buckinghamshire.

The conservation area includes the grounds of St Bernard's School, its school buildings and playing field. It also includes a small number of residential dwellings to the east and west of the school and 1 London Road which is situated at the junction of London Road and Langley Road.



St Bernard's School Conservation Area boundary map

2.2 Boundaries

The south boundary of the Conservation Area runs along the north side of Sussex Place / London Road and along the south boundary of the St Bernard's School site. The boundary returns to the north and incorporates 1 London Road and nos. 3, 5 and 7 Langley Road. It then follows the east and north boundary of the St Bernard's School site before turning to the south, following the west boundary of the school site and incorporating a group of properties on the north side of Sussex Place.

2.3 Topography and Landscape Setting

The topography of the conservation area and its immediate surroundings is level. Modern development now surrounds the conservation area, all part of urban Slough.

2.4 Geology

Slough sits on the northern side of the Thames Valley, the bedrock is Cretaceous chalk with deposits of sand and gravel and overlain by Lambeth Group and London Clay formations. In the late 19th and 20th century clay was being dug out of the ground to the north of the village for brickmaking, this was a major industry within the town.

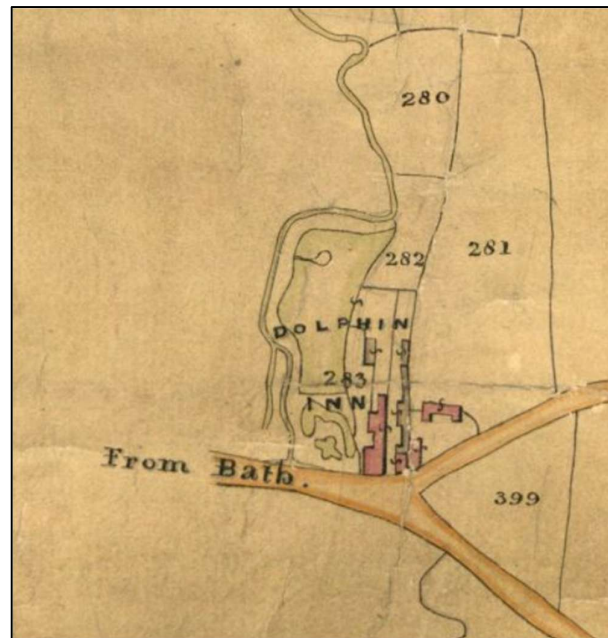
2.5 Archaeology

The Thames Valley area has yielded numerous prehistoric archaeological remains on the Lynch Hill Gravel terraces whilst finds from the Mesolithic and Neolithic period onwards have been found in Cippenham, and elsewhere, all of which suggests this Thames Valley landscape was under almost constant human influence throughout this time. The land was farmed from the Iron Age onwards with small settlements gradually developing into the Saxon period.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the conservation area. There is one Historic Environment Record - the A4 Bath Road from London to Bristol (HER Number 05052.00.000).

3.0 Historic development

The 1844 Tithe map shows the road network at this time, the route of the London to Bath Road and the road to Langley are visible. There were buildings on the site of the current school, one of which is marked as the 'Dolphin Inn' however all of this was demolished in the mid nineteenth century and the site redeveloped for a new house in circa 1860.



Extract from the 1844 Tithe Map (The Genealogist REF:29/3/69)

The house is said to have been built for Baroness Coutts, a Victorian heiress and member of the renowned banking family, but she never lived there. The property was named Aldin House which also suggests it had some relation to Charles Aldin, a local artist (and Pevsner states that the house was built for him). Not long after it was built, the private house became an educational establishment, and this use has continued to this day.

In 1869 the house was sold to the Reverend J Hawtrey who operated it as St Michael's School; Sir Paul Waterhouse, one time president of the R.I.B.A and Stanley Baldwin, former Prime Minister, were pupils at the school. The Chapel, designed by the architect Alfred Waterhouse, was built on to the west end of the house in 1869. The 1881 Ordnance Survey map shows the house, with landscaped grounds and a lake to the north. The map also shows a house at the junction of Langley Road and London Road (this is 1 London Road), the terrace of 3 houses on the north side of Langley Road and numbers 93 & 95 Sussex Place.



Extract from the 1881 Ordnance Survey map naming Aldin House (St Michael's School)
 The green line shows the approximate position of the Conservation Area boundary

Aldin House became a college in 1884, owned by a group of French Jesuits. By 1897 the school site was renamed St Bernard's Convent; the French Bernadine Cistercian Sisters who were fleeing persecution in France, purchased the building and established a community of nuns and a boarding school for girls over the age of 15. The school taught subject including music, needlework, English and deportment, it later expanded to educate girls from the ages of 11 – 18. The school celebrated 'Guardian Angels' Day each year, a tradition which continues to this day.



St Bernard's Convent, Slough in the early twentieth century



Rear elevation of the school building and chapel, circa 1930 (Slough History Online)

In 1906 St Joseph's School for day pupils was founded in a Victorian property just opposite the school (now 1 London Road).



St Joseph's School (now 1 London Road)

During the First World War, the Old Hall, became, for a short time, a hospital for wounded soldiers. In the 1920's younger students were admitted and the school continued to expand and it merged with St Joseph's Day School in 1945. Tennis courts and new school buildings were built within the grounds, adapting to the needs of the school. The School became co-educational in 1989 and remained in the care of the Bernardine nuns until the early twenty-first century, when they left the school became St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School. The school has continued to expand with a new building to the rear of the school site added in recent years.



Tennis courts at St Bernard's in c. 1930 (Slough History online)

New houses were built on land to the west of the school in the latter part of the twentieth century.

4 Surviving Historical Features within the Conservation Area

4.1 Summary of historical features

- The grade II listed west block and chapel at St Bernard's School
- The late nineteenth century buildings on the school site
- 1 London Road (Victorian house repurposed for use as a school, now flats)
- Stone gate piers at the entrance to the school site
- Brick boundary wall to 93 and 95 Sussex Place
- Fine, mature trees
- Garden to front of the school and playing fields to rear

4.2 Street pattern and building plots

St Bernard's School occupies a substantial plot, and this makes up most of the conservation area. Other residential dwellings occupy smaller plots. The busy Sussex Place / London Road runs along the south boundary of the Conservation Area and there is a junction with traffic lights for Langley Road.



Stone gate piers at the entrance to St Bernard's School

5.0 The Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

5.1 Analysis

The St Bernard's School Conservation Area is compact and dominated by the school and its mid to late nineteenth century buildings, the conservation area includes some other residential development to the east and west of the school but there are no clearly defined character areas.

5.2 Summary of townscape features

- St Bernard's School site with its collection of nineteenth century buildings
- 1 London Road
- Mature, established trees
- Nineteenth century boundary wall to 93 / 95 Sussex Place
- Stone gate piers to St Bernard's School, modern traditional style railings reflecting the historic boundary treatment to the school site
- Widespread use of Gault brick and slate

5.3 Current activities and uses

A large part of the conservation area is in educational use (St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School), the rest is in residential use.

5.4 Focal points, views and vistas

The clocktower of St Bernard's School is a feature in the local area due to its height and visual prominence above the trees. 1 London Road has a commanding presence at the junction of London Road and Langley Road.



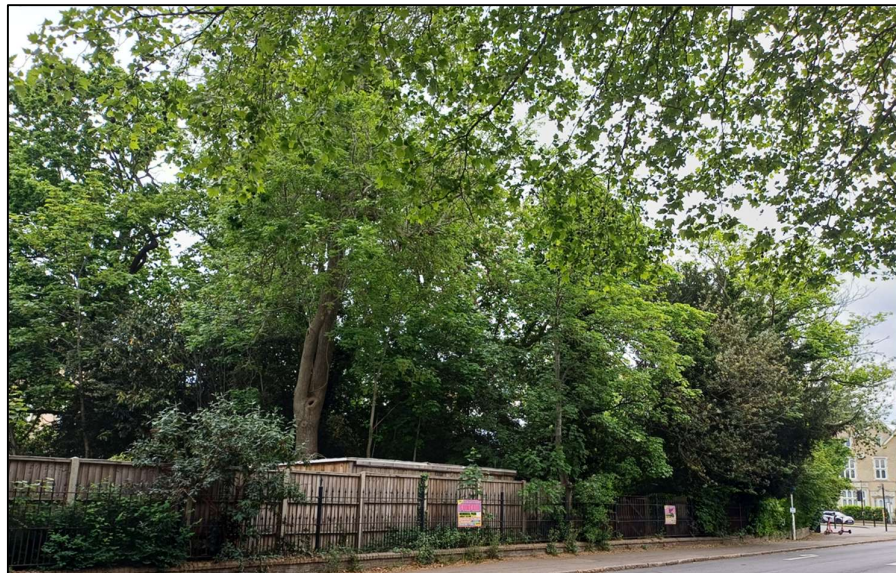
The St Bernard's School site with its prominent clocktower viewed from the south side of London Road

5.5 Open spaces, landscape and trees

There is a large area of open space (playing fields) to the rear of St Bernard's School buildings with a number of fine, well-established trees within the site and to its boundaries. There is a further area of green space to the front of the school with planted beds and larger trees and shrubs. These areas are not publicly accessible, but the green space and trees make a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. There are Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on several trees within the Conservation Area and areas of blanket TPOs marked on the map.



View across St Bernard's Schools playing fields



Trees to the west of the St Bernard's School site

5.6 Public Realm: Floorscape, street lighting and street furniture

The public realm within the Conservation Area is limited to the tarmac pavements along the busy Sussex Place / London Road and Langley Road. The traffic lights and junction add to the visual clutter of the area, and the street lights are modern.

6 The Buildings of the Conservation Area

The conservation area contains a small, but interesting collection of nineteenth century buildings, with a variety of sizes and architectural styles. There is 1 grade II listed building (west block and chapel at St Bernard's School).

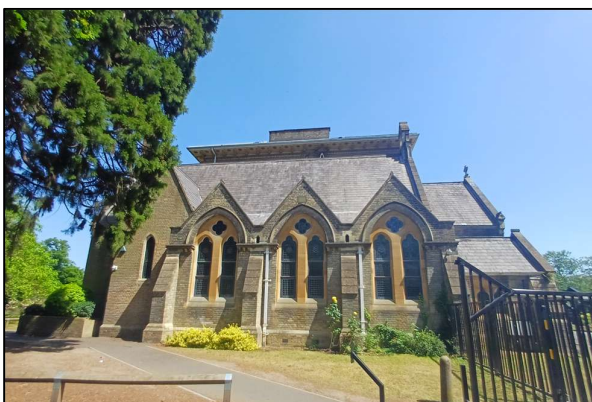
There is one Locally Listed building within the conservation area, but this Survey contains suggestions for the addition of 2 further buildings to Slough Borough's Local List (see Appendix 2). Local Listing does not bring additional statutory protection in itself, but being within the conservation area, such buildings are already protected from substantial demolition. Certainly, every effort will be made to safeguard their contribution to the conservation area and that of any other buildings within its boundaries that contribute to its character as an historic settlement.

6.1 Architectural styles and detailing

St Bernard's School includes the grade II listed 'west block' and Chapel. The main school building is 3 storey and constructed of gault brick with Bath stone dressings and a hipped slate roof with a deep moulded eaves cornice. Due to its set back position the school building is not prominent within the conservation area. The chapel (built 1869) was designed by the architect Alfred Waterhouse in the Neo-Gothic style – he is best known for designing the Natural History Museum, London. The chapel is also of gault brick construction with ashlar dressings, it is a modest structure but contains a high level of detail internally and some fine stained glass.



Front elevation of the grade II listed west block and Chapel at St Bernard's School



Chapel, west elevation

In the latter part of the nineteenth century further school buildings and accommodation for the nuns was built on the site, on its east side. These buildings are also of gault brick construction with red brick dressings / diapering and slate roofs. They feature well detailed door-cases and have retained their original timber sash windows.



Victorian school buildings and clocktower

1 London Road was built in circa 1870 as a private house but later became a school. The property is also of gault brick construction with a gabled slate roof, it has moulded stone window heads, stone decoration above the central front door and ground floor bays. It was extended to the rear in the circa 1980's with a substantial buff brick addition with large glazed windows (the building was used as an office at this time).



1 London Road



93 and 95 Sussex Place

93 and 95 Sussex Place were built as a pair of semi-detached villas. The finely detailed pair are stuccoed with a hipped slate roof with modillioned eaves cornice and dormers to the roof. The properties have sash windows with shutters and timber window heads. There is a nineteenth century brick boundary wall to the west side and frontage and the outbuilding to the west side looks to be of a nineteenth century date. They are included on Slough's List of Locally Important Buildings.

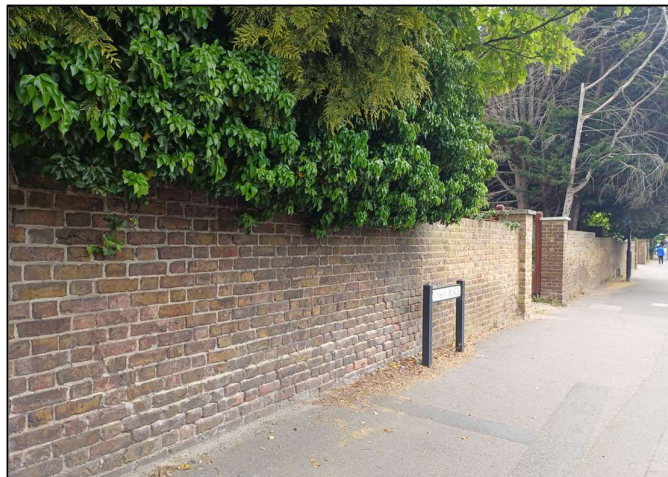
There is a terrace of 3 small mid to late nineteenth cottages on the north side of Langley Road. Modern development / redevelopment has occurred on the western edge of the school site, with two new dwellings built in the early part of the twenty-first century on the site adjacent to the former Presbytery (now Dhillons).



3, 5 and 7 Langley Road

6.2 Boundaries

St Bernard's School retains two of its former stone gate piers. The school site has metal railings to the frontage with shrubs behind, the railings are modern but reflect the historic boundary treatment. It is likely the railings were removed during World War II to be melted down for munitions as part of the war effort. The railings to 1 London Road are also modern replacements. A good length of nineteenth century stock brick boundary wall is retained in front of 93 and 95 Sussex Place and Dhillon's, new openings have been created within the wall, but it has been maintained and repaired over the years.



Nineteenth century brick boundary wall to nos. 93 and 95 Sussex Place

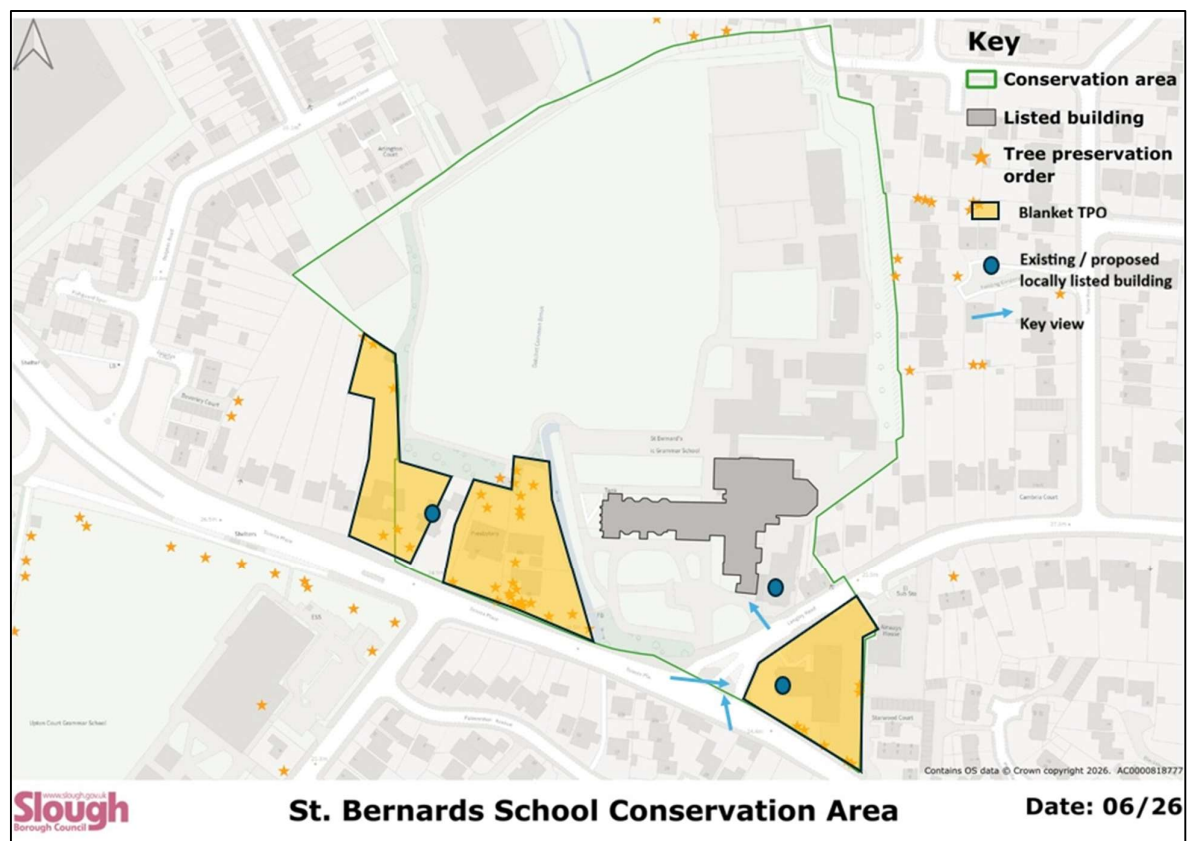
6.3 Listed Buildings

A listed building is one that is included on the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest. These buildings are protected by law, and listed building consent is required from Slough Borough Council before any works of alteration, extension or

demolition can be carried out. There is one listed building within the Conservation Area – the west block and chapel at St Bernard's School (list entry number 1113382).

6.4. (Proposed) Locally Listed Buildings

These are buildings which have been identified as being individually of special architectural or historic interest but falling just 'beneath the line' for inclusion within the statutory list. They make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. The current Local Plan for Slough (adopted March 2004) at the time of publication has a policy relating to Locally Listed Buildings, Policy EN17 which states that special consideration will be given, in the exercise of the development control function, to the retention, enhancement and appropriate refurbishment of locally listed buildings together with their setting. There is one locally listed building (93 and 95 Sussex Place), the (proposed) locally listed buildings are marked on the map.



Conservation Area character analysis map

7 Negative features and issues

There are no negative buildings within the conservation area although the extension to 1 London Road is bulky and rather intrusive. 1 London Road also features 4 air-conditioning units at high level on its front elevation; these are not sensitively sited and detract from the character and appearance of the property.

The uPVC sash windows on nos.3, 5 and 7 Langley Road are not well detailed and are noticeable on the street frontage.

8 Management Plan

The policies of the Slough Borough Local Plan are the primary source of reference for development control advice. If unclear on what requires planning permission within the conservation area please consult the Planning Portal www.planningportal.co.uk or Slough planning team for advice.

New buildings within the St Bernard's School Conservation Area shall preserve or enhance the appearance and special character of the designated area:

- 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. The predominance of the original building in an architecturally unmarred form is paramount, and extensions should not detract from this characteristic or be prominent in public views.
- Materials for any new building works or surfacing must be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area. Where possible traditional material should be used - good quality matching facing brick and sand-faced clay roof tiles or natural slates. Where traditional materials survive, they should be retained.
- Listed and other significant buildings play a key role in the character of the conservation area: new development must not harm their quality or visual integrity and it should be recognised that in many cases new development may not be appropriate.
- Inappropriate replacement windows and doors can damage the character of the conservation area. Traditional natural materials should be used in order to safeguard the special character of the conservation area. This is particularly important in Upton Park where the window designs need to be replicated when beyond economic repair. Generally speaking painted timber windows and doors are appropriate and modern substitute materials such as UPVc and aluminium are not. Replacement windows and doors in houses may be possible under permitted development provided they are similar to the original windows and doors. If in doubt that they are sufficiently similar you can apply for a certificate of lawful development. Replacement windows and doors for flats will need planning permission.
- Within the conservation area planning permission is required for the installation of satellite dishes on flats and all buildings other than houses. On houses permission is required if the dish would be on an elevation fronting a road, public footpath or bridleway, on a chimney or anywhere on a building over 15 metres high.
- All trees in conservation areas are protected and special consideration should be given to those trees that have a significant public role or are within public open spaces to ensure that they are not harmed. It is a criminal offence to undertake works to trees in the conservation area without giving the council six weeks prior notice. New development should recognise this and not present a risk to their continued future growth and habit.

- Other trees are individually protected by Tree Preservation Orders and these are marked on the conservation area map. Consent is required for all work to such trees.
- As boundary treatment brick walls or hedges will generally be preferred to timber fencing.
- Tarmac is not considered an appropriate surfacing material for paths, car parks and drives. Bonded gravel, gravel or setts are preferable and brick for paths can be suitable.
- 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 the area and any important views.
- Applications for development adjoining but beyond the conservation area boundary will be assessed for their effect upon its setting and may be refused if this is considered adverse.
- Special care must be taken to ensure that views looking into and out of the conservation area are not spoilt. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map.
- Street furniture, lamp posts, CCTV camera mountings and posts, telephone boxes, paving and other public works which are beyond planning control can have a disproportionate impact on the streetscape and character of the conservation area and those responsible should consider the heritage context.
- In the conservation area higher standards of design are required in planning applications for it is the function of the planning authority in considering all applications to assess whether they preserve or enhance the special character identified in this appraisal.

Further Reading and sources of Information

M Fraser, *The History of Slough* (1973)

J Hunter et al, *A Town in the Making: Slough 1851* (1980)

Page, William, ed. (1925). *Parishes: Langley Victoria County History of Buckinghamshire*, Vol. 3. pp. 314–318.

Documents and Maps:

www.thegenealogist.co.uk

<https://maps.nls.uk>

Website:

www.heritagegateway.org

