



**JACOBS™**

Bracknell Forest Council  
**Conservation Area Appraisal**  
**Church Street, Crowthorne**



Church Street, Crowthorne

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 This appraisal has been prepared on behalf of Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) by Jacobs in respect of the proposed Church Street area located in the village of Crowthorne.
- 1.1.2 The appraisal was undertaken, following the proposal to designate a part of Church Street, Crowthorne as a new conservation area. An initial assessment of potential for this area to be a conservation area was undertaken in 2005/2006. After concluding the area had such potential, the Council agreed to conduct a full appraisal. All conservation areas are designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the "Principal Act") as an area of special architectural and historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
- 1.1.3 This document aims to provide an understanding of the special architectural and historic interest of the area through a detailed description of its physical constituents and its significance. Based on the details of this appraisal, and through consultation with the community, the Council's Executive will then decide whether or not to designate this area as a conservation area.

## **2 Methodology**

- 2.1.1 The assessment involved initially undertaking background research of the existing historic documentary, cartographic and photographic evidence of the area. Site visits were then undertaken to collect data on the existing historic buildings, streetscene, vegetation and character of the area using written notes and digital photography. The data was then compiled into this appraisal in accordance with "Guidance on the Conservation Area Appraisals" (English Heritage, 2005).
- 2.1.2 The Principal Act recommends that consultation with the public and interested stakeholders is undertaken as widely as possible when proposals for conservation areas are submitted for consideration. To this end BFC consulted with stakeholders on the proposed Church Street Conservation Area appraisal in February/March 2008. Following the assessment of consultation responses, the boundary of the proposed area was reconsidered and a further consultation on this appraisal was undertaken in December 2008.

### **3 Background to Conservation Area Designation**

- 3.1.1 The historic environment depends for its overall character on a blend of the quality of individual buildings, the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares. Other important elements of historic areas include the particular 'mix' of uses, characteristic materials, appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings, the quality of advertisements, shop fronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces, vistas along streets and between buildings, as well as the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of spaces between buildings.
- 3.1.2 Conservation areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Conservation area designation is the main instrument available to local authorities to give effect to conservation policies for a particular neighbourhood or area.
- 3.1.3 The designation of Church Street as a conservation area means that the Council, as the planning authority, would have a duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area in exercising their Development Control functions. Designation also introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.
- 3.1.4 Listed buildings within a conservation area also have statutory protection as buildings of "special architectural and historic interest" in their own right. Part VIII of the Principal Act gives Local Planning Authorities the power to protect trees and woodlands by designating them with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The designation means that consent must be obtained before these trees can be cut down, topped or lopped. However, because of the contribution that trees can make to the character and appearance of a conservation area, the Principal Act makes special provision for trees in conservation areas which are not the subject of TPOs.
- 3.1.5 Special provisions also apply to ecclesiastical buildings in use for ecclesiastical purposes, which are in some circumstances exempt from listed building and conservation area controls. In addition the Crown has special arrangements for listed building and conservation area controls.
- 3.1.6 Conservation area designation essentially introduces controls over demolition, strengthened controls over minor development, and the protection of trees. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (1994) gives further guidance on these issues.

## **4 Summary of Special Interest**

- 4.1.1 The conservation area mainly lies within a triangular area of land defined by Duke's Ride to the north, Waterloo Road to the south and the High Street to the east. The street pattern within the conservation area is composed of a former drive providing access to Wellington College from Duke's Ride and a new lane (Church Street) created with the construction of the church. The pattern of roads (i.e. Waterloo Road and the High Street) already existed by 1872, presumably formalised following the construction of Wellington College.
- 4.1.2 The catalyst for the development of Crowthorne from a settlement of dispersed dwellings was the construction of Wellington College (1859), Crowthorne Railway Station (1860) and Broadmoor Hospital (1863). Speculative development was focussed on the junction between Waterloo Road and the High Street and this area forms the historic core of Crowthorne. The footprints of these properties remain largely unaltered although there has been some infill development on the southern side of Wellington Road (Old Bakehouse Court). In 1872 the village included a Post Office and the Iron Duke Public House. Both these buildings remain in the townscape although the Post Office is now a shop and has been much altered. The historic legibility of the street scene looking west along Waterloo Road from the High Street is high.
- 4.1.3 The proposed conservation area comprises two distinct character zones. To the east, is the middle class residential development comprising large detached and semi-detached villas lining the lane to the north of the church which forms the focal point for this character zone. The eastern end of the conservation area, by contrast, is smaller in scale and commercial in character. These two distinctive zones are significant elements in the development of Crowthorne from the middle of the 19th century. Many of the original buildings survive today and the original character of the historic pattern is clearly legible in the present townscape.

## **5 Site Location and Topography**

- 5.1.1 The Victoria County History of Berkshire notes that historically the Parish of Sandhurst with Crowthorne covered an area of approximately 1834 hectares (4,534 acres), of which 133 hectares (329 acres) was arable land, 266 hectares (659 acres) was permanent grass and 60 hectares (149 acres) was woods and plantations (VCH, 1923). The rest of the Parish generally consisted of open land covered with heather. Most of the Parish was included within the Sandhurst Walk of Windsor Forest with the rest in Bigshot Walk.
- 5.1.2 From the high ground on the east of Crowthorne, at a height of over 121 metres above sea level (400 ft.), the land falls to a level of about 61 metres (200 ft.) near the River Blackwater in the south-west.
- 5.1.3 The land on the Berkshire Moors is uneven, rising into numerous small hills which are a unique part of the county's natural landscape and which

once formed a wide expanse of open moorland (VCH, 1923). The Berkshire Moors have been much built upon, but still survive in part in Crowthorne which is the real “Broad Moor” although others once spread across the Parishes of Sandhurst and into Easthampstead and Winkfield.

- 5.1.4 The soil in Crowthorne is sandy with a subsoil of sand and gravel, so barley and oats used to be the principal crops grown here (VCH, 1923). Today large areas are covered by conifer plantations and the principal centres of population are Crowthorne and Sandhurst.
- 5.1.5 Crowthorne is located between the A321 Wokingham Road, in the west, which links Sandhurst and Wokingham and the A3095, Crowthorne Road, which runs north from Sandhurst to Bracknell town centre. Sandhurst is situated to the south-east of the village of Crowthorne near the River Blackwater, which divides the counties of Berkshire and Hampshire. The main east-west routes through the Parish are Nine Mile Ride and Dukes Ride, which links into Wellingtonia Avenue in the west and Bracknell Road in the east.
- 5.1.6 The Church Street area itself is located south of the Dukes Ride in the south-west of the parish of Crowthorne, between Bracknell and Sandhurst. Church Street is set on a gradual incline which runs downhill from the northwest to the southeast.



Plate 1: Entrance to Church Street in the 1890s (Copyright© Bracknell Forest Council)



Plate 2: Entrance to Church Street today showing that the historic streetscene remains relatively in tact.

## **6 Archaeological and Historical Context**

### **6.1 Prehistoric Era**

- 6.1.1 Evidence for occupation of the Parish of Crowthorne during the Iron Age, around 2500-2700 years ago, comes from the hillfort at Caesar's Camp near Easthampstead. This is a nationally important site which is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 28182). The site is built on a high natural promontory, which stands about 40 metres above the surrounding landscape.
- 6.1.2 The fort comprises a rampart with outer ditch nearly 1.5 kilometres (1 mile) in length, which encloses the spur of the hill. It is believed to have had a wooden palisade encircling the top of the bank and defensible towers either side of a main gateway to protect the defensive encampment.

### **6.2 Roman Period**

- 6.2.1 During the Roman period native hillforts would have been connected to larger settlements by roadways. To the south of Caesar's Camp was a major Roman east/west route from Staines to the Roman town of Silchester, which is known as the Devils Highway and Roman settlements were found along this important road. However, it is likely that this route pre-dated the Roman period since the Roman town of Silchester, to which it is linked, was formally an Iron Age settlement called Calleva Atrebatum, which was home to the Atrebates tribe.

### **6.3 Medieval Period**

- 6.3.1 It is possible that the name Crowthorne dates back to the Anglo-Saxon period when the area formed part of the later Great Forest of Windsor where the Walks of Sandhurst, Bigshot and Easthampstead meet. During the medieval period Crowthorne originally formed part of the Royal Borough of Windsor which included Sonning Hundred, made up of Sandhurst, Arborfield, Ruscombe, Sonning with Earley, Woodley and Sandford Wokingham.

### **6.4 Post-medieval Periods**

- 6.4.1 Although the name was probably much older the first definite evidence of the use of the name Crowthorne comes from Norden's map of 1607, during the reign of James I. This shows that 'Crow Thorn' was a noted local landmark formed by a thorn tree in the area now known as Brookers Corner on the moorland covering this part of Windsor Forest (VCH History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3, 1923).
- 6.4.2 The Parish of Crowthorne was formerly part of the Parish of Sandhurst and on Norden's map of 1607 the area is shown as virtually uninhabited.



The harsh Forest Laws along with the poor quality of farmland kept the area under-developed until the Enclosure Acts of 1813 released land for sale. An Enclosure award was made for the parish in 1817 under the Windsor Forest Enclosure Act of 1813.

- 6.4.3 The village of Crowthorne was located at what was the junction of the Devil's Highway (the Roman road from London to Silchester) and the Sandhurst to Bracknell Road, at Brooker's Corner, on Roque's Map of 1761. The boundary of this region actually follows the old Devil's Highway, just north of the ride. Much of the northern part of the modern town once lay over the border in Wokingham (Without) and would have formed part of Bigshotte. Bigshotte Lodge was at Ravenswood, the centre of Bigshotte Walke, one of the sixteen portions into which Windsor Forest was split.
- 6.4.4 Crowthorne was a minor settlement, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century and by 1823 there were only two dwellings, one of which survives as Edgebarrow Cottage. This small settlement did not start to grow until the Victorian era when Wellington College, its preparatory school at Eagle House, and Broadmoor Hospital were built. Wellington College, opened in 1859, and Broadmoor Hospital, opened in 1863, needed services and the village of Crowthorne quickly grew up between the two institutions.
- 6.4.5 In 1860 a railway station was built at Crowthorne, partly funded by Wellington College. Since the land around Crowthorne was cheap and conveniently located close to London with rail links it soon attracted speculators who by 1853 had built about 30 dwellings. By 1866 enough houses had been built at Crowthorne to warrant construction of a church. The Ordnance Survey map of 1872 shows that Crowthorne village centred along the High Street with the Iron Duke public house and a "temporary wooden church". The land around Church Street was completely undeveloped and was given over to forestry (Figure 4). At this time Church Road East and West exists as track but Church Street does not exist at all.
- 6.4.6 The census of 1871 noted that the birthplace of most of the Crowthorne inhabitants was outside of Crowthorne. Crowthorne became an ecclesiastical parish in 1874 by which time the population was over 700. Consequently the Church of England began construction of the Parish Church of St. John the Baptist in 1872 to serve this new community. A Wesleyan chapel was built in the nearby hamlet of Owlsmoor and the iron mission church of St. Mary was built to serve the eastern end of Crowthorne parish in 1889. Crowthorne was made a civil parish in 1894.
- 6.4.7 By the time the Ordnance Survey of 1899 was published the Church Street area was fully developed and included the church and all the buildings identified within the appraisal as historic (Figure 5) (See Figure 2: House Nos. 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, 45 and 49). Opposite the church is 'Heatherside', later 'Greystoke', set in extensive grounds as well as what later is annotated as 'Crowthorne Towers' (Figure 5); these buildings are now demolished.

- 6.4.8 The Ordnance Survey map of 1933 shows further infill development and the areas have developed considerably with the construction of a chapel further west along Waterloo Road as well as a gymnasium and swimming pool (Figure 6). The house named 'Crowthorne Towers' has a series of extensive playing fields.

## **6.5 The Brick Industry in Crowthorne**

- 6.5.1 Many of the bricks used in buildings in Crowthorne were produced locally, because the geology of the region was suitable for brick-making. The brick-making industry became very important in this part of Berkshire and during the period 1852 to 1964 there were more than 25 different brickworks in operation in the area covered by Bracknell Forest, largely located in Wokingham, Binfield and Warfield.
- 6.5.2 Although local traders set up small brickworks as a sideline, the bricks for larger buildings on estates were often made on site. Thomas Lawrence was the founder of what was one of Bracknell's largest business empires which included printing, home furnishing and by 1860 brick-making. Thomas Lawrence & Sons Brickworks had its own brickyard and kiln in Crowthorne which was opened in 1859 to serve Wellington College. There were other smaller yards in Crowthorne which used the Bracklesham Beds to produce rubber bricks, whereas most yards worked the London clay.
- 6.5.3 During the Second World War, the production of local bricks almost ceased and the drying sheds were used for storing food, timber, ammunition and spare parts for aircraft. The brick industry in Berkshire never really recovered and the yards gradually went out of production.

## 7 Church Street Townscape

- 7.1.1 The character of Church Street does not currently have statutory protection through conservation area designation and there are currently no Listed Buildings in the area although nearby Wellington College is a Grade II\* Listed building and parts of Broadmoor Hospital are Grade II Listed. There are also no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens or battlefield sites inside or close to the proposed conservation area.
- 7.1.2 The historic area of Church Street opposite the church yard of St. John the Baptist's Church forms a late Victorian residential, ribbon development comprised of detached and semi-detached two and three storey houses which are today still largely in single family occupation. The most prominent feature of the streetscene is the Church of St. John the Baptist (Plate 3). The area is one of the few original, Victorian neighbourhoods in Crowthorne village which retains its original character.
- 7.1.3 As Church Street largely dates from the Victorian era, with Edwardian additions, it has well laid-out, wide, straight sections of road.
- 7.1.4 Church Street, St. John's Street and Church Road East and West are all broad lanes and the churchyard and a number of houses have established mature conifers and deciduous trees, some of which are designated as TPOs, which contribute significantly to the character of the area (Plates 5-9).



Plate 3: The main vista of Church Street with St. John's church in the distance



Plate 4: A close up of Church Street showing the St. John's lych gate

- 7.1.5 The morphology of the conservation area is characterised by the regular grid pattern at the junction between St John's Street, Church Road West and Church Street which contrasts with the earlier curving form of Waterloo Road. The larger two and three storey houses along Church

Street and St Johns Street are set back from the road within spacious gardens. Views of these properties are partially screened and filtered behind hedged boundaries and mature trees in front gardens. The earlier development at the junction between Church Street and the High Street is commercial in character and comprises rows of shop fronts facing directly onto Church Street and residential terraces set behind shallow front gardens. The leafy character of the zone in the vicinity of St. John the Baptist's Church contrasts sharply with the hard landscape at the junction between Church Street and the High Street. Continuous spaces have been created by the development of the High Street that extends beyond the boundary of the proposed conservation area.

## 7.2 Spatial Analysis

- 7.2.1 Church Street is situated on the lower slope of Circle Hill and runs along the north eastern boundary of the churchyard of St. John the Baptist's Church (Figure 2). At its north end Church Street is crossed by Church Road West and Church Road East. Church Street joins Waterloo Road, in the southeast, and then runs northwest until it becomes part of St. John's Street and then eventually joins Dukes Ride.
- 7.2.2 The proposed conservation area is centred around Church Street, Church Road West, Church Road East and St. John's Street (Figure 2) and the southern end of the High Street. The High Street, forms the main southern boundary to the proposed Church Street Conservation Area and is a relatively busy road in comparison to unmetalled area in the vicinity of St. John the Baptist's Church, primarily as this part of Church Street and the surrounding areas are restricted to through-traffic by bollards.
- 7.2.3 Church Road East is a broad partly metalled road with no kerbs or pavement and is tree lined. Church Road West, St. John's Street and Church Street are all unmetalled, which contributes to the character of the area. These lanes remain undefined by formal pavements or kerbs and are generally bounded by bollards to prevent parking on the verges and through traffic, hence the area retains a certain semi-rural atmosphere (Plate 9).



Plate 5: The semi-rural character of St. John's Street is emphasised by the unmetalled roads with informal verges and mature trees



Plate 6: Bollards are used to prevent "rat-runs" and close boarded fencing

- 7.2.4 Church Street is a picturesque area, complete with central church, mature trees and Victorian and Edwardian dwellings. Moving down Church Street from the northeast end reveals a variety of larger houses in different architectural styles.
- 7.2.5 Along St. Johns Street at the junction with Church Road West, the street is partially hidden by an island of trees on the west side, while two large houses are positioned on the east side. Beyond the two large houses and the island of trees, the houses of the street give way to late 20<sup>th</sup> century houses in regular modern building styles.

### 7.3 Open and Closed and Green Spaces

- 7.3.1 The main open green space within Church Street is the churchyard of St. John's which is bounded by a row of mature hedges, wrought iron fencing and contains a number of mature coniferous and deciduous trees. This area considerably enhances the visual appearance and character of the area (Plate 7).
- 7.3.2 The churchyard of St John's occupies a triangular site created with the construction of Church Street. The church forms the focal point of this space and is approached by formal paths that bi-sect the area and provide access from the roads on the boundaries. The hedge boundaries and mature trees provide a sense of leafy enclosure within this important open space within the conservation area.
- 7.3.3 The boundaries of the larger houses at the north end of the Church Street are defined by thick, tall hedges and in particular number 25 St. John's Street and 31 Church Street which have profuse hedges that partly screen the houses from public view, although some hedges have been supplemented by close boarded wooden fencing which is not in keeping with the Victorian nature of the area (Plate 6).



Plate 7: The important open space of the churchyard and its mature trees



Plate 8: A view of Church Road with mature trees and wide verges

- 7.3.4 However, the property boundaries within gardens of the remainder of the historic houses consist of low, neat hedges which make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

- 7.3.5 Further down Church Street, the more modern houses have low hedges with brick walls, lawns and flowerbeds facing the street front. The public flower beds at the southern junction with Dukes Ride are also a focal point of the area which should be maintained (Plate 4).



Plate 9: St. John's Street has unmade lanes and uses bollards to prevent parking on the verges



Plate 10: A view westwards along Waterloo Road with the row of mature trees of St. John's churchyard on the right

## 7.4 Church Street Architectural Styles

- 7.4.1 The northwest end of Church Street is lined with a number of detached, late Victorian era houses with Edwardian and 20<sup>th</sup> century additions largely in a "villa" style. The land that the houses were originally built on appears to have been divided into small parcels and sold to the Reverend Arthur Carr by the Soames family (CVAG, 2004).
- 7.4.2 Many of the houses were occupied by members of the clergy from St. John's Church and most appear to have been built by local builders Spear & King (CVAG, 2004). This would partly account for the architectural coherence of the area, which results from the recurrence of certain themes in the brick decorations as well as the use of decorative tiles and similar window designs.
- 7.4.3 Overall the themes are related to the architecture style of the church and its use, hence the architecture is relatively restrained consisting of red brickwork with plain grey decorative brick plat bands, often vertically hung decorative tiles, sash windows and bay windows under hipped roofs with impressive chimney stacks.

## 7.5 The Parish Church of St. John the Baptist

- 7.5.1 The church is the main focus, and also the *raison d'être*, of Church Street. The churchyard forms a triangular open area between Church Street and Waterloo Road (Figure 2).
- 7.5.2 The irregular elevations of the church are dominated by stone Geometric tracery windows and steeply pitched roofs comprising cross gables and gable ends create a sense of drama at the centre of this green space. Oblique views of the church from the east result from a ground plan that

runs parallel to Waterloo Road. The lych-gate at the angle between Church Street and Waterloo Road provides a strong emphasis to the entrance to the church yard. Mature trees in the church yard provide filtered views of the church.

7.5.3 The land for the church was originally given by Mrs Gibson of Sandhurst Lodge and paid for by public subscriptions. The church was consecrated by the Bishop of Oxford in 1873 and replaced an earlier, temporary wooden church, which was built in 1868 (<http://www.crowthorneparishchurch.org.uk/about.html>) (Figure 4).

7.5.4 The Church was designed by Sir Arthur W Blomfield, an eminent Victorian architect who was the son of the Bishop of London, using a distinctive, eclectic late Victorian style with polychromatic brickwork. Blomfield is best known for the work he carried out at Wellington College and the Royal College of Music in London. The east windows of the chancel and chapel at St. John's are filled with stained glass designed by C E Kempe (Plate 41). The stained glass in the east window dates from 1894 and commemorates the memory of Crowthorne's second Vicar, Henry Thornhill Morgan (1884 -1894). The bottom panels show the Patron Saint of St. John the Baptist with a depiction of Angels, one sitting on the Sun and one on the Moon, but the window is dominated by the figure of Christ on the Cross (<http://www.crowthorneparishchurch.org.uk/about.html>). This indicates that Crowthorne Parish was sufficiently prosperous to commission eminent architects.



Plate 11: The architectural and historic character of the St. John the Baptist's Church is central to the area (Southern elevation)



Plate 12: The eastern elevation of St. John the Baptist's Church

7.5.5 The church is built of brick with stone dressings. It consists of a chancel with a north vestry, a south chapel and a nave of four bays with north and south aisles. It was initially only built as far as the chancel but was finally completed in 1889. The lych gate was added in 1913 and was later converted into a War Memorial to remember the men of Crowthorne who lost their lives in the First World War; the churchyard cross was erected in 1914. The west end of the church was altered in 1968 and the present hall extension added during the early 1980's (<http://www.crowthorneparishchurch.org.uk/about.html>).

## **The Victorian Era Housing**

- 7.5.6 The scale and massing of the buildings at the western end of the conservation area is comparatively large compared to the finer grain of the buildings at the eastern commercial end of the conservation area. Although unified by the use of brick and predominant use of clay tiles, differences of design creates variety in the streetscene. Ground plans are irregular and each property differs in this manner. Brick details include the use of polychromatic brickwork that articulates elevations with bands and panels which is characteristic of this period as well as the eastern part of Berkshire. In some cases gable ends and the first floor of properties include tile hanging. Original windows are timber vertical sliding sash or casements using predominantly plate glass with, in some cases, the upper part divided into multiple panes typical of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 7.5.7 The eastern end of St Johns Street includes two detached houses that continue the trend for architectural variety apparent in Church Street. These buildings are set back from the road within spacious gardens but because of their scale they are a prominent feature in the streetscene. Chimneys are a dominant feature of the roofscape and roofs are pitched, finished with slate or clay tile and with gable ends facing onto the road. Canted bays of single and two storeys are a feature of the front elevations and these include either a parapet or pitched roof. The articulation of the elevation of No. 19 is striking with its use of mock timber framing and moulded brickwork. No.25 acts as a foil with its off-white painted brickwork with details such as the dentil course, sills and panels given emphasis in white. Plate glass is a feature of the windows although some modern replacement has occurred.
- 7.5.8 At the top end of the area is No. 19, St. John's Street, a large detached red brick, two-and-a-half storey, mock-Tudor villa now converted into six individual flats with two gable ends facing the main lane (Plate 13). The building, which is set back from the main street and surrounded by hedges, dates from the 1880s. The ground floor has two large bay windows which have large two pane louvered windows. In between these bays is a central entrance bay with an impressive moulded brick door surround, consisting of pilasters supporting a gauged brick arch with a decorative brick keystone. Within this surround is the door, which is flanked by timber surround with lights and a fan light over. At first floor level are black painted applied timbers giving it its "Tudor" timber-framed appearance. The windows in each gable consists of a tripartite design with large, two pane louvered windows. Within the roof level, the gables are again decorated with black and white timber framing, but the two pane windows are casements. There are two brick stacks and a concrete pantile roof with a small dormer window.





Plate 13: No. 19 St. John's Street



Plate 14: No. 25 St. John's Street

- 7.5.9 Next door to this is No. 21 which is a modern brick one and half storey building, set-back from the road and is of no particular architectural or historic interest and has, therefore, been excluded from the proposed conservation area.
- 7.5.10 The next building of significance is No. 25, St. John's Street, located at the junction with Church Road West and Church Street which dates from the 1890s (Plate 14). The building is a very impressive and distinctive detached white-painted house set behind a wooden fence with concrete vertical posts and a hedge behind it. The building is two storeys high forming a T-shaped building with pitched slate roofs. One gable-end faces southwest, adorned by a two-storey canted bay window with a small slate roof and single-pane sash windows. The gable ends have decorative brick dentil courses which continue all around the building at eaves level. There are two tall brick stacks along the south elevation. At right angles to this is a further two bays which contain the main entrance set within a classical portico and to the left is a simple bay window with a flat roof.
- 7.5.11 The boundaries of the properties along Church Street are characterised by high hedges. The entrances to driveways create a break in these hedged boundaries and provide glimpses of the historic properties beyond. As a result of these boundaries the roofscape of these properties is an important element in the character and appearance of the area. Gable ends for pitched roofs and gabled dormers are a prominent element in the roofscape and are also embellished with mock timber framing using a complex ogee pattern. Chimneys are also an important element in the character and appearance of the roofscapes and in some cases are ornamented with recessed panels of brickwork.
- 7.5.12 At the top of the junction of Church Street and Church Road West is No. 31 "St. John's Lodge" which dates from the 1880s (Plate 15). This is a large, two-storey detached house built of red brickwork. It has three bays, with one bay forming a gable-end with decorative vertically hung plain clay tiles. The other bay projects to form a canted two-storey bay window. Between these bays is a central bay section with the entrance and a dormer window at roof level with vertically hung plain clay tiles.

Two decorative bands of grey header brick work runs around the building at the first floor level. The windows consist of vertically hung sashes, the upper section divided by glazing bars into 16 panes with the lower section forming a single pane. The roof is hipped with plain clay tiles and decorative ridge tiles. There is a projecting brick string course at first floor level. There are several large chimney stacks.



Plate 15: No. 31, St. John's Lodge, Church Street



Plate 16: No. 37, 'Firstholt', Church Street

- 7.5.13 Slightly further down the hill No. 37 "Firstholt" is a large house, with a shorter driveway, set close to the street which dates from the 1880s (Plate 16). It is a two-storey building built of brick with the first floor of the roadside front decorated with vertically hung clay tiles in complex decorative patterns. The ground floor of the roadside front has hipped roofs with concrete pan tiles and decorative clay ridge tiles. The front red brickwork is decorated with double plat bands of grey brick headers. The front has a large bay window and a dormer window at roof level. The windows consist of large two pane sash windows. Behind the roadside front, which appears to be a relatively modern addition, is the original part of the building which has a simple Edwardian villa design with a pitched roof but similar brickwork. There is a velux window inserted into the roof to the left.
- 7.5.14 Numbers 43 ("St. John's Cottage") and 45 ("Hobart") form a pair of semi-detached "villa" type residences with the main front formed by two gable-ends which dates from the 1880s (Plate 17). The dwelling is near to Church Street, behind a large hedge with a short driveway and is slightly raised above street level. The gable-ends are decorated with scalloped black painted timber framing with yellow brick infill panels. The house is built of a distinctive grey brick, with red brick detailing at the quoins, around the windows and forming the plat bands used well to form decorative chevron patterns. The windows consist of large casement windows with louvres with glazing bars over them. The lower windows have gauged brick headers. The roof consists of concrete pantiles with decorative clay ridge tiles. The entrance is formed from a small lean-to porch with a brick dwarf wall and turned wooden balustrades supporting a clay tile, pent roof. Further extensions have been made at the rear.



Plate 17: No. 43 St. John's Cottage and No. 45 Hobart, Church Street



Plate 18: No. 49, Poynings, Church Street

- 7.5.15 No. 49, known as “Poynings”, (Plate 18) is an Edwardian villa. This is built of red brick with two gable ends facing the roadside with plain clay roof tiles. The main roadside gables have eight pane sash windows with brick, gauged header courses with black painted barge boards. A higher pitched roof building at right angles to the main front has a dormer window and an impressive fluted chimney and appears to be the original house.

#### **The Interwar Era Housing**

- 7.5.16 No.53, located next door to No. 49, dates from the 1930s and is a two storey red brick “villa” type dwelling under a hipped roof, with slates and a bow window (Plate 19). There is a side extension with dormer window

#### **The Modern Era Housing**

- 7.5.17 Continuing east, are three bungalows dating from the 1950s onwards (Nos. 59, 57 and 55) (Plate 20). These houses are in good condition, built of stock bricks with clay tile roofs, have large picture windows, dormer windows and brick chimneys. Whilst their character does not enhance the architectural or historic interest of Church Street, their location does mean that any future development on the site will contribute towards to the overall architectural coherence. These bungalows have therefore been included in the proposed conservation area.
- 7.5.18 The north-western part of Church Street (now St. Johns Street) is mainly filled with a number of detached and semi-detached small houses of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which are of little architectural or historic interest. This area has, therefore, been excluded from the proposed conservation area.



Plate 19: No. 53 Church Street



Plate 20: No. 55 Church Street

### Eastern commercial area

7.5.19 The eastern end of Church Street has a long tradition as a commercial area within Crowthorne although it would appear that some of the alterations to shop fronts have been carried out in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Variety in the streetscene along the northern side of Church Street is created by the projection and recession of properties that occupy footprints that are aligned perpendicular and oblique to the street. This acts as a foil to the continuous street elevations of the terrace on the opposite side of the road. The ground floors of these properties include shop fronts of varying quality including traditional designs. These properties represent the piecemeal development of this side of Church Street.

7.5.20 These buildings are of two storeys with symmetrical facades. Roofs are a mixture of hipped and pitched and are predominantly finished with slates, although some examples of plain tiles are present. All are of red brick construction and many front elevations have been finished with white paint. Eaves treatments at Nos. 63 and 67 include dentilled and dog-tooth brickwork (Plate 21). The corner between the High Street and Church Street is emphasised with a canted wall. The roofscape on this side of the road is, by contrast to the southern side, less dominated by chimney stacks. The buildings at the eastern end of Church Street are unified by the use of white and off-white painted wall surfaces.



Plate 21: Nos. 63 and 67 Church Street



Plate 22: Pathway to the west of No. 63 Church Street

- 7.5.21 Nos. 63 and 67 Church Street are both commercial in character and currently function as restaurants (Plate 21). These two buildings are an important element in the view along Church Street towards the landmark building of St John the Baptist's Church. Both buildings face directly onto the street and provide definition at the junction between Waterloo Road and Church Street. No.63 is of red brick construction in Flemish bond and hipped roof finished with tiles. The front elevation is symmetrical with a shop front style entrance central door flanked by plate glass of vertical emphasis fixed between timber mullions. The shop front design appears chunky in relation to the design of the building but the fascia is of appropriate proportions and is painted. Green glazed tiles relating to the earlier shop front survive below the black paint. The first floor windows are casements with a vertical emphasis. The path to the left of No.63 had been created by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and linked Church Street with the Heath Hill Road development (Plate 22). This narrow lane is bounded on either side by high hedge boundaries which provide a strong sense of enclosure. The receding view along the path also adds interest to the streetscene. A number of alleyways and drives to the side of this row of shops provide glimpses of the rear of the conservation area and the townscape beyond.
- 7.5.22 No. 67 is also of brick construction but is painted off-white. The symmetrical front elevation includes window openings with a vertical emphasis comprising keystone detailing within a slightly segmental brick arch head and dog-tooth brick ornament at eaves level and corbelled brick kneelers. The traditional style shop front projects from the right hand side of the elevation and uses modern materials that do not make reference to the original building.
- 7.5.23 The area between Nos. 67 and 81 has been cleared for development which has included the demolition of one of the original buildings that formed part of this street elevation. This area will be included within the conservation area to protect the character and appearance of the streetscene from potentially harmful future developments.
- 7.5.24 No. 81 is also set back from the road with a projecting shop front. This property has a narrower ground floor plan and includes white painted brick work and hipped roof finished with slates. The original windows have been replaced with inappropriate casements. The shop front itself respects the proportions and character of the original property and employs plate glass with vertical emphasis fixed between timber mullions and with narrow, painted fascia.
- 7.5.25 The original element of No. 83 is set back from the road while the later shop front faces directly onto the street. The original building is of red brick construction with a half hipped roof finished with slate. Details of the main elevation include a single lozenge on the first floor formed from grey brick headers and multi-paned lights for the first floor. A projecting first floor bay window with gabled roof and of timber construction represents a later alteration to the elevation. The red brick chimney stack projects from

the front slope of the roof and is an important element of the roofscape. The shop front is of modern design with plate glass display window.

- 7.5.26 No. 89 was converted to a shop, probably in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This Classical style building includes a symmetrical façade at first floor level, the ground floor has been altered with the addition of an extension on the front elevation that does not respect the character and appearance of the original building. The original windows have been replaced with inappropriate modern top hung casements. The pyramidal roof is finished with slate and includes ridge tiles with roll moulded apex. No. 87 marks a departure from the alignment of properties and was constructed on an angle with the gable end fronting onto the street. This tall building with attic space includes a strong front elevation comprising moulded window openings with cornice and quoins painted white that contrasts sharply with red brickwork of the walls. Alterations include the addition of a projecting shop front that does not respect the alignment of the original building or its character. The original windows have been replaced by inappropriate top hung casement windows.



Plate 23: The view along Church Street from the east



Plate 24: Nos. 91 – 93 Church Street

- 7.5.27 A good example of traditional shop fronts is Nos. 91 – 95 includes plate glass display windows with vertical emphasis fixed between mullions in the form of slender columns with pilasters, moulded corbels, cornices and fascias over (Plate 24). These designs respect the proportions and character of the historic buildings. These shopfronts project from a single and two storey building that also retain original features such as plate glass two-over-two sash windows, tiles and a chimney stack with stepped brick cornice and tall ceramic chimney pot.
- 7.5.28 No.85 is a modern building which is of inappropriate design including a flat roof and windows of horizontal emphasis. This building does not currently contribute positively to the character and appearance of the proposed conservation area.



Plate 25: Nos. 76 – 86 Church Street



Plate 26: Old Bakehouse Court

- 7.5.29 The row of terraced houses on the southern side of Church Street step down in groups of two, following the topography of the street, gradually sloping down westwards (Plate 25). The original windows are of plate glass and are of a two-over-two pattern. The pitched roofs are finished with slates. The chimneys are a prominent feature of the roofscape and are positioned on the front slope of the roofs as well as to the rear. The row of terraced houses is positioned behind low brick boundary walls or hedge boundaries with shallow, well maintained front gardens.
- 7.5.30 These mid-Victorian style houses are of red brick construction in Flemish bond with pitched roofs finished with slates. The main elevations of each individual dwelling are characterised by a regular pattern of two windows on the first floor and paired front doors which is a typical design feature of this period. Door and window openings include flat arch brick heads. The original windows and doors have been replaced, the replacement windows are inappropriate for historic buildings.
- 7.5.31 The former open area to the south of Nos 76 – 86 has been developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and includes several buildings that do not coordinate well with the character and appearance of the proposed conservation area. These include a single storey flat roofed building that fronts directly onto the street.

### High Street

- 7.5.32 The group of buildings to the north and south of the junction with Waterloo Road form part of the original development of Crowthorne. The corner site on the southern side of the junction between Church Street and the High Street is occupied by No. 244 High Street (Plate 28). This building dates from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and is a single storey structure with pitched roof with gable ends embellished with mock timber framing and pebble-dash wall surfaces that are typical of the Edwardian era. This building acts as a foil to the surrounding street elevation and provides emphasis to the entrance to Church Street. The existing signage is inappropriate for an historic building as it does not respect the proportions and character of the building.



Plate 27: The view along Church Street from the High Street



Plate 28: No. 244 High Street

7.5.33 To the north of the junction is No. 240 High Street which occupies a corner site. This building was formerly a Post Office and has been much altered in its conversion to a shop. Very little remains of the original character of this building, apart from the footprint and envelope. This building, however, has been included within the conservation area boundary to protect the setting of the conservation area and important views westwards along Church Street from the High Street.

7.5.34 To the south of the junction is a short row of four terraced houses that are set back from the road with a deep paved area which is currently used for car parking and pedestrians. This row is of red brick construction in Flemish bond with half hipped roof with continuous ridge line and finished with slate. The roof is dominated by segmental roofed dormers that roughly align with the symmetrical pattern of fenestration on the second floor and are positioned centrally on the roof slope. The front elevation is characterised by modern shop fronts on the ground floor and segmental arched windows containing multi-paned six-over-six vertical sash windows on the second floor (Plate 29). The eaves are embellished with yellow bricks forming a dentilled course and band. Although the shop fronts are modern, the fascias, display windows and doors respect the proportions of the original building.



Plate 29: Nos. 246 – 254 High Street



Plate 30: The Iron Duke Public House



- 7.5.35 The Iron Duke Public House was constructed before the row of terraced houses that were built against it (Plate 30). This building has a lower ridge height and is characterised by hipped roofs finished with slates. The front elevation includes shallowly projecting wings that include ground floor canted bays with parapets. These bays flank a central entrance with a prominent timber porch that is a later addition. The use of grey headers in the brickwork and flat arch heads contrast with the design of other buildings within the proposed conservation area.
- 7.5.36 Trees provide a break between the shopping area and the Iron Duke Public House and provide filtered views of the Iron Duke from the north. A mature tree at the junction between the High Street and Church Street makes a positive contribution to the streetscene and softens the otherwise hard townscape of the High Street in this area. The street activity in this eastern part of the conservation area contrasts sharply with the secluded character of Church Road.

## **7.6 Public Realm Audit**

- 7.6.1 The character and appearance of the proposed conservation area is heavily dependent on the treatment of roads, pavements and other public spaces. The western area contains a number of distinctive elements such as the church lych gate and memorial together with its bench, flower beds and ornate Victorian lamp posts which emphasise the area's historic qualities (Plates 31-34).
- 7.6.2 The building line along the southern side of the High Street is set back creating a wide public area in front of Nos. 244 to 254 High Street. This part of the street consists of modern concrete paving and kerbs and contains a number of street furniture items including plastic bollards, hanging baskets, refuse bins and timber benches to the front of the Iron Duke. A pillar box of traditional design which is located along the southern boundary of the Iron Duke reinforces local distinctiveness. The placing of a modern telephone box and a recycling facility alongside the pillar box appears cluttered and uncoordinated.
- 7.6.3 The street lighting within the area consists mainly of a mixture of original /original style iron lamp stands near to the church, with more modern concrete lamps in the remainder of the area (Plate 34). Waterloo Road is a comparatively busy through-road, so pedestrians exiting the church grounds are protected from the traffic by street barriers which use traditional forms of ironmongery related to those found in the churchyard (Plate 32).
- 7.6.4 The driveways of most of the larger properties in northwest part of the proposed conservation area are surfaced with gravel, which is considered an appropriate material to the character of the area. The unmetalled road surfaces are predominant throughout this area, although Church Road East is partly finished in tarmac but does not detract from the feel of its semi-rural character (Plate 5).



Plate 31: Entrance to Church from Waterloo Road using a traditional form of wooden gate



Plate 32: The pedestrian barrier along Waterloo Road using traditional ironmongery

7.6.5 On refuse collection days wheelie bins are collected from outside properties. This is generally a minor visual inconvenience and is not considered to seriously detract from the character of the area .



Plate 33: Well-designed bins reinforce the areas distinctiveness



Plate 34: The original style lamp stands enhance the area's appearance

7.6.6 There are commercial premises within the Church Street area and hence advertising and signs will have an affect on the character and appearance of the conservation area. A number of the existing shop fronts are not sympathetic in terms of proportion and detailing to the elevations they occupy. A number of cars park at various points along Church Street (See Plate 40). However, parking on the soft verges is prevented through the use of various styles of bollards consisting of unpainted wooden, painted (moveable) metal or concrete barriers (Plates 5, 6 and 9).

## 8 Development and Change of Use

- 8.1.1 There is no evidence of dereliction or lack of general maintenance in the Church Street area. Generally dwellings, and the associated curtilage buildings and gardens, are well-maintained and currently there is little over-extension of buildings. The group of shops to the east have, however, suffered from a number of alterations, some of which are detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Plate 35: St. John's Church extension does not generally harmonise well with the church



Plate 36: New buildings should try to harmonise, by matching the existing hierarchy of height and space

- 8.1.2 A gap site has recently been created at the south east end of Church Street, on the northern side, and has included the demolition of one of the original buildings along this street elevation. Future development of the site should make reference to the existing character and appearance of the conservation area. The main threats to the green spaces in the area come from potential developments within the curtilage of properties, in the form of new dwellings, outbuildings and/or large garages (with associated accommodation) and conversion of large detached properties into multiple residency buildings. The creation of multi-occupancy developments within the proposed conservation area could result in problems such as lack of maintenance, pressures on existing car-parking and the profusion of bins at certain times of the week.
- 8.1.3 The re-development of the St. John the Baptist's Church hall has been proposed in order to modernise it to current building standards (<http://www.crowthorneparishchurch.org.uk/about.html>). This may require that the facilities in the hall are upgraded, which may provide an opportunity to improve the hall and harmonise it within the area (Plate 35).



Plate 37: The historic character of White Cottage is mirrored in the later Little Brit



Plate 38: The Conservation Area looking south

- 8.1.4 The western part of the area's main architectural designs and materials consist of buildings which are predominantly two storeys in height and mainly detached properties, some set in extensive grounds. The mid zone also contains predominantly two-storey buildings but these are much smaller in scale and comprise rows of terraced houses, semi-detached and detached buildings on narrow plots. The use of local materials, including 'Binfield' brick, should feature within any developments in the area. New buildings, extensions and alterations to existing buildings should match or complement existing historic buildings.



Plate 39: Pot holes in the lanes serving Church Street cause water to pool in some places making pedestrian access difficult. These have recently been repaired



Plate 40: Parking along road at the eastern end is a problem in some places with cars using the verges.

- 8.1.5 In general, the key elements for the design of any new buildings or extensions within the area should reflect the use of red bricks, with some decorative brickwork, in the form of grey brickwork, the use of decorative, vertically hung tiles and plain clay tiles or natural slate roofs. New developments should reflect the existing hipped or gabled roofs and

respect the pitch, scale and proportions of the existing roofscape within the village.



Plate 41: The interior of the Church with Blomfield's distinctive design and Kempes east window



Plate 42 : The church doors, railings and gate retain the original historic character of Blomfield's design

- 8.1.6 There are a number of window types in the western part of the area but predominantly these are large casement windows with louvres with glazing bars over them, large bay windows, or large two pane or multi-paned sash windows, all generally painted white. Many of the windows in the eastern part of the conservation area have been replaced with modern examples including top hung upvc windows. Where original examples survive, they include plate glass and multi-paned sash and casements. Dormer windows are found throughout the area, including detached and terraced houses, but generally these are confined to one-and-a-half storey properties (Plate 16, 18 and 19). The loss of traditional forms of fenestration is highly detrimental to the character of the area and replacement windows for damaged windows should be undertaken on a like-for-like basis and should match the original type of window.
- 8.1.7 Where permission is granted for new rooflights then conservation rooflights should be specified and these should be located on subordinate elevations of the building wherever practicable. Traditional ironmongery and gates should be used wherever possible in the public realm (Plates 31 and 32).



Plate 43: No. 55 Parking along Church Street



Plate 44: Modern housing in Church Street

## 9 Conclusions

- 9.1.1 The particular importance of Church Street and the southern end of the High Street, which merits its designation as a conservation area, stems from its retention of part of the original Victorian core of Crowthorne village and the survival of its original form and character. Conservation area designation would recognise the importance of its distinctive mixture of elements which contribute towards the enjoyment of an area's special architectural and historic character and appearance.
- 9.1.2 Conservation policy aims to address the quality of townscape in its broadest sense as well as the protection of individual buildings. It is essential to ensure that in the future the special character of a conservation area is not eroded by unsympathetic developments in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990), PPG 15 and the Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document (February 2008) and saved policy EN20 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (adopted January 2002).
- 9.1.3 The designation of a conservation area is not a bar to all new development. However, such development should be a stimulus to imaginative, high quality design, and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area. New buildings do not necessarily have to directly imitate earlier styles, but they should be well-designed and respect their context, character and appearance. In designing new buildings in the area, special regard should be had for such matters as scale, height, form, massing, respect for the traditional pattern of frontages, vertical or horizontal emphasis, and detailed design such as the scale and spacing of window openings, and the nature and quality of materials.

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Historic photographs courtesy of the Local Studies Collection, Reading Central Library

Photographs of St. Johns Church, Crowthorne 1907

Photograph of the roads around St. Johns Church, with the development of shops around Church Street, Crowthorne. Photograph circa 1890s

The Brick Industry

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## **Appendix 1: Local and Structure Plan Policies**

The Berkshire Structure Plan Policy EN4 states that:

1. The historic features and areas of historic importance and their settings will be conserved and where appropriate enhanced. The councils will only allow development where there would be no adverse impact on features or areas of historic importance.
2. Proposals will be expected to have regard to the wider historic environment and would only be permitted where they would preserve or enhance the character of Berkshire's historic landscape and built environment.

Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework

Policy CS7 - Design

The Council will require high quality design for all development in Bracknell Forest.

Development proposals will be permitted, which;

- i. Build on the urban, suburban and rural local character, respecting local patterns of development and the historic environment;
- ii. Provide safe communities;
- iii. Enhance the landscape and promote biodiversity;
- iv. Aid movement through accessibility, connectivity, permeability and legibility;
- v. Enable a mix of uses;
- vi. Provide high quality usable open spaces and public realm;
- vii. Provide innovative architecture; and;
- viii. Provide well designed and integrated public art.

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the above criteria through the submission of Design and Access Statements, clear and informative plans, elevations and streetscenes and where required site Masterplans, Development Briefs, Concept Statements and Design Codes.

## Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan

### Policy EN20 Design considerations in new development

2.122 in their determination of applications for planning permission, the borough council will have regard to the following considerations:

- (i) be in sympathy with the appearance and character of the local environment and appropriate in scale, mass, design, materials, layout and siting, both in itself and in relation to adjoining buildings, spaces and views;
- (ii) retain beneficial landscape, ecological or archaeological features and, where reasonable, enhance these features;
- (iii) ensure that the design of the development promotes, or where necessary creates, local character and a sense of local identity;
- (iv) provide adequate space for private use and visual amenity, where appropriate;
- (v) provide appropriate layout and design features to improve personal and general security, including the natural surveillance of public spaces, including footpaths, roads and open space;
- (vi) avoid the loss of important open areas, gaps in frontages and natural or built features (such as trees, hedges, walls, fences and banks) which it is desirable to retain;
- (vii) not adversely affect the amenity of surrounding properties and adjoining area;
- (viii) not be prejudicial to the proper future development of a larger area in a comprehensive manner.