

WHITCHURCH CONSERVATION AREA - SUMMARY CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Designated November 1987 Population 8,815

Origins and development of the settlement

The Roman town of *Mediolanum* occupied the historic core of Whitchurch and dates from the mid to late first century. The medieval period is evident through the existence of burgage plots, which can still be seen running at right angles from High Street running through to Castle Hill/Newtown (part of Areas 4 and 5).



Areas of distinctive character

Area 1 – A busy road, one of the many ingressions to Whitchurch. Dodington has a wide street but retains the feeling of enclosure in this elevated part of the town before dropping down and narrowing into Watergate Street. Mostly 3 storey Georgian high status town houses in residential occupation. The vista to the N ends with St Alkmunds Church in the distance.

Area 2 – An area busy with building works. The levels drop towards the centre of the town, and the rooflines become less consistent with a mix of 2-3 storey properties of mixed use. N Dodington and S Watergate St have active frontages, but at the fringes there are some rundown/unkept buildings. The view down Watergate St towards the town centre is masked by a huge expanse of brown brick wall, part of a 1960/70 commercial building, but



otherwise sets the scene with its active frontages and interesting shops for the busy town centre beyond. There is a new development of terraced houses being constructed opposite a fine terrace of Arts and Crafts inspired workers houses in Barkhill, which will hopefully reinforce the sense of enclosure in this part of town. However, the higher SW end of Barkhill (outside the CA) is in need of regeneration.



Area 3 – Mill Street drops down from Highgate where it meets Watergate Street. At this point there are some takeaways in traditional terraced shops opposite new residential development sites. The buildings here are slightly run down. Nearer the junction with Watergate St, the 3 storey buildings are much better maintained and have more active frontages.



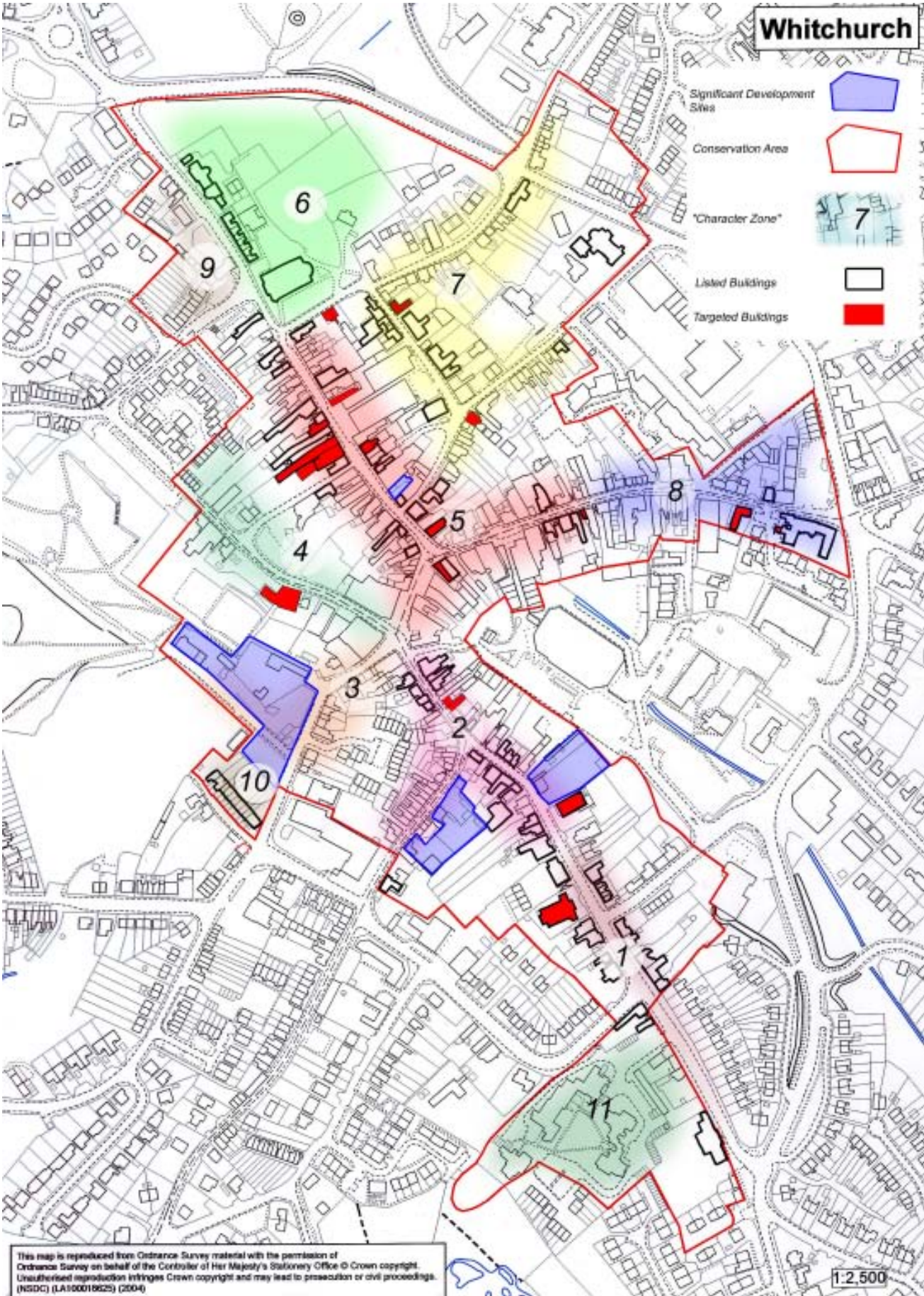
Area 4 – Castle Hill rises up from Watergate St. It is predominately a service area with some residential accommodation near the edges. Going N from Watergate are two sites which give no positive contribution to the conservation area and are ripe for regeneration. There are 2 car parks in this area which contributes to the open feeling further up the hill towards Newtown. Off Newtown is Pepper Street, which follows the burgage plots towards the rear of High Street, and exposes the rear of some High Street buildings in need of repair. Generally quiet area.



Area 5 – The commercial centre of the town. Watergate St is pedestrianised, and Green End and High Street give priority to pedestrians, giving coherence between the main ingress into Whitchurch along Watergate St and Green End. This area is dynamic and is the most vibrant part of the town. There is a good mix of 2-3 storey retail buildings, most of High Street being 3 storey dropping off to 2 storey towards the Church. The buildings on High Street are high status. Unfortunately on High St there are several examples of inappropriate new buildings to the detriment of the streetscape. These have a negative impact and should be flagged for redevelopment. Watergate St buildings are 3 storey at this point, attached to those in High Street. Green End has shops of 2-3 storeys, some with dormers but has a less dynamic character.



Area 6 – The Church of St Alkmund's is set on the highest level at this end of the town, and provides focal point. Dropping away from the Church is Bargates, which has almshouses and old school buildings with decorative brickwork in different colours. Some properties in Church Street require urgent works to enable regeneration. A tranquil place on the outskirts of the conservation area.



Area 7 – St Mary's Street is a quiet place of 2-3 storey commercial and residential properties. It is blighted at the N end by the rear elevation of the Civic Centre; a mid 20th century building with no completely blank elevations. The use of the plot causes space leakage which breaks the strong sense of enclosure at the N end of the street. Towards the S end, the street is fairly well kept and includes some high status properties.



Claypit Street ranges from 2 storey houses nearest the Church, to 3 storey at the centre, and are in good condition. The 2 storey houses over the junction with London Road are in need of repair. The grassed area SW of the junction gives a feeling of openness and ends



the sense of enclosure. St John's Street leads away from the main part of the town and ranges from 3 storey at junction with St Mary's St to 2 storey. This is a quiet, peaceful street with a good sense of enclosure which is in need of some repair.



Area 8 – The easternmost part of Green End and Deermoss lack coherence and it is clear that this area is the edge of the town centre. Some of the buildings are in need of repair and there are several takeaways, and shops in less intensive uses. There is a mix of 2-3 storey buildings here with some new development having recently taken place in the N part of Deermoss. The area has an enclosed, quiet and residential feeling, but the car park at the E end breaks permits space leakage and is an uninteresting open area which leads to the busy main road. Over the road (not in the CA) are some buildings not in use which have a detrimental effect on the area.

Area 9 – A wholly residential part of Whitchurch with a substantial amount of new build, especially down NW side of Bargates. The 1970s dwellings have no positive contribution and the 1980/90 have a neutral affect on the conservation area. An open planted area, opposite the church, has seating area which provides a quiet place for residents to meet. The terraces at the top end of Yardington (W of Bargates) maintain the sense of enclosure although the road is much wider at this point. The vista up Yardington ends abruptly with the SW elevation of St Alkmund's Church.



Area 10 – A charming terrace of 2 storey workers dwellings anchored by an impressive 3 storey dwelling at the SE end. Sitting proudly at the top of the hill off Mill Street, having a positive affect on the general area.

Area 11 – Pauls Moss contains a large Georgian house with substantial 1970/80 extensions and detached blocks of dwellings built in the grounds. The setting of this once significant building has been disrupted by these buildings but much of the original boundary wall has been retained. Peaceful setting near the edge of the town.

Traditional building materials

Orange/red brick, clay tiles or slates, timber frame painted black and white with render infill. Good survival of traditional features including shopfronts.