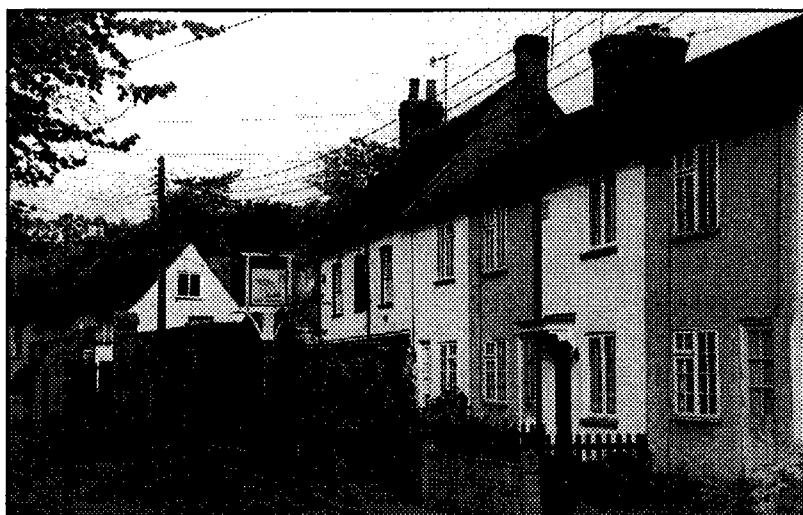

Conservation Areas

some commonly asked questions



❖ What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is a group of buildings, which may not be all suitable for listing, but are nonetheless full of character, interest and history, and thus worthy of protection and enhancement. In conservation areas the buildings themselves are important; but equally the surroundings, open spaces, relationships of buildings to each other, trees and vegetation, and the history of the locality are all vital to an area's special character.

❖ How many are there in Wycombe District?

There are 60 conservation areas in the District ranging from historic town centres to quiet hamlets or country houses in landscaped parks. They all vary widely in character, but the key thing that they have in common is that their architectural or historic interest and their special character and appearance are worthy of preservation or enhancement.

❖ Why is only part of the village/town designated as a conservation area?

People often ask why a conservation area does not include the whole of a village or town. A perfectly sensible question: as for example the Lacey Green Conservation Area uses the village name, but excludes a lot of modern development. The key factor to remember is that conservation area boundaries are only intended to include those areas that have special architectural or historic interest. The boundaries are drawn as tightly as possible to define such areas and areas that are not a vital part of the historic development or have been changed beyond much historic value are excluded. Indeed conservation area boundaries are occasionally reviewed and subsequent modern development is excluded from within their boundaries. This happened for example in the Princes



Risborough Conservation Area when fields included in the original 1969 designation but subsequently developed for the housing of Jasmine Crescent were deleted in 1994.

The boundary of the conservation area is carefully drawn to follow clear physical boundaries wherever possible, and to include the area of special architectural or historic interest, the “cherished and well-loved scene”; the character of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. The Council is committed to ensuring that the standards of conservation area designation are as high as possible and that the quality is not diluted by the inclusion of areas that fall below these standards.

❖ **My house is old and near the conservation area, why is it not included?**

Quite apart from the question of including modern parts of villages and towns, many people ask why their old building or buildings are not included as they are part of the village. However the key consideration for conservation area status is to identify a group of buildings and their surroundings that constitute an area of special architectural or historic interest. The boundary of the conservation area will relate to this special group. Historic properties elsewhere may be too distant from the main grouping, or there may be buildings in between which are not architecturally or historically significant. To extend the boundaries to include all buildings, some of which may be protected by listed building status designation, would in effect “water down” the quality of the conservation area.

❖ **Who decides about designation?**

Designation of a conservation area is a matter of judgement of local planning authorities, guided by specialist Conservation Officers. The “specialness” of an area is of key importance for designation, and a number of criteria are assessed in order to determine an area’s character – these include history, architectural types, materials, open space and vegetation among other things., Conservation Area Character Surveys go through public consultation, whereby local people – who tend to be experts on their local areas, have an opportunity to comment on the appraisal.

❖ **What does designation mean to me?**

Conservation area designation does bring some building work within planning control that would not normally be covered, relating to demolition works, extensions, satellite and digital dishes, fencing, cladding of houses, advertisements and tree works These controls enable the Local Planning Authority to consider the impact of such proposals on the area’s special character. In fact it is a duty laid on the Council by Act of Parliament.

❖ **Where can I get further information?**

Further information about conservation areas can be found in the Councils guidance leaflet “Conservation Areas”. A programme of surveys of all of Wycombe’s conservation areas is underway, and these give a full appraisal of what is particularly special and unique about individual conservation areas.

Guidance notes and further information are available from:-

**Conservation Service,
Planning, Transport and Development Directorate,
Council Offices,
Queen Victoria Road,
High Wycombe, HP11 1BB**

Tel: 01494 421527