

Banbury Road Character Study

1 Context

There has long been a core of settlement on the east side of the river crossing, and the crossing itself is naturally the focus of a number of roads, major and minor, leading in to Stratford.

The Banbury Road may be the oldest of these: it follows a Roman road alignment. It was largely built up as 'ribbon development' principally during the inter-war and early-post war period.



Plate 1: Aerial view of study area

Image from Stratford upon Avon District Council

2 Site and setting: introduction

This area is part of Bridgetown, the suburban area immediately south of the River Avon where four approach roads converge on the Clopton Bridge, a Scheduled Ancient Monument but also the site of the heaviest traffic of Stratford's road network.

This is a major road, the A422, to Banbury, an alternative route to Oxford.

2.1 Landscape

The north-western end of this area is generally flat, being on the edge of the floodplain. As the road moves further out of the town it rises gently to the shoulder of Alveston Hill, rising to a height of 58m.

Virtually the entire length of the built-up road lies on river terrace gravels, with a small area of Keuper marl crossing the road at the position of the milestone, to the south-east end of the road.¹

2.2 General character and plan form summary

This is a residential area characterised by relatively small and relatively shallow plots (although many are somewhat deeper than on Loxley Road, and plots are deeper on the south side of the road than on the north). The plots become slightly larger (especially longer) to the south-east end of the area. This is a characteristic area of largely inter-war 'ribbon development', with some vacant plots being infilled in the post-war period, but with some pre-1915 development to the south of the school playing fields. The area consists of one very slightly sinuous 'ribbon' road. The plan form and architectural characteristics of this area do not readily suggest subdivision into smaller units.

2.3 Landmarks/views

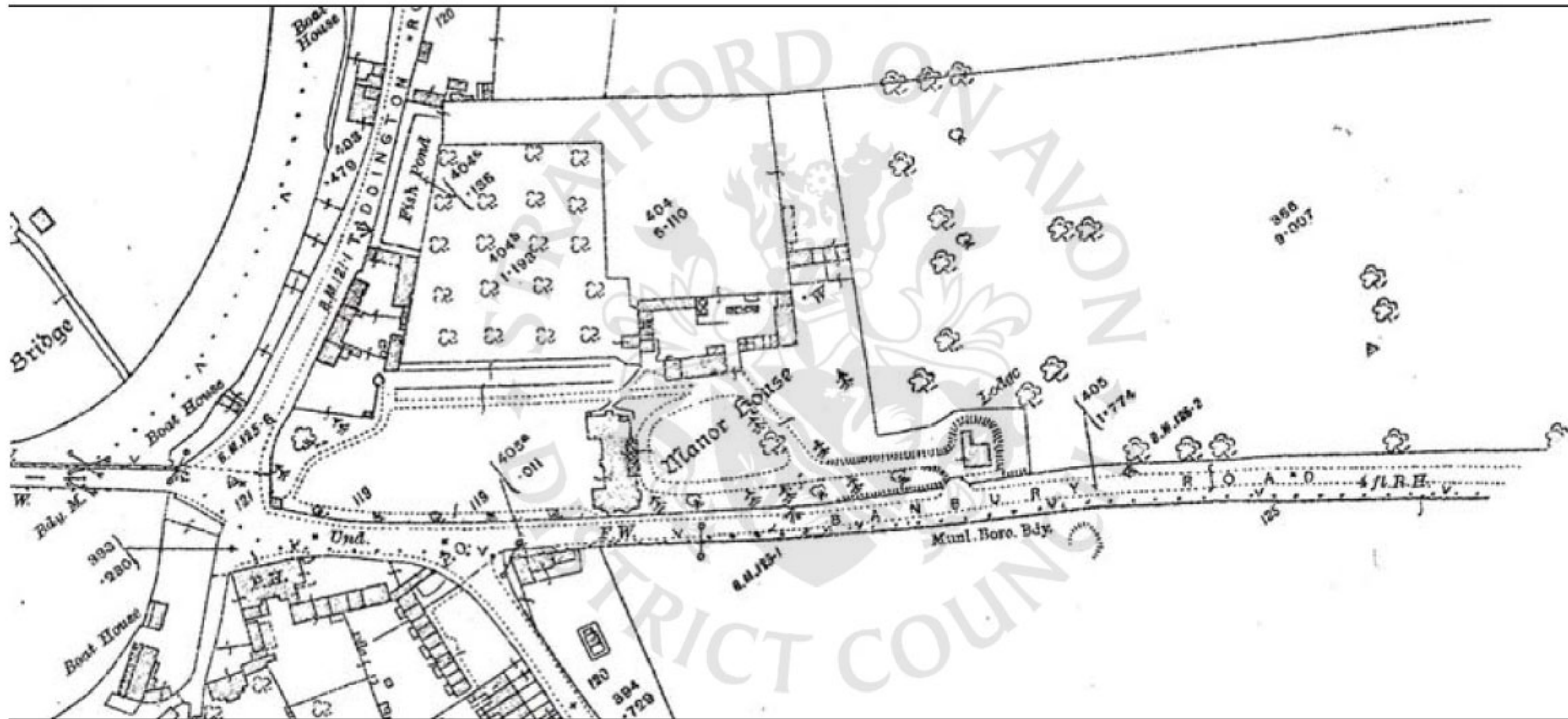
The road does curve very slightly throughout its built-up length, but nevertheless there are views along its length both into and out from the town. The high point (approximately the site of the new roundabout) is not sufficiently high to permit unobstructed views into the heart of the town – some of the new residential development is of three storeys - although the church spire can be seen, but there are now views to the north-west into the newly-built suburban district itself. It is also clear from this location that the town itself is in a basin, and that better distant views could be obtained from the hills from Loxley (to the south-east) around to Atherstone Hill (South) and Weston Hill (south-west).

3 Historical development: overview

Some development began in the period before the First World War. The area was being developed on a large scale in the inter-war period, with some infill throughout the post-war period.

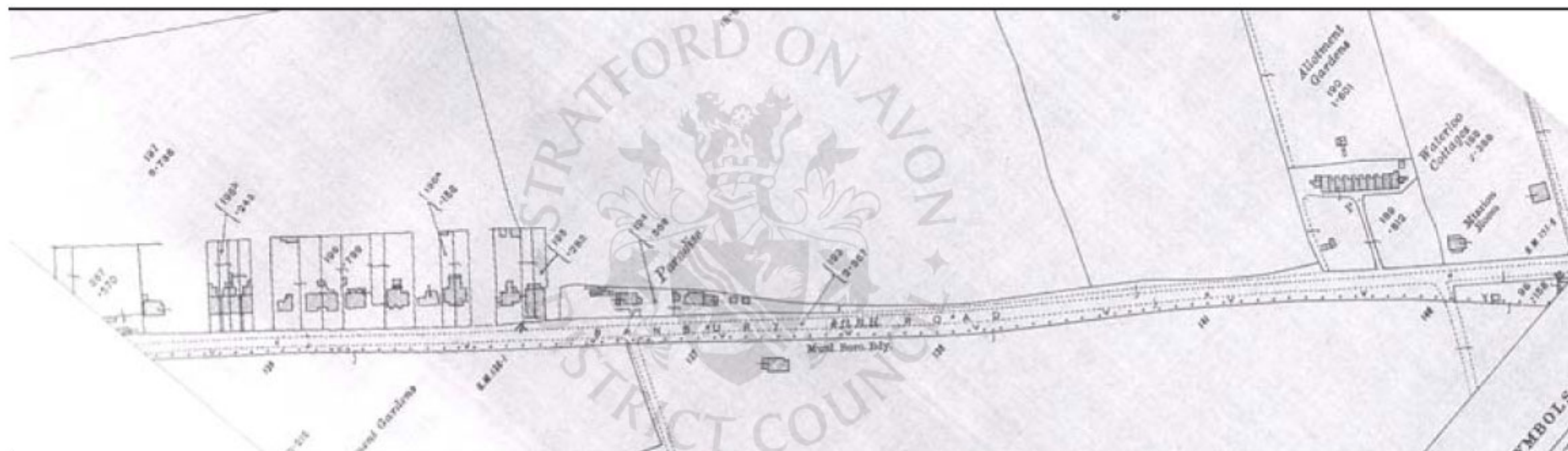
¹ Geological Survey sheet 200, 1974.

3.1 Details of the study area, using historical maps



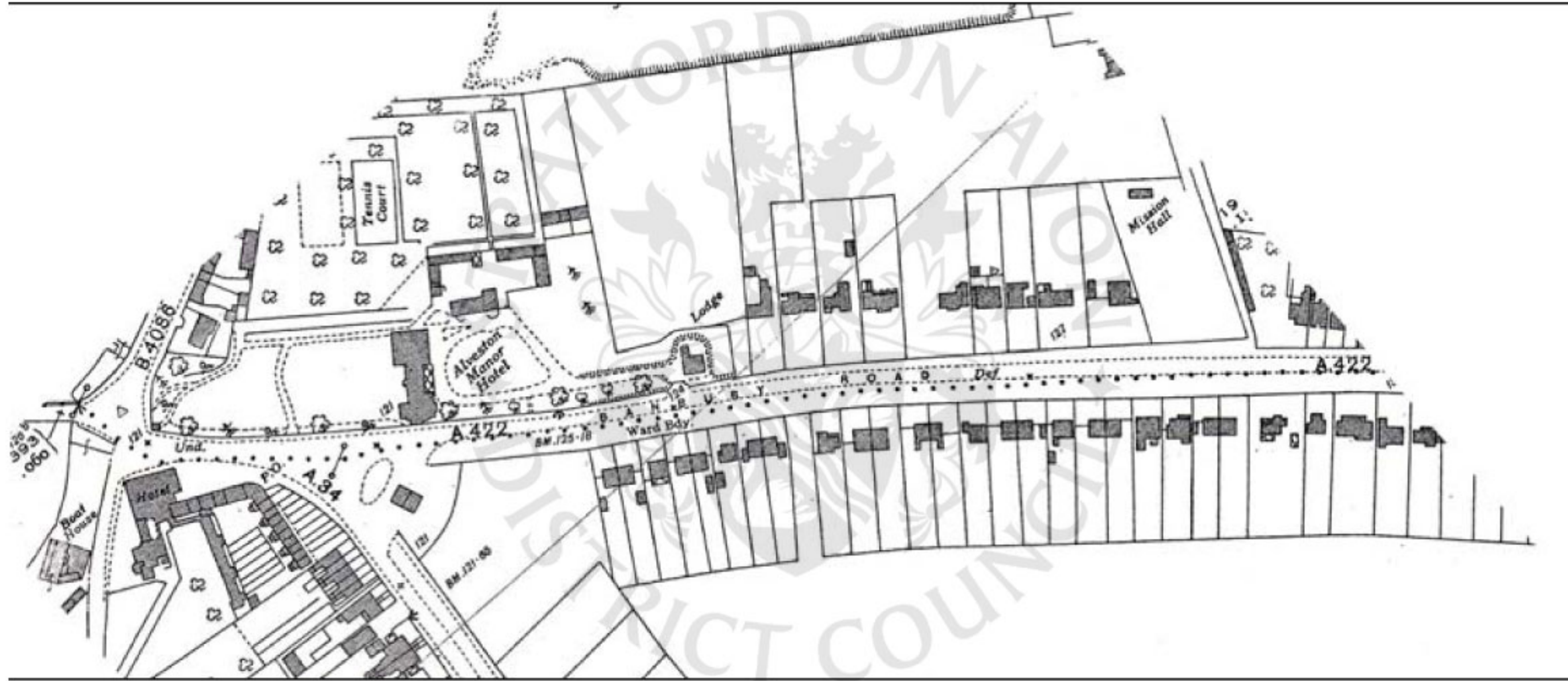
Map 1: Ordnance Survey 1914
North to the top left

The 1914 OS 25" sheet shows that south-east of Alveston Manor and its lodge there is no development (as far as this sheet extends). There is a small group of buildings visible at the Shipston Road junction.



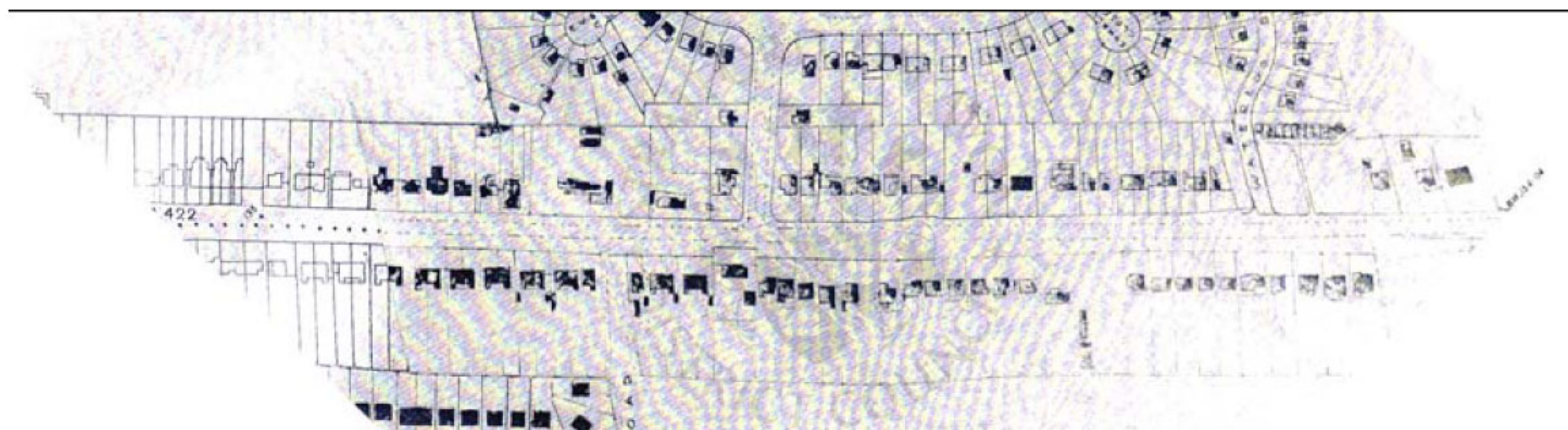
Map 2: Ordnance Survey 1915
North to the top left

The next sheet, revised in 1913 but published in 1915, shows that there was some pre-First World War development slightly further to the east, but this was solely on the north-eastern side. This included Nos 99-101, the two cottages shown here with very narrow plots running along the roadside; this is characteristic of 'squatters' cottages'. South of these cottages is a single house, set well forward towards the road. The terrace 'Waterloo Cottages' also exists, set well back from the road. South of this row there is a small mission chapel. Development along the road is, therefore, extremely patchy. To the south-west of the road are some allotment gardens.



Map 3: Ordnance Survey 1938
North to the top left

The 1938 OS 25" sheet (published 1946) shows the development of uniform plot series on both sides of the road at its north-western end. There are a few interruptions in both series, but the regularity of plot lengths suggests a coherent single-period layout. The small group at the Shipston Road junction has gone and a single new building erected just at the junction. A second small mission chapel is set well back on a plot at the corner of what became Manor Road.



Map 4: Ordnance Survey 1938, with undated manuscript additions
North to the top left

On the Shakespeare Centre Record Office copy of the next sheet of this survey it appears that development had not reached further east than six plots west of the playing field's eastern boundary. Some further houses might have been completed during 1939. All of the darker-shaded houses have been added by hand by the local planning authority. (Oddly this includes several of the houses shown on the 1913/15 map.)



Map 5: Ordnance Survey 1965

North to the top left

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The 1965 OS 25" sheet shows the complete build-up of both sides of the road. The unbuild plot to the south-east (bottom centre) has been used to gain access to the fields at the rear, which have now been built upon. The corner with Shipston Road is shown as a single block of 22 garages, both otherwise vacant.



Map 6: Contemporary GIS

North to the top left.

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The contemporary map shows the full build-up of the area including the more recent estates immediately adjoining the eastern and western plot boundaries. Since the map was drawn the road between Shipston Road and Banbury Road has been completed, with a traffic island at the extreme end of the built-up area (right on the above map).

4 Spatial analysis

This is a linear area along a main A-class road, the A422 to Banbury. This road is emphasised by the width of grass verges to one side. There are break-throughs to serve more recent housing estates to the south-west, and two roads connecting to Loxley Road in the north-east. There are no culs-de-sac developments interrupting the development pattern along Banbury Road.

4.1 Character and inter-relationship of spaces

There is little by way of open space within this area. There are broad grass verges to the south-west of the road, which give the entire road a wide, spacious character. The former fields to the south-west have been or are in the course of being, built over for further suburban development. The only remaining open space comprises the grounds of the Alveston Manor Hotel and the large school playing-field to the north-east. The latter in particular is an important asset to the whole surrounding area.

4.2 Movement patterns/uses

The County Council's traffic counts in September 2004 record a 24-hour weekly average of 5,398 vehicles, an annual morning peak of 550 vehicles per hour and annual evening peak of 522 vehicles per hour. For comparison, this is about half that of the Alcester and Evesham Roads. It is still a busy road, with (by observation) many vehicles exceeding the 30mph speed limit.

Some through traffic may be diverted around the newly-constructed by-pass, especially when the Shottery link to the Birmingham Road is completed.

5 Built character analysis

5.1 Plot patterns

The wide range of plot patterns in the area is demonstrated by some sample measurements of particular development types and periods.

Development type	Plot length (m)	Plot width (m)	Plot area (m ²)
1770s Listed cottage	48.24	13.58	679.2
pre-1915 detached	70.67	23.03	1618.99
Inter-war detached	58.58	19.09	1152.22
Inter-war semi-detached	57.04	9.88	601.02
Average for samples in area	58.63	16.4	1012.86

5.2 Building patterns

The same sample shows some interesting variations in building patterns. Oddly, the proportion of plots covered by buildings is very similar with the exception of the inter-war semi-detached which, in comparison to those in Loxley Road, are larger buildings on slightly smaller plots.

Development type	Building setback (m)	Building footprint (m ²)	% of plot built over (m ²)
1770s Listed cottage	5.25	67.89	10.00
pre-1915 detached	11.43	158.69	9.8
Inter-war detached	12.16	113.00	11.57
Inter-war semi-detached	11.49	94.81	16.66
Average for samples in area	10.08	108.6	12.01

5.3 Architectural and/or historical qualities of buildings



Map 7: Building periods

North to the top left

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- Early-mid Victorian
- Late-Victorian - Edwardian
- Inter-war
- Early post-war c. 1955-1970
- Middle post-war c. 1970-1990
- Recent, post-1990

The bulk of the buildings are of inter-war date, with the few surviving pre-First World War buildings being to the west. There is some post-Second World War infilling of vacant plots throughout the length of the road.

The inter-war buildings are typical examples, with brick and painted render the predominant materials. Inter-war brick is usually a deeper red; post-war brick is often significantly paler. Roofs are usually tiled, although there has been some replacement with post-war cement tile.



Plates 2 and 3: typical views.



Map 8: Front garden conversions and replacement windows

North to the top left

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The great majority of these buildings have had original timber windows replaced by aluminium or uPVC (red on the above map); interestingly many of the earlier (pre-1915) buildings are more original in this respect. There is a relatively small number of extensions; most of the recent ones being unobtrusive in design, although some are large. Car parking is an evident problem in this area. Blue dots on Map 8 indicate conversions of front gardens to vehicle parking, usually with the loss of much or all of the front garden enclosure especially on the smaller plots.²

5.4 Audit of heritage assets

Two cottages (nos 99 and 101) on the north-east side of Banbury Road are Listed at Grade II. No. 99 is dated to the 1770s, of cob construction (the only one recorded in the town). No. 101 is c. 1900, a painted brick extension. (This seems to be Listed as an extension to no. 99, not for any architectural interest in its own right.) These buildings sit unusually close to the road.

At the extreme town end of the road, and within the existing town centre conservation area, the Alveston Manor Hotel (originally c. 1500 with numerous alterations) and its former coach-house (seventeenth century) are Listed at Grade II.

Banbury Road is in origin a Roman road, a saltway between Stratford and Ettington; an early-medieval road ('mycelan straet', in charters from 985 and 988 AD); and a turnpike.

² From visual estimate, over 50% of the road frontage.

There are extensive archaeological finds from excavations at Alveston Manor, including a Saxon settlement site and cemetery north-east of the Manor, and Bronze Age pits. Other undated features including a pit, ditch and gullies are known from the junction of the Banbury and Shipston Road.³

5.5 Contribution of key unlisted buildings

The older buildings, especially the two shops and no. 112 (the sole pre-1915 building south of the road) are important contributions to the townscape as they sit noticeably further forward on their plots, and can therefore be seen from far down the road.

The row of larger houses to the extreme east are significant as a group, as they form the first introduction to the town. Most are of some individual architectural quality.

5.6 Public realm audit

Street furniture is standardised, save that a small number of the telegraph poles retain turned finials. Paved surfaces consist of varying qualities of patched tarmac; kerbstones are standardised. There are some traditional items of street furniture including post boxes. Cable boxes are painted green and located at the rear of the pavement. A worn milestone remains on the southern grass verge, although it is not prominent.

The grass verge to the south-west does vary in width, becoming narrower as the road runs further from the town. It also varies in its 'urban' character, being in some places not formally edged, and in others edged with narrow concrete kerbs.

6 Other contributing factors

6.1 Land uses

The area is wholly residential in character. The only exceptions are the Alveston Manor Hotel and two small shops in older buildings on the north side of the road. These do not detract from the overall character of the road.

6.2 Vegetation

There are some significant trees, principally along the grass verge on the south side of the road. However it is possible to see mature trees in (especially rear) gardens on both sides. The characteristic spacing of houses, and gaps between them, is significant in giving the impression of mature planting in private spaces.

Some of the houses, especially to the east, sit behind substantial hedges.

³ Warwickshire County Council, Sites and Monuments Record.



Plate 4: significant street trees

7 Appraisal

7.1 Development pressure analysis

There have been 9 applications for new buildings within the area studied during the period 1990-2004. This is more than in many of the other areas and does suggest a degree of pressure for subdividing and infilling some of the larger plots, especially those where the original house is located to one side of a wider than usual plot. Four of the applications have been refused, although two of these subsequently secured a permission.

Date	Address	Type	Decision
1990	196 Banbury Road	detached house	refused
1990	31 Banbury Road	dwelling; outline	permitted
1991	r/o 96-100 Banbury Road	dwelling	permitted
1992	196 Banbury Road	dwelling & granny annex	permitted
1996	r/o 96-100 Banbury Road	dwelling, renewal of 1991 permission	permitted
1998	100 Banbury Road	2 houses	permitted
1998	178 Banbury Road	dwelling	refused
1999	178 Banbury Road	dwelling	permitted
1999	184 Banbury Road	extension	permitted
2000	37 Banbury Road	new house in grounds of original	refused
2000	31 Banbury Road	alterations and extension	permitted
2001	48 Banbury Road	dormer bungalow	refused
2002	48 Banbury Road	side extension	permitted

7.2 Key positive features/areas

The entire road has a strong and positive physical character; its relative straightness, its grass verge lining, and its two rows of pleasant houses of varying dates all contribute to a mature residential character and appearance. The houses are, in general, of slightly better quality and slightly more original than those on Loxley Road.

7.3 Neutral areas

There are none.

7.4 Negative features/areas (loss, damage, intrusion)

The residential infill behind the frontage plots, particularly the new estate to the south-east and that with a frontage on to Banbury Road just east of Waterloo Cottages, could currently be seen as a negative feature. The density of these developments is higher, and the built form is characteristically different. However, as with the Dale Avenue estate between Banbury and Loxley Roads, it is highly likely that this will mature with weathering of materials and growth of vegetation.

7.5 Character zones

The area is so varied architecturally that any character areas identifiable would be relatively small and unhelpful for planning purposes. It is felt more appropriate to deal with the entirety of the road as a single area of varied architectural styles and small-scale residential character.

7.6 Areas under existing or potential threat

Development has already occurred along both sides of the road behind many of the plots. Accordingly there remain few areas where such intensification could not occur, but these include the school playing fields between Banbury and Loxley Roads, which currently form a 'green heart' to this wider urban area that is valued by residents, as consultation responses show, and the fields south-east of Avon Crescent.

8 Discussion of special characteristics

The road alignment is Roman; there are four listed buildings; but the great majority of the development is of mixed twentieth-century origin and is not of special architectural or historic interest either individually or as a group.

9 Recommendation on designation

No conservation area designation is suggested. Following the legal definition of a conservation area, and mindful of precedents elsewhere, there is insufficient here of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".⁴

However it is suggested that the entire road from the roundabout at the extreme south-east to the boundary of the town centre conservation area in the north-west could be considered for designation as an "Area of townscape interest" in order to highlight the importance of this as a major entrance route into the town.

10 Existing policy

Guidance in the Local Plan, the Town Design Statement, and the District Design Guidance, applies.

⁴ 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.

11 Policy and management suggestions

The frontage development along Banbury Road is of varied character in terms of its age and architectural details, but is of significance as forming a major approach to the town core. Further conversions of front gardens for car parking should retain as much of the existing front garden enclosures as possible. Roof conversions should have flat rooflights or appropriately-designed dormers on the front elevation.

The glimpses into rear gardens are characteristic along this street, even from moving vehicles, and thus side extensions should not close such views. 'Terracisation' should therefore be strongly discouraged, and where extensions are proposed they should be in scale and subservient to the original dwelling and set back from the building line.

Individual properties could be replaced with new development of appropriate scale and form, and ideally employing the dominant local materials of rendered upper floor and brick ground floor, although high-quality contemporary designs using traditional materials would be considered. Any such new building should respect the local characteristic of building footprint being some 12% of the plot area on average. Building setbacks should be within the range demonstrated in the inter-war period rather than the forward-set earlier buildings, of approximately 11.5 – 12.5m.

The 'informal' character of much of the grass verge should be retained, and further regularising of its edges with concrete kerbs should be resisted.

The amount and speed of traffic along this relatively straight approach road are significant detrimental issues for the residential character of the area. However any further traffic calming measures need to be designed in a way that does not cause further visual damage to that same character.