

LHC Lambourn Historic Core

Historic Character

A small historic village, Lambourn has been a focus of settlement from the early medieval period onwards. Much of the layout of the village is medieval, perhaps early medieval, and the main streets retain a large number of historic buildings dating back to the 18th century. Over the course of the 20th century, Lambourn became a national centre for the racehorse industry and this stimulated the growth of the village. Significant growth has occurred since the middle of the 20th century with housing developments constructed around the village edge in the 1960s and 1990s. Although there has been some redevelopment and infilling in the village core, this has been limited, and the historic character of the zone remains largely unaffected.

Historic Environment

HER records are quite dense in this zone and are composed mostly of standing buildings and documentary references. The zone was covered by the Berkshire Downs Survey and the National Mapping Programme, and several recent evaluations and watching briefs have been carried out on land being redeveloped. The Market Cross is the only scheduled monument in the zone.

No evidence of activity prior to the medieval period has been securely recorded from the *Lambourn Historic Core*. Evidence of significant later prehistoric and Romano-British activity is known from adjacent valley sides and it is possible that features or material of these periods may exist within the zone. A well containing Roman material was uncovered on the fringe of the zone at Bourne House Stables.

Lambourn was a royal estate in the early medieval period and the earliest reference to it was in the will of King Alfred in c888. The distinctive oval layout of the village's roads in the area north of the church is likely to date back to this period. A church is thought to have stood at the site of the present church since at least the early 11th century. The road layout and positioning of the church and market is similar to that seen at other settlements of this date. A palace might have existed during this period and it has been suggested that this could have been at Lambourn Place, but this has not been confirmed by any archaeological material. Some physical evidence for the settlement has been found with early medieval features excavated prior to redevelopment of land at the Red Lion and on Oxford Street.

Lambourn became a borough in the late medieval period, and it is possible that High Street was a planned extension to the early medieval settlement core, but it failed to flourish into a town and, with the exception of the church and related monuments, there are few recorded features of this date. Much of the present church dates to c1180; three extant chantry chapels were added to the church between the 14th century and early 16th century. The market place was mentioned in 1227 but had been mostly infilled with buildings by the 18th century and only a small area with a market cross now remains. The cross is largely medieval in date but also contains 18th century stonework and was restored in the 19th century. Lambourn Place is thought to be the site of the medieval manor. This building was replaced by a large Elizabethan-style house in the mid-19th century which was, in turn, demolished and redeveloped as housing in the 1990s. No reports of features relating to the manor were recorded at the time of its demolition or during the recent redevelopment of the site. Almshouses were established on Chapel Lane by the mid 15th century and in Three Post Lane in 1501. Both sets were rebuilt in the 19th century and it is unknown whether elements of the medieval structures survive.

Historic Environment Character Zone

Post-medieval records are dominated by standing structures and there are over 50 listed buildings within the village. The vast majority of these are houses, most of which are of 18th century date, although there are also seven listed 17th century houses and cottages and seven listed 19th century houses. The church, tombs and other churchyard features, the former school and the Red Lion Inn are also listed. The majority of historic buildings seem to be of 18th century date but, apart from the listing exercise, little other building analysis has been carried out and few structures have been studied in depth. It is, therefore, hard to say whether buildings were re-fronted or rebuilt in the 18th century and frontages of this date may conceal earlier, possibly medieval, structures. A large part of this zone is designated as a Conservation Area.

Historic Environment Potential

There has been no major archaeological or historic character study of the town since the Astill survey of 1978. This remains the most comprehensive review of the archaeological potential. The existing HER record is patchy and biased towards buildings. This is not surprising since the zone has been built up for several hundred years. The work that has been carried out has shown that buried deposits are present and archaeological potential should be high across much of the zone. It is possible that truncation of deposits may have occurred in places along the street frontage due to cellaring. The potential for pre-medieval deposits is totally unclear. The development of Lambourn as a settlement from the early medieval period onwards is very poorly understood. Deposits relating to occupation and burial of these periods are highly likely and will be crucial to understanding how the village developed. The historic building stock has been partially studied but it is likely that further significant buildings could be identified and possible that medieval structural elements could be discovered within later buildings.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Conservation Issues

- Conservation Area appraisal and management plan is overdue.
- Redevelopment of the small number of 'Brownfield' sites in the village centre presents an opportunity for archaeological research, but is a threat to the character of the settlement.
- The historic building stock is poorly understood and could therefore be threatened by inappropriate alterations/development.
- There is a need to stimulate greater interest in the history and historic environment potential within the community.
- More information about the form and character of the town is required to inform future development proposals.
- Need to undertake a new archaeological/historic character study.

Research Priorities

- Is there any Romano-British settlement activity in the zone?
- What was the date and location of the first early medieval (Saxon) settlement?
- Where was the location of the early medieval 'Royal' establishment? Can its character be established? Does the oval street pattern define the 'Royal' enclosure?
- How and when did the later medieval settlement expand away from the oval enclosure? What was the status of the later medieval settlement?
- What is the date and significance of the historic building stock in the village?