

PHC Pangbourne Historic Core

Historic Character

Pangbourne is sited at the confluence of the rivers Pang and Thames and on the junction of man-made routes through both valleys and from the Kennet via the Sulham Gap. Pangbourne has been a focus of settlement from the early medieval period onwards, and its main streets retain a large number of historic buildings dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. The Great Western Railway link from Reading to Oxford was constructed through the village, and when the station was established in the mid-19th century, Pangbourne became a popular Victorian riverside resort. The railway also led to extensive settlement growth, typified by detached villa properties around Pangbourne in the late 19th and early 20th century. Further housing developments were built around the village in the 1960s and 1990s (the surrounding HECZ PSA). The historic core of Pangbourne experienced some redevelopment and infilling, but this has had a limited effect on the character of this zone.

Historic Environment

Despite this background, HER records are sparse in this zone and are dominated by standing structures and documentary references. The zone was covered by the Middle Thames Survey and the National Mapping Programme, but other archaeological work is confined to one pre-development evaluation on Reading Road.

Evidence of activity prior to the medieval period is extremely scarce and consists of a Neolithic axe found in a garden near the church, and flintwork found during the Reading Road evaluation. Evidence of significant later prehistoric and Romano-British activity is known from adjacent parts of the Thames valley floor and it is possible that features or material of these periods may exist within the zone.

A settlement existed at Pangbourne in the early medieval period. The earliest reference to Pangbourne comes from AD844 and it was also recorded in Domesday. Little is known of the nature of this settlement and no physical remains of this date have yet been recovered from the village. Much of the layout of the village was probably established in the late medieval period, but it is not recorded on the HER. Known late medieval features are scarce and consist of two early 16th century buildings, a house and a cottage. A mill existed on the Pang in the 19th century; little is known of its history, but it is possible that it was medieval in origin.

There is a significant stock of historic buildings and most are apparently post-medieval in date. There are several listed buildings representing a diverse range of structures including the church, a 16th century house and cottage, an 1840s railway bridge, an 18th century public house, a lock-up and a parade of shops built around 1900. Domestic structures are the largest component of the listed buildings and most are 17th century in date. It is possible that further investigation of the historic building stock could locate other significant structures or medieval structural elements. Part of Pangbourne has been designated as a Conservation Area but its extent does not include the entire historic core of the village. The site of a Second World War pillbox from the GHQ stop-line is recorded where Reading Road crosses the Pang. Pillboxes were an important component of this system, but are falling into disrepair or have already been demolished as seems to be the case with this example.

Historic Environment Potential

The existing HER record is patchy, but this is not surprising since the zone has been covered in buildings for several hundred years and there has been virtually no investigative fieldwork. There

Historic Environment Character Zone

is therefore no information on the extent and quality of archaeological deposits. The village core has not been subject to intense recent redevelopment so archaeological potential should be high across much of the zone, but it is possible that deposits have been truncated along the street frontage due to cellaring. The village does lie in an area of later prehistoric and Romano-British activity so the presence of material from these periods is possible. The development of Pangbourne as a settlement from the early medieval period onwards is very poorly understood. Deposits relating to early medieval and later medieval occupation and burial are highly likely and will be crucial to understanding how the village grew. The historic building stock has been partially studied but it is likely that further significant buildings will 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 a threat to the character of the settlement.
- The historic building stock is poorly understood and could therefore be threatened by inappropriate alterations/development.
- Need to stimulate greater interest in the history and historic environment potential within the community.
- More information about the form and character of the village is required to inform future development proposals. Need to undertake a new archaeological/historic character study.

Research Priorities

- Does evidence for prehistoric and/or Romano-British activity survive in the village centre?
- What was the date and location of the first early medieval (Saxon) settlement?
- What was the status of the later medieval settlement? Does evidence survive to show how it developed and what its main economic activities were?
- What is the date and significance of the historic building stock in the village?
- Do elements of the WWII defensive features survive in the village and what can they tell us about military strategies?