

Conservation and Design Advice Leaflet No. 1



AMBERLEY CONSERVATION AREA



December 1997
Please keep this leaflet
for future reference

HOW CAN YOU HELP ?

As most of the land is privately owned, we need your help to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. You can help by:-

- * suggesting possible enhancement measures and notifying us when problems occur;
- * contacting us before embarking upon any proposed alteration or extension to your property to establish whether planning permission and/or listed building or conservation area consent is required;
- * ensuring that any proposed alteration to your property and land respect the special character of the area, eg. by using the correct materials and details.

FURTHER ADVICE

If you need further advice or wish to discuss your ideas in more detail please telephone the Planning Department (01403 215100) or write to the Council at the following address:

Director of Planning,
Horsham District Council,
Park House,
North Street,
Horsham
West Sussex RH12 1RL

This leaflet is produced as part of a series of advisory notes on Conservation Areas and Design guidance and has been the subject of public consultation. For details of other literature available contact the Planning Department at the above address.

INTERESTING FEATURES

Some of the features which help give Amberley its unique character.



Flint galleting (chips of flint in the mortar), Vine House, Church Street.



Cast iron gothic windows, the Manse and Chapel (Pottery).



Leaded windows.



Timber frame buildings, Panel Cottage.

ENHANCEMENT SCHEMES

The Council wishes to encourage schemes which preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The key objective is to encourage the repair, re-statement or retention of features which would reinforce the special character of the area. Grants may be made available to local organisations towards certain enhancement schemes.

In Amberley, schemes which would be of particular benefit are:

1. The management and enhancement of land to the west of the village pond area.
2. Re-instatement of surface drains.
3. Enhancement of the electricity sub station.

INTRODUCTION - LOCAL HISTORY

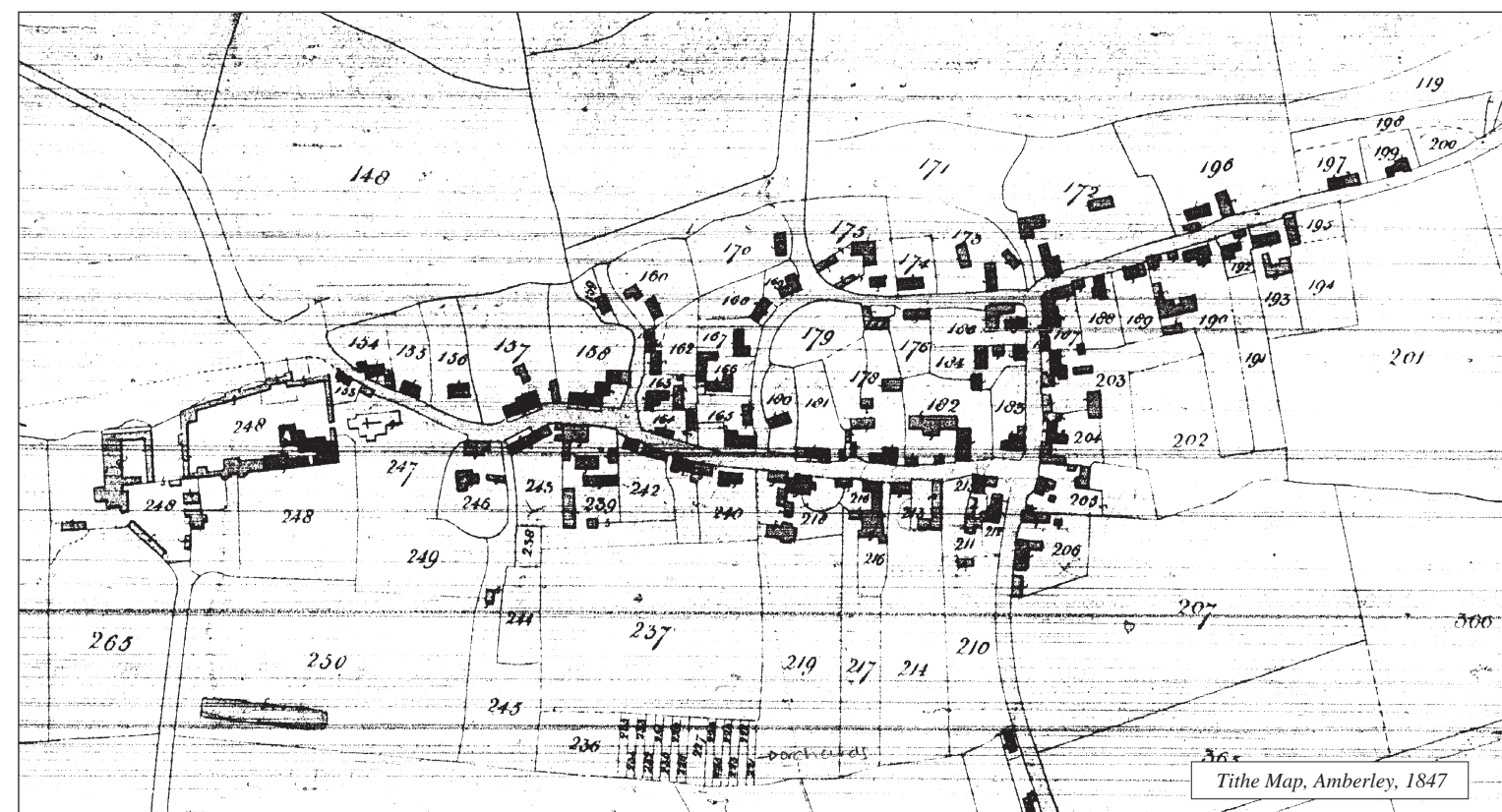
Location

Amberley nestles on the edge of a ridge of upper greensand within the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This landscape has a scenic beauty that is nationally recognised and protected. South of the village is the dramatic and undulating ridge line and escarpment of the chalk Downs which is cut into, to the west, by the River Arun. To the north of the village is the Amberley Wildbrooks Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), lying on the flood plain of the Arun. This is a nationally important area for nature conservation.

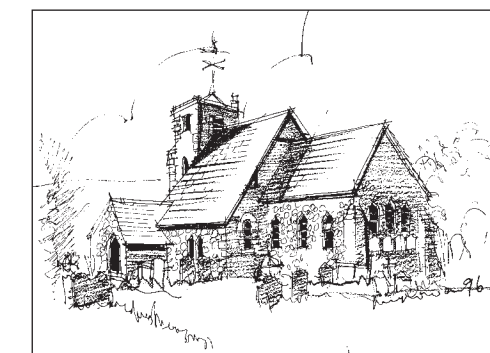
The village lies within a small parish of approximately 550 people, 5½ km (3 miles) west of Storrington.

Origins and Development

The Conservation Area is based on an early Medieval settlement, possibly with Saxon origins and is linear in character due to the local geology.



The Church of St. Michael and Amberley Castle form the historic core of the village and are located in a prominent position to the west. The Castle was once owned by the Bishop of Chichester. It is based on a 12th Century manor house and stands dramatically at the end of the ridge. Despite its humble origins the castle is an impressive landmark in the landscape.



Amberley developed as a farming settlement with the attraction of the manor house and church, the abundance of well water and accessible pastoral land on the brooks and Downs. The village extended east from the church along Church Street, forming a quadrilateral plan with Hog Lane and High Street. The village has developed into a concentration of both listed buildings and unlisted buildings of importance, with fine examples of traditional medieval architecture.

Church Street and Hog Lane are the oldest streets. Many of the buildings were re-built in the 16th and 17th Centuries and are timber framed.

The 18th and 19th Centuries saw the extension of High Street and East Street. These two roads formed the main route from London to Arundel prior to the B2139 Tumpike Road.

The late 19th and early 20th Centuries brought changes to farming practice, with many farms moving away from villages. Changes brought about by the nearby railway and the chalk quarries provided new reasons for growth in the village. Farmyards were infilled and buildings converted.

In the later 20th Century development continued in a suburban form confined to the east. Despite this modern extension the linear character has remained.

POLICIES FOR PRESERVATION

Under Article 4(2) of the General Permitted Development Order 1995, the Local Planning Authority can make a direction to remove certain development rights from dwellings fronting a highway or open space, so that planning permission is required. This helps to manage changes, in particular to the frontages of unlisted buildings, where details characteristic of the Conservation Area could be lost.

In Amberley Conservation Area, the following permitted development rights have been removed:

- * The painting of unpainted exterior natural materials, such as stone, flint, timber and brick on dwellings and buildings within their curtilage. Such painting could harm the natural colours which are important to the character of the area.
- * The demolition of curtilage walls. Demolition could have a significant detrimental impact on the enclosed character of the area.
- * The alteration of windows involving a new design or materials. The loss of wooden and metal casements to uPVC windows will be avoided.
- * The alteration of doors involving a new design or materials. The loss of traditional style wooden and glazed doors to more modern styles and materials could harm the rural appearance of the area.

In addition new development should respect the characteristics set out in this leaflet. Special regard should be had to the following:

- The most appropriate form for new buildings is two-storey buildings of a scale to those existing.
- The linear nature of the area should be respected in considering any proposals for new development.
- Re-use and use of natural materials for repairs and new building. Where Greengault sandstone is unavailable, locally quarried Midhurst sandstone could be an alternative.
- Road margins and surfaces should remain informal. Traditional surface drains should be retained and re-instated wherever possible. Driveways should avoid only using hard materials such as tarmac; gravel would be a more appropriate finishing.
- The introduction of driveways should respect the strong sense of enclosure which should not be reduced by the loss of walls and planting.
- Maintenance and management of trees, shrubs and plants to retain the green character of the area.

CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The village is set in a particularly attractive rural location, beneath the Chalk Downs, overlooking the flood plain of the River Arun. In addition to its farming origins, two further influences have determined the village's form and distinctive character:

- The landscape setting
- Traditional building materials

Landscape Setting

The limits of Amberley are clearly defined, having been determined by topographical constraints. The landscape setting of the village is therefore integral to its distinctive character.

The Downs escarpment and ridge form a backcloth to the village which is a landmark within the Conservation Area and the Wildbrooks. Views of the Downs may be glimpsed from many locations within the Conservation Area. These views play an important role in linking the village with the countryside and should be retained. The irregular mosaic of open grassland, scrub and deciduous woodland add to the 'rural feel' of the village.

From the ridge of the Downs panoramic views reveal the pattern of the escarpment, the village and the Wildbrooks beyond. Trees enclose the village reducing its visual impact in the landscape. Their importance is apparent from the Downs, the B2139 and the Twitten footpath.



The loss of the trees would have a serious affect on the character of the village and its relationship with the landscape.



The brooks have Medieval origins and are still used for grazing and hay making.

The Wey South track strikes out north from Hog Lane to Greatham Bridge on the Arun, an ancient crossing point that provides a link with the village and the brooks. When viewed from the brooks the village is largely hidden by trees with some chimneys and rooftops visible.

Within the Conservation Area there are important and dramatic views from below the castle and the village pond across the open brooks.

CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Buildings and Materials

Recent development in the Conservation Area has taken place mainly in old farmyards. The informal nature of the area is essential to its character. This is influenced by a variety of elements, all of which should be maintained:

- irregular roads with no kerbs
- open surface drains and native and domestic plants along road margins
- variety of house size, design, age and siting
- boundary walls in a variety of size and materials
- use of natural materials
- an abundance of plants, hedges, mature trees and shrubs

There are an assortment of single-storey dormer cottages, larger two-storey houses and converted and traditional farm buildings. The traditional scale of buildings has for the most part been maintained. Buildings are generally sited close together either abutting the road, or in walled gardens. The variety of siting and scale prevents a monotonous street scene.



Driveways are uncommon and importantly have informal gravel surfaces.



Traditional extensions to buildings with cat-slide roofs. This could be viable for further extensions in the area.

The buildings share a simple architecture and the use of local natural materials adds variety. Greengault sandstone is integral to the character of the area and is widely used. Contrast is provided by bricks, timber framework, field and sea flints and painted and unpainted render, in both buildings and their garden walls.

The sense of enclosure is maintained by buildings having small garden openings. Roofs are steeply pitched, mainly in thatch with deep dormer 'eyebrows' or clay tile, with some lower pitched slate roofs. Roof and chimney designs vary giving rhythm to the roof line.



Doors are generally simple wooden designs, some with glazing and often with steps leading up to them.



A variety of chimney types can be found, mainly brick built and sometimes of an intricate style.

Windows are mainly traditional, metal casements with leaded lights or wooden casements with glazing bars. When necessary the repair of original windows should be encouraged, or if it is not possible, replacement windows of similar materials and design should be used.

There are a few uPVC replacement windows in the unlisted buildings and those which have been introduced are an example of the harm that further replacements would have on the character of the village.

TREES AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The informal rural nature of the village is influenced by the variety of green features within the street scene. The village is framed by mature trees, which provide a green backdrop. The trees strengthen the sense of enclosure and help define the village boundary.

Other trees, choice shrubs, hedges and plants within gardens complement the street scene. A Tree Preservation Order protects some of the trees north of East Street and Conservation Area controls apply to other trees in the area.



Trees and shrubs on the approach to the church form a 'green vista' which should be maintained.



The abundance of plants that cascade over walls and grow along the road margins are a constant reminder of the rural location of the village, e.g. Naillards and Old Place, Church Street.

New planting should be encouraged wherever plants and vegetation die, or are cleared for repair work to walls or as part of new development proposals. A list of suitable species is available from the Planning Department.

The only open green space is the village pond beneath the church. It is an important transition between the wildness of the brooks and the built form of the village. It was traditionally a watering pond for horses and is now a focus for villagers and visitors alike.



DETAILED APPRAISAL OF THE VILLAGE

Church Street

Church Street is the oldest road with the most diverse characteristics. Many buildings are listed, dating from the 17th to the 19th Century, but are probably on medieval timber frames.

At the eastern end of the street the 19th Century rendered buildings of the Laurels and Old Postings are prominent. The road is generally narrow and enclosed. Buildings abut the road or have small gardens. Informality is provided through the varied siting of the buildings, their roof styles, materials and through the surface drain that is most visible along the southern side.

There are a number of unique features in Church Street, some of which are:

- * Barton Cottage's thatch roof with tile 'catslide'.
- * The Manse, Chapel and Panel Cottage form a focus to the area, introducing new architectural features to the surrounding vernacular.
- * Panel Cottage forms a pinch point in the road, concealing Church Street on its approach to the Church.
- * The relationship of thatch, tile and slate roofs. Bishop's and Vittoria show the differences in pitch and height that provide rhythm to the roof line.



Drewitts Farm

Drewitts Farm is the last remaining farm and yard within the village. It is possible, like many others, that the farmyard will be subject to pressure for redevelopment. Any redevelopment should maintain the built frontage as its loss would detract from the character of the area. Re-development offers the opportunity to reinforce the rear boundary of the village, possibly through the introduction of a native hedge, with some trees, to the rear of the farm.

Within the farmyard are two buildings which could be worthy of retention and conversion. To the east of the house is a weather board flint and tile outbuilding which is important to the street scene. To the west of the house is a traditional outbuilding, which is attached to the listed farmhouse. Many of the other buildings have little architectural merit, and could possibly be replaced.

The Alley

The Alley may once have provided access to the brooks. Its informal road surface, stone and tile buildings and planting in the garden of Amberley Cottage give the impression it is close to the farming hinterland. It opens out into an area of predominantly 19th Century formal painted rendered buildings with dramatic views across the brooks.

Church, Castle and Environs

West of Panel Cottage the character of the Conservation Area changes. The street widens and is lined with raised verges, with larger scale dwellings set back from the road. The sense of enclosure is affected by driveways, although their informal nature and limited number respects the generally enclosed feel.



Oak Tree House is a good example of the local architecture



Amberley House adds symmetry to the street scene and contrasts with Oak Tree House.

The church has an 11th Century Norman framework, that was extended in the 12th and 13th Centuries. Within the churchyard are valuable trees, shrubs and grasslands adding to the informal character of the area. The nature conservation interest of the grasslands has been recognised and they are being managed by the Parochial Church Council and West Sussex Wildlife Trust.

The castle was extended and fortified in the 13th and 14th Centuries, probably due to threat of invasion along the then navigable River Arun. This area of the village shows little change since the Tithes Map of 1847. The main change being to the use of the castle, now a hotel and a restaurant, which has left the fortifications untouched and has maintained its archaeological integrity. There have been some changes to the southern setting. Any further proposals for change need to be controlled sensitively due to its prominence in the landscape.

To the west of the castle is Home Farm which was one of the major farms in the area after the Enclosures Acts of the early 19th Century. The farm is one of the two remaining working farms in the village. It has an excellent 16th Century listed barn with a steep pitched tile roof (formerly thatch) which is still used for farming purposes.

School Road and High Street

The southern approach to the village is open and the sense of enclosure, an essential characteristic of the Conservation Area, does not begin until Stream House and Stream Cottage.



The flint boundary walls of Stream Cottage and Stream House contrast with the rendered buildings in High Street, giving an impression of the variety of colour, texture and design that is characteristic of the village.

High Street is narrow, steeply rising to East Street. 18th and 19th Century rendered and painted buildings huddle together, abutting the road at its junction with Church Street. Towards the top of High Street are splashes of green in the gardens of Holly Tree House, Laurels and Ruffs Cottage.

East Street

East Street is wider than High Street, but stone and flint boundary walls maintain the sense of enclosure. From the junction of Hog Lane and High Street the massive wall of the White House conceals much of East Street from view. Buildings are raised above road level with small gardens. The open surface drain is a distinct feature along the southern side of the road. Views of the Downs can be glimpsed from several driveways.



The large scale of the Black Horse and the White House soon give way to smaller cottage style buildings.



Boundary walls maintain the sense of enclosure. Newer suburban style development to the east of the village is concealed from view by a twist in the road.

Hog Lane

Located on the top of the ridge Hog Lane has the highest concentration of medieval timber framed, stone and thatched buildings in the village.



Buildings and retaining walls enclose the road. The presence of gardens and green road margins maintain the informal character of the area.

Traditional architecture is prominent, with fine examples of simple porches, strong doorways, cast iron windows, exposed timber work and dramatic tile and thatch cat-slide roof extensions. The concentration of the features give it a distinctive character.

Kennards, a listed Grade II* building situated at the eastern end of Hog Lane is a particularly fine example of a medieval timber and thatch building. It dominates the street scene built on 2 metre footings, giving a three-storey scale.

Infill development has retained the linear character, but has not altogether been in sympathy with the scale or design of traditional buildings. Bungalows, open hardstandings and the use of some natural materials detract from the character of the Conservation Area. New retaining walls, for example, lack vegetation found elsewhere in the village. The introduction of plants could assist in integrating newer development into the area.