

LANGPORT AND HUISH EPISCOPI CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

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Introduction

Conservation areas are areas of 'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities to identify appropriate parts of their areas, to designate them as conservation areas and to keep them under review.

Historic areas are now extensively recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance, economic well-being and quality of life. Public support for the conservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest is well established. By suggesting continuity and stability, such areas provide points of reference in a rapidly changing world: they represent the familiar and cherished local scene. Over 9000 have been designated nationally since they were introduced in 1967 and there are 88 in South Somerset. The Langport and Huish Conservation Areas were first designated in 1971 and extended in 1989.

The District Council is also required by the Act to define the special interest and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Conservation area appraisals contribute to the fulfilment of this requirement, because, in order to be effective in conserving the special interest of the area, planning decisions need to be based on a thorough understanding of the area's character. The appraisal is intended to provide the District Council and the local community with a clear idea of what features and details contribute to the character of the conservation area and describe what is special. Appraisals therefore provide essential guidance to decision-making in the planning process.

The appraisal document follows the content recommended in advice from English Heritage, 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' published by English Heritage/ Planning Advisory Service/ DCMS 2006.

Summary of special interest - the area's key characteristics

- Survival of the historic settlement form of Langport, its early hill top site, causeway to the ancient river crossing point and survival of medieval burgage plots
- Three storey development around Cheapside
- Narrow streets with buildings to the rear of pavements, some behind small gardens. Huish with broader roads and high boundary walls of blue lias stone
- Industrial buildings around the historic river wharf
- A palette of materials of smooth orange-red clay brick, painted brick in historic bonds, some blue and white lias stone, and flat painted render in cream or white. Ham stone detailing.
- Clay and slate roofs. Some mansard roofs but very few dormers.
- Legacy shop fronts indicating the extent of the historic trading centre

ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Location

The Parishes of Langport and Huish Episcopi lie more or less equidistant between Bridgwater and Yeovil on the southern edge of the Somerset Moors. Huish Episcopi surrounds Langport on three sides, with Langport being the smaller parish. Huish parish is highly irregular in shape and its boundaries are dictated largely by natural features, modified by the effects of drainage and enclosure of the 'moors', and by the

position of Langport. Langport's west boundary is formed by the River Parrett with the built form of Langport extending onto the west bank of the river and into Curry Rivel Parish.

Langport town covers a small steep hill, just north the confluence of the Yeo and the Parrett at a narrowing of the river valley. With Hurds Hill occupying a similar position on the west bank, the river could be bridged and the crossing protected, making Langport an ideal settlement location. To the north and south of the town the land was marshy, probably providing only summer pasture, until the advent of modern drainage.

Huish extends to the north and east of Langport onto the rising ground which provides for dry access eastwards to Somerton.

Landscape Setting

The immediate landscape setting of the settlements is defined by the open moors extending to the north, south and west with the River Parrett flowing through the narrow gap between Langport Hill and Hurds Hill whilst the broad shoulder of the Mid Somerset Hills rise to the north of Wearne hamlet. These features broadly contain the spread of the town and its immediate rural edge. To the east the setting is less defined, with the town having road linkages with the small hamlets of Picts Hill, Wagg and Pibsbury. The low ridgeline of Picts Hill provides a degree of containment in this quarter.

Historic development

Langport and Huish are interlinked with Langport being surrounded on three sides by the Huish Parish. It is suggested that historically Langport may have in effect been part of Huish that later formed into a separate Parish and administrative area as Langport became an important trading centre.

The causeway linking the river crossing at Langport to the higher ground is thought to be of prehistoric date and although there is as yet no direct evidence of this, stray finds and earthwork features of prehistoric date make occupation of this area likely. Similarly, although Roman occupation of the town site and use of the causeway and river crossing has not been proven, both are likely, particularly as Roman material has been found in the town centre. There is also good evidence of Roman settlement on the west bank of the river at Frog Lane and at Wearne to the north of the town.

It is, however, the Saxon occupation of the town, which has most interested archaeologists. The settlement was recorded as a burh in the early C10th Burghal Hideage and in 1086 the Domesday Book records 34 burgesses. By 930 a mint was established within the town that continued production into the 11th century. The town remained a royal possession throughout the Saxon period. The parish of Langport is small with little land outside the immediate vicinity of the town. It is, therefore thought that the economy of the town was based on trade, as a distribution centre by road and river, and connected to the royal estate of Somerton.

In the medieval period Langport remained an important trading centre and harbour and was held from 1181 until the early 16th century as part of the manor of Curry Rivel. The wealth of the town was such that in the early C14th a new borough was established by the Bishop of Wells on the west bank of the river in an attempt to expand Langport's success. 31 burgesses are recorded at Southwick or Frog Lane by 1358 and the borough survived into the C16th. In the post-medieval period a renowned battle of the Civil War took place nearby.

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Trade was maintained as an important part of the economy by the trading company of Stuckey and Bagehot, founded in the town in about 1770. In the late 19th and early C20th river trade was replaced by rail with the construction of two lines close to the town.

Huish in comparison was a largely rural parish with the settlements of Huish, Littleney, Wearne, Pibsbury and Coombe all dictated by the terrain and stretches of marsh by the rivers. By the early C14th much of the marsh had been drained, with Huish, which commanded the route to Langport becoming the most important in the Parish acquiring the Church, court house, vicarage, cross and green.

Langport began to extend its built up area into Huish parish in the C19th, with Newtown dating from 1845. In recent years Langport and Huish have expanded physically as a dormitory settlement for both Taunton and Yeovil. (See Map 1 Early Features)

Archaeology

Langport presents a number of questions that would benefit from further archaeological research.

Despite excavation to depths of nearly 3m on Bow Street, the earliest period of construction of a causeway and bridging point across the Parrett is still to be established. There is however, the intriguing suggestion of continuity of use of the river crossing and settlement site over a long period given by a number of Roman stray finds and the associated evidence from Wearne and Frog Lane of Roman occupation in the near vicinity. The character of all three of these sites is still to be investigated.

Langport was an important Saxon site, one of only four Somerset burhs recorded in the early 10th century Burghal Hideage and one of a small group of sites which appear to have acted as trading centres for the royal estates, established at a distance from the main royal residences (the closest parallel in Somerset being Axbridge and Cheddar).

On The Hill there are prominent earthworks behind the houses to the west and southwest of the hilltop, and running from North Street to the northwest corner of the playing field that coincides with the parish boundary. Close to this there is a long straight bank at the edge of the playing field that may be related to the Civil War. Understanding of the burh defences is still a matter for research, despite several small-scale excavations to this end. The precise form of the burh defences, whether they fully encircled the burh or relied on the marshes for defence on the north-west side is important for the wider questions of the accuracy of the Burghal Hideage hideation in Somerset. The date of the outer defences, whether civil war or Saxon, is still to be established. The character of settlement within the burh defences remains enigmatic, the excavations that have been carried out having produced little secure evidence of early structures. This, along with evidence from the other Somerset burhs (particularly Lyng and Axbridge), has raised questions concerning the nature of settlement within these defended sites.

Excavations outside the defences have produced clearer results, with 3m of well-preserved stratigraphy dating from the 12th to 16th centuries along the Langport causeway surviving in places. However, the full depth of archaeological stratigraphy has not been excavated, and the original date of settlement along the causeway has still to be shown. The medieval archaeology of the town is of particular importance as one of a small number of non-rural market centres in the county. Medieval remains may provide information concerning the balance between commerce and craft

industry in the economy of the town. The archaeology of the well-preserved burgage plots is therefore of prime importance.

Archaeological features have been identified within the settlement, where appropriate care should be taken in relation to development. An Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP) has been designated across the core of the settlement reflecting the importance of the archaeological resource relating to the prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval development of the settlement. (See Map 5) Additionally, the historic buildings are an important archaeological resource in their own right. Any proposed development within the AHAP will need to include appropriate measures to assess and, if necessary, protect or record the archaeological interest of the site or building.

Key historic influences

The key historic influences and characteristics of Langport and Huish are:

- Geographical position as bridging point for the river, with likely prehistoric and Roman use and settlement
- Important Anglo-Saxon urban centre with a mint, market and minster being a royal possession while Huish was held by the Bishop of Wells.
- Saxon burh at Langport,
- Economy of Langport based on trade with Huish growing alongside.
- 14th century attempt to establish a new suburb on the west bank of the river
- Civil War defences and associated with nearby site of battle
- In the late C19th and C20th river trade was replaced by two rail lines.
- Late C19th century – early C20th suburban expansion

Setting of the conservation area

The setting of the conservation area to the north and north-west extends across the North Moor to the railway embankment and viaduct which visually contains the area on this side. To the south the immediate setting of the conservation area can be taken as the line of the River Parrett but the open nature of the moorland beyond means that here there is a wider setting less precisely definable. The track at Huish Drove around 300m south of the river and the line of the Yeo east of its confluence with the Parrett could be taken to contain an appropriate immediate setting but the visual setting arguably includes all of Huish Level because its landscape character is consistent and larger constructions further away from the town could be prominent and intrude on the setting of the area.

On the west the setting is contained by the rising ground and tree cover of Hurds Hill, and the edge of the flood plain along Frog Lane and at Port Field. To the east the settlement is wrapped with recent residential development.

The setting at Huish is closely associated with the environs of the church and can be taken to be relatively limited in extent. It can be defined to the north as the footpath at the side of St Mary's Park on the north side of the field adjacent to the churchyard. To the east, Courtfield and part of the school grounds and extending south round Pound Farm and back to Huish Bridge and Huish Drove. Constructions of a larger size eg of the scale of the abattoir further away could intrude on the setting particularly of the church.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

General character and plan form

The historic plan of the settlements is largely formed around the inverted T shape formed by the junction of North Street, Cheapside and The Hill. To the west Cheapside leads into Bow Street on its causeway across to the river bridge, north is North Street, and to the East is The Hill area that leads through the Hanging Chapel and on to historic Huish.

The major roads are still those turnpiked in the mid to late C18th. The first in 1753, entering Langport from the west through Westover, Bow Street and Cheapside, and then heading along North Street towards Somerton. In 1792 four new routes from Langport were created: To the north a road led to Othery. A second crossed Langport burh to Huish Episcopi and on to Pibsbury. The third heads south from Huish Church towards Muchelney. The fourth heads north from Huish Church to Wearne and then turns west to link with the Othery route.

The Hill was the focus of the early development of the settlement, and the site of the Saxon burh, the layout of which is likely to still be reflected in the existing streets. Some elements of the burh defences are still visible around the Hill. It was the site for the market in the C16th although the focus of the town shifted to Cheapside subsequently. In the C12th Bow Street was laid out as a planned extension of the town with Burgage plots, long narrow plots of regular proportion, arranged to north and south. This is an unusual survival in that the pattern of mediaeval street and historic burgage plots can still be clearly seen along with their historic setting in the open moor, not surrounded by development behind. In many examples such a layout pattern has become surrounded by later development leaving the historic form unclear. The rear boundaries on both sides back onto presumably contemporary drainage rhynes.

Later expansion of the town was along North Street, initially in mediaeval times, when a settlement at Westover was also developed but mostly begun in the C17th.

Huish is of a much looser form, historically clustered around the church and junction of the road to Muchelney with a number of outlying villages. Later development into the C20th has seen suburban expansion between historic Huish and Langport settlements. The built form expanded around the railway, which dates from 1906, and later as a number of estates that comprise modern Huish Episcopi.

Character and interrelationship of spaces

Within the core of Langport the character is typically the tight urban street spaces in Cheapside and Bow Street, the lower Hill and southern North Street. The former burgage plots along Bow Street stretch away from the street north and south with a diminishing intensity of building away from the street frontages being a particular characteristic. The tight street spaces contrast with the area south of Bow Street where spaces open out at Whatley and the river corridor which is open, green and markedly rural in nature; with the area east of the Hanging Chapel into Huish and with the northern extent of North Street where spaces are looser in character. The juxtaposition of two substantial churches so close to each other is distinctive but their immediate settings are very different; Langport All Saints, with its north walls hard onto the street dominates the enclosing urban enclave on The Hill while St Mary, Huish is set almost rurally a few hundred metres to the east with fields to both north and south.

Key views and vistas

Prospect of the moors to the south from several vantage points on The Hill
Vista along Bow Street both east and west
Back River and burgage plots seen from Cocklemoor
Bow St and burgage plots seen across the North moor
The Hill from Bow Bridge with church tower and massing of trees evident
Views to Huish Church from Hanging Chapel Road and from the east and north approaches.

Landmarks

Huish Church with tall iconic Somerset tower
Group around the Hanging Chapel and Langport parish church on the Hill
River crossing at Bow Bridge with C18th warehouse
Grouping of red brick houses in North Street

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Conservation Areas are designated for their special character, but within the area there will usually be zones that express character variations but contribute to the whole. The definition of these 'sub areas' and the elements making up their character aids a more detailed and nuanced description of the character of the conservation area.

For this purpose the area it can be subdivided into six distinct sub-areas (see Map 2)

- 1. Bow Street and Cheapside**
- 2. North Street**
- 3. The Hill from Cheapside to the Hanging Chapel and Playing Field**
- 4. Hanging Chapel to Huish Church and environs**
- 5. Whatley, Cocklemoor and meadow land to the South.**
- 6. Westover proposed extension area**

1. BOW STREET AND CHEAPSIDE

Form and character

This part of the conservation area comprises the mediaeval settlement running along the east-west aligned causeway from the bottom of The Hill to the river wharf at Bow Bridge at its western end. The street is a tight linear space with, behind the frontages, the largely intact arrangement of burgage plots running north and south to encircling rhynes (drainage channels). This area is significant for the survival of the historic settlement form, the surviving pattern of boundaries, a number of important historic buildings and its setting between the open moorland north and south.

Contrasting the urban Bow Street frontages, many burgage plots run out north and south to open garden areas; a transition from urban to rural character over a short distance. In contrast also, the modern town square on the site of a former pig market, is open with formal central island and street trees, modern library but architecturally poor mid C20th block of shops.

The Bow Street frontage is also characterised by many arched through-ways leading into the rear of the plots.

Scale, height and building line

Bow Street and Cheapside are relatively narrow roads with the majority of buildings immediately to the rear of the pavements. Buildings are a mix of two and three storey with conventional pitched roofs and mansard roofs, three storey buildings being more

common in Cheapside and the east end of Bow Street. Most buildings are flat fronted and face the street, with a very few set sideways onto the road. The whole feels built up and enclosed with little opportunity for views out beyond the linear vistas east and west.

To the west end of Bow Street, the buildings become more industrial in nature, with courtyards such as Pockocks Yard and Beard's Yard, with two large warehouses on the east bank of the river. Both are immediately adjacent to the road. Buildings to the rear within the burgage plots are lower than the frontage buildings and run at right angles to the road along the plot with a general diminution of density towards the rear of the plots.

Whilst the majority of the buildings are set immediately to the rear of the pavement, the Congregational Chapel has a grassed area to the front, with brick wall with panels and dental detailing to top. Along with the two yew trees, this forms an important small open green space in the conservation area. The blue lias cobbled and flagged courtyard space to the side of Virginia house is also important to the character of the conservation area.

Significant buildings and groups

- The Great Bow Bridge, by William Gravett of 1842. Three broad archways in blue lias.
- Great Bow Wharf, C18 brick warehouse, and the associated brick Shearstone House to the east
- Water Pump to east of veterinary surgery dated 1878
- Dolphin Inn, brick in English Garden Wall bond. Carved dolphin in poor state on flanking wall set back.
- The 3 storey group, all in white lias and said to be built by William Atyeo, Blake House with a Georgian parapet, Arlington House, more compact with the overhanging eaves of the Regency, and adjoining Italianate shop with detail in grey lias.
- Langport Manor House, set back behind hedges, painted brick, with iron trellis porch
- The Angel Inn, an early C19 painted brick front, and Wessex House with shop, painted brick .
- Ensor House, 3 storey, 2 floors in brick with white lias rustication to the windows, above a spoilt ground floor.
- Old Market House, pale render, architraves and prominent quoins in ham stone
- Market house/Town Hall, early C18, with 3 arches to an open market below. High railings and gate to form enclosure. Upper floor in brick with clock mounted to face both ways along the street.
- former Registry Office, single storey in Bath Stone over Little Bow bridge
- Virginia House, at right angles, of late C17. Ham stone pedimented doorcase.
- Tudor House, and adjoining premises.
- Bank Chambers, likely to be the original Stuckey's Bank from the 1770s, late Georgian style,
- Langport Arms Hotel, blue lias, part is the late C16 Swan Inn. Notable heavy porch.
- The former Lloyds Bank, rendered with curved windows.
- Greenslade Taylor Hunt office of early C18th
- The Corner House, high quality brick and Ham stone and curved roof.

Key Unlisted buildings

- Opposite the town hall at the entrance to the car park, the white lias gate piers of the former pig market and drinking fountain.
- Congregational Chapel and Manse with grassed area to front with boundary wall and trees.

Trees and green spaces

The continuous urban frontages allow very little in this sub-area. Only the front garden and yew trees of the Congregational Chapel, a birch, hedges and small garden outside Langport Manor House, the formal street trees planting in the 'town square' and the town garden behind the Town Hall feature.

Significant trees lie to the north of Great Bow Yard,

Trees and some extensive gardens, hidden behind street frontages in burgage plots on N side of Cheapside and both sides of Bow Street, are also significant.

Local features

Several surviving historic shop fronts where the shops have closed are important as they reflect the former extent of business and trade within the town.

A surviving early petrol pump in recess to front of Langport Reclamation is distinctive.

Along Bow Street, the properties have a backward lean away from the road, reflecting the differing ground conditions for building along the causeway frontage and the soft ground behind.

Typical details

The majority of roofs are gabled; there are few hips and no half hips. Mansard roofs are a very locally distinctive feature, and are only repeated in one other town within the district.

The typical orange-red brick (from Bridgwater) is most often in Flemish bond.

Windows are both sliding sash and casements, and are painted. Casements are rebated and balanced. There are very few historic dormers.

The boundaries of the burgage plots remain well defined, with outbuildings to the rear, subservient and at right angles to the road, the buildings often lower in height away from the road frontage.

Materials

There is a varied mix of materials to this part of the conservation area but they generally conform to the overall palette seen throughout. The principle materials are clay orange-red brick or painted brick often in Flemish Bond, some stone detailing in Ham Hill or white lias stone. Render is flat finished with colours generally pale buff or cream, but occasionally painted blue, green, grey or dusty pink. The stone, blue and white lias, is generally cut and squared and set to courses. The predominant roof materials are red clay 'Bridgwater' double roman roof tile, with some pantile and Welsh slate. Chimneys are typically red brick.

Key colour characteristics

The predominant colours are soft blue-greys of blue lias stone and Welsh slate, creams of white lias stone, warm orange red of the brick and roof tiles, white and cream of painted surfaces with occasional stronger colours. White windows.

Views

As a straight enclosed street there are limited opportunities for views to the south or north. The views are focused to the west over the bridge to Hurds Hill with trees closing the end of the vista. To the east the Post Office is framed by the end of the

Cheapside. As the Post Office is approached the houses on either side frame a vista up The Hill to the trees on the left hand side as the road gently curve to the right.

2. NORTH STREET

Form and character

A linear area with form created by the line of North Street with historic burgage plots extending to the west but contained by rising land on the east side. The evidence of these long plots is more eroded than in Bow Street with amalgamations and losses. North Street area is more open in character than Bow St particularly opening out into a looser form as you progress away from the Cheapside junction. The street is contained by buildings and walls but with noticeable numbers of openings to the west. North of the White Lion the conservation area extends only on the east side but the built frontage on the west side north of here is significant in the character of the street and setting of the conservation area.

The sense of containment is strong on the east side with rising ground behind the frontage buildings and strong tree presence showing from the edge of the Recreation Ground. The enclosed form is broken by the wide access to the Surgery on the west side.

Scale, height and building line

North from the Post Office, the buildings are two and occasionally three storeys, mostly set on the back of the footway, with some single storey connecting elements between. Some are set back with small enclosed front gardens. The School defines the north extent of the area, set back and elevated above the street and separated from the more closely built frontages further south by a high stone boundary wall which contains the street and encloses the gardens around Coppers and open space adjacent. Here the line of the street is further delineated by trees.

Key listed buildings and groups

In North Street there are a number of striking brick houses which form two key groups strongly marking the character of the street. These include, on the east side

- Newhaven, Morningside, Belgae House (with Downside – see below)

And on the west side

- Corner House with its curved corner frontage and shop front, Herald House and The Cottage and two subservient elements

Interspersed with these are cream or white finished buildings notably

- Victoria House, cream render with deep bays, good iron trellis porch and railings
- Virginia, painted brick, good railings
- The Post Office, in ashlar Bath stone
- The former Black Swan in painted stone
- North Street house 3 storeys painted brick but windows replaced

Key unlisted buildings

- Huish Episcopi Primary School with attached house of 1876 by Henry Hall, lias and ashlar dressings; its four strong gables address the street
- Church Room (All Saint's Hall) set back with triple lancet gabled front
- Downside, brick with bath stone window and door surrounds, plinth, quoins, plat band
- Coppers, former police station dated 1904, lias and bath stone detailing
- High lias stone boundary front wall to Coppers
- North Street surgery; modern circular form in dark red brick

Materials

Walls - Warm orange-red brick, cream/white render and light painted brick and stone, lias stone on secondary structures

Roofs – plain clay tiles, some pantiles (The Cottage mansard), slate.

Painted joinery mostly white or light coloured.

Key colours

Two material colours dominate North Street; Warm red of brick and clay tiles, light-coloured paint and render

Details

Chimney stacks brick

Dormers do not feature

A few water-tabled gables

C19 shop front with pilasters and consoles at North Street House

Trees and green spaces

Significant trees

- Containing the street space in front of and south of Coppers
- Rising behind Downside on the north side of Priest Lane

The recreation ground extends to North Street south of Coppers and with the gardens of Coppers forms a significant open, treed green space within the built up frontage to the street; an important asset of the CA.

3. THE HILL

Form and character

This area comprises a promontory elevated above the Parrett valley which spreads below on the north, west and south sides and on which site the early settlement of Langport took place. The form and street pattern probably reflects the Saxon or medieval settlement with a series of roads and lanes running up the western side from the river and a route that runs east along the ridge through Huish towards Somerton: the historic approach to the Parrett crossing. This form with the central market area now in-filled as the Pound enclosure, the parish church adjacent, a town gate to the east (now the Hanging Chapel), the routes down to the river and the remains of (Saxon burh?) earthworks encircling combines series of important features illustrative of a long history.

The pattern of built form relates closely to the streets with groupings of frontage development interspersed by more open areas enclosed by distinctive walls. The lower end of The Hill forms part of the core of the town at the Cheapside/North St junction with its urban character and grouping of substantial brick and stone buildings. Hill House, 5 bays in brick, and the gable of the Post Office enclose the street narrowly here before the climb eastwards where lias stone, pale render and a lower scale mark a change of character, a character that changes progressively from west to east.

At the crest of the hill on the north side 3 storey buildings press forward above a raised pavement looking out over the bungalows and open gardens of C20 development at Bush Place opposite. Once the crest is reached, an urbane scene unfolds revealing the tower of All Saints Church and an array of varied buildings

forming a loose square with the Pound, enclosed by wall, railings and hedge and the monumental trees set in the centre.

Historic routes reach down off The Hill. Whatley Lane leading down west to Whatley, is contained on the south side by historic buildings but late C20 building at the top (Bush Place) and bottom erodes the historic pattern and character.

Priest Lane runs from the Pound northwards down to North Street and is contained by high walls without frontage buildings.

East of the Pound the street is funnelled between St Gildas' three storey stone façade and the church hard by the roadside and the character continues the pattern of frontage buildings interspersed with walled spaces. It is an area with the feeling of a quiet backwater but of distinctive qualities. Fine red brick (Old Rectory and wall with trees of architectural presence behind) alternates with mixed style stone facades while the space is visually contained by the Hanging Chapel gateway and separated from the area beyond.

On the north east side of The Hill, there is an open area of land, the higher part of which is associated with the Convent and the lower, below a tall retaining wall, is now a recreation ground. In character this is not important itself but is the site of historic earthworks, probably those of the Saxon burh along the upper line and of Civil War origin NE of the present football pitch. The open space is of historic and archaeological interest and does allow the historic settlement to stand separately from the modern development to N and NE.

Pockets of late C20 building with a character at odds with the general historic area lie to the south of the church on St Gilda's Close and at the top of Whatley Lane in Bush Place.

Scale, height and building line

Approaching up the hill from Cheapside, the buildings are almost consistently two storeys, define the narrow street space closely and climb the steep hill on both sides. Part way up the space opens out with high lias stone walls on both sides of the road. At the top of the hill, the space is wider and buildings arranged in a more dispersed pattern with some gardens and substantial trees. On the south side, a built frontage including All Saints Church defines the street. Opposite, and on the roadside is the three storey Convent and St Joseph's Church, then a high brick wall, broken by the Old Rectory, set back from the road. On the south side there are stone villas. The Hanging Chapel forming a narrow archway over the road frames the edge of the character area.

Key listed buildings and groups

- All Saints Church, Langport
- C19 red brick Old Rectory with regency iron trelliswork porch
- Annadale, three storeys Italianate, in render
- The French House; white render, margin-paned sashes, Regency-style balcony
- The steps, raised pavements and iron hand railings on the north side of steep part of The Hill
- Church Cottage, Lions Gate, and the Old Rectory, all form an important group either side of the Church as they all relate to the influential merchants and bankers, the Stuckey family.
- Moorfield House, Moorfield Cottage and Church Cottage to the west of the Church

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- The Hanging Chapel; mediaeval town gateway with a Chapel, now Masonic lodge, over.
- On Whatley Lane, Chapel House former Baptist Chapel.
- The pump and railings enclosing the former pound.

Key unlisted buildings

- The Red House, Arts and Crafts in narrow red bricks, with tile-creased quoins
- The Gatehouse, west of the Church, decorative red brick – possibly a former coach house
- St Gildas Centre and attached Roman Catholic Church. Stucco rendered villa from the early C19 in ornamental grounds

Materials

Walls -Blue and white lias stone, brick, painted render

Roofs – Clay tile and slat

Views

Important views to the open countryside are to the west from the top of The Hill, from Whatley Lane between Hill View and Jasmine Cottage and from All Saints Churchyard and the top of St Gilda's Close where the eye is drawn to the distant views over the river across the moors to the south.

The vista past All Saints Church to the archway of the Hanging Chapel is also important, as the houses frame the arch and draw the eye to it without competing with the Chapel as the main subject of attention.

Narrow vista down Whatley Lane

Local features/typical details

A significant local feature of this part of the conservation area is the survival the undeveloped area of land to the north to St Gilda's NE of Priests Lane, running to the rear of the houses on North Street and between the school and Bonds Pool; the recreation ground. This open space is important to the character of the conservation and whilst now a playing field, forms the NE boundary of the historic settlement with the remnants of earthworks mentioned above.

On the north side of The Hill a raised footway contains steps which climb steeply above the road and join together in flatter platforms protected by simple wrought iron railings.

Other than the features and details noted above, high walls of both brick and blue lias are notable, as is the stepped footpath on the north side of the hill, and the blue lias paving materials. There are no legacy shop fronts as we move away from the commercial side of the town.

Pump pond and railings

Somerset street lamps

Some lengths of stone paved footway

Chimneys brick

Windows painted

Key colour characteristics

Creams and buffs of painted render, warm orange red brick and tiles, the soft greys of the lias stones and slate

Trees and green spaces

Large trees are significant in this sub-area, contributing markedly to character within it and seen in more distant views. Key groups are
Encircling the grounds of St Gildas,
On the west side of the recreation ground,
On the north side of Uphill, large yews contain the street
East of St Joseph's Church
In the Pound

4. HANGING CHAPEL TO HUISH CHURCH AND ENVIRONS

Form and character

East of the Hanging Chapel gateway, there is an immediate change in character to first an area of larger more disperse houses set back from the road in large gardens, those to the south side of the road behind high stone walls of coursed blue lias and with cock and hen coping. With the exception of one dwelling set in this wall line, the wall continues with a few punctuations for entrances all the way to the junction with the Muchelney Road. Much of the eastern length of this is without a footpath between it and the road.

On the north side is a natural stone pavement and low blue lias stone boundary wall enclosing smaller houses in gardens, The Old Police House, The Beeches etc. A lane at Bonds Pool, drops away to the north, containing a range of small scale historic cottages in a tight group. A group of modern bungalows (outside the CA) east of Bonds Pool introduce a character transition into the more rural setting of Huish Farm and St Mary's Church, the land opening out to an open field still used for agriculture bounded by a stone wall. The field borders onto the church yard. Significant mature trees along Hanging Chapel Road, in the gardens both sides of the road and in the churchyard are a particular feature of this part of the conservation area. On the corner of Muchelney Road is a prominent mansard roofed house, Huish Farm, and the road is bounded by more high walls surrounding its outbuildings and The Vicarage. The rural character here of lanes, walls and mature trees contrasts completely with the urban area west of the Hanging Chapel gateway. There are routes off Hanging Chapel Road to both north (outside the CA in modern development) and south, road and footpath. A path next to Bennetts Cottage drops down off the ridge onto the moorland below offering glimpses into the extensive private gardens that characterise the southern side of the ridge and which define its appearance viewed from the south.

Scale, height and building line

Buildings are two storey, and are set back on large individual plots to the rear of a high wall on the south side. The buildings themselves tend to be large and more modern in design, but are largely benign in terms of their impact
The exception to this are the houses to the immediate north of the Hanging Chapel and the west side of Bonds Pool. These are much smaller in stone and brick.
The boundary walls running all through this character area are important and along with the larger dwellings and large gardens around them, define this character area as distinctive from the other sub-areas.

Materials

Blue and white lias dominate as building materials for buildings with blue lias boundary walls with cock and hen and blue lias slabs for copings. The footway next to the carriageway is blue lias. Roofs are a mixture of clay tiles and slate, with the notable introduction of thatch.

Key colour characteristics

Whilst there are some light-coloured rendered buildings, the key colours are the natural colours of the lias stones and clay tile roofs.

Views

West along the road towards the Hanging Chapel framed by walls, trees etc East towards St Mary's Church with treescape. Distant views of the prominent church tower from the north, south and east outside the area. Glimpsed views south towards Muchelney at Bennetts Cottage. St Mary's Church stands alone isolated from development with important vistas in from the Pibsbury direction and across the field to the north from both the A372 from the north and The Hill to the west. This, historically, undeveloped open aspect to the Church is a very important to its setting.

Trees and green spaces

The agricultural field to the north and west of the church is a significant open space in the conservation area preserving the open rural character fundamental to the setting of the grade I listed church and of the eastern length of Hanging Chapel Road. This space is one where any development or change to its character is likely to be detrimental to the setting of the Church and the conservation area.

Tall, mature trees are a strong feature along Hanging Chapel Road, within the churchyard, within gardens, especially of The Gateway, close to the road and around and south of the Vicarage.

The spacious open gardens and mature trees that reach down to moor level on the south side of the ridge are key to the character of that part of the area.

Key listed buildings and groups

- Huish Episcopi Parish Church of St Mary and its lych gate

The Church with its vicarage, church room, and war memorial along with Huish Farm all form a significant group, although the church car park useful but utilitarian, detracts from this. The church room lies outside the conservation area.

- The Hanging Chapel and the buildings which frame it,
- Huish Farm; lias stone, plain clay tile mansard roof, trellis porch
- Old School House/The Beeches;
- The Gateway, with regency stucco front. and Gateway Cottage below

Key unlisted buildings

- Huish House, a substantial arts and crafts house, bath and white lias stone, tile hanging, decorative plaster prominent ornate chimneys
- The Rectory, early C19 lias stone, low slate roof. Medieval fragments (of Muchelney Abbey?) feature in house and outbuilding
- Bennetts Cottage
- The Old Police House and attached row of cottages
- Huish War Memorial

Materials

Strongly characterised by lias stone in walls, buildings and pavings along Hanging Chapel Road.

Brick and render in Bonds Pool

Roofs clay tile generally; slate also present

Key colour characteristics

Warm orange red of brick and tile, soft greys of lias stone

Local features/typical details

Gables with ornate (The Beeches) or plain barge boards (Old Police House)
Lias stone frontage boundary walls, high and low, cock and hen and flat slab copings
Ornate brick chimneys
White painted joinery

Other details, Surfaces and street furniture

Stone pavement comprising square flag stones with lias stone kerbs with several crossings in lias setts extend for significant lengths along Hanging Chapel Road is a particular feature of this area and forms an important part of the setting to the Hanging Chapel, the church and this street.

5. WHATLEY, COCKLEMOOR AND MEADOW LAND TO THE SOUTH.

Form and character

Low lying land set between the town and the river is the defining feature of this open, un-built-up, rural character area.

At the western end, Cocklemoor is a finger of open accessible recreational grassland between the Back River and the River Parrett. Here the sense of the historic town plan of the Bow Street causeway and burgage plots arranged along it, bounded by the Back River can be appreciated.

East of this lies Whatley, its car park and C20 housing development having almost totally obliterated a former industrial corner. Here the urban area approaches the river and is dominated by extensive areas of tarmac and parked vehicles and a formless suburbia all however mitigated by a strong tree presence around the car park, along the Little Bow River and on Cocklemoor.

Further east, past grey C20 bungalows, an area of wet moor opens out running below the escarpment of The Hill and Hanging Chapel Road. Representing the border between the town and extensive open moors to the south, this is a lush, tranquil area crossed by pollard willow-bordered rhynes possessing a very rural character significant to the setting of the urban area above.

Scale, height and building line

Whatley is characterised by generally poor C20 buildings, many single storey. Their layout is rather suburban and scattered across the face of and below the scarp detracting from the appearance of the Hill. Most building set back with front gardens, or forecourt parking, Whatley House the exception.

The openness and lack of buildings away from Whatley is an important characteristic, significant to the setting of the southern side of the town and needs to be preserved. More development on the scarp will cause harm.

Significant buildings and groups

No listed buildings. At the foot of Whatley Lane, 17-23, Whatley, white render and brick with pantile roof, a small-scale C18 cottage terrace behind long front gardens, and Whatley House, lias stone, opposite represent the historic character. No other groups or buildings of significance.

Materials

Lias stone, brick, painted brick, clay tiles, grey artificial stone, concrete tiles

Views

Fine prospects exist southwards across the moors towards Muchelney from Cocklemoor and the riverside footpath. This Somerset moorland character with its

straight droves, rhynes and pollard willows, often flooded over in winter, running up to the base of the town escarpment defines Langport's character and its location on the ridge above flood level.

Local features/typical details

The low bridge, now blocked below the arch, formerly over the Little Bow River now culverted, at the end of car park

Key colour characteristics

Warm orange-red of brick and clay tiles, soft greys of lias stones, harder greys of artificial stone that features throughout the C20 building.

Trees and green spaces

The key characteristic of this part of the conservation area. - see above in Form and character

Area 6. WESTOVER

Form and character

The area of the former settlement of Frog lane/Southwick on the west bank of the river beneath the higher ground at Hurds Hill was the area associated with river trading and the site of the now redeveloped Langport railway station and its goods yard. The key feature is the way Westover, the road from Bow Bridge west rises above the river's flood plain level and crosses the surviving bridge over the railway track bed before curving round Hurds Hill. Remnants of the former uses here survive fragmentally amongst post-railway growth; a weigh bridge and warehousing, a former hotel, industrial buildings and warehousing with associated dwellings. Character concentrated on line of Westover, rural and tranquil close around to the north with a scattering of buildings now in residential use. South of Westover all is open; characterless modern commercial buildings and parked vehicles dominate the scene. The area is visually contained by Hurds Hill with its tree cover to the west.

Scale, height and building line

On the north side of Westover a localised group forming a built up frontage of 2 and 3 storey buildings but elsewhere open in character. These buildings of the trading and railway age face a narrow defile some metres below Westover itself which rises on stone faced embankment close in front. Behind this frontage only a scatter of buildings of one and two storeys.

Key buildings all unlisted

- Westover House, former Railway Hotel, of late C19, brick built, three storey, with upper warehousing accessed from the main road by a surviving folding iron bridge
- Railway road bridge over former S&D line to Durston and retaining walls to cutting
- Weighbridge and weight house, lias and ham stone now extended in commercial use
- Former railway goods yard warehouse, now office, on river bank, 3 storeys red brick with buff brick banding
- Late C20 footbridge across the Parrett

LANGPORT AND HUISH EPISCOPI CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Materials

Lias stone in buildings and boundary walls, red brick with stone (Ham and Bath) details, cream or white render, clay tile and slate roofs

Colours

Similar to Bow Street, warm reds of brick, greys of lias stone, pale render and weathered clay tiles

Trees and green spaces

Trees along and above the line of the railway

Significant open space along north river bank, telling of former wharfs, important to setting of listed Bow Bridge, Great Bow Warehouse and former wharf opposite

Views

From river shore north and south across moors

Along the length of Bow Street towards The Hill

Characteristic details and features

Brick chimneys, roofs hipped or gabled, no dormers

Iron railings as Westover rises towards rail bridge.

Iron swing bridge access to Old Railway Hotel

Low lias walls contain Westover

MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

General condition, problems, pressures

- The area suffers from heavy through traffic, with a high number of heavy trucks in spite of the weight limit.. This is especially an issue in narrow Bow Street and at the Hanging Chapel where they become stuck and damage the building or other nearby buildings as they attempt to turn around.
- The footways to Bow Street and Cheapside are narrow and pedestrians are vulnerable to injury from passing vehicles..
- The 'highway clutter' at the junction of North Street and access to the Tesco car park is detrimental to the setting of the conservation area
- Downside has remained unoccupied and in poor repair for many years. The house is prominent and a detraction.
- Pressure to develop in the land to the north of Huish Episcopi Church, and within and across the burgage plots should be resisted.
- Some poor buildings detract from overall quality of the area
- Overhead wires are intrusive in many locations

Opportunities for beneficial change

Improvement to the traffic management, generally and especially alternative routes for pedestrians.

Repair and occupation of Downside

Overhead wires across the area could be rationalised

Other work

To propose the listing of Huish War Memorial.

Development management

Future development within or affecting the setting of the conservation area will be expected to conform to the policies in the South Somerset Local Plan, objectives in the associated South Somerset Historic Environment Strategy and guidance published in association with these.

Amendments to the Conservation Area boundary

The Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act places a duty on the planning authority to review from time to time the areas they have previously designated. The conservation area was designated in 1971 and extended in 1989. Considerable development has taken place around the core area since that time raising the need to review the boundary in order to ensure that it defines the area of architectural or historic interest and follows features that exist on the ground as far as practical as an aid to identification.

Proposed boundary changes are shown on **Map 3** along with the existing boundary and are

- To include an area of Westover including the historic weighbridge and building to the south of the road, and the former hotel and other industrial buildings on the north side of Westover. See description in **Area 6 below**
- To include the White Lion Hotel and the Beeches, Stable Cottage and listed Evandale on North Street.
- To include an area of land enclosed by walls to the south of the Vicarage in Huish Episcopi and Pound Farm

ANNEXES

1. Highway features of interest

MAPS

- 1. Map of early features**
- 2. Map of area showing sub-areas**
- 3. Map showing current and proposed boundary**
- 4. Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP)**

References

Victoria County History
Somerset Extensive Urban Survey
Somerset Historic Environment Record