

The Square



Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

JANUARY 2017



The Square Conservation Area Appraisal

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1.0 Introduction

The Square Conservation Area Character Appraisal aims to set out the area's special character and appearance and how it can be preserved or enhanced.

This appraisal will be used to help inform the design of any future development proposals so that they preserve or enhance the area and acknowledge its features.

It is important to note that no appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and that the omission of a particular feature, building or open space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

This amended version was prepared in late 2016.

2.0 Background, Scope and Structure

The borough of Watford contains eight conservation areas, the oldest of which were designated in 1973 and 1975. The Urban Conservation Strategy produced during 2001 designated a further five conservation areas - including The Square. More recently the High Street / King Street Conservation Area became Watford's most recently designated conservation area in 2006. In addition, the Watford Heath Conservation Area and Estcourt Conservation Area were extended in 2008 and 2010.

This appraisal is structured to include:

- A summary of designation;
- Policy background;
- Definition of the special interest of the area via spatial and character analysis, historical development and important features.

3.0 Designation

The Square Conservation Area was designated on 22nd January 2001 under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The main aims stated within the original designation report for the Conservation Area (Watford Borough Council, 2001) were:

- to protect the area from inappropriate development which would harm the special character of the area;
- to protect the detailing of buildings which contributes to the special architectural and historic interest of the area;
- to protect the strong consistent building lines;
- to protect the architectural and historic integrity of the cemetery and to protect it from proposals which would dominate or harm its character or appearance.

4.0 Definition / Summary of Special Interest

This area is of special architectural and historic interest, providing an important example of the town's Victorian expansion. The contemporary layout remains unaltered, with the four roads (Aynho Street, Oxford Street, Banbury Street and Souldern Street) forming a discrete urban form in terms of character and design. The building line is strong and consistent and these groups of terraces have maintained much of their original detailing, where other comparative areas of a similar age elsewhere have not.

The houses were developed over a short period of time by the local building firm of Clifford and Gough and collectively provide one of the best examples of their work in the Borough. Dates of construction during the 1890s appear on the front of the houses in attractive cartouches, with further attractive patterns of brickwork in red and yellow gault bricks. The streetscape is marked by the tight urban grain of development, which helps to create a more intimate feel than the later development to the south.

An important landmark feature is the Red Lion Public House, on the corner of Vicarage Road and Aynho Street. This Victorian group of buildings replaced an earlier establishment from the eighteenth century, which was the earliest known development in this area. Attractively detailed, the buildings form part of diverse groups of buildings along this stretch of Vicarage Road dating from different parts of the nineteenth century.

In spatial terms, the largest feature in the Conservation Area is the Victorian cemetery, which retains its original plan. This important historic space is punctuated by a variety of features, including the sculptural elements of tombs and gravestones and various buildings – most notably the cemetery chapel, which is elaborately detailed in the 14th century style. The cemetery walls and treescape are also a significant feature, adding a unifying character to the area.

5.0 Location and Setting

The Square Conservation Area lies to the west of Watford town centre – in the area of the Borough known as West Watford. The area is located in the centre of the Council's Vicarage ward, with the busy Vicarage Road (A4145) running along its southern boundary. Although this route provides a significant access route between the west of the town and the town centre, its spatial scale is limited to being a single carriageway road. To the south of Vicarage Road is a hybrid character area containing both domestic scale structures, such as the town's former workhouse, as well as large scale structures, such as Vicarage Road Stadium. While this stretch of development is largely related to employment land uses, the other areas of built form which adjoin the Conservation Area are dominated by residential land uses. To the north, east and west are fairly uniform streets of later nineteenth / early twentieth century terraced housing. An exception to the tight grain of the terraced housing is Chater Junior School, which is located to the north-east of the Conservation Area. Although the site was first developed with a school in the late nineteenth century, the current building dates to the 1980s and comprises one principal building set within grounds dominated by sports pitches.

6.0 Archaeology and Historic Development

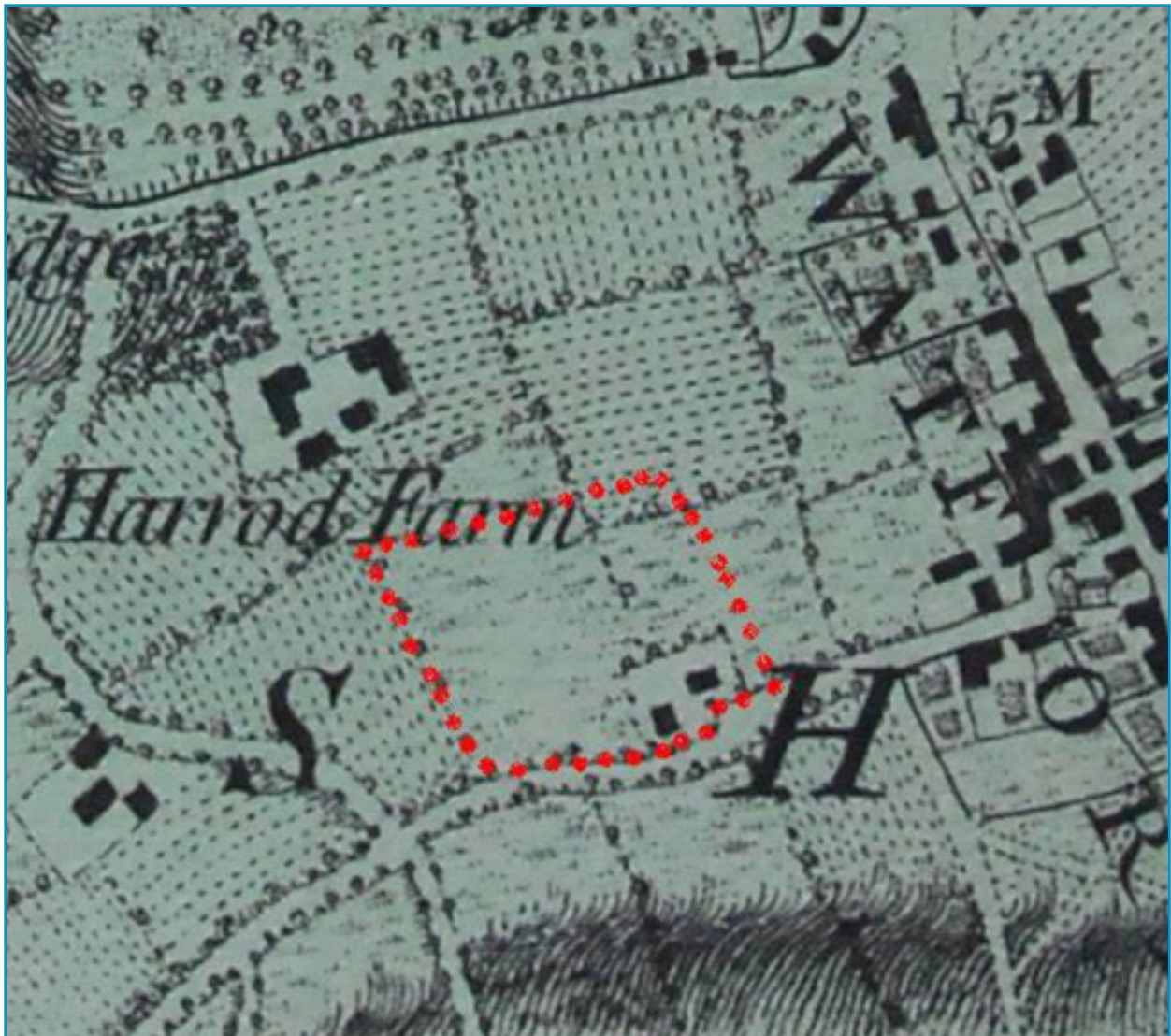
6.1 Archaeology

In the absence of detailed survey work into the archaeological potential of the area covered by the Conservation Area, it is difficult to make any conclusive comments on this topic. There are no recorded archaeological finds for the area on the County Council's Historic Environment Record, while the Extensive Urban Survey Project Assessment (2000) focused on developments in the area from the Victorian period onward.

There are no scheduled monuments in the Conservation Area.

6.2 Historic Development

Before the arrival of the railway in the 1830s, development in Watford had been largely limited to the town's historic core around the High Street. The agrarian nature of this part of the District before the mid-nineteenth century can be seen on the Dury and Andrews' map from 1766, which shows the majority of the area as farmland. A track, which is the present day Vicarage Road, can be seen going across the area on an east-west axis, with two buildings on its northern side. This group is likely to represent the Red Lion Public House, which was first recorded when the site changed use and became a public house in 1751.



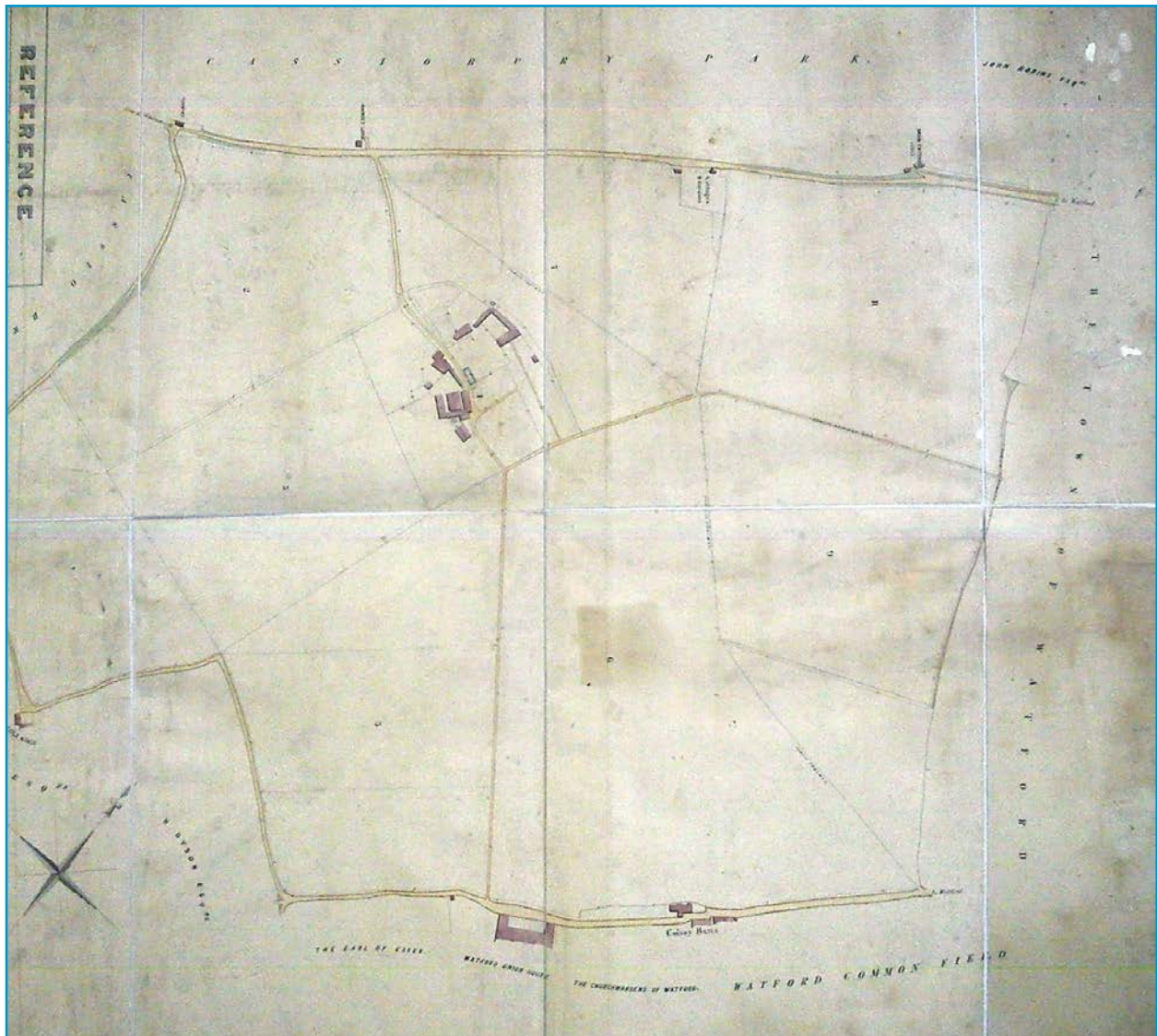
1766 Dury and Andrews Map with approximate area of Conservation Area highlighted

In the decades that followed, further urban development in the area was limited. To the south-east of the Red Lion Public House, a group of buildings had been developed, originally as part of a farm, but later as a more distinctive property known as 'Colney Butts House'. This property is recorded from the eighteenth century and can be clearly seen on the 1842 Tithe Map. The most significant new development in this area, that is visible on the Tithe Map, was the development in 1838 of the Watford Union Workhouse. This was also developed on the southern side of the main east-west track, outside the present day Conservation Area. During this period the track may have been known locally as 'Union Street' – in connection with the workhouse. However, it is detailed as 'Hagden Lane' on the 1871 OS Map, before being detailed as 'Vicarage Road' on the 1896 OS Map. The etymology of the name that lasted for this stretch of road related to the location of St Mary's Vicarage on a stretch of the road further east, which has since been cut off by the Exchange Road section of the inner-urban ring road. Hagden Lane still exists as a street name, but only now relates to a stretch further to the west of Vicarage Road.



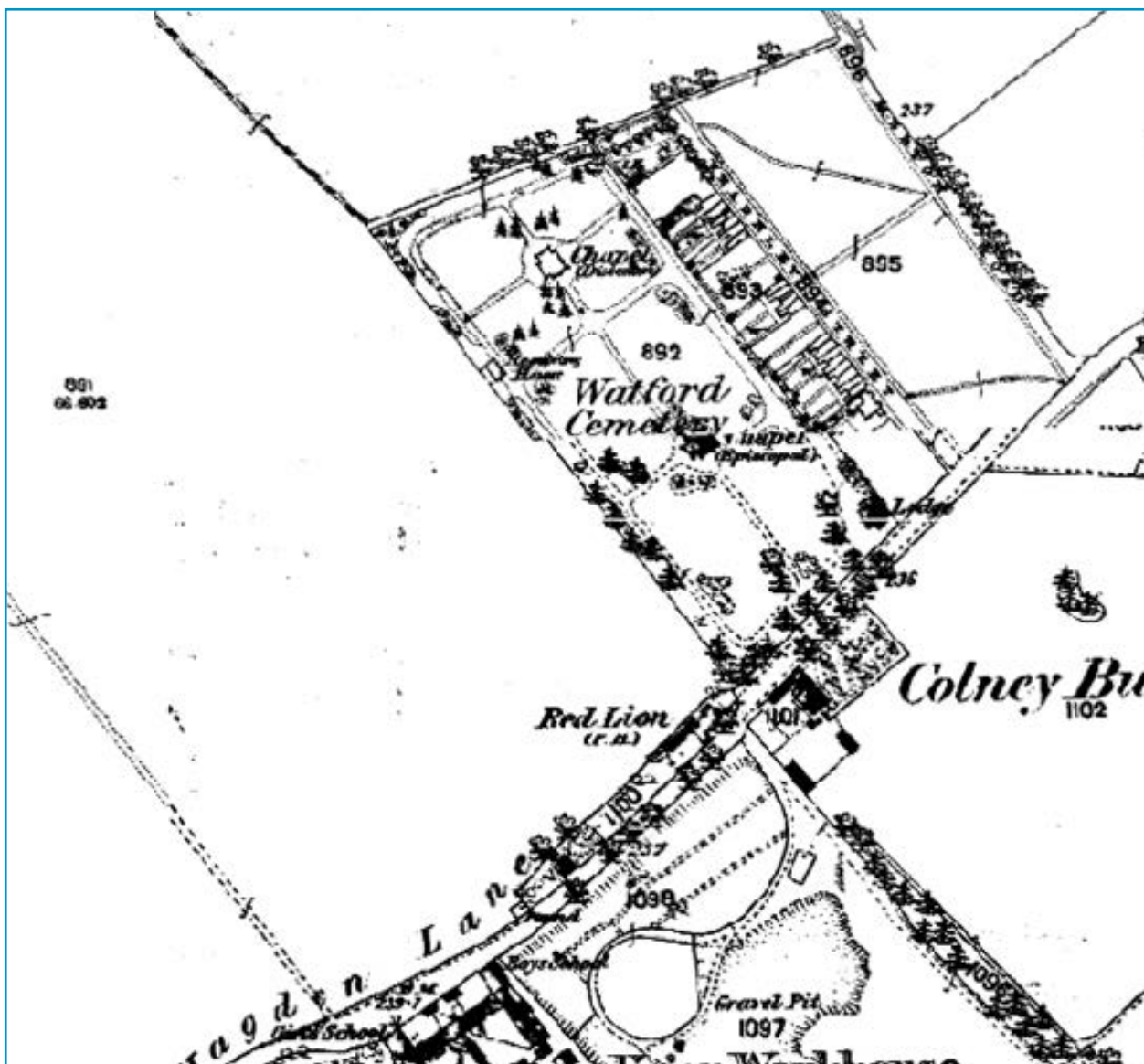
1842 Tithe Map

Ten years after the publication of the Tithe Map, a plan was produced of Harwoods Farm, which included land holdings north of the Red Lion. This map showed that the three large fields immediately to the north of the public house were in use as arable farmland and were called Thistley Field, Colney Butts Field and Pitcroft Field. The Farm was owned by the Earl of Essex, who resided at the nearby Cassiobury House and had significant land ownership in the wider Watford area. It can be surmised that the plan was produced in preparation for a land sale and in the following year, on the 21st July 1853, a proportion of the Farm was sold to Henry Milford Boodle.



1852 Plan of Harwoods Farm (Vicarage Road runs across the southern part of the plan)

Shortly after, on the 20th August 1853, Parliament passed the Burial Act, which amended the laws concerning the burial of the dead in England beyond the limits of London. The 1853 Act made it easier for parish vestries, the antecedents to today's local authorities, to close down existing overcrowded burial grounds and purchase land for the development of new cemeteries. In the two following decades a boom followed nationally in the construction of public cemeteries by publicly-financed burial boards. Within Watford, the overcrowded graveyard at St Mary's Church was duly closed on the 7th of February 1856 and a new cemetery at Vicarage Road was developed. However, the records show that the first recorded burial at the new cemetery was not until the 6th November 1858 and it is unclear how proceedings were managed in the interim period. Nevertheless, the first recorded burial was that of Mary Ann Howarth, an infant who had died aged just 3 months old. In recognition of the fact that the child had not been baptized, the burial ceremony was not conducted by a clergyman. Urban developments elsewhere in the area were generally limited. Further to the west, on land fronting onto Vicarage Road, a pair of houses with gardens was built between 1852 and 1871.



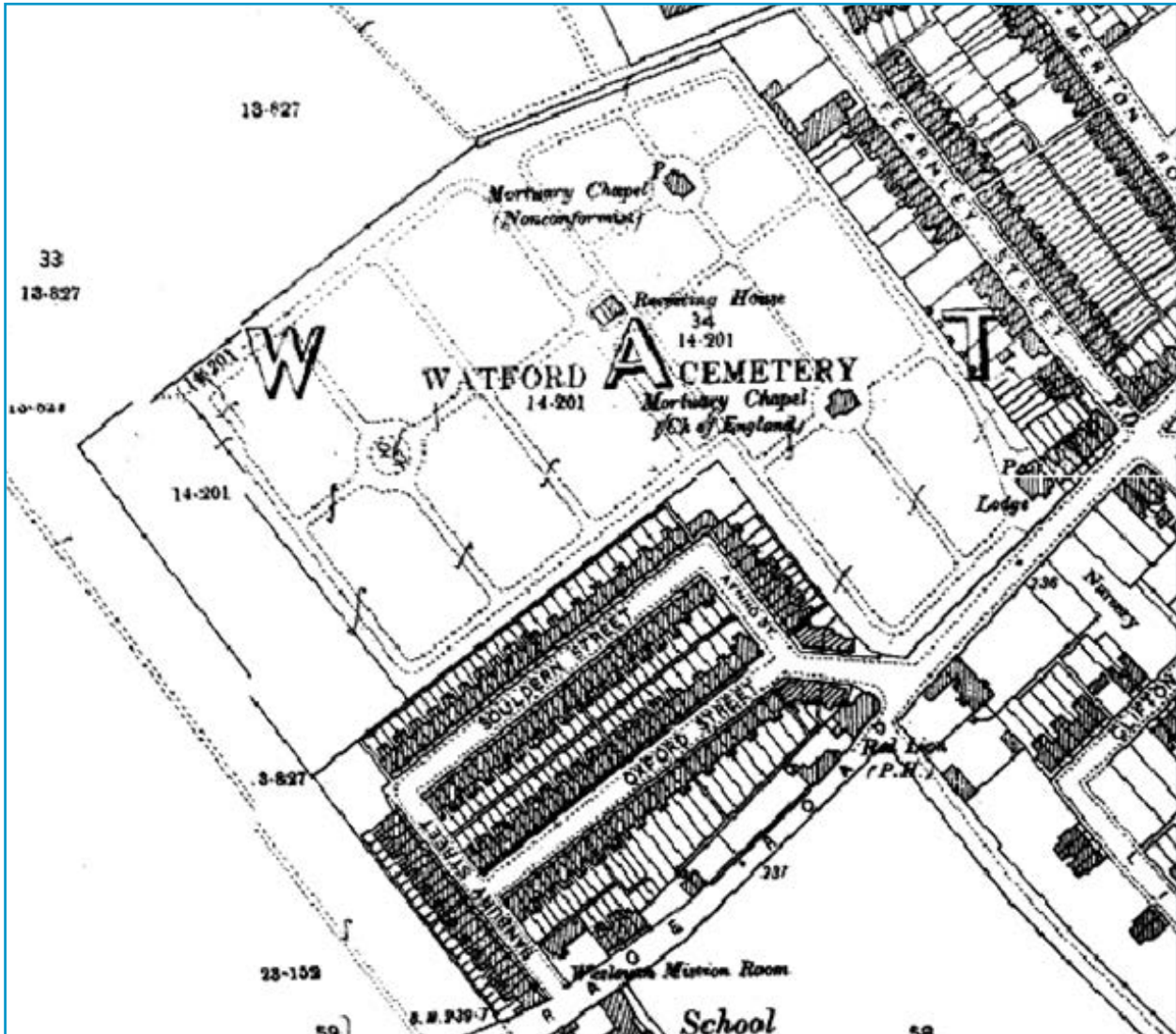
1871 OS Map

By 1871, when the next detailed map of the area was published, the Cemetery was well established, with the various related buildings – such as the Cemetery Lodge and Chapels, in evidence. Although some house building was underway immediately to the east of the new cemetery, the wider area still remained largely untouched by urban development at this stage – with land to the east still open between Fearnley Street and the historic core of Watford.



Image from shortly after the Cemetery was opened showing the Cemetery Lodge and the largely undeveloped stretch of Vicarage Road to the east

Further urban development during the 1870s – 1880s in this area was generally limited. The existing Cemetery reached its capacity during this period and was expanded westwards after further land was sold by the Earl of Essex to the Burial Board of the Parish of Watford on the 31st December 1884. It was shortly after this that rapid urban development began on land to the south-west of the Cemetery. The local development firm run by Edwin Clifford & William Gough purchased the land between the expanded Cemetery and Vicarage Road for the construction of the 'Harwood's Park Estate'. The first new street to be laid out was 'Aynho Road', with the first 11 houses completed in 1890. However, by the time of the publication of the 1892 Peacocks Directory of local properties, the street was known as 'Aynho Street' – a name which was not to subsequently change again. In 1891 Oxford Street and Souldern Street were laid out and about a third of the houses were constructed, with the remainder of the houses on Souldern Street and a large proportion of those on Oxford Street completed during the following year. Development along Banbury Street was carried out during 1893, as was the remaining building work on Oxford Street. On the 29th April 1893, the foundation stone was laid for the Vicarage Road Mission Chapel, on the corner of Banbury Street and Vicarage Road. The Chapel was opened several months later on the 13th August 1893.



1896 OS Map

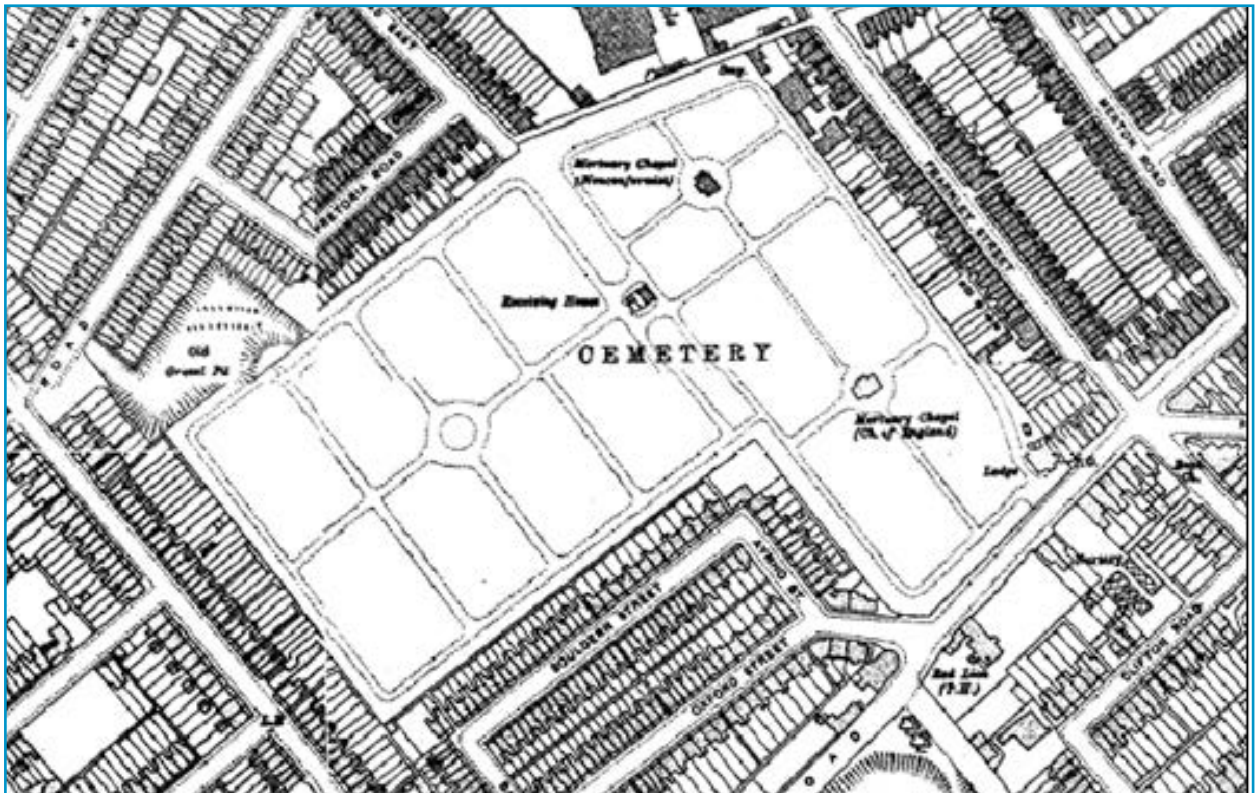
Development after 1893 was more piecemeal in nature, as the vast majority of the area had been developed. The terrace of houses at 111 – 119 Vicarage Road was built in 1894 and the small number of previously undeveloped plots around the Estate were developed in 1897. The Red Lion Public House and its associated stables were rebuilt in 1895 and 1896 respectively.

The etymology of the new street names on the Harwood's Park Estate can be explained by the earlier life of the developer William Gough, who had been born in the Northamptonshire village of Aynho. The names Aynho, Banbury, Oxford and Souldern can all be traced to settlements in South Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire. Contemporary local directories reveal that the new Estate was largely populated by a mixture of artisans or workers involved in the building trades and their families.



Early twentieth century postcard image of the Cemetery

Following the dramatic change of the early 1890s, the picture of the immediate area had not changed significantly by the time of the 1914 OS map. Having completed building work on the Harwood's Park Estate the pressure for new development pushed northwards and westwards, with extensive new building work nearby by a variety of different building firms in the years that followed.



1914 OS Map



Aerial photograph from circa 1914 looking northwards.

After 1914 there was limited change in the area. New burial plots continued to be developed at the Cemetery and a significant new feature was added in 1929, when a large war memorial was erected by the Imperial War Graves Commission close to the Vicarage Road entrance.



Official unveiling of the Vicarage Road War Memorial in February 1929

Although the Cemetery had been expanded during the 1880s, the continued pressure of new burial plots had resulted in it reaching capacity during the 1920s. With no available adjacent land to expand onto, a new cemetery was developed in North Watford, which opened in 1931. Following the closure of the Cemetery at Vicarage Road, the area was subject to limited change until plans were passed by the local authority in 1959 for the demolition of the existing cemetery lodge and the construction of a replacement building. At this time the access off Vicarage Road was widened, with part of the older boundary wall demolished, while the Nonconformist Mortuary Chapel was demolished. The Harwood's Park Estate was subject to relatively minor change during the twentieth century. The terraced houses at number 11 – 15 Souldern Road were destroyed in a bombing raid on the 3rd October 1940, with the owner of number 13, Mr Samuel Frederick Circuit, a fatality of the high explosive device. The plots were subsequently redeveloped with a pair of semi-detached houses in 1955.



1960s image showing 'P.J. Gidding Banbury Store' on the corner of Banbury Street and Vicarage Road

Some of the corner properties that had originally included shopfronts were converted to residential uses in the late 1970s, while the former Mission Chapel was taken over by the West Watford Christian Fellowship in 1983. During the late 1970s the Estate was subject to some public realm improvement works as part of 'The Square General Improvement Area Plan'.



Circa 1975 view of Aynho Street (left) and Souldern Street (right)



Circa 1975 view from Vicarage Road of Banbury Street (left) and Aynho Street (right)

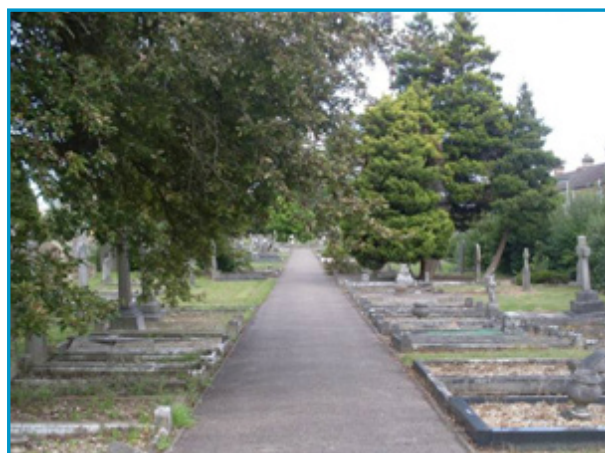
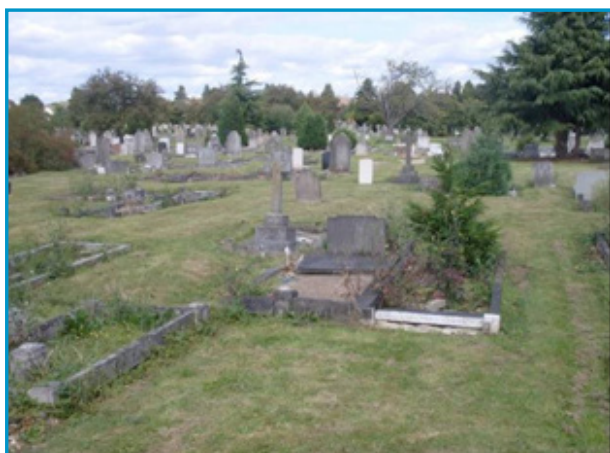
7.0 Spatial Analysis

This section considers the morphology of the area, key spaces, and important views and vistas into and out of the area.

7.1 Character and Interrelationships of Spaces

The character of the spaces within the Conservation Area is sharply divided between the large scale open space of the Cemetery and the smaller scale spaces around the area of terraced housing. The Cemetery is a significant area of open space within the heavily built up part of the Borough known as West Watford. Although the large space is interspersed with just four buildings, a large proportion of the area is taken up with memorial structures – ranging from simple grave stones to more elaborate commemorative features. The design of the Cemetery is fairly utilitarian and uses a simple grid pattern of large blocks of grave plots separated between a network of symmetrical pathways. The structure is more pronounced in areas with a higher density of memorials along pathways, while some of the more central spaces have a more open aspect. The boundaries are strongly marked by relatively high walls and rows of established trees/hedging, with the limited access points providing a controlled relationship between this space and the wider areas of built form. Although there is an avenue of trees between the Vicarage Road perimeter and the Cemetery Chapel, internal landscaping elsewhere is less formal. Combined with the varied relationships of memorial structures, which have been developed over two centuries, the character of the area is fairly heterogeneous.

In comparison the scale of spaces around the streets of terraced properties is much more restricted and the character is more uniform. Front gardens are small and form part of the cross-section of relatively narrow streets, with private rear gardens hidden behind the rows of terraced houses. Vicarage Road includes some slightly larger scale spaces, including a modestly sized car park fronting the Church, while a courtyard and narrow tree lined green space are located adjacent to the Red Lion.

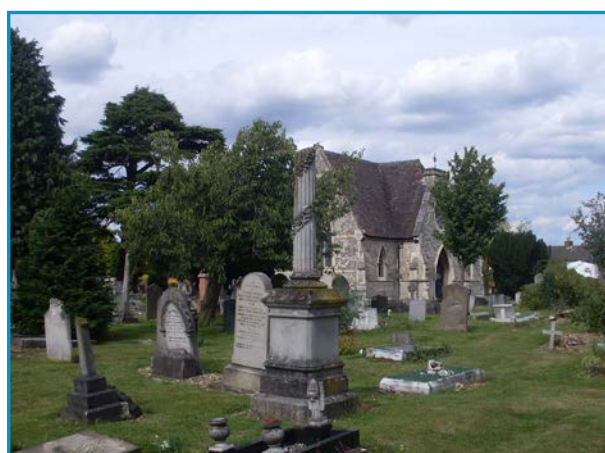


Looser (left) and tighter (right) groupings of memorials in the Cemetery

7.2 Key Views and Vistas

Generally flat and with buildings of a consistent height, the topography and built form of the area limits the potential for significantly dramatic views. The views into the Conservation Area from outside are largely restricted by the adjacent streets of terraced properties. However, views into the southern part of the Conservation Area can be found along Vicarage Road. The Red Lion provides a landmark between Vicarage Road and Oxford Street, while restricted vistas up Banbury Street and part of Oxford Street are found along Vicarage Road. The Cemetery boundary wall and hedge largely restrict views into the area, but the larger scale War Memorial, Chapel and Lodge stand out from the road.

Within the Cemetery, the low level memorial structures are set against the larger scale Chapel and former Receiving House, which serve as landmark features within the landscaped space. Within the streets of terraced housing the feature trees, at the junction of streets, form visual focal points.



View up Oxford Street from Vicarage Road / View across the Cemetery towards Chapel

8.0 Character Analysis

8.1 Character Zones

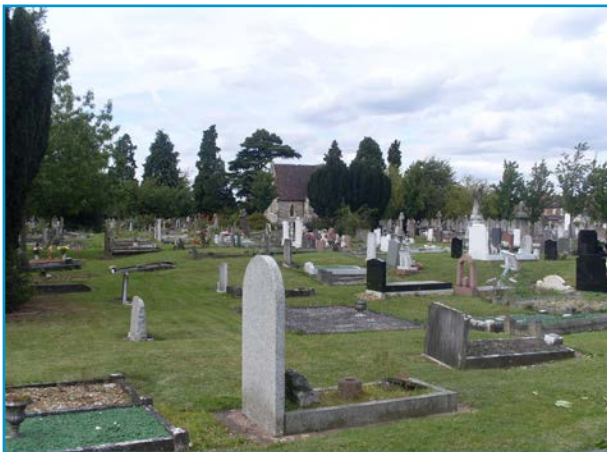
The conservation area consists of two distinctive character areas.

Area A

The larger of the character areas is the one formed by the Cemetery. Buildings are located sparsely around the area, which has a very open aspect. The area is dominated by rows of graves and memorials.

Area B

The smaller of the two character areas is the one formed by the streets of terraced housing in the south-west of the Conservation Area. Development is densely formed around a rigid street pattern.



Area A



Area B

8.2 Activity

Activity levels across the Conservation Area vary, with the primary focus for movement along Vicarage Road. The streets of terraced housing off Vicarage Road consist solely of residential properties and generally experience low levels of street activity. The Cemetery has controlled opening hours which restrict access during the evenings and at night. When the Cemetery is open there are moderate levels of activity, consisting generally of mourners visiting particular graves, although there are some pedestrian movements across the area between the Chester Road and Vicarage Road entrances. However, the southern boundary of the Conservation Area is much busier, with various commercial properties along Vicarage Road and the larger scale land uses of the Hospital and Stadium. The Red Lion Public House is currently not open for business, but has historically been a focus for activity.

8.3 The Qualities of the Buildings and their Contribution to the Area

The streets of terraced houses that form the Harwood's Park Estate provide a notably fine example of the work of the local developers Clifford and Gough in the late nineteenth century. Although some building features have been lost due to insensitive alterations, the architectural qualities of the houses remains readily apparent. Unusually for housing in Watford, the dominant material for the building façades is gault brick, with extensive patterned detailing in orange coloured brick. As well as the more uniform courses of orange brick across the building elevations, it is also used to elaborately represent the date of construction of particular terraces. Brick detailing is also apparent below the eaves, including saw tooth brick between contrasting courses. Further ornamental detailing is provided by the stone cartouches, which were a signature feature of Clifford and Gough developments. These panels give the building date of the terrace in question within an ornately detailed border which subtly varies across the various cartouches.



Note attractive roof and ridge tiles on this chapel



Front elevations are broken up by projecting square bay windows at ground floor level, with pitched fish scale slate roofs projecting across the full run of the elevation. Windows are topped by curved brick arches in contrasting brick, as are the doorways, which also feature toplights. The roofscape is enlivened by well preserved gault brick chimneys, which have decorative courses of contrasting brickwork, and cockscomb ridge tiles. As most of the buildings date from within a three year period and have general similarities in terms of materials and features, there is an overall homogeneity in the area. Later enhancement works to the public realm have been consistent across the area and have added some visual interest with the crown topped street lighting columns.



In comparison, the buildings in the Cemetery and along Vicarage Road are more varied and reflect a greater diversity of architectural styles. Most notable are the ornately detailed Red Lion building, which integrates with the adjoining former stables, and the 14th century style Cemetery Chapel, which integrates in design with the nearby Cemetery boundary wall.

8.4 Grave Stones and other Memorial Features

As well as the principal buildings and boundary walls in the Cemetery, there is a wealth of historical structures provided by the various grave stones and memorials. The memorial features display a wide range of different designs and materials, reflecting the gradual development of individual plots to bespoke design briefs. While the Cemetery does not feature groups of chest tombs, as located in the St Mary's Churchyard, there are still various larger scale memorial features, such as the memorial group relating to the Earls of Clarendon and the War Memorial.



In addition, many of the graves relate to important local figures in the development of the town. Both Edwin Clifford and William Gough, who were responsible for developing the built-up part of the Conservation Area, are buried in the Cemetery, as well as other key local developers like William Judge. Various important local architects are buried there, such as Charles Ayres, William H. Syme and William Grace. Moreover, the Cemetery features a number of graves of servicemen killed during the two World Wars and the re-interred remains of those buried in the former graveyard of Beechen Grove Baptist Church.



Grave stone of Warrant Officer R. D. Cartwright (left), builder William Gough (centre) and the memorial plaque relating to the Beechen Grove Baptist Church re-interment.

8.5 Listed Buildings

There are no Nationally Listed Buildings located within the Conservation Area. However, the Grade II Listed

'Administration Block at Watford General Hospital' is located opposite the southern boundary of the Conservation Area and impacts on its setting. The building was constructed in 1838 as the Watford Union Workhouse. It was built following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 to replace Watford's old Parish Workhouse and the architect was T.L. Evans.



The former Watford Union Workhouse on Vicarage Road

8.6 Locally Listed Buildings

As part of the Council's Urban Conservation Strategy, a register of Locally Listed Buildings was compiled within the Watford District Plan 2000 (2003). This register was updated in 2010 and the following buildings were included in the revised list due to their importance in terms of architectural interest, function, historical interest, landmark quality and streetscape quality:

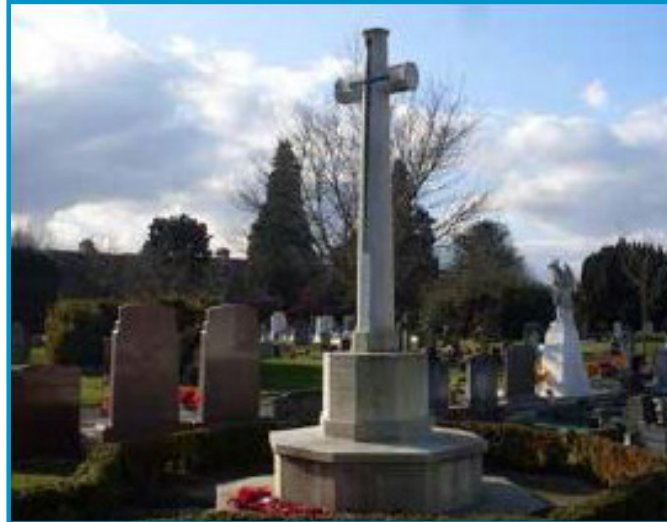
- **Chapel, Vicarage Road Cemetery**

Elaborately detailed chapel in the 14th century style. The Chapel was likely to have been built at the time the Cemetery was first developed in the 1850s. This Chapel has served as an important religious building to the town since. Originally the Chapel just served the Anglican denomination. However, following the demolition of the Nonconformist Chapel at the Cemetery, the remaining Chapel serves for all Christian denominations.



- **War Memorial, Vicarage Road Cemetery**

Constructed in stone with a large cross on a stepped plinth. The memorial was unveiled at a large civic ceremony on the 24th February 1929 and, along with the memorial outside the Town Hall, is the primary focus of Remembrance Day ceremonies in Watford. The memorial was erected by the Imperial War Graves Commission.



- **Red Lion Public House, 105 Vicarage Road**

Public House with former stable on historic linear plot running alongside road. The Red Lion dates back to at least 1751, although the current buildings relate to a 1890s rebuild for Benskins Brewery by a notable local architect Charles P Ayres. As a continuously functioning public house it also has strong community significance. The site itself is also remarkable for the survival of the historic curtilage associated with the public house.



8.7 Other Significant Buildings/Structures

A number of unlisted buildings in The Square Conservation Area contribute positively to the character of the area despite not meeting the criteria for statutory or local listing. The following are notable for their age, style and/or historic uses. They are also a reminder of the gradual development of the town:

- Receiving House, Vicarage Road Cemetery;
- Former stable, Vicarage Road Cemetery;
- 107 – 109 Vicarage Road.

8.8 Prevalent Local and Traditional Building materials

Facing Materials

The dominant material within the Conservation Area is gault brick with orange brick used for decorative courses. There is more variety provided by the buildings in the Cemetery and along Vicarage Road. This includes London stock brick, red brick, white render, stone dressing and uncoursed ragwork. The dominant roof material is slate, while the two ecclesiastical buildings have clay tiles on the pitched roofs. Windows on the terraced housing were originally timber framed sliding sash types, but many have been replaced by plastic versions. There is greater variety in window types in the Cemetery and along Vicarage Road, including timber framed casements, lancet and rose windows.



The materials used for front boundaries vary considerably. Within the area of terraced housing, front boundaries are generally marked by timber palisade fencing or brick walls (a later addition). The Cemetery boundary is largely marked by a relatively high brick wall, but along most of the Vicarage Road frontage there is a lower wall of uncoursed ragwork with natural stone copings.



Floorscape Materials

There is little evidence of original historic fabric in the floorscape of the Conservation Area. The paths within the Cemetery have been laid with dense bitumen macadam, while the internal roadways have been laid with hot rolled asphalt. Burial plots are interspersed between areas of grass or gravel. The area of terraced housing has also been subject to extensive alterations to the floorscape. The carriageways have been resurfaced with asphalt, while the

footways were the focus of public realm improvement works in the late 1970s. They are largely covered in artificial stone paving slabs, with feature areas of granite sets and cobbled sets.

8.9 Contribution of Trees and Green Spaces

The Conservation area falls into two parts: Vicarage Road Cemetery and the residential area comprising Oxford Street, Souldern Street, Aynho Street and Banbury Street. The Cemetery makes up just over two thirds of the total area of the Conservation Area.

The residential area contains limited street tree planting, carried out in the late 1970s as part of the proposals for the Council's 'General Improvement Area'. They are located at key points at the road junctions and half way along Oxford Street and Souldern Street. With the exception of a maple, all are relatively small growing species including upright hornbeam, cherry, thorn, rowan and whitebeam. Due to the relatively modest size of the gardens, there are generally few garden trees. However, a few do occur between Oxford Street and Souldern Street, which serve to soften the view when looking from Aynho Street. The largest trees within the residential area are those located on the piece of land to the west of the Red Lion Public House. They comprise a mixture of sycamore, birch, Leyland cypress and Lawson's cypress. Whilst not readily visible from within the residential area, these trees do nevertheless provide significant softening to views from Vicarage Road.



Trees at junction of Aynho Street and Souldern Street



Trees in rear gardens between Souldern Street and Oxford Street

There is a significant number of trees within the cemetery that exhibit a relatively wide range of ages, although, considering the age of the cemetery, there do not appear to be many trees dating from when it was first developed. Those that are older, yew and cedar, are close to the chapel and the boundary with Aynho Street and Victoria Passage. There are a high proportion of evergreen trees, including yew, cedar, cypress specie and holly. The deciduous element comprises malus (ornamental apple), lime (mainly pollarded trees along the Aynho Street and Harwoods Road boundaries), cherry, upright hornbeam and non-native oak.

With the exception of the boundary pollards and a recently planted short avenue of trees in front of the chapel, there is no recognisable planting pattern. Planting has taken place between graves where space has allowed and there is also an element of self seeding within grave spaces and where plots have been neglected. All sections have a good scattering of trees, with the exception of sections M Consecrated (located adjacent to the rear gate to Chester Road) and A Consecrated (located at the Vicarage Road entrance), where few trees grow within the sections.

The main views of the trees are all within the Cemetery as surrounding houses and the Cemetery boundary wall

and hedging prevent views from street level. However there are views from the Vicarage Road entrance where the chapel is framed by a backdrop of cedar, cypress and yew. The tops of some of the taller cypress are visible from street level in Souldern, Banbury and Oxford Streets. Limited views are available from Victoria Passage and Durban Road East.

There are no Tree Preservation Orders in place within The Square Conservation Area.

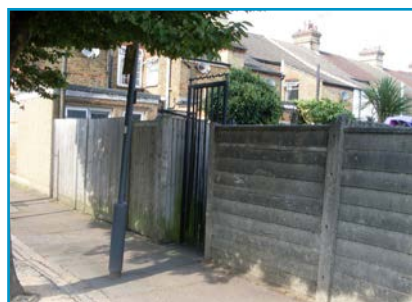


Trees on rear boundary of Aynho Street and southern rear boundary of Oxford Street

8.10 The Extent of Intrusion or Damage (Negative Factors)

Loss of building features

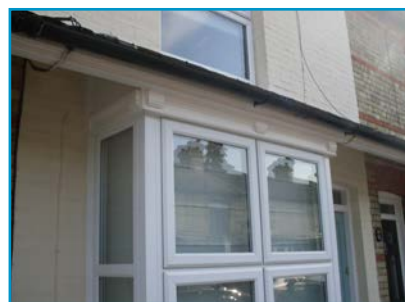
Throughout the Conservation Area there are examples of unsympathetic alterations to the external elevations of buildings. This includes the removal of original chimneys, windows, doors, shopfronts and other detailing, as well as the addition of new wall cladding, porches and satellite dishes. A particularly frequent problem is the replacement of original wooden framed sliding-sash windows with poorly suited uPVC replacements.



Inappropriate and ugly metal gate and concrete wall



Badly maintained standard signage clutter is inappropriate in Conservation Area



Original bracket detailing retained with uPVC windows



Inappropriate alteration of historic window opening



Inappropriate and ugly fake cladding

Deterioration of graves and memorials

Many of the grave stones and memorials are suffering from signs of deterioration. Inscriptions are frequently faded, while many grave stones have fallen over or are cracked. Some of the more elaborate memorials have fallen apart and/or are missing sections, while some associated metal railings have been bent out of place.



Traffic and Pedestrian Management

Given that the area was developed before cars were invented, there are longstanding issues within this part of Watford over how car parking can be accommodated on some of the narrow streets of terraced Victorian properties. The more radical approaches for tackling this problem, through the demolition of existing properties and their replacement with new parking areas, is not something which is deemed to be acceptable within the Conservation Area. Although traffic levels are relatively low throughout the majority of the Conservation Area, there are high volumes around Vicarage Road, which has a negative impact on the amenity of this setting.



High traffic volumes along Vicarage Road



Signage clutter along Banbury Street

8.11 Capacity for Change

The designation of a conservation area does not provide a block on any development within its boundaries. The area has changed considerably since it was first built and the renovation and reuse of properties by new owners and businesses is to be welcomed as a means for ensuring the continued vitality of this part of Watford. However, change must not come at the expense of degrading the character and scale that makes the area special and alterations to properties need to be sympathetic to their context.

As an area of the town that was 'built out' over 100 years ago, there are few obvious sites within the area that would be suitable for redevelopment.

8.12 Neutral Areas

The Conservation Area boundary was drawn in such a way as to avoid including extensive areas which dilute its character. However, the row of garages on the northern side of Vicarage Road adds little to the general amenity of the Conservation Area.

9.0 Suggested Boundary Changes

It is not considered that there are material reasons for making any alterations to the boundary of the Conservation Area.

10.0 Management Proposals (for issues identified in section 8.10)

The earlier draft of this document, which was published for consultation in autumn 2011, contained a section entitled Management Proposals. That was included in order to obtain comments and suggestions from the public that can be used in a subsequent document. The section has been removed from this final version because the Character Appraisal is intended as a descriptive document, rather than one that includes statements of new policy. A separate Management Proposals document for the area will be produced at a later date.

11.0 Local Consultation

An earlier draft of this Character Appraisal document was published in early 2012. This final version has been produced with the benefit of the comments received during that consultation. The Council intend to produce a further document containing management proposals for the area; a public meeting will be arranged to inform the preparation of that document.

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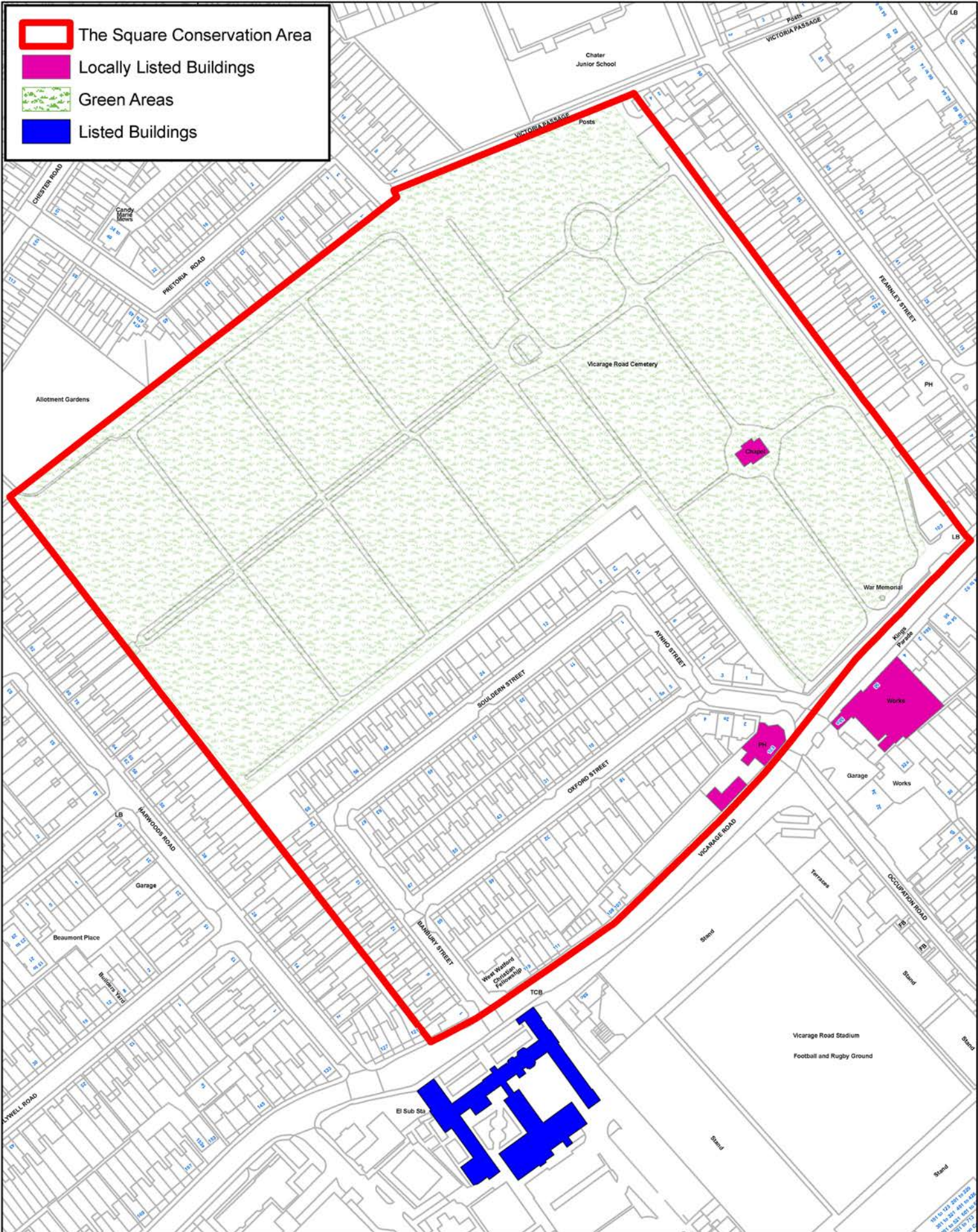
Ordnance Survey, 1914.

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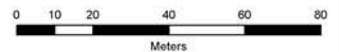
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- The Square Conservation Area
- Locally Listed Buildings
- Green Areas
- Listed Buildings

The Square Conservation Area



Scale: 1:1,992
at A4

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