

# Wantage Neighbourhood Plan



## Conservation SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most historic properties are concentrated in Wantage town centre or village centres - easier to protect with conservation areas.</li> <li>• South and west ranges of the square not significantly altered since the 19th century.</li> <li>• Important archaeological sites located near the Ridgeway - high national public awareness and tourist interest encourages protection.</li> <li>• Vale and national policies give high priority to conservation of heritage.</li> <li>• Strong local groups promote conservation of heritage, e.g. Wilts &amp; Berks Canal Trust, Friends of the Ridgeway, historical and archaeological groups.</li> <li>• The award-winning Museum and events such as the Dickensian Evening raise awareness of Wantage's historic character and hence enthusiasm for its conservation.</li> <li>• The district is relatively affluent and property is valuable, which is an incentive to care for it.</li> <li>• The town's history is well-documented and there is plenty of literature available.</li> <li>• The town's eastern, southern and western approaches are attractive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General ignorance of listing system and responsibilities it imposes on owners of historic properties, despite copious information available if looked for.</li> <li>• Lack of support for owners of domestic listed buildings.</li> <li>• Shortage and high cost of traditional building skills and local materials, e.g. English elm, lime plasterers. Modern alternatives trap damp and damage historic structures.</li> <li>• Lack of public awareness of historic buildings in less prominent areas such as Mill Street - it is easy never to look above pavement level.</li> <li>• Recession has exacerbated neglect - empty shops.</li> <li>• Modern tarmac pavements prevent old walls from breathing. Renewal often means a new layer of tarmac, resulting eventually in floor levels below pavement levels, leading to damp.</li> <li>• Heavy goods vehicles cause vibration and pollution - especially at bottom of Mill Street.</li> <li>• Centuries-old trees in Conservation Areas rapidly being lost to disease and not being replaced - no tree planting policy.</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recovery from recession means more prosperity, care and repair.</li> <li>• Public could be made more aware of conservation issues and responsibilities of owners to listed buildings, perhaps with displays at the Museum or leafleting.</li> <li>• Development of tourist industry would further incentivise proper maintenance.</li> <li>• New housing developments could increase demand for shops and hence value and status of commercial and residential properties.</li> <li>• Empty buildings in Alfred Street could be saved from dereliction by Council intervention. This would also promote commerce by improving pedestrian circulation.</li> <li>• Community Assets strategy could be used to purchase and protect vulnerable features, e.g. pubs.</li> <li>• Community Land Trusts could be established - self-funded redevelopments, combining housing with community spaces, e.g. Convent.</li> <li>• Crab Hill development and Science Vale Oxford would divert traffic away from town centre - less pollution, vibration.</li> <li>• Park &amp; Ride at Grove Technology Park could reduce pollution in the town centre.</li> <li>• New trees could be planted where old ones have been removed.</li> <li>• Tree Preservation Orders could be used to protect ancient trees, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Development of eco materials, e.g. limecrete, clay paints, may bridge gap between traditional and modern building materials and make sympathetic repairs more feasible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressure from central government to convert and update old housing stock for residential use - large, non-local commercial developers uninterested in conservation and may actively subvert it.</li> <li>• Local authorities apparently unable or unwilling to prevent damage to or destruction of historic buildings, even in Conservation Areas, e.g. 16th-century(?) Blanshards building, inappropriate doors and double glazing in some properties. Enforcement officers need to deal with these issues.</li> </ul>