

---

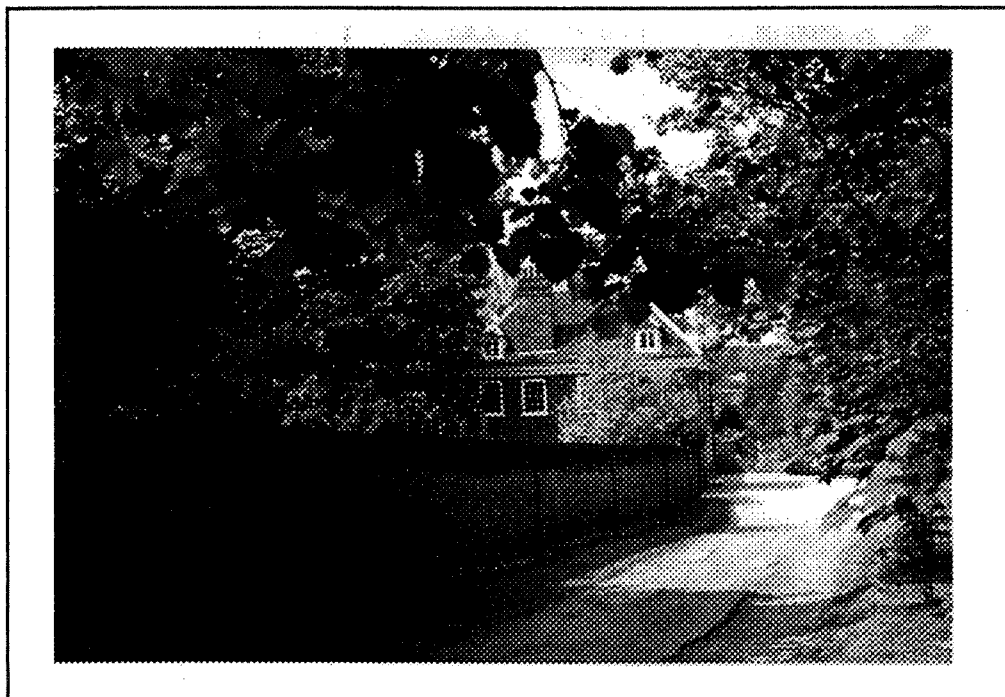
---

# Conservation Area Character Survey

# CLAPTON MILL

---

---



## What are Conservation Areas?

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest which are considered worthy of preservation or enhancement. They are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Within conservation areas there are special controls on some alterations to buildings and their demolition or partial demolition and on works to trees. The Council's Heritage Guidance Note on conservation areas gives further details of the specific controls that apply.

Designation of a conservation area does not preclude the possibility of new development, but such development must be designed positively to enhance the special character of the area.

## The Purpose of This Survey

This conservation area character survey describes the main features of special architectural and historic interest which justifies the designation of Clapton Mill as a conservation area.

The survey is intended to complement the approved policies for conservation areas in the Council's Wycombe District Local Plan. These Policies are the primary means of safeguarding the special character of our conservation areas.

The survey is also intended to be used as an aid in development control decision making. Proposals for schemes positively to enhance the character and appearance of Clapton Mill Conservation Area will be produced in the future in consultation with councillors, local residents and other interested parties.



## HISTORY

The earliest reliable indication of any building in the area of the river is a record of a mill in 1719 owned by Groner Steyn. This was probably Clapton Mill itself. At this time the mill was likely used for the production of iron wire. Groner Steyn sold the mill in 1735 when it was described as one of the best mill sites on the river with a powerful head of water. In 1748 three mills were recorded as being on the site together with the mansion house and three coach houses with granaries above. In 1764 the mill buildings were partly converted to the manufacture of paper. The 1803 enclosure map depicts five mills on the site. Two of the mills were used for the production of paper. The others were metal mills used for the production of wire.

By 1818 all the mills were converted to paper mills. The then mill owner, William Venables installed a new water wheel which would be powerful enough to power the new Fourdrinier machinery required for the paper making industry. The keystone of the arch over the wheel pits on the mill building bears the date 1818 and the initials W V.

In 1862 the mills are recorded as being used for the manufacture of electro-plated ware and employed about 200 persons, mostly boys. At around this time it is believed that Clapton Cottage was used as the managers house for the mills and Mill Cottage was used as the gate keepers house. Two large iron gate posts still stand outside the cottage. By 1876 all of the smaller mill buildings had disappeared leaving only the main mill, Clapton Mill. In 1915 Wainwrights Ltd used the mill building for furniture manufacture and during the First World War the building was used for making aeroplane propellers and wings. In 1921 a fire destroyed about half of the mill building and was only halted by the brick wall which partitioned the building. Probably as a consequence of the fire the mill site was marked as disused on a 1925 ordnance survey map.

The mansion house, Clapton Revel was probably built for Groner Steyn around the same time as the mill was built. The Old Coach House nearby was first erected as a brick and timber barn in the 17th century and later converted to a coach house for the mansion in the early 18th century. An all wood barn was constructed to adjoin the east side of the original building at around the same time. The Old Coach House is likely to have been used as an Inn during its history.

The area is now wholly residential and in-fill development has occurred over the years. Nevertheless the area retains its sense of history as an important part of the industrial heritage of the River Wye.

Clapton Mill was first designated as a conservation area in 1992.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

As part of the industrial heritage of the River Wye the site is of great importance. Much can be learnt from the mill site and the remaining buildings. Old wheel pits indicate where water wheels once were and remains show how the mill used to operate. Evidence of the 1921 fire is still visible in the mill and foundations of the destroyed section of the building are still evident.

Later uses of the mill are confirmed by artifacts found in the mill building. A circular saw from the mills reproduction furniture days was found, also a dynamo which generated power for Clapton Revel after the mill no longer served a commercial purpose.

There are no known sites of special archaeological interest or Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the conservation area. However in the event of archaeological deposits being found the Council may require archaeological conditions attaching to planning permissions where appropriate, including watching briefs, excavation or similar recording procedures.

## ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Clapton Mill has a very distinct character apart from its surroundings. It has a semi-rural appearance but the quiet ambience that would normally be associated with such a setting is disturbed in the northern part of the conservation area by the noise from the motorway which lies to the north.

The key features of the conservation area in its eastern part are the mill building itself and the presence of the River Wye. The buildings once associated with the mill also make an important contribution to the character of this part of the conservation area as do the presence of mature trees.

The western part of the conservation area is dominated by the River Wye and the header reservoir which fed into the mill race. The formal gardens of the grade II\* Clapton Revel run along the north side of this reservoir. The mature trees at the western most part are visually important and many are protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

## ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

The most important building architecturally is the mansion house, Clapton Revel, built in the early 1700s with later 18th century alterations. The house is built on the hill side over looking the mill and the rest of the conservation area to the south. The mansion is of regional significance being listed Grade II\*. The mill building itself although not listed is significant to the conservation area and is central to its character. Mill View and Garden Cottage are dwellings converted from the old drying house associated with the industrial past of the area. The Old Coach House too is a converted building which as its name indicates was one of the three coaching houses in the area serving the mill activities.

At the southern boundary of the conservation area is Revel Cottage, an attractive early 19th century dwelling within a pleasant setting next to the river. It is thought to have been built as a gardener's cottage for Clapton Revel.

## MATERIALS

Brick predominates as a building material in the area, however the historic buildings at the heart of the conservation area, Clapton Mill, Mill View, Garden Cottage and part of the Old Coach House have first storeys timber clad. Mill Cottage and Wye Stream Cottage at the entrance of the conservation area are of brick and flint with attractive bargeboarding at the gable ends. Roofing materials are of tile or slate. The mixture of materials in this part of the conservation area is part its special character. However, modern materials are best avoided in this historic area with its semi-rural characteristics as they would tend to jar against the use of traditional materials which blend more appropriately with the surroundings.

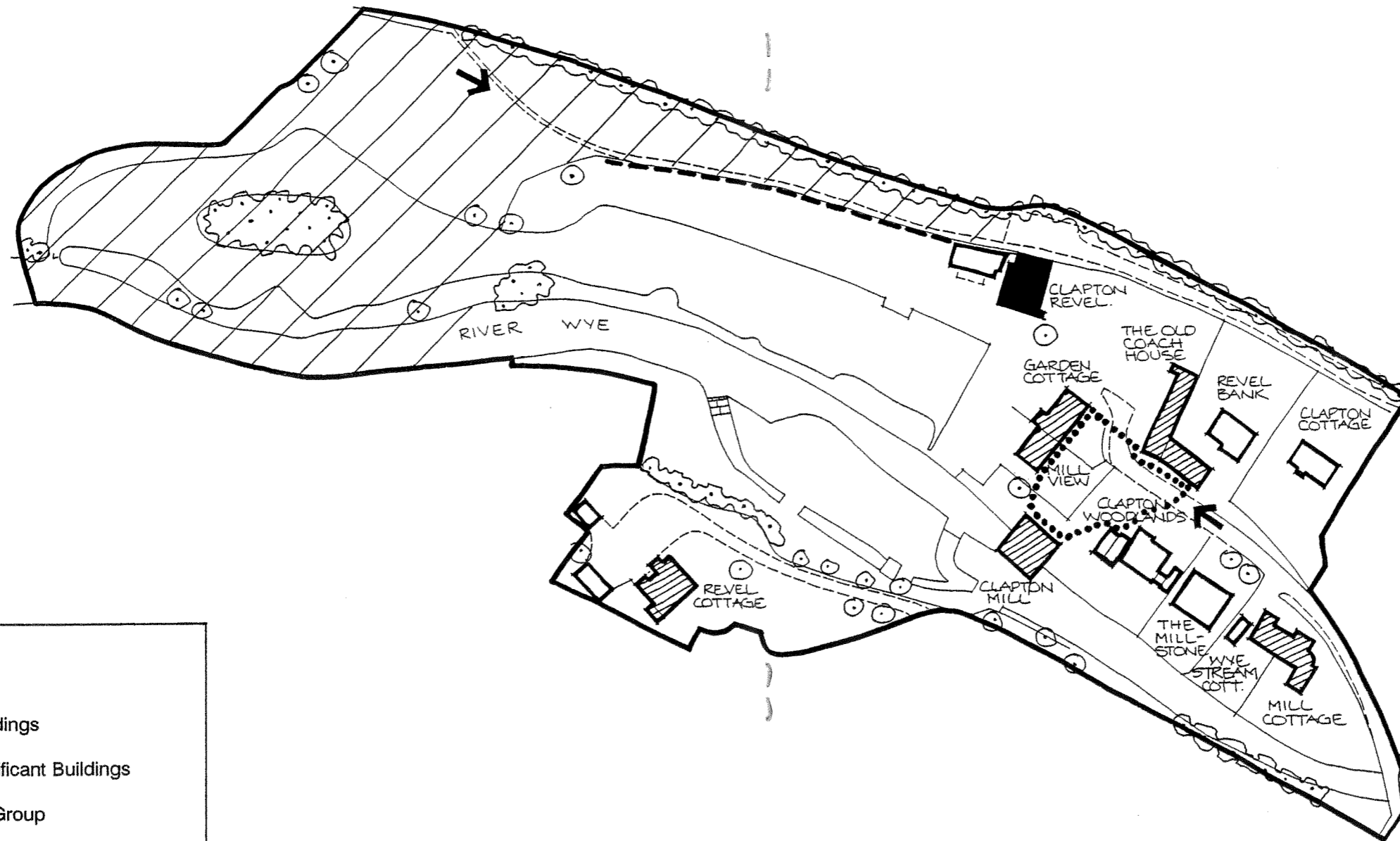
In accordance with the semi-rural nature of the area surfacing of driveways and the like should be informal, such as a surface dressing of shingle or where a more hard wearing surface is required pavements would be recommended. Tarmac and concrete should be avoided as they are unlikely to preserve the character of the area.

## TREES AND VEGETATION







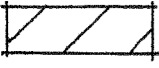

Trees are an important part of the character of the conservation area. Many of those to the west of the conservation area are protected as are those in the vicinity of Revel Cottage. Mature trees throughout the conservation area are an essential part of its character and combine to give the semi-rural and enclosed ambience of the area as a distinct identity apart from the surrounding development.

The trees and shrubs along the northern boundary of the site are important in screening the

# Clapton Mill Conservation Area Character Survey Map



## Clapton Mill

-  Listed Buildings
-  Other Significant Buildings
-  Important Group
-  Important Wall
-  Important Trees & Tree Groups
-  Significant Views
-  Area with potential for Nature Conservation
-  Boundary of Conservation Area

motorway embankment and for providing some noise mitigation and filtering the polluted air from the motorway.

Mature trees along the southern boundary of the river bank provide a sense of enclosure and containment of the conservation area, setting it apart from the surrounding urban development. Nevertheless there are opportunities for some clearance of vegetation to open up views of the river.

Tree planting at the western boundary would help to further screen the retail park to the west.

### **OPEN SPACE AND AREAS OF WATER**

The main area of open space in the conservation area is to the west and comprises the mill pond and the open areas that surround it including the gardens of Clapton Revel and Revel Cottage and over-grown areas further west. It is all in private ownership although a public footpath to the north of the conservation area provides some limited public access.

The Council's River Wye Study has identified that the scrubland area at the Clapton Mill Conservation Area is particularly attractive to wildlife as it is relatively undisturbed, and contains a number of different habitats afforded by the herbaceous plants, the mill pond and the island set within it. The Study recommends that a detailed ecological survey is carried out, subject to the owners permission, to assess its importance for wildlife.

The area has a great deal of recreational and educational potential. The River Wye Study suggests that an interesting circular walk incorporating both historic and wildlife interests could be created. Areas for pond dipping and water testing could be incorporated as an educational resource for local schools.

The open area and waterways at Clapton Mill are important to the setting, character and historical

context of the conservation area and also have a likely importance for nature conservation. Policy L5 of the Wycombe District Local Plan seeks to protect the river environment and states that "planning permission will not normally be given for development which would adversely affect the visual quality, amenity, wildlife habitat or public enjoyment of ...the River Wye. All opportunities should be taken as part of development proposals to enhance the river environment and/or to increase public access to rivers and riverbanks."

### **GROUPINGS**

There is an identifiable cohesive group of buildings at the heart of the conservation area. It includes the grouping of historic buildings - the mill, the old drying house and the old coach house. Although much altered from their original state they hark back to the industrial past of the conservation area and clearly share a common identity. It is a very close knit grouping where the buildings themselves predominate.

### **VIEWS**

The topography of the area which is in part steeply sloping and well treed does not allow for many views within the conservation area.

The view of the grouping of historic buildings from the private drive is important to the character of the conservation area.

The footpath close to the northern boundary of the conservation area allows views of Clapton Revel in an open setting which are important to preserve.

There are many opportunities to enhance views within the conservation area. For example the view of the river from the bridge near Mill Cottage could be improved.

## **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL ADVICE**

The policies and proposals of the Wycombe District Local Plan are the primary source of reference for development control advice. In addition the Council's approved Heritage Strategy is seen as a supporting document to the plan.

This character survey is also intended to provide broad guidance of an informal nature in considering new development in the conservation area. Below is a brief check list taking account of the above text.

To safeguard, preserve and enhance the appearance and special character of the Clapton Mill conservation area:-

- In the conservation area higher standards of design are required as it is the function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance the special character as identified in this appraisal.
- Materials for any new building works or surfacing must be sympathetic to the semi-rural character of the area. Traditional local building materials such as brick, flint and weather-boarding and for roofing, tile and slate are likely to be most appropriate. Surfacing should be informal in this semi-rural area and tarmac and concrete should be avoided.
- Inappropriate replacement windows and doors can damage the character of a conservation area. Traditional natural materials should be used in order to safeguard the special character of the conservation area. Generally speaking painted timber windows and doors are appropriate and modern substitutes such as UPVC and aluminium are not.
- All trees within conservation areas are protected and certain trees

within the Clapton Mill conservation area are further protected by Tree Preservation Orders. As individual mature trees and tree groups are a special characteristic of this conservation area new development should preserve existing trees and not present a risk to their continuation taking into account future tree growth.

- Any development close to the River Wye or the mill pond must preserve or enhance its visual quality, amenity, wildlife habitat and public enjoyment.
- New development which will be likely to have a visual effect on the identified important group will be carefully controlled. Any development that is acceptable must be designed not as a separate entity, but should be sympathetic in form, scale and materials with the existing building in the group.
- Special care must be taken to ensure that views within the conservation area are not spoiled. Those of particular importance are identified on the survey map.

---

---

## NOTES

### FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Wycombe District Council's Planning, Transport and Development service has a number of publications which offer further guidance. Ask the Conservation Officer for further information on which Heritage Guidance Notes are currently available and appropriate.

The **Conservation Officer** is always pleased to give advice on all heritage matters and can be contacted on 01494 421578 or seen by appointment in the Council Offices or on site.

Development Control matters within the conservation area are the responsibility of the **West Team** who can be contacted on 01494 421517.

Planning Policy matters are the responsibility of the **Policy and Environment Unit** who can be contacted on 01494 421545.

The River Wye Study compiled by the Planning Department and Leisure Department has identified an opportunity for nature conservation at the western part of the Clapton Mill Conservation Area. Contact the **Planning and Projects Unit** on 01494 421521