

## 2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 Chorleywood Common was designated a Conservation Area in 1976, with a minor amendment in 1991. It is a unique area within Three Rivers District, which is of both historic and architectural importance. Its continuing preservation and enhancement is of the utmost importance.

## 3.0 History and Layout of Area

- 3.1 Chorleywood Common is thought to date to the Domesday Book. However, archaeological evidence for Belgic remains in Chorleywood in juxtaposition to Roman Villas on the southern slopes of the valley may indicate earlier settlements. Finds from the Common itself are limited to fragments of Roman Samian pottery.



Views of Christchurch



The Cottage, Homefield Road

- 3.2 One of the earliest written references to the Common appears in the Statute of Merton (1236). The Lord of the Manor was given the right to enclose and plough up village “waste” land, providing that enough common pasture land was left for the commoners. Evidence of early agricultural use is seen in the strip lynchets on the steeper slopes of the Common, now covered by scrubland.

- 3.3 Chorleywood Common was given the Norman name of “Bosco de Chert” (Churl’s Wood) within the area of “Rychemareworde” (Rickmansworth), where people in the Chess and Colne Valleys tended their pigs. Other research into the history of place names include “Ceorla Leah” as the derivative for “Chorleywood” referring to a clearing or a meadow in the forest and like other places name “Chorley” there is a possibility that the area was royal property. 1524 deeds show Chorleywood as “Charlewoode” which changes to “Charleywood”. The name “Chorleywood” was decided upon at the first meeting of the Urban District Council in 1913.
- 3.4 Maps depicting Chorleywood Common survive from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They act as a useful tool for determining the development of the built form of the area. Many of these maps only name Chorleywood and not the Common. John Oliver’s Survey of the County of Hertfordshire delineates Chorleywood as a town or village, connected by road to Rickmansworth, which contains woodland.

- 3.5 Chorleywood Common, if the place name evidence is taken into account, was used for pasture rather than arable cultivation. Chorleywood Common, as it appears today with scrubland and young trees, is a result of the decline in sheep grazing after the First World War and frequent fires on the Common in the 1930's which encouraged many birch seedlings.
- 3.6 The Commoners or copyhold tenants possess rights of common usage, conveyed with titles of property "from time immemorial". In 1965 Chorleywood Common was registered as common land under the 1965 Commons Registration Act to protect these rights.
- 3.7 The extent of the Common has been partially affected by the transfer of parcels of land between families during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1786, Mr. Wilson agreed with the Commoners to exchange certain parcels of land for parts of the Common upon an annual payment of 3s. 6d. and in 1824, Chorleywood House exchanged part of the Common for a piece of Colliers (part of Collyers field, now known as Colleyland and originally part of the Berkhamsted poor estate adjoining Hole Farm). Large estates also controlled much of the land around the north-east of the Common, e.g. Chorleywood House, Chorleywood College built on the Cedars Estate, and Christ Church. The existing brick and flint walls provide evidence of the extent of their estates, although modern development has often unfortunately hidden the open nature of the grounds.



Views across Chorleywood Common

- 3.8 Ribbon developments along the edge of Chorleywood Common have historic origins. For example, Dog Kennel Lane is named after the Arklow Kennels which were home to a famous pack of fox hounds circa 1880's. Likewise, the Old Berkeley Hounds, owned by Lord Lonsdale and later by Lord Malden in 1862, are likely to have taken advantage of the Common for exercise. Old Berkeley Cottage and Berkeley House are surviving buildings which contributed to the use of Chorleywood Common as land to keep animals.



Berkeley House

## 4.0 Character and Appearance of the Area

4.1 As with other open commons in Three Rivers and throughout Hertfordshire, the overwhelming character of the Chorleywood Common Conservation Area is rural, centering around an open common, with core buildings on the fringes dating from the Medieval to Edwardian and Victorian periods. Some of these buildings are the result of urban growth from neighbouring towns, whilst others are isolated remnants of how Chorleywood Village has grown.

### Views

4.2 Views within, into and out of the Common and surrounding areas can add to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is important that these views are maintained and not disturbed by inappropriate forms of development. Views are created through the gaps in the woodland settings, as detailed in the picture on the front page, which is viewed from the cricket ground. The changes in topography of the land create interesting vistas within the Conservation Area. Specifically along the eastern boundary of the Common along Dog Kennel Lane, the road is set between two areas of land which increase in height. The landscape to the east of Dog Kennel Lane contains a mixture of residential dwellings which are partially obscured from view by vegetation. The sporadic layout of these buildings maintains the open nature of the Conservation Area. To the west of the road is the Common. The ranging land levels provide interesting views, especially surrounding the dells. The views along Rickmansworth Road, to the north of the Common are marred by the road signage and visually intrusive boundary treatments.

4.3 To the west of the Common again the variations in land levels create an interesting feature within the Conservation Area. The layout of the dwellings, by Old Common Road and their varying heights relate to the topography of the land level creating an interesting landscape as viewed from the Common. Chorleywood Bottom is located within the bottom of what appears to be a valley, with the Common to the north and the land to the south, such as Furze View, being set on higher levels. The variations in land levels of the surrounding area are especially prominent from the southern section of the Common. Extensive views of the areas outside of the Conservation Area, such as the residential areas around Chorleywood and the open field land to the south west of the Conservation Area can be viewed from the Common. There are extensive views of the Common from the area of open field land to the south east of the Conservation Area.

### Character and Appearance

4.4 The open and rural nature is a prominent characteristic of the Conservation Area formed by the openness of the Common. The older original buildings within the Conservation Area reflect the historical agricultural use of the Common and are located irregularly throughout the Conservation Area. These buildings are generally Grade II Listed. The architectural features of a number of these buildings are discussed in detail in the separate Character Zone analysis below. It is recognised that the original timber windows and architectural features, such as the chimneys, play an important role in maintaining the historic architectural features of the Conservation Area. The arrival of the Metropolitan Railway line resulted in a change in the urban form particularly around Station Approach. Chorleywood Bottom reflects the old village style hamlet of the Conservation Area whilst the other buildings within the Conservation Area were constructed at a later date. The character of the northern part of the Conservation Area has also developed following the development of Rickmansworth Road (A404) creating an urbanising feature within the rural aspect of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area also contains Art and Crafts style buildings located around the Conservation Area. The architectural features of these buildings are considered to be of a benefit to the amenities of the Conservation Area and integrate with the design and integrity of the older style buildings located along the fringes of the Common. The predominant character of the architectural features within the Conservation Area are that of Mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century architecture.