

Binsey Conservation Area Appraisal

Consultation Draft - July 2026



Figure 1: View of "The Church and The Perch" sign on approach to Binsey

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Figure 2: View of Binsey Cottages

Executive Summary

Key Positive Features

Agricultural Origins

Very small conservation area whose layout, building pattern and open space has evolved organically, dictated by agricultural use.

Green Space and Rural Character

Two vast green fields in an open setting which makes an important contribution to its agricultural character.

Untouched Appearance

Flooding constraints prohibit major development, making Binsey appear “stuck in time” despite proximity to Oxford city centre.

Topography and Views

Flat topography and low buildings create a wide expansive atmosphere and offer unobstructed views of the village and its surroundings.

Proximity to River

The proximity to the River Thames enables expansive views towards the city centre and has been a vital component in the development of Binsey.

Greenery and Foliage

Abundance of greenery and foliage contributes to rural character and appearance of Binsey.

Agricultural Buildings and Traditional Materials

Buildings are a key part of the agricultural heritage of Binsey. They have historically served a variety of purposes, are constructed of traditional materials and have a characterful appearance.

Boundary Treatments

Boundaries are defined by wooden fences, hedges, or stone walls, complementing the traditional buildings and rural village character.

Glimpsed Views

Organic development of buildings leads to large gaps between properties, through which glimpsed views of outhouses and former agricultural buildings are visible.

“Homemade” Signage and Street Furniture

Lack of homogenous street furniture and instances of “homemade” signage contributes to the village character.

Literary Connections

Literary connections to G. Manley Hopkins and L. Carroll, and the Legend of St Frideswide.



Figure 3: A view of The Perch from the public path

Introduction

Statement of Special Interest

With its irregular line of characterful cottages set amid green fields, Binsey appears as a village almost frozen in time within the boundaries of Oxford. In his 1837 book *Memorials of Oxford*, James Ingram- English academic and later President of Trinity College- noted of Binsey: *“In 1771 there were only twelve houses in the parish, and they have not increased much since.”* Nearly two centuries later, his observation still rings true.

Binsey was designated a conservation area on 23rd February 1981, in recognition of the village’s remarkable survival. The report of the City Architect and Planning Officer to Planning Committee on reads as follows:

“The survival of Binsey within the Green Belt and floodplain is precious. The attitude of the major landowners, Christ Church, has been an important influence in its preservation. By virtue of its survival, situation, and remarkable character a very strong case for its continued preservation... can be made for Binsey.”

The designated area includes the small hamlet to the northwest, composed of a handful of residences, agricultural buildings, and the village pub: The Perch. However, the built environment represents only a small part of the conservation area, the rest of which comprises open green fields. A single road, Binsey Lane, runs through the hamlet, which can also be approached on foot via a path leading from the Thames River Path to the east.

Approximately half a mile to the north stands the Grade I listed medieval Church of St Margaret of Antioch. Although it lies outside the conservation area boundary, the protection afforded by its Grade I listing is considered sufficient to ensure its preservation for the future.

Reason for Appraisal

The City Council has a statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to identify those parts of their area that are considered to have ‘special historic or architectural interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ and to designate these as conservation areas. Within these areas the 1990 act requires the Council to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area when exercising its function as a local planning authority.

This Conservation Area Appraisal defines the special historic and architectural interest of the area, including those features of its character and appearance that should be preserved. It also identifies negative features that detract from its character and appearance and issues that may affect it in future.

The government’s policy for managing conservation areas is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (adopted in 2012). Chapter 16 paragraph 202 states that Heritage assets should be “conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.”

The NPPF states that local planning authorities should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and to conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In determining planning applications, it directs local planning authorities to take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

In compliance with the planning policy framework, this appraisal provides a public record of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset including an assessment of the features that contribute to its significance. The appraisal conforms to Historic England guidance as set out in *Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management* (February 2019).

This appraisal will be used by the Council to ensure that the qualities and local distinctiveness of the historic environment are considered and contribute towards the spatial vision of local plan documents. It should ensure that investment and enhancement in the Binsey Conservation Area is informed by a detailed understanding of the area’s special interest. It will be used when determining planning applications affecting the area and should inform the preparation of proposals for new development. Planning applications should be informed by and refer to the appraisal when explaining the design concept.

The appraisal cannot mention every building or feature within the conservation area. Any omission should not be taken to imply that it is not of any interest or value to the character of the area.

Local Community Involvement

Fieldwork was undertaken in April 2024 using the City Council's 'Character assessment Toolkit', a standardised questionnaire used to collect information on the positive and negative contribution of different features of the environment to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Following compilation of archival research and fieldwork, a first draft was produced in April 2026.

Following the preparation of the first draft, a formal consultation was undertaken between May and June 2026. The draft appraisal was available to view online on the Council website. The appraisal consultation was advertised on the Council website, on social media and via local news outlets. Comments from the consultation were summarised, which were used to inform the final draft of the Appraisal which was presented to **TBD** who endorsed it on **TBD**.

Context

Location and Setting

Binsey is located in the northwest of Oxford about 2.4 km from the city centre. It is sited to the west of the Thames River across from Port Meadow and about 1.6 km southwest of the ruins of Godstow Abbey.

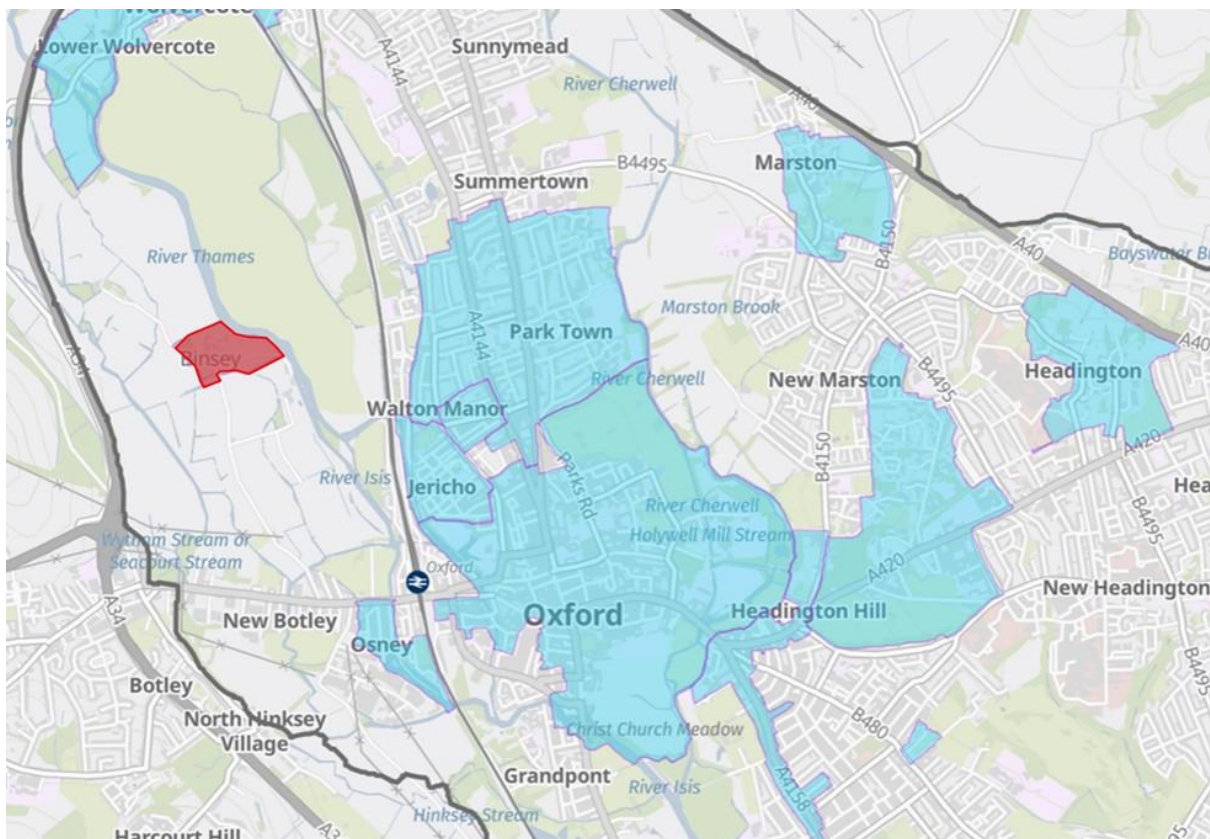


Figure 4: Binsey Conservation Area (Outlined in red)

The conservation area has a distinct “boot” shape, with the boundaries dictated by the river Thames in the east, and field boundaries to the north, south and west.

The primary approach to Binsey is from Binsey Lane which runs north from Botley Road through the hamlet and terminates at St Margaret of Antioch Church beyond. On approach, views of expansive fields to the east and west can be glimpsed through gaps in the hedgerows which line the lane. Crossing a small bridge, the field of vision opens, offering views towards the row of cottages and farmhouses nestled in green fields.

To the north, the former medieval fields are now divided into smaller fields separated by hedgerows. To the south also sit open fields which were once the historic islands of Langney and Medley. To the west lies Binsey Leys- lower lying land that was historically used as pasture rather than arable- and to the east is the River Thames and Port Meadow.

Binsey also lies within an “100-year flood” plain and can suffer severely during storms. In extreme cases, the hamlet can become inaccessible even to emergency road vehicles. Writing about Binsey in 1872, Herbert Hurst remarked on “*the doleful aspect of the place when it was hemmed in by floods.*” Its susceptibility to flooding prevents major development and is part of the reason Binsey has been so well preserved.

Geology, Topography and Archaeological Interest

Binsey lies on a sedimentary bedrock of Mudstone formed between 166.1 and 157.3 million years ago during the Jurassic period. Above this, the hamlet lies partly on sand and gravel deposits and partly on river alluvium formed of clay, silt, sand, and gravel. The terrain is flat with generally well-maintained paths, but with a few muddy spots. It is situated in the Thames floodplain, with floods caused partly by the silting up of the river.

Binsey is located within an extensive landscape of parchmarks that have been identified from aerial photographs taken from the 1930s onwards. The first photographs of nearby Port Meadow were taken by Major G Allen in 1933 and subsequent surveys and analysis of Binsey by D Riley and P Rhodes in the 1940s. The wider landscape of Port Meadow and fields south of Binsey show barrow and ring ditch cemeteries of Bronze Age date and enclosures, fields, droveways and hut circles of Iron Age date. Parchmark features comprising huts, tracks and fields are also visible around the hamlet.

Although Binsey is not mentioned until after Domesday it is likely that it was regarded as a holy site by the end of the 11th century. A swine herder’s hut in a wood at Binsey is recorded in a 12th century recounting of the Legend of St Frideswide, and an entry referring to lands held by St Frideswide’s, comprising 105 acres of meadow and a spinney of eight acres with eighteen villans, is thought to refer to the land of St Margaret’s Chapel.

Excavations carried out in 1987 surrounding St Mary’s Church indicated that the enclosure was potentially established in the Iron Age or Roman period but was subsequently provided with a revetted rampart in the early-middle Saxon period. Radiocarbon dating from animal bone fragments recovered from the ditch fills gave dates of 80-530 cal AD and 900-1220 cal. A silver penny or sceatla (c710-60) has also been recovered from Binsey.

Binsey remained a small hamlet throughout the medieval period. Although early settlement was probably linked to St Mary’s Church, it appears that Binsey was largely abandoned in favour of settlement at Seacourt. It was assessed at half a hide under the control of St Frideswide’s in 1279 while a 15th century cartulary suggests that the hamlet had belonged to St Frideswide’s since its foundation in the 8th century. The medieval village formed part of the St Frideswide’s estate until its dissolution when it passed to Christ Church.

The Conservation Area has not been subject to significant archaeological investigation. A trial trench was excavated in 2019 prior to the building of a new rear

extension to the Perch which revealed late medieval and early post-medieval pits and ditches along with a small amount of pottery, animal bone and clay pipe. A building appraisal undertaken at The Perch in 2013 suggested that the presence of a cruck-type frame visible at second floor level may indicate a medieval origin for the building, with the northern extension and south-wing added in the 17th century.

The hamlet can be assessed as having a high potential for significant archaeology related to prehistoric, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval activity.



Figure 5: Bronze Age occupation and barrows; Iron Age occupation. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Historical Development

Binsey's name reflects its origins as an island during the Anglo-Saxon period. The place-name survived the Norman Conquest in various forms, including "Beneseye" (1122), "Buneseie" (1141), and "Beneseya" (1291). It is generally understood to mean "Byni's island," with the suffix "-ey" denoting an island.

The earliest evidence of settlement at Binsey is found in the legend of St Frideswide, who is said to have founded a monastery there in the early 8th century.

According to tradition, Frideswide was the daughter of a 7th-century King of Mercia. Raised by a holy woman, she grew up to be deeply devout and renowned for her beauty. A Saxon prince named Algar sought her hand, and when she refused him, he invaded Oxford in pursuit. Frideswide fled the city by boat, seeking refuge at Binsey, where she lived in seclusion for three years. During this time, she is said to have taken shelter in a deserted hut, developing spiritual wisdom and the ability to heal.

While at Binsey, Frideswide is believed to have caused a spring of healing water to emerge. The well became associated with miraculous cures for those who drank from it or prayed there. Today, it survives within the grounds of St Margaret's Church and remains a site of pilgrimage. The well is also thought to have inspired the "Treacle Well" in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.



Figure 6: St Margaret's Well

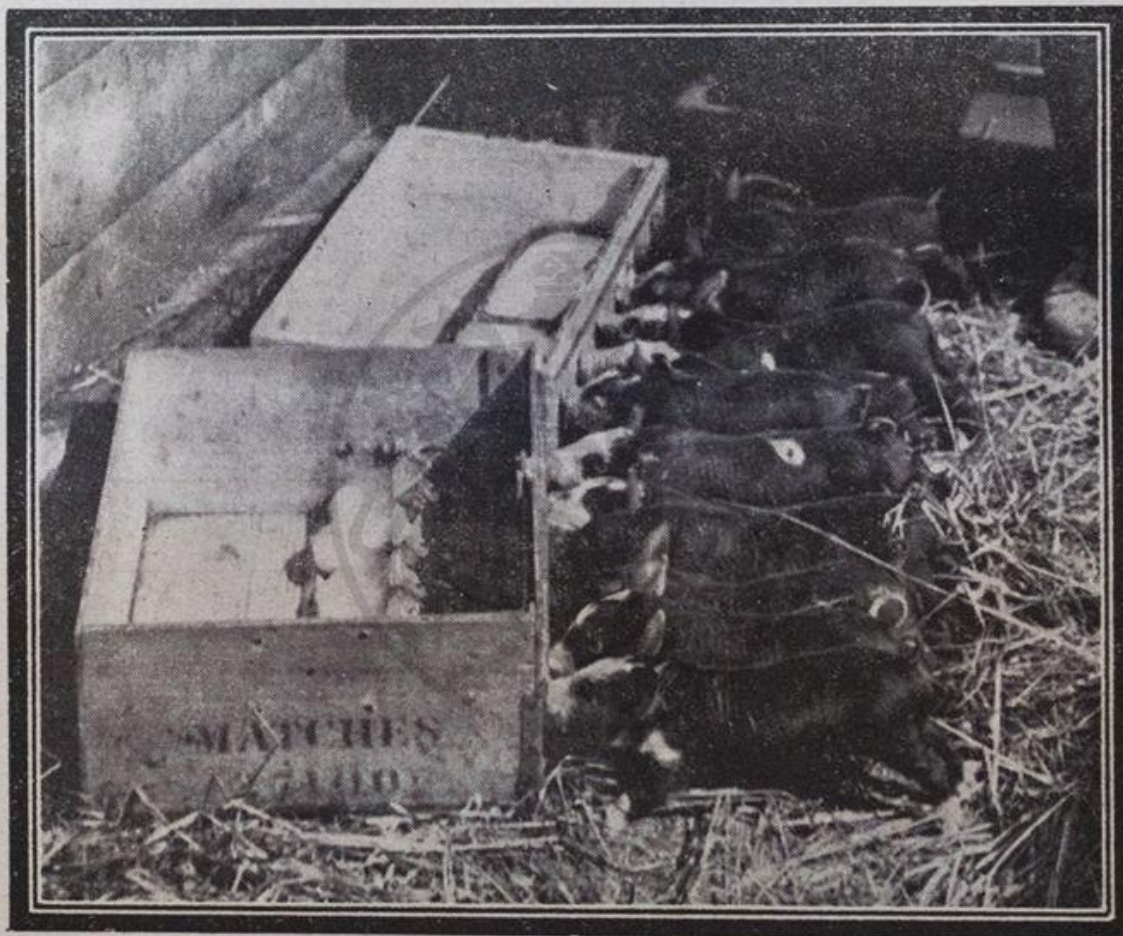
Archaeological evidence supports the early occupation of the area: an early 8th-century sceat (small silver coin) discovered at Binsey suggests settlement at this time, when inhabitants would have sought higher ground within an otherwise marshy landscape. By the 12th century, the township comprised the islands of Binsey to the north and Langney to the south, defined by tributaries of the Thames.

Binsey formed part of the extensive landholdings of St Frideswide's Priory, being confirmed to the priory at its refoundation in 1122, while Langney was granted between c.1190 and 1200. Medley, located to the south, was also closely associated, having been granted to the priory in 1139. These relationships are reflected in medieval and early modern taxation records, in which the inhabitants of Binsey and Medley were often recorded together. Following the dissolution of the priory in 1524, these estates passed to Cardinal College (now Christ Church), and the area became known as "Binsey Manor", encompassing the hamlet, surrounding agricultural land, and St Margaret's Well.

Although geographically close to Oxford, Binsey historically lay within the separate liberty of Northgate Hundred, alongside Medley, North and South Oseney, Walton, and Holywell. In 1418, areas beyond the city boundary, including Binsey, were assigned to ecclesiastical parishes: with Binsey being attached to St Frideswide. However, over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, the jurisdiction of Oxford expanded, and by the 18th century Binsey fell within the "Ridden Boundary", which was formally recognised as the municipal boundary in 1832. In 1889 the city was divided into four electoral wards covering the north, east, south and west of the city. Binsey fell into the West Ward.

Agriculture has historically underpinned the character and economy of Binsey. In 1279, St Frideswide's Priory recorded 21 villein tenants in the settlement. The surrounding landscape comprised predominantly meadow, with arable land to the north and west which was subject to flooding. Rights of common were exercised on Port Meadow to the east, where residents grazed livestock, sometimes looked after by a herdsman employed by the village. However, disputes over these rights were a recurring feature from the 16th century onwards, particularly regarding access and intercommoning. Attempts by the city to restrict these rights- often physically by placing posts and rails at the entrances- continued into the late 17th and 18th centuries. This culminated in a legal confirmation of access rights in 1797, and disputes ceased after the ford was dredged out between Port Meadow and Binsey. Access rights were eventually formally resolved in 1970. By the early 19th century, approximately 120 acres of land in the area were held by Christ Church. Following enclosure, much of the former arable land was converted to pasture. Today, the fields of Binsey and some properties are still used for agricultural purposes by local farmers, including the nearby Medley Manor Farm to the south, however, most are now solely residential.

A LITTER OF SUCKING-PIGS.



On Mr. Skelcher's farm at Binsey, tenanted by Mr. Lansbury, a sow recently gave birth to a litter of 13. The sow and one porker, however, died. The rest of the litter have been safely nourished with the aid of babies' bottles. © Oxfordshire History Centre
porkers busy at work on the feeding bottles.—(O.J.I. photo.)

Figure 7: A Litter of Sucking-Pigs, Newspaper Article.

Binsey's population has remained consistently small. In 1381, forty-four inhabitants were assessed for the poll tax; by 1524, this had fallen to just five men, rising to thirteen by 1648. The population stood at fifty-five in 1801 and sixty-three in 1921, before declining to fewer than thirty by 1974.

The built environment has evolved incrementally. The Perch Inn, located within the hamlet, is understood to occupy the site of a medieval pilgrim hostel, with the present building dating largely from the 17th century, when it served travellers, agricultural labourers, and river workers; accessed both on foot via Binsey Lane or across Port Meadow, and via the Thames River where boats would be moored. It has been rebuilt on multiple occasions following fires in 1957, 1977 and 2007 and has formed a key feature of the hamlet for centuries.



Figure 8: Exterior view of The Perch Inn house in Binsey, during renovation work, 1978

Due to its small population, provision of education within Binsey was also limited. A Sunday school was recorded in 1814, and a short-lived day school operated between 1823 and the 1830's- presumably in the Old School House. For much of its history, children attended schools in Oxford, including St Frideswide's School in Osney, which operated from the late 19th century until the early 20th century.

Despite its proximity to Oxford, Binsey has experienced little modern development, as is evidenced by historic mapping, from Rocque's map of Berkshire (1761) through to modern Ordnance Survey maps. Today, Binsey remains a small rural hamlet characterised by a limited number of dwellings, agricultural land, and its historic association with the Thames landscape. Its survival with minimal alteration reflects both its physical constraints within the floodplain and the long-term stewardship of Christ Church. Modern activity remains modest in scale and dictated by the area's geography- including small local enterprises, such as Bossoms Boatyard: a boatbuilding and restoration business (est. 1830), and Medley Sailing Club (est. 1937). Binsey also has a strong sense of local community, with annual events such as the Binsey Fete, which celebrates community spirit and village life.



Figure 9: John Rocque's Map of Berkshire, 1761



Figure 10: OS Six-Inch Map, 1876. National Library of Scotland

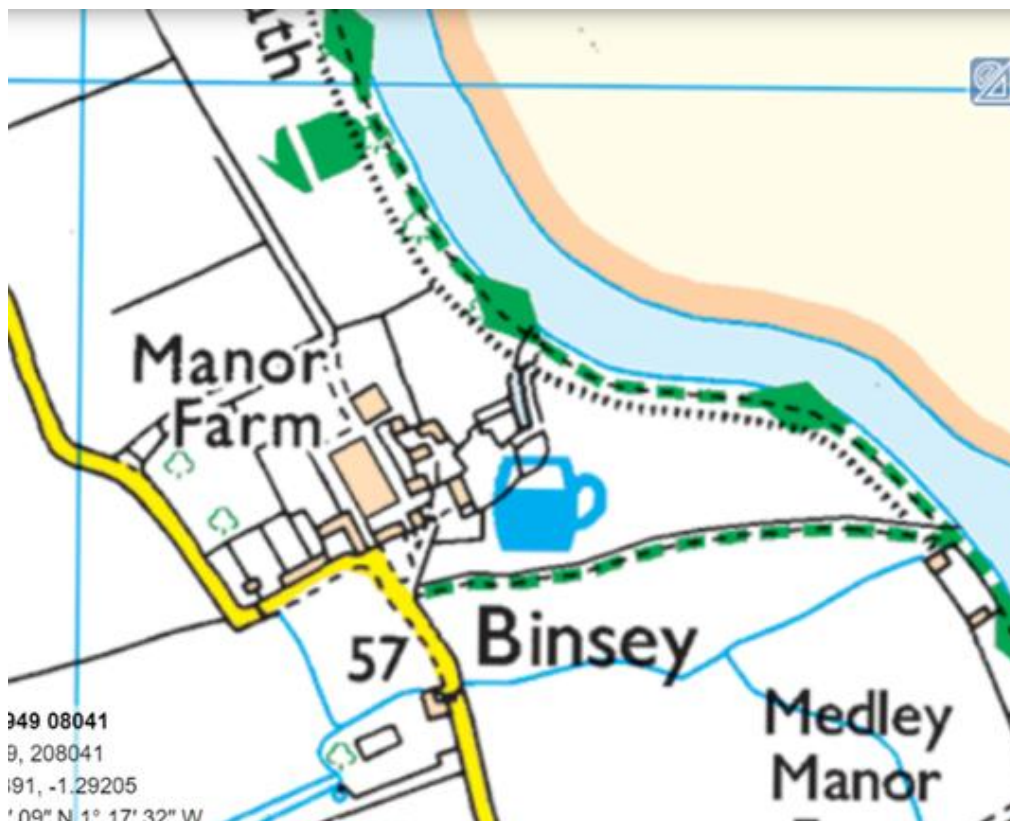


Figure 11: OS Maps Leisure (1:50,000/1:25,000), 2024. National Library of Scotland



Figure 12: Binsey Green Fete 2011. Photograph, 2011. Oxfordshire History Centre

Literary Connections

Binsey's tranquil, rural character has clearly left a lasting impression on those who have experienced it, having been immortalised in notable works of English literature. Its riverside setting, pastoral landscape, and relative seclusion from the city have inspired writers and contributed to its cultural significance, most prominently in the works of Lewis Carroll and Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

The stretch of the river above Medley is said to have been one of Lewis Carroll's favourite boating reaches and where he entertained Alice Liddell- the inspiration for the titular character- with the stories that would later form Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

The well at the Church of St Margaret is also widely identified as the "Treacle Well" described in the Dormouse's tale, while The Perch Inn is reputed to have been the venue for an early reading of *Through the Looking-Glass*.

Binsey Poplars

Binsey is also associated with the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose poem Binsey Poplars (1879) was inspired by an avenue of poplar trees that once lined the Thames between Oxford and Binsey. Their felling in 1879 prompted Hopkins to compose one of his most celebrated works, lamenting the loss of the landscape and reflecting a growing awareness of the impact of human intervention on the natural environment, particularly in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

Binsey Poplars

felled 1879

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
Of a fresh and following folded rank
Not spared, not one
That dandled a sandalled
Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow and river and wind-wandering weed-winding bank.
O if we but knew what we do
When we delve or hew—
Hack and rack the growing green!
Since country is so tender
To touch, her being so slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
To mend her we end her,
When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc unselfe
The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.

By Gerard Manley Hopkins

Spatial Analysis

Street Pattern and Layout

Binsey is designated a Conservation Area due to its rare survival and ‘untouched’ rural character, despite being within walking distance of the City Centre. The conservation area is divided into two distinct, informal zones which reflect its organic growth rather than a planned layout:

- Open Green space to the south including Binsey Green.
- Built-up area to the north, comprising vernacular cottages and agricultural buildings as well as The Perch public house

A wedge of green space also exists where Binsey Lane bifurcates, with one road leading to the Perch whilst the other leads beyond Binsey to the Church of St Margaret’s. This space contains a solitary tree and the “Church and the Perch” sign, which functions as an informal gateway feature, welcoming visitors into the hamlet and signposting major features of the area.

A strong sense of rural character is established prior to entering the conservation area. Binsey Lane acts as a transitional route, marking a clear shift from the urban environment of Botley Road to the quieter, rural setting of Binsey. Vehicular access is limited to this single approach, with the road terminating to the north at St Margaret’s Church. This absence of through traffic reinforces the secluded and rural qualities of the area.



Figure 13: Approach to Binsey via Binsey Lane, reflecting the transition from urban to rural.



Figure 14: The Church and the Perch sign acts as an informal introduction to Binsey.

The street pattern reflects the historic evolution of the settlement. Development has occurred incrementally along Binsey Lane, with cottages oriented directly onto the road, following its course northwards towards the church. This linear arrangement is characteristic of a small rural hamlet.

Another key route into the hamlet is provided by a sand and gravel path running westward from the Thames Path across open fields. This route facilitates access to and from the river and connects the hamlet to nearby businesses such as Bossoms Boatyard and Medley Sailing Club. The path, in existence since the early 20th century, remains accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

While the restricted access to Binsey limits traffic and helps preserve its rural character, it also results in reliance on a single road. The absence of designated parking areas often leads to vehicles parking along the verges of Binsey Lane, which can detract from the quality of views and the overall appearance of the conservation area.



Figure 15: A key route into Binsey is via the sand and gravel path across Binsey Green



Figure 16: Car Parking along Binsey Lane, obscuring key views of the historic row of cottages

Views and Vistas

Views Out

Binsey's abundance of flat, open farmland allow for mid- and long-range views across its pastoral surroundings, which make a significant contribution to its rural village character.

Key views outward from the conservation area include expansive panoramas across Port Meadow and the River Thames. From the eastern edge of the conservation area, there are glimpses of the spire of St Philip and St James Church to the south-east, providing a visual connection to the wider landscape beyond Binsey.

Looking north from this vantage point, emerging development associated with the Oxford North innovation district is becoming increasingly visible on the skyline beyond Port Meadow. This introduces a notable visual contrast, reminding the viewer of Binsey's proximity to the city despite its rural character.

To the west, Wytham Hill cuts the line of the horizon providing a distinctive and often dramatic silhouette, particularly under evening light conditions. This view is mostly visible from the road north of Binsey, leading towards the Church.

Views to the north and south are generally contained by dense tree belts, which enclose the conservation area and help to define its boundaries, reinforcing its sense of seclusion within the wider landscape.



Figure 17: Views out of Binsey include a panorama of Port Meadow.



Figure 18: Views South are obscured by trees which define the boundary of the Conservation Area

Views In

Views into Binsey make a significant contribution to the area's overall significance and character. The arrangement of historic cottages and agricultural buildings set within open green fields creates a picturesque and cohesive composition. Key views showing the composition of characterful cottages and agricultural buildings are seen from Binsey Lane looking towards the hamlet, and from the pedestrian path running alongside Binsey Green.

The settlement is characterised by a generally level topography, allowing for long, uninterrupted views through the conservation area from end to end. The visual impact on arrival to Binsey is heightened by the pronounced contrast between the enclosed approach along Binsey Lane and the openness of the hamlet itself. As the hedgerows and trees which line Binsey Lane fall away on entering Binsey, the space opens out to reveal a lighter, more expansive environment.

The row of historic buildings is the focal point of the views of Binsey, with the unique character of each individual building providing interest through the variety of materials and styles, providing visual interest and richness, contributing to the distinctive charm and rural identity of Binsey.



Figure 20: View of the row of buildings as seen from the pedestrian path along Binsey Green.



Figure 19: Views into Binsey are centred around the row of historic cottages and farmhouses which front Binsey Lane.

Trees and Green Landscape

Binsey's extensive green setting and abundance of mature trees are fundamental to its rural character, forming a stark contrast with the urban environment of Botley Road to the south. The area's scenic quality is further enhanced by the changing colours and textures between seasons- from the warm tones of autumn and the muted browns of winter to the emergence of vibrant wildflowers in spring and the lush greenery of summer.

Hedgerows, hedges and grass verges commonly indicate boundaries between properties, with trees also acting as informal indicators of the Conservation Area boundaries and providing a green background in many views. In addition, trees and hedges contribute to privacy, screening private rear gardens from public vantage points.

Around the Perch public house, established tree and hedge planting performs a functional role, helping to contain activity by acting as a visual and acoustic buffer. This planting reduces the impact of noise and light spill from the rear garden, maintaining the tranquillity of the surrounding area. The mature weeping willows in the gardens of the Perch are a notable feature for the more ornamental pedigree.

The presence of wildlife, including ducks, geese, and other species, further enhances Binsey's rural character. The surrounding open fields provide important habitats, while sensory elements such as birdsong, the presence of grazing cattle, and the occasional smell of wood smoke contribute to its distinctive sense of place and pastoral setting. The riverbank just north (upstream) of the Perch land stage is the location of the historic Binsey poplars. The trees were immortalized by the Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins in his 1879 poem *Binsey Poplars*. The present poplars are later replacements, which have maintained the landmark.

Despite the prominence of trees within key views of the conservation area, Binsey's overall canopy cover is 23.98%. This is slightly above the average for the city of 20.33%, but lower than other comparable rural satellite Conservation Areas such as Wolvercote with Godstow (31.47%), Littlemore (25.32%), and Headington Quarry (25.30%). This comparatively low percentage reflects the significant proportion of land within the conservation area occupied by open fields, where tree cover is naturally limited.

Nevertheless, the contribution of trees to the character and significance of Binsey is considerable. Their strategic placement within key views, along boundaries, and within the built area means that, despite their lower overall coverage, they play a disproportionately important role in defining the conservation area's rural setting and visual identity.

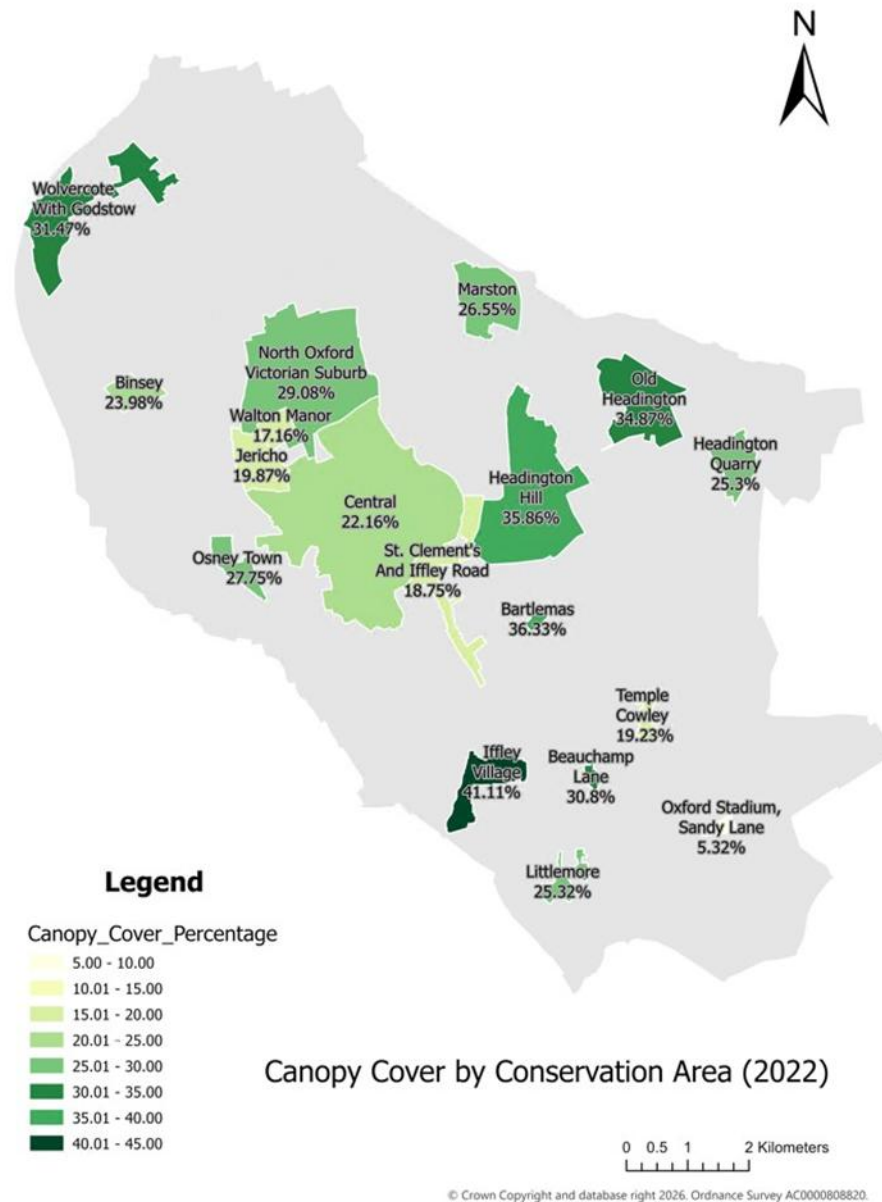


Figure 21: Canopy Cover by Conservation Area (2022)



Figure 22: Trees and hedges often contribute to privacy by screening views to residential gardens.

Public Realm and Signage

Street furniture and signage within Binsey are notably limited. Examples include the timber “Church and the Perch” sign, a red post box integrated into the wall of a barn, laminated notices affixed to gates, hand-painted signs advertising locally grown produce, and informal measures such as small boulders and repurposed tyres used to guide parking on grass verges, presumably for the occupants of the historic cottages who do not have off-street parking. Much of this furniture and signage has an improvised ‘homemade’ quality, which contributes positively to the hamlet’s informal and rural character.

Binsey is largely devoid of artificial lighting, with no street lighting present within the conservation area. Similarly, it lacks local services and amenities such as shops or bus services. While the absence of such infrastructure reinforces the area’s historic character and sense of remoteness, it can present practical challenges for residents, particularly during flood events when access may be restricted.

There are, however, elements of modern signage and temporary infrastructure such as “danger,” “no parking,” and flood warning signs, as well as traffic cones and metal barriers which detract from the historic and visual quality of the area.

Opportunities exist to enhance the public realm through the sensitive introduction of well-designed and appropriately scaled features. These could include a community notice board, seating along the Thames Path to take advantage of key views, and interpretive signage reflecting Binsey’s cultural and literary associations, including its connections to figures such as Gerard Manley Hopkins and Lewis Carroll, and the historic significance of the Binsey poplars.



Figure 23: Hand-painted signs contribute to the rural village-like character of Binsey



Figure 24: Repurposed tyres dictate parking on grass verges



Figure 25: A designated board for signs does not exist, and signage is often placed on gates

Boundary Treatments

Boundary treatments within Binsey are typically simple and informal in character. Most properties and spaces are defined by a combination of timber post-and-rail fencing, wire fencing, low stone walls, and hedgerows.

Such boundary treatments are characteristic of agricultural landscapes, where enclosure is functional rather than ornamental. Timber and wire fencing are commonly used to delineate fields and manage livestock, while hedgerows serve both as natural boundaries and as important ecological features, supporting biodiversity and reinforcing historic field patterns. Stone walls, where present, reflect local building traditions.

The generally low height and permeable nature of these boundaries allow for visual continuity across the landscape, maintaining key views into and out of the hamlet and reinforcing its open, pastoral setting. This contrasts with more urban boundary treatments, such as high brick walls or close-boarded fencing, which is common in some of Oxford's more urban conservation areas.

The simplicity, functionality, and use of natural materials in boundary treatments are integral to Binsey's agricultural identity and contribute positively to the overall rural and historic character of the conservation area.



Figure 26: Timber fences separate delineate public paths and field boundaries



Figure 27: Common boundary types for domestic properties include timber fencing, stone walls or hedges.

Buildings

Building Types and Uses

The built form of Binsey is predominantly agricultural and residential in character, with most structures dating from the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries. These buildings reflect the historic development of the hamlet and its long-standing association with farming. Their form, scale, and function- both past and present- illustrate the evolution of a small agricultural settlement closely tied to the surrounding landscape.

Building types within the conservation area include workers' cottages (examples of both thatched survivals and others later re-roofed with Welsh slate), larger farmhouses and manor houses, as well as agricultural outbuildings such as barns constructed in timber and rubble stone. There are also examples of later agricultural structures, including barns and hangars clad in corrugated metal, timber and concrete breezeblocks which reflect continued adaptation of the area for farming purposes into the 20th century.

These building types are characteristic of vernacular architecture in rural Oxfordshire, where construction was traditionally based on locally available materials and simple, functional techniques. Timber framing, rubble stone walls, lime mortars, and thatched or clay-tiled roofs were commonly used, resulting in buildings that are modest in scale and harmonise with their surroundings. Agricultural buildings were typically designed with practicality in mind, with open interiors, large openings, and minimal ornamentation, while domestic buildings often remain compact, with irregular forms reflecting incremental development over time.

Buildings are generally arranged along regular plots, many fronting directly onto Binsey Lane in a linear pattern that follows the historic route through the hamlet towards St Margaret's Church. This arrangement reinforces the historic street pattern and contributes to the area's cohesive and legible form.

Binsey contains a notably high proportion of nationally designated heritage assets (partially due to the low number of buildings in total across the conservation area) as well as a significant number of unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Together, these buildings form a coherent group, unified by their materials, scale, and rural vernacular character, and are integral to Binsey's architectural and historic significance.



Figure 28: Farmhouses, Barns and cottages were typically built between the 17th and 19th centuries and contribute to the rural vernacular character of Binsey.

Listed Buildings

There are 6 Listed Buildings located within the boundaries of Binsey Conservation area. A number of additional ancillary buildings are considered part of the curtilage:

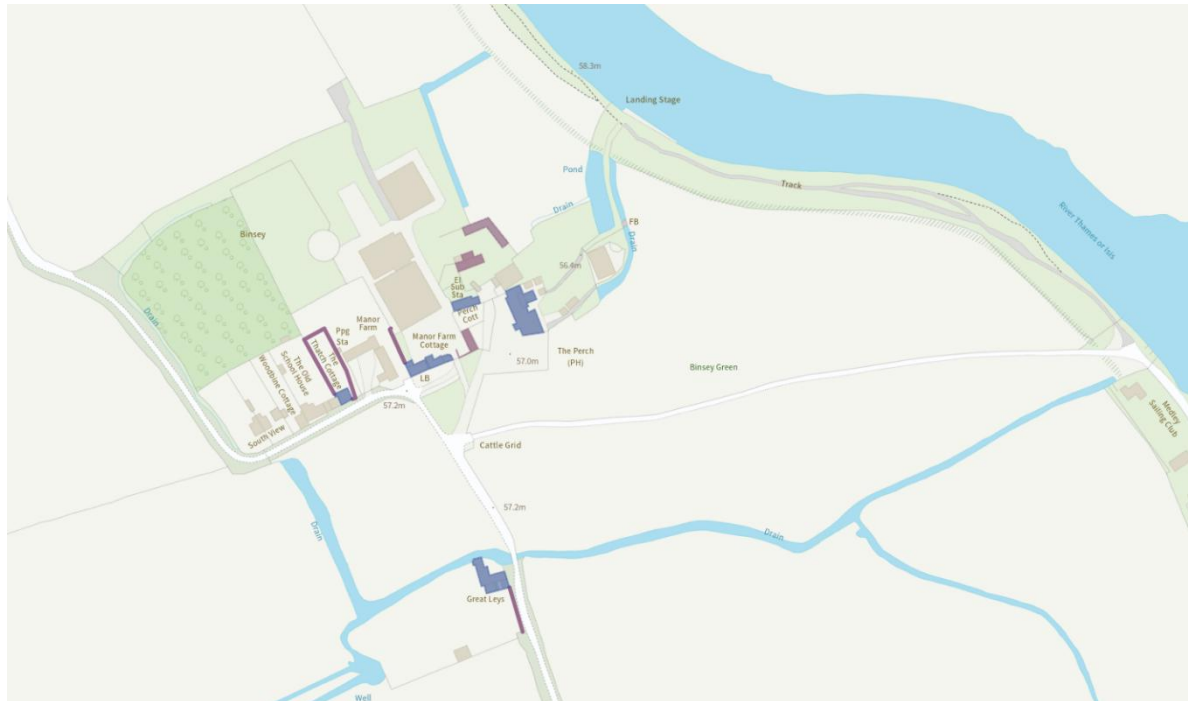


Figure 29: Listed Buildings in Binsey Conservation Area (Blue) and Curtilage-listed structures (Purple)

- **The Perch Inn, Grade II**
- **Manor Farmhouse** (Perch Cottage), Grade II
- **Manor Farm Cottage** (40 yards to west of Perch Inn), Grade II
- **Barn to the West of Manor Farm Cottage and adjoining it, Grade II**
- **The Thatched Cottage, Grade II**
- **The Limes, Grade II**

Additionally, whilst not located within the Conservation Area's boundaries, an additional 4 Listed structures can be considered to contribute to the area's history and evolution. These are:

- **Medley Manor Farmhouse, including doorway in Garden Wall, Grade II**
- **Medley Footbridge at Medley Weir, Grade II**
- **Church of St Margaret, Grade I**
- **St Margaret's Well with arch and steps, Grade II**

Further details of listed buildings located within the Binsey Conservation Area can be found in Appendix A.

Positive Contributors

Alongside the listed buildings found within Binsey, there are also a number of properties which contribute positively to the character of the conservation area.

These buildings and structures, whilst not listed by the Secretary of State for their national importance, are felt by the Council to be of local importance due to their architectural, historical or environmental significance within the area.

Care should be taken to ensure that these buildings and structures are maintained and conserved in a sympathetic manner to prevent any harm to the significance of the area. These are identified below.

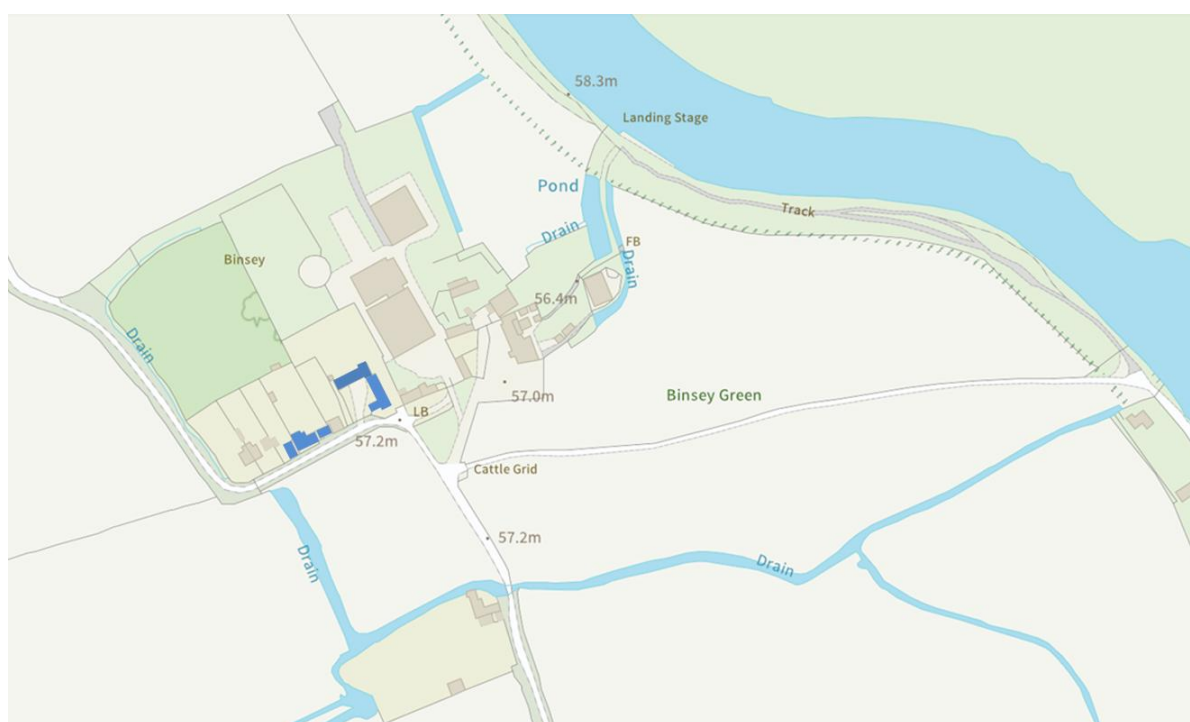


Figure 30: Map of Positive Contributors

- **Manor Farm**
- **Old School House**
- **Woodbine Cottage**

Further details of all positive contributors can be found in Appendix B.

Materials and features

A strong sense of visual cohesion is evident across the buildings in Binsey, arising from the consistent use of traditional materials and repeating architectural elements. Features such as red brick chimney stacks, timber-framed windows, and white-rendered walling contribute to a cohesive vernacular character that is typical of small rural settlements like Binsey.

The materials found within the conservation area are characteristic of traditional construction in rural Oxfordshire. Walls are commonly formed of locally sourced limestone, often laid as rubble masonry and, in many cases, finished with lime render or limewash. The use of locally quarried stone reflects the historic reliance on readily available nearby natural materials which contribute to the distinctive palette of warm, muted tones found throughout the area.

Traditional construction techniques typically employed lime mortars for bedding, pointing, and rendering. These mortars are permeable and accommodate moisture movement which allows buildings to “breathe”- an essential characteristic of traditional (pre-industrial) construction. Timber framing was also widely used, particularly in agricultural buildings, with structural oak frames supporting roofs and, in some cases, stone or rendered infill panels.

Roofing materials vary across the conservation area, including thatch, clay tiles, Welsh slate, and corrugated iron. Historically, many modest dwellings would have been thatched using locally available straw or reed, requiring steeply pitched roofs to facilitate water runoff. From the 17th century onwards, there was a gradual transition towards stone slate and clay tile roofing, often reflecting increased prosperity or changing building practices. Red brick chimney stacks are also a consistent feature across many buildings, providing vertical emphasis and adding to the visual rhythm of the roofscape.

Windows

Timber casement windows are the prevailing window type within Binsey, most commonly in two or three-light configurations with horizontal glazing bars. There is, however, notable variation, with examples incorporating vertical glazing bars forming four, six, or twelve-pane arrangements. Windows are typically painted white, often with contrasting darker sills and lintels. This variety within a consistent material palette adds subtle visual interest while maintaining overall coherence.



Figure 31: 12-Pane window, Old School House



Figure 32: 3-light casement with horizontal glazing bars, The Thatched Cottage

Doors

Front doors are generally positioned on principal elevations facing Binsey Lane, reinforcing the linear street pattern of the hamlet. Door styles vary from simple boarded and ledged timber doors- which are often painted in dark colours- to later panelled designs. While some doors are modern replacements, the continued use of painted timber helps to retain a largely traditional and sympathetic appearance.



Figure 33: Timber Ledged and dark-painted front door, The Thatched Cottage



Figure 34: Six panelled timber door, The Old School House

Roofs and Chimneys

Roof forms are predominantly gabled or cross-gabled, with occasional hipped examples, such as at The Perch and The Limes. The variation in roofing materials—including thatch, clay tiles, Welsh slate, and stone slate—reflects both the chronological development of the settlement and the adaptation of buildings over time. Red brick chimney stacks are a consistent and prominent feature, contributing to the historic skyline and reinforcing the architectural unity of the conservation area.



Figure 35: Thatched roof and tall brick stacks at The Thatched Cottage.



Figure 36: Welsh slate roof and tall brick stack at Manor Farm



Figure 37: Red clay tiles on outbuilding roof at Manor Farm

Details

Architectural detailing is generally modest, in keeping with the vernacular nature of the buildings. A notable feature within Binsey is the presence of named cottages, with house names displayed on plaques or signs instead of numbers. These small-scale details contribute to the individuality of each property while reinforcing the intimate, rural character of the hamlet.



Figure 38: The Old School House Sign

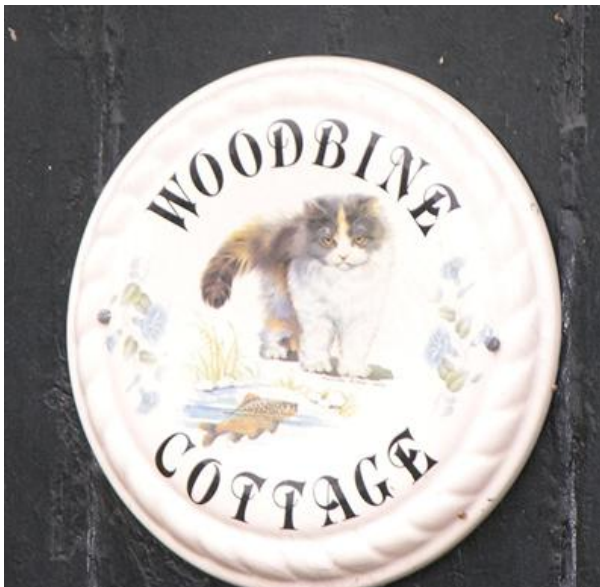


Figure 39: Woodbine Cottage Plaque

Negative Features, Vulnerabilities and Opportunities for Enhancement

Negative Features and Vulnerabilities

Several features have been identified as having a negative impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. These negative features and other issues affecting the character and appearance of the area are set out below.

Parking

The limited availability of formal parking provision within the hamlet- particularly in association with the Perch public house and the Church of St Margaret- results in vehicles parking along the verges of Binsey Lane. This issue is often exacerbated during events and periods of high visitor demand. Such parking can detract from key views into and within the conservation area.

Flooding

Binsey is increasingly affected by flooding events, which are likely to become more frequent and severe as a result of climate change. Flooding poses a risk to the structural integrity and long-term condition of historic buildings, and can also isolate the community. The reliance on a single vehicular access route exacerbates this vulnerability, with the potential to prevent access for emergency services and limit residents' ability to reach essential amenities.

Public Realm Visual Clutter

The absence of a dedicated and appropriately designed community notice board has resulted in notices and advertisements being affixed in an informal and ad-hoc manner to gates, fences, and other features. This contributes to visual clutter within the public realm.

Views and Loss of Trees

The loss of trees, whether through diseases such as ash-die-back, age, climate change impacts or management decisions, has the potential to adversely affect key views and the overall character of the conservation area. Trees play a significant role in framing views, defining boundaries, and reinforcing the rural setting of Binsey.

Maintenance of Green Spaces

While the informal and semi-wild character of green spaces contributes positively to Binsey's rural identity and biodiversity value, a lack of active management in some areas can result in overgrowth. This may obscure important views and the setting of designated heritage assets, including structures such as the Grade II listed barn to the west of Manor Farm Cottage.

Loss of Traditional Features

Although many buildings within Binsey retain a high proportion of their historic fabric or have been sensitively altered, traditional features remain vulnerable to incremental loss. The replacement of original elements- such as windows, doors, roofing materials, and finishes- with modern, inappropriate alternatives can erode the

architectural integrity of individual buildings and, cumulatively, the character of the conservation area. This risk is often heightened where features are poorly maintained or have reached the end of their functional life.

Uncontrolled or Unsympathetic Alterations

Most recent alterations and extensions within Binsey are modest in scale, sensitively designed, and typically located to the rear of properties where they are less visible from the public realm. However, there remains a risk of larger or poorly designed alterations such as prominent extensions, dormer windows, or rooflights which, if not carefully controlled, could detract from the historic character and visual coherence of the area.

Development Pressure

Binsey has largely been protected from significant new development due to its location within a floodplain, and there have been no major proposals since a refused application for residential development consisting of 7 new homes in 2004. Nonetheless, given the ongoing demand for housing in Oxford, future development proposals may come forward. Without careful design that responds sensitively to the hamlet's scale, layout, and rural context, such development could have a substantial impact on its character.

Building Use and Maintenance

Some agricultural buildings within Binsey are no longer in active use and have been repurposed for storage or left under-maintained. A lack of appropriate and ongoing maintenance can lead to gradual deterioration, resulting in the loss of historic fabric and undermining the contribution these structures make to the character of the conservation area.

The Perch

Changes to the Perch public house to accommodate increased visitor numbers have introduced some unsympathetic elements. Additions such as flat-roofed extensions and a large white gazebo within the rear garden detract from the character of the original listed building and from views into the area, although the visual impact of some structures is partially mitigated by surrounding tree cover.

Opportunities for Enhancement

The following section identifies opportunities for enhancement of the Binsey Conservation Area. These identify ways to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area, in addition to the statutory protections provided by its designation as a Conservation Area. Some measures may require collaboration between residents and the relevant local authorities, while others may be undertaken by individual homeowners or through community-led initiatives. Relevant agencies responsible for each enhancement opportunity are identified in each section.

Parking Management

Traffic and parking management present a key opportunity for enhancement, particularly during periods of peak activity associated with St Margaret of Antioch Church and the Perch public house. Measures could include the development of a coordinated parking strategy, provision for managed overflow parking at appropriate locations, and the promotion of sustainable transport options. Consideration could also be given to shared or community transport initiatives, particularly during events, to reduce reliance on private vehicles and minimise pressure on Binsey Lane.

Responsibility: Local Authority Highways Department, St Margaret of Antioch Church, The Perch Inn, event organisers

Management of Green Spaces

Targeted and sensitive management of green spaces would help maintain key views and improve the setting of heritage assets. In particular, areas of overgrowth such as those in front of Manor Farm Cottage and the Grade II listed barn to its west could be carefully managed to balance biodiversity value with the need to preserve important sightlines and enhance the appreciation of these buildings.

Responsibility: Relevant landowners

Flood Resilience

Any future alterations to properties within Binsey should consider flood mitigation measures in order to safeguard their architectural and historic significance.

Responsibility: Binsey residents/homeowners

Restoration of Traditional Features

The retention and reinstatement of traditional architectural features represents an important opportunity to enhance the conservation area. Repair and restoration works should be informed by an understanding of historic fabric and carried out using appropriate materials and techniques. The provision of clear guidance and support to property owners would assist in promoting high-quality, consistent outcomes across the conservation area.

Responsibility: Binsey Residents/Homeowners supported by the Local Authority Planning Department

Sensitive Development

All new development and alterations within the conservation area should be carefully designed to respect and reinforce its established character. Proposals should respond to the prevailing scale, layout, materials, and detailing of surrounding buildings, ensuring that new elements remain subordinate and complementary. The

use of high-quality, locally appropriate materials and craftsmanship will be essential in maintaining the integrity of the conservation area.

Responsibility: Local Authority Planning Department, Developers, Binsey Residents/Homeowners

Public Realm Signage

There is an opportunity to improve the quality and coherence of signage within the public realm. The introduction of a sensitively designed community noticeboard would reduce the need for ad hoc postings on gates and fences, thereby minimising visual clutter. In addition, discreet and well-designed interpretive signage could be introduced to highlight Binsey's historic development and cultural associations, including its links to Gerard Manley Hopkins, Lewis Carroll, and the legend of St Frideswide, enhancing visitors' understanding and appreciation of the area.

Responsibility: Local Authority Planning Department, community groups, and landowners

Energy Efficiency

Upgrades to improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings present an opportunity to enhance sustainability while safeguarding heritage significance. Interventions should be carefully considered to ensure that they do not detract from the character or appearance of buildings, for example, by avoiding visually intrusive installations such as poorly sited air source heat pumps or inappropriate external insulation. The provision of tailored guidance by the Local Authority, including best practice examples and conservation-led solutions, would support residents in making informed and sensitive improvements in line with climate objectives.

Responsibility: Binsey Residents/Homeowners, Local Authority Planning Department, Developers



Figure 40: Parking Provision at The Perch Inn



Figure 41: Flood warning sign on the pubic path along Binsey Green

Climate Change and Sustainability Guidance

“The most sustainable building is one that already exists”. These words are taken from Historic England’s Advice Note 18: *Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency*. Not only does the continued repair, maintenance, use and re-use of historic buildings avoid unnecessary release of embodied carbon associated with processes required for demolition and new builds, but the historic environment is an invaluable resource which has far-reaching social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits. Once lost, it is lost forever.

As such, it is essential that we adapt our existing historic building stock to withstand the impacts of climate change and reduce the buildings’ carbon footprint. In doing so, this will improve their energy-efficiency and thermal comfort for occupants, reduce their contribution to harmful fossil fuel emissions, and ensure they remain safe and desirable dwellings for future generations to enjoy.

Binsey is an area of special architectural and historic interest, recognised for its remarkable survival as a rural village that remains largely unaffected by modern development despite its proximity to Oxford city centre. The purpose of this guidance is to assist Binsey residents in improving the energy efficiency of their properties in a way that conserves and enhances the character and significance of the conservation area.

This guidance will only address aspects of retrofitting in Conservation Areas which involve planning. Internal measures such as internal wall, loft or underfloor insulation, installation of draught-proofing measures or installation of secondary glazing to windows will not be covered in detail, as these do not require planning permission (unless the building is listed).

Permitted Development

Certain energy efficiency improvements may fall within Permitted Development rights and therefore not require planning permission, while others will require formal consent. Clarification is provided in each section. However, **this is not a comprehensive guide**, and **reference should be made to *Schedule 2 of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015*** for definitive interpretation.

Further useful guidance on energy efficiency and retrofitting is provided in the Bibliography section. Where there remains uncertainty as to whether proposed works require planning permission, applicants are advised to check the online *Planning Portal*, or to seek pre-application advice via the Council’s website.

Please note: This guidance is accurate as of April 2026. Applicants should refer to the most current version of the relevant legislation and guidance when preparing future applications.

Whole Building Approach

Whilst internal measures will not be covered within this guidance, any interventions to historic properties to improve their thermal and energy efficiency- both internal and external- should be considered as part of a “whole building approach”. Older buildings were designed with different principles to modern ones, and interventions which may be appropriate to newer properties may lead to unintended consequences such as damp, condensation, or poor air quality in older buildings.

A “whole building approach” does not mean doing everything at once but rather taking a holistic approach to the retrofitting of historic buildings. Understanding your building, how it performs, and its heritage significance, can guide the retrofitting strategy, to ensure interventions that are effective and sustainable can be prioritised, and each stage in the process is considered as part of an overall plan for the building. Further information on devising a Whole Building Approach can be found within Historic England’s Technical Advice Note 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency.

Many of Binsey’s buildings are listed for their architectural and historical merit. As such, this guidance should not be interpreted as a blanket “one-size-fits-all” approach, and each building should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The unique features and characteristics of the building should guide the principles for its retrofit strategy.

Windows and Doors

Traditional windows and doors make a significant contribution to the architectural character and historic significance of buildings in Binsey. They often embody a high level of craftsmanship and utilise durable materials which are difficult to replicate. Once lost, these features cannot be replaced.

Historic windows have become particularly vulnerable to unsympathetic replacement or alteration. Such changes can lead to the loss of historic fabric, including hand-made glass, detract from the appearance of the building and may cause unintended consequences such as condensation and damp due to reduced ventilation.

Given the prominent siting of buildings in Binsey, often fronting directly onto Binsey Lane, windows and doors are highly visible in the public realm. Inappropriate replacements can therefore have a pronounced and harmful visual impact.

Homeowners should look to repair existing windows before considering replacement. Traditional windows can often be repaired simply and economically and, with appropriate maintenance, can last for many years. By contrast, many modern replacements are made from lower-quality materials with a shorter lifespan, and the whole-life environmental costs of replacement are significantly greater than repair and refurbishment.

Combining window repair with secondary glazing, draught-proofing, or internal measures such as blinds, curtains or shutters can significantly improve heat retention without requiring planning permission (unless the building is listed).

Do I need Planning Permission?

If the building is not listed, windows can be replaced under “Permitted Development” rights (i.e. without requiring planning permission), on the basis that the windows are “of a similar appearance” to existing. This includes their material, style, colour and detailing (such as the width of the glazing bars, sash ‘horns’, window depths, trickle vents etc.).

Modern materials such as PVCu pose a particular threat to the heritage value of historic areas and would not be considered “of a similar appearance”. They may seem to be a sensible replacement option due to their low cost and rapid installation time, however, PVCu units are easily identifiable and unable to replicate the fine detailing of original timber windows. Their long-term performance and compatibility with historic buildings also cannot be guaranteed. PVCu windows typically last 20-30 years, in contrast to the original hardwood windows that can last over 150 years with regular maintenance.

Thick double glazing can also harm the appearance of historic properties by losing the original glass panes and by altering window proportions, glazing bars and thickness. However, advancements in technology now allow for double glazing which replicates the properties of historic glass, and for sashes to be altered to accommodate vacuum or modern slimline double glazing which is much thinner.

For cases where the retention of sashes is not feasible (e.g. due to decay), these can be replaced with slimline double-glazed sashes whilst retaining the window frame.

Doors are similarly vulnerable to replacement to improve energy efficiency which can often result in the loss of original doors and traditional craftsmanship. In many cases, existing doors can be upgraded through repair and draught-proofing measures introduced. Again, repair should always be considered before replacement. Where replacement is necessary, these should match/reinstate the materials, colours and detailing of traditional doors. PVCu doors on front elevations are not appropriate.

Guidance:

Repair and refurbishment of existing windows and doors should be considered before replacement. When combined with secondary glazing, draught-proofing, shutters or curtains, this can significantly improve thermal efficiency without requiring planning permission or altering historic fabric.

Planning permission is not required for the replacement of windows and doors which are “of a similar appearance” to existing windows. This includes material, style, and details (such as the width of the glazing bars, sash ‘horns’, window depths etc.).

When introducing double glazing, consider using slimline or vacuum glazing, and whether existing frames/sashes can be altered to accommodate double glazing.

If you are unclear about whether your replacement window is considered “of a similar appearance”, you can apply for a Certificate of Lawful Development from the local planning authority or apply for pre-application advice.

PVCu is not considered an appropriate replacement material for windows or doors on historic properties.

External Wall Insulation

External Wall Insulation (EWI) involves adding an insulating render system or rigid insulation boards, typically finished with render or cladding, to the exterior of a building. It is primarily used to improve thermal performance, particularly in buildings with solid walls where cavity wall insulation is not possible.

Unlike internal wall insulation, which can disrupt occupants, reduce floor space, and require the removal or alteration of internal architectural features, EWI is generally simpler to install. It also reduces the risk of thermal bridging at wall and floor junctions and helps protect the building fabric from temperature fluctuations and external moisture.

Do I need Planning Permission?

Planning permission is required for the installation of EWI to any part of the exterior of a dwelling within a conservation area.¹

While EWI can deliver thermal benefits, it often results in significant changes to a building's character and appearance. Traditional features such as the texture of limewashed rubble stone walls will be lost, and deepened window and door reveals and alterations to eaves lines can further affect the appearance of the building. In Binsey, where views of traditional agricultural or vernacular construction methods make a significant contribution to the area's special character, EWI would be particularly harmful.

Accordingly, the installation of External Wall Insulation on principal front façades within the Binsey Conservation Area would not be supported. EWI may be acceptable on modern extensions which are not visible in the public realm.

Guidance:

External Wall Insulation on historic façades of historic properties within Binsey Conservation Area will not be supported.

Alternative insulation measures, such as internal wall insulation, should be considered for historic dwellings, provided they form part of a wider whole-building approach, and would not require planning permission, unless the building is listed. The building's construction and performance should be fully understood to ensure that additional insulation is appropriately ventilated and does not result in unintended consequences such as damp or condensation.

External Wall Insulation may be acceptable on modern extensions where these are not visible from the public realm, however this will require planning permission. Further guidance on the suitability of EWI can be sought through pre-application advice.

¹ The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A, A.2(a)

Roof Alterations

Roof-level alterations to improve thermal performance are often one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to increase a building's energy efficiency and often don't require planning permission if the building is not listed. Care should be taken to ensure insulation materials are compatible with the existing construction and that the building's performance is properly understood so adequate ventilation is maintained.

However, insulation works must not compromise a building's significance through external changes to roof form or appearance, such as alterations to ridge or eaves heights, loss of detailing, or the addition of roof ventilators.

Binsey has multiple thatched cottages which require a higher level of care when making roof-level alterations such as installing insulation. All thatched properties are listed, and will require Listed Building Consent, and owners are encouraged to employ relevant specialists to aid in roof projects.

Do I need Planning Permission?

For unlisted properties, thermal improvement works at roof level (such as installing insulation) can be carried out under Permitted Development rights, as long as the works do not exceed the height of the highest part of the existing roof or include the installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil and vent pipe.²

Guidance

Insulation of roof space is encouraged as an easy and cheap way of improving thermal efficiency of dwellings, however this must be considered as part of a "whole building approach".

Most works will not require planning permission. However, where permission is required, it is unlikely to gain officer support where works will result in changes to the appearance of the roof, such as its height or material. Installation of features such as flue or soil and vent pipes should be located on rear roof slopes.

² The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 1, Class C, C.1

Renewables

Renewable technologies such as photovoltaic (PV) panels, air source heat pumps (ASHPs) and ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) can significantly reduce a building's carbon footprint by providing clean energy. Additional benefits may include lower energy bills, increased property value, greater energy independence, and, in some cases, may be eligible for government grants or other incentives.

However, these technologies can involve high upfront costs, particularly where financial support is unavailable, leading to long payback periods. Performance may also be affected by weather conditions, maintenance requirements and space constraints, particularly for GSHPs.

The installation of renewable technologies is therefore best undertaken alongside fabric improvements, such as enhanced insulation or upgraded windows and doors, to reduce overall energy demand and improve payback times. A whole-building approach should be adopted to ensure the building's construction and performance are fully understood, and that interventions do not result in unintended consequences to the internal environment, occupant health or the building

PV Panels

Photovoltaic (PV) panels can have a significant impact on the appearance of conservation areas, particularly when installed on roof slopes visible from public highways. In Binsey, most of the properties face south, and have low, steep roofs. As such, the efficiency of PV panels would be maximised on front roof slopes of properties, which would have a harmful impact on key views and the rural character of Binsey. As such, installation on outbuildings is encouraged in the first instance.

Air Source Heat Pumps

Air source heat pumps (ASHPs) operate by extracting heat from the external air and converting it for use within a building. They require an external condenser unit incorporating a fan and compressor, which generate noise during operation. As a result, ASHPs have the potential to affect conservation areas through both noise and visual impact.

While the installation of ASHPs is supported in principle, proposals must take account of the quiet rural character of the area. Properties in Binsey are mostly set on larger plots with ample space to the rear in order to accommodate units. Nevertheless, the siting of units and associated noise levels should be carefully considered to avoid disturbance to occupants and neighbours. In addition, condenser units are visually intrusive and would harm the character of the area if visible from the public realm. Units should therefore be located to the rear of properties and screened where necessary.

It is often the case that in association with the installation of Air Source Heat Pumps in properties, internal services such as pipework and radiators require upgrading to

accommodate the new technology. Many properties within Binsey are Listed and it is likely that listed building consent will be required for the work.

Ground Source Heat Pumps:

GSHPs work by extracting heat from underground, where temperatures are constant year-round. Heat is extracted using a buried pipe known as a ground loop. GSHPs require the digging of trenches or boreholes within gardens of properties.

Properties within Binsey are typically set within larger plots with spacious rear gardens where it may be possible to provide the space required to install functional GSHPs. However, it should be noted that the process can be costly, and consideration must be given to other elements such as archaeology, drainage, trees and ecology.

As is the case with ASHPs, often the installation of Ground Source Heat Pumps in properties require the upgrading of internal services such as pipework and radiators to accommodate the new technology. Many properties within Binsey are Listed and it is likely that listed building consent will be required for the work.

Do I need Planning Permission?

PV Panels: Planning permission is required if the solar panels will be “installed on a wall which fronts a highway” (often a front roof slope). Permission is also required if the panels protrude more than 0.2 metres beyond the plane of the wall or the roof slope, or would sit higher than the highest part of the roof (excluding chimneys)³. Planning permission is required for the installation of PV Panels on listed buildings.

ASHPs: Planning permission is required if the ASHP will be installed on a wall which fronts a highway (often a front elevation), is above the level of the ground floor storey, or is within 1 metre of the dwellinghouse curtilage. Permission is also required if the volume of the ASHP’s outdoor compressor unit would exceed 0.6 cubic metres, or would result in the presence of more than 1 ASHP on the same building/curtilage.⁴

GSHPs: The installation of ground source heat pumps on domestic premises are considered Permitted Development and do not require planning permission.⁵

Guidance

All installation of renewable technologies should be carried out in accordance with the principles of a “whole building approach” and in conjunction with appropriate upgrades to the fabric of the building where possible.

³ The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 14, Class A, A.1

⁴ Ibid. Class G, G.1

⁵ Ibid. Class C, C

PV Panels should be located on roofs of outbuildings where possible. The southern facing roof slopes of properties within Binsey are often on front elevations which form key views of the area and contribute significantly to its character. Solar panels located on these slopes require planning permission, and are unlikely to be supported by the local authority.

PV panels should follow a regular pattern, size, colour, finish and mounting to reduce their visual impact and maintain continuity across dwellings within the Conservation Area.

There are opportunities for community-led initiatives to install PV panels on modern agricultural buildings with shallow pitched roofs to provide renewable energy to residents without compromising the heritage significance of Binsey.

Planning permission is required for the siting of ASHPs on a wall or land which fronts a highway. Most properties in Binsey have ample space in rear gardens to site ASHPs which would cause less visual harm. The sizing, appearance and noise generated by the units must be considered to ensure this does not have a harmful impact on neighbours or the wider residential character of the area.

Properties within Binsey are set in fairly spacious grounds with opportunities for the installation of GSHPs, particularly in rear gardens. Consideration must be given to archaeology, drainage, trees and ecology, and for both the installation of ASHPs and GSHPs, listed building consent is likely to be required if upgrades are made to pipework and radiators which may impact historic fabric.

EV Charging

The introduction of electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure presents both opportunities and challenges within Binsey due to its rural character, and poorly sited equipment has the potential to significantly detract from the character of the conservation area.

EV charging points serving properties with off-street parking may be installed under permitted development rights. Within Binsey, this includes 1 and 2 Southview and Manor Farm. For these properties, chargers should be sited to minimise visual impact, preferably within garages or outbuildings which are present at both sites. Other properties with off-street parking (e.g. Perch Cottage and The Limes) are Listed and would require planning permission and potentially listed building consent, subject to siting. These may be acceptable where, again, chargers are sited on outbuildings or, in the case of The Limes, adjacent to boundary walls, out of view from Binsey Lane.

As a rural, historic hamlet, the installation of EV charging units would have a disproportionately large impact on the significance of the conservation area for properties which do not have off-street parking, as cars are often parked on grass verges across the road from the properties instead. Individual charging solutions are unlikely to be acceptable for the affected properties (e.g. Woodbine Cottage, The Old School House, The Thatched Cottage and Manor Farm Cottage), and there are no opportunities for retrofitting existing infrastructure such as bollards or lampposts to accommodate EV Charging points. However, as with PV panels, there may be opportunities for communal charging ports in less sensitive areas such as within the concrete courtyard to the rear of Manor Farm Cottage, or within the Perch Car Park. Installation of such measures would be subject to coordination between landowners, Binsey residents and Local Authorities.

There are opportunities for the installation of sensitively designed freestanding EV Charging ports in the car park of The Perch Inn.

Do I need Planning Permission?

EV charging units can be installed under Permitted Development within an area lawfully used for off-street parking. However, they will require planning permission if the outlet and its casing would exceed 0.2 cubic metres or face onto and be within 2 metres of a highway.⁶ Planning permission is required if the building is Listed.

Electrical upstands are also considered Permitted Development and are subject to the same criteria as above. Additionally, they must not exceed 1.6 metres in height or result in more than 1 upstand being provided for each parking space. Planning permission is required if the building is Listed.

Planning permission is required for on-street EV Charging.

⁶ The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 2, Class D

Guidance

For properties with off-street parking, chargers should be sited to minimise visual impact (preferably within garages, outbuildings or elevations not visible in the public realm). Planning permission will be required if the building is listed, however there are still opportunities for sensitively designed and located units on these properties which would be considered acceptable.

Consideration should be given to the size, form, material and colour of the units, as well as establishing a coordinated approach with neighbouring properties.

For properties with on-street parking, communal solutions should be sought such as installation of EV charging units in less sensitive locations (e.g. yard to the rear of Manor Farm Cottage or The Perch Inn carpark). Communal charging measures will require liaison between landowners, Binsey Residents and the Local Authority.

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Guidance Documents

General & Other Guidance

Historic England web guidance on [Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings](#). (2017)

Historic England web guidance on [Historic and Traditional Buildings at Risk of Flooding](#) (2025)

Historic England web guidance on [The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings](#) (2017)

Historic England web guidance on [The Maintenance and Repair of Traditional Farm Buildings](#) (2017)

Climate Change & Energy Efficiency Guidance

Historic England web guidance on [Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency](#). (2026)

Historic England web guidance on [External Wall Insulation](#). (2025)

Historic England web guidance on [Installing Heat Pumps in Historic Buildings](#).

Historic England web guidance on [Installing Solar Panels](#).

Historic England web guidance on [Energy Efficiency and Retrofit in Historic Buildings](#). (2024)

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Oxford City Council's web guidance on [Heritage Retrofit Guidance- Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction](#). (2024)

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Appendix A: Listed Buildings

The Perch Inn

Grade II, Listed 1954

The Perch Inn is Grade II Listed and is owned by Christ Church. It is the only public house in Binsey and can be accessed by car, foot and boat, which can be moored at the pub's landing stage on the Thames River.

The Perch Inn's long documented history spans from the 17th Century to appearances in 18th-century diaries and 19th-century records, when it was known as "The Fish." Over time it became a well-known destination, frequently depicted in artworks and photographs and noted in literary accounts, such as artworks by George Price Boyce and Henry Taunt.

The building has been altered over the years, particularly following its partial destruction by fires in 1957, 1977 and 2007. The building is 2-storeyed and built of rubble with a distinctive thatch roof with red brick stacks extending from the roof. To the north projects a 2-storey extension (probably late C18) with a Welsh slate roof. Single storey extensions have been added elsewhere over the years to provide additional space.

Its relationship with the River Thames is central to its character. The Perch stands directly beside the river, with moorings on the bank and a path leading from the garden to a landing stage, allowing visitors to arrive by boat as well as by land. The surrounding riverside landscape, including views across Port Meadow, contributes significantly to its appeal, and the Thames provides both the setting and the means of access that have historically shaped the inn's role as a place of respite, and Binsey as a destination for day trips and recreation, particularly for people looking to escape the busy city centre.

Within the context of the quiet hamlet, the pub significantly increases the level of activity in the area.



Figure 42: The Perch Inn (2024)



Figure 43: Perch Inn, Binsey, Oxford, Oxfordshire. A distant view of the thatched inn with an oriel window near Port Meadow.

Manor Farmhouse (Perch Cottage)
Grade II, Listed 1972

Manor Farmhouse, otherwise known as Perch Cottage, is probably C18 in origin and is composed of a 2-storey coursed rubble building with a red-brown tiled with red brick stacks. A later single-storey brick extension with a coursed rubble façade has also been constructed to the east of the building. The property has large front and rear gardens which is uncommon in Binsey where the majority of historic properties front directly onto the road. Trees and foliage partially block views of the property from The Perch.

The name suggests that this dwelling used to be the main farmhouse for Manor Farm. It would have served a residential purpose, allowing farmers, workers and their families to live close to their workplace.



Figure 44: Manor Farmhouse (Perch Cottage)

The Threshing Barn

A coursed rubble barn located to the rear of Manor Farmhouse is also considered part of the curtilage of the site. The barn is mostly hidden from public views but is surviving evidence of the site's former agricultural use. It was previously used as a threshing barn to store and process grain crop. The site was proposed to be turned into a dwelling as part of a planning application in 2003/4 by Christ Church.



Figure 45: The Threshing Barn

Manor Farm Cottage
Grade II, Listed 1972

To the West of the Perch Inn is Manor Farm Cottage, a 2 storeyed early C19 dwellings constructed of rubble. The property has a Welsh slate roof and red brick stack, and its windows follow an asymmetric pattern: a feature of many of the small cottage residences found in Binsey. The building represents a simple agricultural workers cottage, with this reflected in the simplicity and finely proportioned detailing of the building features. It would also have been associated with Manor Farm

This property also has a small front garden, as the rear of the property fronts onto a maintenance yard and barns behind the property. To the west, Manor Farm Cottage is attached to a barn which is also listed.



Figure 46: Manor Farm Cottage

Barn to West of Manor Farm Cottage
Grade II, Listed 1972

The barn adjoining Manor Farm Cottage, sometimes referred to as the Roadside Barn is of C18 origin and is constructed of rubble with a central cart door. It has a rectangular plan and its western gable above the stone walling is made of horizontal timber boards. The southern (front) roof pitch is covered with red pantiles and the rear roof pitch is covered with concrete tiles.

To the rear of the barn is a concrete yard which it shares with Manor Farm Cottage. To the north of the yard is a modern barn that formerly housed the calf pens. In 2003 Christ Church applied for the demolition of the modern barn and the erection of 7 residential dwellings with associated car parking. The application was ultimately refused.



Figure 47: Barn to the West of Manor Farm Cottage

The Thatched Cottage
Grade II, Listed 1972

Nestled within the row of cottages on Binsey Lane is the Thatched Cottage. The two-storey dwelling dates from C18 and is constructed of plastered rubble painted white. The property has 4 casement windows on its front façade as well as a plain timber door, thatched roof and 2 red brick stacks. The construction of the cottage would have used locally available materials and would have served as a farm labourer's quarters.

Whilst the building fronts onto Binsey Lane, to the rear extends a long, narrow garden plot. The property is semi-detached, adjoining a single-storey barn on its western face.



Figure 48: The Thatched Cottage

The Limes, South Side of Green
Grade II, Listed 1972

Whilst most buildings are located on the North side of the Conservation Area, The Limes, otherwise known as “Great Leys”, is a residential property located on the Southwest boundary of the conservation area on Binsey Lane.

The dwelling dates from C17, although it has been extensively altered from its original “L” shaped layout. The building today is 2 storeys in height constructed of rubble and brick with stone slate and Welsh slate roofs. The old range has a central moulded stone-based stack with a modern red brick shafts. On the South of the East wing is a 2-storeyed C19 red brick addition with a Welsh slate hipped roof, a red brick stack and sash windows. On the East of the East wing is a 2-storeyed stuccoed addition with a Welsh slate roof and casement windows.



Figure 49: The Limes

Appendix B: Positive Contributors

Manor Farm

Located east of the Thatched Cottage, the front elevation of the property faces East. An old stone bounds the property and provides glimpses through to the courtyard which would have formed part of the former farm compound.



Figure 50: Manor Farm

Old School House

A 2-storey residential dwelling forms part of the row of cottages visible in views of Binsey. An inscription above the front door reads "The Old School House."



Figure 51: The Old School House

Woodbine Cottage

To the left of the Old School House, is Woodbine Cottage, which also forms part of the row of cottages seen in views towards Binsey. The cottage would have previously been thatched.



Figure 52: Woodbine Cottage