

Historic Environment Character Zone

LRS Lambourn – Recent Settlement

Historic Character

This is a zone of late 20th century and recent housing developments that have expanded from the historic village of Lambourn. Prior to development the zone was part of Lambourn's agricultural hinterland and was composed of Parliamentary fields created from the village's open fields, downland and meadow. The area north of Upper Lambourn Lane was part of the parkland of Lambourn Place. Lambourn has become a national centre of the racehorse industry and this has stimulated growth of the village since the mid-20th century. Areas of housing were constructed on the east side of the village in the 1960s with that on the west built since the 1980s. Most of the 1960s development was built as council housing and consists of small estates with parks and schools. The more recent housing is a mix of large detached houses with extensive gardens and developments of densely-packed small houses.

Historic Environment

HER records exist across this zone but are not common. Records are dominated by findspots and deposits located as a result of construction work. The zone was covered by the Berkshire Downs Survey and the National Mapping Programme and several evaluations and watching briefs have been carried out prior to development.

Very limited evidence of activity prior to the medieval period has been recorded in this zone. An earthwork thought to be of later prehistoric date existed at Lambourn Place; most of this has now been covered by housing, but a small stretch of it remains in a field between The Park and the River Lambourn. It was partially excavated by local archaeologists in the 1930s but, although some Romano-British pottery was recovered, its date and function remains unclear. Evidence of significant later prehistoric and Romano-British activity is known from adjacent valley sides and it is possible that features or material of these periods may exist within the zone. Romano-British pottery was recovered from the construction of Lambourn station in the 1890s and from development near Stork House in the 1990s. The finds near Stork House came from within 100m of a site where some undated burials were discovered in 1980s and it is possible that these burials were contemporary.

Early medieval material has been recovered from several locations. Recent investigations at Bourne House Stables have located evidence of an early medieval date, including sunken floored buildings and finds of 7th – 8th century date. The Lambourn Place earthwork may be of this date, and it has been suggested it could be related to early occupation around the church and putative palace site. Pottery was found during construction at Northfields and a 6/7th century brooch was found on Hungerford Hill. The brooch had fabric imprints on its reverse and it might have come from a burial, suggesting the presence of a cemetery of this date in the area.

Few records for later periods exist and most are for late and post-medieval pottery and rubbish found during construction work. The only other recorded features relate to the Lambourn Valley Railway. This was constructed in the 1890s and terminated at Lambourn station where there were also goods sheds and cattle pens. The line was closed in the 1970s and the majority of its components, including the station, sheds and tracks were either demolished or removed. The site of the railway terminus has now been redeveloped.

Historic Environment Potential

Potential of this zone is very hard to assess as few HER records exist. Archaeological work in advance of development has demonstrated that features of medieval and perhaps earlier date

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survive. By analogy with adjacent zones and evidence from archaeological work, there is potential for later prehistoric, Romano-British and early medieval material.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Conservation Issues

- Development pressure is forcing settlement to expand out of the valley floor onto the lower slopes.
- The zone has high potential for Roman and early medieval archaeological discoveries.
- More detail is needed on the historic building stock to ensure appropriate policies are put in place to conserve this resource.

Research Priorities

- What was the nature and extent of Romano-British activity in the zone?
- Are the burials at Stork House Roman in date and do they indicate the presence of settlement activity nearby?
- Is there continuity of settlement from the Roman period to the current day?
- What was the date, nature and function of the earthwork between The Park and the River Lambourn?
- Do the recent discoveries at Bourne House Stables represent the earliest phase of the modern settlement? What does this site tell us about the spread of Saxon influence into West Berkshire in the years following the end of Roman rule?