

BOUNDARY REVIEW

NEWBURY TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA

DECEMBER 2021



Report Title: Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area: Boundary Review
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1. Introduction

Background and Purpose

- 1.1 This boundary review has been conducted alongside the Newbury Town Centre conservation area Appraisal and Management Plan (2021) document. This document has been written to explain and justify proposed boundary changes as a result of the boundary review process, initially carried out in the summer of 2021 with public consultation and review in 2023 and 2024.
- 1.2 Newbury Town Centre (NTC) conservation area boundaries were last reviewed and updated in 1990. The NTC conservation area, defined by the 1990 boundary, is now considered to be overly large with a particularly varied character, including the canal and residential suburbs in addition to the town centre. This variety makes the ongoing management of the conservation area difficult, hence the necessity for this review. A map of the existing NTC boundary (correct as of 1990) has been appended to this document for reference.

Planning Policy Context

- 1.3 The Newbury Town Centre conservation area was originally designated in 1971 and has been subject to several extensions and amalgamations over the years, with the latest boundary extensions adopted in 1990 (see the appended summary of the NTC conservation area's designation and evolution). The planning policy landscape has changed considerably since that time, with the introduction of new guidance and policy relating to conservation areas, their designation, review and management. This boundary review has been conducted in light of current planning policy and guidance.
- 1.4 This review aims to fulfil the Council's duty to review and update previously designated conservation areas, as required by section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the commitment made by policy CS19 in the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2012). This review also responds to the policy and guidance set out in the NPPF (Revised 2023) and by Historic England's guidance on Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2019).
- 1.5 Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that "*when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such*

status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest”.

This boundary review and adjustment is a direct response to this requirement.

Document Preparation and Community Involvement

- 1.6 This boundary review has been prepared by Heritage Architecture & GL Hearn in close liaison with West Berkshire Council, based on surveys undertaken in 2020 and 2021.
- 1.7 The process of producing the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and this boundary review involved public consultation in 2023 and 2024 with relevant local amenity societies and stakeholders, statutory bodies and the public. The process of consultation is designed to increase public understanding of the character of the conservation area and encourage public discussion regarding the conservation area’s issues and future management. The outcome of this consultation process and any comments received have been considered by West Berkshire Council, including comments on the proposed boundary review. A list of consultees has been appended to this document.
- 1.8 Ordnance Survey data has been reproduced under licence: unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright.

2. Summary of Boundary Review

- 2.1 The following key changes have been proposed as part of this boundary review. Further information and justification have been provided for each change in Section 3 below.

Kennet and Avon Canal, Newbury (East and West) Conservation Areas

- 2.2 The NTC conservation area bears a strong relationship to the Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) and the Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) conservation areas, which sit immediately on either side of, and adjacent to, the Town Centre. The intersection of the canal from east to west across the town centre makes for a more complex boundary between these three separate conservation areas. To assist with the future management of all three conservation areas, the boundary has been reviewed to place as much of the canal (and associated towpaths, land, canal-related buildings and structures and buildings that have a direct impact on the canal's understanding and setting) within the respective canal conservation areas, leaving any town centre-related buildings and areas within NTC conservation area. Historic use, function and character were an important consideration in this review and the proposed boundary changes.
- 2.3 The result of the above is that some areas would now be included within a neighbouring conservation area, rather than remain as part of the NTC conservation area. All areas are proposed to retain their current conservation area status unless identified as a proposed reduction or 'subtraction' in the below mapping.

Newtown Road Conservation Area

- 2.4 The 1990 Conservation Boundary includes a large residential suburban area to the south of Newbury Town Centre. Whilst characterful in its own right, this area has a markedly different character and development, as well as making the NTC conservation area unmanageably large. Therefore, this area, alongside various extensions, is proposed to be separated to form a new conservation area, known as "Newtown Road".

Boundary Subtractions/Reductions

- 2.5 The proposed reductions to the NTC conservation area boundary are in response to Historic England and NPPF guidance to ensure that an area justifies designation as a conservation area based on its special architectural or historic interest. This ensures that the conservation area is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack

special interest. The areas of removal were found to have limited architectural or historic interest generally, and whilst it is acknowledged that these areas may have examples of historic buildings of interest (whether listed or unlisted), these buildings do not contribute to the character and appearance of the NTC conservation area.

- 2.6 It is of paramount importance not to “water down” the special interest of the conservation area. The NPPF posits that impacts on a conservation area must be considered on the conservation area “as a whole”. The inclusion of areas that lack special interest will dilute the conservation area’s overall quality, thus lowering the bar and lessening the potential impact of new development. The higher the quality of the conservation area, the higher the benchmark is for proposed development. As such, including areas of lower architectural and historic interest would leave the Council open to challenge. In place of conservation area protection, it is proposed that WBC may use Local Listing to protect any non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.7 Historic England sets out criteria on suitability for conservation area designation in paragraph 72 of “Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management” (2019). Areas that do not meet these criteria and guidance have been identified and proposed for subtraction/reduction. In paragraph 74, this guidance also states conservation area designations made solely to protect trees are unlikely to meet the criteria of special architectural or historic interest as set out in the NPPF. Any areas that do not meet the criteria on suitability for designation, but may contain trees, have been identified as a proposed subtraction/reduction. Any trees of high amenity value are proposed to be considered separately for protection via a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

Boundary Additions/Extensions

- 2.8 Several areas immediately outside of the 1990 NTC conservation area boundary have been identified as being of sufficient interest to warrant inclusion within the NTC conservation area boundary and thus proposed as an addition/extension. This exercise was completed through site surveys and research, following the guidance set out by Historic England: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2019). This considers Historic England’s criteria on suitability for designation, including the presence of designated and non-designated heritage assets; areas of surviving historic layout, features, architectural styles and materials; areas of local interest associated with the development of the town centre; and areas with high-quality public realm that are an essential component of the wider historic area.

Minor Boundary Revisions

- 2.9 In several cases, the boundary additions and subtractions have been proposed as part of minor revisions to better reflect current plot boundaries and topographical features. This will make understanding the boundary easier in practice and is in line with guidance set out by Historic England: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2019), paragraph 68.

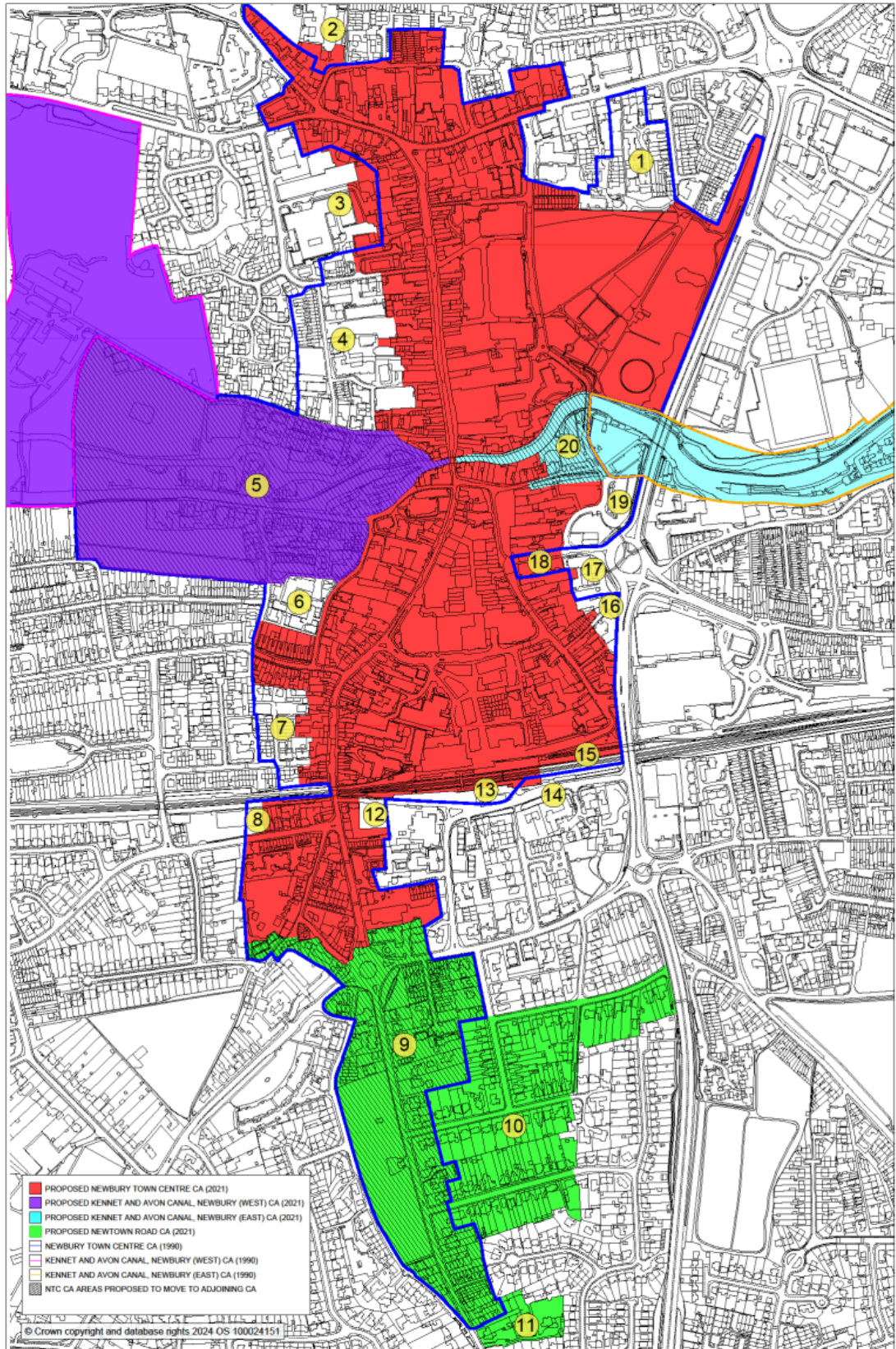


Figure 1: Boundary Review Map

3. Boundary Changes

- 3.1 Please refer to the map in Figure 1 with numbered changes for additions and subtractions to the conservation area. The colour coding denotes the proposed new conservation area boundaries. Below is the justification and reasoning for these changes.

Area 1: Subtraction of residential area to the north of Victoria Park

- 3.2 This area is dominated by modern development and lacks historic character generally; it makes a limited contribution to the special interest of the conservation area as a whole and its inclusion currently dilutes the overall quality of the conservation area. It is therefore proposed as a subtraction. The buildings of historical value in this area are protected by statutory listing (e.g. 69 and 71 London Road, 75 and 77 London Road, 1A – 5 & 6 St Marys Place and 1 - 4 Lime View), which also demands consideration of development within their settings. Any unlisted buildings of historic and/or architectural interest in this area should be considered separately for local listing – see the appended list of key historic buildings proposed to be considered for local listing.

Area 2: Addition of the Infant Schoolhouse, Speenhamland

- 3.3 The unlisted Infant Schoolhouse is of historic and architectural interest and is an attractive historic school within Speenhamland and Pelican Lane close to the town. Opened in 1874, designed by Newbury architect James H. Money, and described at the time as “of a picturesque Gothic character” (Newbury Weekly News, Dec. 17, 1874). Aesthetically it makes a positive contribution to its immediate setting, as well as the wider conservation area and contributes to its historic interest – particularly as it was designed by a local architect. It is therefore proposed to be included as part of the conservation area.

Area 3: Addition of the area west of the Broadway and Northbrook Street

- 3.4 This western boundary is complex due to the piecemeal development to the rear of the buildings on Northbrook Street and The Broadway; the historic street and field patterns have been largely lost due to modern commercial development. The current boundary has little regard for plot boundaries and topographical features, making it difficult to interpret. This proposed revised boundary runs close to the historic extent of the town, as defined by the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project – a GIS tool by

WBC archaeology service. It also incorporates several mature and semi-mature trees, which contribute to the character of the conservation area. This new zone provides a clear buffer to the rear of the buildings on the Broadway and Northbrook Street, where the extent of the previous boundary was unclear.

- 3.5 These proposed changes are minor revisions to make the boundary easier to understand. The new proposed boundary runs along existing plot boundaries and land divisions, excluding modern developments where possible (which do not contribute to the special interest of the area).

Area 4: Subtraction of the area west of Northbrook Street

- 3.6 This western boundary is complex due to the piecemeal development to the rear of the buildings on Northbrook Street and The Broadway; the historic street and field patterns have been largely lost due to modern commercial development.
- 3.7 The character of this area is dominated by a high proportion of modern development which detracts from the character and appearance of the conservation area. The row of Georgian terraced houses on West Street (previously 'Carnarvon Terrace') have survived in a greatly eroded state. Whilst it is acknowledged that this terrace and the Camp Hopson Funeral Directors Building have a degree of historic and architectural interest, this alone is insufficient to justify the inclusion of area 4 as a whole, especially when this would come at the cost of including neighbouring modern detracting development.
- 3.8 Therefore, when taken as a whole, this area is not of sufficient historical or architectural interest to justify its inclusion and would dilute the quality of the conservation area. The unlisted Georgian Terrace on West Street and the Camp Hopson Funeral Directors building should be considered separately for local listing – see the appended list of key historic buildings proposed to be considered for local listing.
- 3.9 These proposed changes intend to make the boundary easier to understand, by running along existing plot boundaries and land divisions, excluding modern developments where possible (which do not contribute to the special interest of the area).

Area 5: Change to become part of neighbouring Conservation Area (Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) Conservation Area)

- 3.10 A review of this area has found that its character is more closely associated with that of the canal. This includes the Newbury Lock Area and the development on the southern and northern sides of the canal, which have a greater impact on the setting and experience of the canal, as well as a closer relationship in terms of historic use and development. Therefore, the conservation area status of this area will be retained but is proposed to become part of the Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) conservation area.

Area 6: Subtraction of the residential area west of Oddfellows Road

- 3.11 This proposed boundary tightly hugs the historic extent of the town, as defined in the HLC project, using Oddfellows Road as a logical marker. This area contains a high proportion of characterless modern development. It is not of sufficient special interest to warrant inclusion and dilutes the quality of the conservation area.

Area 7: Subtraction of the residential area West of Bartholomew Street

- 3.12 This proposed boundary tightly hugs the historic extent of the town, as defined in the HLC project, using existing plot boundaries and topographic features where possible. The excluded area contains a high proportion of characterless modern development that is not of sufficient special interest to warrant inclusion and dilutes the quality of the conservation area.

Area 8: Subtraction of the former builder's merchant premises and yard south of the railway

- 3.13 Immediately south of the railway tracks, the boundary is proposed to be tightened to exclude a modern builder's merchant premises and yard (formerly Jewsons) and to better reflect the historic extent of the town. This building is a simple and characterless 20th warehouse-style building and it is not of sufficient historic interest to warrant its inclusion within the conservation area.

Area 9: Newtown Road Conservation Area (Separate Conservation Area)

- 3.14 This large area is clearly of historical interest, however has a different character to the NTC conservation area and is located outside of the historic development of the Town (as defined in the HLC project). Its size, location and residential character warrant the

creation of a new conservation area to allow better appraisal and management of both conservation areas.

Area 10: Newtown Road Conservation Area East Extension

- 3.15 This area is considered to be of similar historic character and quality to Area 9, through its high proportion of unlisted yet historic and characterful dwellings that retain a clear expression of original features, materials and street patterns. This complements the area's existing historic residential/suburban character. It is considered to be of sufficient interest to justify its proposed inclusion as part of the newly proposed Newtown Road conservation area.

Area 11: Newtown Road Conservation Area South Extension

- 3.16 This area is considered to be of similar historic character and quality to Area 9, through its high proportion of unlisted yet historic and characterful dwellings that retain a clear expression of original features, materials and street patterns. This complements the area's existing historic residential/suburban character. It is considered to be of sufficient interest to justify its proposed inclusion as part of the newly proposed Newtown Road conservation area.

Area 12: Subtraction of playground to St Nicolas C of E Junior School

- 3.17 This subtraction proposes to exclude the school playground, which is not of sufficient historic or aesthetic interest and makes a limited contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This change also better utilises existing plot boundaries which makes the conservation area boundary easier to understand.

Area 13: Subtraction of area south of the Railway

- 3.18 This proposed minor boundary alteration omits a small area that contains parking areas and a modern single-storey building of no architectural merit. The area is not of sufficient historic or architectural interest and makes no contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Area 14: Addition of the Newbury Station building

- 3.19 This proposed minor boundary adjustment allows for the inclusion of the historic station building (the previous boundary cuts diagonally across this building). This is an unlisted early 20th-century railway station building built on the site of the 1847 station in red brick

building with stone dressings and detailing. The building is linked to the growth of Newbury. The whole of this building is considered to be of sufficient historic and architectural interest to justify its proposed inclusion.

Area 15: Subtraction of the railway tracks

- 3.20 This area of railway track makes a limited contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and is therefore proposed to be excluded from the conservation area.

Area 16: Subtraction of the area west of the A339

- 3.21 This area contains modern development that makes a limited contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is therefore proposed to be excluded from the conservation area.

Area 17: Addition of the extension to the Post Office building

- 3.22 The previous boundary cut diagonally across this site. This change better utilises existing plot boundaries to make the conservation area boundary easier to understand. In addition, the early 20th-century three-storey brick industrial building is in keeping with the character of the post office site (see Area 18) and is therefore suggested for inclusion.

Area 18: Addition of the Post Office Depot

- 3.23 Whilst this yard/depot is utilitarian in appearance, it forms a part of the post office site's development and setting. The post office site was opened in 1896, and this depot/yard made an important contribution to its function. The site is also the approximate location of a previous almshouse dating from 1795 and demolished in 1952, so the site may also hold archaeological interest. This site, therefore, holds historic interest and makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. Therefore, it makes a contribution to the special interest of the conservation area and warrants its proposed inclusion.

Area 19: Subtraction of the bus station and car park area north of KFC

- 3.24 The area between the roundabout, Wharf Road, and the A339 consists of modern development and traffic infrastructure of limited historic and aesthetic interest. It is, therefore, proposed to be excluded from the conservation area as it makes a limited contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Area 20: Change to become part of neighbouring Conservation Area (Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) Conservation Area)

- 3.25 A review of this area has found that its character is more closely associated with that of the canal and wharf area. This includes the listed Cloth Hall and Corn Stores (now West Berkshire Museum), examples of Newbury's past industries and trades, which have strong historic associations with the canal and wharf area. The location of these buildings and their visibility from the canal and wharf means they contribute to the setting and experience of the canal and the Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) conservation area. Therefore, the conservation area status of this area will be retained but is proposed to be included as part of the Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) conservation area.

4. Neighbouring Conservation Areas

Updated Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area

- 4.1 The proposed updated NTC conservation area includes Newbury Bridge, which links the northern and southern parts of the updated NTC conservation area boundary. This is due to the bridge's significance as an integral piece of historic road infrastructure, which was fundamental to the town centre's development. As such, the updated NTC conservation area boundary effectively over-sails that of the Kennet and Avon Canal East and Kennet and Avon Canal West conservation areas, which meet under the bridge.

Updated Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) Conservation Area

- 4.2 The proposed updated Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) conservation area boundary adjoins the updated Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) conservation area underneath Newbury Bridge. Here, the proposed new conservation area boundary includes water and the canal structure, but not the bridge above.
- 4.3 Moving eastwards, the proposed updated Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) conservation area includes the towpath; an integral feature associated with the canal. The Wharf area is to be part of the updated Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) conservation area, due to the distinctive visual and historically functional relationship between the canal and the wharf.

- 4.4 This proposed area boundary update includes the former Corn Stores and Cloth Hall (West Berkshire Museum), which have a historic relationship and visual connection with the wharf and canal. On the north side of the canal, the boundary will hug the outer edge of the towpath and edge of Victoria Park; the buildings to the north and the park have a stronger relationship with the town centre in use, activity and historical relationship, and therefore have been included as part of the updated NTC conservation area. The same applies to the buildings on the south side of the canal fronting Mansion House and Wharf Street.

Updated Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) Conservation Area

- 4.5 The proposed updated Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) conservation area adjoins the updated Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) conservation area underneath Newbury Bridge. Here, the proposed new boundary includes water and the canal structure, but not the bridge above. To the west of Newbury Bridge, the proposed new boundary would be defined by Northcroft Lane in the north, and West Mills, Oddfellows Road and the small cut-through to Kennet Road in the south. These areas have a strong visual link to the canal, which is an important part of their setting. Therefore, these areas fit more comfortably in the Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) conservation area, and so are proposed to be included within its updated boundary.

New Newtown Road Conservation Area

- 4.6 It is recommended that the Newtown Road Conservation Area becomes a separate conservation area to reduce the current overlarge size of the NTC conservation area and the associated issues this has created with its ongoing management. It is located to the south of St Johns Roundabout and the busy A343 (area 9 in the map in Figure 1). This area was originally a separate conservation area (Pound Street and Newtown Road) first designated in 1971, and was merged into NTC conservation area in 1990 (see appendix for a summary of the NTC conservation area evolution). The reasons for this are as follows:
- The area has a wholly different character and appearance to that of the Town Centre, and can be summarised as a leafy residential suburb that developed from the Victorian period onwards, containing the Newtown Road Cemetery (opened in 1850) and its associated buildings and structures.

- The area developed separately from Newbury town centre, which has developed organically over many centuries of human occupation. Conversely, the Newtown Road area commenced development in the second half of the 19th century, with further development in the early 20th century as a suburb of the town.
- Its use, both historically and in present times, is primarily residential. It, therefore, functions as a suburb of the Town Centre, but it is not within the town centre itself.
- Given its size and distinct physical separation created by the St John's roundabout and the A343, it is logical that this area is severed and separately designated.

4.7 Given its very different character, history, development and appearance, the Newtown Road area makes a limited contribution to the significance of the NTC Conservation Area. The proposed separation of these areas would simplify the understanding of Newbury Town Centre's significance and character and would avoid the dilution of its significance as a whole.

4.8 The Newtown Road area is a distinct area which deserves its own unique assessment and management. This proposed detachment will ensure that improved and targeted management policies can be tailored for each area, and will essentially make development management more straightforward.

5. Adoption and Phasing

5.1 It is recommended that the updated boundary for Newbury Town Centre, Kennet and Avon Canal, Newbury conservation areas (East and West) and the newly proposed Newtown Road conservation area, are all designated/adopted concurrently. This way, no areas of heritage significance will be left unprotected at any one time.

6. Appendix

6.1 The previous version of the conservation area boundary dating from 1990 has been included below for reference. Newbury Town Centre conservation area is shown edged red. The Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) conservation area is shown edged blue. The Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) conservation area is shown edged green.

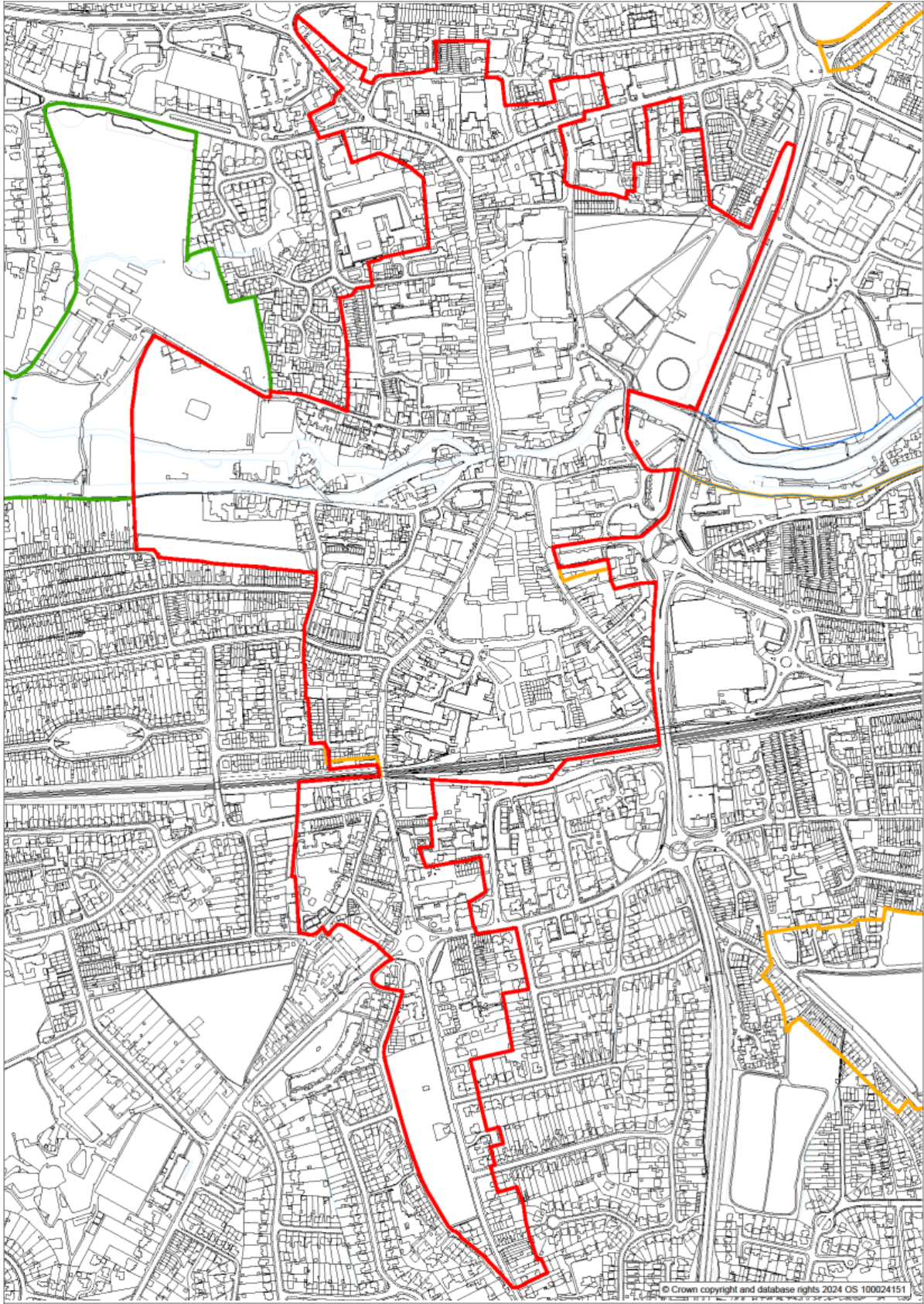


Figure 2: Conservation Area Boundaries, updated in 1990.

6.2 The history and evolution of the NTC conservation area designation is summarised as follows:

- In 1971, three separate conservation areas were established within the area of the Town Centre: "Pound Street and Newtown Road," "Kennet and Avon Canal," and "Northbrook Street".
- In 1973, there were extensions to include parts of Northcroft Lane, West Street, and Pembroke Road.

6.3 By 1977, there were 2 Town Centre conservation areas. One focused on Northbrook Street, Oxford Street and London Road and the other on the Canals. These areas were merged into one conservation area: the Newbury Town Centre conservation area. Pound Street and Newtown Road conservation area remained separate at this time.

6.4 In 1983, two adjacent Kennet and Avon Canal conservation areas were designated, adjoining the existing Newbury Town Centre conservation area, forming the Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (East) and the Kennet and Avon Canal Newbury (West) conservation areas.

- In 1990, the Newbury Town Centre conservation area was again expanded, incorporating areas such as the Kennet Centre, Cheap Street, additional sections of Bartholomew Street and the Newbury Wharf area. This update led to the previously separate "Pound Street and Newtown Road" conservation area being absorbed into the Newbury Town Centre conservation area.

6.5 As a result of the proposed boundary changes, several unlisted yet characterful historic buildings will no longer benefit from conservation area protection, once the proposed boundary changes are adopted. Other unlisted yet characterful/historic buildings have been identified neighbouring the boundary of the conservation area, but are in an area that falls short of Historic England's criteria on suitability for conservation area designation. The following buildings have been identified as potential candidates for inclusion on WBC's local list, and any other relevant buildings will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

- 58-88 West Street (formerly Carnarvon Terrace)
- Camp Hopson Funeral Directors, West Street

- Speenhamland Primary School, Pelican Lane
- 73 London Road
- 79-83 London Road
- Masonic Hall, London Road

6.6 The Draft Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan underwent public consultation for six weeks between 12/01/23 and 23/02/23. The Draft NTC CAAMP and Proposed Revised NTC CA Map were made available on the WBC Website. Paper copies were made available in the Council Offices, Newbury Town Hall and Newbury Library during the consultation period. Two additional meetings were hosted with Key Stakeholders and Historic England on 23/04/24.

6.7 List of consultees during the Draft NTC CAAMP consultation 2023:

6.8 Residents and businesses within the existing NTC Conservation Area and a 10m buffer were contacted by letter

6.12 The following consultees were contacted by email:

6.9 Newbury Town Council

6.10 Greenham Parish Council

6.11 Shaw-cum-Donnington Parish Council

6.12 Speen Parish Council

6.13 Historic England

6.14 Newbury Society

6.15 Historic Buildings and Places

6.16 The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

6.17 The Victorian Society

6.18 The Georgian Group

6.19 The Twentieth Century Society

6.20 Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust

6.21 Berkshire Gardens Trust

6.22 The Canal and River Trust

6.23 Environment Agency

6.24 The Gardens Trust

6.25 Kennet and Avon Canal Trust