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Oxford City Council
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Scale 1:4000

Headington Quarry Conservation Area

Designated 4 January 1971

Headington Quarry Conservation Area, No.4

The district known today as Quarry, stands on Corallian limestones and has its origin in the extensive quarrying industry that provided much of Oxford's building stone in the medieval and later periods. The older buildings in the Quarry do not form a village in the conventional sense, but represent the colonisation of the "hills and holes" left by quarrymen. W J Arkell in "Oxford Stone" says: "without man's interference, the district would be a level plateau, but the streets and gardens are at all levels, full of sudden dips and rises. The whole village is built on a vast rabbit-warren of old quarries and tip-heaps". The survival of these quarries in a residential area is of considerable industrial archaeological interest.

Headington Quarry is situated two miles north-east of Magdalen Bridge and is defined on the south-east by the church glebe land, towards the open country of Shotover, and by the eastern by-pass; on the west by the regular development of the inter-war years; and less clearly on the north in the mixed development south of the London Road.

The oldest remaining buildings belong to the 18th century, many more are 19th century in date and considerable development has taken place this century. The earlier scattered houses in the district were small stone cottages, built singularly or in terraces in the vernacular building traditions of the locality. Many of the single houses have a symmetrical facade with a central entrance door and end chimney stacks. The original artisan nature of the Quarry declined with the run-down of the quarry industry and, following the construction of Holy Trinity Church (Gilbert Scott) in 1850 and of the Quarry School (James Brooks) in 1864, rapid growth took place in the second half of the 19th century. With this increasing residential development, brick became the predominant building material. Morris dancing, a tradition that continues today, has been associated with Headington Quarry for centuries.

Despite the growth of the Quarry into a residential district of Oxford, it still retains much of its earlier visual quality. The uneven, man-made nature of the ground has resisted comprehensive change, and the area now contrasts sharply with the adjoining areas. Today, the Quarry still forms a definable entity of some sixty acres, with twisting lanes, rubble stone walls, and humble stone and brick cottages, sprinkled with newer homes, and criss-crossed with walled footpaths. The existence of abrupt changes of level has enabled much of the recent development to merge into the area without undue disruption. Great care has been taken over the layout and detail of the majority of these recent developments. It is of the utmost importance to continue to exercise this care in the design, layout and materials of new building, and at the same time to ensure the preservation of the existing attractive features.

To this end, the Council designated Headington Quarry a conservation area on 4th January 1971.