



[Home](#) > [Eynsham Village](#) > [Character](#)

EYNSHAM VILLAGE - CHARACTER

[Find Us](#)

[Brief Visit](#)

[Bus Timetables](#)

[Good Food](#)

[Housing](#)

[Parking](#)

[People](#)

[Photo Map](#)

[Planning](#)

[Recreation](#)

[A to Z](#)

[News](#)

[Events](#)

VILLAGE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

A group of local residents undertook this assessment in 2023, as a guide to future development. We made special reference to the [Eynsham housing map](#) (2012), a [list of recent developments](#) and [residents' responses on local history](#) (2015). Our template for each era focused on 'spirit of place', historical connections, views into and out of the village and access routes between the village and new developments.

[Community First](#) has since drawn out a set of [common themes](#) - including our recommendations for creation of an independent [design review panel](#) and the commissioning of a professional traffic study - that will in turn inform the [design policies](#) in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

TO 1914 | 1914-1960 | 1960-1980 | 1980-PRESENT

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO 1914

Eynsham village sits in an elevated position on the gravel terrace overlooking an early crossing of the River Thames at Swinford. The first mention of the name is in the 9th century Anglo Saxon Chronicle; the fact that it is mentioned under the year 571 perhaps reflects a memory of something very important having happened many years before the Chronicle was compiled.

The area is rich in pre-historic remains and possibly settlement on the site of the village has been almost continuous. By 1005 a [Benedictine abbey](#) had been established and its monumental buildings and economic control of local life greatly influenced how the village developed. In 1215 the abbey built a completely new area - Newland Street, which today contains Eynsham's oldest domestic building, [The White Hart](#) public house.

SPACES: gaps between built elements - streets, gardens, etc.

The built area in the centre of the village has a distinctly urban feel probably due to the abbey's attempts to run the settlement as a town, encouraging trade with markets and fairs. There is little or no space between any of the houses. The narrow streets are dominated by traffic and wheelie bins. There are several ancient alleyways joining different parts of the built area both old and new.

BUILDINGS: The older buildings are of local stone interspersed with later red and black brick. Houses line the streets with few front gardens (and, of course, no garages). There are scores of [listed buildings](#) in the Conservation area. Nearly all the larger houses are not visible from the streets. Most houses are 2-storied but there are some 3-storied houses dotted around the central area.

To the north of the medieval church is a [small square](#) containing an 18th-century building now used as a museum but originally built as a market hall with schoolroom above. This Square well illustrates the lack of building space in the village centre as some of the properties that line it are built at very sharp angles, presumably respecting already existing roads. One retains an old Oxfordshire name - the Tuer - used for narrow passageways and spelt with great variation throughout the county.

Despite the intrusion of some 20th-century building, the preservation of historic features in the centre of the village is of paramount importance:



the church, the [Bartholomew Room](#) and entire Square with its medieval cross, Lord's Farm threshing barn, the alleyways, Newland forge, and the malting chimney at the [Jolly Sportsman](#) public house (probably the last one left in West Oxfordshire) are all vital to maintain the character of the village: not all are listed or even in the Conservation area.

GREENERY & LANDSCAPE FEATURES: The only green open space in the older part of the village is [the graveyard](#), this is home to several magnificent trees. Other important trees line Conduit lane and the car park. One small cottage in the centre gives a home to a wonderful magnolia in its tiny front garden. A large house in Newland Street, presently [Beech Court](#), has some very important mature trees in its front garden (one magnificent beech recently lost and not replaced by anything). There are 4 trees in the Square and 9 planters which give the area a pleasant green, calm atmosphere, but overall the most important trees are in private gardens.

The views down Mill Street and Oxford Road all end with good trees.

It should be noted that on the southern side of the village [the medieval fishponds](#) area provides much needed green space.

VIEWS: The street views are charming (or would be but for traffic and wheelie bins). From the oldest part of the village there are no views out to countryside. The few visible trees are extremely important.

NOISE & SMELL- man made or natural: Traffic noise and smell dominate the central area accompanied by smelly wheelie bins and the smells of food cooking emanating from various pubs and restaurants. This can and should all be addressed.

SPIRIT OF PLACE: Eynsham is a busy, happy place with a great sense of community. Lots of pubs and clubs. Lots of sports and activities.



FROM 1914 TO 1960

The population of Eynsham declined from a peak of 2,177 in 1871 to only 1,644 in 1921; this included a few houses outside the village at Barnard Gate and Freeland. Growth began in the 1920s and new houses were built along existing unbuilt up roads mainly on the outskirts of the village (Wytham View being an exception). Many people began to work outside the village (in Witney and Oxford) and by 1931 the number of houses had risen from 406 to 483. By 1951 though Freeland had been removed from the parish there were 588 houses and the population had risen to 2,373. There was only a modest increase in population in the 1950s.

Intensive housebuilding [from the 1960s](#) more than doubled the population.



The houses of this period used completely new materials, roughcast and pebbledash, no stone or brick; they have larger windows and thinner walls and are consequently less well insulated than the traditional buildings. They are the same or very similar to those built everywhere else in the country at this date – generous sized rooms and generous gardens (homes for heroes); though Eynsham does contain one particularly mean development of this date.

Many were council houses (now mostly privately owned).

The most dramatic change perhaps was north of the village where [the A40 was built in the 1930s](#), and to accompany it, a road-house inn, [The Evenlode](#).

The buildings of this date have no visual relationship to the original housing in the village centre so there is nothing to guide any new developments.



1960-1980 AND 1980-PRESENT: PLEASE SCROLL DOWN