

**UESA      Urban East Suburban Area**

**Historic Character**

This is an extensive zone of mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbs containing several areas of historic settlement including Calcot Row and Purley-on-Thames. The suburbs were developed over three different landscape types. The landscape around Purley-on-Thames in the north was like that of the adjacent Thames Valley and comprised Parliamentary fields, meadows and a park. The Calcot area was like the rest of the Kennet valley and had a mix of early enclosure fields, parklands and some woods. In the centre of the zone the landscape was dominated by irregularly-shaped fields, extensive woods, commons and small dispersed settlements.

Development of the zone began in the 1930s with new housing being constructed around Purley, Calcot Row and The City. The main phase of suburb construction between Calcot Row and The City was in the late 1950s and 1960s and much of the built up area created became known as Calcot or Tilehurst. Development south of the A4 around Calcot Grange and Calcot Place was relatively late and took place in the late 1980s. Some housing was constructed around Purley in the 1950s, but the major phase of expansion southwards from the historic settlement was in the 1970s and 1980s. Most historic settlements have been subject to some redevelopment, but Calcot Grange and Calcot Mill retain historic buildings, and Calcot Row retains both buildings and elements of its plot pattern. The largest non-housing area is Calcot Park Golf Course which was developed from Calcot Park, an extensive 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape park, and some adjacent fields. The house has been re-used as the club house and some aspects of the park's landscaping features and buildings are preserved within the course. There are few other parks and open spaces, and most are on the western edge of the suburbs or between the south edge of Calcot and the railway line.

**Historic Environment**

There are few HER records for this zone and, unusually, most are for standing structures and buildings. Very little archaeological work has been carried out and there is no record of archaeological work prior to construction of any of the housing developments. Archaeological surveys including the Lower Kennet Valley Survey and the National Mapping Programme have covered the area but have not identified many areas of activity. The only evidence of activity prior to the later medieval are a few scattered prehistoric and Roman findspots. The settlement at Purley existed by Domesday, but no deposits or structural remains of it have yet been located, and it is unclear what the origin and nature of this settlement was.

Late medieval buildings and structural elements have been recognised within farm buildings and houses, and these are listed. There are several other listed buildings within the zone and all are located either in the Calcot/A4 area or around Purley. The listed structures are a mix of ecclesiastical, domestic, farm and country house buildings. Two roadside features, a milepost and a pump, have also been listed. There are no Conservation Areas within this zone.

**Historic Environment Potential**

The archaeological potential of much of the zone is likely to be low. The housing estates were constructed with modern-earth moving machinery so it is likely that there has been a combination of truncation of deposits and deeper burial under levelling material over much of the zone. Most of the zone was green-field prior to development so the survival of "islands" of archaeological deposits in undeveloped locations is possible. The nature and quality of any deposits is hard to estimate on present evidence. If areas of specific potential exist at all, the historic settlement nuclei and deposits and structural remains relating to medieval and later occupation, are likely to be present.

## *Historic Environment Character Zone*

Purley village is likely to have a more significant potential in particular for early and later medieval deposits. Additionally, the areas along the River Thames, especially any gravel terraces, are likely to contain greater potential, especially for prehistoric evidence.

### **Historic Environment Action Plan**

#### Conservation Issues

- There is continued development pressure in the area.
- Conservation of the historic character of Purley.
- Conservation of surviving historic buildings and features associated with the London-Bath coaching route and toll road.

#### Research Priorities

- Does the paucity of evidence for the prehistoric period represent a genuine picture of the level of activity in the zone in this period?
- Do historic buildings at the farms in the zone contain information about post-medieval and modern farming practices?
- Can the historic buildings and features along the A4 be used to explore the use and development of the coaching route to Bath?
- Can Purley Park help explain the development of architectural styles and landscape garden design in the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries?
- Can the surviving WWII defensive features in the Kennet Valleys help us understand the military and political history of that period?