

Fordingbridge Conservation Area



Fordingbridge is a small but busy town at an historic crossing of the River Avon and on the edge of the New Forest. The main pressure on the conservation area comes from heavy vehicles passing through it and redevelopment. The linear town centre is formed of short streets linked by a series of open spaces. The conservation area extends to include Parsonage House Farm, the Victorian terraces of Shaftesbury Street, the Infirmary and the watermeadows alongside Sweatfords Water. Most of the historic core of the town remains intact, from the 'entrance' by the church at the south end to the Old Manor House in Salisbury Street. Only in Provost Street, where much of its character has been lost through modern developments is the visual coherence threatened. The later Victorian terraces (Shaftesbury and Church Streets) continue the small scale of roadside buildings. These terraces illustrate the damage which can be caused to good unlisted properties in historic areas by piecemeal changes to windows, doors and external finishes and removal of features and detailing.

Forde is mentioned in the Domesday Book as having a church and two mills. It was probably part of the nearby royal manor of Burgate, developing around the church and the ford. Fordingbridge is essentially a brick built town with most buildings dating from the years following the fire of 1702 although some timber-framing remains concealed behind brick skins. As a thriving commercial centre it was well known for textiles, tanning, brick making, pottery and many other industries up to the early years of the 20th century.

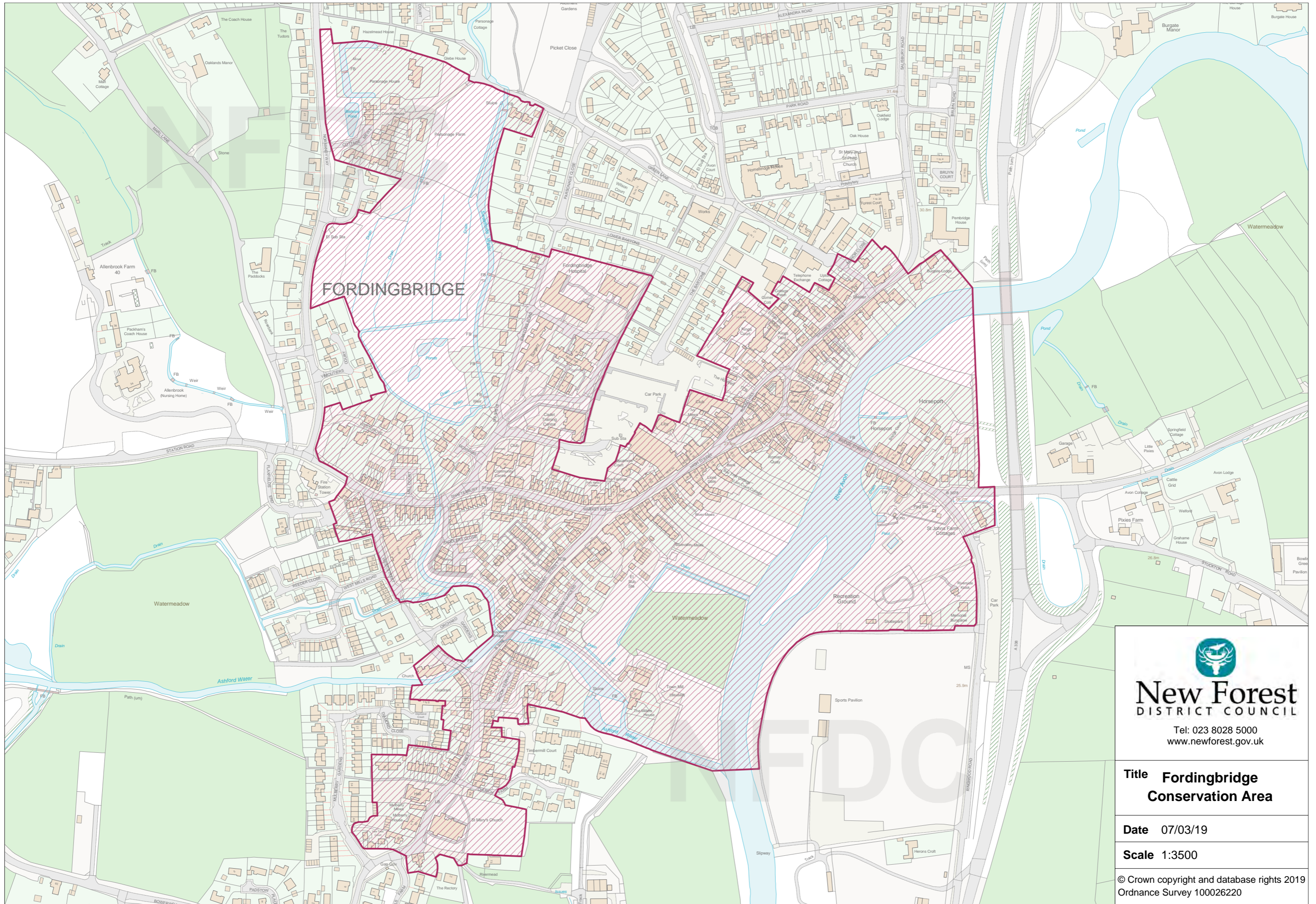
These are key features in the conservation area and the points relate to the numbered areas on the map.

- The **church** (Grade I) has grown from a vanished Saxon building, through reconstructions of the 13th to 15th centuries to the large building we see today. In the 19th century the church overlooked an area of commercial activity, and some cottages in the square of Church Street were clearly once shops.
- The **bridge** (Grade II*) dates from the 14th century although it has been rebuilt and enlarged several times since then. The bridge keeper was obliged to keep watch for deer stealers for 15 days either side of Midsummer Day.
- The **town centre** enhancement scheme won a Civic Trust commendation in 1995. The scheme aimed to improve the appearance, function and convenience of the central streets and reduce the dominance of vehicular over pedestrian traffic. The work involved extensive re-surfacing, creation of new spaces, highway realignment and redesigned junctions, improved lighting and signing, and was undertaken after consulting the local community.

- The **Infirmery site** (Grade II) contains a group of purpose-built workhouse buildings for the accommodation of ninety paupers dating from 1895.
- Burgate Manor courts were held at **The Old Manor House** (Grade II*). It dominates the space at the Salisbury Street entrance to the town close to the original driveway to Burgate Manor which was cut in half by the by-pass in 1975.
- **May's the butcher in Salisbury Street** (Grade II) is the only remaining example of the many thatched houses seen in turn of the century photographs of Salisbury and Provost Streets.

These are some of the things that make Fordingbridge special - they need to be looked after:

- **History**
The original linear street pattern.
The layout of narrow plots running down to the river, particularly on the SE side of High Street.
The system of improved watermeadows common on the Avon was first introduced in Fordingbridge.
- **Buildings**
Small 2-storey brick houses facing the roadway with small gabled dormers.
Original doors and small-paned timber windows.
Roofs of handmade tile or 19th century slate.
Unlisted terraces with simple repeating details (Shaftesbury Street/Church Street).
- **Archaeology**
The medieval bridge and the moat at Parsonage Farm are both Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- **Landscape/Townscape**
Glimpses down alleys and through archways off the main streets.
The spaces such as Market Place which link the main streets.
The watermeadows near Town Mill.
- **Setting**
The River Avon and the views to the gardens behind the High Street.
Trees form an important backdrop to the buildings especially at Horseport and Sweatfords Water.
- **Potential for enhancement**
West Street has a neglected feel as a result of the demolition of the gasworks.
Chances to improve the look of many signs on buildings should be grasped.



New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**Title Fordingbridge
Conservation Area**

Date 07/03/19

Scale 1:3500

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Ordnance Survey 100026220