

Hampton

Conservation Area Appraisal



Historic rural village

designated 25.06.90

This appraisal and the accompanying map has been prepared in collaboration with Highworth Town Council and was adopted by Swindon Borough Council as “a proper assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of Hampton Conservation Area” on 11th December 2000 and re-designated on 4th April 2006.



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Introduction

Hampton Conservation Area was designated by Thamesdown Borough Council on 25th June 1990.

This document defines and records the special architectural or historic interest that warrants designation of Hampton Conservation Area and identifies elements that contribute to its special character and appearance.

Development proposals which affect the conservation area will be judged for their effect on the area's character and appearance as identified in this conservation area appraisal.

A conservation area is "an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

When considering applications for development which affect a conservation area "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area." (Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

This appraisal, in defining the special interest, character and appearance of the conservation area, provides a sound basis for development control decisions. It will help planning officers, developers, designers and the public at large assess whether a proposed development affecting a conservation area would, or would not, preserve or enhance the character and appearance of that area.

This appraisal should be read in conjunction with policies contained in the current Swindon Borough Local Plan and with national planning policy guidance, especially Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.

The information contained in this appraisal was collected during the year 2000. To be concise and readable, it does not record all features. The omission of any feature from the text or accompanying maps does not, therefore, mean that it must not be of interest or value.

Location

The tiny hamlet of Hampton is set in rural surroundings in Highworth Parish, within the Borough of Swindon. The settlement is some 5 miles to the north-east of Swindon town centre and approximately ¼ mile to the west of the market town of Highworth, off the B4019, a route from Highworth through to the A419 Swindon to Cirencester road linking the M4 and M5 motorways.

Origins

Today Hampton consists of a cluster of cottages and houses around a former farmstead with the earliest building, Old Farmhouse, probably dating from the early 17th century. However, documentary and archaeological evidence suggest early origins for settlement at this location, no doubt encouraged by its favourable position on a sheltered slope at the spring line between the limestone ridge and the clay of the Thames vale. Many prehistoric and Romano-British features and finds have been revealed in the fields around the conservation area and particularly from the area between Hampton and Highworth.

The existence of a settlement here in the Anglo-Saxon period is hinted at by an incidental reference to Hampton as the location for the signing over of a gift of land attended by the King and several bishops. Hampton appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Hantone¹, at which time, with a population counting only about 15 adult males, it was larger than Highworth. Undated settlement features, possibly related to the medieval settlement of Hampton, show as both vegetation marks and earthworks on aerial photographs of 1967².

Although recent years have seen some alterations to the hamlet (particularly at Hampton Farm where several farm buildings have recently been demolished or converted and a riding arena has been constructed), only a few additional houses have been built during the last 40-50 years and Hampton remains a tiny hamlet.

¹Gover - Place Names of Wiltshire, 1939 p27

²SMR ref.460

Landscape setting

Hampton is situated in rural surroundings adjacent to the B4019, on the hillside a short way below the hilltop town of Highworth.

The hamlet lies on coral-rag limestone above the clays of the Upper Thames valley on the south-west slope of the shallow valley formed by Bydemill Brook. The hillside position affords wide views.

To the west of the hamlet lie the brook and a small copse known as Hampton Copse whilst beyond, the disused Highworth and Swindon branch railway line curves around the hamlet following the foot of the scarp slope.

The conservation area is surrounded by open agricultural land.

Boundaries and extent

The hamlet includes a cluster of farm buildings, houses and cottages arranged about a narrow lane that forms a loop off the B4019 Highworth to Blunsdon Road.

The small conservation area encompass all of the buildings in and around the hamlet's historic core together with associated gardens and open space. Boundaries are generally drawn at the junction with open agricultural land beyond.

To protect the setting of the hamlet, including its leafy, green approaches, and to make a meaningful boundary, the conservation area includes all of the land enclosed within the loop of lane with its southern boundary formed by the Highworth-Blunsdon road. This includes the extensive grounds of a late Victorian house (Hampton Lodge) and a modern house (Coveage Field) and a small field, currently cut and baled for hay.

To the north-east, land alongside a track leading out into the fields is included. This land was formerly used as allotments and an integral part of the hamlet. The spacious and well treed gardens of the modern houses that now occupy this land (Corbiere, The New Bungalow and Chesford Elms) contribute to the leafy character of the conservation area and form an obvious contrast with the fields beyond. The New Bungalow is an interesting 'modern' house built in the 1960s.

The western edge of the conservation area is somewhat complex, relating closely to the boundary of the former farmyard that was at the heart of the conservation area. Although the farm buildings remain on the Ordnance Survey's current map base, several of them have recently been demolished and others converted to residential use.

To the south-west the conservation area includes a green area, distinct from the surrounding cultivated land, alongside the small stream that flows through the conservation area at this point. In the summer it is overgrown with numerous willows adjacent to the stream side and the remnants of mature hedging separating the area from the open fields beyond.

The present day

Today the hamlet comprises around 20 dwellings. The only public facility is a post box - there is no church, shop or pub or school. However, Highworth, with a full range of the necessary and desirable facilities, is within walking distance and the centre of Swindon only 20 minutes drive by car.

Hampton's origins are firmly linked with agriculture and until recently the buildings at the heart of the hamlet remained in use as a working farm. Some of the farm buildings have recently been demolished, others converted and the remaining buildings lie disused. Aside from stabling of several horses and the cutting of the small field in the centre of the area for hay, the hamlet has become purely residential.

The B4019 forms an effective bypass for the hamlet for traffic and is a route along which cars travel at considerable speed. Although traffic noise from the road can be intrusive, now that farming, with its associated noises and activity, has ceased within the hamlet, the conservation area is generally quiet with a feeling of isolation from the bustle of the modern world. The rural surroundings, abundant tree cover within the hamlet and the use of local materials in historic buildings and boundaries ensure that it retains a pleasant rural ambience.

Summary of general character

The conservation area is characterised by a mixture of historic buildings and old roadside walls, limited 20th century infill, areas of green open space and some fine groups of mature trees and hedges. Hampton is a small conservation area, sensitive to change, and further development could adversely affect its character and appearance.

The special interest that justifies designation of Hampton Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors relating to these parts, including:

- the rural setting of the village on a promontory above the Upper Thames valley with significant views of both Hannington Hall and the low-lying plain;
- the architectural and historic interest of the village's buildings and other structures - including the stone built Old Farmhouse and roadside walls;
- the prevalent use of local materials, notably local ragstone and stone slate roofing;
- the area's trees, especially individual Scots pine, willows along watercourses and other greenery where this bounds a road or footpath;
- the small stream that runs through to join the Bydemill Brook;
- the tranquil and pastoral quality of the area;
- the area's open space including extensive gardens, paddock and a small hay field at the centre of the conservation area.

Highways and streetscapes

The hamlet contains a mixture of old and new buildings arranged in a haphazard fashion along an unnamed lane that forms a loop off the B4019 Highworth to Blunsdon Road. The unkerbed B-road, edged by unmown grass verges and hedges, is straight at this point and carries traffic at some speed past Hampton.

In contrast, the lane through the hamlet carries little traffic. It is narrow and unkerbed, flanked by wide grass verges, field hedges and trees. In summer, growth of vegetation to the verges and hedges results in an enclosed feeling to the lane. Accumulated dust and debris on the road give it an almost unmade appearance and the absence of street lighting columns (except for one) and standard footways contribute to this rural village ambience. This 'street scene' is characteristic of traditional rural, agricultural communities. It forms an important contribution to the character of this village.

At the lower entrance to the village the lane is generous and open, flanked by wide verges and field hedges. Standing alongside the lane to the left, just off the B-road, is a small, rendered cottage of traditional scale and form. Uphill, to the right, an open green space is progressively more manicured and treed, becoming formal lawn as the modern house called Coveage Field is approached. This is the only house in the hamlet to be accessed from the B-road rather than from the lane.

Trees and other greenery are particularly noticeable in this area of the hamlet, including the numerous willows that line the banks of the small brook that runs through this lower end of the village and into Bydemill Brook.

A slight bend in the road reveals a group of buildings forming the historic core of the conservation area. The majority of these are farm buildings, some now converted to residential use, clustered around the house known as 'Old Farmhouse' or No.12. This listed building appears to date from the early 17th century³ and is likely to have been the main farmhouse prior to the building of Hampton Farmhouse.

³WBR report - The Old Farmhouse, unpublished, 199?

Most of these buildings are vernacular - built with local building materials in a traditional manner to provide for simple farming activities and ordinary people. The predominant local material is stone, both for walling and roofs and in boundary walls.

All of the buildings in this grouping are of stone, with attractive stone slate roofs, and give the area a historic character and appearance which the conservation area status seeks to preserve. Several of the more modern farm buildings have been demolished since this ceased to be a working farm and the stone-built barn and stable/granary have been converted to residential use. Although conversion of the buildings themselves has on the whole been sympathetic, the resultant domestic treatment of the site and its surroundings imparts an uncharacteristically suburban look that has been to the detriment of the area's rural character.

Across the road, on the inside of the bend, a further group of farm buildings are disused and very overgrown. Several of these are of 19th century, or earlier, date and stone built, albeit with roofs replaced by corrugated tin. Although these buildings are disused they contribute to the diminishing agricultural character of the hamlet.

At the head of the bend in the lane, Hampton Farmhouse is a large stone house set well back from the road, approached by a drive entered through gates in a stone wall. There are some fine specimen trees in the grounds.

As the road turns it rises more steeply. The north side is raised and bordered by a stone cottage, the remnant of a row. A narrow track leads off to the right, flanked by a row of stone workers cottages. This track leads to a listed, stone-built cottage of 18th century date, one of the few older properties sited away from the lane. Further along, roadside stone walls and hedges and a raised footpath enclose the lane.

There are good views from the top end of the lane, across the valley to the west. Here, the road splits at a small triangle of grass. The lane leading to the north quickly becomes a track leading out into the fields. An iron 'kissing gate' leads to a footpath uphill, across the fields towards Highworth.

Several individual modern houses in this part of the conservation area occupy large plots and although of suburban design, out of character with the conservation area, they are largely well hidden from the roadside by abundant tree planting (Tresco, The New Bungalow, Chesford Elms). However, an exception is the modern bungalow (Corbiere) situated at the turn of the lane, which is particularly prominent

on entering the conservation area from the eastern end of the hamlet. The lack of enclosure to the wide, open-plan frontage exposes a modern appearance that is uncharacteristic of the area. The conservation area's only street light, a standard modern column, and ugly telegraph poles and associated equipment, all sited close by, contribute to the erosion of the rural character in this area.

To the south, the lane loops back to the B4019, bordered to the left by a wide verge and field hedge and to the south-west by the neat mown verge and stone boundary wall of Hampton Lodge. This large, brick late Victorian villa is a good example of its type, although recently extended, and has attractive landscaped gardens bordered by numerous mature trees.

The exit to the B4019 is marked by a group of tall lime and willow trees within the grounds of Hampton Lodge.

Views into and out of the conservation area

Hampton's hillside position affords wide views in which modern development is noticeably absent, although the Motorola factory at Groundwell is now visible on the skyline.

To the west, views are across the valley of the Bydemill Brook, towards Hannington where the Hall particularly stands out. At the northern edge of the conservation area there are sweeping views over the Thames vale towards Cricklade. Approaching the village along the B4019 from Blunsdon, the village appears laid out on the hillside like a model.

Views from within the conservation area to the wider landscape testify to the area's setting in the landscape and make a significant contribution to its overall rural character.

Architectural and historic character, building materials

The conservation area is characterised by historic buildings of traditional construction and materials. The hamlet's historic buildings are primarily of the local rubblestone. Stone slate roofs are a feature although slate and artificial materials are also present. Brick is little used in the hamlet's older buildings, except occasionally in chimney construction.

Buildings are simple in form with gabled roofs and small openings. Houses are of two or two-and-a-half storeys with simple gable end or ridge chimneys. Dormer windows are not typical (those to Hampton Farmhouse are a recent addition).

A total of 3 buildings in the conservation area are listed for their special architectural or historic interest. They are typical of the area: Hampton Cottage is a two-storey, rubble stone residence, of 18th century origin, listed Grade II. It has three brick chimneys and a quarter-hipped roof with a leaded, casement attic window.

The Old Farmhouse dates from the 17th century. Two storey with large chimneys, it is built of rubble stone with a stone-tile roof and is listed Grade II.

The small 18th century barn immediately south of The Old Farmhouse is also listed Grade II. It too is of rubble stone with a half-hipped stone-tile roof, and an interesting timber roof structure.

Stone boundary walls are common, contributing to the impression of a predominantly stone built hamlet. Elsewhere within the conservation area, hedges are the usual form of boundary treatment.

There are several modern houses in the conservation area (including Chesford Elms, The New Bungalow, Corbiere, Tresco and Coveage Field), built during the 1960s and 70s, (prior to designation) but these are generally low level and although some are extensive they are, on the whole, hidden from view by the abundant roadside and garden vegetation that characterises the area and have had a limited affect on the historic character and appearance of the hamlet.

An application for a new dwelling adjacent to Coveage Field was refused at appeal in 1989 and no new houses have been built within the conservation area since its designation in 1990.

A recent application has been refused for conversion and demolition of a number of farm buildings. This is in part due to the fact that although conversion of redundant farm buildings is in general terms to be encouraged, development outside housing policy boundaries is to be resisted especially within rural areas.

Key buildings of interest

English Heritage advice is that "most of the buildings in a conservation area will help to shape its character in one way or another.⁴" and, in addition to the area's listed buildings, there are a number of other buildings which make a strong contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the area.

Several of the farm buildings associated with Old Farmhouse are of interest and are typical of the area, built of rubble stone with stone slate roofs. Apart from the large barn and stable/granary which have been converted, they include a small brick-built granary.

Hampton Farmhouse is a large farmhouse sited away from the lane to take best advantage of views across the valley. It is built in traditional materials but is much grander in scale than the vernacular houses in the area and may have been built to replace the 'Old Farmhouse' at a time when that house was deemed to be old-fashioned and unacceptable as a residence.

The row of small cottages (Nos. 4-7) were presumably built as workers cottages. Although altered they retain many attractive features including railings enclosing small front plots and small front porches.

Hampton Lodge is an attractive example of a late Victorian villa in red brick with half-timbered detailing. Unfortunately it was recently extended in 2003

¹⁴ 'Conservation Area Appraisals' - English Heritage, June 1997. Paragraph 2.2.

Local details and features

There are a number of local features which add to the area's distinct identity and form part of the special interest of the area. It is highly desirable that these features are retained.

Streams and springs: a small brook runs through the lower end of the village, collecting run-off drainage from neighbouring fields and springs and running into the Bydemill Brook to the west. The gentle sound of running water and the associated waterside vegetation contribute to the area's charm.

Boundary walls: stone walls are a feature of the area, adding to the common use of stone as a walling and roofing material. A red post box is set in an attractive, brick topped section of wall on the bend of the lane at the upper end of the hamlet.

Gates: a railed 'kissing gate' leads to the footpath towards Highworth at the upper end of the hamlet. Field gates are traditional wooden gates.

Trees: Mature and growing trees, hedgerows and other greenery add significantly to the rural ambience of the area with particularly fine specimen trees to be found around Hampton Farmhouse. There is also a fine row of beeches along the boundary of Hampton Lodge with the adjacent hay field. Elsewhere, hedgerow and streamside trees (often pollarded) enhance the area.

Those trees which make a particularly positive contribution to the conservation area are identified on the attached map. In such a well tree'd area, it has not been possible to identify every notable tree and lack of a specific reference does not imply that it must not be of value.

Negatives

Although the abundant vegetation is a particular characteristic of the area and has often helped to soften the effect of the insertion of modern houses, in some cases the planting of non-native shrubs and trees close to the roadside has been to the detriment of the area's historic character, for example at the entrance to the converted Hampton farmyard.

The wide, open-plan frontage and bungalow design of Corbiere is uncharacteristically modern. It is unduly prominent, in comparison with other modern properties in the area, due to the lack of a hedge or other boundary screening.

A large number of concrete hydrants (9) clustered on the verge present a rather odd appearance at the upper entrance to the hamlet.

Opportunities

The appearance of the area around Corbiere could be improved by the enhancement of the green triangle at the lane junction. Possibilities for the removal of the overhead wiring and the associated telegraph poles and raised equipment cabinet, should be investigated. The modern street lighting column could be replaced by one of a more sympathetic style, if required.

Useful publications

Wiltshire Towns: The Archaeological Potential. J. Haslam (1976)

Around Highworth in old photos. G.Tanner (1991)

Highworth. G.Tanner (1993)

A Hill-Top Town of Distinction. B. Little, Country Life, 1971

The Archaeology of Wiltshire's Towns, An Extensive Urban Survey: Highworth Wilts County Archaeological Service (2000)

A history of Highworth; Parts 1,2 and 3. Highworth Historical Society

The villages and Highworth. P.J.Archer (1978)

Highworth and round about. P.J.Archer (1973)

The Buildings of England (Wiltshire). N. Pevsner (Penguin 1975)

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Swindon Borough Local Plan (1999).

Supplementary Planning Guidance: 'Good Design: House Extensions' (Thamesdown Borough 1990).

Supplementary Planning Guidance: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'. (Swindon Borough 1999).

Conservation Areas (Swindon Borough Council 1997).

Planning Policy Guidance 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment.

Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, June 1997.

Conservation Area Practice, English Heritage, October 1995.

HAMPTON MANAGEMENT PLAN






MANAGEMENT ISSUES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	ACTIONS REQUIRED
Planning & Design		
Existing Modern Development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Existing modern houses have a limited impact on the historic character of area. Some modern dwellings impact on the area when viewed from the street.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure future development proposals are strictly controlled in terms of design and materials 	Consultation with:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & conservation department
Future Development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ad-hoc planning applications, for alterations, conversions and refurbishment of properties.</i> <i>Potential reuse and conversion of underused and redundant farm buildings.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure future development proposals are strictly controlled in terms of design and materials 	Consultation with:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & conservation department
Public Realm & Amenity		
<i>Signage & street furniture</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Street signage limited to mandatory speed signs.</i> <i>Various items of Utility equipment spoil the environment along these narrow lanes.</i> <i>Non native trees have been included within gardens and boundaries contrasting with the more traditional hardwood trees in the area.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all existing signage is maintained in good order. Ascertain with Utility Companies if concrete hydrants are operational. Sensitive boundary treatments need to be considered. Use of appropriate vegetation and shrubbery to screen off open frontages where identified. 	Consultation with:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & conservation department & Liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways & Utility companies.

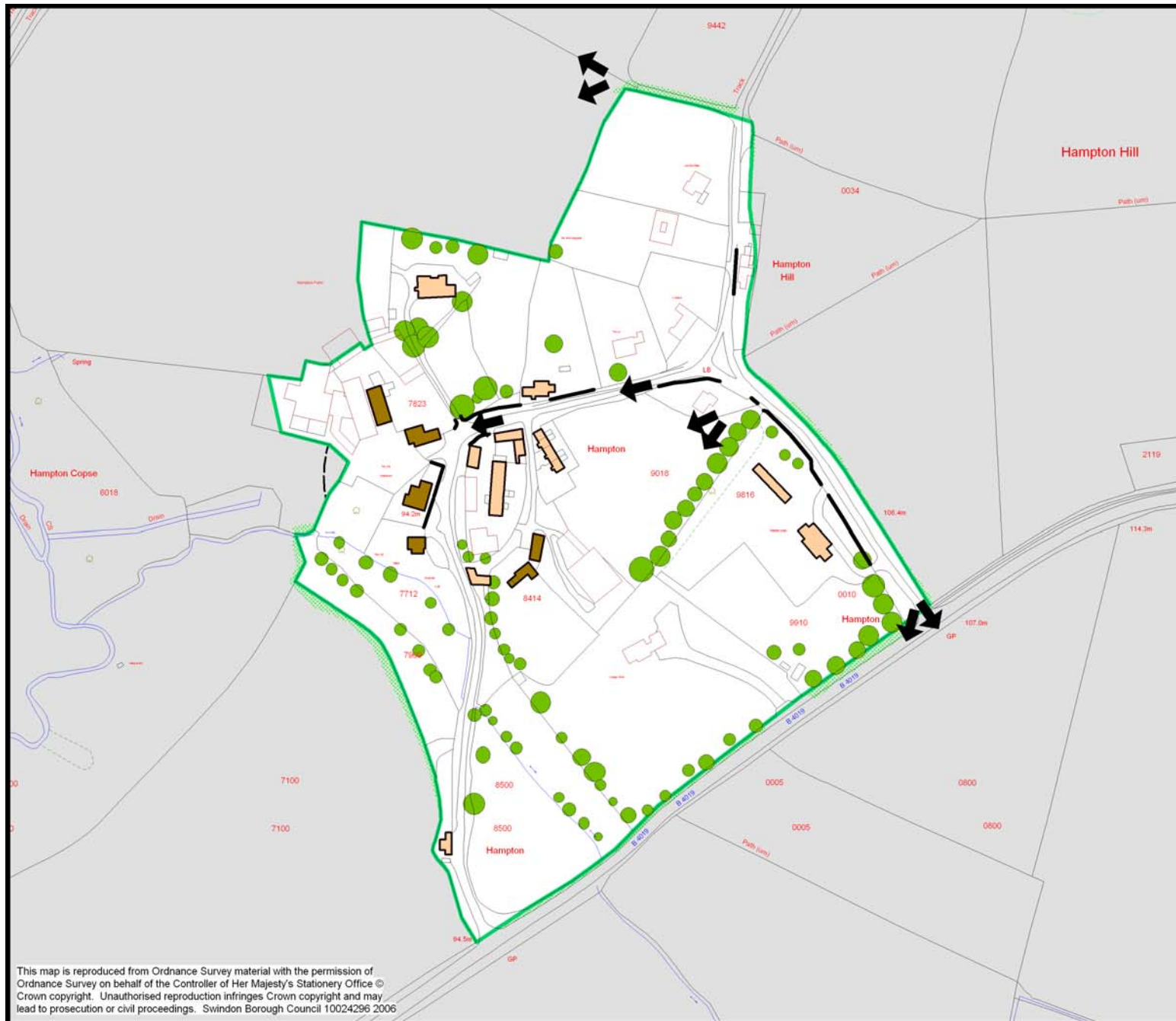
MANAGEMENT ISSUES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	ACTIONS REQUIRED
Public Realm & Amenity		
Shops & Retail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>No shops are present within boundary of conservation area – Nearest shop located within Highworth</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is unlikely that a shop would be viable in this location due to the limited number of properties in this area. 	
Parking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>No immediate concerns with parking</i> <i>Properties have off road parking.</i> <i>Grass verges and gullies/ditches present to either side of this narrow lane</i> <i>Pavements not present in village.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing parking arrangements appears to work satisfactorily Any proposals for implementing pavements would not be supported in this area.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways safety.
Traffic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Only traffic local to the village uses this narrow lane. The busier Cricklade Road by-passes this sensitive area</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that current road surfaces are maintained to useable standard. Ensure grass verges are maintained and repaired where necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways safety.

Hampton Conservation Area

Key to map

Given the complexity of the area, the omission of any feature from this map should not be interpreted as evidence that it is not of interest or value.

-  Boundary of conservation area
-  Listed building
-  Key building of interest
-  Significant tree or trees
-  Area of water
-  Important green space
-  Wooded area
-  Significant wall or boundary
-  Area with distinct identity
-  Important view



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