

# Hinton Parva

## Conservation Area Appraisal



Historic rural village

designated as a conservation area by Thamesdown Borough Council on 16 July 1990

## Hinton Parva Conservation Area Appraisal

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## Introduction

This document assesses the special interest, character and appearance of Hinton Parva Conservation Area. Prepared by Swindon Borough Council's Design, Conservation and Development Section, it should be read in conjunction with policies 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 in this appraisal was collected during late 1999. To be concise and readable, it does not record all features. The omission of a feature from the text or accompanying maps does not, therefore, mean that it must not be of interest or value.

The appraisal and map has been prepared in collaboration with Bishopstone Parish Council and was adopted by Swindon Borough Council as “a proper assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of Hinton Parva Conservation Area” on 28th March 2000 and re-designated on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2006



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## Location

Hinton Parva is located in rural surroundings in Bishopstone parish, in north-east Wiltshire, approximately 8 km south-east of Swindon.

The extended village of Hinton Parva does not have a single nucleus but consists of several clusters of buildings dispersed along a mile-long stretch of the B4507 between Bishopstone and Wanborough. It is situated at the foot of the chalk scarp of the North Wessex Downs, taking advantage of the spring line that occurs between the open chalk upland to the south and the broad clay vale to the north.

In an appeal decision notice<sup>1</sup> issued in 1989, the inspector described Hinton Parva as consisting of three elements: to the east a compact development around the church; a cluster of development around the village hall and post office; and to the west, pockets of development around the original farms of Home Farm, Upper Farm, The Grove and West Hinton Farm.

The conservation area covers the compact area of settlement to the east that clusters around the small Norman church of St Swithun.

## Origins

Hinton Parva appears to have originated as part of an estate based on Wanborough and held by the monks of Winchester.

It had gained its own name 'the farm of the (monastic) community' by the tenth century but did not become a separate parish until the twelfth century. Since then the parish has been identified as either Little Hinton or Hinton Parva, with both names still being found in common usage. Although the settlement has medieval origins the majority of the current buildings date from the seventeenth century onwards.

The parish was previously divided into east and west tithings, allowing the western section of the village to be distinguished as West Hinton hamlet or occasionally as West Town. Hinton parish was merged with Bishopstone in 1934<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>(T/APP/X3920/A/93/217557/P4)

<sup>2</sup>VCH, 1976

## **Landscape setting**

Hinton Parva conservation area comprises a small cluster of settlement enfolded by the downs. To its south Charlbury Hill (rising to 253m) is dominant, emphasising the rural position of the hamlet at the foot of the open chalk downland that is the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty<sup>3</sup> (AONB), one of the most extensive and least spoiled downland tracts in southern England.

The village is located alongside the B4507 Swindon to Wantage road which follows the contour line towards the foot of the chalk scarp. From this road, as from surrounding footpaths, there are few views to be had into the conservation area, enhancing its impression of seclusion. The Parish Council, however, note that from footpaths high on the Downs there are excellent views over the conservation area and surrounding land.

Long views out from the conservation area are only gained from its margins, from the footpaths leading out from its centre, and from the foot of Tucker's Lane. Many of these views are of the high land to the south. To the north-east of the conservation area the land drops away into a steep-sided coombe. Springs rise at its floor, flowing out to the north-east as a small stream. Turn of the century maps show watercress beds along the early reaches of this stream. This area is well tree'd and almost hidden from the rest of the conservation area, visible only from the small cemetery.

### **Designation of Hinton Parva Conservation Area**

The Hinton Parva Conservation Area was designated by Thamesdown Borough Council on 16 July 1990 because it was considered desirable to preserve and, where necessary, enhance the special architectural and historical interest of this area of Hinton Parva village.. The character appraisal was readopted on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2006 by the planning committee.

The character and appearance of this quiet hamlet are particularly vulnerable to damage from unsuitable development because of the area's exceptional historic ambience. Particularly where unsuitable development would be visible from public roads and footpaths, it would damage the visual amenity of this peaceful conservation area and detract from the setting of its listed buildings.

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<sup>3</sup>As designated under section 87 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.

### **Boundaries and extent**

The boundaries of the conservation area have been drawn widely to encompass all of the buildings in and around its historic core which is formed by Church Row and Tucker's Lane.

To the west this includes a tiny, brick built, nonconformist chapel, of interest for its part in the village's social history as well as being an example of its type. This building is still in use today. Of similar interest, to the east, is the small separate cemetery. This is bounded by attractive brick walls and includes several yew and holly trees, species often found in country graveyards and cemeteries.

To the south, on the southern side of the B4507, a number of former workers' cottages have been included within the boundary. These cottages, several of which have been much extended, retain attractive banks and hedges that contribute to the enclosed character of the road at the entrance to the conservation area. Land to the south of the B4507 is included within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Open space to the west, north and east, bordering the built environment, is included in order to protect the hamlet's rural setting in the countryside. Whilst it is recognised that this includes a number of mundane steel-framed agricultural buildings and some 20th century development that does not harmonise with the hamlet's historic character, this is justified by the need to create a meaningful boundary on the ground whilst enclosing the elements, identified in this document, that contribute to the area's special interest.

### **The conservation area today**

Today the dispersed settlement of Hinton Parva consists of around 70 dwellings. Around 30 of these dwellings fall within the conservation area.

As with other rural communities, many of which were largely self sufficient in the past, the decline of agricultural employment and loss of rural facilities has led to the village becoming increasingly residential, with a high proportion of the population working and studying outside the village.

However, the conservation area does retain two working farms, one of which has diversified to include stables, and it is common to see tractors and horses around the village at all times of the day.

There has been relatively little modern development within the conservation area. A number of council and agricultural workers cottages were built during the 1950s and early '60s at the south-west corner of the conservation area but recent infill is limited to a pair of houses built in tandem on a narrow plot on Church Row and a modern detached house built recently on land that was previously part of Parva Stud on Church Row. This house has been built and designed with materials that are inconsistent with the adjoining properties, especially the adjacent Manor House. This further emphasises the case that modern development within a conservation area need to be both sensitive and consistent with the local environment. The bungalow belonging to the stud, which occupied the stables of the former manor-house, remains as the last property on this north-western exit from the village.

The site directly to the east of this bungalow remains undeveloped and gated off. A barn formerly occupied this area but has since been demolished. The future of this area remains unclear.

Facilities within the conservation area are sparse. There is no pub, shop, school or doctor's surgery and only a minimal bus service links the village with neighbouring villages and Swindon town centre. The village hall (formerly the village school) and red telephone box, together with the post office, are outside the conservation area.

## **Traffic**

The historic core of the conservation area surrounding the church, is served by a loop of lane to the north of the B4507. The B-road, in effect, by-passes this area leaving it almost free of traffic. As a result, this part of the conservation area retains an air of tranquillity that has all but disappeared from other settlements in the area.

### **Summary of general character**

The specific interest that justifies the designation of Hinton Parva conservation area derives from a number of architectural, historical and environmental factors including:

- the historic street pattern with properties either side of Church Row and Tuckers Lane;
- the layout of the hamlet, clustering around the typical English village combination of church, manor and rectory;
- the rural setting of the village at the foot of the chalk downland;
- the architectural and historic interest of the village's buildings - in particular the small Norman church of St Swithun and the Manor house;
- the prevalent use of local materials - notably local chalkstone and thatch; the area's trees - especially individual yews and holm oaks;
- the great lengths of well-tended box hedging, green banks and verges that line the lanes.

### **Highways and streetscapes**

The conservation area is usually entered by car from the B4507. Where it passes through the conservation area this road is narrow and unkerbed, enclosed by high banks to either side. This street form is characteristic of rural, agricultural communities and forms an important contribution to the character of this village.

The historic character of the area is not immediately apparent on this approach, the only buildings visible being twentieth century former agricultural workers cottages to either side of the road. However, at the entrance to Church Row a thatched cottage (Little Thatch) although much altered, sets the scene.

Two lanes form a loop leading from the B4507 into the heart of the conservation area; Church Row and Tucker's Lane. Both are narrow lanes with a sense of enclosure provided by roadside agricultural buildings, banks and hedges. These can be dangerous exit points onto the busier 'B' road, uphill and with poor visibility.

A safer entrance/exit to the conservation area is to the north-west where Church Row leads out of the village and swings round to rejoin the Wanborough road at the bend known as City Corner. At the edge of the village, this road has an attractive raised footway and verge to its south side, enclosed by a high box hedge. Some modern concrete posts and railings have been installed along the length of this pathway. The decorative condition of both the posts and the rails are poor and the simple task of redecoration and maintenance would do much to improve this section of pavement. To its north side, however, it is more open and the frontages of the two modern properties that adjoin it have an uncharacteristic suburban feel.

Having entered the conservation area via Church Row there is an attractive prospect of the church and former rectory, fronted by the tiny green, although the former is somewhat obscured by trees. Two huge holm oak trees in the grounds of Hinton Manor are prominent. One of these trees bordering on adjacent Church boundary is undermining the stability of the entrance steps and wall itself. The roots and the lower trunk of this tree are pushing the wall to a dangerous angle. There are potential health and safety issues to people who use this entranceway.

Within the historic core of the conservation area the impression is one of relatively dense building coverage with the majority of buildings set close to or even right on the roadside - it is here that the historic identity of the village is at its strongest. The traditional, and still prominent pattern of development, is in essence linear, with properties located close to the highway, separated by generous gaps, and individual curtilages to the rear. Backland development is uncharacteristic. Lanes are generally narrow and unkerbed with few footways - fortunately the roads are quiet enough to allow walking in the road in comparative safety!

A number of footpaths lead out from the hamlet's centre - in the past these paths must have been in daily use as routes to school, fieldwork, smithy and the neighbouring villages etc. Today only the path leading from Church Row between high box hedges out towards the B4507 remains a well-used footway.

### **Architectural and historic character, buildings materials**

The conservation area is characterised by historic buildings of traditional construction dating mainly to the C17 and C18 centuries. Several substantial farmhouses cluster

along both sides of the lane. Eight buildings in this small conservation area are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest: St Swithun's Church (Grade I), the Manor, 4 typical vernacular downland cottages and two farmhouses.

The Church of St Swithun (one of the few churches named after this saint) is listed at Grade I. It is a small Norman church recast in Perpendicular style and built of rubble stone with a stone-slate roof. The small graveyard contains a number of 18th and 19th century headstones and chest tombs. A larger cemetery is present further along Tuckers Row to the East of the church.

Hinton Manor, in Church Row, dates from the 17th century. It is two-and-a-half storey with one-and-a-half storey elements, in stone and brick with a stone tile roof. The outbuildings to the east include a small thatched and weather-boarded barn.

Church Farmhouse has an 18th century central portion. It is two-storey, in part chalk ashlar, chalk rubble and gault, red and blue brick with a slate roof. The property has been alerted overtime and this is evident to the front elevation where former window openings have been blocked up.

Somerset Farmhouse, in Church Row, is late 18th century, two-storey with a gable-lit attic. It is built of stone rubble with an artificial slate roof. The village pump is sited on the east gable end.

The Little Cottage, Threeways and Greystones, also in Church Row, form a one-and-a-half storey row of thatched cottages in Church Row, dating from the 18th century or earlier, with brick chimneys and eyebrow dormers. In 1996, Threeways and Little Cottage were damaged by a fire. The condition of the thatch to The Little Cottage is deteriorating with evidence of a build up of moss on the roof covering.

Povey's Cottage, in Tuckers Lane, is an 18th century one-and-a-half storey thatched cottage. The core of the building is in painted chalk rubble, with brick chimney and eyebrow dormers.

The adjacent property, Cannons Cottage has been altered and refurbished. Sadly, the use of the modern materials on the external elevations are somewhat inappropriate for this rural village. There is evidence of the original decorative brickwork at fascia level. The use of steel garage doors on the adjacent timber framed garage also detracts from the rural charm of this lane.

These buildings are typical of the village and show the traditional walling material to be the local chalkstone, used in either ashlar or rubble form (this is frequently now rendered, particularly on more exposed elevations). Brick is often used for dressings and the gable-end chimney stacks - this was widely produced locally, on the clay lands to the north. Roofs are generally of simple, gabled form and although only five of the conservation area's buildings are thatched today, it is likely that this was a more predominant roof covering in the past. The typical building form is simple, of one-and-a-half or two storeys some of the farmhouses having gable-lit attics.

### **Key Buildings<sup>4</sup>**

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.

The majority of these are of importance for their use of traditional materials and form. Examples are a notable number of traditional farm buildings, particularly those in roadside locations. These are typically weather boarded structures on plinths of brick or stone, such as that adjacent to Somerset Farmhouse. Another attractive, but less traditional, building is the former rectory, Orchard House, an early nineteenth century villa of render with elegant sash windows. On the edge of the conservation area, the small, brick-built nonconformist chapel is a good example of its type.

These, and other key buildings, are identified on the attached map.

### **Local details and features**

Trees, hedgerows and other greenery are a feature of the area, adding significantly to its rural ambience. Particularly noticeable in the centre around the church are several fine holm oaks and yews, almost concealing the church and manor from view. Groups of holly and yew also surround the secluded cemetery. Those trees which are particularly prominent and make a positive contribution to the conservation area are identified on the attached map. However, it has not been possible to identify every notable tree and lack of a specific reference should not imply that it must not be of value.

Boundaries are generally well-kept box hedges atop long grassy banks, giving the approaches to the centre of the hamlet their characteristic sense of enclosure.

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<sup>4</sup>See Swindon Borough Local Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'.

### **Negatives**

There has been little modern development within this small area of the village but where this has occurred, notably Carrantha House and the bungalow to the west of this site, has not always been paid to its historic character of the village and this has to a limited extent had an adverse affect on the area.

### **Opportunities for improvement**

Long term tree management needs careful consideration, particularly in the areas around the churchyard and cemetery. Regular maintenance to the grass verges during the Summer months would allow more better appreciation of the boundary walls adjacent. It would also improve sight lines at the junction of the busy B road.

Decoration and maintenance of the railings along the southside of Chapel Row between the Chapel and Batts Farm House would improve the visual amenity along this road.

The gated opening within the boundary wall to the church is in a poor condition. Two mature holm oaks are forcing the adjacent stone wall outwards. Agreement between the owner of the Manor House and the church wardens and DAC needs to be reached.

The Land between Carrantha House and Parva Stud is the site of a former indoor training stable. This building has since been demolished and only the concrete base remains. The site is overgrown and compared to the rest of the village looks poorly maintained. Some basic pruning and maintenance of the adjacent trees and vegetation would bring enormous benefits.

## **Useful publications**

### **Victoria County History of Wiltshire**

**An Introduction to the History of Bishopstone.** G I Parker, 1985

**The Wiltshire Village Book.** Michael Marshman, 1987

**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.