

Stratton St. Margaret (Lower Stratton)

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



- Conservation area designated on 14th September 1992
- Appraisal and management plan adopted 10th February 2009

This appraisal, management plan and the accompanying map has been prepared in collaboration with Stratton St Margaret Parish Council. Swindon Borough Council's Planning Committee approved the document on 10 February 2009.

At the same time, the Committee authorised the Director of Planning and Transport authorised to use the document for planning and development control purposes.



Environment & Regeneration
Swindon Borough Council
Premier House, Station Road, Swindon, Wiltshire
SN1 1TZ

This document can be produced in a range of languages and formats (such as large print, Braille or other accessible formats) by contacting Customer Services Department

Contents

1	Summary of the Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area	4
1.1	Introduction	5
1.2	Purpose of the appraisal and management plan	5
1.3	Conservation policy	5
2	Background	7
2.1	Location and landscape setting	7
2.2	Boundaries	7
2.3	Origins and history of the settlement	7
2.4	Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area today	10
2.5	Traffic	10
3	The special interest of the conservation area	12
3.1	General character and appearance	12
	Ermin Street	12
	Swindon Road	13
	Church Street	14
3.2	Architectural and historic character	14
	Listed buildings	14
	General architectural character	15
3.3	Buildings of local interest	16
3.4	Trees	16
3.5	Local details and features	17
4	Opportunities for enhancement	18
4.1	Negative features	18
4.2	Scope for improvement	18
5	Public Consultation	18
6	Stratton (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area Management Plan	19
6.1	Introduction	19
7	Useful publications	23
	Appendix 1 Photographs	24

1 Summary of the Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area

The special interest that justifies designation of Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors including:

- Location alongside part of a Roman road, Ermin Street;
- Former rural village now incorporated into the urban fabric of Swindon;
- St Margaret's Church, a grade I listed 13th century church;
- Well-stocked churchyard with a semi-rural atmosphere containing notable 18th and 19th century tombs;
- Architectural and historic interest of many of the area's historic buildings including parish church, Methodist chapel, farmhouses, Victorian school, public houses and cottages;
- Five listed buildings: St Margaret's Church, Van Ecker churchyard tomb, Church Farm, The Wheatsheaf PH, No. 73 Swindon Road;
- Mix of 18th and 19th century building with a large proportion of post-railway development;
- Prevalent use of local stone – post-railway buildings notable for red brick dressings;
- Local details that add to local identity e.g. old stone walls, GR VI post box, street name signs and datestones;
- Trees, especially in St Margaret's churchyard and individual specimens elsewhere.

1.1 Introduction

Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area was designated by Thamesdown Borough Council on 14th September 1992.

This document defines and records the special architectural or historic interest that warrants designation of Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area and identifies elements that contribute to its special character and appearance. Swindon Borough Council's Planning Committee approved this document on 10th February 2009.

1.2 Purpose of the appraisal and management plan

The *conservation area 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.

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.

The *conservation area management plan* (Section 6 of this document) identifies how the conservation area could be enhanced or improved with the support of the local authority, residents and other agencies.

1.3 Conservation policy

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 should be read in conjunction with policies contained in the current Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 and with national planning policy guidance, especially Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment and Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning.

The information contained in this appraisal was originally collected during the year 2000/2001. The area was revisited and the document revised and updated in November 2008. 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.

2 Background

2.1 Location and landscape setting

The conservation area encompasses the core of the historic settlement of Stratton St Margaret which was once a rural village became a suburb of Swindon in the 20th century. The area is bounded for the most part by 20th century houses. The A 419 (T), a dualled road that currently forms the limit to Swindon's residential eastern expansion, passes to the east of the conservation area and the sound of passing traffic can be heard within the new cemetery east of St Margaret's Church.

The topography of the site is flat. Views within the area are restricted by built development and there are no prominent outward views.

2.2 Boundaries

The conservation area covers the core of the old village of Stratton St. Margaret. The boundary has been drawn to include historic buildings astride a short length of Ermin Street and two side roads, Church Street and Swindon Road; the former leads to the medieval church, the latter is part of an old route to Swindon.

The designation report approved by Thamesdown Planning Committee at the time of designation in 1992 stated that the area's buildings: "provide the strongest architectural and historic interest and whose special character is still intact enough to make preservation, and enhancement where necessary, desirable".

Modern development on the north side of Swindon Road and west side of Ermin Street (upper) has not been included within the conservation area because it does not reflect the notable historic and architectural interest of the pre 20th century development of the village.

2.3 Origins and history of the settlement

A short history of Stratton on Stratton St Margaret Parish Council's website describes Stratton St Margaret as "once a small village...now become the north

east corner of Swindon and is rapidly losing any semblance of the village community that it once was.” The conservation area encloses the core of the historic village of Stratton St Margaret close to St Margaret’s Church and along Ermin Street.

Stratton derives its name from the Latin strata (a street) after the Roman road, Ermin Street, which passes through the parish. The above history continues: “In the Domesday Survey of 1086, the name is shown as Stratone, when the parish was in the possession of Nigel, the physician of William the Conqueror. The village consisted of three hamlets - The Street, the area around Green Road and Dores Road and including the few houses at Kingsdown; and Stratton Green, mainly around Tilleys Lane. Footpaths and coffin-ways joined the hamlets.

The parish church of St Margaret dates back to the 13th century, with many later additions, including partial rebuilding in the middle of the last century. Amongst the interesting churchyard tombs is one to Sir William Hedges who was president of an East India Company in the 17th century. The church registers date from 1608. Near the church once stood a tithe barn, mainly of wooden construction, and the village pound and the small parochial school.”

The churchyard was enlarged at the end of the 19th century when an addition was made by taking in the site near the tower where the first village school was built. There was a further extension c.1914 when the old Stratton Pound was taken over.

The first Methodist Chapel was built in Swindon Road in 1830, enlarged in 1842. The present chapel was built in 1883, the schoolroom was added in 1897 and the clock provided in the 1930’s. Grange Infants School was founded on 10 June 1895 as the Stratton (Board) School, Infants. It was enlarged in the 1930s and, although extended many times since then, the red brick part of the school that lies within the conservation area is a survival of the 1895 building.

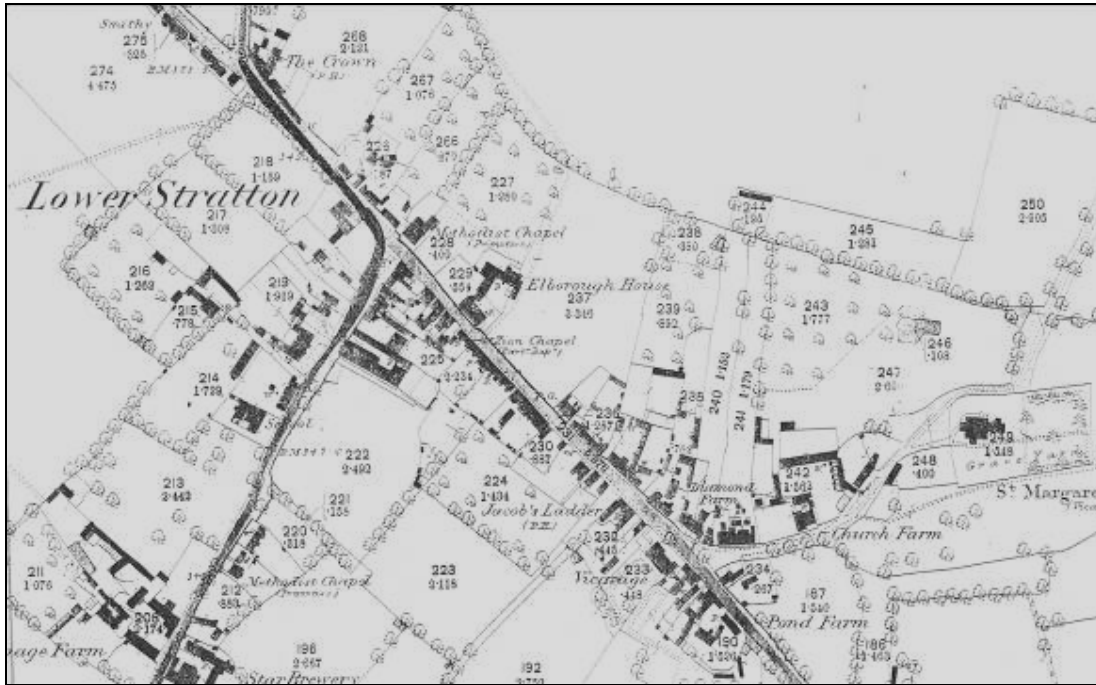
The conservation area contains farm buildings dating from the 17th and 18th century - for example, Church Farm in Church Street. A rapid change from a rural to an urban community began in the 1840s with the arrival of the Great Western Railway Works and the growth of 'New Swindon' a couple of miles away to the south west. Although Stratton St Margaret retained its identity as a village until the First World War, the original village has been broken up by 20th century infill housing and industry and alterations to the road network.

The old Roman road, known as Ermin Street and Hyde Road as it passes through the town, has declined in importance (and seen a vast reduction in traffic) since the construction of the A419 Stratton St Margaret by-pass in the 1970's.

Today, the vestiges of the three close knit hamlets that comprised historic Stratton may be found in three sub-urban areas known as Upper Stratton, Lower Stratton and Kingsdown. The historic parts of Lower Stratton and Kingsdown have been designated conservation areas.



Andrews & Drury Map, 1773.



Ordnance Survey 1886.

2.4 Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area today

The conservation area is primarily residential. There are two active places of worship, two public houses and a collection of small businesses located around the junction of Ermin Street and Swindon Road namely, a veterinary clinic, two estate agents, a gents barber, a hairdresser and, nearby, a yoga centre and chiropractic clinic. There are office premises at the western end of Swindon Road and at no. 160 Ermin Street. No 73 Swindon Road offers Bed and Breakfast.

2.5 Traffic

Traffic along Ermin Street is unsettling due to the narrow width of the road and the fact that many properties open directly onto a narrow pavement. Hobley Drive now takes the greater part of east-west traffic thereby avoiding the conservation area but Ermin Street is increasingly becoming used as a 'rat run' between The White Hart roundabout and Hobley Drive. Road bumps leading up to zebra crossing attempt to reduce traffic speed.

The upper part of Ermin Street, between the Methodist Church and The Crown (known as the 'Ermin Street link') has been made into a cul-de-sac for traffic but, at the time of writing (November 2008) is open one-way to buses.

3 The special interest of the conservation area

3.1 General character and appearance

Development within the conservation area follows a predominantly linear pattern alongside Ermin Street, Church Street and Swindon Road but development in depth is not uncommon. Ermin Street south of the Methodist Chapel is narrower in width than Swindon Road and has a much more confined spatial character especially as properties in Swindon Road are well set back from the roadside. Five open spaces contribute positively to the otherwise densely developed conservation area. They are: (1) the churchyard of St Margaret's Church which has a semi-rural atmosphere reminiscent of the former rural origins of the village, (2) an informal grassed open space adjacent to no. 174 Ermin Street which provides a breathing space in the Ermin Street frontage, (3) a formal small garden/park adjacent to no. 152 Ermin Street which contains a memorial to a R.C.A.F. pilot whose plane crashed nearby in 1941, (4) a grassed area, with bright red bench and litter bin, formed at the junction of Ermin Street and Church Street, and (5) paved public open space formed at the junction of Ermin Street and Swindon Road.

Within the conservation area there are three discernible areas with their own identity: historic ribbon development along the old Roman road called Ermin Street; Church Street, leading to St Margaret's Church and cemetery; and part of Swindon Road between Hobley Drive and Ermin Street.

Ermin Street

Ermin Street is the spine of this small conservation area, following the straight course of a Roman road. The route is lined with buildings including individual and groups of old buildings of architectural and historic interest, some dating from the 18th century and earlier. Although many have been altered they, at least, clearly illustrate the built pattern of the past.

In the central section stone cottages are built close to the road (notably on the west side) and front doors open directly onto the pavement. Although the built

form is two-storey the narrowness of the road gives an enclosed feel to the area. Later housing is set back from the road behind a low wall and narrow front garden. As one proceeds southwards beyond The Wheatsheaf (a grade II listed building) the road widens and at the Church Street junction there is a grassed area and an isolated tree almost in the middle of the junction itself. Here, there are a number of stone dwellings on either side of the road. This small area has a distinctively historic character - but marred by necessary traffic control measures such as barriers, speed humps and signage.

At the north end, a similar historic ambience is created in front of the Methodist Chapel where a small cluster of businesses and a few old cottages surround the junction with Swindon Road.

Beyond the junction with Swindon Road, the road has been altered by the introduction of traffic calming measures¹ including trees, metal barriers, widened pavements and differing road surfaces. The Crown and a number of cottages on the south side have historic interest. The walled tarmac playground, in front of the Victorian school, forms a gap in a generally built-up roadside frontage.

Swindon Road

Swindon Road is part of an old route from Swindon to Stratton. Though it still provides access to old Stratton, the recently constructed Hobley Drive is the main east-west thoroughfare, busy throughout the day. Swindon Road branches from Hobley Drive at a modern standardised road junction but, opposite, a collection of old cottages and a converted chapel proclaim the road's historic origin.

Swindon Road is wide with buildings well set back from the road. The road is characterised by stone dwellings. There are notable groups of stone cottages at the west end, e.g. Numbers 43/45/47 (dated 1924), nos. 49-53 and the converted Methodist Chapel (dated 1830), plus another good group at the *east* end beside the junction with Ermin Street. Between these is a row of 1930s semi's. There

¹This length is a cul-de-sac for all except buses.

are tall regularly spaced street lights, parked cars and road markings which give the area a contemporary urban atmosphere. Nos. 4/6 and 8/10 are sturdy late 19th century semi-detached buildings that have a larger scale than the majority of buildings in the area.

Church Street

Church Street has a more tranquil, almost rural, atmosphere than the well used suburban thoroughfare along Swindon Road and Ermin Street. Church Street is a cul-de-sac², traffic movements are small and there is a spacious feel enhanced by the open space of the churchyard and cemetery. Two of the conservation area's listed buildings³ (St Margaret's Church and Church Farm) contribute to the street's historic appearance but this corner of the conservation area is most notable for its trees, stone walls, open space and the historic atmosphere of the church and well stocked churchyard.

3.2 Architectural and historic character

Listed buildings

There are five listed buildings in the conservation area. The Church of St Margaret (grade I) has 13th century origins with a low two-stage 19th century west tower. A round-headed doorway to the north looks 12th century. The interior is primarily 13th century and contains a notable 17th century memorial to Katherine Hedges, died 1649. The graveyard is well stocked to the south with numerous 18th century headstones with relief carvings and a number of chest tombs. The tomb of Susannah Nicholas Van Acker of Erith, Portland stone with a slate top, is listed grade II.

Church Farm (grade II) dates from the mid/late 17th century. It is an 'L' plan farmhouse built of local rubblestone with ashlar stone quoins and ovolo section stone mullion windows. The building was altered in the 1980s after becoming

²Leading to Kenwin Close and Bridge Close

³~~There~~ There is a grade II listed tomb in the churchyard.

derelict but contains some historic internal features. It is now incorporated into an elderly persons grouped dwelling.

The Wheatsheaf in Ermin Street is listed grade II and probably dates from the 18th century. It has a typical Cotswold stone tiled roof which is characteristically laid in diminishing courses i.e. small tiles close to the ridge becoming larger towards the eaves. The pub has been associated with nearby Arkells Brewery since the 1850s (Arkells Brewery is the focus of the Stratton (Kingsdown) Conservation Area).

No 73 Swindon Road, dated 1773, is a two and a half storey coursed rubblestone former farmhouse, listed grade II.

General architectural character

Old stone cottages are typical (e.g. 55/57 Swindon Road) but the conservation area contains a mixture of building types including late Victorian red brick terraces (e.g. 7-14 Church Street - a form of development also plentiful in Swindon's Old Town and Rodbourne), semi-detached late Victorian houses (e.g. 138-152 Ermin Street, 8/10 Swindon Road) and 1930's semi-detached housing (e.g. the south side of Swindon Road). Dwellings are generally two-storey but 8/10 Swindon Road is oddly out of character with the area, almost three full storeys.

Local stone⁴ is prevalent in the area, often used with red brick for window and door surrounds. Brick is also a common walling material. Unfortunately, the historic interest of many buildings has been eroded by alterations to original building materials - for example, slate and timber have been replaced with concrete tiles and plastic, brick- and stone-work has been rendered or pebble-dashed. However, the essential form of the old buildings and the old street pattern remains.

⁴Unfortunately, many stone facades have been rendered or painted.

3.3 Buildings of local interest⁵

In addition to Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton)'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 best preserved of these are identified on the accompanying appraisal map and include the Methodist Chapel, 2/4 Church Way, The Crown and No. 98 Ermin Street.

Unfortunately, many obviously historic buildings have been severely altered externally and these are not identified on the appraisal map. However, some of these externally altered buildings have features that suggest pre-1800 origins (e.g. date stone, roof pitch, size of window openings) and may therefore contain internal features of historic interest. The omission of any building from the map does not, therefore, mean that it must not be of interest or value.

3.4 Trees

This is an urban area and trees are not a notable feature of the area except around St Margaret's Church where chestnuts, limes and yews add significantly to the special interest of the area. The relative absence of trees elsewhere in this predominantly suburban area gives greater significance to those that are present especially the lime tree at the junction of Ermin Street and Church Street, a sycamore beside the entrance to Underwood House in Swindon Road, a yew beside No. 174 Ermin Street and new trees planted as part of the landscaping of the cul-de-sac end of Ermin Street.

Those trees, and groups of trees, which are particularly prominent and make a 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 should not imply that it must not be of value.

⁵ See Swindon Borough Local Plan SPG: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'.

3.5 Local details and features

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

- Stone walls are a feature of the area. A traditional stone wall bounds the churchyard of St Margaret's Church. Those rubblestone walls that form boundaries between properties facing the road (e.g. beside no. 89 Ermin Street and beside The Wheatsheaf) probably date from the 19th century or earlier;
- Date-stones on buildings are common, e.g. 'Primitive Methodist Chapel 1830' (61/63 Swindon Road) and '1789 R S L' (126A Ermin Street)
- A red GR VI post box;
- Old wall-mounted street signs at Church Street and Churchway are features of local interest.

4 Opportunities for enhancement

4.1 Negative features

- Many of the buildings are suffering from an incremental loss of architectural detail through the replacement of traditional building materials with inappropriate modern materials.
- Street litter is commonplace.
- An increase of traffic along Ermin Street (perhaps related to the use of this road as a 'rat run' from Sainsbury's to Hobley Drive) is a concern for residents.

4.2 Scope for improvement

- Long term tree management and planting need careful consideration.
- Painting of lamps, school railings and road furniture would improve the appearance of the area.

5 Public Consultation

Residents of the Conservation Area were consulted by letter and questionnaire on 3rd November 2008 and asked to express their views by email, letter or phone. Stratton St Margaret Parish Council and local ward members were consulted in September and December of 2008. The draft was available for viewing or download on the Council's website and at Premier House and the Stratton and Swindon Libraries.

6 Stratton (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area Management Plan

6.1 Introduction

The following management plan lists how the conservation area could be enhanced or improved with the support of the local authority, residents and other agencies. It should be seen as a working document that: -

- Encourages future planning applications to respect and promote what is special about the conservation area;
- Seeks to ameliorate or, if possible, remove negative elements;
- Encourage a degree of 'ownership' of the area by residents (and where applicable Parish Councils);
- Promote closer cooperation between all relevant parties including utilities, local authority departments, Parish Council and the local community.

In line with advice⁶ it is proposed that this management strategy together with the conservation area appraisal be reviewed and updated regularly (five years is recommended).

⁶ Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas - English Heritage and PAS (2006)

LOWER STRATTON CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN			
MANAGEMENT ISSUE		STRATEGY	PARTNERS
Design of new development	Some modern development has an adverse impact on the conservation area.	<p>Seek to ensure that future development proposals preserve or enhance the historic character and appearance of the conservation area, as described in this appraisal.</p> <p>Ensure historic conservation input into forthcoming Supplementary Planning Guidance, including design.</p>	Swindon Borough Council.
Inappropriate alterations and additions to buildings	Incremental changes to buildings e.g. external alterations, conversions and refurbishment of properties have sometimes resulted in loss of architectural interest.	<p>Where planning permission is required, ensure future development proposals are strictly controlled in terms of design and materials.</p> <p>Consider the preparation of an information leaflet on good practice for minor alterations including works that do not require planning permission.</p>	Swindon Borough Council/Residents.

LOWER STRATTON CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN			
MANAGEMENT ISSUE		STRATEGY	PARTNERS
Buildings of local importance	There are a number of unlisted buildings that have been judged as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.	Ensure that development is in accord with Swindon Borough Local Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'.	Swindon Borough Council.
Buildings at risk	Buildings in the area are generally in good condition.	Monitor the condition of historic buildings within the area. Use statutory powers to secure the repair of particular buildings noted to be at risk of decay.	Swindon Borough Council.
Traffic	Traffic can be threatening to those whose front doors open directly onto the pavement. Ermin Street is being increasingly used as a 'rat-run'.	Ensure that 30 mph speed limit is enforced. Consider a reduction in speed limit or other traffic calming measures.	Swindon Borough Council/Police
Signage & street furniture	Street furniture is in need of painting.	Ensure that all existing signage and street furniture is maintained in good order.	Swindon Borough Council.

LOWER STRATTON CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN			
MANAGEMENT ISSUE		STRATEGY	PARTNERS
Potential decline and loss of trees	Trees make a vital contribution to the special interest of the conservation area and the setting of its listed buildings, especially around St Margaret's Church.	Trees within a conservation area are afforded protection. In most cases anyone wishing to undertake works or remove a tree must give the Council six weeks notice.	Swindon Borough Council Arboricultural Officer

7 Useful publications

- *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.*
- *Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011.*
- *Buildings of Significant Local Interest – Supplementary Planning Guidance (Swindon Borough Council 2004)*
- *Good Design: House Extensions - Supplementary Planning Guidance (Swindon Borough Council 2004)*
- *Conservation Areas - Supplementary Planning Guidance (Swindon Borough Council 2004)*
- *Listed Buildings - Supplementary Planning Guidance (Swindon Borough Council 2004)*
- *Backland and Infill Development - Supplementary Planning Guidance (Swindon Borough Council 2007)*
- *Archaeology - Supplementary Planning Guidance (Swindon Borough Council 2004)*
- *Planning Policy Guidance 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment.*
- *Planning Policy Guidance 16 - Planning and Archaeology*
- *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2005.*
- *Guidance on the management of conservation areas, English Heritage, 2005*
- *Stratton St Margaret* Rev F W T Fuller
- *A History of Swindon to 1965* Crittall et al. (Wilts. Library Service 1983)
- *Arkells Brewery website* www.arkells.com
- *Parish Council website* www.strattonstmargaret.gov.uk
- *Stratton Remembered* Stratton Parish Council

Appendix 1 Photographs

Fig 1: Characteristic features of Lower Stratton Conservation Area



St Margaret's Church has a seemingly rural setting.



The churchyard contains many interesting tombs and gravestones.



Church Farm dates from the mid/late 17th century.



Late 19th century semi-detached houses in Swindon Road.



King George VI letter box.



A lime tree at the junction of Ermin Street and Church Street softens the urban landscape.

Fig 2: Characteristic features of Lower Stratton Conservation Area



The former Jacob's Ladder pub whose deeds go back to 1783.



Nos 2 and 4 Church Way are a pair of stone built dwellings of local historic interest.



No 98 Ermin Street, a building of local interest.



Old street name sign adds to the local identity of the area.



Datestones are a distinctive feature of many houses.



The village's first Methodist Chapel is identified by a half round plaque.

Fig 3: Characteristic features of Lower Stratton Conservation Area

	
<p>A row of three cottages built in Swindon Road in 1924.</p>	<p>Early 20th century dwellings on the east side of Ermin Street.</p>
	
<p>The Wheatsheaf PH is a grade II listed building with a stone tiled roof.</p>	<p>Stone is one of the prevalent building materials within the conservation area.</p>
	
<p>Small commemorative park, Ermin Street.</p>	<p>The upper end of Ermin Street is now a cul de sac.</p>

Fig 4: Characteristic features of Lower Stratton Conservation Area



This part of Grange Infants School dates from 1895.



The Methodist Church occupies a prominent position facing down Swindon Road.



This building in Swindon Road once housed the village's first Methodist Chapel but has been converted into two dwellings.



Decorative pattern in the paved area beside the infants' school.



No. 73 Swindon Road (Brewery Farm House) is a former farmhouse, listed grade II.

28.11.08



The frontages of two storey dwellings on the west side of Ermin Street have been much altered.

Stratton St Margaret (Lower Stratton) Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

