

Castle Eaton

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 Castle Eaton 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 to use the document for planning and development control purposes.



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1 Summary of Castle Eaton Conservation Area

The special interest that justifies designation of Castle Eaton Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors including:

- Historic layout and predominantly linear street pattern of the village;
- Setting of the village in a flat riverside pastoral landscape with significant views to surrounding countryside;
- Architectural and historic interest of the village's buildings and other structures including 17 listed buildings;
- Medieval churchyard cross, a Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- The presence of the River Thames and the village's location on the Thames Path;
- Prevalent use of local building materials, notably local stone which gives the area a distinctively Cotswold appearance;
- Trees, hedges and other vegetation especially where these bound a road or footpath;
- Local features and details that give the area its distinctive identity, notably a K6 telephone kiosk and cast iron pumps;
- Stone boundary walls;
- A tranquil village atmosphere.

1.1 Introduction

This document defines and records the special architectural or historic interest that warrants designation of Castle Eaton 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.

Castle Eaton Conservation Area was designated by Wiltshire County Council on 24th January 1975 - one of the earliest conservation areas in Swindon Borough. It was re-designated with a revised boundary by Thamesdown Borough Council on 30th April 1990. The boundary was revised in order to protect the setting of the grade II listed barn south of Castle Eaton House and to include an open area between this barn and Mill Lane which is considered vital to the setting of the village. A further minor revision was approved on 10th February 2009 to rectify an anomaly that had arisen from the construction of Ettone Barns in 2006.

Designation reflects the Council's commitment to preserving and, if possible, enhancing the character and appearance of this rural village whose historical ambience and environmental quality make an important contribution to the Borough's varied types and ages of conservation areas.

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 assess whether a proposed development would, or would not, preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation 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 6.0 of this document) identifies how the conservation area could be enhanced or improved with the support of the local authority, residents and other agencies.

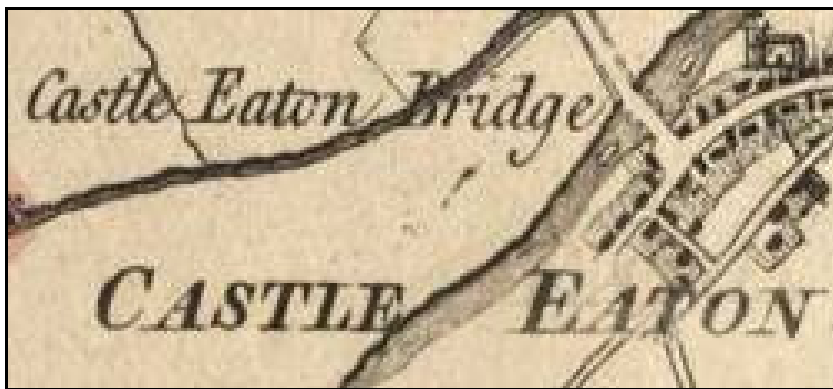
1.3 Conservation policy

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 October 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.



Andrews and Drury map, 1773

2 Background

2.1 Location

Castle Eaton lies in completely rural surroundings beside a meander of the infant River Thames approximately 16 kilometres north of Swindon and 10 km southeast of Cirencester. It is one of a number of local villages (e.g. Kempsford, Marston Meysey and Down Ampney) which lie on the flat, low land beside the Upper Thames, interconnected by narrow country roads and footpaths. Castle Eaton is on The Thames Path, a 180 mile long distance 'National Trail' that follows the course of the Thames from London to the source of the Thames in Gloucestershire.

The village may be reached via one of three narrow lanes. From Fairford and the north the access is over one of only two bridges¹ over the Thames between Cricklade and Lechlade. The western approach is along a lane that, 3 miles to the west of the village, branches from the A419 Swindon to Cirencester road, a principal route linking the M4 and M5 motorways. From the eastern end of School Lane a narrow lane proceeds to Hannington and Highworth.

2.2 Boundaries

The boundary of the conservation area has been drawn to enclose the historic core of Castle Eaton and open space vital to its rural setting. The road bridge (constructed in 1893, strengthened in 2001) and the southern riverbank are included in recognition of the unique contribution of the River Thames to the atmosphere of the village.

Late 20th century residential development beside School Lane on the southeastern edge of the village is omitted because it lacks the obvious architectural and historic qualities of the heart of the village.

The character and appearance of this quiet conservation area are particularly vulnerable to damage from unsuitable development because of the area's attractiveness and historic ambience.

¹The other is Hannington Bridge to the east.

2.3 Origins and history of the settlement

Aerial photographs point to evidence of prehistoric and Romano-British settlement and farming in the vicinity. The Domesday Book of 1086 refers to the settlement of 'Ettone', possibly deriving from an Old English term meaning 'farm by the water'. Evidence of the village's early origins may be found in the two Norman doorways at the Church of St Mary's, a grade I listed building, and the medieval cross in the churchyard, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There is documentary evidence of a 14th century fortified manor² or 'castle'.

With the exception of the church, the village's characteristic historic buildings appear to date from the 17th and 18th centuries with 19th century additions. Nineteenth century maps of the village show a collection of buildings containing the elements of a typical rural English village: church and graveyard, rectory, farmhouse and farm buildings at either end of the settlement's main thoroughfare (Manor Farm and Castle Eaton), an inn, a smithy³, a bakery⁴, a mill and a collection of large and small dwellings dispersed around the roads known today as Long Row, The Street and Mill Lane. (School Lane existed as an old route along the backs of properties facing The Street but this lane has lost its historic character.)

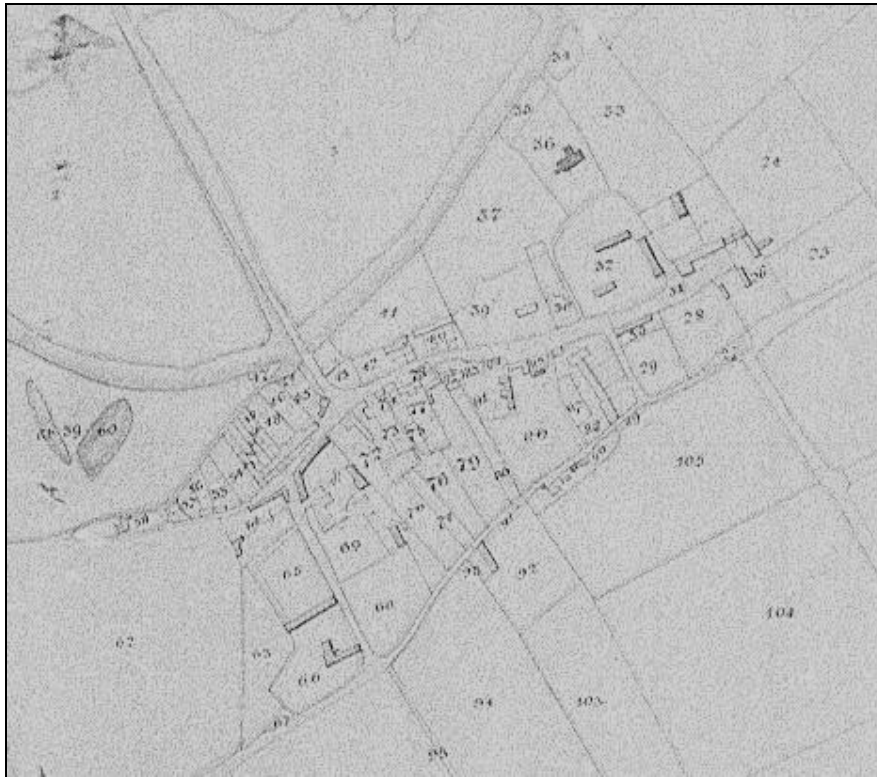
In common with many English villages, there were few major changes within the village until the late 20th century when a number of one- and two-storey dwellings were constructed on either side of School Lane and limited infill, some backland, added to The Street. More recently a disused grade II listed 18th century barn has been converted to a dwelling and redundant farm buildings at Castle Eaton Farm have been replaced with four large dwellings (Ettone Barns).

²See Audrey Tomlin's history and guide to the St Mary's Church.

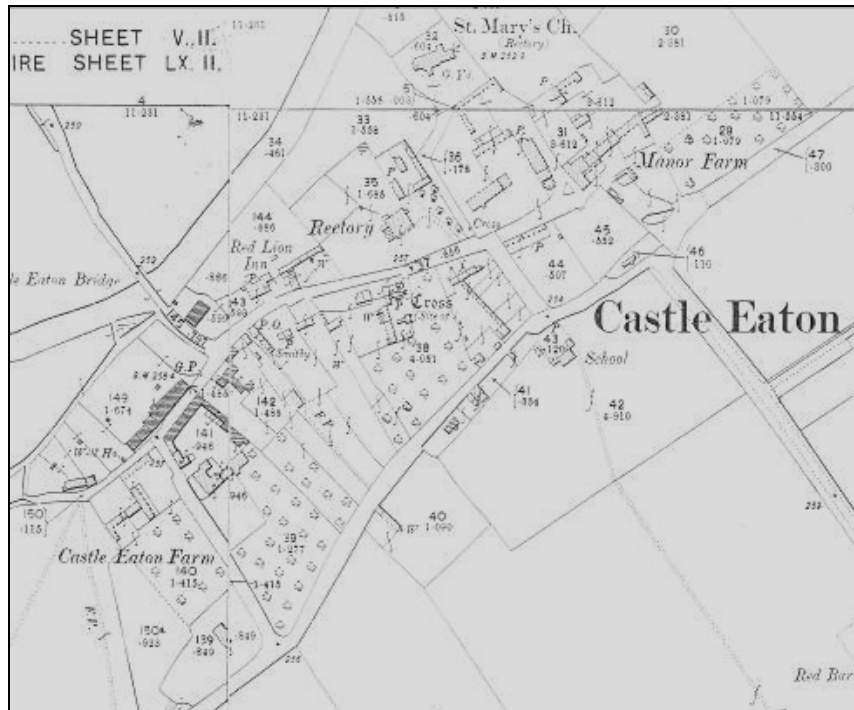
³Marked opposite The Red Lion on O.S. map of 1900.

⁴The Malt House has large bread ovens at the rear.

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Tithe Map, c.1840



Ordnance Survey, 1886

2.4 Landscape setting

The village's setting beside the Thames in a flat pastoral landscape is an important part of the character of this rural conservation area. Views and glimpses of surrounding open countryside and the Thames contribute significantly to the special interest of the place.

For example, the space west of the Red Lion⁵ affords views of the Thames and, beyond, the fields north of the river, sufficiently to bring the countryside apparently into the heart of the village. There is a similar northward view from the path to St Mary's Church.

One of the best views in the conservation area is the symmetrical stone façade of Bridge House as one enters the village across the Thames from Kempsford. The River Thames is one of the defining features of the area and it is fortunate that the riverside is easily visible from public viewpoints from the road bridge, the garden of the Red Lion and the churchyard. The prominence of the river in certain views is one of the characteristics of the area that forms part of its charm.

2.5 Castle Eaton Conservation Area today

The village is almost exclusively residential. In common with the majority of Wiltshire villages, some post-War development has taken place (notably beside School Lane) but this has not detracted from the strong historic character of the village.

In recent times, the village had a shop/post office⁶ and a village school⁷ but these are now closed. St Mary's Church has an active congregation and The Red Lion is a public house. A new village hall and resource centre⁸ (replacing a 'reading room' constructed in 1901 on the same site) was completed in 2001.

⁵Subject of an appeal (dismissed) against refusal of permission for the erection of a house 1990.

⁶Now 'the Old Post Office' opposite the Red Lion.

⁷Built in 1855 - now converted to a private dwelling.

⁸The hall has a part-time post office service and computer room.

Traffic is infrequent and there are few road markings. The lack of kerbed pavements adds to the area's rural character but can be dangerous for pedestrians. Lack of off-road parking (typical of streets created before the motor car) can lead to parking problems. There is a very limited bus service to Swindon and Fairford. Roads are generally quiet, there is a 30 mph speed limit through the village and a low level of street lighting. The village has a tranquil atmosphere.

3 The special interest of the conservation area

3.1 General character and appearance

The village is arranged informally around a rectangle of roads which derive from the settlement's original street pattern - as indicated by the varying width and bend in The Street. With the exception of the two recent 'backland' developments (The Laurels and dwellings behind 'Appletrees'), buildings in the conservation area relate directly to the roads of this historic street pattern. The conservation area contains three distinct areas: The Street which forms the linear historic spine of the village; St Mary's Church and the extensive Manor Farm complex in the north east; Mill Lane with Castle Eaton Farm buildings and open space abutting the village in the south west.

The Street

The Street is Castle Eaton's main thoroughfare on which sit nearly all of the area's historic buildings. It runs from the southwestern corner of the village to the church lych gate - the historic spine of the village. Some old buildings, such as Numbers 1 to 5, directly front the road, others are set back behind low stone walls and gardens. The Street comprises a mix of buildings in terms of height and scale, none higher than two-and-a-half storeys, and its south side is considerably more built up than the north. Trees are prominent along the eastern length which, together with the high roadside boundary wall of Glebe House, create an enclosed character in contrast to the open atmosphere in front of the Red Lion where buildings are set back from the road and there are glimpses over the Thames.

There are two recent cul-de-sac housing developments set back from the road on the south side of The Street - The Laurels and the dwellings behind 'Appletrees'. Vehicular access from The Street to these obviously modern dwellings is via openings which are narrow and unobtrusive openings and thereby help to preserve The Street's generally historic appearance.

Long Row is straight and uniform (tree lined grass verge to east, pavement to west) which at first impression gives a suburban feel. However, the open long front gardens behind a low stone wall provide a green setting for a picturesque terrace of old cottages⁹. A converted Victorian school with arched windows closes the southward view.

St Mary's Church and Manor Farm

St Mary's Church stands in a green graveyard on slightly elevated ground beside the Thames. The corbelled bell turret is a distinguishing feature. From the churchyard there are good views through the riverside willows to the north and eastward over flat fields towards Kempsford. The walk from the lych gate to the church passes several features typical of this rural village: old stone walls (containing remnants of old gravestones), vernacular outbuildings, farm machinery, mature trees and glimpses of the Thames and beyond.

Manor Farm is set back from The Street, secluded from the village behind a low stone wall which permits glimpses of farming activity. Within its well defined curtilage are to found an orchard and other trees, a walled garden and a grouping of old and new farm buildings typical of the locality.

Mill Lane and Castle Eaton Farm

Despite two pairs of post-war semi-detached houses, a strong historic tone is set by Numbers 1 to 5 The Street, a row of old stone cottages. Castle Eaton House, dating from the 18th century, and buildings at the side and rear form a pleasant 'farmyard' grouping despite their residential use.

Opposite, a new development of four barn-style houses (Ettone Barns) stands on the site of former farm buildings. The new houses are out of scale with their surroundings and, unfortunately, their mass is not softened by planting or landscaping.

⁹ Unfortunately these have lost their original stone roof covering.

Between these farm buildings and the grade II listed barn at the western entrance to the village is an open field that brings the open countryside right up to the edge of the village - a crucial part of its rural setting. The unkerbed road passing between low stone walls contributes to this rural atmosphere.

Open spaces

The area has a spacious feel characterised by buildings in uncrowded surroundings. The large private gardens of, for example, Glebe House, Manor Farm, Long Row and Castle Eaton House, and the publicly accessible grounds of St Mary's Church and the Red Lion form an integral part of each building's setting. These and other open spaces between The Street and School Lane and directly fronting the highway (e.g. in front of Greenaways and Long Row) contribute to the loose-knit pattern of the conservation area.

3.2 Architectural and historic character

Despite the presence of late 20th century housing, old buildings outnumber new and a historic character and appearance prevails, stemming from the building form, age and style of the properties which make up the conservation area - dating mainly from the period c.1650-1850.

The vernacular architecture is typified by the prevalent use of local limestone in walls and roofs and Castle Eaton may be described as a Cotswold village. Buildings in the village are predominantly two-storey with some 1 1/2 storey (Bridge Cottage, 1 & 2 The Street), being constructed with Cotswold limestone under roofs of stone tile, with some slate and clay tile.

Rubble stone is commonly used for humble cottages such as 1 & 2 The Street and the grade II listed barn at Manor Farm. The area's more prestigious buildings have facades of coursed and dressed stone with smooth ashlar stone quoins. Only Glebe House has a facade of ashlar with thin lime mortar joints.

Boundary walls of rough uncoursed rubble stone, with or without mortar, are a

feature of the area. A typical example is the roadside wall of Glebe House and the walls beside the path to the church.

Despite the impressive red brick Georgian facade of The Red Lion, brick is not common except in chimneys and window surrounds. Steeply pitched stone tile roofs are dominant in The Street, some such as Nos 1 & 2 with front gables - a typical characteristic of the Cotswold vernacular.

Traditionally, two basic types of timber window design are found in Castle Eaton¹⁰; side opening casements beneath a timber lintel are common in the cottages (e.g. 1 to 5 The Street) and vertical sliding sashes are prominent in the front of the village's grander buildings¹¹ (e.g. Bridge House, The Malt House, Manor Farm House). Gabled dormer windows, wholly within the roofslope are common.

The Malt House exemplifies a number of aspects of the local vernacular. The building has a front of coursed and dressed stone with ashlar quoins but the (less visible) sides and rear are constructed with rubble stone. With a similar gesture to presenting a good front to the street, the windows at the front are large well proportioned vertical sliding sash but the rear outhouse has smaller windows, casement and sash. Chimneys and rear window dressings are in red brick. The building is roofed in slate, indicating its 19th century origin (slate was comparatively rare in rural locations before this date).

3.3 Buildings of local interest¹²

English Heritage advice¹³ is that, "most of the buildings in a conservation area will help to shape its character in one way or another" and in addition to the 16 grade II listed buildings there are a number of other buildings which make a strong contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the area. For example, the

¹⁰Note that 1 & 2 The Street and the rear of Bridge House have C17 stone mullion windows.

¹¹The windows of Glebe House have been much altered.

¹²See Swindon Borough Local Plan SPG: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'.

¹³Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, March 1997

lych gate, the terrace of stone cottages in Long Row and the brick barn at Manor Farm. These, and other buildings of local interest, are identified on the accompanying map.

3.4 Trees

Trees add significantly to the interest of the area. There are several specimen trees which act as a backdrop to the village or as a setting to the area's buildings, notably those beside St Mary's Church, in the garden of Glebe House and on the riverbank. The trees in Long Row were planted in memory of those who gave their lives in the 1914-1918 War.

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 treed 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.

Local details and features

There are a number of local details which form part of the special interest of the area. These 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.

- Natural stone boundary walls are a distinctive feature of the conservation area and are essential to its predominantly stone appearance¹⁴;
- The village has a K6 red telephone box (listed grade II);
- There are two Victorian cast iron pumps, one at either end of Long Row (the southern one has lost its cast iron cap);

¹⁴ There is an unusual boundary wall of upright stone slabs at Elm Cottage just outside the area.

4 Opportunities for enhancement

4.1 Negative features

- The house and bungalow on either side of the road leading over the Thames are out of character with the historic interest of the area by virtue of their design and materials;
- Poles and overhead wires and, for example, unsightly electricity equipment opposite Castle Eaton House detract from the area's historic appearance;
- The footpath in front of the cottages in Long Row is in need of repair;
- Cars parking on pavements and verges are eroding the verge/pavement and are a hazard to pedestrians;
- Temporary structures in the garden of the Red Lion are unsightly and obstruct views across the river;
- The mass, scale and materials of Ettone Barns are out of keeping with the special historic interest of the conservation area;
- The roof of the church is in need of repair.

4.2 Scope for improvement

Some of the buildings are suffering from an incremental loss of architectural detail through the replacement of traditional building materials with inappropriate modern materials. In particular, the loss of original natural stone roof tiles (as, for example, at Longcot and the cottages of Long Row) and inappropriate alteration of original timber windows has begun to erode the village's historic character. Long term tree management needs careful consideration.

5 Public Consultation

Residents of the Conservation Area were consulted by letter and questionnaire on 22nd December 2009 and asked to express their views by email, letter or phone. Castle Eaton Parish Council and local ward member 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 Highworth and Swindon Libraries. A drop-in surgery was held on 4th February 2008.

6 Castle Eaton 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 advice¹⁵ it is proposed that this management strategy together with the conservation area appraisal be reviewed and updated regularly (five years is recommended).

¹⁵ Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas - English Heritage and PAS (2006)

CASTLE EATON 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.

CASTLE EATON CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN			
MANAGEMENT ISSUE		STRATEGY	PARTNERS
Buildings at risk	Buildings in the area are generally in good condition. Repair of the church roof is currently subject to fund raising.	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.
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.
Traffic/parking	High levels of traffic occasionally use the narrow road through the hamlet to the detriment of residents' amenity. Cars parked on pavement edges and verges are a hazard to pedestrians	Ensure that 30 mph speed limit is enforced. Consider a reduction in speed limit or other traffic calming measures.	Swindon Borough Council/Police

CASTLE EATON CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN			
MANAGEMENT ISSUE		STRATEGY	PARTNERS
Signage, street furniture and overhead wires	Small items of street furniture (e.g. telephone kiosk and cast iron pumps) make a positive contribution to local identity.	Ensure that all existing signage and street furniture is maintained in good order and that new street furniture is in line with principles set out in English Heritage 'Streets for All' publication.	Swindon Borough Council/Parish Council/Public utilities
	Unsightly overhead wires spoil the appearance of the area.	Support any proposal to put cables underground subject to archaeological and other considerations.	
Potential decline and loss of trees	Trees make a vital contribution to the rural ambience of the conservation area and the setting of its listed buildings.	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.

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*
- *Guide to St. Mary the Virgin Church, Audrey Tomlin (1992)*
- *Victoria County History of Wiltshire*

Appendix 1 Photographs

Fig 1: Characteristic features of Castle Eaton Conservation Area



Grade II listed agricultural barn converted to residential use in 2008.



Long Row.



Manor Farmhouse.



Church of St Mary dates from the 13th century with Victorian restoration and alterations.



The River Thames flows along the northern edge of the conservation area.



Chest tomb in St Mary's churchyard.

Fig 2: Characteristic features of Castle Eaton Conservation Area



The medieval stone cross in St Mary's churchyard is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.



K6 type telephone kiosk outside the village hall.



The Red Lion is a good example of an early 18th century house, unusually for the area it is built with red brick.



Multi-gabled row of cottages in The Street (grade II).



A tented trellis porch at Castle Eaton House.



Castle Eaton House, an early 18th century house with characteristic stone tiled roof (grade II).

Fig 3: Characteristic features of Castle Eaton Conservation Area



Looking east along The Street.



Trees planted in Long Row.



Bridge House has an early 19th century front to a much older building.



St Mary's lych gate, a building of local interest.



Cast iron pump in Long Row.



The village is located along the Thames Path.

Castle Eaton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

