

# **Hodson**

## Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



- Conservation area designated on 30th April 1990
- Appraisal and management plan adopted 10th February 2009

**This appraisal, management plan and the accompanying map has been prepared in collaboration with Chiseldon 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.



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## **1 Summary of the Hodson Conservation Area**

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

- Rural setting of the historic core of the village on the chalk terrace with significant views of the higher downs to the south and east;
- The secluded, wooded setting of the coomb in the north of the conservation area;
- Architectural and historic interest of the village's buildings and other structures, including 12 listed buildings, and their haphazard layout around the lane;
- Prevalent use of local materials, notably local rubble stone and chalkstone and thatch and stone slate roofing;
- The narrow, unkerbed lane with wide grassy verges in the centre of the conservation area and informal 'track' accesses to dwellings;
- Trees, especially in the wooded coomb;
- Small stream that runs through the coomb;
- A tranquil and pastoral quality;
- The area's historical association with the writers Richard Jefferies and Edward Thomas.

## 1.1 Introduction

Hodson Conservation Area was designated by Thamesdown Borough Council on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1990.

This document defines and records the special architectural or historic interest that warrants designation of Hodson Conservation Area and identifies elements that contribute to its special character and appearance. Swindon Borough Council's Planning Committee approved the document on 10<sup>th</sup> 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 September 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**

Hodson conservation area covers the historic core of the hamlet of the same name. The settlement is situated in rural surroundings in the Parish of Chiseldon in northeast Wiltshire. Swindon's modern town centre lies approximately 6 km to the northwest.

The hamlet lies just off the B4005 road between Wroughton and Chiseldon. The narrow lane that passes through Hodson crosses the M4 to the north of the hamlet and skirts around Coate Water to enter Swindon in the Broome Manor area.

The village of Chiseldon, the largest settlement in the parish, lies just to the southeast of the hamlet. Chiseldon also contains a conservation area.

### **2.2 Boundaries**

The boundary of Hodson Conservation Area has been drawn to include the historic core of the hamlet, taking in a cluster of historic, listed, buildings at the edge of the scarp, and their immediate surroundings. To the north, the boundary has been drawn to include a section of the steep-sided wooded coomb, including several historic properties close to the valley bottom.

Michael Marshman in his "Wiltshire Village Book" refers to Hodson, with "its delectable thatched cottages in a tiny valley that seemed to belong to faerie", as having remained "secluded" despite the growth of nearby Swindon.<sup>1</sup>

The conservation area has an exceptional environmental quality. The existence of an area of such unspoiled rural character is surprising so close to the development pressures of Swindon. The high proportion of listed buildings within the area is a likely factor in the preservation of the area's character and

appearance as is the retention of the majority of the hamlet under the single ownership of the Burderop Estate.

The character and appearance of the area are particularly vulnerable to damage from unsuitable development because of the hamlet's delicate scale, pastoral setting and historic ambience. Particularly where unsuitable development would be visible from public roads and footpaths, it would damage the visual amenity of this conservation area in a rural location and seriously detract from the setting of its listed buildings. These are interests of acknowledged importance. Protection is, therefore, necessary.

Modern farm buildings and housing in the south of the hamlet have not been included in the conservation area as they would dilute the superior historic environment of the conservation area.

### **2.3 Origins and history of the settlement**

There is archaeological evidence in the area relating to periods from the Neolithic onwards and the remains of settlements, roadways and field systems of Bronze Age, Iron Age and the Roman occupation are all evident in the vicinity.

The three main settlements of the parish, Chiseldon, Hodson and Badbury are all early settlements. A charter of 901 concerning land at Chiseldon also includes a reference to Hodson under the name 'Horeston'.

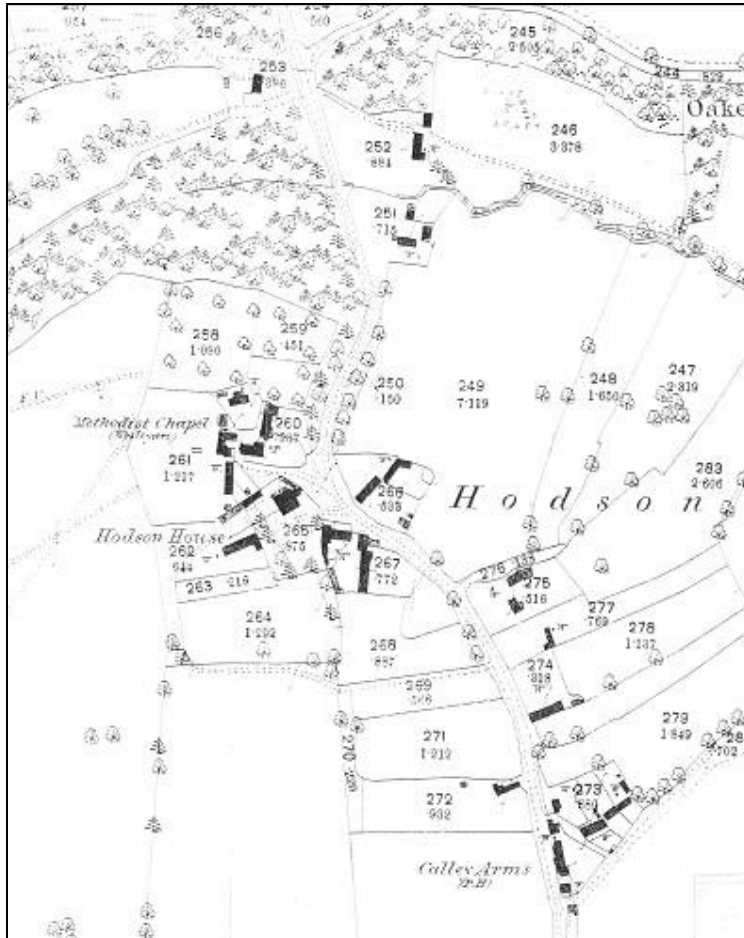
At the time of the dissolution Chiseldon Manor, including land at Hodson and Badbury, was held by Hyde Abbey. Following the dissolution the manor was granted to Sir John Bridges of Blunsdon, later Lord Chandos. The estate was later conveyed to the Stephens family and then to William Calley the elder, citizen and draper of London, in 1619. It has been in this family since that date and the majority of the hamlet's cottages and farms still belong to the Calley estate<sup>2</sup>, now known as the Burderop estate.



The hamlet appears in the past to have been larger than it is today. The County Archaeologist has reported that there are remnants of village features in fields to the south-east of the conservation area, adjacent to the track leading to Ashley House, and the Andrews and Drury map of 1773, as reproduced in the Victoria County History, appears to show quite a number of dwellings, although by the time of the 1886 1st Edition Ordnance Survey the situation is much as today. A detailed history of the parish of Chiseldon can be found in the Victoria County History (Wiltshire).



Andrews and Drury, 1773



Ordnance Survey, c.1886

## 2.4 Landscape setting

The hamlet of Hodson lies wholly within 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. Current policy states that priority will be given to the conservation of the character and high scenic quality of the landscape in the AONB<sup>4</sup>.

Situated at the edge of the chalk scarp of the Marlborough Downs, to the south of the hamlet is open chalk upland, which rises again in the distance as the higher Downs. The greater part of the hamlet is set at the top of the scarp on the flat

<sup>3</sup> As designated by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

<sup>4</sup> See Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 Policy ENV 11

chalk terrace but to the north of this the land falls away into a steep sided coomb cut in the chalk by a small stream running east to west. The valley is on the Upper Greensand and is heavily treed in contrast with the chalk terrace. Further to the north is the broad clay vale.

Hodson is located just to the south east of Burderop Wood, a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Views from the edge of the hamlet of the wider landscape - particularly south to the wide, arable fields of the chalk terrace - help to reinforce the village's location within the rural and historic landscape.

Within the heart of the conservation area, changing levels and the close cluster of buildings restrict outward views to a series of snapshots and glimpses of surrounding countryside.

The woodland restricts views in the coomb. However, to the east the woodland thins and there are glimpses of the fields beyond.

## **2.5 Hodson Conservation Area today**

Today the hamlet as a whole comprises around 22 dwellings, of which 15 are in the conservation area. Although there is a pub just outside the conservation area, there is no shop, school or church (there was previously a Wesleyan chapel in the hamlet, Methodism having been brought to the village by one of Wesley's friends by 1789). Chiseldon, however, with a full range of the necessary and desirable facilities, is within one and a half km, and the centre of Swindon only 20 minutes drive by car.

Hodson's origins are firmly linked with agriculture and Hodson Farm, whose buildings lie just outside the conservation area, remains in use as a working farm. Otherwise the hamlet is largely residential. The rural surroundings, traditional architecture of the buildings and use of local materials in historic buildings and

boundaries ensure that the hamlet retains a pleasant rural ambience.

The road through Hodson is a winding lane retaining a pleasant rural character. It is unkerbed and edged by wide grass verges through the conservation area. There is a minimum of signage. Access to dwellings from the lane is via simple trackways and the conservation area is currently unspoilt by modern, kerbed, vehicular accesses. The lane's appearance makes a major contribution towards the area's rural character and its alteration would diminish this.

## **2.6 Traffic**

Although Hodson appears to be a pleasant backwater, bypassed by the B4005, in reality commuters seeking a short cut to and from Swindon's centre frequently use the narrow minor road running through the hamlet. Traffic noise and the dangers of increasing amounts of traffic on this minor road, in places only single track, detract from the rural character of the hamlet. Noise from the distant M4 motorway also impinges on the hamlet's tranquil ambience.

### **3 The special interest of the conservation area**

#### **3.1 General character and appearance**

There are two discernible sub-areas within the conservation area: (1) the collection of houses on the brow of the hill (south), and (2) the wooded coomb (north).

*(1) Conservation area (south) - the hamlet:* Approached from the south, Hodson's historic character is not immediately apparent. The hamlet is entered via a narrow lane off the B4005 and the majority of buildings at this end of the village are modern dwellings and farm buildings. The main exception is a row of stone-built thatched cottages protected by virtue of their grade II listing.

However, as the bend is rounded into the conservation area, the hamlet's historic core presents an idyllic prospect. Here, a cluster of attractive historic houses and cottages are grouped closely to enclose the lane. Surrounding land is above the level of the road and only glimpses of the fields beyond are available between buildings.

The lane is narrow and unkerbed, flanked by rough grass verges, so wide to the left of the road as to give the impression of a small village green. The verges are an important feature of the conservation area. Part of their charm lies in their slightly unkempt state and their contribution to the area's rural character would be diminished if they were to become more manicured. Nearly all the buildings visible at this point are historic buildings. They are mostly built in the local tradition, from local materials: notably local rubblestone and thatch.

The only building to the east of the road in this core area is a former row (now two dwellings) of thatched cottages standing gable end on and raised above the level of the road. These cottages have attractive, well-kept gardens. Two larger houses, Hodson Farmhouse and Hodson House stand close together on the west side of the lane. In the verge that fronts them are a red letter box, a village notice board and an unsightly rusting road 'no through road' sign.

Property boundaries are generally defined by well-kept hedges and stone walls. Roadside hedgerows are comprised of indigenous species. Unlike the valley coomb, trees are a remarkable feature in this area of the village, other than several tall pines to the rear of Hodson House and a number of clipped garden hollies.

In front of Hodson House, a small track leads off to the left, providing access to a number of small, thatched cottages. Further round the corner, out of sight of the main way through the village, is a late 20<sup>th</sup> century thatched dwelling, a replacement for an old cottage destroyed in a fire.

*(2) Conservation area (north) - the wooded coomb:* As the road begins to descend steeply to the valley bottom, its character changes as it becomes overshadowed by trees. The road is deeply cut into the valley and is enclosed to either side by high banks and beech trees which, in full leaf, block out the light. Once in the valley, the lane opens out and becomes less enclosed. To the left of the road is an area of mixed woodland, light penetrating between the mature trees. To the right, nearing the valley bottom, a small parking place cut into the side of the road serves several small cottages. These are historic, thatched cottages, set well back from the road, and screened from it by trees. The cottages are fronted by a wooded garden. The introduction of non-native specimen trees has made the character of this area very different from that of the mature woodland beyond. Beyond the cottages are glimpses of fields as the woodland gives way to small fields.

A small stream runs along the valley bottom and under the road. The sound of running water is a pleasant accompaniment to a walk through this area. As the road rises up the north side of the valley, two rough forest tracks lead off to the right. One track leads to a dwelling and the other provides access to Oaken Ground Copse, the woodland that stretches along the east flank of the valley. To the west, at the edge of the conservation area a small clearing within the

mixed woodland houses a thatched cottage and outbuilding. This is Keepers Cottage (grade II), the model for the house of the principal character in "The Gamekeeper at Home" by Richard Jefferies (1848-87), poet-naturalist and a local man. Hodson (and nearby Burderop) have strong associations with both Richard Jefferies and Edward Thomas (1878-1917), First World War poet and Jefferies' biographer early in the 20th century.

### **3.2 Architectural and historic character**

The conservation area is characterised by historic buildings dating mainly to the 17th and 18th centuries. These buildings are vernacular in character, that is to say domestic cottages, farms and farm buildings built with local building materials (stone, brick, timber and thatch) by local craftsmen using traditional building techniques.

Buildings are generally of limestone or sarsen rubble or chalkstone, sometimes rendered or painted. Many roofs are thatched and steeply pitched, often with 'eyebrow' dormers. There are also instances of stone tiled roofs and Welsh slate roofs. Windows are usually simple timber casements in small openings under timber lintels. The traditional building form is one-and-a-half or two storey with ridge chimneys although two larger dwellings, Hodson House and Hodson Farmhouse, both have attic stories. Brick is often used for later extensions and chimneys. Some of the former rows of cottages have now been combined to form larger units.

Two buildings, Hodson Farmhouse and Nos.28 &29 (both of which show evidence of timber framed origins), date to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and earlier. Hodson Farmhouse retains three smoke-blackened cruck trusses probably from the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century. The building was probably rewalled in stone in the 17th century. Nos.28 &29 may be 16th century or older.

Virtually every building (13) in this tiny conservation area is listed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, under section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings

and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as being of special architectural or historic interest. All are listed Grade II and, with the single exception of 28 & 29 Hodson, are denoted as having Group Value.

### **3.3 Trees**

Trees add significantly to the interest of the area, notably in the north of the conservation area, where the mixed woodland in the coomb is essential to its distinctive character. Non-native species planted as garden specimens in the valley bottom, are uncharacteristic and detrimental to the area's rural character.

There are few significant trees in the conservation area outside the coomb and its approaches. Exceptions are a group of pines adjacent to the Hodson Farmhouse and a few garden hollies.

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.

### **3.4 Local details and features**

Hodson Conservation Area is characterised by stone-walled, thatched cottages, mostly dating from 17th and 18th century, and, to the north, by copse woodland. 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.

*Trees:* Trees (in the form of woodland in the north of the area), hedgerows and other greenery are a feature of the area, adding significantly to its rural ambience.

*Boundaries:* stone walls, neatly clipped hedges and hedgerows of indigenous species are a distinctive feature of the hamlet.

*The lane:* the road through Hodson retains the appearance of a winding country



lane, without modern kerbing or vehicular accesses. It makes an important contribution to the area's rural character.

*Unkerbed grass verges:* the lane is edged by wide verges of rough grass. In the historic core of the hamlet these are so wide as to almost create the impression of a village green.

## **4 Opportunities for enhancement**

### **4.1 Negative features**

The levels of through traffic using this narrow country route are of concern, from a safety point of view and because of the damage caused to the rural ambience of the hamlet.

An abundance of overhead wires detracts seriously from the historic appearance of this area. This is unfortunate in view of its otherwise unspoilt nature.

A 'no through road' sign on the green is in a poor state 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 addition to a 30 mph speed limit, there may be pressure in the future for some form of traffic control along this minor road. This, and any associated signage, should be carefully considered for its impact on the rural surroundings. No alterations to the lane, or additional signage, should be installed within the boundaries of the conservation area.

Hodson is a small conservation area with an unspoiled historic environment that is almost unique, in its quality, in the Swindon area. Future development in the area is likely to be quite carefully controlled due to the high proportion of listed buildings in the area. However, attention to even minor alterations, such as new garden buildings or the upgrading of vehicular accesses, is required in order to maintain the area's quality of character and appearance.

Long term tree management and planting within the coomb needs careful consideration. Non-native species in gardens in the valley bottom are uncharacteristic of the area and, in the long term, could be replaced by more

suitable specimens.

## **5 Public Consultation**

Both the Chiseldon Parish Council and the Chiseldon Local History Group were consulted on the first draft of this appraisal. Residents of the Hodson Conservation Area were invited by letter to express their views. The draft was available for viewing or download on the Council's website and at Premier House and the Town Library in Swindon. Views expressed were reported to Planning Committee.

## **6 Hodson 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 advice<sup>5</sup> it is proposed that this management strategy together with the conservation area appraisal be reviewed and updated regularly (five years is recommended).

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<sup>5</sup> Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas - English Heritage and PAS (2006)

<b>HODSON CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN</b>			
<b>MANAGEMENT ISSUE</b>		<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>
<b>Design of new development</b>	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.
<b>Inappropriate alterations and additions to buildings</b>	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.

<b>HODSON CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN</b>			
<b>MANAGEMENT ISSUE</b>		<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>
<b>Buildings at risk</b>	Buildings in the area are generally in good condition.	Monitor the condition of historic buildings within the area and use statutory powers to secure the repair of particular buildings noted to be at risk.	Swindon Borough Council.
<b>Signage &amp; street furniture</b>	<p>Unsightly 'No Through Road' sign beside the green.</p> <p>Overhead wires spoil the appearance of the area.</p>	<p>Ensure that all existing signage and street furniture is maintained in good order.</p> <p>Support any proposal to put cables underground subject to archaeological and other considerations.</p>	Swindon Borough Council/Parish Council/Public utilities
<b>Traffic</b>	High levels of traffic use the narrow road through the hamlet (in places single track) to the detriment of residents' amenity.	Ensure that 30 mph speed limit is enforced. Consider a reduction in speed limit or other traffic calming measures appropriate to the conservation area.	Swindon Borough Council/Police.
<b>Potential decline and loss of trees</b>	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 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*
- *The Wiltshire Village Book. Michael Marshman. 1987. Countryside Books.*



## Appendix 1 Photographs

*Fig 1: Characteristic features of Hodson Conservation Area*

	
<p>Local stone and thatch is characteristic of the conservation area.</p>	<p>A narrow unkerbed track leads to a secluded cluster of dwellings.</p>
	
<p>The grassed area in front of Hodson House feels like a traditional village green.</p>	<p>The narrow road through the hamlet descends steeply to the valley bottom.</p>
	
<p>Hodson lies on a network of public footpaths.</p>	<p>The stream passes beneath a stone bridge but is mostly hidden from view.</p>

*Fig 2: Characteristic features of Hodson Conservation Area*



View northwards over arable fields emphasises the area's rural location.



Small scale thatched buildings are a feature of the valley bottom.



Large stones help to prevent traffic eroding the grass verge.



Red brick is less prevalent than stone and generally indicates 19<sup>th</sup> century or later construction.



This 'no through road' sign is unsightly.



Overhead power and telephone cables detract from the hamlet's rural ambience.



*Fig 3: Characteristic features of Hodson Conservation Area*



Characteristic building materials: local stone, thatch, brick and slate.



Stone boundary walls are a feature.



Collection of historic buildings in the upper part of the hamlet.



Hodson House overlooks the 'village green'.



Mature trees that line the road viewed from outside the conservation area.



Thatch predominates throughout the conservation area.

28.11.08

