

Rodbourne Cheney

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



- Conservation area designated on 25th June 1990
- Appraisal and management plan adopted 10th March 2009

This appraisal, management plan and the accompanying map have been prepared in collaboration with Rodbourne Green Residents Association. Swindon Borough Council's Planning Committee approved the document on 10 March 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

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1 Summary of Rodbourne Cheney Conservation Area

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

- St Mary's Church, listed grade II, a parish church with 13th century origins much altered and extended to accommodate the late 19th century increase in worshippers arising from the post-railway growth of Swindon;
- The well-stocked churchyard of St Mary's Church which contains three grade II listed 19th century chest tombs and a notable collection of yew and lime trees;
- Manor House, listed grade II*, a typical stone-tiled Wiltshire manor house of late 16th century origin (its former stables are also listed);
- The Green, a grassy triangular piece of unfenced land which is a relic of a traditional rural village green;
- The characteristic relationship between manor house, church and village green;
- Hreod Burna Brook, flanked by green open space, which bisects the area;
- Remaining vernacular farmhouse and cottages dating from before the historic hamlet's suburbanisation;
- Small details such as stone boundary walls, stone kerbs and grass verges which add to the area's distinctive local identity.

1.1 Introduction

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

This document defines and records the special architectural or historic interest that warrants designation of Rodbourne Cheney 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

This *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 and landscape setting

The conservation area is in a suburban location about 1 kilometre from Swindon town centre. Despite its urban setting the northwest of the conservation area is bounded by open space alongside the River Ray, some of which lies within the conservation area itself. Generally speaking, this green space is well tree'd on the south side of the stream but open grassed space on the north side.

Approaching from the south, Cheney Manor Road rises slightly to the Green then descends to the stream before rising again to the platform of St Mary's churchyard.

2.2 Boundaries

The boundary has been drawn to enclose the core of the historic hamlet of Rodbourne Cheney including medieval church, 16th century manor house and the open space between them especially the Green.

Though set within the 20th century expansion of Swindon, Rodbourne Cheney's historic origins are evident today - not least in the characteristic medieval relationship between church and manor which conservation area status seeks to safeguard.

The delineation of a boundary which encompasses both church and manor has necessarily resulted in the inclusion of many buildings which do not contribute to the area's historic character.

2.3 Origins and history of the settlement

The name 'Rodbourne' apparently derives from Old English 'hreed burna' meaning reedy bourn, referring to the brook just north of the manor house.

The first written evidence for a community here is in the Domesday Book where it is called Redbourne and the inhabitants are listed as "3 villains, 5 borders and 1 serf".

In 1242 the manor belonged to a Ralph Chany, hence the appendage 'Cheney'.

The first recorded vicar of St Mary's Church, Johannes Channeu, in 1308, was probably a relative.

St Mary's Church dates from the 13th century and there are two stones, probably of Saxon origin, set within its walls. The Church was consecrated about 1250 and in 1324 it was given to the Monastery at Hailes in Gloucestershire.

By the middle of the 19th century the Church was in disrepair and in 1848 it was much altered to accommodate the increase in attendees resulting from the growth of the Great Western Railway works. It was the arrival of the GWR which initiated Rodbourne Cheney's transition from a rural to an urban community. The appeal for funds for restoration in 1848 states: "The population of the Parish of Rodbourne Cheney chiefly owing among other causes to the vicinity of the railway station at Swindon New Town, having of late years greatly increased..."

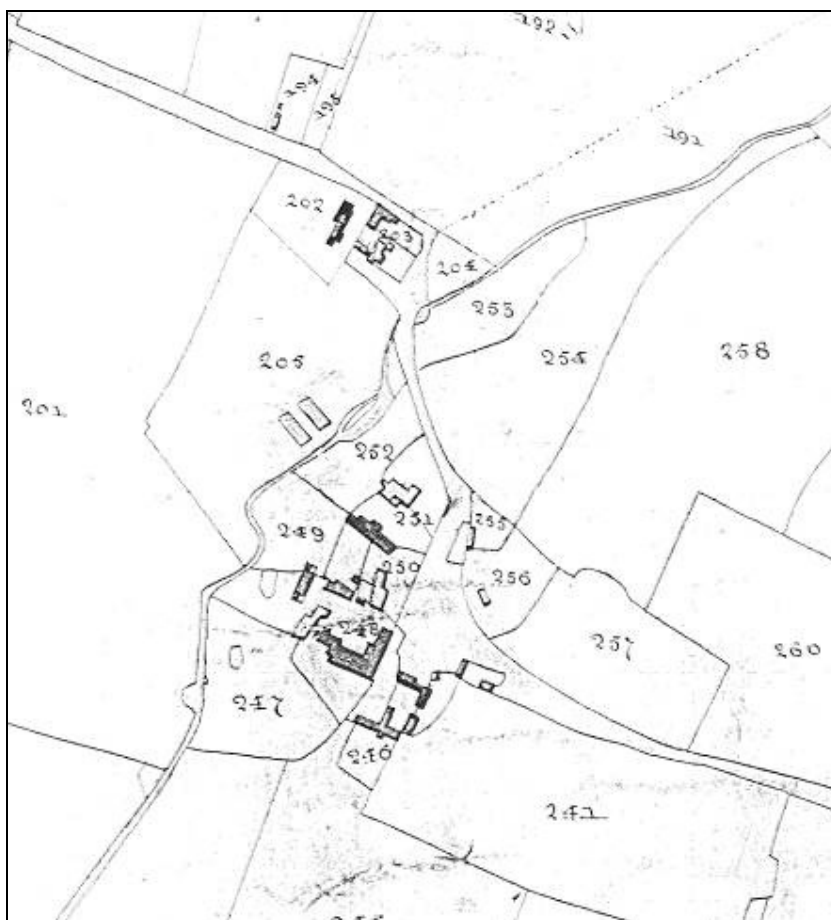
In 1913 a church magazine described the parish thus, "It was once a country parish pure and simple, it still retains its hamlets and has large tracts of fine, open country, but the main part of the parish has now all the features of a working class district, albeit of the respectable class".

In 1928 the parish of Rodbourne Cheney was incorporated into the Borough of Swindon but even at that date the 'village' retained a rural setting. The biggest changes to the area came in the 1930's when a wave of typical semi's (e.g. Harvey Grove) brought Rodbourne Cheney within the urban area of Swindon.

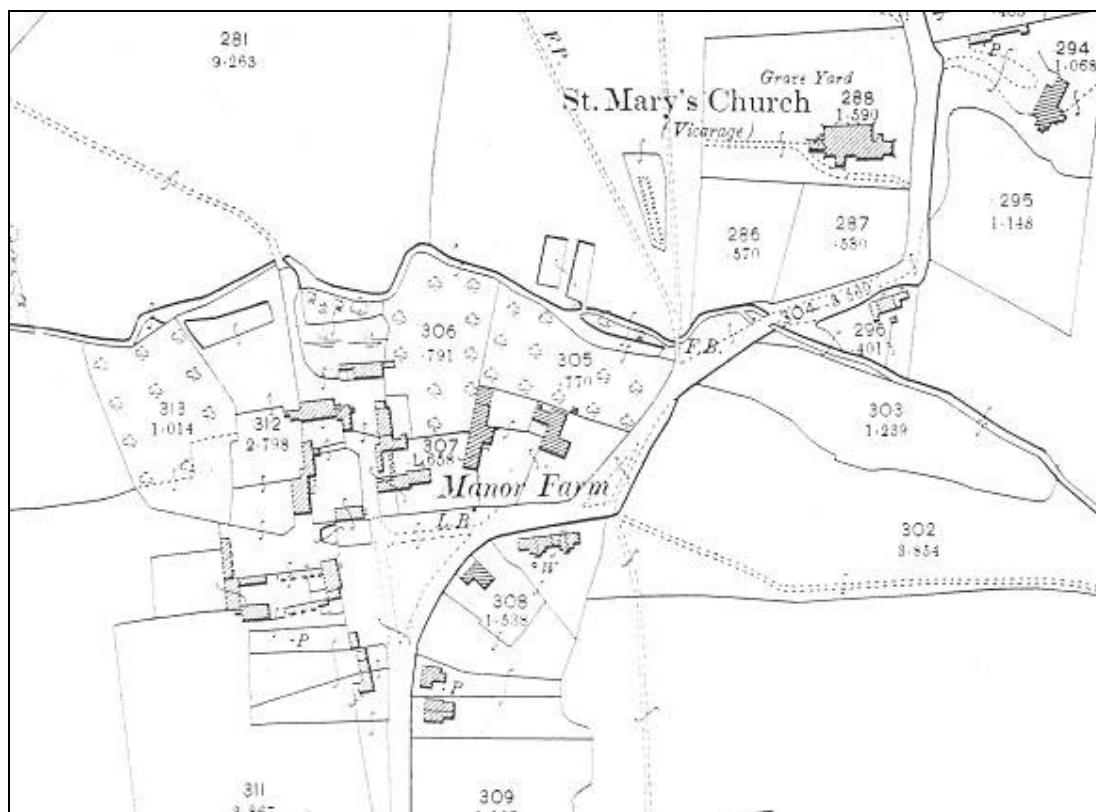
Vicarage Road was constructed in the 1930s to 'by-pass' the old village using some of the land belonging to Manor Farm. The farmhouse fell into disrepair and was demolished c. 1965 and a crescent of bungalows (191 to 201 Cheney Manor Road) were built on the site. The bungalows have stone face-panels using natural stone from the demolished farmhouse. The by-pass has undoubtedly contributed to the peaceful backwater atmosphere of Rodbourne Green but whilst Rodbourne Green is 'off the beaten track', St Mary's Church stands beside a busy 20th century roundabout.



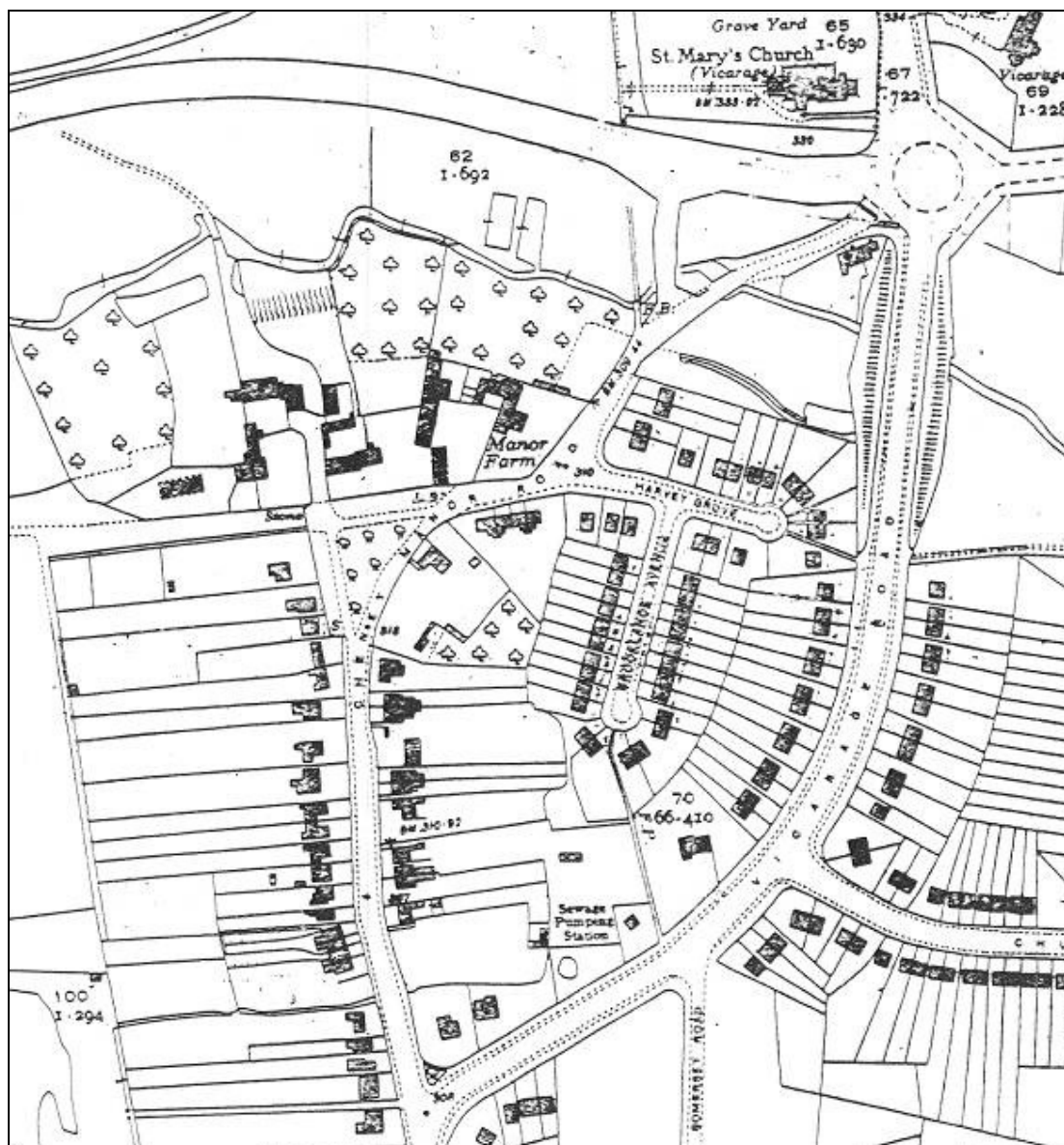
Andrews and Drury, 1773



Tithe Map c. 1843



Ordnance Survey, 1900



Ordnance Survey, c.1955

2.4 Rodbourne Cheney Conservation Area today

The early 20th century magazine article quoted above also says, “In the neighbourhood of St Mary’s Church there are not a few old houses and cottages, quaint and pretty, which tell of the rural pursuits which were largely pursued before the invasion from Swindon”. So it is today – but most dwellings have been much altered and extended.

With the exception of two places of worship (St Mary’s Church and a large Meeting House north of the Manor House) the conservation is residential, containing less than 50 dwellings. Vicarage Road carries the town’s traffic around the conservation area and the absence of high levels of traffic help to give the area a tranquil backwater atmosphere.

Public open space within the area is used for dog walking and other recreation.

3 The special interest of the conservation area

3.1 General character and appearance

Rodbourne Green, a triangular area of grassy open space in front of Manor House and Manor Cottage (formerly one dwelling but now in two ownerships), is the focus of the area south of the stream and one of the three defining features of the conservation area – the others are St Mary's Church and Manor House.

The Green apparently once contained the village stocks and was a meeting place for the local hunt. Today it retains the character of a village green because of the lack of kerbs (on two sides), the presence of trees and its irregular shape. The Green is overlooked by a mixed collection of buildings the most notable of which is Manor House and Manor Cottage, which have 16th century origins. This remnant of a village green is a surprising find in a suburban setting - even local villages do not possess such a central space.

Proceeding northwards from the Green along Cheney Manor Road, the road bends and dips down to the stream. On the left stands a row of bungalows. Though uncharacteristic, they are small in scale and do not overbear on the streetscene. On the right, there is an attractive row of 19th century vernacular stone cottages typical of the period and their locality (Nos 228-234 Cheney Manor Road). There are some old sarsen stone roadside kerbs which contribute to the historic character of the area.

The road forks at the stream. The right fork is the continuation of the old route through Rodbourne Cheney from manor house to church but today this road is abruptly blocked at a stone wall¹ beside which stand a row of 19th century stone cottages (280-284 Cheney Manor Road). The left fork is a relatively recent narrow road which links Cheney Manor Road to Akers Way, a busy east-west thoroughfare that isolates St Mary's Church from the noticeable tranquillity found in Rodbourne Green.

¹ A traffic roundabout has been constructed in its path.

St Mary's Church and its well-stocked graveyard stand on the other (north) side of Akers Way in a slightly elevated position overlooking a busy roundabout.

Surrounded by an old stone wall, the area has a distinctively historic appearance but the character of the area is marred by the sound of traffic.

More than half the area is public open space on either side of the small stream that bisects the conservation area.

3.2 Architectural character

The conservation area is characterised by a mixture of Victorian houses, older listed buildings, limited 20th century infill, open space and some very fine groups of trees. In addition to six listed buildings², there are a number of other buildings which make a strong contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the area notably Nos 228-234 Cheney Manor Road, a stone terrace with red brick dressings, and Nos 214 and 226, two Edwardian red brick dwellings with stone ground floor bay windows and a symmetrical facade.

3.3 Buildings of local interest³

In addition to Rodbourne Cheney's listed buildings there are a number of other buildings which make a strong contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the area. These are identified on the accompanying appraisal map and include No. 171 Cheney Manor Road which retains its stone façade and No. 5 Cheney Place, a converted former farmhouse with projecting gable-end bread oven.

3.4 Trees

Trees add significantly to the interest of the area especially the yews and limes in St Mary's Churchyard and other specimen trees several of which pre-date the area's 20th century dwellings.

² Manor House and Manor Cottage, stables north of Manor House, St Mary's Church, Evans chest tomb, Wiltshire chest tomb and a group of five chest tombs (one entry).

³ See Swindon Borough Local Plan SPG: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'.

The Rodbourne Green Residents Association planted a walnut tree on The Green in 1984. Walnut was chosen because of the memories of older residents picking walnuts from the trees in the Walnut Field behind Upper Rodbourne Farm.

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 does not imply that it must not be of value.

3.5 Local details and features

In addition to trees, 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:

- Roadside stone walls;
- Sarsen stone kerbs;
- Well-tended front gardens;
- Grassy roadside verges;
- The stream;

4 Opportunities for enhancement

4.1 Negative features

The Meeting Room north of Manor House is completely out of character with the overall character and appearance of the conservation area.

Despite local residents regularly turning out at organised clean up days, litter is unsightly beside footpaths and in the stream.

Galvanised steel lighting columns on the Green are poor quality and detract from the area's appearance.

4.2 Scope for improvement

Ongoing erosion of the Green remains a problem despite measures such as timber posts and sarsen stone placed to discourage cars.

Most of the unlisted buildings are suffering from an incremental loss of architectural detail through the replacement of traditional building materials with inappropriate modern materials, notably natural slate with concrete tile and timber windows with U PVC.

Long term tree management and planting need careful consideration.

Grass verges are being lost to car parking.

5 Public Consultation

The Rodbourne Green Residents Association and ward members of Moredon and Western wards were consulted about a draft of this appraisal. All residents of the 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 Rodbourne Cheney 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 and the local community.

In line with advice⁴ it is proposed that this management strategy together with the conservation area appraisal be reviewed and updated regularly (five years is recommended).

⁴ Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas - English Heritage and PAS (2006)

RODBOURNE CHENEY CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN			
MANAGEMENT ISSUE		STRATEGY	PARTNERS
Design of new development	Some modern development has an adverse impact on the conservation area.	Seek to ensure that future development proposals preserve or enhance the historic character and appearance of the conservation area, as described in this appraisal.	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.	Where planning permission is required, ensure future development proposals are strictly controlled in terms of design and materials. Consider the preparation of an information leaflet on good practice for minor alterations including works that do not require planning permission.	Swindon Borough Council/Residents.
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.

RODBOURNE CHENEY 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.
Signage & street furniture	<p>Modern lighting columns are out of character.</p> <p>Unsightly overhead wires spoil the appearance of the area.</p>	<p>Ensure that all existing signage and street furniture is maintained in good order. Consider replacement lighting columns in consultation with residents.</p> <p>Support any proposal to put cables underground subject to archaeological and other considerations.</p>	Swindon Borough Council/Residents/Utility companies.

RODBOURNE CHENEY CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN			
MANAGEMENT ISSUE		STRATEGY	PARTNERS
Parking	<p>The grass verge of the Green is in danger of further erosion from parked and moving vehicles.</p> <p>Demand for car parking has led to the loss of formerly grassed areas and gardens.</p>	Consider additional measures to protect the Green whilst preserving its rural character. Ensure grass verges are maintained and repaired where necessary.	Swindon Borough Council/Residents

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*
- *St Mary's Church, Rodbourne, Sheila Povey*
- *A History of St Mary's Church*
- *Stratton St Margaret, Rev F W T Fuller*
- *A History of Swindon to 1965 Crittall et al. (Wilts. Library Service 1983)*

Appendix 1 Photographs

Fig 1: Characteristic features of Rodbourne Cheney Conservation Area



St Mary's Church stands beside a busy suburban road.



Manor House, listed grade II*, a typical stone-tiled Wiltshire manor house of late 16th century origin.



Natural stone kerbs.



The stream that runs through the conservation area separating church from manor house.



A row of 19th century stone-built houses overlook the road as it descends to a small bridge.



Wooden bollards prevent cars from mounting the grass verge.

Fig 2: Characteristic features of Rodbourne Cheney Conservation Area

	
The 'village green'.	Bread oven projecting from the side of a former farmhouse (now a dwelling).
	
Footpath leading over the stream.	Former farmhouse incorporated into a modern cul-de-sac development of dwellings.
	
A large deciduous tree enhances the village green.	Red brick and slate dwelling typical of the post- railway expansion of Rodbourne Green.

Fig 3: Characteristic features of Rodbourne Cheney Conservation Area

	
Stone is characteristic of the area's oldest buildings.	The green viewed looking up Cheney Manor Road.
	
Stone wall and stone kerbs add to the area's local identity.	Inter-war houses – note the wide grass verge.
	
Traffic roundabout in the northeast of the area.	Large sarsen stone placed to prevent erosion of the grass verge of the green.

Rodbourne Cheney Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

