

Sevenhampton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



- Conservation area designated on 30th April 1990
- Appraisal and management plan adopted 4th April 2006

This appraisal and the accompanying map has been prepared in collaboration with Highworth Town Council and was adopted by Swindon Borough Council as “a proper assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of Sevenhampton Conservation Area” on 11th December 2000 and re-adopted on 4th April 2006.



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Sevenhampton Conservation Area Appraisal

Contents

Introduction	1
Location	2
Origins	2
Landscape setting	3
Boundary and extent of the conservation area	3
Present day	4
Summary of general character	6
Highways and streetscape	7
Views into and out of the conservation area	7
Architectural and historic character	8
Key buildings of interest	9
Warneford Place and grounds	10
Medieval settlement remains	11
Local details and features	12
Negatives	13
Useful publications	14
Management Plan	15
Map of Sevenhampton Conservation Area	End

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Introduction

Sevenhampton Conservation Area was designated by Thamesdown Borough Council on 30th April 1990.

This document defines and records the special architectural or historic interest that warrants designation of Sevenhampton Conservation Area and identifies elements that contribute to its special character and appearance.

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.

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, 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.

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

The information contained in this appraisal was collected during the year 2000. 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.

Location

Sevenhampton is situated in rural surroundings in the Parish of Highworth in north-east Wiltshire. It is about 9 km north-east of Swindon and about 2 km south of the historic market town of Highworth. The village sits astride a minor country road, classed as the C142, and two lanes, Bellingham Lane and Roves Lane, neither of which is a through route for motor traffic.

The conservation area contains the village of Sevenhampton, archaeological remains and the grounds of Warneford Place, a large secluded historic house at the end of a tree lined drive.

Origins and history of the settlement

Neolithic blades and a flint axe have been found in the area and a Saxon coin found in the village may indicate early occupation of the site. Sevenhampton may mean “the seven homesteads” or “enclosure of the the seven home farms”.¹

The 1086 Domesday Book entry for ‘Seofonhaemtune’ is sometimes interpreted as Sevenhampton, and sometimes as Sevington in Leigh Delamere. The first clear reference to Sevenhampton is in 1211 and the conservation area includes considerable earthwork remains illustrating medieval settlement and farming. Remains near the parish church include rectangular house platforms and hollow ways.

Andrews and Drury’s Map of Wiltshire (1773) clearly shows the hamlet of Sevenhampton and a large house, avenues of trees and formal garden at Warneford Place. The area has long been associated with the Warneford family who occupied Warneford Place (sometimes referred to as Sevenhampton Place) for over 500 years.

The village has a farming background but, in common with many rural English villages, its agricultural character has declined in the 20th century.

¹Wiltshire Place Names. R.Tomkins (Redbrick Publishing 1983)

Landscape setting

Sevenhampton village lies in a valley in undulating open landscape between the North Wessex Downs and the River Thames, along which a small stream flows eastwards to join the River Cole. It is surrounded by open countryside which is mainly in agricultural use but a golf course (Wrag Barn) lies to the north-west and, to the east, there is an area of managed open parkland associated with Warneford Place.

The low valley opens southwards giving long views to the ridge of the North Wessex Downs. A country road descends gently from the west into the valley and curves through the valley bottom, where the village lies, before rising steeply.

Boundaries of the conservation area²

The conservation area covers almost 57 hectares, much of it open land, making it the largest conservation area in the Borough of Swindon. Conservation area designation recognises the importance, quality and interest of three distinct areas, linked by history and landscape, each of which contribute to the area's overall special interest.

The conservation area boundary has therefore been drawn to fully include the following areas:

- the settlement of Sevenhampton village including its parish church;
- the grounds of Warneford Place, including the historic buildings of Warneford Place and Hill Farm;
- important medieval settlement remains that occupy open land between the village and Warneford Place.

Sevenhampton is a historic rural village with medieval and earlier origins. The boundary encloses the village and pasture land to the rear of properties which is important to the rural landscape setting of the village. To the west the boundary

²On 11 December 2000 the south eastern boundary was amended to exclude a small part of Dog Kennel Copse that had been included in the original conservation area but was later found to be outside the Borough of Swindon.

encloses an area of woodland known as 'The Rookery' and Bellingham Lane, part of the old settlement pattern of the village, now a short tarmac lane at the end of which stands a pair of stone cottages.

*Warneford Place*³ was formerly the home of the Warneford family who, until the start of the 20th century, were the leading local family of the district. The conservation area boundary encompasses part of the grounds of Warneford Place including the remnants of the 18th century mansion (incorporated into a modern building), the lake, or 'fish-pond', with copses on either side and an area of open parkland south of the tree-lined drive from Warneford Place to the village. The conservation area boundary follows the line of the drive and includes The Lodge and the prominent group of mature trees that stand beside it. Hill Farm, a grade II listed building, its vernacular outbuildings, and part of Dogkennel Copse are also included.

Archaeological remains of a medieval settlement are located between the village and the grounds of Warneford Place. The archaeological interest of the remains is recognised through their inclusion in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments⁴. The whole of the ancient monument is included within the conservation area.

Present day

Today the village comprises of 38 buildings. The Church is the only public building but is locked when not in use. There is a public telephone box but no shop. There is no public bus service that serves the village, however a community transport service does operate and stops if requested. Farm buildings at Sevenhampton Farm are in agricultural use. The village was relatively free of through traffic prior to 1990 when the atmosphere could have been described as tranquil. Now however, since 1990 as a result of the expansion of:-

- several industrial areas (South Marston and Europa Industrial Estates)

³ See 1910 photograph in History of Highworth Part 2; Highworth Historical Society*

⁴ Compiled and maintained by the Sec.of State under Section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended.

- various shopping centres (Greenbridge and Abbey Meads/Haydon Wick)
- large factories (Honda and Motorola)

The traffic within Sevenhampton has vastly increased as a result. This is partly due to the catchment area for both employees and customers for many of these new developments is within the northern half of the borough and villages in the Oxfordshire region, Faringdon, Shrivenham and Wantage etc.

The main Oxford Road (A420) links Oxford to Swindon. At peak hours it becomes clogged with traffic especially in the area of Shrivenham and South Marston. Although not directly linked to this main arterial road, Sevenhampton has become a short cut to areas north and west Swindon. This has had a marked impact on Sevenhampton and the smaller villages in this area. Despite speed restrictions imposed in the village the tranquil atmosphere of this area has gradually eroded.

Roves Farm Visitor Centre (outside the conservation area) is a working farm and local tourist attraction at the end of Roves Lane. This attraction does occasionally results in increased traffic flow during certain periods of the week, eg weekends.

Summary of general character

The conservation area is made up of three distinct parts; the village, the grounds of Warneford Place and the area of medieval remains. The special interest that justifies designation of Sevenhampton Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors relating to these parts, including:

- the rural setting of the conservation area in open countryside with views to the crest of the downs;
- the architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, ten of which are listed;
- the prevalent use of local building materials, in particular the use of local stone;
- the historic layout of the village and its primarily linear pattern of development;
- the special archaeological interest of medieval settlement remains - designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- the historic interest of the grounds of Warneford Place and the area's links with the Warneford family;
- the area's trees and woodland;
- natural stone walls - particularly in roadside locations.

Sevenhampton village

Highways and streetscape

The village contains a mixture of old and new building located along the nameless main street, Bellingham Lane and Roves Lane

Buildings generally face the highway, set back behind natural stone boundary walls. Natural stone walls are one of the most prevalent characteristics of the village. Throughout the village they stand between buildings and the road, softening the impact of unsuitable development and helping to unify the uneasy mix of old and new.

The road through the village is kerbed on its north side only - from The Old Post Office to Round Robin Cottage. The other side of the road has a narrow grass verge which, together with the absence of street lighting columns and the generally modest vehicular entrances to roadside properties, contributes to the rural village character of the main street. This street form is characteristic of traditional rural, agricultural communities and forms an important contribution to the character of this village.

Bellingham Lane and Roves Lane, which flow naturally into the main street unencumbered by standardised highway junction requirements, further enhance the hamlet's appearance and, despite the unsuitable, scale, design and materials of some of the village's buildings from the 1970s and 1980s, the village retains a predominantly historic ambience.

Fortunately, modern building has kept to a linear infill form of development, avoiding the obtrusive backland cul-de-sac type of development that has occurred in other local villages. Though new, the modern houses have not spoiled the village's old street pattern.

Views into and out of the conservation area

Landscape setting is an important part of the special interest of this conservation area. Views of surrounding land contribute significantly to its character and reinforce the area's distinct identity.

From the main road through the village there are two views which capture the character of this historic rural village. On the western approach the first view of the village is of an old farm building beside a stream in a spacious green open space overlooked by mature trees and a stone-tiled farmhouse, Bellingham Farm; on the approach from the east, descending the hill, there is a picturesque and typically English view of parish church and old cottage before a backdrop of tall trees, a distant view of hills in the background. As the road meanders through the village, there are other views of field, hedge and more distant rolling landscape that assert the hamlet's rural location.

The landscape setting of the area with open views to Liddington Hill and Charlbury Hill give the area its distinctive north Wiltshire identity. A planning inspector has observed, "the boundary [of the conservation area]...encompasses much undeveloped land. The character and appearance of the conservation area is therefore not only derived from the architectural style of the buildings but also from the general landscape setting within which they are located⁵."

Architectural and historic character; prevalent building materials

The settlement is small and contains a mix of old and new building with the older, pre-War building collected at the west end of the settlement. Here, the historic buildings of Bellingham and Sevenhampton Farms, The Old Bakery, Trenchard Cottage (No.36) and The Old Post Office are set in ample space and dispersed in an apparently random relationship to each other and the road. Unfortunately, several large late 20th century dwellings have significantly diluted the village's former historic character but nonetheless the area is still clearly of great architectural and historical importance and sensitive to further change.

A medieval parish church⁶ was replaced in 1864, leaving Sevenhampton House, a 17th century stone cottage beside the church, as the oldest building in the area.

With the exception of the parish church and Warneford Place, the buildings are vernacular - domestic farmhouses, cottages and farm buildings built with local materials (stone, brick, timber) by local craftsmen. Primarily these buildings are

⁵Appeal statement re: Bellingham Farm, June 1992 - Ref: T/APP/X3920/A/92/199190/P4

⁶A watercolour of the old church at Sevenhampton can be found on page 297 of History of Highworth Part 2.

constructed of random coursed local stone with small openings for windows and doors. Several buildings retain a stone tiled roof but thatch is absent. Brick chimneys are typical and timber windows the norm.

In contrast, dwellings built in the 1970s and 1980s are made of artificial stone and tile (whose colour does not harmonise with the local natural stone), standard size uPVC or aluminium windows and mock Cotswold detailing. The Reema Houses are examples of 1950s pre-fabricated system building. Forester's Cottage and Round Robin Cottage, formerly known as Nos. 3 and 4 New Houses are a pair of typical council or forestry semi-detached cottages. (Nos. 1 and 2 New Houses, an identical pair, once stood on the adjacent plot now occupied by two new dwellings.)

Despite this dis-harmony of building style and type, the village is unified by the use of natural stone, especially in boundary walls, and the predominance of historic buildings which dispel the modern tone of the late 20th century houses.

Key buildings of interest

English Heritage advice⁷ 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 area's listed buildings (there are ten within the conservation area), there are a number of other buildings which make a strong contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the area.

Bellingham Farm, The Old Post Office, The Old Bakery and Stable Cottage in the west and Hill View and Church View on the hill to the east are the most notable. These are built with local stone and brick typical of the local vernacular of this corner of Wiltshire. These, and several old cottages and farm buildings scattered along Bellingham Lane and Roves Lane, add considerably to the area's historic character.⁸

⁷ Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, March 1997

⁸ See Swindon Borough Local Plan SPG: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'.

Warneford Place and grounds

The eastern half of the conservation area contains Warneford Place and grounds together with buildings at Hill Farm and part of Dog Kennel Copse. The special interest of this area lies in its historic buildings, its long association with a noted Wiltshire family and the formal landscaped parkland containing avenues of trees, lake and woodland.

The area is private but some of the parkland is visible from the road as it ascends the hill beside the parish church. A public footpath runs eastwards from the road entrance to Sevenhampton House, crosses the site of the medieval village, then follows the course of the drive for a short length before proceeding south east towards Shrivenham. From here one can view the woods which conceal Warneford Place, individual mature trees in the parkland and an avenue of limes leading from the church to the gates north east of Warneford Place.

English Heritage advises that; “The distinctiveness of a place may come from much more than its appearance. It may draw on...local environmental conditions or historical associations, for example those connected with particular crafts or famous people⁹.” The Warneford family were a leading local family and elegant monuments to them are contained in the church at Highworth. When, in 1902, Warneford Place was sold to Lord Banbury, one of Directors of the Great Western Railway, Francis E. Warneford described it as “the end of 530 years of Warneford tenure.”¹⁰

This part of the conservation area contains five listed buildings and several unlisted ancillary buildings constructed in the local vernacular.

Warneford Place was an 18th century mansion on the site of a medieval building. Of the 18th century house only the so-called ‘ballroom’ remains, listed grade II. It was the north wing of a house of nine bays with a pedimented three-bay centre apparently built for Catherine Warneford in the 1770s¹¹. This house was remodelled by Lord Banbury in 1904 and was finally demolished in 1960 after Lord

⁹Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, March 1997

¹⁰The Warneford, Francis E. Warneford (1991)

¹¹The Villages of Highworth, P T Archer (1978)

Banbury sold the estate to Ian Fleming, the creator of James Bond who died in 1965 and is buried in the churchyard¹². A modern house (known for some years as Sevenhampton Place) was built in its place incorporating a doorpiece and portico from the 18th century building - for this reason it is listed grade II.

Impressive gates and stone gate piers (grade II) to the north of Warneford Place lead into the grounds - probably erected by Lord Banbury in 1904. Pevsner¹³ attributes the typically Victorian lodge to a W. Wilkinson (1872).

Just south of Warneford Place lies Hill Farmhouse (grade II) which has an early 19th century front to an earlier building and a timber framed granary on staddle stones, also grade II. There are a number of characterful 19th century vernacular outbuildings in the vicinity.

Medieval settlement remains

Medieval settlement remains at Sevenhampton were designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1997. The remains lie in two areas; in fields on the south-west facing slope surrounding the church and on adjacent level ground between Roves Lane and the stream.

The medieval remains are well preserved and will contain archaeological remains and environmental evidence relating to the monument and the landscape in which it was constructed. Further details of the monument can be found in the formal schedule entry¹⁴. Earthworks north east of Bellingham Farm are also included within the conservation area.

¹² A short article about Ian Fleming at Sevenhampton can be found in Wilts. Life Vol. 3 No. 1 1987

¹³ Buildings of England (Wiltshire): Nicholas Pevsner 1963.

¹⁴ Monument Number: 28967. District: Swindon. Copy available from Swindon Borough Council

General

Local details and features

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.

One of the most distinctive features of the area is the use of local natural stone and the area is notable for its stone boundary walls. In the stone wall outside The Old Post Office is an interesting Edward VII post box and a little further along the road is a red K6 phone box. The stream adds to the rural ambience of the area - it can be seen beside Bellingham Lane and from the public footpath across the fields behind Keepers Cottage.

Trees

Trees add significantly to the interest of the area. Individual trees are given more prominence because of the sparsity of hedgerows in the area. The area contains planted and managed copses such as The Rookery, Crooked Lane Copse, Thorney Copse and Dog Kennel Copse and two avenues of trees in the grounds of Warneford Place; one leading from the church, the other lining the drive. Fine individual specimen trees and small clumps of trees, for instance beside The Lodge, contribute to the area's well tree'd appearance.

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.

All trees within conservation areas are covered by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In most cases, anyone proposing to do work on a tree in a conservation area (which is not already protected by a Tree Preservation Order) must give the Council six weeks notice, unless it can be shown that immediate danger threatens.

Negative factors

Unfortunately, in the twenty years before the 1990 designation of the conservation area, planning permission was granted for several new dwellings. The design, scale and choice of building materials for these dwellings is generally out of character with the prevailing historic appearance of the village and the new houses have eroded some of the hamlet's former charm. Nonetheless, the area as a whole, including archaeological remains, precinct of the parish church and the grounds of Warneford Place, retains a special quality and historic interest which conservation area status will help to preserve.

Increased traffic movement in this village has made a huge impact on this once quiet farming village. A traffic survey carried out in 1998 recorded that.. ' the development at Honda and South Marston has hugely increased traffic passing through Sevenhampton. About 270,000 vehicles a year now pass through the village. The Roves Farm visitor centre had an additional 10,000 visitors in 1997.' To date in 2005 the farm receives approximately 30,000 visitors each year.

Useful publications

The Warnefords: An English family through eight centuries. F.E.Warneford (1991)

Wiltshire Place Names. R.Tomkins (Redbrick Publishing 1983)

Around Highworth in old photos. G.Tanner (1991)

Highworth. G.Tanner (1993)

A history of Highworth; Parts 1,2 and 3. Highworth Historical Society

The villages and Highworth. P.J.Archer (1978)

Highworth and round about.P.J.Archer (1973)

The Buildings of England (Wiltshire).N. Pevsner (Penguin 1975)

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Swindon Borough Local Plan (1999).

Supplementary Planning Guidance: 'Good Design: House Extensions'

(Thamesdown Borough 1990).

Supplementary Planning Guidance: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'. (Swindon Borough 1999).

Conservation Areas (Swindon Borough Council 1997).

Planning Policy Guidance 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment.

Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, June 1997.

Conservation Area Practice, English Heritage, October 1995.

SEVENHAMPTON MANAGEMENT PLAN

MANAGEMENT ISSUES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	ACTIONS REQUIRED
Planning & Design		
Existing Modern Development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Modern development within conservation area. Some dwellings impact on the conservation area in terms of inappropriate materials and design in contrast with the historic character of the village.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure future development proposals are strictly controlled in terms of design and materials 	<p>Consultation with:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & conservation department
Future Development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ad-hoc planning applications, for alterations, conversions and refurbishment of properties.</i> <i>Potential reuse and conversion of underused land and redundant farm buildings.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure future development proposals are strictly controlled in terms of design and materials. Conversion of redundant buildings needs to be carefully considered in the light of the existing conservation area and how new uses may impact on the local environment. 	<p>Consultation with:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & conservation department
Public Realm & Amenity		
Signage & street furniture		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Street signage limited to mandatory speed signs.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all existing signage is maintained in good order. 	<p>Consultation with:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & conservation department Liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways & Utility

MANAGEMENT ISSUES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	ACTIONS REQUIRED
<p>Public Realm & Amenity</p> <p>Shops, Retail & Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>No shops are present within boundary of conservation area – Nearest shops located within Highworth.</i> <p>Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>No immediate concerns with parking</i> <i>Grass verges and gullies/ditches present to either side of lane through village.</i> <i>Pavements not present in village,</i> <p>Traffic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Increased amounts of traffic are travelling through this village.</i> <i>Village is used as a short cut to various large industrial complexes on outskirts of Swindon.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is unlikely that a shop would be viable in this location due to the limited number of properties in this area. Existing parking arrangements appears to work satisfactorily Any proposals for implementing pavements would not be supported in this area. Ensure that current road surfaces are maintained to useable standard. Ensure grass verges are maintained and repaired where necessary. Future monitoring of increased traffic flows to ascertain impact on conservation area. 	<p>companies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways safety. Continued liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways safety.