



WORTON CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

November 2003

Planning Services



Development Control & Conservation

Forward Planning & Transportation

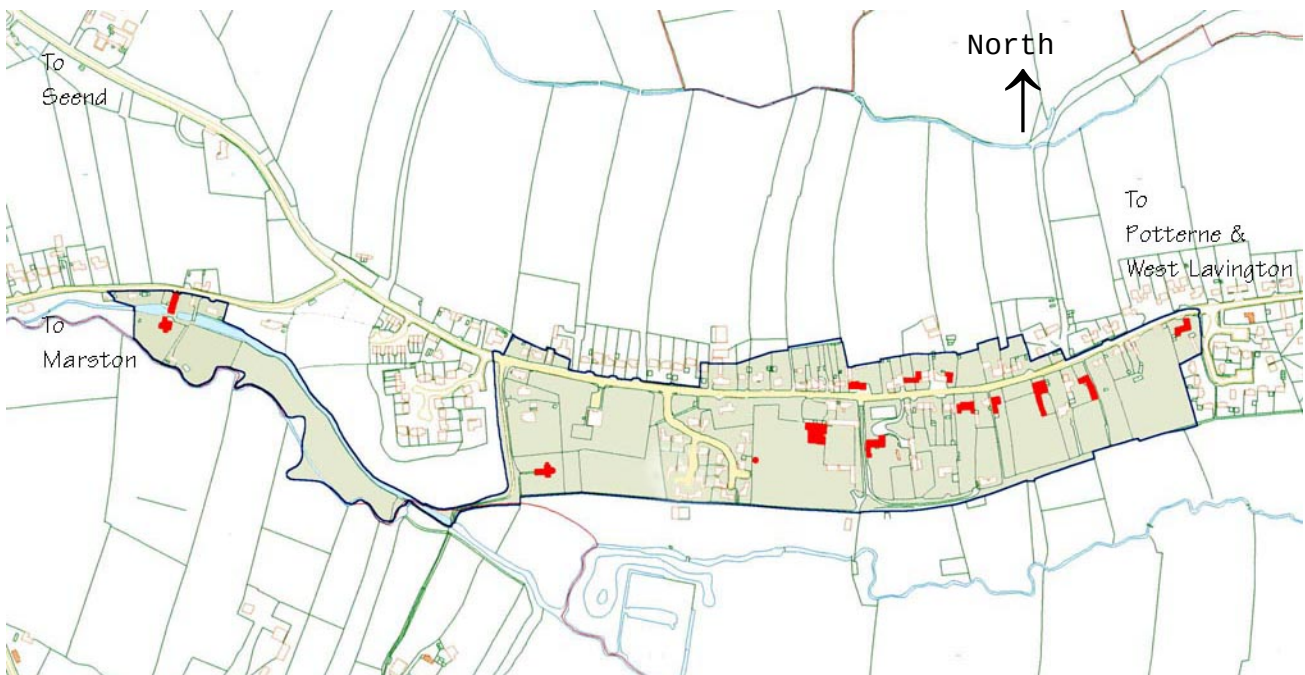
Building Control & Property Management

WORTON CONSERVATION AREA

The purpose of this Statement of the Worton Conservation Area is to identify and record those special qualities of the village that make up its architectural and historic character. This is important for providing a sound basis for local plan policies and development control decisions as well as for the formulation of proposals for the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the area.

The Statement contains an assessment of the Worton Conservation Area and has been prepared for all those with an interest in the village, or undertaking work on its buildings, landscape, streets or public spaces. By drawing attention to the distinctive features of Worton it is intended that its character will be protected and enhanced for the benefit of this and future generations.

The Worton Conservation Area was designated on 9 May 1975. From west to east it includes Worton Mill and its immediate environs and runs as a narrow band along the mill stream to the church. The Conservation Area then widens to include buildings, gardens and open space on the south side of the main road up to and including Park Farm. On the north side only pre-20th century buildings are within the area.



Worton Conservation Area – showing the main road layout and with the listed buildings in red. An enlarged map of the area is on pages 5 and 6. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved Kennet District Council LA078328 2003

Geology and topography

Worton is located approximately 3 miles south-west of Devizes on a secondary road which links Melksham to Salisbury via West Lavington. Marston is approximately half a mile to the south on a minor road that also provides links to Coulston and Erlestoke. Potterne is roughly a mile to the east and Seend 3 miles to the north-west.

Land in the parish of Worton is more or less level at about 60 metres above sea level. South of the village Semington Brook rises in West Lavington and flows north-west through Worton and Marston. To the north is Summerham Brook that flows in the same direction.



The 17th century timber frame and thatched Park Farm marks the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area.

The village is perched on a narrow greensand ridge elevated just above the poorly drained heavy Kimmeridge clay that covers much of the parish. This is most evident on the south side of the village where the land falls away towards the Semington Brook and there are long distance views to open countryside.

Origins and development of the village

In 1173 Worton was part of the Bishop of Salisbury's estate of Potterne but was recorded as a separate settlement with its own administration. At that time Worton and Marston formed the south-western part of the parish of Potterne, but in 1852 Worton and Marston became one parish, later separated into two.

Worton means "farmstead with herb garden or kitchen garden" suggesting that the original settlement could have been a community within the manor of Potterne. A map of 1656 indicates some 40 houses in the village suggesting a population of 150-200. Between 1801 and 1971 the population appears to have been around 300-400 and relatively stable apart from the effects of a plague of 1644. Roads around Worton were only of local significance until 1769 when the route through the village became part of the turnpike between Melksham and Salisbury. Before then the links with surrounding settlements were by means of country lanes such as Joiner's Lane from Worton to Potterne and travelling conditions were hazardous. This and other similar local links are now no more than tracks.



Prince Hill is on the site of what was probably the oldest building in Worton. This was Lytlecote traced back to 1281 - later to become Flower's Farm

Early maps show a building known as Flower's Farm on the site of what now is Prince Hill and this is believed to be the site of one of the oldest buildings in the village. The Assize Rolls of Wiltshire refer to the building as Lytlecote, and this has been traced back to 1281. The name Flower's Farm dates from 1537 and for a time the property was known as Worton Little Court.

Farming the waterlogged land is likely to have presented problems and traces of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation may be seen on either side of the road west of the village. By 1656 this area had been taken out of the open fields and enclosed. Enclosure in Worton was complete by the early 19th century and in 1841 over 85% of the agricultural land was described as meadow.

In many villages the church is amongst the earliest buildings but prior to the middle of the 19th century the residents of Worton had to walk to the parish church at Potterne as it was not until 1843 that a church, Christ Church, was built on the Marston side of the village.

The 18th century external walls of Manor Farmhouse hide a 16th century timber-frame making this one of the oldest buildings in the village and it seems likely that some other early buildings have been lost. Surviving buildings of the 17th century are Park Farmhouse, the early parts of The Grange and Ashton House. The tithe map of 1839 shows Park Farm comprising several separate units, including a Carpenter's Cottage. Some 17th century work also survives at The Rose and Crown although the building was considerably altered in the 20th century.

Early to mid 18th century architecture is found at Cambria House and later 18th century building at Worton House and numbers 96 and 98 High Street.



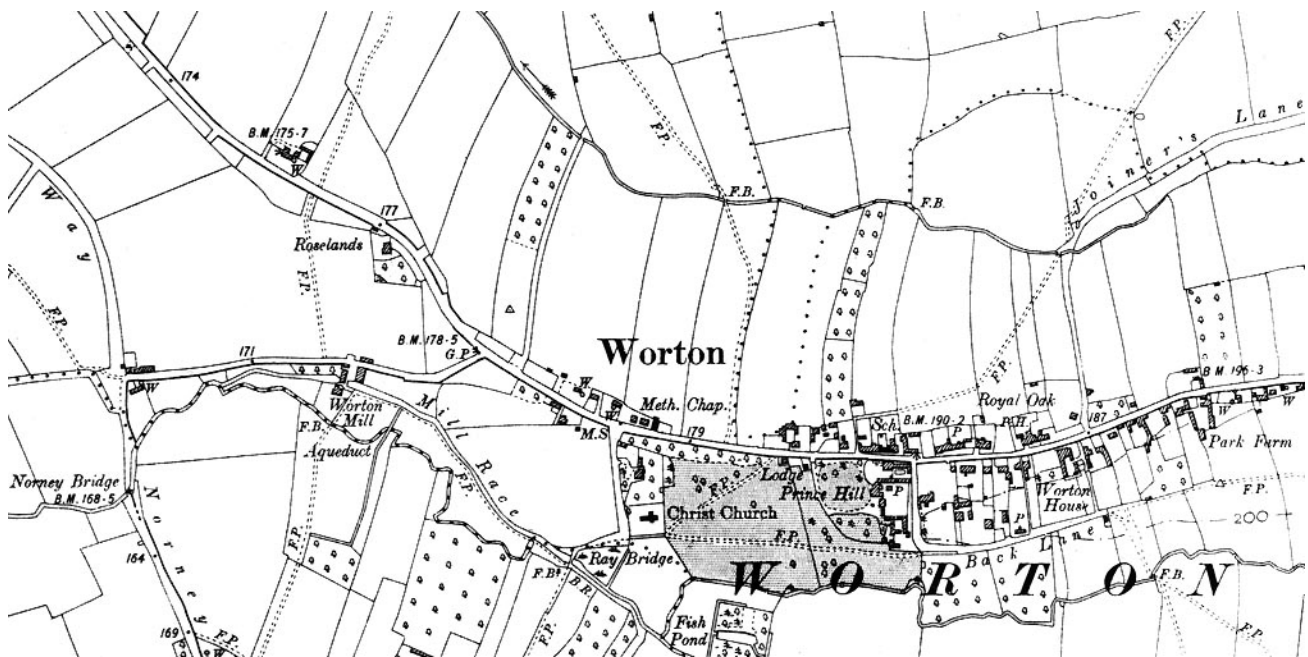
The position and elevation of Worton House in the street scene makes this one of the most prominent buildings in the village. Blind windows as on the east elevation are a familiar device of the 18th century and were intended to enhance the appearance of the building.

The most important 19th century buildings are Christ Church and Worton Mill, both mid 19th century, and Mill House. Many of the other buildings in the Conservation Area are 19th century as can be seen from the Ordnance Survey map of 1900.

In 1819 children from Worton and Marston were being taught at Potterne and in 1844 a Sunday School room was built in the centre of the village. The adjoining headmaster's house was built in 1896. There was a Wesleyan chapel at Worton in 1829 and a new chapel erected in 1848 which still survives although no longer in ecclesiastical use.

The most imposing 20th century building in Worton is Prince Hill listed as "an unusually elaborate early 20th century neo-Georgian house with high quality detailing." This is clearly on the site of Flower's Farm and is said to contain elements of the earlier building. The intention here was obviously to create an impressive country house and this is certainly achieved.

Changes in the Worton in the later part of the 20th century are significant with considerable development including several small residential estates and a number of individual houses. These are located in various parts of the village both within and outside the Conservation Area.



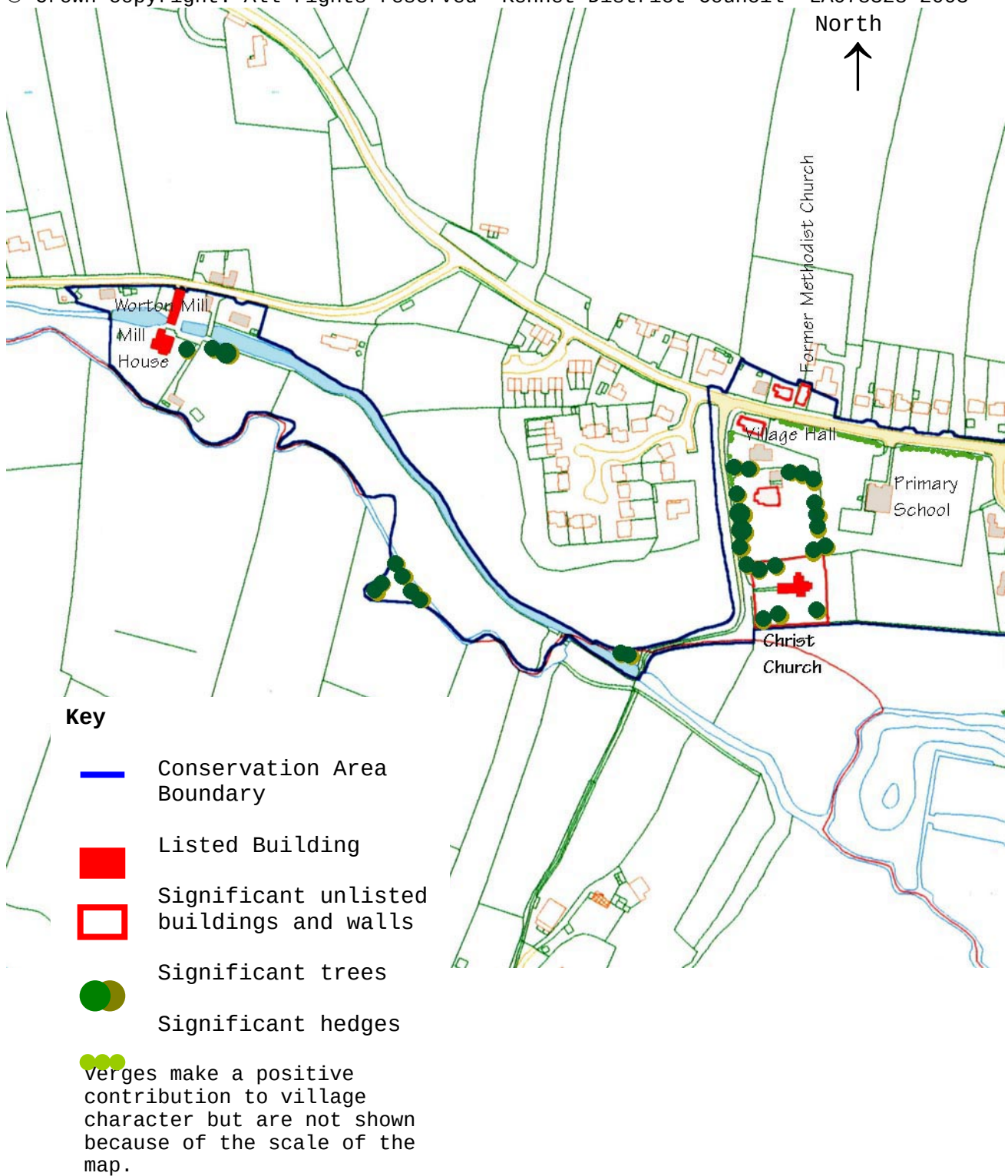
Worton in 1900. This shows how the layout of the village has been influenced by its location on the slight ridge. The basic form of the village has remained more or less intact to the present day and almost all of the built-up area of the village as shown here is within the Conservation Area. The important early link with Potterne was via Joiner's Lane.

Archaeological significance

Worton is first recorded in AD 1173 as 'Wrton' and earthworks relating to settlement shrinkage are still visible adjacent to the church. In addition evidence of medieval ridge and furrow earthworks are visible immediately around the village. Two artefacts have been unearthed in the village, a Romano-British counterfeit coin and a saucer brooch of Saxon date have been discovered.

Worton Conservation Area - west

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Details of listed buildings are correct at the time of publication but can change.

For definitive information it is advisable to check with the District Council

Worton Conservation Area - east



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The base map used in this report is the latest available - recent changes within
the village may not be shown.

Architectural and historic character



Ashton House was altered in the 19th century from two cottages but still retains a traditional long straw thatched roof. Alongside are former agricultural workers cottages probably late 19th century.

To the casual observer Worton is a village made up of one long street. It is indeed a linear village but with a greater depth than first appears. There are a number of interesting historic buildings on either side of the High Street. This is now a busy through road but paths that connect with the parallel green lane to the south have an entirely different quiet character. At the south-western edge of the village can be found the Parish Church and further west along the mill stream Worton Mill with the small group of buildings around it.

All of the higher status buildings of Worton are on the south side of the main road. At the eastern end of the Conservation Area is Park Farm, a 17th century timber framed building with hipped combed wheat reed thatched roof. The building is prominent and marks the entry to the Conservation Area. Immediately alongside and right on the road frontage is Ivy House, a 19th century brick and slate building which, although unlisted, is important to the character of Worton, as are many of the other unlisted buildings along the street.

At a smaller scale and further west is Manor Farmhouse, visually an 18th century brick building but encasing a 16th century timber frame. Further along, Worton House, in red brick with projecting bays either side of the front door, is an 18th century dwelling which makes its presence felt by its position close to and elevated above the main road.

Cambria House is an early to mid 18th century brick house with a Bridgwater tiled roof and chimney stacks at either end. The use of red and blue brick and the detailing of sash windows; front door and canopy are typical of buildings from this date. In contrast, just beyond is Ashton House, basically a 17th century timber framed building, formerly two cottages, but altered in the early 19th century, as can be seen by the use of double-hung small pane sash windows on the first floor and timber casements below. The roof covering is long straw thatch.



The north side of the High Street in what is visually the centre of the village. Oak House in a distinctive 19th century timber frame building in Tudor style and alongside Flower's Cottage and the Old School House are also 19th century.

Prince Hill, set within its imposing courtyard, is listed grade II and described as a house of 1912. Construction is brick with a roughcast finish and painted timber dressings and this, together with the tall roofs and chimneys, creates a distinctive building. Visually there is no external evidence to suggest that it is a much older property redesigned and refronted in the early 20th century. This is the last of the listed buildings on the south side of the High Street.

Listed buildings on the north side of the street are the 17th century Rose and Crown Public House, now presenting a 20th century appearance, together with the late 18th century pair of red brick houses 96 and 98 High Street, and The Old Forge. Buildings on the north side near the Rose and Crown are tightly packed and close to the road giving the clear impression of being the historic centre of the village. There is little space in front of the buildings and they are therefore highly visible.

Heading due south from the Rose and Crown and on the other side of High Street is Back Lane, which gives the best position from which to appreciate the architecture of The Grange. The building is originally 17th century built of timber frame with red brick infill. It was extended in matching style in the early 20th century and has an attractive uniform appearance.



Back Lane looking east with Orchard Cottage just visible. Here the quiet and secluded "green lane" is in marked contrast to the busy parallel main road. This probably best represents a view of Worton from past times.



A series of narrow and enclosed footpaths link High Street with Back Lane and there are also paths and tracks to the north with historic links to nearby settlements.



The timber frame, brick and clay tile construction of The Grange is of particular interest as it covers both the 17th and 19th centuries. The technique of extending a timber frame building in matching style was popular in the Victorian period.

The overall appearance of the High Street is created by the mix of buildings both listed and unlisted and the various walls, hedges and trees that delineate the line of the road. Also clearly evident is a substantial amount of 20th century infilling either in the form of single dwellings or small estates such as Cedar Close.

Linking Back Lane with the High Street are a number of narrow and contained pathways that have an intimate and enclosed feel in contrast to the wider and more open lane to the south with its extensive views across the plain.

Spaces between buildings are an integral part of village character especially where there are long distance views to the surrounding countryside. The character of an area is also influenced by the activity that it contains but in Worton this is now much reduced with only the School, the Village Hall, the Rose and Crown and the garage remaining.

Access to Christ Church is from a lane off the High Street thus the church and churchyard are hidden away and make no visual impact on the main street scene. The well-known architect T H Wyatt and his partner David Brandon designed the church in 1843. It is a small ashlar building with low pitch slate roofs and the church with its surrounding churchyard, walls and hedges makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.

The attractive way to approach Worton Mill is from the footpath on the south side of the mill-race where it extends from Back Lane. Here the Mill appears at the end of the view. The Mill together with the Mill House are 19th century listed buildings, both in red brick with hipped slate roofs. The surviving mill features, including sluice gates, identify this area as once a working area.

Worton Mill is now in residential use and its character much altered from working times. The character of the Mill and its immediate surroundings is also distinct from that of the main part of the village.

One of the disappointing aspects of Worton is the lack of attention given to local distinctiveness in the design of new housing. Much of the new development both within and outside the Conservation Area is of a style and form that can be seen across the country and the opportunity to enhance the village with interesting new designs to complement the historic buildings and form of the settlement has been lost.

Building materials and details

Brick is the most common building material in Worton and in early days was probably obtained from local sources, although the Kimmeridge clay is the least favoured for brick making. Gault clay provides the best quality brick but the Devizes Brick and Tile Works at Caen Hill was not opened until after 1810 when Gault clay was found there during the construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal. Some of the later buildings are constructed of Devizes brick. The quality of historic brickwork in Worton is often good as can be seen in the detailing of the buildings.

There are few examples of 16th and 17th timber frame in Worton and, apart from the church not much stone. Park Farm, combed wheat reed, and Ashton House, long straw, are the only thatched buildings in the Conservation Area.

Clay tile roof coverings, both plain and patterned are found on both 18th and 19th century buildings and Welsh slate in the later 19th century as construction of the canal had made transportation easier. Chimney stacks provide visual interest.

Windows and doors are very important in defining the character of historic buildings. Early buildings have simple timber casement windows although sometimes these are 19th century replacements. Door details are also simple, often boarded or planked. Sash windows are distinctive features of 18th and 19th century buildings and can be dated by the thickness of glazing bars and size of frames. Doors are usually six or four panelled and may have decorative doorcases.



18th century buildings such as Cambria House are notable for the use of high quality brickwork. Here construction is in Flemish bond and together with double hung small pane sash windows and panelled front door provides a good example of the period.

Gates, gatepiers and walls along the High Street are part of the character of the road and provide local identity. This is especially evident where there are no footways and where the road edge is emphasised by hedges and trees above the walls.

There is little in the way of traditional paving in Worton which makes the path to the church particularly important. Here the stone path and avenue of trees provide an attractive approach. Also important to the rural character of the village is the unmaded surface of Back Lane in contrast to the tarmac surface of the lane to the church.

Landscape setting and the contribution made by green spaces and trees

Oak, lime, beech, cedar and Scots pine and other species are found on the drier ground in the Conservation Area in contrast to the willow and alder trees found on the damp areas outside and close to Semington Brook. Many of the important trees in the Conservation Area are within private gardens including those around the churchyard and surrounding properties. Trees in the churchyard are mature and some have recently been lost.



Before the trees are fully in leaf it is possible to see the church from the Mill Stream. This view also shows the importance of trees in the Conservation Area and the contribution made by open spaces to the setting.

In the modern estate of Cedar Close is a very large mature cedar tree, covered by a Tree Preservation Order. Further along at Prince Hill and Prince Hill Lodge the yews and pines are important features.

A number of the properties on the southern side of the High Street have large gardens that stretch to the top of the greensand ridge which forms the Conservation Area boundary. These are generally mature gardens with many large specimen trees, all of which are important in defining the character of this part of the Conservation Area. The paddock on the north side of the High Street between The Old Forge and Oakley House provides an important long distance view to open countryside.

The landscape surrounding Worton is important to the setting of the village. Within the Conservation Area the school grounds are a significant open feature and, in contrast the churchyard a small enclosed enclave. On the southern side of the village the open fields east of the church together with the grounds of Prince Hill and The Grange are key landscape areas.

Problems and eyesores



Functional but unattractive. The buildings of the former Old Forge Garage have seen better days and their prominent position in the High Street makes this visually one of the least attractive parts of the village.

A number of the historic buildings in Worton are unlisted and are therefore vulnerable to change. Replacement doors and windows, especially where not selected to match the originals do have an adverse effect on the character of buildings and such alterations are beginning to appear in the Conservation Area. The treatment of boundaries is also important and the removal of hedges or the replacement of hedges with timber fencing can disrupt the scene.

Historic areas and the volume and speed of present day traffic sit uncomfortably together as is evident on the main road through Worton. Many of the properties in the Conservation Area have provision for off-street parking, although where prominent this can affect their setting.

Diversity of uses is an important component of village character and is particularly vulnerable to changing economic and social circumstances. The surviving buildings of Old Forge Garage (Bodmans Coaches) have a utilitarian appearance and have seen better days. The street frontage buildings do not make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and there is scope for improvement.

Damage and decay to some of the brick walls along the High Street is apparent and will soon need attention. The problem of erosion has been exacerbated by the use of incorrect mortar for repair. Lime mortar should always be used on historic brickwork for practical and aesthetic reasons.

Non-indigenous planting is usually unattractive in historic areas and the evergreen hedging that provides the boundary to the turning / parking area at the rear of Prince Hill sits uncomfortably with other planting in the locality. Overhead supply cables and their supporting poles can be obtrusive, particularly in the winter months as can be seen in various locations along the High Street.

Preservation and enhancement

Preservation and enhancement of the character of the Conservation Area depends on the actions of all those who have an interest in the village either as owners, occupiers, the District and Parish Councils and other service providers. Owners and occupiers of land and buildings have the ability to enhance the area through their direct activities, some of which may require planning permission or listed building or conservation area consent.

The District Council is responsible for planning control, and preservation of the character of the Conservation Area is a statutory duty. Work undertaken by those providing electricity and telephone supplies can affect the quality of the environment, as can works carried out within the highway.

Preservation of existing character

It is the aim of the District Council that the character and appearance of the Worton Conservation Area should be preserved and there are various ways in which this can be achieved. The following list is not exhaustive but is intended as a guide to the type of work that would contribute to maintaining the quality of the village.



Yew Tree House is a particularly good and unspoilt example of Edwardian architecture. There are a number of unlisted historic buildings in Worton and these make up a significant part of the Conservation Area



This view of the Village Hall at the western end of the Conservation Area shows the importance of trees and open spaces.

Action by the District Council:

- Applications for planning permission and conservation area consent to be assessed with reference to this character appraisal.
- Advice to be made available to owners of historic buildings, listed and unlisted, to encourage good standards of maintenance and repair and the retention of original materials and details.
- Contact to be maintained with the County Council as Highway Authority concerning works within the Conservation Area and in particular the protection of roadside walls.
- Proposals for indigenous tree and hedge planting to be encouraged, especially replanting within the churchyard and the open areas to the south.

Action by owners:

- Look carefully at desired changes to buildings and surroundings and view the proposal in context. Where construction work is involved take particular care in the choice of materials.
- Retain where possible original features but if undertaking alterations to doors and windows on traditional buildings copy original styles and details.
- Consider any extensions as complementary to the existing building and design in keeping.
- Look after trees, shrubs and hedges and, where appropriate, identify sites for replacement tree planting. Do not replace hedges with other forms of enclosure, such as walls or fences, especially on prominent frontages.

Enhancement

Where areas or features in the Worton Conservation Area are out of keeping with the character of the village it will be desirable to seek improvements or undertake replacements.

Any such changes need to be designed to recognise the intrinsic character of Worton using materials and details that fit the rural scene. There are a number of sites where there is potential to enhance the area, in particular the following:

- The street frontage buildings to the Old Forge Garage. Here remedial action to remove redundant features and building maintenance would improve the appearance of the street scene and improve the setting of the adjoining listed buildings
- Careful repair of the damaged brick boundary walls in the High Street – exactly matching the brick and the mortar.
- Replacement of evergreen hedging to the rear access at Prince Hill with more appropriate species.
- Hedge planting to screen timber fencing to the southern boundary of the Conservation Area.

Action should also be taken to provide improved identity to Worton by the provision of appropriate "gateways" at either end of the main road. If properly executed this could contribute to reducing vehicle speeds but needs to be done with care to avoid introducing a standard traffic calming approach with the accompanying signs and clutter.



Christ Church was built at the western end of Worton to make it more accessible to the residents of Marston. The secluded location amongst the trees creates a quiet oasis in contrast to the main road. There are open views to the south down to the brook and beyond.

The planning context



From time to time buildings become redundant and need a new use if they are to survive. Worton Mill, now in residential use and only just visible behind the trees is a case in point. This is a particularly attractive view of the mill and mill stream.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to determine which parts of their area are "Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

The Act, and Government advice given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, Planning and the Historic Environment, states that the local planning authority should formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of all Conservation Areas and this assessment, published as the Worton Conservation Area Statement, is part of the process.

This Conservation Area Statement was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 20 November 2003. SPG provides additional information on the interpretation and implementation of policies and proposals contained in a Local Plan.

Consultation procedures, consistent with the advice contained at paragraph 4.7 of PPG15 – *Planning and the Historic Environment*, have been undertaken during the preparation of this Statement. Paragraph 3.16 of PPG12 – *Development Plans*, also states that adequate consultation is a requirement for adoption of SPG. The Council considers that the consultation undertaken meets the obligations for consultations set out in PPG12.

The Replacement Kennet Local Plan 2001-2011 has been subject to a Public Local Inquiry and the Inspector's report has been received. The Inspector's Recommendations will be published as Proposed Modifications during the winter of 2003 and Adoption is anticipated during the spring-summer of 2004. This Statement will provide detailed background information for the interpretation of policies contained in the Replacement Local Plan, particularly Policies HH5 and HH6.

In addition, the guidance will be relevant to the application of Policies PD1, HC5, HC22, HC32a, ED9, ED11a, ED11b, AT28, HH12 and TR17.

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

The steady reduction in farming employment and the growth of personal transport has altered the character of villages across the county and Worton is no exception. In spite of the loss of the local shop and post office the village is seen as an attractive place to live. The most obvious change in the late 20th century was the introduction of a substantial amount of new residential development that has considerably altered the historic character of the Conservation Area and much of the village beyond.



Features of the High Street are boundary walls, gates and gatepiers, trees and hedges with buildings beyond as shown here at Grange Lodge. It is the combination of these that defines the appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.

Activities such as the school, pub, village hall and church contribute to the special character of Worton and the loss of any of these would adversely affect the village. Special care is needed to protect historic buildings both listed and unlisted and vehicular traffic needs to be contained.

The 'Limits of Development' defined in the Kennet District Local Plan indicate that expansion of the existing built-up area will in future be resisted, which means that there is little scope for further development. A substantial amount of open land within the Conservation Area and south of the High Street is also identified in the District Plan as an Area of Minimum Change. Other smaller open areas and gaps between buildings need to be protected as an integral part of village character.



This study of Worton is intended to highlight the significant features that make up the character of the village but the presentation has to be selective. Omission of any items of interest from the text or from the illustrations should not be regarded as an indication that they are unimportant in conservation or planning terms.

Conclusions

A large amount of development has taken place in Worton in recent years thus the potential for further development or redevelopment in the village is limited. The threat to the character of Worton is from an accumulation of minor changes bringing non-rural and discordant elements into the village, which will diminish its special character. The introduction of paved surfaces and public lighting, including obtrusive security lighting, would fall into this category. The character of the village can be particularly affected by changes to existing buildings especially buildings of historic interest.

Erosion of character occurs through the failure to identify important features and by the use of inappropriate standard building components such as replacement windows and doors. Similarly large rooflights in prominent locations would be inappropriate, especially on historic buildings.

In Conservation Areas it is important to recognise, and work with, the form and grain of the village taking into account historic boundaries, building forms, and overall density.

The various elements that make up the special character of the village can be safeguarded if identified and appreciated. The purpose of Conservation Area designation is to ensure the character of Worton is preserved and enhanced for the benefit of existing and future residents, businesses and visitors. The information in this character assessment is intended to assist this process and provide guidance for the future.

Bibliography:

The Victoria County History
R S Barron – The Geology of Wiltshire 1976
Kennet District Council – Landscape Assessment and
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The assistance of the Archaeology Section Wiltshire County
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This leaflet is one in a series of Conservation Area Statements and Guidance Notes produced by Kennet District Council. For an up to date list, or if you require further information or advice, please contact:

The Conservation Section, Planning Services,
Kennet District Council, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes SN10 2AT
☎ 01380 724911 www.kennet.gov.uk

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