Keevil

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT
**St. Leonard's Church**

Dating from 14th-16th century, it is built of limestone ashlar, with a tower at the western end. The font has a 16th Century bowl mounted on a 14th Century pedestal and there is a number of good 17th and 18th Century memorial tablets. The Norman Sanctus bell is one of the few remaining in Wiltshire and is housed on a square bell turret. The Churchyard has 27 listed tombs.

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**Blagden House**

Is mainly of rendered brick with a stone-tiled roof. Originally a much larger house, a substantial part of it was demolished and the frontage we see today was erected in 1710. The back of the house is Elizabethan and timber framed although this has now been rendered over and is not obvious.

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**Talboys**

Is an early 15th century timber-framed hall-house with wattle-and-daub panels on a dressed limestone plinth and a jetted first floor. The massive entrance door leads via a passage to a two bay hall, with original gallery. The east wing was added in the 19th century to mirror the original west wing.

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**Front Cover**

**Keevil Manor** is a good example of a Wiltshire manor house with exceptionally rich fittings. It was built in 1585. The front is of limestone ashlar; the roof is stone-tiled and gabled. The central porch, added in 1611, shelters a Tudor arched doorway and shell-headed niches.
KEEVL

Village Design Statement

Introduction

The residents of Keevil have produced this Village Design Statement (VDS).

The document describes the character of the village’s buildings, street pattern, trees and open spaces and recommends design guidelines for the future, which will influence the design and character of future development within the village.

This VDS is the result of widespread village participation and consultation, and a special committee co-ordinated the document’s production with the assistance of West Wiltshire District Council.

The District Council adopted the VDS as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 12th March 2003. This VDS supplements the following policies contained within the adopted West Wiltshire District Plan:
C12-C17 Conservation Areas; C18-C21 Listed Buildings; C29 Trees and Tree Planting; R2 Protection of Recreation Areas; H4 Flat Conversions; H5 Village Policy Limits; H6 Areas of Minimum Change; H9 Residential Conversions in the Countryside; E5 Rural Employment; E6 Farm Diversification; E8 Horse Related Development; CF3 Rural and Village Facilities.

The guidance also supplements the following draft policies contained within the emerging West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration:
C17-C25 Conservation Areas; C26-C29 Listed Buildings; C31a Design; C40 Trees and Tree Planting; R2 Protection of Recreation Areas; H16 Flat Conversions; H17 Village Policy Limits; H18 Areas of Minimum Change; H21 Residential Conversions in the Countryside; H24 New Housing Design; E6 Rural Employment; E7 Farm Diversification; E8 Employment Conversions in the Countryside; E10 Horse Related Development; TO3 Hotels, Guest Houses and Self Catering Accommodation; TO4 Camping, Caravans, Holiday Homes; CF3 Rural and Village Facilities.

Copies of the West Wiltshire District Plan and the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration are available at the District Council offices, the five town libraries and on the District Council’s website www.westwiltshire.gov.uk within the District Plan pages.

The District Council will refer to the Village Design Statement when it considers planning applications for new development within the village.

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1
Planning Context

Development in West Wiltshire is planned at two levels, through the preparation of the Wiltshire Structure Plan and the West Wiltshire District Plan. These are prepared in accordance with national and regional planning guidance.

Wiltshire Structure Plan

The Structure Plan developed by Wiltshire County Council sets out the broad strategic planning policy for the whole county. The current Wiltshire Structure Plan covers the period to 2011 and was approved in January 2001.

West Wiltshire District Plan

The District Plan, prepared by West Wiltshire District Council, elaborates on the Structure Plan policy framework by providing detailed development policies and proposals for the towns, villages and rural areas. The current Plan is being reviewed to cover the period to 2011.

Keevil Village Policy Limits

The District Plan identifies Village Policy Limits for over 30 villages in West Wiltshire, including Keevil. Within these policy limits, a certain amount of in-fill housing development to support local services will be permitted, provided that a number of detailed criteria are met.

Area of Minimum Change

The District Plan also identifies Areas of Minimum Change within some villages, including Keevil. These are important open spaces, often related to historical development patterns, that need to be kept as unchanged as possible, to maintain and enhance the character and essential form of a village as a composition of buildings and spaces. Proposals for new housing development will not be granted within these areas.

Keevil Conservation Area

The Keevil Conservation Area was designated in 1973 to preserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest in this part of the village. Preserving the special character or appearance within or adjacent to this area, is the primary consideration when assessing proposals for development. Stricter planning controls exist in conservation areas over minor alterations to land uses and buildings, and over proposals for demolitions or tree work.

The Parish Council

The village has an active and dedicated Parish Council, which makes observations and recommendations on planning matters to West Wiltshire District Council. With Wiltshire County Council and West Wiltshire District Council, the Parish Council is concerned with the provision and upkeep of village community facilities.
Keevil is a small, elongate village in West Wiltshire, five miles east of Trowbridge and to the south of the main A361 Trowbridge to Devizes road. It is well separated from adjacent villages by farmland. Throughout the village, large gardens provide an open, spacious aspect and the surrounding fields afford wide vistas. The narrow, winding Main Street which runs approximately east-west has diverse but coherent 15th-19th century houses and forms the backbone of the village, providing the only link by vehicle to the outside world. Outside the village, but within the Parish, lie Keevil Wick to the east and The Strand to the north.

The following maps show that the structure of the village has remained unchanged for at least the past 100 years. Although the population has remained stable, there has been a marked increase in the number of individual dwellings.

Keevil in 1889 (91 households, population 384 in 1891 census)
Houses ranging from 15th to 19th Century in origin, are restricted to the centre of the village and along Main Street to the east and west.
Keevil in 2003 (171 households, population 404 in 1991 census)
Post-war development is largely restricted to ribbon development of bungalows, houses and infill along spur lanes to the south of Main Street.

Village Context

History
Keevil has always been a settlement based upon agriculture and, until after the Second World War, the community was largely self-sufficient.
Keevil Manor estate can be traced back to before the Norman Conquest, although the Manor house itself dates from c. 1585. From 1681 the estate, comprising the Manor house and three individual farms (Westwood, Longleaze and Manor farms), was owned by the Beach family, together with a large proportion of houses in the village. Much of the estate with the farms was sold off in 1911. The smaller Blagden estate, comprising Blagden House, Wick Leaze, Pinkney and Church Farms, was also broken up in the 20th century.
The larger, old houses in the village originated either as farm houses or as the residences of clothiers, while the smaller houses and cottages were built for farm-workers and small-holders, or were formerly homes eventually converted into local businesses (shops, pubs, bakery), now reinstated as family dwellings.
Still in use today, the airfield covers much farmland requisitioned in 1941, when several farms disappeared completely. Until around 1960, most of the villagers worked on the land or provided services to the farms and farm-workers. During the past forty years, increased car ownership has resulted in commuting to work in surrounding towns becoming commonplace. Keevil has become a popular residential village for working and retired families, attracted by its character and sense of community.
Present and Future

Agriculture
Keevil has traditionally been an area of family-run livestock farms, with the farmers and employees living locally as a matter of necessity. In recent years, higher costs and lower incomes have tested the viability of traditional farming, so farmers have had to reorganise their businesses, specialising and diversifying to survive. Diversification away from traditional farming, an economic necessity, is likely to require changes to the existing farming infrastructure. For example, larger machinery may require new purpose-built buildings, and some traditional farm buildings might benefit from conversion to other uses.

Airfield
The airfield, which is owned by the Ministry of Defence, has one remaining 2,000-yard long hard-surfaced runway of the three originally constructed. It has limited impact on village life, mainly because road access is from Steeple Ashton, rather than Keevil. The site is not permanently occupied, but it is important for military training. It is also used for recreations such as gliding and occasionally motor sports. At current levels of use, noise from the airfield is at an acceptable level.

Employment
The majority of active residents commute to surrounding towns to work but a recent informal survey indicated that around 30% of working residents operate from home, some in overseas business. There are no longer any shops in Keevil, and the nearest pub, The Lamb on The Strand, although within the parish, is one mile from the village centre.

Social and Leisure
Keevil has a wide range of social and specialist activity groups. The social life of the village is focussed on three buildings - St.Leonard’s Church, Keevil Primary School and the Village Hall. The Church continues to provide a spiritual refuge for the community, and will endeavour to offer an outgoing pastoral Ministry in the future, as it has for at least the past 800 years. The regular active congregation is few in number, but many more people attend Church at major festivals, marriages, baptisms, funerals and memorial services. When the Church bells ring out, we recognise a true sound of Old England. The venerable and beautiful Church building itself is the most important cultural historic legacy in the village. The Village has a thriving Church of England Aided Primary School, its status having changed on 1st January 2002 from being Voluntary Controlled. The Diocese of Salisbury appoints the Foundation Governors, whose number has to exceed the other appointed members of the governing body.
The Church has therefore a substantial part to play. The school enjoys a high reputation and because of this is very popular, even with families living outside Keevil. The school, with a very supportive Parent Teacher Association, runs a wide range of activities for the children, including essential fund raising events. A Mother and Toddler Group also uses the school’s facilities. The playing field is used for junior football, while cricket at junior and senior level has been played in the grounds of Keevil Manor for many years. Several village institutions have their origins in the 19th century, but the Keevil Society, whose purpose is to preserve the character and environment of the village, was started relatively recently in 1987. The Village Hall is much used by many organisations including the Parish Council, Parochial Church Council, Keevil Society, Drama Group, Scottish Country Dancing, two Yoga groups, the Embroidery Group, Flower Show, Women’s Institute, Mother’s Union and Silver Threads. For historical reasons, the last three also include a number of Bulkington members. The hall is available for private hire to villagers.

Village Context Guidelines

- Diversification of agriculture away from traditional livestock farming is likely to require changes to the existing farming infrastructure, which will need the understanding and support of the community.

- It is essential that sufficient funding is available to keep the Church open and maintained and it needs support from all members of the community. A shortage of ordained clergy may bring about a greater need for members of the Church to be involved in running it.

- Any increase in use of the airfield beyond current levels could result in an increase in levels of noise, which may become an issue.
Wildlife

Wildlife does not just include song thrushes and foxes, badgers and butterflies. It is also about worms, spiders, beetles and ants: and every inch of macadam and concrete takes away yet more of their living spaces.

The village wildlife today is not as varied as 40 years ago; several species of birds have greatly declined in numbers or are entirely absent: Skylarks and lapwings have become very scarce, few warblers breed, and the nuthatch and turtle-dove, once reasonably common, have not been seen in the village for many years.

Curlew, once an early summer visitor that almost certainly bred within the parish, no longer grace May dusk and dawns with their haunting wild cries. A more positive development is the increase in buzzard and sparrow hawk numbers and the return of the barn owl as a breeding species.

The airfield is a boon as it is the only large area of relatively undisturbed land in the village.

It provides a home for hares, and a resting place for migratory birds in spring and autumn, whilst in winter golden plover and lapwings flock there.

The farmland surrounding the village is not a particularly wildlife rich environment.

The fields are heavily grazed and silage is cut in early summer. Hedgerows provide the most viable habitat, giving shelter not only to birds and mammals, providing them with secure 'roadways', but also to wild flowers, especially the wild violet.

Gardens, especially those with a fair proportion of unkempt areas, such as nettles, support much of the village wildlife, from birds to butterflies.

The village stream is home to the grey wagtail, and the occasional water shrew. The many garden ponds provide havens for frogs, newts, dragonflies and aquatic insects.

Wildlife in Keevil, though diminished, is still fascinating. Respect, understanding and common sense will be needed in the future to keep it so.
Village Setting

Landscape Character of the Area

Keevil is set amid undulating farmland on the southeast side of the Bristol Avon valley. It lies on a shelf of Jurassic age rocks known as the Corallian Beds, a sequence of alternating limestones, sands and clays which overlie the Oxford Clay of the (Bristol) Avon valley. These rocks dip gently beneath the chalk escarpment of Salisbury Plain, some three miles to the south of Keevil.

The village lies mainly on the coral rag member of the Corallian Beds, with the overlying upper calcareous grit appearing near the Church. These rocks give rise to a variety of soils, some stony and well drained, others heavy and clayey.

Keevil is situated at the end of a shallow valley that slopes gently eastwards, from an elevation of 65 metres above sea level down to 50 metres at the centre of the village. A small stream, liable to flooding at times, runs through the village, parallel to Butts Lane and Main Street. From this point the valley opens out and, about one mile to the northeast, the stream drains into Semington Brook, a tributary of the River Avon.

The Countryside

The Parish is set amongst relatively small fields given over either to arable crops or pasture. As a result of centuries of farming, there are no nearby remnants of ancient forest. A network of byways (1.5 miles) and footpaths (8.5 miles) extends across farmland to surrounding villages. Entering the village from the east, the visitor is treated to a panorama on one side dominated by thatched cottages set against a background of mature trees, while to the south is an expanse of green fields, hedges and trees with the backdrop of the hills of Salisbury Plain.

To the west of the village, the road rises gently through farm-land. Traditional hedgerows obscure the view of the open fields. Wide ancient hedges of hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and elm form the field boundaries, with the occasional 30 ft dead elm standing like a sentinel, a reminder of the work of a hostile invader. Interspersed amongst the hedges are ash, alder and particularly oak. Indeed, isolated ancient oak trees give a park-like aspect to the countryside around Keevil.
**Village Setting Guidelines**

- The landscape setting is important to Keevil's essential character. The open aspect of the surrounding countryside, with its mature trees and hedgerows surrounding the fields should be protected, conserved or enhanced.

- Existing boundary walls and hedges are important features throughout the length of Main Street and should be retained.

- The existing network of footpaths should be retained to enable people to appreciate and enjoy Keevil’s surroundings.

- The airfield provides an important haven for wildlife.

- Wild areas within gardens provide habitats for a diversity of wildlife.

**Settlement**

**Settlement Pattern**

The Parish of Keevil comprises the village of Keevil and the hamlets at Wick and Hurst Farms and The Strand. Keevil's historic core is the varied collection of 15th-19th century houses extending along Main Street and, to the south, along Martins Road and Pyatts Corner. The only modern extensions are south of Main Street, specifically the southern end of Martins Road, and along Martins Lane (off Martins Road) and Butts Lane (an extension of Pyatts Corner), which are lined with modern houses and bungalows. Butts Lane merges into the surrounding farmland, but Martins Road ends abruptly with the gates to the airfield.

The outstanding feature of Keevil is that, from nearly everywhere in the village and in almost every direction, the aspect is spacious, a harmonious relationship between individual houses, gardens, trees and fields. The utilitarian agricultural buildings and byres, clustered close to the road, indicate the village entrance from west and east, and demonstrate that farming remains an essential aspect of village life.

St Leonard's Church dates from the 14th century. Curiously, although it can be seen clearly from outside the village, few Keevil houses have a clear view of the church. Listed timber-framed and thatched cottages line Main Street, with names such as 'Old Bakery' and 'Old Cobblers' indicating homes that were once adapted for business use. Main Street has no pavement from Portway to Westwood, and indeed some of the buildings are very close to the road. A pavement runs from 3 Main Street (Westwood Farm) to 75 Main Street (The Old Post Office). Grass verges, walls and hedgerows, in front of small gardens, separate the houses from passing traffic.
Some of the important houses are clustered near the village centre, including Field Head, Blagden House, Stable House and Talboys, a fine clothier's house. Many other important houses, such as the Manor, Lorgleaze House and Little Talboys are located elsewhere within the village.

Four small modern developments of 'executive-style' houses have been sited with some discretion, while infill houses are located along both Main Street and Martins Road.

**Public spaces**

Along the byways, and in the mature grounds and gardens of the Conservation Area, a wide variety of trees is found. Of particular interest are the clipped yews, known as the Twelve Apostles, in the grounds of Keevil Manor and the line of mature Horse chestnuts inside the Manor wall along Main Street. A row of alternating lime and chestnut trees, pollarded in recent times, marks the entrance to St Leonard's Church.

In view of the small size of the village, and the proximity of the countryside, Keevil has little need of large public spaces. In the centre of the village, the modest Stocks Green understates the hidden interest elsewhere. To the west of the centre, Main Street displays its best features with high banks and stone walls protecting the historic buildings behind them. The show of snowdrops is a notable feature of roadside verges in early spring.

The Banfield Recreation Ground, which can be approached by footpaths from both Martins Road and Butts Lane, provides a useful area of open space and affords views of the airfield and Salisbury Plain beyond. The village pond, despite its location towards the end of Martins Road, could become a greater asset with sympathetic landscaping.
Settlement Guidelines

- Development should respect the historic pattern of the village.
- Much of the village is designated as a conservation area. As a result, it is desirable to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- Open spaces or gaps, which make a significant contribution to the character or appearance of the street scene should be protected, particularly where they provide views to the open countryside.
- Trees, which are identified as being important to the village’s character, should be retained. Within the conservation area all forms of tree works must have permission first. New planting should involve the planting of native species wherever appropriate.
- Any future development must take into account the capacity of the existing infrastructure.
- Within the historic core of the village there may be possible archaeological remains from earlier settlement activity. Any proposed development should be checked with the county archaeologist to see whether it may impact such remains and whether any archaeological investigation will be required.

Buildings

Keevil has a wealth of attractive, interesting buildings dating from the 15th century onwards. Forty six of the dwellings are listed, approaching one-half of the pre-20th century buildings in the village. The character and diversity of Keevil’s buildings is a consequence of its position at the boundary between towns and villages to the north-west, where limestone is the main building material, and settlements to the east, where vernacular brick buildings predominate.

Relationships

The view eastwards along Main Street from the Martins Road corner is dominated by a harmonious sweep of distinctive, detached houses on the north and, to the south, open fields stretching unbroken towards the escarpment of Salisbury Plain. The timber-framed houses, with their thatched roofs, are particularly striking. To the west of Pyatts Corner, the stretch of Main Street with a high pavement and grassy bank on its north side is dominated by the high boundary walls of Blagden House and those listed Grade 1 of the Manor. This area features three sets of fine gate piers surmounted by carved ornaments.
As the road rises to the west, another diverse suite of individual houses, one cruck-framed, comes into view. The Church of St Leonard’s, with its 14th century origins, is on higher ground at the end of a short lane adjacent to the village school which was built in 1869.

Most of the bungalows and houses along Martins Road, Martins Lane and Pyatts Corner/Butts Lane were built in the period 1950-60. Three small cul-de-sac developments (4-6 houses each) of larger homogeneous, executive-style, detached houses (at Hobbs Hill, Strong Close and School Close) have taken place since 1970.

**Central area**

(Comprising Main Street, to the east and west of Keevil Manor and Blagden House, and adjacent parts of Martins Road and Pyatts Corner)

The historic houses show notable consistency of general character, but diversity of detail. There is consistency in terms of:
- **period**: predominantly 17th and 18th century, though notable earlier and later houses;
- **quality**: the majority are listed grade II, with two (Keevil Manor and Talboys) listed Grade I;
- **setting**: houses typically standing apart in their own space, many close to the narrow street;
- **height**: two stories; only two larger houses (Keevil Manor and Blagden), both well back from the road, rising to three storeys.
- **roof-line**: steep-pitched roofs and a straight eaves line at the front (a minority with gables or dormer windows in the eaves line);
- **chimneys**: are typically square, not extending high above the roof-line;
- **windows**: predominantly wood-framed and casement; thatched (or once thatched) houses may have drip-flashings above the upper windows.

Within this general pattern, there is an interesting diversity of:
- **house walls**: about one-third of the houses appear to be timber-framed, some cruckframed either with original wattle-and-daub filling, or with later brick, mostly painted white; one-third are a mellow red-brick, commonly Flemish bond, some with dressed stone quoins and mullions; the remainder are built of rubble-stone or mixed materials; only the largest houses are of dressed Bath stone;
- **roofs**: about one-third of the roofs are thatched, others mainly clay-tiled; several of the larger houses have stone, but slate is rarely used.
Modern Developments

Post-war developments along Martins Road and Martins Lane, Butts Lane, Ho'obs Hill and Pyatts Corner range from modest bungalows and small houses to substantial 'executive-style' houses. Architecture is broadly typical of the period.

A recent development, at the eastern end of Main Street, comprises of two substantial houses of mottled brick.

The more modern residences have two-car garages incorporated into their designs. The majority of older properties have either garages and/or off street parking. At Pyatts Corner particularly, a shortage of garages or parking spaces results in a high proportion of cars parked on the road.

New Building Guidelines

- Any future development in the village, including extensions to existing buildings, should respect the building types and details of the central area around Main Street and its immediate environs.
- Any new building should incorporate materials and designs in harmony with the built environment.
- Within the Conservation area, or where new development may affect the settings of listed buildings, the preservation of their special character will be the primary consideration.

Transport

Keevil is linked to surrounding villages and towns by narrow, twisting roads. The village is largely free from noise disturbance from traffic on adjacent main roads. Speed restriction signs sometimes fail to prevent traffic speeding through the village. Because Keevil is compact, many people walk rather than drive within the village. Pavements are mainly tarmac with natural stone edges. There are grass verges adjacent to the road. Because most villagers have access to a car, the bus service to both Trowbridge and Devizes is probably adequate in frequency, but it might be more used if it served the supermarkets in both towns. Keevil has a good bus service to schools in Trowbridge, but travelling to other schools in Market Lavington can be difficult. Currently, 'Link', a voluntary good neighbour service across Wiltshire, helps fill the gap. It has a local co-ordinator and offers transport assistance, company, support and friendship to people of all ages. Much of the work is transport-based, taking people for
medical appointments and to hospitals, for example. The Hopper bus provides a useful service in transporting patients to the Royal United Hospital in Bath.

**Transport Guidelines**

- The Parish Council and the Keevil Society should press the appropriate authorities for an extension to the length of the speed restriction through the village.

**Street Furniture**

The electricity and telecommunications distribution systems are based upon conspicuous overhead cabling, which forms one of the most ugly installations in the village. The modern-style public telephone box installed on Main Street is also an intrusive feature.

Villagers have taken the initiative to replace black plastic footpath signs with more visually attractive wooden signs. Wooden seats are strategically located within the village, including a new one in the Churchyard to celebrate the 2002 Jubilee.

The provision of street lighting has been controversial. After extensive debate in 1992, five street lights, of a traditional style with clear white lamps, were installed at key locations in the village (at Pyatts Corner, Stocks Green, the lower end of Martins Road, opposite the village hall and at the entrance to Keevil School). Many years earlier the residents of Martirs Lane installed amber lights.

A number of signs installed on the initiative of villagers add to the character of the village, for example, the ‘Keevil’ signs at the entrances to the village, the handsome gold lettering on the slate memorial at Stocks Green, and the discreet tablet at the playing field.
Street Furniture Guidelines

- Any future proposals for street lighting should be of traditional design and subject to extensive consultation.
- Any additional cabling for power and telecommunications should be carefully designed to minimise visual intrusion, especially in the central area, near Stocks Green.
- Traditional sign posts and signs should be retained and any new ones should be traditional in character.

Produced by the Keevil Village Design Group and Villagers of Keevil with the support and assistance of West Wiltshire District Council.

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Map overleaf showing Conservation Area, Area of Minimum Change and Revised Village policy Limits 2003.