WILTON
CONSERVATION AREA
STATEMENT

March 2005

Planning Services

Development Control & Conservation

Forestry Planning & Transportation

Building Control & Property Management
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Statement is to identify and record those special qualities of Wilton that make up its architectural and historic character. This is important in providing a sound basis for the Local Plan policies and development decisions, as well as for the formulation of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of the area. The Conservation Area was designated in 1985. This Statement includes a review of the Wilton Conservation Area and is intended for all those with an interest in the village, or undertaking work on the buildings, landscape, roads or public spaces. It is also essential reading for anyone contemplating development within the area. By drawing attention to the distinctive features of Wilton it is intended that its character will be protected and enhanced for the benefit of this and future generations.

LOCATION

Wilton is in the eastern part of the Vale of Pewsey and lies just north of East Grafton off the A 338. It is 2 miles east of Burbage and 7 miles south of Hungerford on the A4.
Wilton is a small village of some 70 households. Its Parish Church is at the nearby East Grafton and its principal historic and traditional buildings are mainly farmhouses, a former inn, some 19th century villas and a non-conformist chapel.

The main street extends along the valley between two brick and stone bridges spanning a stream that widens to a picturesque pond at the western end. Along the narrow winding street are thatched timber framed, red brick and white painted cottages and houses including a former shop.

From the eastern bridge Hollow Lane widens at a bend that branches to private drives to a former small holding and some bungalows. The lane continues east between thatched cottages and 20th century modern tiled houses to leave the village by Bank Farm. North east out of the village a lane passes the remaining active farm of Manor Farm up towards Wilton Hill Cottages and the windmill.

To the west Chapel Hill climbs south out of the village between a variety of 19th century buildings on one side and renovated and 20th century houses on the other.

The roadsides of the village are particularly well endowed with grass verges, banks and hedges with overhanging trees.
LANDSCAPE SETTING AND GEOLOGY
The village is in a relatively steep sided valley of greensand to the south and Chalk to the north that give rise to natural springs in the pond and feeding a stream that flows through the centre and into Wilton Water to the north west. Most of the older cottages are built on the slope of the valley sides while the more recent buildings are on relatively flat areas of clay beside the stream and the parallel street. Locally there are meadows and pasture on the greensand while on the Chalk there are larger arable fields. Hedgerows and trees strongly define the field boundaries.

ARCHAEOLOGY
In the village Neolithic pottery fragments were found near the Swan Inn and a Bronze Age urn found in a ditch east of Batts Farm that was likely to have been a burial site. There is the course of a Roman Road from Mildenhall near Marlborough to Winchester just north of the village. To its north there is a bowl barrow and to its south Romano–British pottery and tile fragments have been found. An Anglo-Saxon brooch was found in the garden of the Croft.

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT
The land at Wilton was probably granted in about 1130 as part of the King’s estate of Bedwyn. Its land was in three parts; held respectively by the lords of Wexcombe Grafton and Marten manors.

The original village was a small settlement where as many as five ‘roads’ converged upon it at the corners of a central village green, an area of about three acres. In the middle ages the village comprised many small farmsteads set around the green. By 1787 most of the land in and around the village had been acquired for the Savernake estate by the earl of Ailesbury who inclosed and built upon it in 1792.
Manor Farmhouse, the only working farmhouse left in the village. To the right is part of a former outbuilding converted to residential use.

The public house, left, on a flat site that used to be the green and cottages on the valley slope.

The Wesley School of 1843 and Bethel Chapel of 1811 as originally built

Church Cottages by the pond were combined into a former village ‘Poor Law’ house or ‘workhouse’.

More land was acquired during the early 19th century until in 1929 when much of the outlying parts of the estate were sold. By the 18th century there were cottages, farmsteads and an inn standing beside the lane bordering the green. Roads led out to Wexcombe, Bedwyn, Grafton and Crofton. In 1792 a section of road called Moor Lane had been built north west of the village pond to join the Crofton Road with East Grafton. Most traffic from Bedwyn moving south west used this road and the north side of the green. The lanes south and west of the green were gradually abandoned by traffic and became absorbed into adjacent holdings. Evidence of these old lanes still exist at junctions off Hollow Lane and off the main street to the east of the pond.

The steep part of Moor Lane became known as Chapel Hill when the Bethel Chapel was built in 1811. The chapel was used by Methodists, who in 1843, attached to it a Sunday school and meeting room. Between 1858 and about 1885 it was used as a day school attended by about 30 pupils instructed by an untrained teacher. Unusually, there had evidently been a dame school previously on the site as early as 1652. This was originally funded by two spinsters for the instruction farmworkers’ children.

North of the school room a large brick and slate house ‘Victoria House’ was built in the mid 19th century. Also about this time the 17th and 18th century Church Cottages were combined together for use as the former village Poor Law House or ‘workhouse’.

In 1828 there were seven farms in Wilton, the largest of 305 acres the smallest 50 acres all were mixed farms, though mainly arable, and worked from farmsteads within the village. In 1929 the Savernake estate sold many of its farm and cottage property of which three farms were in Wilton: Manor, Bank and Batts Farm. Land at Wilton Bank Farm was combined with Manor Farm in 1962 and more land from Batts Farm added to this in 1993. Manor Farm continues as a farmhouse, farm buildings and is still a working farm in 2004.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC CHARACTER

Manor Farm on the east side of ‘the green’ is now the only working farm in the village. The large farmhouse is of brick with a thatched roof of the 18th century but incorporating a 17th century timber framed cottage. The yard is mainly built up with large span framed and sheeted agricultural buildings but there is preserved a barn of the 17th century. This is of four bays with a thatched roof over timber framed walls.

Also bordering the roadside there is a traditional 19th century brick and tile outbuilding that has been converted with 20th century alterations into two cottages.
On the hill out of the village is Cruses Cottage, formerly a smithy but now a cottage thatched, white painted brick and listed as of 17th or 18th century origin. It is of a 2-bay lobby entry plan originally of timber frame. The adjoining outbuilding is also thatched and clad in traditional weatherboards.

Nearby is Batts Farm formerly a farmyard and house of which only the house survives. Originally of the 17th century it has a timber frame exposed in the east gable. The main façade is entirely of early 19th century brick with four bays of casement windows and a roof of plain tiles. The yard has been redeveloped with four houses in an appropriate layout but with tiled roofs of very steep pitch.

Its neighbour to the west is Old Swan Cottage. It was a former Inn that opened in 1724, but is now a private house. The licence is now held at the mid 20th century Swan Inn opposite. Originally of timber frame it is of a single storey and attic with dormer windows covered by a thatched roof. It was brick by the 19th century and then built-up to a full 2-storeys in the mid 20th century with a slate roof and tall first floor metal casement windows.

Its neighbour to the west is Old Swan Cottage. It was a former Inn that opened in 1724, but is now a private house. The licence is now held at the mid 20th century Swan Inn opposite. Originally of timber frame it is of a single storey and attic with dormer windows covered by a thatched roof. It was brick by the 19th century and then built-up to a full 2-storeys in the mid 20th century with a slate roof and tall first floor metal casement windows.

On the adjoining plot is the Croft another farmhouse on a former small holding. It is closely built up to the narrow roadside on a bend while the barn is elevated above a widening grass verge. The house is an 18th century 2-storey building of wisteria draped brick and thatch with large casement windows and central porch supported by light timber columns. The front garden shrubs and trailing plants soften the already mellow brick wall. Adjacent to the drive entrance and a large lime tree is the 17th century barn of weather board on a timber frame.

The house, barn and intervening trees are particularly significant to the character of the street.
Opposite the Croft is Well Cottage that is one of the earlier buildings erected on the ‘green’ side of the street. It is a 17th century thatched cottage of exposed timber frame with both brick noggin and wattle and daub panels above a plinth wall that is largely of flint. It has small casement windows some 18th century with leaded lights.

The Old Post Office is the most prominent member of a cluster of varied buildings that form the village centre. It is constructed to a relative large scale, the walls are of painted brick with a roof of slate. The front wall has a 2-storey bay with sash windows at first floor above the former shop window of mullioned plate glass flanked by a small sash window and a door. Off the side yard there is a further door and large sash windows. Constructed in 1898 it extends back from the imposing gable wall on the street in reducing scale in a range made up of four dwellings including two flats in the former post office and stores. ‘Middle Cottage’ was the former bakehouse and ‘Hideaway Cottage’ was the bakery stores and stables.

‘Springs’ is a listed thatched cottage dating from the 17th century, originally single storey and probably timber framed it is now of painted brick with a small section of framing and stone exposed adjacent the planked front door. The windows are a combination of pleasant 19th century style casements and there is a ‘Sun’ fire insurance plaque. Of ‘L’ shaped plan it is closely built up to the former shop and significant to the village centre group.

Church Cottages were built as two cottages of single storey and attic in the 17th century also probably of timber frame. The frame walls were replaced in the 18th century with red brick and west of the central door extended into a rear wing. In the early 19th century it became the ‘Poor Law’ House until 1835 when it reverted to ordinary dwellings to be divided into three for farm labourers. Its name derives from its ownership by St Mary’s Church, Great Bedwyn until 1924. Today it is one house and occupies an important position by the village pond.

The pond is a particularly distinctive feature of Wilton and a major part of its special identity. Its proximity to the roadside in a public rather than a farmyard location makes it the concern and responsibility of the wider community. However the neatness of its banks, the condition of the short grass and overhanging trees, the condition of the posts and chains together and the presence of the numbers of duck is a tribute to particular individuals who maintain this asset for the village.

‘Quackers’ overlooking the pond from high up among trees on the valley slope is a recently built red brick and tile house replacing a bungalow of the same name. It is of cottage scale and style and in-keeping with the design of traditional buildings in the village.

In front of ‘Quackers’ the grass verge is probably at its widest in the village which when combined with the area of the pond itself is an open space in very satisfactory contrast to the narrow street outside The Old Post Office.
'Pond Cottage' behind the pond is bounded at the rear by the stream and occupies an island site against the hillside. Like several cottages in the village it is of 17th century origin and was probably originally timber framed. Now of painted brick it retains the small scale and a thatched roof with dormer windows.

The bridge at the foot of Chapel Hill is a location of particular quality as a meeting of the ways and a quiet corner with a seat and shade for a rest. Several footpaths converge there on the village street from Wilton Water and Crofton together with one from Dodsdown and Wilton Brail in the north. The scene includes the mellow stone parapets of the bridge, the wide soft edged grass verge and a rich variety of overhanging trees and enclosing hedges. All combine to make this area one of strong character.

Beside the stream and west towards Wilton Water there are two red brick cottages of similar form. Wilton Cottage is probably of about 1780 with a thatched roof while Brook Cottage, nearer the village, is of about 1860 and roofed in slate. Set down below the chalk hillside in lush gardens levelled to just above the stream both cottages have a secluded character that seems to separate them from the village generally.

On the west side of Chapel Hill at the bottom is ‘Drake House’ built in 1996. Its brick garden boundary wall is now quite significant to the character of the bend in the lane.

Victoria House is a significant unlisted building elevated by its siting some distance up Chapel Hill where, in the view from the street, the chimneys, roof and upper walls appear high over the roofs of cottages near the pond. It was built in 1830 of brick with a low pitched slate roof over an elegant bracketed eaves. In recent years an extension on the south side has been built in matching style and materials that very much enhance the entrance and the house generally. The extent of its hillside grounds are important to the undeveloped character of the area south west of the pond. Historically it has been the home of several notable local tradesmen, the local miller, briefly the village boot maker, the grocer and baker, and the farmer of Bank Farm.
Chapel Hill. The Old School House circa 1811-43

The Old School House is another unlisted significant building of historic interest built in three stages; first the school reputedly in 1652 and then the chapel in 1811 and finally the original school ‘demolished’ and rebuilt in 1843. The chapel referred to originally as the Bethel Chapel was used by the Wesleyans, later to be known as Methodists, as a place of worship until 1994.

The school building has a large stone tablet set into the brick façade inscribed ‘Wesleyan School’. More finely detailed and interesting is the façade of the former chapel. This appears originally to have been built in red/blue chequered brick up to the gauged brick heads of two recesses with stone key blocks. Later, possibly in 1843 at the time of the school rebuilding, the wall was built higher as a gable in plain red bricks to incorporate a single central sash window with Gothic revival glazing bars. The window head in the later brickwork has an elliptical stone head with key and impost blocks. The squat red brick porch echoes this elliptical stone feature over double doors. A recent alteration has formed two ground floor windows in the chequered brickwork on each side of the porch. The rendering on the corners is full height and returns on to the brick side walls. The roofs are of slate with elaborate carved gable barge boards on the chapel. The dark paint however is unfortunate in concealing the smaller perforations.

The roadside railings, walls and gate piers are an interesting asset although the original lamp overthrow has been removed to widened the gateway for vehicles and the pillars rebuilt.

The Georgian House dates from about 1800 and previous owners have included a boot maker whose workshop stood on the site of Fairview to the south. It is built of red/blue chequer bricks with an old clay tile roof. The façade is asymmetrical with ground and first floor sash windows equally spaced on each side of a front door. The loft conversion has sadly altered the original roof line with a flat section and dormer windows that are too large, although these are an improvement on an earlier design. A wide vehicular entrance opens off the lane.

Fairview is typical of the mid Victorian villa built in the 1860s in part of the grounds formerly belonging to the Georgian House. Apparently as a result of a family feud it was deliberately sited to block its southerly view and so named to emphasise the point. It is an early example of cavity wall construction with render on brick covered by a hipped slate roof. The sash windows each have a single glazing bar with the large panes of the period. The central door is covered by a gabled porch in the centre of the symmetrical façade. At the rear there is a 2-storey extension of the late 20th century and a vehicular access drive cut relatively unobtrusively into the site from higher up the hill in the south.

Also of the 1860s Willow Bank was a reconstruction by the same builder close to the roadside on the steep site opposite. Although of 3 storeys it is vernacular in style with a gabled roof and casement windows that up until recently were with leaded lights.

The symmetrical façade is set back behind a single storey outhouse to the southside. The small front yard leads directly on to the lane. A recent extension to the rear faces north over a new garage. The formation of a long and obtrusive drive in from the north has extensively replaced the original rural green banks of the roadside with a gateway and brick retaining walls.
HOLLOW LANE

Hollow Lane leaves the Street at the road junction near the Swan Inn via the east of two brick bridges over the stream between willow trees, soft edged grass verges and thatched cottages.

There are eight or so 20th century houses and bungalows occupying the wide flat clay area adjacent the stream through the village. The first of these ‘the Cygnet’ is concealed by a beech hedge and trees.

Immediately adjacent the bridge and close to the road edge is the Malthouse a small red brick thatched cottage adjacent an unobtrusive parking space. Thought to have been originally an 18th century agricultural outbuilding with a low hipped roof eaves all round it was extended forward in the 19th century in brickwork as a front gable wall with casement windows. Insertion of a first floor structure completed its conversion to residential use. In the 1960s a rear extension was added and a thatched porch fixed over the side door.

Next to it and set back behind a wider verge is a listed building of 17th century origin with the symmetrical facade of a single house with three dormer windows, a central door and chimneys to each end. Contemporary with the façade rebuilding in 18th century brick an extension has been added to the north with a division into two farm labourers cottages. These are No. 208 Poplar Cottage and No.209 ‘Shambatt Cottage’. The brickwork is in a chequered pattern of blue headers. These two cottages and the Malthouse together with the willow tree by the bridge parapet and the simple grass verge are an asset to the area.

Facing the wide bend in the lane ‘Apple Tree Cottage’ is a combination of four 18th century thatched cottages in a long row of six bays and occupies a significant position in the view along most of Hollow Lane. It is of a small scale elevated on a grass bank and approached by a flight of steps from the roadside. Also the sloping ground along its length is reflected in the stepped line of casement windows across the front walls. The walls are of red and blue 18th century brick with some greensand stone built-in under the varied line of attic dormers that include some exposed roof framing. Its scale, mix of vernacular materials and apparent random window pattern are particularly rural in character that should on no account be tidied up or painted to appear more consistent.

Orchard House also stands on a bank above the wide bend in the lane and was the former farmhouse to a small holding. John Wesley is believed to have stood on this bank to preach. The house is of the late 18th century with a cottage of similar date attached to the west gable. It has a substantial 2-storey wing at the east end of the rear. There is also a single storey rear wing to the cottage part that connects to a former dairy. The land to the south includes a productive orchard and kitchen garden.
A tree lined driveway leads off Hollow Lane to another former small farm known as Midden Hollow. The large grounds include a pond and a wide variety of trees. The house was rebuilt by the Ailesbury Estate in 1908 in a group of existing older buildings around a yard but which ceased in agricultural use in 1966. Most of the farm buildings have now gone except for a former milking parlour and a small timber clad granary. Although the buildings are of little architectural interest the grounds and the drive are of high environmental quality.

East of the corner Hollow Lane continues between a listed thatched cottage, The Forge, on the south side bank and a pair of slate roofed cottages no.s 214 and 215 on the first of the relatively flat sites on the north side.

On the south side the character of the lane is particularly rural with soft edged steep grass banks, native hedge and overhanging mature trees.

On the north side young trees and some lengths of native hedge screen the shared drive to several late 20th century houses set back on the site of former orchards behind driveways and lawns. Those with low brick walls and gate piers are the most suburban in character.

The Forge like its neighbour Orchard House is set up on the continuous southside Greensand bank and approached by a steep drive.

The cottage is of 17th century origin of one room and a loft built of chalk and brick then extended by a further single structural bay against the chimney gable. The actual former forge was in an adjacent outbuilding of brick and flint that was rebuilt in 1998 as a residential extension. A lobby connecting it to the cottage was also built. The combined buildings appear to be quite a successful preservation of the original tiny cottage in its 1993 form while providing a justifiable extension of the accommodation into the outbuilding. The connecting lobby also happens to be in an appropriate position for the entrance to the combined building.

The overall white painted wall treatment that shows no distinction between the new and the old is harsh and quite alien to the village. Fairfaced brickwork would have been more appropriate for the new work.

The slate cottages have origins as early as 1804 but have since been built-up to a full 2-storeys, rendered and white painted with 20th century casement windows. No.214 adjoining ‘Shambatt Cottage’ is set back from the lane behind native hedge and lawn.
Hollow Lane Cottage is a listed building dating from 1797 set gable end facing the lane. The roadside bank returns around the front and the door is approached by shallow steps. It is significantly orientated to face south east along the lane and forms one end of a widening that includes the wide verge and lawn in front of Coles Thatch. The cottage was divided into two prior to the estate sale of 1929. It is of 2-storey with an entrance between two central chimneys, thatched over walls of chalk and flint laced with brick. The casement windows are of different patterns and like the walling are of varied periods of both interest and character.

Coles Thatch was fairly recently named after John Coles the thatcher of Woodborough. It was originally three cottages but joined into one in the 1970s. It is reputed to incorporate a 900 year old timber post taken from Marlborough Mill when it was demolished in the 1970s. At the front the central three structural bays are timber framed with brick noggin. Across the rear and in extensions at each end the external walls are entirely of loadbearing brickwork.

Bank Farm house was the farm house to the former Wilton Bank Farm. In 1929 it was sold with Midden Hollow and Cruses Cottage with 267 acres some of it with adjoining land between Hollow Lane and the stream where in the 1960s houses were built after it ceased as a dairy farm. There was a group of farm buildings but most have been demolished including a long barn with a semicircular annex that probably housed a horse gin. The garden wall east of the house juts out into the roadside and is the remains of another building.

The farmhouse is of late 18th century origins built of brick with a thatched roof. The façade has been altered with the addition of early 20th century bay windows and insertion of a window instead of the front door. Since 1900 an extension has also been added to the rear wing with walls of matching brick and a roof of matching thatch.

A late 19th century timber clad barn adjacent to the lane and the south east boundary fence has been recently and fairly sympathetically converted to residential use and is known as ‘Honey Barn’. The dense black finish on both the cladding and the window frames will hopefully mellow with time.

The buildings and grounds of the former farm are now entirely residential, neat, tasteful and generally well presented and maintained but almost devoid of agricultural or rural character. This is sadly the case in many instances around the village where farm houses, labourers’ cottages and former farm yards have been tidied up and cleared of superfluous outbuildings for residential use only.
MATERIALS AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

The traditional buildings of the village are constructed in a limited range of materials and the earlier examples have a consistent shape and form.

The 17th century Well Cottage is one of the older buildings in Wilton and has examples of the materials and most of the vernacular building details common to the several thatched cottages around the village.

The thatched roof is in two original structural bays against the main brick chimney with a third smaller bay at the rear of the chimney. Under the half hipped end an attic window is set immediately above the tie beam and side windows within semi dormers above the timber roof plate on the wall. The thatched covering is of wheat straw in a series of coats laid on the spars of the structure with a generous overhanging eaves all round. The top or weather coat is of combed wheat reed with a ridge simply wrapped over with a simple straight edge on each slope. The whole is covered with a fine mesh of galvanized wire to discourage damage by birds.

The timber framed walls are of oak supported on a plinth under the window sill level. The footings of the plinth would have been excavated only down to a shallow firm base in the sub soil. This plinth was originally of the impervious flints bound together in lime mortar to resist rising damp from the ground. The oak sole plate would also resist damp but be subject to decay. Lengths of the plate were probably renewed during rebuilding of the plinth when the tenoned ends of the posts were accessible. Much of the plinth has been renewed in brick laid in Flemish bond. Unusually high the plinth wall has probably been built up all round at some time to compensate for removal of the decayed lower ends of the posts. The corner posts and braces seem now to be in a very serviceable condition.

Windows The small two light casement fit well into the wall frame but others enlarged to three lights have required removal of timbers to fit. In these instances the window and the brick noggin are called upon to supplement the frame for support which is unsatisfactory. The leaded light lattices in modern wood frames may be examples of casement glazing from the 18th century.

Wall panels high under the eaves are rendered, possibly on the original type of wattle, with lower nogging panels half a brick thick.

Brickwork. Poplar and Shambatt Cottages in Hollow Lane are also reputed to date from the 17th century. They have similar scale, roof pitch angle, thatched covering and dormer windows as Well Cottage but the external walls are of brick from the ground up. The lower courses below the window sills are of a plain red brick but above this level there is a clear chequer of red and blue bricks up to the main eaves level. From there up plain red bricks infill to the sides of the dormer windows. This pattern of construction is evidence that the brickwork was probably built up in at least three stages. First the plinth was renewed in brick. Then in the late 18th century during alterations to change the pattern of windows the chequered work with projecting string courses was built up to replace the timber frame. And finally in the 20th century brick replaced the last of the wattle on each side of the dormer window. The two light casements would fit comfortably under the original arches but enlarged to three lights these have required the removal of loadbearing brickwork to fit. Openings under other chequered brick arches were probably bricked-up when the building reverted to two cottages.
Slate roofs
Welsh slates were brought to the Vale of Pewsey by canal barge via Bristol and coastal shipping from North Wales. Exported in vast quantities from the end of the 18th century, slate, at a reasonable cost, offered an alternative to thatch. It is a durable roof material requiring low maintenance, easy to lay, light in weight, and incombustible. Some examples of buildings in the village with roofs of slate include Victoria House, Old School House, The Old Post Office, Old Swan Cottage, Brook Cottage, Willow Bank, Midden Hollow and Fairview. Slate roofs take either gable or hipped roof form but are usually of about 30-35 degrees pitch. Victoria House and Fairview are hipped, the former with lead sheet rolled ridges and the latter with blue clay ridge tiles. The Old School House chapel has a gabled roof with ridge tiles and elaborately carved gable end bargeboards. Slate was the original covering to all except Old Swan Cottage where thatch was replaced during a rebuilding of the upper storey.

Tiled roofs
Use of plain clay tiles in the village is comparatively recent and contemporary with the wide use of bricks in the 18th century. Examples in the village include: Batts Farm house and Orchard House. During remodelling of the former including a brick façade to replace the timber frame a half hipped tiled roof replaced the thatch. Hips covered by tiled roofs require special tiles known as a bonnet that neatly continues the tile coursing around the hip angle without the interruption and thick mortar bed of a normal ridge tile.

Plain clay tile hanging
Old Swan Cottage includes an example of plain clay tile used as a cladding for an upper gable wall on a light timber frame.

Feather-edged weather boarding
Another form of timber cladding is feather-edged weather boarding. This is usually nailed to a timber subframe of light scantling for outbuildings and non-habitable detached farm buildings or workshops. Surviving boarding is not usually older than late 18th century and is most common from the late 19th and early 20th century. Late 20th century examples are usually lined internally for improved thermal insulation. Examples in the village are at Croft Barn, the granary at Midden Hollow and the recently conversion called Honey Barn. Tar, creosote or more recently dark brown wood preservative is applied to the horizontal boards to extend the life of the cladding. Black paint or stain is not appropriate. The faded appearance of low viscosity preservative is less harsh and less likely to flake off to leave the wood unprotected.

ADVICE NOTE
The principles of design for extensions with thatched roofs.
Proposed extensions to existing buildings in thatch should respect certain principles,

a) Thatch should be pitched at 50 degrees or more and continue the local tradition of ‘Long Straw’ where existing.

b) The layout plan should be of simple rectangular form without irregularities or acute angles. Round or curved plans are practicable in thatch but any inside radius must be generous.

c) The creation of valleys and large dormer windows should be avoided.
d) Single storey extensions added to the rear of a two storey building of maximum span may be covered by a continuation of the existing slope to form a ‘catslide’. The span of the extension must be limited to allow the pitch of the thatch to match the existing slope.

e) Mortar weatherings to chimneys are preferred by thatchers to those of lead.

Thatch should not rest on an existing flat roof surface. It is important to maintain clear ventilation and drip space under eaves. Balanced flue outlets should not be positioned so as to emerge from walls under a thatched eaves or close under a gable verge.

PROBLEMS AND EYESORES

The community has changed in character during the last 50 years from agricultural to almost exclusively residential. In addition to four or so farmyards, the bakery, the forge, the post office and shop, the chapel and school have all ceased in business. This is a social change that is reflected in the uses now put to the buildings and their grounds. The notable exceptions are the Swan Inn and the agricultural buildings of Manor Farm. Several houses also accommodate modern ‘white collar’ businesses worked from home.

There is little to detract from the tranquil street scene. The buildings, the gardens and grounds are all well presented and maintained. If there is any criticism it is that there are no longer any outward signs of rural activity.

Within the Conservation Area there are few eyesores but the growth in the ownership of vehicles has resulted in the formation of parking spaces and vehicular accesses off the village lanes. Where there were formerly continuous grass banks, hedge and trees there are now several wide bellmouth gaps deeply excavated into the roadsides. Some have a serious impact on the rural character of the village scene. Perhaps with more consideration given to alternatives the impact of a particular proposed vehicular access could be reduced.

Overhead telephone and electricity cables and poles with stay wires are a minor eyesore.

PRESERVATION OF EXISTING CHARACTER

In order to preserve the distinctive character of the village its traditional and historic buildings should be maintained as existing. New uses should be found for traditional outbuildings formerly in agricultural use so that they are maintained. Their design and materials should as far as possible remain unaltered including the doors and windows.

Traditional building materials should not be rendered or painted for the first time.

There are buildings that were formerly thatched but are now covered by tiles or slates. Further loss of thatch in and around the village would severely detract from its historic character.

New areas of hard surfacing should be kept to a minimum. Materials such as block paving, concrete and tarmacadam are alien to the rural scene and only suitable for steep slopes. Driveways should generally be of compacted gravel and retained so that spillage is reduced onto the public road.

The cottage drive laid across the verge is appropriate but the loose gravel surface should be stopped from spilling into the road.
As well as the buildings and roads, the natural environment of trees, hedgerows and garden shrubs are a major part of the scene in the village. Although trees of over a certain girth are protected in Conservation Areas, these with permission should be lopped like smaller trees and shrubs so as not to overgrow and detract from the hedgerows in the lanes.

The pond and the soft edged roadside grass verges are an intrinsic part of the rural character of the street. The verges should be respected by drivers and not over-run by vehicles. Reinforcement with kerbs or hardening of verges for car parking or as footways should not be options.

THE PLANNING CONTEXT
Wilton is a village that does not have a range of facilities and housing development will be restricted.

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 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 Wilton Conservation Area Statement is part of the process. This Conservation Area Statement was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on 3 March 2005. SPG provides additional information on the interpretation and implementation policies and proposals contained in the Local Plan.

Consultation procedures, consistent with the advice contained at paragraph 4.7 of PPG 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment, have been undertaken during the preparation of this Statement. Paragraph 3.16 of PPG 12 – Development Plans, also states that adequate consultations is a requirement for adoption of SPG. The Council considers that the consultation undertaken meets with the obligations set out in PPG 12.

The Kennet Local Plan 2001-2011 has been adopted by the Council and became operative on 30th April 2004 and provides background information for the detailed interpretation of policies contained in the Replacement Local Plan, particularly Policies PD1, HH5, HH6, HH8, HC24, HC32a, ED9, ED11a and HH12.

ENHANCEMENTS
There is opportunity to enhance the Conservation Area by improving the perimeter of the car park at the Swan Inn. The roadside edge is insubstantial and poorly fenced. The orange plastic netting is perhaps only a temporary safety measure where the gravel meets the grass bank of the stream. Low but visible wooden rails on strong vehicle resistant posts might be more appropriate.

It is obviously important to maintain an open and inviting prospect of the pub from the road. Tree planting along the frontages would enhance the presentation of the pub and car park while maintaining it in view.
SUMMARY
The village is within a quiet valley setting with historic and traditional buildings among a rich variety of trees and shrubs. A few cottages, a former shop and farmhouse with barn are closely grouped near the very significant roadside pond beside the narrow street. The Swan Inn, although in the centre of the village, is not an historic building nor is it picturesque but its setting has potential for improvement. Batts Farm and the roadside outbuildings at Manor Farm have generally been sympathetically redeveloped as houses among trees and an improvement in the setting of the pub would make a strong impact on the main part of the village.

There are fourteen buildings listed Grade II and a further thirteen buildings of traditional design with some roadside walls of particular significance to the character of the village.

A limited range of materials and details distinguish the special character of historic and traditional building in the village.

The quality of the environment is threatened by the following:

* The importation of untraditional and standard materials for the construction and repair of buildings including the application of unsuitable paint.

* Vehicular accesses driven through roadside banks and hedgerow and impervious surfaces used for drives and car parking spaces.

* Any further loss of traditional agricultural buildings and community facilities in the village that may include the public house.

* Loss of significant roadside trees or hedgerows.
CONCLUSION
Economic and social changes are likely to bring about pressure for development or redevelopment but the potential for more residential development within the Conservation Area is very limited.

Plots for residential infilling particularly in the backland gardens of small existing buildings would be quite inappropriate to the character of the village. Also any development in the paddocks off the lanes would detract from the tranquility of the Conservation Area. It is important to recognize the shape and layout of the village taking into account its historic boundaries and the low density of buildings.

The character of the village would be adversely affected by changes to the buildings. Erosion of character would occur through the application of standard solutions. The historic interest of buildings would be diminished through inattention to the preservation of external architectural detail and traditional materials.

Changes to the natural environment both private and public may occur through lack of expertise or attention to traditional rural practices. Inappropriate changes may emanate from neglect of the public domain.

Preservation of the ‘status quo’ is the preferred policy of conservation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Grafton Parish Village Design Statement
Wilton Village 2000
The Victoria County History
KDC Landscape Assessment Conservation Strategy
Hidden Depths, Wiltshire Geology and Landscapes. Isobel Geddes

CONSULTATIONS
Grafton Parish Council
Wiltshire County Council
  The Director of Environmental Services
  The County Archaeologist
Wiltshire Buildings Record
The Campaign to Protect Rural England
English Heritage

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Maps are reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licenced to Kennet District Council. Licence No. LA 100017656,2005.
This booklet and future www.pages is one of a series of Conservation Area Statements and Guidance Notes.
If you require any further advice or information please contact:-

The Conservation Section, Planning Services, Kennet District Council
Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2AT
Tel. 01380 724911