



**WILCOT
CONSERVATION AREA
STATEMENT**

COMMITTEE DRAFT

Keeping Kennet Special

December 2004

WILCOT CONSERVATION AREA



Wilcot is a village with obvious quality and character but also of hidden charms. The close relationship between the Church, Manor and Manor Farmhouse demonstrates the link between history and architecture.

The purpose of this Statement of the Wilcot 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 Wilcot Conservation Area and is intended for all those with an interest in the village, or undertaking work on its buildings, landscape, streets or public spaces. It is also essential reading for anyone contemplating development within the area. By drawing attention to the distinctive features of Wilcot it is intended that its character will be protected and enhanced for the benefit of this and future generations.

Wilcot Conservation Area was designated on 24 January 1975. The Conservation Area is widely drawn to include the Church of the Holy Cross and the Manor House together with the surrounding buildings on the south side of the village, and the large triangular green to the north. Fields south and east of the church and between the church and Wilcot Green are included, as is a section of the Kennet and Avon Canal. 20th century development west of the canal is outside the Conservation Area

The main characteristics of the Conservation Area are:

- its location in the Vale of Pewsey
- the form of the settlement in two distinct parts
- the Church of the Holy Cross, Wilcot Manor House and Manor Farm constituting the early development of the village
- high quality planned development in the vicinity of Wilcot Green
- its landscape setting and the associated trees and hedges, especially the sculptured box hedges on the north-east side of Wilcot Green and fronting cottages to the south-east
- inclusion of a short stretch of the Kennet and Avon Canal



The well-known view approaching the village from the west is the arrival at the canal bridge with Wilcot Green about to come into view just beyond. The importance of the landscape setting and trees is immediately apparent.

Wilcot parish includes the villages of East Stowell, Huish, Oare and Wilcot. There is a separate Conservation Area at Oare for which there is a separate Conservation Area Statement.

Geology and topography

Wilcot is an attractive village 8 miles east of Devizes and 6 miles south-west of Marlborough. Pewsey is 1½ miles to the south-east. Land in the parish rises more than 50 metres from its lowest point of 124 metres above sea level near the parish church to the edge of the scarp west of Withy Copse, although most of the village is at the 131 metre contour.

Wilcot village is located on the upper greensand of the Pewsey Vale where the land is drained by minor tributaries of the Salisbury Avon flowing south. Views from the village are of the southern slopes of the Marlborough Downs to the north with a high point at Pecked Hill to the west.



This map of the Wilcot Conservation Area shows the form of development of the village with the early buildings to the south centred on the Church and Manor House and the planned layout to the north around Wilcot Green. Listed buildings are marked in red.

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Ancient roads crossing the parish have had a marked influence on the pattern of settlement and there are two main considerations, long distance and local. Roads are conditioned by the underlying geology, the climate and by human activity. Before techniques were invented to stabilise and maintain road surfaces the most durable routes were those following the watersheds between natural drainage systems. The most obvious routes were therefore on the chalk ridgeways as can be seen running east/west at Tan Hill Way north of the village.

Just east of Wilcot is Hare Street, part of the historic route from Upavon to Marlborough. As its name implies it was a Saxon herepath (literally "warpath") used by marching armies and at the time of strategic importance.



The passage of time and use have resulted in the lowering of the surface of the lane that runs south from the church to form a holloway. The sense of enclosure is emphasised by tree cover.

A second function of long-distance routes from prehistoric times to the early 20th century was for driving animals and many have acquired the name "drove". They were useful at local, regional and national level and enabled shepherds and dairy farmers to move animals from one pasture to another, and from farm to market. The local route was Workway Drove, running from Pewsey through Wilcot and up to Knapp Hill, where it joins the ridgeway along Wansdyke to Tan Hill.

Wilcot is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty confirming the high quality and national significance of the setting of the village and the surrounding landscape.

Origins and development of the village

There is little evidence of prehistoric settlement at Wilcot but the village was mentioned by name in 940. The early development was close to the Church and Manor House, both of which were already standing by 1086. Settlement was made easier by the existence of level land and a number of springs in the locality which encouraged village expansion. This characteristic of the area is recognised in the origins of the name "Willa's cottages" or "weille-cote" meaning cottages by the spring or well.



Wilcot Manor just west of the church is believed to be on the site of an earlier building. Although historically important the visual effect of the Manor on the Conservation Area is limited.

Wilcot Parish Church, the Church of the Holy Cross, is the oldest building in the village and dates from the late 12th century (but with alterations and extensions in the 15th, 18th and 19th centuries). It was the only Wiltshire church mentioned in 1086 belonging to a lay tenant in chief, Edward of Salisbury. Edward's grandson Patrick, earl of Salisbury, subsequently gave it to Bradenstoke Priory. Appropriation was confirmed in 1182 and 1184 and this link lasted for several centuries. In 1334 Wilcot was smaller than Oare but by the 16th century it was the largest village in the parish, although 17th century growth seems to have remained around the lower part of Wilcot Street.

In Domesday Wilcot Manor was described as an "excellent house", and the vineyard attached to the Manor is also mentioned. The present Manor House dates from the early 17th century with 18th century and later alterations, the front of the building being an 18th century remodelling of earlier work. The house is believed to be on the site of the Domes Optima noted in the Domesday Book and later a manor of the Bishops of Salisbury. Within the Manor House grounds are a dovecote of 1737, and the lake formed when the canal was constructed, both largely concealed from public view.

Manor Farmhouse, just north of the church, is a mid to late 18th century building and Paradise Cottage, further east and previously a farmhouse, is early 18th century. Within this southern part of Wilcot the Old Post Office is mid 18th century.

Also in the 18th century a group of cottages was built on the slightly higher better-drained land around what was to become Wilcot Green. Five cottages were built shortly before 1779 and by 1803 there was a row of cottages on the north as well as on the west side of the north-west corner. This was also the location of the village forge.



18th century development in Wilcot was dramatic establishing an entirely new layout and in due time creating Wilcot Green.

A map of 1773 shows buildings dotted along both sides of the lane that runs from the crossroads south-west to the church which indicates a greater density of development than survives today.

The surface of the lane, being on greensand, has been worn away by traffic and climate such that a holloway has been created well below natural ground level.

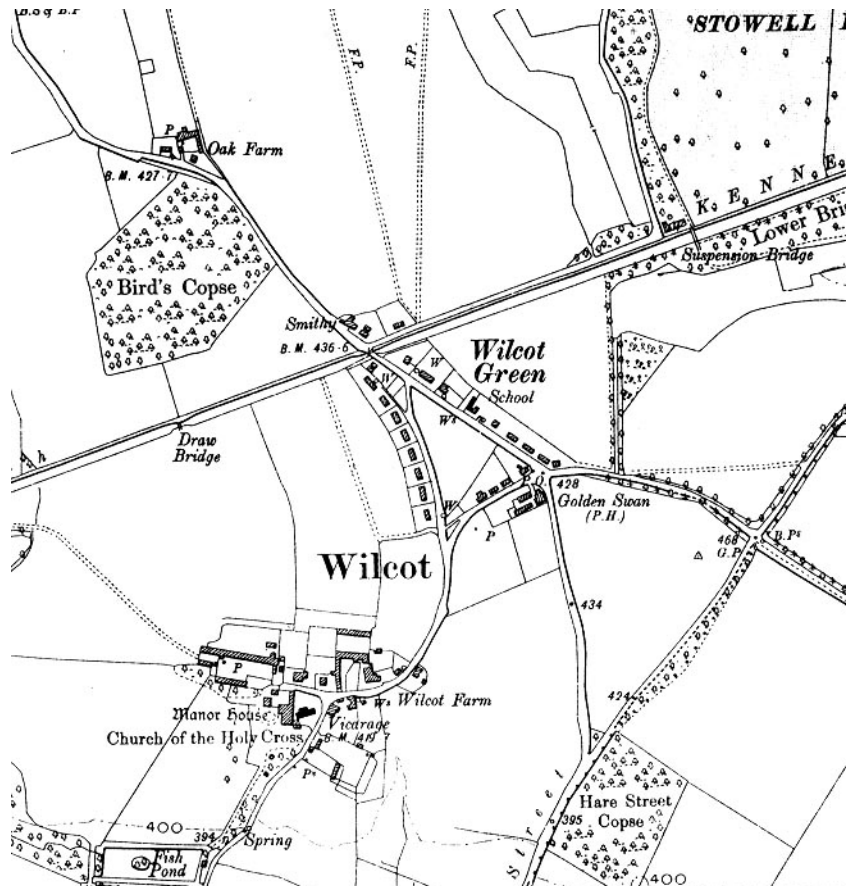


The road from Wilcot Green to Stowell, now an attractive avenue, is a realignment from the construction of the canal in the early 19th century.

The pattern of roads in the village remained largely unchanged until construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1807. In the early 19th century Stone Bridge Lane and Old Orchard Lane were closed and new roads made along the north bank of the canal from Wilcot Green to Stowell Park and from Back Lane to the Marlborough to Upavon road. A later change to transport in the locality was the opening of Pewsey station in 1862 just one mile from the village and providing a direct Great Western Railway link to London.

Major change in Wilcot also took place as a result of the 1813 building of Stowell Lodge, (now known as Stowell Park), for the Wroughton family. The new house was to be surrounded by a park and enclosure of the land involved the destruction of East Stowell village and the removal of its inhabitants to Wilcot Green. Between 1803 and 1839, which is the period when East Stowell village was abandoned, 10 pairs of cottages were built at Wilcot Green, 7 on the west side and 3 on the north side of the east corner. A school was built overlooking the green in 1841.

Another area affected by the construction of Stowell Lodge was the hamlet of Stonebridge just to the north of the Conservation Area where Cannings Cottage is the only dwelling to survive. The buildings here were also demolished and the inhabitants rehoused at the green.



Special features in an area create local distinctiveness and provide identity. A close look within the Conservation Area will reveal other examples.

Wilcot in 1901 showing how little the basic form of the village has changed in over 100 years. Most of the buildings shown on this map have survived and are within the Conservation Area.



The Golden Swan is a key building because of its design, siting and use. Character is more than just appearance and use is a vital component.

The Golden Swan, still the village inn, was built in 1859 at the east corner of the green. This succeeded The White Swan which was originally part of another group of buildings to the south-west. In the later 19th century additional building included two pairs of cottages at the north-west corner of the green on either side of the canal.

Until the First World War life in Wilcot continued much as it had in previous centuries but the post-war period was a time of major transformation in the countryside with the introduction of new farming methods and machines. The reduction in farm employment from the 1940s was accompanied by the growth of individual transport such that those living in the village no longer had to find work nearby. This change in social structure is particularly evident in the late 20th century where most of the houses now serve a mobile or retired workforce.

At the end of the 19th century the village had a school, post office, several shops, a public house and a reading room. With improvements in transport the need for local shops declined, other services were also affected, and the village school was combined with that at Oare. In the mid 20th century several of the older cottages west of the green were replaced by council houses with additional houses built alongside.



Kennet House represents one aspect of recent change in the village being the amalgamation of a pair of cottages to form a single unit. The appearance of the building is enhanced by careful maintenance and a sympathetic colour scheme.

The existence of the main line railway link at Pewsey has encouraged long distance commuting with some second homes. Three houses at the southern end of the village and east of the church were built in the mid to late 20th century and under construction (in 2004) is a group of seven new dwellings in part of the former farmyard to Manor Farm.

At the beginning of the 21st century Wilcot has become a residential village providing an attractive location for those who seek a tranquil quality of life in the Wiltshire countryside. Activities are an essential part of village character and, although facilities are limited, they still include a village hall, cricket pitch, church, recreation field and public house.

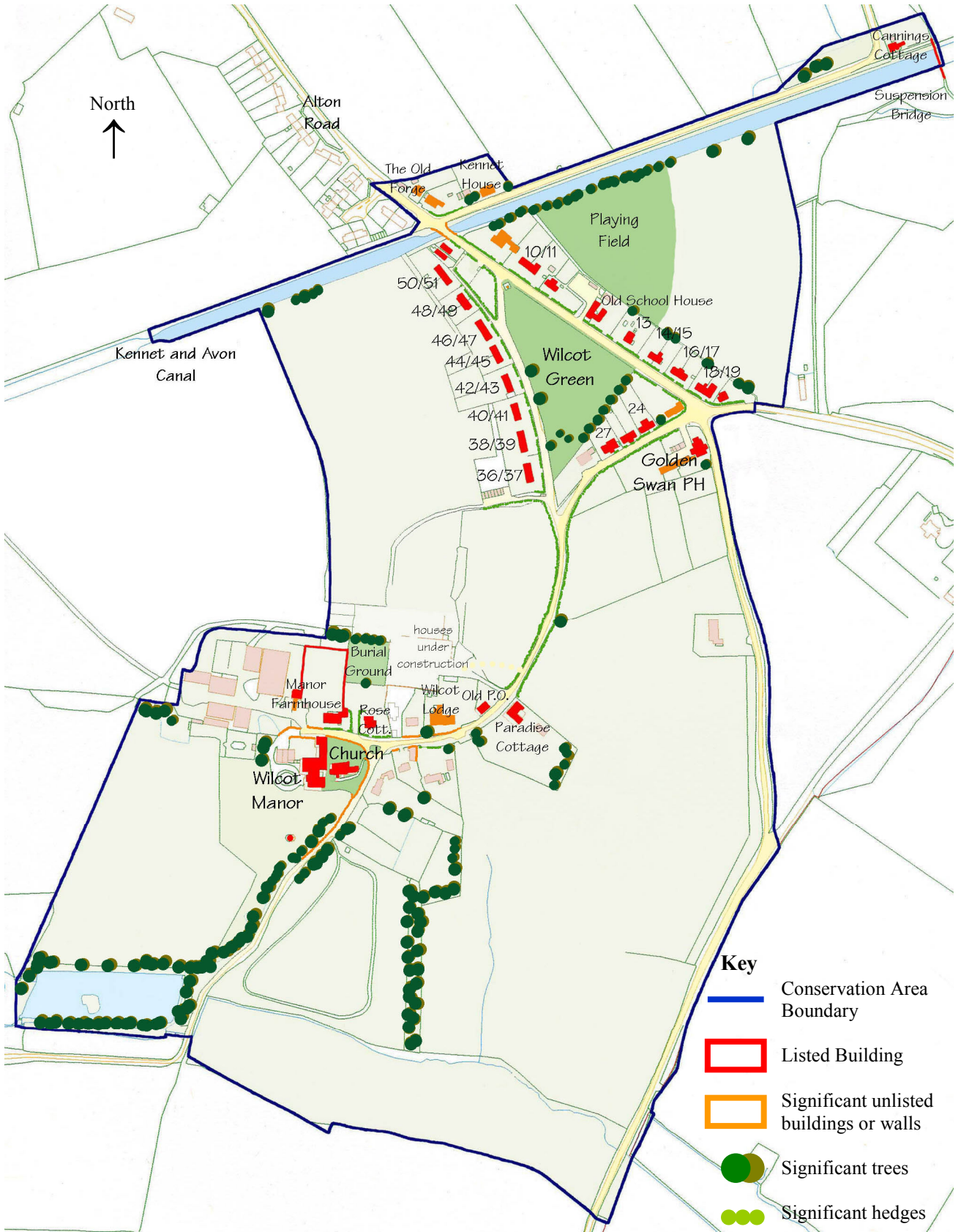
Archaeological significance

The village has Saxon origins being first recorded as Wilcotum in 904. To the south a probable moated site is visible on aerial photographs and a series of amorphous earthworks have been noted by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.

Several prehistoric and Romano British entries are recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record. These include a Bronze Age arrowhead, spearhead and fragments of an axe head. A Romano British building located north of the village has been partly excavated on two occasions and a substantial chalk wall, several pottery sherds of 2nd to 4th century date, and a number of coins have all been revealed.

A vineyard is mentioned in the Domesday survey and several medieval coins have been noted in and around the village. A 13th century seal matrix of Master William of Charmouth was discovered at Oak Farm. Several prehistoric and Romano British records are also noted on the Sites and Monuments Record.

Wilcot Conservation Area



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

Details of listed buildings are correct at the date of publication but can change. For up-to-date information it is advisable to check with the District Council.



The southern section of the village is the historic nucleus of Wilcot but now largely hidden away as a quiet corner.

Architectural and historic character

The two parts of the village, the earlier built around the church and the later grouping around Wilcot Green, have a distinctive character related to built form and architectural style. A significant proportion of buildings in the Conservation Area are listed as of special architectural or historic interest and it is only in recent years that major change has taken place.

The earliest building in the village is the Parish Church with elements dating back to the late 12th century although following a serious fire in 1876 the fabric of the church is now predominantly 19th and 20th century. Wilcot Manor House has 17th century origins but other than these two buildings most of the historic development in Wilcot is from the 18th and 19th centuries. The original village grew up around the church which is where the older buildings of Wilcot can now be found. Buildings around Wilcot Green are 18th and 19th century with a few from the 20th century.

Wilcot Green



The traveller passing along the northern side of the green may not be immediately aware of the quality of the buildings but the importance of box hedges is apparent.

Communication links with Wilcot are such that the approach to the village is primarily from the east and west and arrival from both directions brings you to the village green. The approach from Pewsey is a tree lined route with a gentle incline into the village. There is thus an enclosed character to the road which gives way to the more open feel of the village Conservation Area. The built up area starts just north of The Golden Swan from where the quality of buildings in Wilcot can immediately be seen. At this crossroads lanes run south to Pewsey, south-west towards the church and through the village north-west to Wilcot Green and beyond.

Although not the earliest part of the village, it is The Green and the buildings around it that are an especially distinctive feature of Wilcot. It is immediately apparent that this part of the village was carefully designed and the design and arrangement of buildings present a pleasing uniformity of style.

Box hedges form an important feature in the view on the north-east side of The Green where the buildings follow a regular line but are set back from the roadway. The cottages here are a mix of mid to late 18th century and early 19th century. From east to west construction ranges from two-storey squared limestone cottages with slate roofs to brick and thatch or stone and thatch, the stone and thatch former school house and stone and slate school room located in the centre of the group. Virtually all of the buildings around Wilcot Green are listed and retain much of their architectural and historic interest.



The characteristic form, design and layout of the later estate cottages, together with the unsurfaced road, is a special feature of the village.

In contrast to the variations on the north-east the later pairs of cottages on the western side of Wilcot Green are distinctive by the consistent use of plan form, materials and details. Each pair of cottages is built of squared limestone with a low pitch Welsh slate roof and with brick chimney stacks. The cottages have later front porches and there have been some extensions and window alterations. The importance of the spaces between the buildings is equally evident as on the north-west side and it is this rhythm of building and landscape that gives this part of the village its special quality.



The first buildings in the Conservation Area on the western side of the canal. Although The Old Forge and Bridge Cottage are not listed buildings they are both of historic interest. Their architectural quality is diminished by the installation of modern windows.

The unsurfaced tracks and pathways are an integral part of the rural character of the village and the lack of tarmac surfacing works well as a traffic calming measure. This is most evident at the access road on the western side of Wilcot Green.

As the road through the village runs further north-west there is a gentle incline to the bridge over the Kennet and Avon Canal. At this point there are pairs of thatched cottages on the south side, close to the canal but set below road level. The canal bridge therefore creates a visual stop to the development and it is the canal that then forms the boundary to the Conservation Area. The only exception is the small group of dwellings at the crossroads just north of the canal.

Approaching Wilcot from the north-west the first sign of development is the mid 20th century housing on Alton Road with the later group of houses at Canal Close. The historic beginning of the village is at The Old Forge, a stone and thatch cottage with a later brick and tile building close to the road. This is the site of the former Smithy shown on the plan of 1901. Passing Bridge Cottage next door and just at the western end of the canal bridge is a turning left running northwards alongside the canal towards Stowell Park.



Cannings Cottage is at the north-western end of the Conservation Area. Buildings such as this are especially conspicuous as they contain the view.

This lane is the link to East Stowell and is a tree lined avenue, rural in character. Apart from the former pair of stone cottages now combined to form Kennet House, there is no development on the lane until reaching Cannings Cottage. The lane is slightly elevated above the canal with trees and vegetation partly hiding views of the water. On the other side of the lane the gaps between the hedgerow trees allow glimpses of the edge of the scarp in the far distance.

At the point where the lane turns west is the early 19th century Cannings Cottage which is the former Lodge to Stowell Park. The building is limestone with a thatched roof and was designed in a cottage ornée style. Also at this point but largely hidden is a mid 19th century pedestrian suspension bridge which is one of the more unusual features along the canal.

Returning to the junction at The Golden Swan and following the road south-west towards the church, the immediate character is closely related to that of The Green. The Golden Swan is a 2½ storey building dating from 1859, built of malmstone with red brick dressings and a steep pitch thatched roof. On the north side of the building is a large open porch and on the west a 1½ storey slate roof extension. The building is of considerable quality and an important feature at the crossroads.



One of the other especially distinctive features of Wilcot is this unusual suspension bridge. An iron plate on the bridge carries the inscription "Dredge Patentee Bath".

The row of cottages running south-west, Numbers 23-27, dates from the late 18th century. The buildings are 1½ storey, set to a regular line and with the distinctive sculptured box hedges forming the enclosure to the road. Construction is of brick or malmstone with brick dressings and the buildings here are closer together than other groups of cottages in the village.

There is no building beyond the southern end of The Green and at this point the road becomes a typical country lane with hedges and trees on either side. The signpost to the church at the top of the lane is the only indication that there is a hidden part to the village.



The alignment of the lane leading to Church reveals a constantly changing scene with Paradise Cottage and the Old Post Office (above) being the first buildings to come into view.

Wilcot Church and Manor

Because of the curved alignment of the lane it is only when relatively close that the first buildings in the group come into view. On the left-hand side of the lane is Paradise Cottage, a two-storey house dating from the early 18th century. It is a substantial brick building with the date of 1729 carved into a small moulded brick feature on the right-hand at first floor level. The grass verge and front wall, set back from the road, suggest a building of some stature. In contrast, The Old Post Office is a more modest mid 18th century cottage built in brick, single-storey, with an attic and a thatched roof and with a later extension. The datestone over the door reads M/WL/1746.

Fronting The Old Post Office is a flint boundary wall that continues in front of Wilcot Lodge. This is a large mid 19th century house with late 19th century extensions and is a good example of the period. The front of the Lodge faces south and because of a gap in the hedge (which is the location of the Wilcot/Pewsey Pumping Station) there is a long distance view to the open countryside. Other houses to the south are late 20th century. At the corner of Wilcot Lodge is a large horse chestnut tree part framing and part obscuring the view.



Rose Cottage is an important component of the group of buildings fronting the churchyard. The overall design of the building, its scale and proportion form a complete picture which needs to be preserved unaltered. Thatch is the traditional long straw.

The core of this part of the village is the Church of the Holy Cross. The small building of the late 12th century was extended in the 15th century but as previously indicated was badly damaged by fire in 1876. The church is built of malmstone with limestone dressings and has a square tower and a clay tile roof. It sits in an open churchyard at a level above that of the road with stepped access into the churchyard through a 20th century lych gate. The wall to the churchyard, which is brick and flint, is a feature in the street scene.

Facing the triangle and on its north side Rose Cottage, built of flint with a long straw thatch roof, dates from the early 19th century. Rose Cottage is an important component of the group of listed buildings around the church. It is also important in the role it now plays in limiting the prominence of new housing in the former Manor Farm yard.

Slightly further to the west in this group is Manor Farmhouse, a good example of mid to late 18th century architecture. The use of decorative brickwork, double-hung sash windows and gable end chimney stacks is typical of this period. The position of the building relative to the church, with its front wall and formal appearance, is entirely in keeping with its role as one of the main farmhouses in the locality.



The front of Manor Farmhouse is an attractive representation of 18th century style building incorporating high quality brickwork, double-hung sash windows and a simple roof form with gable end chimney stacks.

Descriptions of Manor House show it to be a building of considerable architectural and historic interest covering the periods from the 17th to the 19th centuries. The listed building entry describes it as having a central block of three bays with cross wings at both ends and a further service wing to the left. The house is believed to be on the site of the Domus Optima noted in the Domesday Book and later a manor of the Bishops of Salisbury. In Conservation Area terms, this is a building that makes a relatively small contribution to the visual character of the village because it is mostly hidden behind the church and a high brick wall.

There is an attractive informality in the area surrounding the church formed by the mix of architectural dates and styles and the general arrangement of the buildings.



It is too early to assess the full effect of the new housing development at Manor Farm seen here from the burial ground.

The 20th century buildings to the south-east have been softened by the passage of time and the growth of vegetation in the gardens. The pathway between Manor Farmhouse and Rose Cottage leads to the village burial ground, a walled enclosure containing several trees and approached through iron gates and stone gatepiers. The most obvious change here is in the construction of new houses in part of the former farmyard of Manor Farm. This is a substantial development that will on completion provide seven new dwellings.

Heading south from the church the lane leads down within a shallow cutting. This is another example of a holloway with the sense of enclosure accentuated by boundary walls and overhanging beech trees. The lake south of Wilcot Manor is almost completely hidden by the trees and therefore has little visual impact on the Conservation Area although the stream indicates the presence of water in the locality. Views east are over the former water meadows with views south over the open countryside of the wider Pewsey Vale.

Building materials and details



The attractive appearance of historic brickwork, as at Manor Farmhouse, results from the combination of brick colour and texture, the bond used in construction, and the lime mortar. The side windows here are a recent alteration.

Building materials to be found in Wilcot are predominantly brick and limestone but include malmstone and flint. There is however a pattern to the way in which these materials are used closely related to the history and architecture of the buildings. The use of timber frame in the village seems to have been restricted to construction of former barns at Manor Farm which have recently been demolished.

Early buildings reflect the materials available at the time of their construction and this has a significant influence on their design and appearance. In Wilcot the earlier buildings, mostly 18th century, are in brick with limestone used in the late 18th and early 19th century buildings, in particular the estate cottages that surround Wilcot Green. The introduction of limestone and of Welsh slate was facilitated by the opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810.

This use of locally available material can also be seen on the roofs of buildings in the village with thatch and clay tile on the earlier buildings and Welsh slate from the middle of the 19th century. The thatch tradition in the Pewsey Vale was originally long straw as can still be seen at Rose Cottage. In most other cases the thatch has been changed to combed wheat reed.



The brick front wall to Paradise Cottage is laid in an unusual header bond with overburnt blue brick selected to create a distinctive vertical pattern. The rubbed brick recess carries the date 1729.

Brickwork in Wilcot is attractive and varied. One of the main characteristics of historic brickwork is the bond used in construction. A good example of this is at Manor Farmhouse where red and vitrified blue bricks have been set to a pattern (in this case Flemish bond) with the red bricks forming window dressings and quoins. Other good examples in the locality include Paradise Cottage and the Old Post Office.

Historic brickwork was always set in a lime mortar which has a particular weathering characteristic and gives brick buildings their special quality. Lime mortar also is tolerant of slight movement and prolongs the life of the bricks. The appearance of brick buildings is therefore influenced by the colour and texture of the brick, the bond used in construction and the colour and texture of the mortar. Most of the brick buildings in Wilcot are found in the vicinity of the church.



At first glance the ashlar Bath stone cottages on the western side of Wilcot Green look remarkably consistent but a closer inspection shows how plans and appearance varies. The central passage between 38 and 39 is said to contain a bread oven that once served the village.



In contrast to 38/39 the plan variation at 36/37 is indicated by the central chimney. The attractive appearance of these cottages is in the simple detailing of the ashlar stone walls and Welsh slate roofing with brick stacks.



The carved Estate motif is used as an important design feature within the group of cottages. Also important are the original windows and doors, not all of which have survived.

Chimney stacks are often important features in historic buildings and this is evident in Wilcot with extensive use of gable end stacks, some of which are decorative. Although most of Wilcot Manor is hidden from view, it is possible when in or close to the churchyard to see some of the building at high level including a number of ornate chimney stacks.

Stone is the simple term for a wide range of finishes and techniques. In its basic form stone will be random rubble and in Wilcot this is only found in boundary walls such as the wall fronting The Old Post Office where it is used in conjunction with flint.

As its use becomes more sophisticated the stone appears in buildings as coursed and squared rubble or ashlar with decorative quoins and window dressings or the occasional sculptured feature. The estate cottages on the western side of The Green, Numbers 36-48, are of squared and coursed limestone with a carving of the estate insignia found at Numbers 38 and 46.

The group of cottages on the south-east side of The Green, Numbers 24-27, show an attractive and varied combination of stone and brickwork, including small square limestone, malmstone and brick dressings. Malmstone, found on a number of buildings in Wilcot, is a form of inferior limestone with limited weathering qualities.

Doors and windows are important elements in historic buildings and once again their design is closely related to the dates and styles of architecture of the buildings. Boarded timber doors were used in the smaller of the 18th century buildings and many of these still survive. The more sophisticated 18th century buildings generally have six-panel painted timber doors and this is a tradition that continued into the 19th century.

There is extensive use of painted timber two and three-light casement windows throughout the village, in some cases probably replacing earlier leaded light windows. The only examples of the use of small-pane double-hung sash windows are found at Wilcot Manor and Manor Farmhouse and at the later Wilcot Lodge where the sash windows have a different glazing bar pattern.

There are particularly interesting small-pane iron casement windows in some of the buildings around the green but in a number of cases original windows have been replaced with modern styles. Original windows and doors are becoming increasingly rare and are of considerable architectural and historic interest.

Within the overall design of the estate cottages the contribution made by gutters and downpipes should not be overlooked and the traditional use of cast iron adds quality especially where there are no or only small fascia boards.

The use of formal walling is limited to the southern part of the Conservation Area. High brick walls enclose Wilcot Manor and there is a brick and flint wall fronting the churchyard. Behind Manor Farm and on the western edge of the burial ground is a section of cob wall, part with a thatched coping and part with clay tile.

A small area of Sarsen setts survives at the Lych Gate entrance to the church and another stone pathway across the lane to the south.



Views out are important to the character of the Wilcot Conservation Area as seen here looking west to the scarp of the Marlborough Downs.

Landscape setting and the contribution made by green spaces and trees

The landscape of the Vale of Pewsey is largely a product of the Enclosure Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries and the effects of more recent intensive farming practices involving the loss of hedgerows, especially at the base of the scarp slopes. Being located in the Vale the landscape setting of Wilcot is a key element in defining the character of the village and there are a number of differing aspects of this. From many locations within the village trees provide important backdrops and contain views although many of these tree groups are outside the Conservation Area boundary.

The key green space is Wilcot Green, which is especially distinctive with the tall row of limes on the east side and other specimen trees set around the edges. Close by but hidden behind the cottages to the north are the village sports field and the canal beyond. Here the woodland of Stowell Park contains the view and defines the field edge with a strong tree line. The lane to Stowell Park through the avenue of limes, with the occasional sycamore, runs parallel to the canal with attractive long-distance views to the scarp of the Marlborough Downs and views from the canal path across the sports field towards the village.



Wilcot Green is the visual focus of the village and the feature that best defines its character.

The landscape seen from the towpath south-west of the canal bridge is more open and there are views from here to Pecked Hill which rises to a height of 202 metres in the far distance. Ash trees line the canal on both sides. The open fields between the two developed areas of the village are seen from a number of vantage points and provide views of some of the village buildings including the church tower.

At the southern end of Wilcot the key green space is the churchyard that provides the setting to the church, Manor Farmhouse and Rose Cottage and is the focus of this part of the village. The burial ground behind Rose Cottage is secluded but allows a degree of separation between new and old development.

South of the church the extensive grounds of Wilcot Manor are hidden by a high stone wall and bank with mature beech trees planted close to the boundary and along the lane. On the east side tree planting, including a newly planted arboretum extends south to the former water meadows. These water meadows are a feature of historic interest reflecting the former farming methods of the locality.

Problems and eyesores

For the most part the Conservation Area is attractive and well cared for and there are relatively few visual problems. Buildings and their gardens are maintained to a standard in keeping with the rural character of the village and particular attention has been given to the appearance of the many front hedges that are such a feature of Wilcot.



The western edge of the Conservation Area is defined by the line of the canal. Pecked Hill can be seen in the view south from the canal bridge.

Although there has been a progressive increase in traffic through the village (as reported by the Parish Council) the level of use remains relatively low. As with every other village in the locality moving and parked cars can be seen as a necessary intrusion and this is particularly apparent at weekends when there is extensive parking within the Conservation Area.



One of the few eyesores in the Conservation Area but hidden away and of relatively little impact. Additional planting to the rear of the cottages here would help integration into the landscape.

Listed buildings are subject to special control and cannot be altered without consent. Nevertheless, listing cannot impose retrospective controls and there are a number of buildings where modern window styles intrude. This is more noticeable in the vicinity of Wilcot Green.

Poles and overhead wires can be unsightly, and this is especially noticeable south of the Golden Swan and around Wilcot Green.

The block of lock-up garages behind Number 36 The Green appears neglected but this is a relatively secluded structure and does not intrude on the main spaces within the village.

Coniferous evergreen trees and shrubs do not sit well in the village landscape and neither do timber fences, and there is evidence of both within the Conservation Area. The garden section of canal bank just south of the bridge is overcomplicated and out of character.

There is considerable intervisibility between the two main parts of the Conservation Area across open fields as most readily seen from the east. From this view it is possible to see the development currently under construction north of Manor Farm, although the associated landscape planting scheme will in time reduce the impact of the new houses.

Preservation and enhancement

Preservation and enhancement of the character of the Conservation Area depends on all 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 Wilcot Conservation Area should be preserved and there are various ways in which this can be achieved. The following list is intended as a guide to the type of work that would contribute to maintaining the quality of the village.

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 or where appropriate the reinstatement of missing features.
- Contact to be maintained with the County Council as Highway Authority concerning works within the Conservation Area and in particular the protection of unmade tracks and green edges.
- Proposals for indigenous tree and hedge planting to be encouraged.



The brick gable is a recent extension to this group of cottages maintaining the original form and window detail. The rear extension to number 10 shows how an historic building can be enlarged without compromising the original form.



The interesting comparison between these two buildings is that they started life looking the same. The building to the right has been extended above the former lean-to roof with modern windows inserted in the gable end. This destroys the integrity of the architecture and has an adverse effect on village character.

Action by owners:

- Look carefully if considering changes to buildings and surroundings and always view your proposal in its context. Where construction work is involved take particular care in the choice of materials.
- As a general rule repair rather than replace original features and where undertaking alterations to doors and windows on traditional buildings copy original styles and details. Where modern windows have been installed in historic buildings look at the possibility of replacing with original styles and designs.
- If proposing extending a building consider this as complementary to the existing and design in keeping. Take particular care to identify the character and scale of the original building and the importance of the spaces between buildings and avoid being intrusive in sensitive locations.
- Consider the long-term maintenance of trees, shrubs and hedges and where appropriate identify sites for replacement tree planting.
- Avoid the introduction of evergreen hedges, trees or modern fencing in prominent positions.

Enhancement

There is little in Wilcot that is out of keeping with the character of the village and the scope for enhancement is limited. Where changes are proposed they should be designed to reflect the intrinsic character of the relevant part of the village using materials and details that maintain the rural scene.

- Poles and overhead wires are obtrusive in various parts of the village: resiting poles to less obtrusive positions or placing wires underground would be an improvement.
- Attention should be given to the garages to the west of The Green.
- Care needs to be taken in the maintenance of existing trees and hedges avoiding their replacement with non-native species. Where this has occurred, replacement with indigenous species would enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Reinforcement of planting to the rear of the cottages on the west side of the green is a potential enhancement.
- Non-original windows can be found in a number of historic buildings in Wilcot, most evidently in the vicinity of the green. Modern windows are likely to have a limited life and the opportunity should be taken on future renewals to use a style and detail to match the original.
- In view of the importance of trees within the village a tree survey and strategy for future planting would be of benefit.
- The distinctive designs of the former estate cottages should be recorded as an aid to their long-term maintenance and to assist future enhancement by reinstating original features.



There seem to be numerous poles and wires in Wilcot. Unfortunately many of these are conspicuous and spoil the view (especially where made more obvious by ivy growth).

Areas of potential change

There has been significant change within the village in recent years and the potential for further change is limited. The very poor condition of the redundant timber frame farm buildings at Manor Farm resulted in their eventual demolition and has provided an opportunity for redevelopment. There is however no other part of the Conservation Area where a similar opportunity will arise.

Economic and social changes are likely to bring about pressure for further extensions to residential buildings and any such proposals will need to be examined with great care to ensure that the quality of the Conservation Area is not adversely affected. This is especially important at Wilcot Green where the spaces between buildings are a vital part of village character.

It needs to be recognised that the cottages fronting Wilcot Green, particularly those designed as part of the planned estate, are of exceptional interest. This is because of their form, layout and detailed design. Alteration to any one of the buildings affects the composition of the whole. There may therefore be little scope for further extension on the smaller buildings within the Conservation Area. Extension to some of the larger houses may be possible but unless skilfully designed will have an adverse effect on their character and settings.



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

Each of the elements seen in this photograph of the north side of Wilcot Green contributes to village character. Buildings, trees and hedges are obvious but small details such as consistent verges, gates and original windows are important. Road surfaces and edges make up a major part of the picture and their treatment needs to be kept simple and rural. Poles and wires are obtrusive.

The planning context

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.



There is little formal paving in Wilcot. This section of setts was presumably laid to provide the vicar of the time with a dry route from the church to the vicarage.

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 Wilcot Conservation Area Statement, is part of the process.

This Conservation Area Statement was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 2004. 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 Kennet Local Plan 2001-2011 has been adopted by the Council and became operative on 30th April 2004. This Statement provides detailed background information for the interpretation of the Local Plan, particularly Policies HH5 and HH6. In addition, the guidance will be relevant to the application of Policies PD1, HC24, HC33, ED10, ED12 and ED13.

Summary and Conclusions

Summary



It should never be assumed that unlisted buildings are of no historic or architectural interest. Unlisted buildings such as Wilcot Lodge make a significant contribution to the character of the area and need to be carefully maintained.

The major changes that have taken place in Wilcot since the Conservation Area was first designated are the continued reduction in farming activity, and the loss of timber framed and thatch barns at Manor Farm with a new housing development on the site. Also evident is increased leisure activity along the Kennet and Avon Canal. The village has seen investment in the repair, alteration and extension of many houses and cottages and some smaller dwellings have been combined and upgraded. All this has taken place within a well defined physical and landscape structure and with only limited effect on the visual character of the village.

The landscape setting of the village together with the positioning of buildings means that the attractive character of Wilcot has for the most part been maintained. The village has a high proportion of historic buildings, most of which are listed. It also has limited village facilities and thus outward commuting is significant. Trees, verges and other landscape features are important but can be vulnerable to damage or loss.

Increasing prosperity has led to a significant investment into property which can be seen in the amalgamation of pairs of cottages to form a single unit or the extension of buildings to provide enlarged accommodation.

Conclusions

Wilcot is a picturesque village that has maintained its original architectural and historic character. This character varies between the two main parts of the Conservation Area but both areas are of considerable merit. 20th century development has relatively little impact in the village although new building north of Manor Farm will be noticeable for some time until the landscape matures.



The canal represents an interesting example of a new lease of life for an historic feature once seen as redundant. Conservation Area decisions need to be forward looking but recognising the contribution made by history and character.

Careful maintenance of the many listed buildings and their settings will be necessary if the impressive character of Wilcot is to be preserved and enhanced. This applies particularly in the vicinity of Wilcot Green where the group value of the buildings is more significant than their individual merit.

The potential risk to village character is from the introduction of elements that are unnecessarily obtrusive, or urban or sub-urban. Modern boundary walls and fences, paved surfaces including formal driveways, and street or high intensity security lighting would fall into this category. It is important to recognise, and work with, the form and grain of the village taking into account historic boundaries and overall density.

Sustainability and the protection of rural areas are key considerations in the Kennet Local Plan. Wilcot is defined as an area where further development will be restricted and consequently there is little potential for major change within the village. The setting of the village is especially important and this needs to be taken into account in any works outside the Conservation Area that might affect this, especially at the southern end.

All of the elements that make up the special character of the village need to be identified and protected to ensure that future changes do not undermine this. Preservation of the character of Wilcot is for the benefit of existing and future residents, businesses and visitors. The information in this Statement is intended to assist the process and provide guidance for the future.

Bibliography: The Victoria County History
R S Barron –The Geology of Wiltshire 1976
John Chandler – Devizes and Central Wiltshire 2003
Kennet District Council – Landscape Assessment and
Landscape Conservation Strategy 2001

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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:

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