

Liddington

Conservation Area Appraisal



Historic rural village

designated as a conservation area on 30 April 1990 re-designated on 5 June 1995

Liddington Conservation Area Appraisal

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Introduction

This document assesses the special interest, character and appearance of Liddington Conservation Area. Prepared by Swindon Borough Council's Design, Conservation and Development Section, it should be read in conjunction with policies in the current Swindon Borough Local Plan and with national planning policy guidance, especially Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.

The information in this appraisal was collected during late 1999. To be concise and readable, it does not record all features. The omission of a feature from the text or accompanying maps does not, therefore, mean that it must not be of interest or value.

The appraisal and map has been prepared in collaboration with Liddington Parish Council and was adopted by Swindon Borough Council as “a proper assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of Liddington Conservation Area” on 28th March 2000 and readopted on 4th April 2006



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Location

The small village of Liddington is located in rural surroundings in Liddington Parish, within the Borough of Swindon. The settlement lies south east of Swindon town, close to the M4 motorway, junction 15 of which is only about 1.5 kilometres away via the B 4192 - known as Purley Road where it passes through Liddington village. A small part of the conservation area, at the north-east, is in Wanborough Parish.

Origins of the settlement

The parish as a whole has been an area of settlement since the earliest times. The ancient Ridgeway traverses the parish just north of the village and the Iron Age hill-fort known as Liddington Castle overlooks the present-day village. Liddington is recorded in the late Saxon period, around 940 AD. The Domesday Book of 1086 refers to the settlement as Ledentone. Records indicate that Liddington was a fairly prosperous parish in the 14th century. Population of the parish was 454 in 1841 but gradually declined thereafter.

A detailed history of the parish can be found in the Victoria County History (Wiltshire); volume ix.

Landscape setting

Liddington is a small village surrounded by open countryside, nestling in a semi-elevated position on the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs.

The village lies on the gently rising Upper Greensand belt between low lying clays in the north and chalk downlands to the south. South of the village the chalk scarp rises sharply to Liddington Castle and to the North Wessex Downs. Liddington, like Wanborough and Bishopstone, is a "spring-line" settlement located at a point where water courses emerge from this chalk scarp.

The whole of the conservation area lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)¹ which is one of the most extensive and least spoiled downland tracts in southern England.

There are significant views from within the village to the surrounding landscape. Liddington Castle, an iron age fort, is prominent on the skyline and a well known local landmark. Good views of the hill-fort can be gained from the churchyard and from the public footpath and road that marks the conservation area's southern boundary. To the east, Upper Wanborough's church with its unusual combination of tower and spire can occasionally be glimpsed from The Street and Lidenbrook. From The Street west of Street House Farm there are commanding views of Swindon and the Upper Thames valley.

These, and other, views out of the conservation area to local landmarks and the wider landscape reinforce the conservation area's distinct identity as a historic settlement between chalk downland and low lying plain.

Designation as a conservation area

The Liddington Conservation Area was designated by Thamesdown Borough Council on 30 April 1990 because it was considered desirable to preserve and, where necessary, enhance the special architectural and historical interest of Liddington village. On 5 June 1995 the conservation area was enlarged to include an area of archaeological interest on the edge of the village. On the 4th April 2006 the character appraisal was readopted with a number of minor revisions to the document.

¹As designated under section 87 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949

Boundary and extent of conservation area

The conservation area encompasses the whole of the built form of the village including the environs of Liddington Manor and Liden brook. Within the boundary can be found four distinct parts that each contribute to the overall area's special interest, namely:

- the historic core of the village around All Saints' Church and The Green;
- Liddington Manor and environs;
- the village's historic street pattern including The Street, Bell Lane, Ham Road and the footpath by Liden brook;
- traces of settlement earthworks, probably Saxon, close to Manor Farm House.

Church Road and The Green form the historic core of the village, now unfortunately separated by fast-moving traffic along Purley Road. Early maps show that The Street was originally the main road through the village with Church Road leading off it. The boundary encloses all the historic buildings in this area including seven listed buildings and the curtilage of Street Farm House. In addition, the boundary extends westwards along Purley Road in order to protect the trees and mature vegetation in this locality and to include the prominent natural stone wall below Appletree Cottage.

Liddington Manor is a small Jacobean manor house (grade II*) standing in grounds that include some fine specimen trees and shrubs, a lake and ponds that served a former mill. The property was substantially renovated at the end of the nineteenth century - a long thatched stable block (grade II) and extensive planting in the grounds date from this time. The Manor and its environs make a major contribution to the overall character and appearance of the conservation area through its historic buildings and associations and the quality and extent of the well tree'd garden landscape.

The Street, Bell Lane, Ham Road and the footpath beside Liden brook comprise the rest of the village's early street pattern. The Street forms the central spine of the conservation area, off which is located The Green and two twentieth century cul-de-sac developments. The whole length of The Street is within the conservation area - from its junction with Purley Road to beyond Manor Farm House, a late 19th century farmhouse. Between Manor Cottage and Manor Farm House, The Street, lined by

mature vegetation on its southern side, retains a distinctly rural 'green lane' appearance.

The conservation area boundary extends a short way out of the village along Ham Road in order to protect this green approach to the village and a short length of Liden brook. The footpath beside Liden Brook which links The Street to Ham Road provides a pleasant, well wooded walk with a glimpse of Liddington Manor.

In 1995 a field containing traces of settlement earthworks north of Manor Farm House was added to the conservation area due to its special historical interest as part of the early development of the village (see below).

The conservation area boundary encloses some uncharacteristic late twentieth century developments which do not harmonise with their surroundings, notably Manor View, Spinney Close and Lidenbrook. It has been necessary to include these in order to create a meaningful and practical boundary line that fully encloses the four distinct parts noted above.

Present day

Historically, Liddington's economy was related to agriculture; sheep rearing on the downs south of the village and arable land to the north. Over the past fifty years its agricultural character has declined and today Liddington is primarily a residential village. In 1999 the village comprised about 100 dwellings. There are two pubs within the village. The small post office & shop have closed. There is no school and no other source of employment. The village has a generally quiet atmosphere except for the distant hum of the M4 motorway - particularly noticeable near the church.

The parish church thrives but a former 19th century Methodist chapel on The Street has now been converted to a dwelling. A village hall beside the church was completed in 1993 using stone salvaged from a former Victorian school (1851) that stood on the same site.

Whilst the area around the church has been severed from the body of the village by the construction of a 'by-pass' in 1939, the essential historic layout of the rest of the village remains intact. One of the benefits of the by-pass has been that The Street is now relatively traffic free. Both Bell Lane and The Street are on a bus route. A 30 mph speed restriction applies within the village.

Features of interest in the locality, on the high land to the south of the village, are the ancient Ridgeway trail and Liddington Castle, an Iron Age fort which is a 'Scheduled Ancient Monument' under national legislation.

Summary of general character

The special interest that justifies designation of Liddington Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors including -

- the historic layout and street pattern of the village;
- the rural setting of the village in a pastoral landscape with significant views of both Liddington Castle and the Thames valley;
- the architectural and historic interest of the village's buildings and other structures - in particular All Saints' Church (Grade I) and Liddington Manor (grade II*);
- the use of local materials, notably thatch and local stone;
- Liden brook and the area's water springs;
- the area's trees and other vegetation especially where this bounds a road or footpath;
- stone boundary walls;
- the special archaeological interest of settlement earthworks, probably Saxon, on the edge of the present-day village.

Highways and streetscape

Setting aside the three late 20th century developments, buildings in the conservation area generally sit in small plots of land fronting the highway but set back behind a low wall or grass verge. Bell Cottages and buildings around The Green depart from this trait but, in the past, overlooked spaces that were formerly more open and public.

Church Road, bearing off Purley Road beside a young horse chestnut tree, is a narrow, un-kerbed lane, sunk below the land either side except at its south-eastern end where a new property, Church Cottage a modest, roughcast-rendered, roadside house with gable-end brick chimneys, now extended to the rear, sits. Church Lane leads to the Church of All Saints from where there are fine views of Liddington Castle. At the end of Church Road are the imposing, Grade II listed Parsonage House and Old Rectory, around which a footpath leads to the main road.

The Church Road area contains five of the village's eleven listed buildings spaced respectfully around the churchyard. This area has a distinct and virtually unspoiled historic atmosphere deriving from the historic buildings, the walls of local stone, mature churchyard yews overhanging the lane and the overbearing influence of the solid medieval church.

The Street forms the spine of the conservation area and, prior to the creation of a bypass in 1939, was the village's main thoroughfare. Moving east from Purley Road, the north side of The Street has a narrow pavement with very old, worn, kerb-stones and a metal fence encloses a field outside the conservation area. From here, one has commanding views of Swindon to the north-west.

By Street House Farm, Bell Lane drops and bends to the left (north) whilst The Street continues past the small post office. Set in the angle of Bell Lane and The Street, Byways forms a disappointing focal point to approach from the west, obscuring the more visually pleasing facade of The Village Inn and Bell Cottages.

The Green was formerly a triangular open space, presumably a public 'village green' in front of a number of cottages. Apart from the access road, the area is now private - fenced gardens have replaced the original green. Two rows of historic cottages (some of which are listed) overlook this space - The Street forming the third side of the triangle.

Beyond The Green, The Street widens and, with the exception of the former Methodist Chapel, development is set well back from the road creating a feeling of spaciousness further enhanced by a small open grassed area beside the entrance to Spinney Close which might be considered as a latter day replacement to 'The Green'.

Beside a footpath and track that leads to Liddington Manor, Spinney Cottage is a historic building which, though altered, retains much of its original character. From here to The Lodge, where a narrow lane leads to the Manor and farm buildings, the north side of the road is thick with vegetation, an important natural feature that gives privacy to Liddington Manor. Beyond The Lodge, The Street is narrow and un-kerbed and, where undisturbed, lined with mature vegetation especially on its southern side. This enclosed length of road contrasts markedly with the openness of the area by Spinney Close.

Throughout the conservation area, a sense of expanse is often quickly contrasted by a sense of enclosure, another example is to be found around the church where the enclosed sunken atmosphere of Church Road is only a few steps from the open views of Liddington Castle.

Bell Lane is narrow and un-kerbed, with a sleepy, leafy rural character given by bordering mature vegetation. After the sharp bend beside The Village Inn there are views of the high land at Upper Wanborough to the north. Here, as elsewhere in the conservation area, this green backdrop reinforces the village's tranquil, rural character. As one progresses along the lane, Lydden Coombe, a distinctive 1930's house becomes visible. A post and rail fence on the left sits uneasily in an area characterised by hedgerows and green embankments.

Ham Road is the continuation of Bell Lane after it crosses the bridge over Liden brook into Wanborough parish. The conservation area boundary covers this rural approach to the village from Wanborough with the banks of Liden brook which runs parallel to Ham Road for 100 metres before turning west. This area was formerly the leat of a mill which was operational until the early part of the twentieth century and has given its name to Millfield House.

Liddenbrook is a modern cul-de-sac development in an uncharacteristic buff coloured brick and its buildings do not contribute to the historic interest of the conservation area. However, the low height of Liddenbrook's buildings and their

uncrowded layout mean that they do not have a strong visual impact on the village. *Spinney Close* leads to Manor View, another modern cul-de-sac development whose buildings do not contribute to the historic interest of the conservation area. From this area, one of the highest parts of the village, the unusual church at Upper Wanborough can be seen.

Local details and features

Liden Brook, the stream which has its source close to Liddington Manor, gives the village its name and is a distinctive element in the conservation area. The footpath that links The Street to Ham Road is heavily wooded and offers a surprising, leafy walk on the edge of the village.

Trees. From a distance Liddington appears well tree'd. Two areas of mature tall trees, around Liddington Manor and in the environs of All Saints Church, dominate the area, provide a setting for the area's buildings and help to blend the village into the landscape. Mature beech, oak and ash are present - dominated by two large redwoods in the grounds of Liddington Manor.

Trees, hedgerows and other greenery add significantly to the rural ambience of the area and those trees, and groups of trees, which are particularly prominent and make a positive contribution to the conservation area are identified on the attached map. In such a well tree'd area, it has not been possible to identify every notable tree and lack of a specific reference should not imply that it must not be of value.

Boundaries. There are a number of stone walls within the conservation area which, through their use of a local material, contribute to the area's distinctive identity.

The most notable stone walls are to be found close to All Saints Church and the south side of The Street close to Street House Farm. Throughout the area large sarsen stones have been used to mark a boundary or as a makeshift roadside kerb. This distinctive local stone is often used as a building material and, for instance, forms the base of the retaining wall to the churchyard. Use of locally available stone, in construction of walls, buildings and kerbs, gives the area its local character distinguishing it as a North Wiltshire village. The most significant boundaries are identified on the attached map.

Lych gate:- At the entrance to the church is an attractive lych gate erected by parishioners to commemorate those who died in the 1914-18 War.

Victorian conduits:- The village is notable for a number of cast iron Victorian conduits which are visible remnants of a former way of life. One is to be found at the entrance The Green and another at the top of Bell Lane. A third pump has been relocated close to the junction of Purley Road and The Street.

Other items of street furniture worthy of note include a red K6 phone-box, a QE II red post-box beside the Post Office and two road direction signs: a black and white finger post opposite the Post Office and a board at the east end of The Street before its junction with the B 4192. These seemingly insignificant items are typical of a particular period and add to the overall character of the area. With a minimum of maintenance they will, in time, take on a greater historic interest and become attractive features of interest.

Architectural and historic character

The conservation area contains buildings of a variety of ages. Eleven historic buildings are listed including All Saints Church (grade I) and Liddington Manor (grade II*).

On the western side of the Purley Road, Church of All Saints' is the only grade I listed building in Liddington Parish. It has a Norman font bowl (c.1200) and a 13th century north aisle which has been little altered. The building has stone walls and a stone tile roof. In the grounds is a 15th century stone cross base, listed grade II.

Three grade II listed buildings stand close by: Parsonage House, whose core is a late 17th century house in chalk rubble; The Rectory, which dates from 1824, and, adjacent to the former school site, a thatched 17th century cottage.

Liddington Manor is a small, mid-17th century manor house with rubble-stone walls (with remnants of render) and a stone tile roof. The mid-19th century red brick and thatch stable block nearby is listed grade II.

Number 10 The Street (Inglenook Cottage), 16 & 16a The Green and 24 The Green with April Cottage are 18th century thatched cottages listed grade II. Number 70 The Street (Manor Cottage) is a grade II thatched cottage of 1827.

There is no strong cohesive style or period but the village's humbler cottages have a simple form, pitched roof, small timber casement windows and substantial chimney stacks. Two-storey buildings are the predominant form, but older buildings of one-and-a-half storey survive. These vernacular buildings are typically constructed of rubble stone or brick, with brick dressings and thatched roof. Several stone cottages are now rendered or painted, perhaps to protect the friable local stone. Inglenook Cottage, April Cottage, and 70 The Street are listed buildings but other 'unlisted' cottages, such as Spinney Cottage and Homelea, though altered and extended, still reflect the characteristic vernacular style and materials of the conservation area.

Historically, many buildings in Liddington were thatched and seven thatched buildings remain. Holly Tree House, Church Road, is a 1990s thatched dwelling and the steep pitch of No. 2, The Street and Spinney Cottage suggests that they were also once thatched.

The village's oldest, and most prestigious buildings, All Saints' Church and Liddington Manor, are roofed with stone slates. Thatch, natural slate and clay tile prevail on the village's historic buildings. Both Parsonage House and Homelea are roofed with clay pantiles; slate became popular in the nineteenth century, for instance at The Old Rectory of 1825 (grade II) and Manor Farm.²

² An Appeal is at present being heard in relation to a residential development in the grounds of Manor Farm APP/U3935/A/05/1179087

Key buildings of interest³.

English Heritage advice⁴ is that, "most of the buildings in a conservation area will help to shape its character in one way or another" and in addition to the area's listed buildings, there are a number of other buildings which make a strong contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the area.

Numbers 11, 13 & 15 The Street (Bell Cottages) date from around the mid 19th century. The 'Village Pub' occupies the northern part of this row and this, fronted by Byways, forms the stop to the view from the western end of The Street. This row of little brick cottages with a rubble-stone back-wall has significant local value and interest and serves as a reminder of the development of the settlement.

Myrtle House at the top of Bell Lane is a good example, relatively unaltered, of a modest Victorian villa. Though these villas are common elsewhere, for example in the Edwardian expansion of Swindon's Old Town, this is a pleasant curiosity in this rural conservation area. Similarly, Lydden Coombe is a building typical of its period - a 1930s style of architecture derived loosely from the Arts and Crafts Movement. It is highly visible from Bell Lane.

At The Street's western end, Street House Farm holds a key position with gable end to the road but prominent in the approach from Purley Road. It is a tall building with a steeply pitched roof and windows with thick timber mullions and leaded lights - possibly 17th century in origin but altered and extended. At the other (eastern) end of The Street, Manor Farm is a characteristic Victorian farmhouse, rendered and lined to imitate stonework with ground floor bay windows, a symmetrical facade, Welsh slate roof and tall brick chimneys.

These, and other key buildings, are identified on the attached map.

Archaeological interest

An open area immediately to the east of the village contains traces of probable Saxon settlement remains and, on the sides of a steep sided valley, or coombe, a system of ancient strip lynchets.

³ See Swindon Borough Local Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance: 'Buildings, Structures and Facades of Local Importance'.

⁴ Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, March 1997

In view of its archaeological interest, its special historical interest as part of the early development of Liddington and its proximity to the present day village, the field containing the settlement remains was added to the conservation area in 1995.

The well preserved strip lynchets lie in open countryside just beyond the conservation area boundary. They have considerable local importance and are protected by their inclusion in the County Sites and Monuments Record.

Negative factors

To a limited extent, the character of the village has been adversely affected by new housing, somewhat out of character with its surroundings. But the old road and street patterns are still clearly evident and the village retains a historic character, whose essential nature can be preserved by ensuring that any new development is not out of scale or character with its surroundings.

Where new development has occurred, the accompanying wide vehicular accesses, specified to meet highway safety guidelines, have been to the detriment of the rural character of the lane - an unfortunate example is the entrance to 66 The Street. Trees and other vegetation have been lost and with them, the characteristic sense of enclosure. Additional accesses would further erode the area's character.

Late twentieth century development in Liddington is unremarkable. Brick has been commonly used but has not always been carefully chosen to harmonise with the colour and texture of the local red brick. Use of artificial stone, for example in the extension to the Village Inn and Cardigan House in Liddenbrook, is out of harmony with the colour and texture of the area's characteristic natural stone.

Scope for improvement

There are a number of signs in the area around the church (No Parking, No Access to Playing Fields, No Dogs etc) which would benefit from an integrated approach to size, colours and location.

Long term tree management and planting need careful consideration.

Useful publications

Victoria County History of Wiltshire

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Swindon Borough Local Plan (1999).

Supplementary Planning Guidance: 'Good Design: House Extensions' (Thamesdown Borough 1990).

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

Conservation Areas (Swindon Borough Council 1997).

Planning Policy Guidance 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment.

Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, June 1997.

Conservation Area Practice, English Heritage, October 1995.

LIDDINGTON VILLAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN











MANAGEMENT ISSUES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	ACTIONS REQUIRED
Planning & Design		
<i>Existing Modern Development</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited modern development within conservation area. Some modern dwellings impact on the conservation area when viewed from the road. Eg Lindenbrook. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure future development proposals are strictly controlled in terms of design and materials 	Consultation with:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & conservation department
<i>Future Development</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad-hoc planning applications, for alterations, conversions and refurbishment of properties. • Potential reuse and conversion of underused land and redundant farm buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure future development proposals are strictly controlled in terms of design and materials. • Conversion of redundant buildings needs to be carefully considered in the light of the existing conservation area and how new uses may impact on the local environment. 	Consultation with:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & conservation department
Public Realm & Amenity		
<i>Signage & street furniture</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street signage limited to mandatory speed signs. • Public footpath runs alongside river/spring line to village. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all existing signage is maintained in good order. • Periodic maintenance to footpath area will help to ensure longterm continued use of this asset. 	Consultation with:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & conservation department & • Liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways & Utility companies.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	ACTIONS REQUIRED
Public Realm & Amenity		
<i>Shops, Retail & Community</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No shops are present within boundary of conservation area – Nearest shops located within Swindon. • Public House and refurbished village hall provide well utilised community facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unlikely that a shop would be viable in this location due to the limited number of properties in this area. 	
<i>Parking</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No immediate concerns with parking • Most properties have off road parking. • Grass verges and gullies/ditches present to either side of lane through village – Bell Road/Ham Lane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing parking arrangements appears to work satisfactorily • Any proposals for implementing pavements would not be supported in this area.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways safety.
<i>Traffic</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only traffic local to the village uses this narrow road (The Street) within village area. Purley Road (B4192) by-passes Village. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that current road surfaces are maintained to useable standard. • Ensure grass verges are maintained and repaired where necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued liaison and co-operation with SBC traffic management & highways safety.

Liddington Conservation Area

Key to map

Given the complexity of the area, the omission of any feature from this map should not be interpreted as evidence that it is not of interest or value.

-  Boundary of conservation area
-  Listed building
-  Key building of interest
-  Significant tree or trees
-  Area of water
-  Important green space
-  Wooded area
-  Significant wall or boundary
-  Area with distinct identity
-  Important view

