

Bath and North East Somerset
Planning Services

Hinton Blewett Conservation Area Appraisal



July 2014



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Introduction

Hinton Blewett was identified as being of special architectural and historic interest and designated as a Conservation Area (hereafter 'CA') in 1993.

The Council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of CAs in exercising its planning powers and to conduct periodic re-appraisal of boundaries. This provides a consistent and sound basis upon which to determine planning and other applications.

The appraisal identifies features which contribute toward the character of the area and those that detract from it. This enables local residents to participate in identifying features which are important to the special character of their area, and provides a base upon which to develop proposals for preservation and enhancement.



Summary of Special Interest

- The exceptional landscape setting overlooking the Chew Valley. The village is situated on a plateau affording it many fine views of the surrounding countryside.
- The Barbury as a remnant of early medieval settlement provides an excellent focal point for the CA, functioning as a key part of the traditional appeal of the village.
- The characteristics of Hinton Blewett as a medieval planned village typical of other North Somerset settlements and critical to the setting of the CA.
- Thick, well preserved hedgerows provide an organic sense of enclosure that permeates the village and contributes to its rural character.
- The medieval field patterns that provide a key part of the setting of the CA.
- The traditional road layout and signage little affected by modern street furniture or highway development maintains the character of the area.
- Widespread use of local building materials such as natural stone and timber, lime based mortars and renders.



Assessment of Special Interest

Location and Landscape Setting

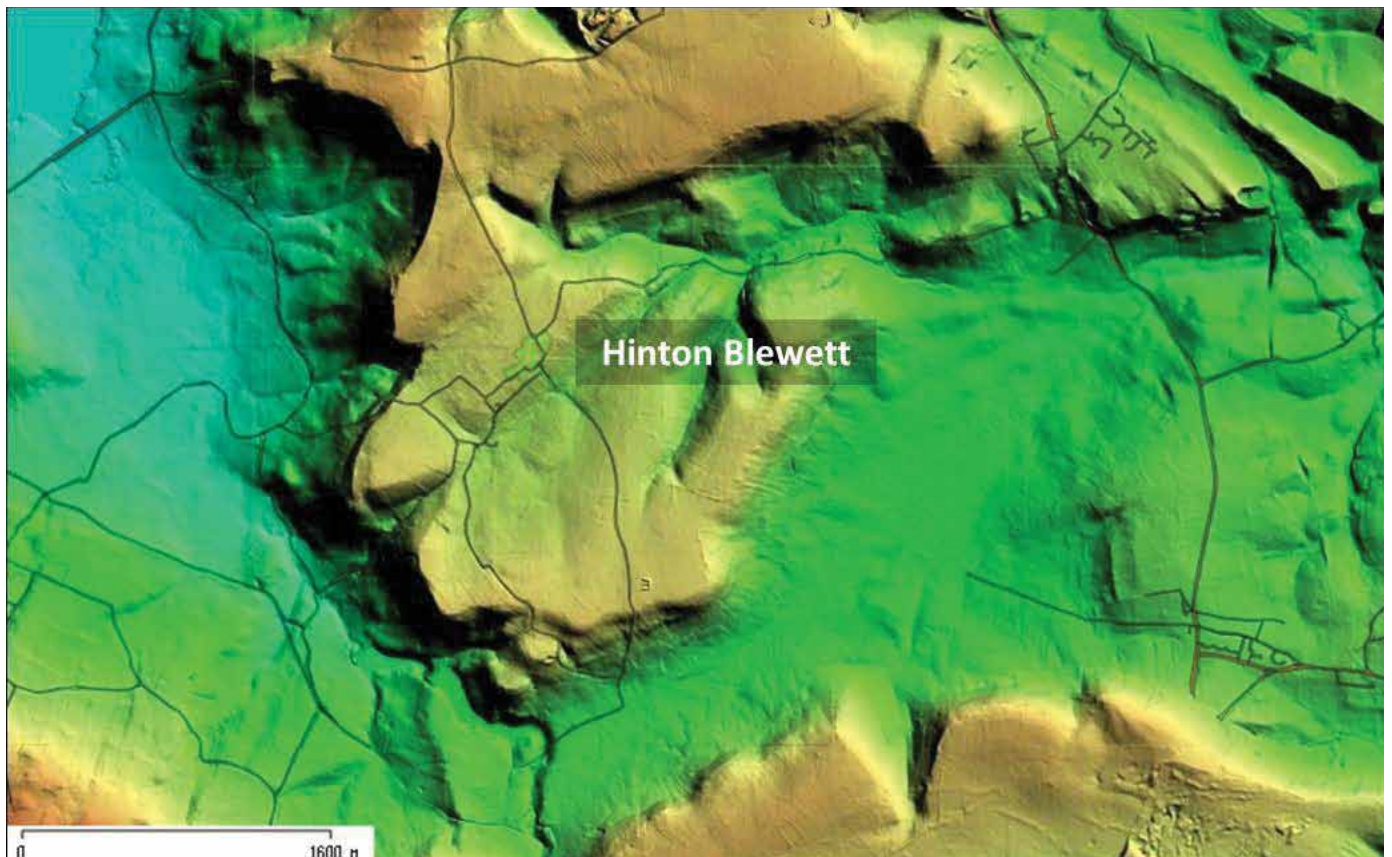
Hinton Blewett is a small historic settlement occupying an elevated position 13 miles south of Bristol and 13 miles west of Bath. The parish is large but sparsely populated and includes the hamlet of South Widcombe. Hinton Blewett is surrounded by several larger villages including Temple Cloud, Bishop Sutton and West Harptree.

The village is on the south western edge of an undulating plateau extending from Newton St Loe in the north east and is within the Mendips Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is situated in high quality pastureland and its elevated position affords extensive views of the surrounding landscape.

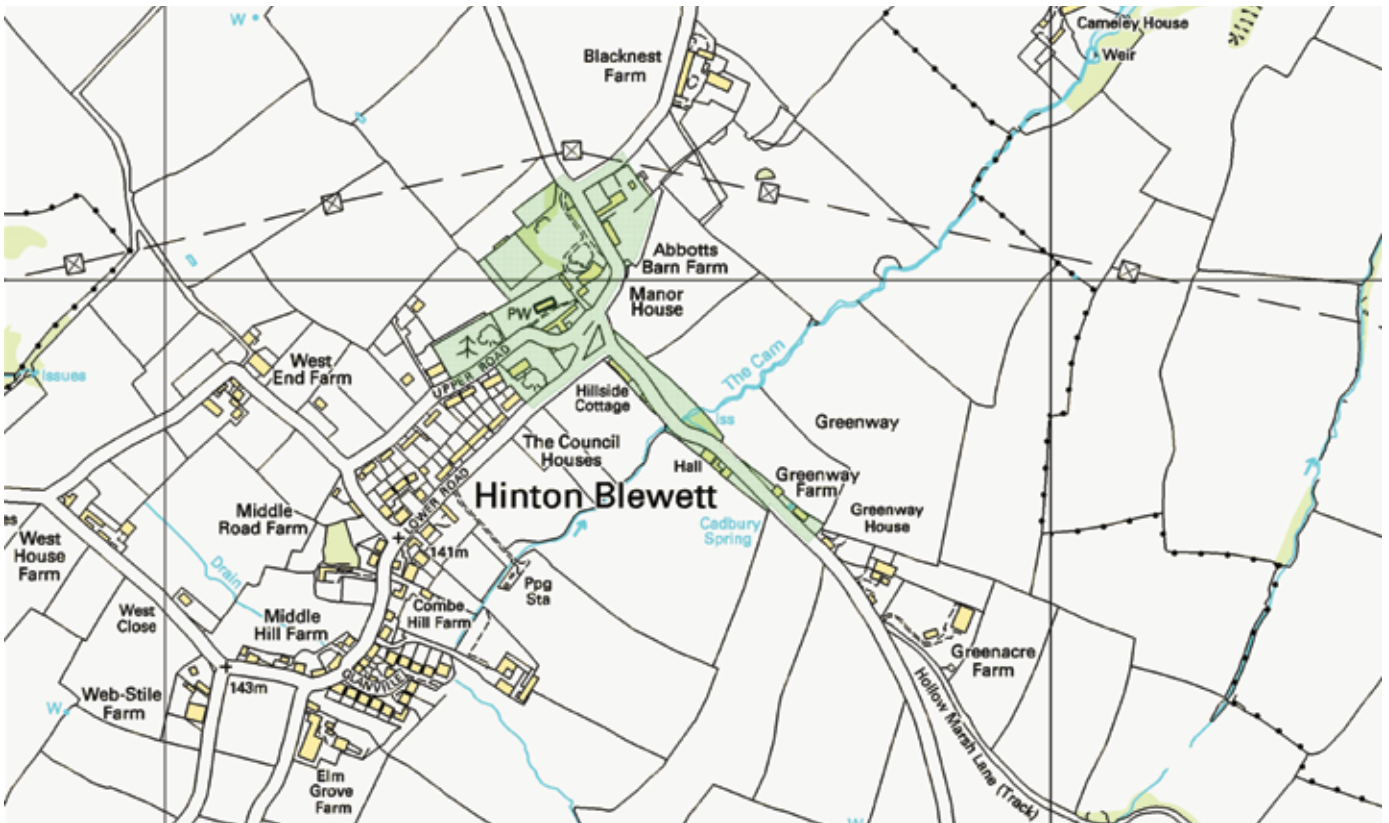
The local network of rights of way is well used by visiting ramblers and villagers alike. These paths provide excellent views and reinforce the importance of the outstanding landscape setting.

The setting of Hinton Blewett is characterised by rich agricultural land consisting of irregular, ancient, small field patterns bounded by well-established hedgerows. No significant woodland or development obscures the open vistas that accentuate the sense of rural isolation.

The character and significance of the built environment is enhanced by, and dependent upon, its agricultural landscape setting and its physical, visual and historic relationship with it.



The terrain map above shows the village on a land plateau.



Modern map showing conservation area

Historic Development

The earliest recorded human activity is evidenced by finds of worked flints in surrounding fields, suggesting occupation in the Neolithic period. The fertile, well drained soils provided suitable conditions for agricultural settlement from the earliest period.

The Domesday Book entry for Hinton Blewett identifies the settlement as 'Hantone', meaning 'high enclosure' in Old English. The reference is likely to relate to a Saxon enclosure, south of the modern settlement. The settlement was subsequently remodelled as a medieval planned village, in keeping with other villages in the area. Surviving ridge and furrow field patterns from this period are evidence of an open field or strip system.

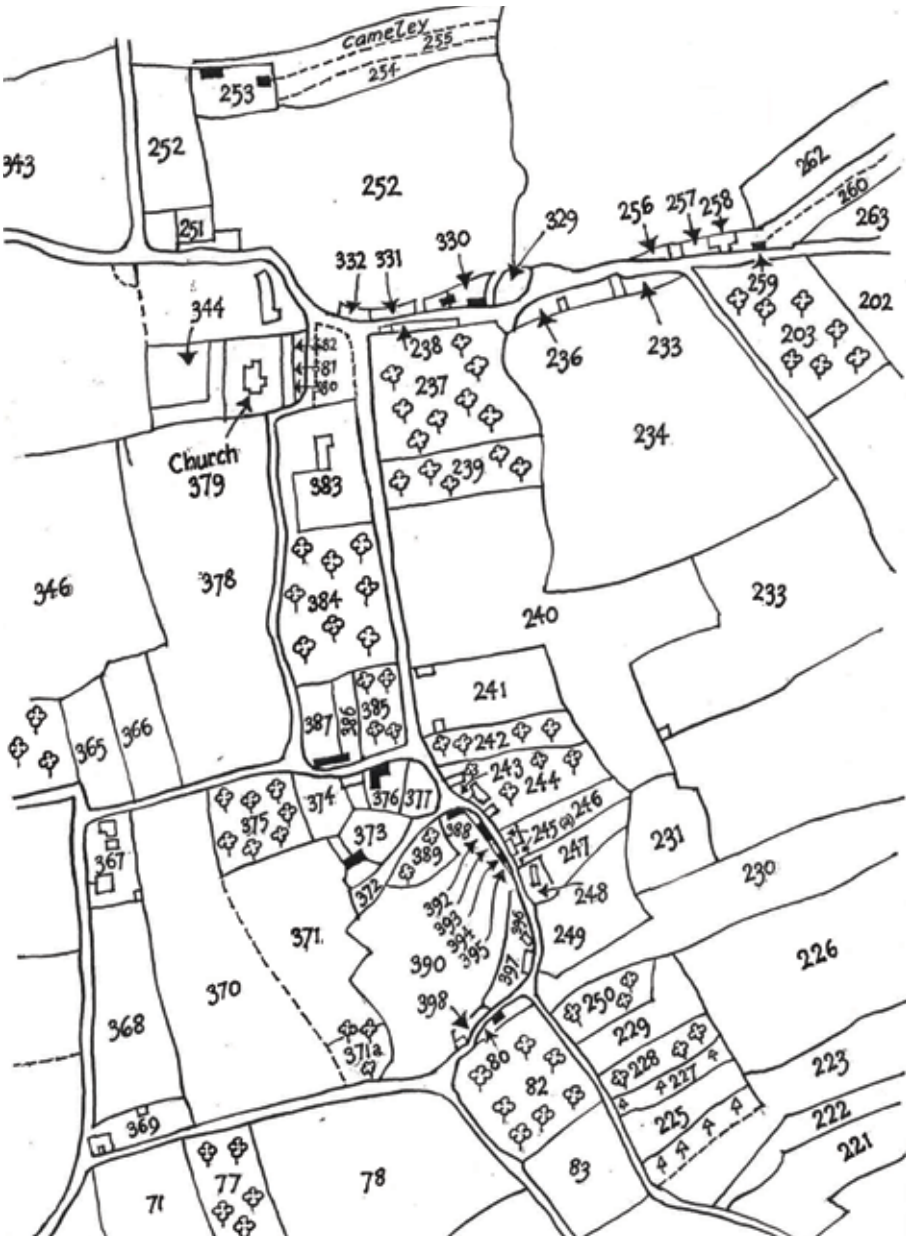
Abbots Barn was held by Keynsham Abbey, which also received an annual income from the Rectory. The present church dates back to the late thirteenth-century and several other buildings in the village have mid to late medieval origins as evidenced by surviving internal roof construction.

Hinton Blewett was largely unaffected by industrial activity which brought significant development to neighbouring settlements such as Pensford.

Hinton Blewett was however affected by the social impacts of the Industrial Revolution. This period resulted in significant rural depopulation, as employment substantially shifted from agriculture to urban based industry. The 1836 tithe record shows the parish at 1,079 acres, with land use at 14% for arable land, 7% orchard, 3% coppice/woodland and 76% pasture. Between 1841 and 1891 the number of farm labourers dropped from 46 to 8.

This decrease coincided with a decline in the overall village population which fell by over half in the same 50 year period as workers and their families migrated to towns. Agricultural workers of the period were generally housed in 'tied' cottages near the farm where they were employed, and empty and redundant cottages fell into disrepair together with several more significant farmhouses during the period. By the twentieth-century sixteen farmhouses shown on the 1836 parish map had disappeared.

The exodus of agricultural labourers had a significant impact on the built form and character of the village. Gaps where farmhouses and tied cottages once stood are evident, and the population density did not recover. The depopulation that occurred in the nineteenth-and 20th centuries and the consequent lack of development is particularly evident in Hinton Blewett and a key characteristic of the CA and its built form.



Map of lost farmhouses



Archaeological Significance

One official archaeological survey is recorded in the CA, a 2008 watching brief associated with sewer construction. Victorian glass and pottery was discovered but no finds from earlier periods were found.

Several field walks and amateur excavations have been undertaken with finds verified by Somerset Heritage Museum. The finds include Roman coins dated to 200AD from the Barbury and Church Cottage gardens and Neolithic flints in the surround fields and throughout the village.

The probable Saxon enclosure to the south of the village is outside the CA boundary but provides a significant link to early origins and would merit further archaeological investigation.

Given the above information it can be concluded that significant archaeological potential exists within the Hinton Blewett CA and environs.

Barbury

Plan Form and Spatial Analysis

Hinton Blewett is a medieval planned settlement with a nucleated plan form. It bears close resemblance to the plan form of nearby East Harptree, and follows the form of the principal street, back lane (joined to the main street at both ends) with the church at one end.

Sixteenth-century and earlier ridge and furrow field patterns survive throughout the parish and follow present day field boundaries. This suggests that field boundaries and field patterns have altered little and can be regarded as an important survival and part of a significant historic landscape.

Building density in the CA is highest near the church with the majority of listed buildings found here. The CA extends down towards Hollowmarsh Lane with a regular but low density pattern of agricultural cottages and farm buildings.

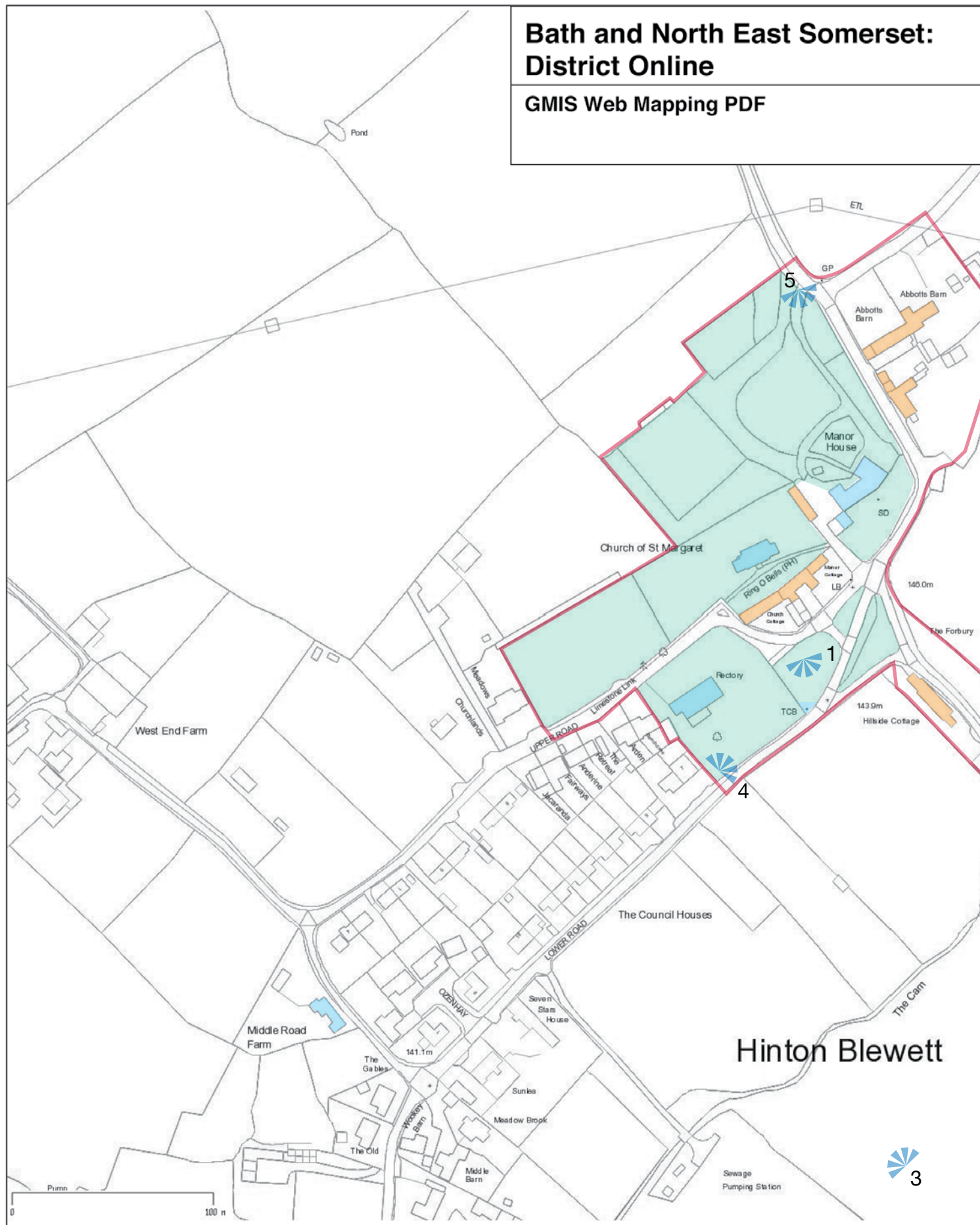
The farmhouses and scattered agricultural labourers' cottages throughout the wider village are divided by the open spaces of former orchards, pastureland and in some cases lost buildings. Linear development has taken place towards Greenway as ancillary agricultural buildings have developed away from the traditional settlement core. Upper Road and Lower Road remained free of development until the 1950's which may be an indication of continuing worker exodus after the late nineteenth-century depopulation.



Hinton Blewett Conservation Area

**Bath and North East Somerset:
District Online**

GMIS Web Mapping PDF



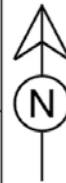
Date: 29-1-2013






Scale: 1:3252

Map Centre - easting / northing:
359497 / 156942

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

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-  Listed Buildings
-  Undesignated Heritage Assets
-  Important Green Spaces
-  Important Views
-  Conservation Area Boundary

Key Views and Vistas

Map

- View Point 1: The Barbury looking east, south and west (Panorama)
- View Point 2: Right of Way looking west (views of Manor House and church)
- View Point 3: Right of Way looking north and north-west (views of Manor House and church)
- View Point 4: View looking east and south-east into the Barbury
- View Point 5: View into CA looking south on right boundary wall of Manor House and left Abbots Barn Farm
- View Point 6: View from the west showing church and Manor House

The Barbury itself as the centre of the medieval planned village affords excellent views out over the surrounding pastureland to the south. From almost anywhere in the village views out over the countryside are characterised by rural scenes of grazing cattle and a verdant agricultural landscape.



Key View Point 1

The scattered farmhouses and medieval village core sit comfortably in the landscape due to their positioning, form, massing and the use of local, natural building materials which provide a strong sense of place. More recent development is not regarded as consistent with the established



historic built form and is discordant with its character. Future development in and around the CA should thoughtfully and sympathetically reflect the existing form including established building heights, massing and use of local traditional materials.



Key View Point 2



Key View Point 3



Key View Point 4



Key View Point 5



Key View Point 6

Character Analysis

Architectural and Historic Qualities

The CA contains four buildings on the statutory list of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic interest. These are the Church of St Margaret (formerly All Saints), the Old Rectory, the Manor House and a red K6 telephone kiosk. The CA is highly unusual in that the architectural record shows no new buildings completed since the late nineteenth-century. The undesignated, modest vernacular buildings are regarded as heritage assets and their retention and preservation is important for the character of the settlement.

The most significant building is the Church of St Margaret, which is Grade I listed. It is likely that this was one of the very earliest permanent structures in the village. The Church is the only significant break with the generally low rise character of the built form, providing an appropriate landmark building. In common with some other North Somerset churches it contains a fine Norman font.

The Old Rectory has a seventeenth-century core with later alterations mostly from the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, at the peak of local prosperity. There are two unusually large 28 pane sash windows which are noteworthy features.

The Manor House is a large two storey eighteenth-century building with nineteenth-century alterations bounded by a high stone wall all constructed in local limestone. The high status of this impressive house alludes to the period of agricultural prosperity in Hinton Blewett preceding the significant social changes resulting from the impact of the Industrial Revolution and subsequent migration to the towns.

There are some examples of historic street furniture which make a positive contribution including the listed K6 telephone kiosk and an increasingly rare Somerset County Council cast iron fingerpost and an historic red post office letter box set into the stone wall outside Manor Cottage.



Undesignated Heritage Assets

The most significant buildings in the CA are listed but undesignated buildings in the CA comprise attractive cottages, farmhouses and barns that are regarded as locally important heritage assets constructed using local building materials and make a positive contribution to the character of the CA. These undesignated buildings add to the coherency of the CA in their form, massing and use of local materials and building techniques and contribute to the sense of place. A detailed survey of these buildings could help identify and preserve their character.

Church Cottage is part of an earlier row of two storey cottages just to the south of the Church of St Margaret. The Ring of Bells public house and Manor Cottage extend this row which occupies a prominent central location within the CA. They are constructed of local rubble limestone under clay roof tiles and provide an attractive backdrop to the Barbury – ‘Bury’ having the same meaning as Barbury – a fortified place. The rear elevations of these cottages remain largely unaltered and provide a fitting setting for the church.

Abbots Barn Farm is a complex of eighteenth and nineteenth-century farm buildings constructed mainly from squared and coursed local limestone rubble.

Several modest stone built cottages, farm buildings and an old schoolhouse, which appear to be largely unaltered and well maintained, extend the village in a linear fashion down Greenway Lane to the south of the main settlement.



Entrance to the Priory via the Barbury



Abbots Barn Farm in foreground, a locally important building, and the Manor House centre in the background



Entrance to Ring O' Bells Free House



Hillside Cottage located just south of the Barbury



Village Hall



Greenway House



Greenway Cottage (Front)



Greenway Cottage (Back)

Activity and former uses

The agricultural tradition of Hinton Blewett that, from the archaeological record, has ancient, pre-historic origins continues to the present day with several working farms within the village.



Trees and green spaces

Tall, dense and well preserved hedgerows are a key and defining characteristic providing a sense of enclosure and contrasting with the dry stone walls of the Cotswolds to the north. The hedgerows also define the shapes of irregular field patterns and divide the surrounding landscape into a classic and attractive patchwork. This has remained largely unchanged since at least the 16th century evidenced by their relationship and alignment with surviving remnants of mediaeval ridge and furrow. Hedgerows provide vital wildlife corridors for local fauna such as dormice, bats and birds. The hedgerows in and around the village make a significant and positive contribution and their preservation and maintenance is important.

Gardens and open spaces within the village provide important spaces for the setting of buildings and are an important aspect of the setting of the CA.

The churchyard and paddock are also important green spaces. The churchyard is still in use with many burials of modern origin. The paddock, located north of Upper Road, helps retain the village's green and open setting, and allows views in and out of the village.

The Barbury is a significant green area at the centre of the medieval core of the village. It provides a valuable link to the historic development of the village. The name suggests it may have had a defensive function. The area has survived unaltered in size and form. It is also part of the current amenity and as such any development in or around this area is likely to have a detrimental impact on the character of the CA.

The Barbury



Opportunities for enhancement

The use of traditional building materials is prevalent but unsympathetic changes to some details such as windows, doors and the use of modern render have negatively affected the appearance of traditional buildings. Restoring and reinstating traditional and appropriately detailed windows and doors would enhance the character of the buildings. The use of traditional building materials such as timber, lime mortars and renders as opposed to UPVC and cement based materials is important in preserving the traditional character and maintaining traditionally constructed buildings.

Trees recently planted around the Barbury restrict views to the surrounding countryside. When planting careful thought should be given to the protection and enhancement of key views.

There is a requirement for the Local Planning Authority to respond to the issues regarding climate change and the emerging energy deficit. There is in principle support for renewable energy, but this must be weighed against the impact on the historic environment. Hinton Blewett and its setting is regarded as being sensitive and the implementation of micro generation such as solar panels and wind farms need to consider the impact on the CA and its setting.

Neutral areas

There is some modern development that has not responded to local vernacular building styles, plot widths or settlement plan form and has resulted in suburbanisation. Any new development is encouraged to engage with the traditional, existing built form, reference detailing and use local materials to enhance the conservation area.

General condition

The condition of buildings is generally good. There are no derelict or empty buildings and the church benefits from regular use. There is evidence of high quality repair using appropriate materials such as lime mortar. There are some examples of repair to historic buildings using cement-based materials which have caused harm and should be avoided.

Summary of issues and recommended management proposals

1. It is recommended that an Article 4 Direction be considered to control changes to doors and windows, roof coverings, insertion of roof lights and the demolition of walls under 1m high. This would help preserve important traditional architectural detailing and prevent the deterioration of the historic townscape.
2. A CA extension is not recommended at this stage. An attempt to encompass the medieval plan form and probable Saxon enclosure of the early settlement would necessitate inclusion of several areas of modern housing and thus reduce the quality and character of the CA.
3. Particular attention should be paid to changes affecting the setting of the CA. In particular special consideration should be given to the medieval plan form, probable Saxon enclosure to the west of the village and other heritage assets crucial to the setting of the CA.
4. Enforcement action should be considered in cases of unauthorised works expressly where works adversely affect the character of the CA or listed buildings.

5. When works are carried out to the highway or streetscape the opportunity should be taken to reinstate traditional signage and, where relevant, should be considered with reference to the Council's adopted Streetscape Manual.
6. Hedgerows make a significant contribution to the special character. Particular attention should be paid to applications made under hedgerow regulations.
7. The use of underground cables for services would help prevent the streetscape and wider landscape being devalued and adversely affected by overhead wires.
8. Archaeological investigation in and around the location of the probable Saxon enclosure is highly recommended. This will provide a clear mandate for preservation and help more accurately identify the early origins of the settlement.

Community involvement

Public support and involvement is essential to the successful management of CAs and as such the first draft of this appraisal was sent to Hinton Blewett Parish Council for comments and consideration. A public meeting was held at Hinton Blewett village hall and the Council presented the appraisal to the community and this marked the beginning of the formal consultation period.

Furthermore the preparation of the appraisal was undertaken with the kind and helpful assistance of individual members of the Parish Council, local residents and especially local historian Rosemary Walker and Parish Council Chair Elizabeth Brimmell all of whom provided invaluable assistance.

Planning policy context

Conservation Areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which places a statutory duty on local planning authorities to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest.

A conservation area is defined as: *'...an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'*.

The quality and interest of the area as a whole, rather than individual buildings, is the main consideration when designating such areas.

Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of most buildings and tree felling/surgery. The scale of extensions that may be added to existing dwellings as "permitted development" is also limited.

While there may be resource implications from higher expectations for the maintenance of existing buildings and the quality of new works, for most owners these are outweighed by the cachet of designation.

Designation also provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

Section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and an appraisal provides the means for this.

Section 72 requires that, in considering applications for development in a Conservation Area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of that area.

Conservation Area appraisals are considered by English Heritage to be vital to the conservation of these special areas. The content of this statement is based on the suggested approach set out by English Heritage.

Furthermore Hinton Blewett is situated within the Mendip Hills AONB where the significant controls and policy designations of the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-2014 apply to planning control in the Conservation Area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for sustainable development, which includes the conservation of the historic environment. When developments are proposed, the Framework requires the significance of heritage assets – archaeology, listed buildings and conservation areas – to be defined and it stresses that 'as heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.'

The NPPF is further explained in the National Planning Practice Guidance. Chapter 18 provides answers to a series of questions about the way in which heritage assets should be addressed through the planning system.

The Council's policy for planning, including the historic environment, is currently under review. Until the Core Strategy and subsequent local planning policies are adopted, the current policies, saved from the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan, remain part of the Development Plan. Further information on the current Development Plan for Bath & North East Somerset can be viewed on the Council's website by following the link to the Planning Policy homepage or by contacting the Planning Policy Team on 01225 477548.

General Guidance and Policy

- *The National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG 2012*
- *The National Planning Practice Guidance, DCLG 2014*
- *Saved policies from the Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan 2007*
- *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, English Heritage (2011)*
- *Conservation Principles: Policies & Guidance, English Heritage 2008*
- *Bath & North East Somerset, Living in a Conservation Area, 2003*
- *Bath & North East Somerset Streetscape Manual, (Adopted April 2005)*
- *Archaeology in Bath and North East Somerset: Supplementary Planning Guidance 2004*
- *Rural Landscapes of Bath and North East Somerset: A Landscape Character Assessment, Adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance 2003*
- *Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation Methodology, Chapman, 1997*
- *Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2009-2014)*
- *The 1984 revision to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest*
- *Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan 2007 as revised*
- *Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation (1995)*

Further reading

Pevsner, N (1958) *The Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol*

Pevsner, N (2011) *The Buildings of England: Somerset North and Bristol*

Walker, R (2007) *Puddings without Suet, Life in Hinton Blewett 1840's – 1940's*: Fiducia Press London

www.parish-council.com/HintonBlewettParishCouncil/ is the main site for the village with some brief historical notes and details of the parish council.

Field Boundaries Project, BANES (2006)

Streetscape Manual, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Adopted April 2005

English Heritage, *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2012)

English Heritage, *Understanding Place: an Introduction* (2010)

English Heritage, *Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments in a Planning and Development Context* (2010)

English Heritage, *Valuing Places: Good Practice in Conservation Areas* (2011)

Glossary

Listed buildings: Buildings on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Heritage asset: A designated or undesignated building, monument, archaeological site, place, area or landscape identified as possessing local or national significance and heritage and cultural value meriting special consideration in planning decisions and the planning process.

Conservation Area: Defined by English Heritage as '*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'. Some permitted development rights are removed for owners of buildings in a Conservation Area and special planning controls may apply.

Article 4 Direction: A direction under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. Article 4 Directions remove specified permitted development rights and can be made to cover parts.

Contact Details

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Planning & Transport Development
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Bath
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Telephone: (01225) 477000

Further contact details can be found on B&NES Council's website: www.bathnes.gov.uk

Contact for advice regarding:

- Listed Buildings and Listed Building Consent
- Archaeology
- Conservation Areas
- Works to trees within Conservation Areas
- Planning Permission
- Planning Policy
- Urban Design

All the above teams are located in Planning & Transport Development based in Bath.

This document about the Hinton Blewett Conservation Area can be made available in a range of community languages, large print, Braille, on tape, electronic and accessible formats from Planning Services on 01225 394100

Prepared by Bath & North East Somerset Council Planning Services.