

Bath and North East Somerset
Planning Services

Claverton Conservation Area Character Appraisal



March 2007



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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Introduction

Claverton was recognised as being of special architectural and historic interest and was designated a Conservation Area in November 1981.

Bath and North East Somerset Council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning powers, and to periodically reappraise the boundaries. This appraisal is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The appraisal identifies elements which contribute toward the character of the area and those that detract from it. This provides a base upon which to develop proposals for preservation and enhancement.

The preparation of the statement also enabled local residents to participate in the identification of features which are important to the special character of the area in which they live.



Summary of Special Interest

- The exceptional setting in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- The compact layout of the village set into the hillside and aligned along the contours
- The contrast between intimate enclosure and the fine open space of the surrounding countryside
- The historic remnants of the Manorial village, including walled gardens, groups of ancillary buildings, drives, gate piers and other vestiges of the ancient Manor
- The association with the new Claverton Manor building and the gardens of the American Museum
- The strong connection with Ralph Allen, whose mausoleum is in Claverton Churchyard
- The uniformity of traditional building materials
- The absence of road markings, signage and other paraphernalia; informal grass verges emphasising the rural setting of the village
- High stone boundary walls and walled gardens
- The superb views east across the Avon valley
- The high proportion of listed buildings and monuments, particularly the parish church and the collection of buildings at Manor Farm



Assessment of Special Interest

Location and setting

Claverton is a small village situated in idyllic countryside on the western slopes of the Avon valley, about two miles east of the city of Bath. The village retains its rural character despite the proximity of the city of Bath and the University.

Claverton lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Bristol-Bath Green Belt. It lies within the 'Bathford and Limpley Stoke Valley' area as defined in *Rural Landscapes of Bath and North East Somerset*¹.

The development of the village is related to its topography, being *'located within reasonable distance of the river, close enough to be accessible, high enough up the valley to be away from potential flooding yet protected from the prevailing winds by the surrounding hills – a classic location for an early settlement'*². It is one of several settlements sited along a spring-line, benefiting from a natural water source originating in the surrounding hills.

The village is linked to the later Claverton Manor, now the American Museum, which overlooks the village from an elevated position further up the hill. Claverton Manor garden is on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest. The area includes the Jacobean steps and balustrades within the earlier Manor House grounds.

The Conservation Area takes in Claverton Manor Farm and outbuildings, the parish church and various dwellings and farm buildings set along a narrow north-south road through the village.

The busy Warminster Road (A36) is a former turnpike road and was built in the early 1830s, bypassing the village to the east. A steep route to Claverton Down runs west towards Bath from the southern edge of the village.

The setting of the village, nestled into the hillside and surrounded by wooded slopes and meadows, is one of the finest in the area. There are panoramic views eastward to the hills beyond, and to the west the land slopes upward, framed by woodland, with lush meadows and grazing livestock completing the pastoral scene.

A small area on the eastern side of the Warminster Road is included in the Conservation Area. This is a 19th century extension to the village, incorporating two modest stone buildings, with characteristic stone boundary walls. The narrow lane between these buildings leads down to a stone bridge over the Kennet and Avon canal. Although not in the Conservation Area, the canal and the associated structures and activity contribute considerably to the attractive rural setting of the Conservation Area.

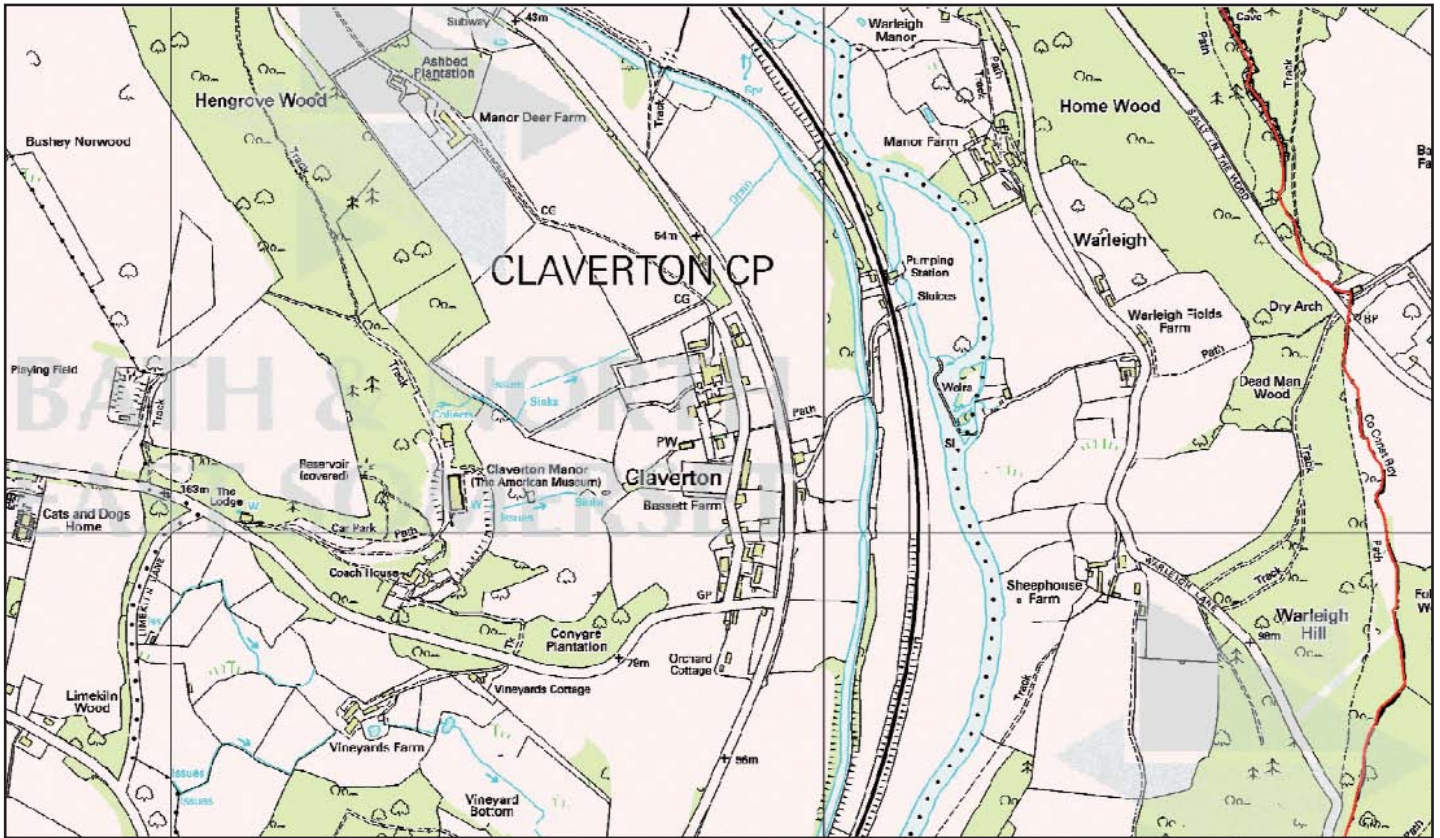
1. B&NES 2003

2. 'Claverton and its Manors', *America in Britain*, James Ayres, 2001



The canal and associated structures contribute to the attractive rural setting of the Conservation Area





Modern map of Claverton

Historic Development and Archaeology

It is thought that the section of the Roman 'Fosse way', between Bath and Cirencester, passed near the village and crossed the river at this point.

Claverton is Saxon in origin, and is mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Clafertone' possibly from the Saxon word for clover, signifying the many meadows associated with the village, or from another old English word for water lilies. Saxon remains have been found at various sites in the village.

The settlement belonged to the religious manor of Claverton, which, following the Norman Conquest, was given by William II to Hugolinus, a commissioner involved in the compilation of the Domesday Book.

Claverton was the site of a skirmish during the English civil war in the lead up to the Battle of Lansdown in 1643.

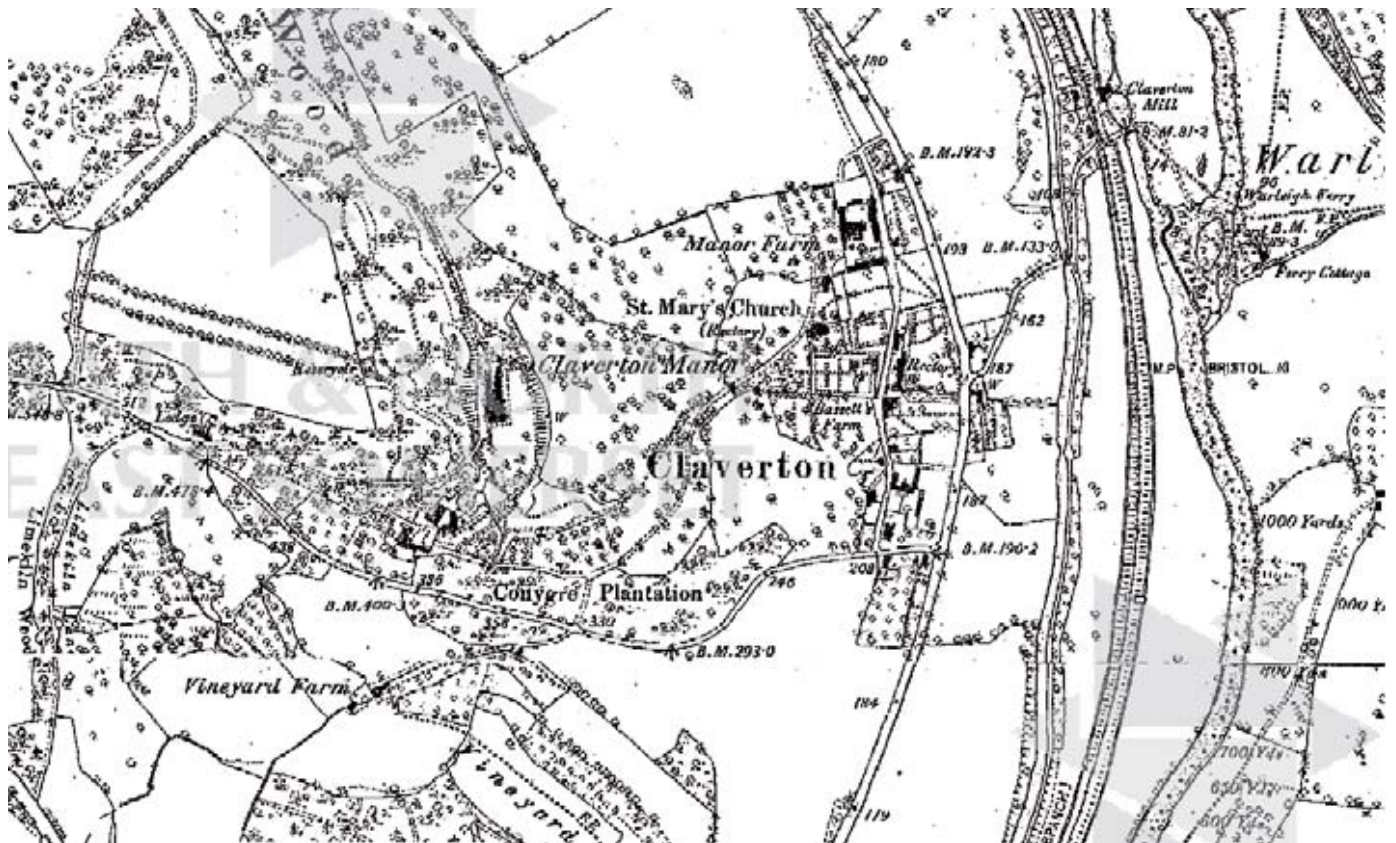
It is thought that a manor house building or religious court for use by the bishops of Bath and Wells was in existence from the 13th century, although no remains survive. The exact site is not known although it was thought (in 1928) to be located to the south of the church.

The subsequent Jacobean manor, of which only the garden walls and stone balustrades remain, was demolished in 1823 and a new manor house (now the American Museum) was built further up the hill, robbing the village of its close physical association with the manor. Some of the architectural features from the manor house were incorporated into Old Manor Cottage.

Spatial Analysis

The plan form of the village is predominantly linear, with buildings set in generous plots, but in some cases built hard up to the road. These are generally older buildings and contrast with 19th century and later development, which tend to be set back slightly. The church is an exception, tucked away on sloping ground and concealed by high garden walls. The church tower and flagpole may be glimpsed through gaps between buildings.





OS first edition map of 1885

With the manor conspicuously absent, there are no landmark buildings in Claverton with the possible exception of the church.

Most buildings are domestic in scale and oriented towards the road, exceptions generally being barns and outbuildings which face inwards to form yards. Most of the outbuildings have been converted to dwellings, with some new access points created.

To the south of Manor Farm are impressive balustraded terraces, the main surviving features of the original Manor House. These formal terraces and the unobstructed open space opposite are notable features, allowing fine views across the valley and a strong connection with the surrounding countryside.

There is a marked change in character from this formal open space to the rest of the village. The cottages and agricultural buildings are built close to the village street and surrounded by rubble boundary walls. High stone boundary walls and private walled gardens are a principal feature and give a strong sense of enclosure, contributing to the almost secretive feeling of the village.

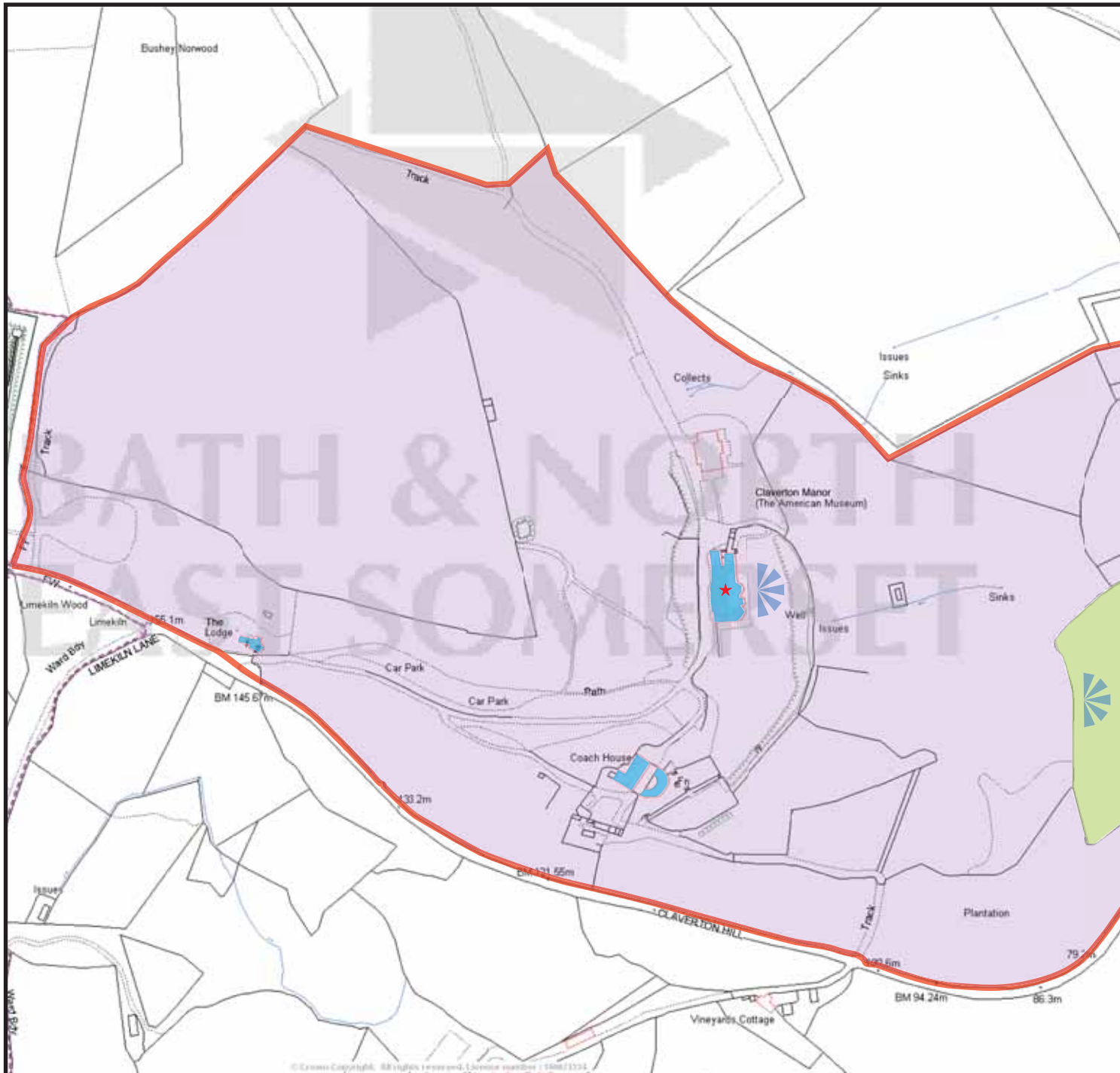
Views and Vistas

There are superb panoramic views particularly to the east, while gaps between buildings allow views of the wooded slopes to the west. A particularly good vantage point is from the churchyard which is set on a knoll at the highest point in the village. The road through the village follows a gentle zigzag, allowing sequential views along the streetscape; this contributes positively to the sense of surprise and concealment within the village, greatly adding to its charm.



Claverton Conservation Area

(extended 3 April 2007)





Key

- Principal listed buildings and walls*
- Unlisted buildings which contribute to the character of the Conservation Area
- Claverton Manor Historic Park and Garden
- ☼ Important views
- ★ Landmark buildings
- Important green spaces
- Conservation Area boundary

*This map does not show all listed walls or curtilage listed buildings

Character Analysis

Activity and Land Use

Up until the 20th century the village was a farming estate belonging to Claverton Manor. The estate was broken up in the 1950s, leading to division of the land and properties, and now the village is largely residential. Most of the barns and outbuildings have been converted to dwellings.

Former land uses include farming, work at the nearby stone quarries and wine making. The parish was a notable wine producer, with a renowned vineyard. 'Vineyard Cottage' indicates its probable location on the southern slopes.

The Victoria National School (1897) at the village entrance provided improved educational facilities for the children of the parish and commemorated Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. It closed in 1950 and is now a dwelling.

Architectural and Historic Qualities of the Buildings

One notable aspect of Claverton is the conspicuous absence of the medieval manor house. The gap where the house once stood is emphasised by the surviving terraces, formal gardens and balustrades, all of fine ornamental stonework. Other remnants of the manor such as the high walled gardens and decorative pillars are found throughout the village and indicate the splendour of the original manor house. The attractive patina of the old stonework is one of the enduring charms of the village.

The village has a high concentration of listed building groups, with St Mary's Church providing a focal point. The site has had a church since 1250, and the present building dates from the 15th century. However the west tower is the only recognisable medieval remnant, as the building was comprehensively rebuilt and enlarged in 1858. The church houses a restored monument to the former Lord of the Manor, William Basset, dated 1613.

The churchyard features a number of historic tombstones and burial monuments of eminent parishioners. These include the mausoleum of Ralph Allen of Prior Park, who owned Claverton Manor for a while and was a generous patron of the village. The mausoleum is an imposing burial monument which is listed Grade II*.

Manor Farmhouse is an impressive early 17th century building, which has been partially gothicised in the 19th century fashion. The barn, coach house, stable, pig sties and attached outbuildings at Manor Farm are listed Grade II*. The barn is probably 15th century and an extremely rare example of a hammer-beam roof in this area. The exceptionally high quality of the craftsmanship here indicates the status of the former manor.

Other buildings are generally later, but as a group form a fairly recognisable historic farm yard, although division of the properties has led to some loss of character, with modern road surfacing tending towards the suburban.



Ornamental stone walls and formal gardens emphasise the gap where the old manor house stood



The Mausoleum of Ralph Allen of Prior Park sits in a prominent position in the churchyard



The Rectory Coach House

Listed buildings include Manor Farmhouse and the group of former outbuildings associated with Manor Farm; Old Manor Cottage; Manor Farm Cottage; Basset Farmhouse; The Old Rectory and ancillary buildings and walls; and the fine ashlar gate piers at the entrance to the carriageway, which once lead to the old manor house.

There is a recognisable hierarchy in the built form in Claverton, from the Manor down to small cottages and farm buildings, which should be adhered to where alteration or new development is proposed.

A mixture of ashlar and rubble often denote the hierarchy of buildings while the use of lime mortar and traditional detailing makes a significant contribution to the character. High stone ashlar and coursed rubble walls built of local stone are a prominent feature throughout the village.

Original stone tiles have mostly been replaced by natural clay tiles, which complement the mellow stone. Plain tiles, Roman tiles and pantiles are common. Where original stone tiling survives it is particularly important and should be retained.

A cast iron finger-post at the southern entrance to the village is a traditional local feature which adds rural charm to the village, despite the busy road nearby.

New buildings have generally been built using local stone with traditional details, and the character of the village is heavily dependent on this limited palette of local materials.

Unlisted Buildings of Merit

In such a small community every building, from the large houses to the humble outbuildings, contributes to the group value of the whole and to the overall character of the area. In Claverton particularly, farm buildings and estate cottages make a key contribution to the character of the village, indicating its former association with the manor and its relationship with the surrounding countryside. Gentrification of such modest buildings can rob them of their charm and dilute the varied character of a traditional village.

In addition to the statutorily listed buildings there are a significant number of buildings which are of local significance and could be considered for inclusion on the Local List. Orchard House is a former estate cottage, extended in the 1930s, which retains much of its early character. Some other buildings of interest in the streetscape are Basset Cottage, Holly Cottage, The Old Post Office and The Pillars.



Many buildings have similarities in design and materials



High walls built of local limestone are a prominent feature of Claverton



Traditional cast iron finger-posts contribute to the rural character of the area



A wrought iron kissing gate provides an informal connection with the main road of the area

Trees and Green Spaces

The Conservation Area is surrounded by green space, and the village itself is blessed with numerous trees which are integral to the setting of the buildings within the village. Two large copper beech trees and the yew trees around the church are particularly good examples of mature specimens. Informal grassy banks and wildflowers soften the road edges.

The walled gardens and green spaces within the village are important characteristics of the Conservation Area which should be retained. Development within these spaces would be detrimental to the character of the village.

The historic park of Claverton Manor is an exceptional asset to the village. Mature parkland trees provide an attractive backdrop to the village and will be protected by inclusion in the Conservation Area.

The proximity of the open countryside with undulating hills and wooded slopes emphasises the diminutive scale of the settlement, and its sense of seclusion within the countryside is a major part of its charm, despite the proximity of the main road.

The public thoroughfares have informal grass verges appropriate to the rural character of the area.



Open countryside framed by mature woodlands provides an exceptional setting for the village



Modern materials and domestic detailing can detract from the character of converted barns and farmyards



Informal grass verges are appropriate to the rural character of the area

General Condition

The area is well maintained, but not excessively, allowing the grass verges and common land to grow naturally. At the time of survey, the high stone walls of the walled garden opposite the Rectory are suffering from some neglect. This is an important historic enclosure within the village and would benefit from sensitive conservation.

The council is not aware of any Buildings at Risk in Claverton.



Loss or Damage

Some 20th century development within the Conservation Area is built from local stone, but in places modern materials such as plastic windows and concrete tiles contrast poorly with natural materials elsewhere in the village. Some buildings have also had inappropriate alterations such as modern porches and inappropriate landscaping and planting.

Large farms (Basset Farm and Manor Farm) originally occupied generous portions of the land in the village, with a farmhouse, cottage, substantial barns and other outbuildings. Most of these buildings have now been converted to residential and are in private ownership. The treatment of boundaries, vehicle access, inappropriately detailed conversions and the division of the farmyard into suburban style gardens means that much of the cohesive farmyard character of the groups of buildings has been lost.

Opportunities for Enhancement

In such a small settlement, every building makes a significant contribution, and unsympathetic treatment of individual buildings can have a tremendous impact on the overall character of the area. Further loss of character could be prevented by the introduction of an Article 4 Direction to restrict permitted development rights.

Due to the established grain of the village, it is considered that Claverton may not be able to absorb further infill development without detracting from the special character of the area.

Where alterations to former farm buildings have harmed the special character of the area, sensitive restoration of some details may be appropriate and should be encouraged.

2007 Boundary Changes

See centre page map

Reassessment of the Conservation Area boundary is one of the purposes of an appraisal. The boundary was amended to include:

- The small field and stone boundary wall to the extreme north of the area. This is an attractive green space which softens and frames the entrance to the village. Possibly a former orchard, this area of land is a natural inclusion in the Conservation Area, being clearly associated with the village rather than the countryside beyond, and contributing to the attractive rural character of the village.
- Claverton Manor (The American Museum) and the Historic Park and Garden. The Manor and its park have an historic connection with the village and form an important collection of historic buildings in a fine parkland setting. The buildings, walls and trees are extremely important to the character of the area and will benefit from the protection afforded by Conservation Area designation. The field to the east of the Manor completes the connection with the village and is important to its setting.
- Minor amendments were made to rationalise the boundary in relation to property boundaries.



Modern rooflights can detract from the historic character of buildings

Summary of Issues and Recommended Management Proposals

- Some alterations to traditional buildings in the area have not been sympathetic to the character of the village, such as additions of porches, barn conversions, and alterations to driveways. Applications for development of this type will be carefully assessed and inappropriate proposals will be refused. Enforcement action is recommended in cases of unauthorised works which adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area.
- There are a number of instances of standard Velux-style rooflights on prominent roof slopes. Replacing these with cast metal conservation style roof lights to reduce the visual impact should be encouraged, although this cannot be enforced.
- Plastic windows and doors on unlisted buildings are unsustainable and detract from the character of the area. It is recommended that an Article 4 Direction be considered to control alterations to doors and windows. This would help prevent further loss of traditional details which cannot be controlled at present.



Neglect of boundary walls, cement mortar repairs or unsuitable pointing can detract from the character of natural stone walls

- Alterations to boundary walls or inappropriate repair techniques such as the use of cement mortars or unsuitable pointing has occurred in some cases. Protection of the boundary walls is a high priority and they should not be neglected. Traditional repairs with lime mortar should be encouraged. Enforcement action should be considered in cases of unauthorised works which adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area, and an Article 4 Direction is recommended to control demolition of walls under 1m high (walls over 1m are protected under the Conservation Area designation).
- Unlisted buildings of particular local importance for their architectural interest, their contribution to the local environment or for their historical associations should be considered for inclusion on the list of Locally Important Buildings which is currently being prepared by the Council. Locally Important Buildings are protected by existing policies in the *Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan* (emerging).



This 'secret garden' entrance is somewhat marred by the insensitively placed oil pipe

- The unmarked, rural character of the road and the cast iron finger-posts contribute significantly to the character of the village. Any works to the highway or streetscape should take into account the special character of the area and, where relevant, be considered with reference to the Adopted *Streetscape Manual*³.
- Trees provide a significant contribution to the special character of the Conservation Area and there are special provisions for their protection under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990). Where appropriate the Council will use its powers to make Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees that are under threat. Planting new specimen trees should be encouraged to provide and maintain a varied age range of trees and sustain the appearance of the area for the future.
- The use of underground cables for services would help prevent the streetscape and wider landscape being interrupted by overhead wires.
- The policies that govern development in Conservation Areas in the *Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan* (emerging) should be carried forward into any replacement Local Development Document.
- An archeological survey to establish the exact site of the Jacobean manor or manor court would be of benefit to understanding the historic development of the village.

Planning Policy Context

A Conservation Area is designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990). The quality and interest of the area

as a whole, rather than individual buildings, is the main consideration when designating such areas.

Section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to periodically formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas within the district. Section 72 requires that in considering applications for development in a Conservation Area, attention shall be paid to the desirability of conserving 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 approach suggested by English Heritage⁴.

The *Joint Replacement Structure Plan* (2002) and *Regional Planning Guidance 10* (2001) (to be replaced in 2007 by the *Regional Spatial Strategy*) contain broad policies regarding the built and historic environment and the Green Belt.

More detailed policies are to be found in the *Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan* (emerging). This was examined at a Public Inquiry in 2005. The Council has now prepared a response to the Inspector's Report from this Inquiry and modifications to the plan have been proposed. The *Local Plan* is programmed for adoption in early 2007. It will then be 'saved' for three years in the Council's *Local Development Framework*.

Community Involvement

Public support and involvement is essential to the successful management of Conservation Areas. Following the production of a first draft by Bath and North East Somerset Council, copies of this appraisal and the accompanying

maps were provided for the parish council and local Members. A copy was posted onto the Council's website and a press release sent to local papers. Six weeks were allowed for comments to be submitted, after which the final draft was completed. This appraisal was approved by the Council on 5 March 2007.

General Guidance

Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan (emerging)

Bath & North East Somerset Council, *Rural Landscapes of Bath & North East Somerset*, (Adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance 2003)

Bath & North East Somerset, *Living in a Conservation Area*

Bath & North East Somerset *Streetscape Manual*, (Adopted April 2005)

Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation Methodology, Chapman, 1997

Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2005

Guidance on Conservation Area Management Plans, English Heritage, 2005

The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A Guide to Good Practice, English Heritage, 2006

Planning Policy Guidance 15: *Planning and the Historic Environment*

Planning Policy Statement 22: *Renewable Energy*

3. *Streetscape Manual*, Bath & North East Somerset Council, adopted April 2005

4 *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, English Heritage, 2005

Further Reading

The Fosseway at Bath, Keevil A. J., 1989

The History of the Parish of Claverton, Members of Claverton Down Women's Institute, 1962

'Claverton and its Manors', James Ayres, in *America in Britain*, vol. XXXIX, pub. The American Museum in Britain 2001

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.

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 of a Conservation Area where there is a clear and immediate threat to the amenity of the area.

Locally Important Buildings: Buildings of particular local importance for their architectural interest, their contribution to the local environment or for their historical associations. Although these buildings do not benefit from the same statutory protection as listed buildings, their inclusion on the local list will be a material consideration in determining applications for planning permission. The council is currently in the process of drawing up a list of Locally Important Buildings.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO): An order made by a Local Planning Authority in respect of trees or woodlands to prohibit works to trees without consent (part VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999)

Contact Details

Contact Planning Services for advice regarding
Listed Buildings and Listed Building Consent: 01225 394171
Unlisted Buildings and Conservation Area Consent: 01225 394171
Works to trees within Conservation Areas: 01225 394171
Planning Permission: 01225 477722
Archaeology: 01225 477651
Planning Policy: 01225 477548

Email: historic_environment@bathnes.gov.uk

All the above teams are located at
Planning Services, Trimbridge House, Trim Street, Bath, BA1 2DP

This document about the Claverton 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.