

ALMONDSBURY

Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



This document provides an appraisal and management plan for the Almondsbury Conservation Area. It sets out the main features contributing to the distinctive character and appearance of the Conservation Area along with a strategy for its preservation and enhancement. This document fulfils the statutory duty to review and draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the Almondsbury Conservation Area. This will support the policies of the Core Strategy (December 2013) and Policies, Sites and Places DPD (November 2017), which together comprise the South Gloucestershire adopted Development Plan, and will be used as a material consideration when assessing the merits of development proposals.

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Please note: This Conservation Area Character Appraisal sets out the main elements contributing to the character of the Conservation Area. It is not intended to be comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no conservation or heritage interest.

Introduction

A conservation area is an area of “special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s.69(1)). Designation recognises the collective value of buildings and their settings and emphasises the need to protect not just the individual buildings, but the distinctive character of the area as a whole and the sense of place.

The Lower Almondsbury Conservation Area was designated in 1975 as a way of safeguarding its special architectural and historic character. Many features contribute to this special character including trees, boundaries, walls, gardens, open spaces, groups of buildings, land use, the degree of enclosure and the age, materials, size, scale, and detailing of the buildings.

PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document is a conservation area character appraisal and management plan for the Almondsbury Conservation Area. A character appraisal is intended to assess the special historic character of a specific area, to explain how it has evolved, and highlight the key features that are of significance and define the area as it exists today. Defining the special character of the conservation area will help to guide appropriate change and ensure that future development preserves or enhances the character of the conservation area and its setting. Once published the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan will form material consideration to be taken into account in the determination of planning decisions.

This Document proposes revisions to the Almondsbury Conservation Area boundary as shown on Plan 1 and which is explained further at Chapter 3.

The principal objective of this Character Appraisal and Management Plan is to guide and inform the protection, management and enhancement of the conservation area when determining planning decisions through the development management process. The document sets out:

- The legislative framework and planning policy context and how these govern conservation area considerations that must be taken into account in the planning process
- Relevant existing policies relating to the historic, built and natural environment within the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy 2006-2027 (adopted December 2013) and the Policies, Sites and Places (PSP) Plan (adopted November 2017)
- The historic and landscape context of the Almondsbury Conservation Area
- The proposed new Almondsbury Conservation Area boundary, as shown on accompanying Map 1 (the changes are identified on Plan 1 below)
- A summary of the key areas of the Conservation Area's special interest including the important features that help to define its character and appearance
- Area specific assessment of five character areas (as shown on Map 2) and accompanying guidance identified for the preservation and enhancement of each area
- A strategy for the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area as a whole
- Map 2 forms part of the document and identifies the key heritage designations and features within the conservation area as well as preservation and enhancement strategies to ensure the management, protection and enhancement of those elements and their settings.

Legislative and Planning Policy Context

OVERVIEW

The provisions for conservation area designation and management are set out in legislation. Government planning policy (as explained in the National Planning Policy Framework) and Government guidance (as described in the Planning Practice Guidance) provide further context.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990 sets out the requirement of local planning authorities to:

- from time to time 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 designate those areas as conservation areas (section 69 [1]) and
- formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and consult the public in the area in question, taking account of views expressed (section 71 [1 and 2])

Once designated, the local planning authority has a statutory duty to ensure that any proposed development will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area (section 72 [1])

The Council also has a duty to periodically review their area and all existing Conservation Areas (section 69 [2]) and this document sets out the results of this review for Almondsbury.

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan fulfils the statutory duty to determine which parts of Almondsbury are worthy of designation as a conservation area by reviewing the area and its boundary. It provides an improved understanding of the architectural or historic significance of the Conservation Area and methods to maintain its character and appearance. The assessment includes the identification of any threats and opportunities that are then developed into preservation and enhancement strategies that are specific to the area's needs and in turn, guide development to conserve or, where appropriate, enhance the Conservation Area's special character or appearance.

Identifying relevant factors which contribute to the special character and appearance of the Almondsbury Conservation Area in more detail provides a sound basis for determining planning applications in line with the statutory obligation to ensure that this is preserved or enhanced through the determination of planning applications.

The role this advice serves in supporting the implementation of local plan policy is set out in the following sections relating to national and local planning policy.

In accordance with the **Town and Country Planning Act 1990** it is an offence to fail to obtain planning permission for demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area (section 196D). In addition to the general control over demolition, conservation area designation also introduces control over the lopping or felling of trees above a certain size. It also withdraws some permitted developments rights.

NATIONAL POLICY

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) sets out how the Government intends the planning system to operate when determining planning applications and in preparing Local Plans. The protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment is at the very heart of the national policy objective of achieving sustainable development. [Chapter 16 of the NPPF: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment](#) sets out a wide range of requirements relating to conservation areas and the historic environment that are relevant to this document.

A conservation area is a **designated heritage asset** as defined in the NPPF.

'Significance' in terms of heritage-related planning policy is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework **as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.**

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF requires applicants to provide an assessment of heritage significance, including any contribution made by their setting. With regard to development affecting a conservation area, a supporting heritage statement should demonstrate how proposals will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and maintain significance. This guidance document seeks to identify those elements of architectural or historic significance that contribute to the special character or appearance of the Almondsbury Conservation Area and its setting together with a strategy for its preservation and enhancement and will therefore assist with this.

Paragraph 196 requires Local Plans to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In developing their strategy, plan-making bodies should take into account opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

The South Gloucestershire Local Plan is required to contribute to the delivery of sustainable development and the following documents and policies on the historic and natural environment have been devised to provide a strong and strategic basis for delivering this through the local planning process.

The South Gloucestershire Core Strategy 2006-2027 (adopted December 2013) – sets out a vision for future development in South Gloucestershire to 2027. It covers the general location, type and scale of development as well as protecting what is valued about the area. This document can be considered to help provide further details on how any proposals within or affecting the Almondsbury Conservation Area can comply with, among others, the following policies:

Policy CS1 High Quality Design – This policy requires development to be of the highest standards of design, which respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of both the site and its context and that features of landscape or heritage value are safeguarded. Where appropriate, Adopted Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans should be taken account of.

CS2 Green Infrastructure – This policy requires that existing and new Green Infrastructure (GI) is managed as an integral part of creating sustainable communities and considered the objective of conserving and enhancing landscape character, historical, natural, built and cultural heritage features and realising the potential of these assets to assist with mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Policy CS9 Managing the Environment and Heritage – Under this policy new development will be expected to conserve, respect and enhance heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Policy CS9 supporting text advises that: *In order to ensure that heritage assets are properly recognised and protected, the Council will maintain or provide access to an up to date Historic Environment Record and periodically appraise heritage assets including **Conservation Areas**, and its list of locally listed buildings.*

The Policies, Sites and Places Development Plan Document (DPD) includes policies for managing new development and has the following development management policies relating to heritage and landscape conservation as well as design and local distinctiveness:

Policy PSP1 – Local Distinctiveness

Policy PSP2 – Landscape

Policy PSP3 – Trees and Woodland

Policy PSP17 – Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment

Policy PSP19 – Wider Biodiversity

Policy PSP38 – Development within Existing Residential Curtilages, including Extensions and New Dwellings

Policy PSP39 – Residential Conversions, Sub-Divisions and Houses in Multiple Occupation

PSP40 – Residential Development in the Open Countryside

POLICY PSP17 – HERITAGE ASSETS AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Conserving and Enhancing

Development proposals should serve to protect, and where appropriate, enhance or better reveal the significance of heritage assets and their settings. They should be conserved in a manner that is appropriate to their significance.

Conservation Areas: *Development within or affecting the setting of a conservation area will be expected to:*

- *preserve or, where appropriate, enhance those elements which contribute to their special character and appearance; and*
- *pay particular attention to opportunities to enhance negative parts of the conservation area and draw on local character and distinctiveness.*

Proposals should demonstrate that:

- size, form, position, scale, materials, design, colour and detailing have proper regard to the distinctive character and appearance of the conservation area; and
- buildings, groups of buildings, historic street and plot patterns, open spaces, building lines, views, vistas, ground surfaces, boundary walls and other architectural or hard landscape features, which contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area are retained; and
- existing trees, hedges and green spaces, or other natural features, which contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area, will be retained and protected.

The overall aim of this Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan is to build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in the adopted South Gloucestershire Local Plan, setting out important factors to be taken into account by those applying the relevant policies, including PSP17 and CS9. They therefore play a key role in describing and explaining how adopted planning policies should be interpreted and delivered through the development management process.

The need for a character appraisal and management plan for a conservation area can be considered reflected in local plan policy PSP17 and CS1, above. Without such a character appraisal or management plan in place, the implementation of the above policy requirements would be less effective.

Consequently, to ensure the rigorous application and consideration of the local plan policy through the development management process, this document identifies the key characteristics of the Almondsbury Conservation Area, as well as any negative aspects, that as part of the “preservation and enhancement strategy” need to be addressed when the opportunity arises. Preservation and enhancement strategies will therefore be identified for each character area as well as a “conservation area wide” strategy.

The improved understanding of the special character and appearance of Almondsbury Conservation Area which results from this document will help to support Local Plan policies relating to conservation areas, as well as those concerning local character and distinctiveness and the historic and natural environment. Following public consultation and consideration of comments, subject to any further amendments required, this document will be endorsed as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for development management purposes, with the weight to be attached for consideration by the decision maker.

The Conservation Area boundary

The current boundary of Almondsbury Conservation Area generally follows the outline of the historic development of the village, encompassing Gloucester Road, Sundays Hill and Church Road, which are the principal routes through the village, as well as the smaller connecting lanes. The southern boundary extends to Over Lane, to encompass the wooded slopes and common land that are so vital to the character and quality of the village. The boundary naturally encompasses areas of modern development, in order to protect the setting of historic buildings and the relationship and spaces between historic areas of the settlement.

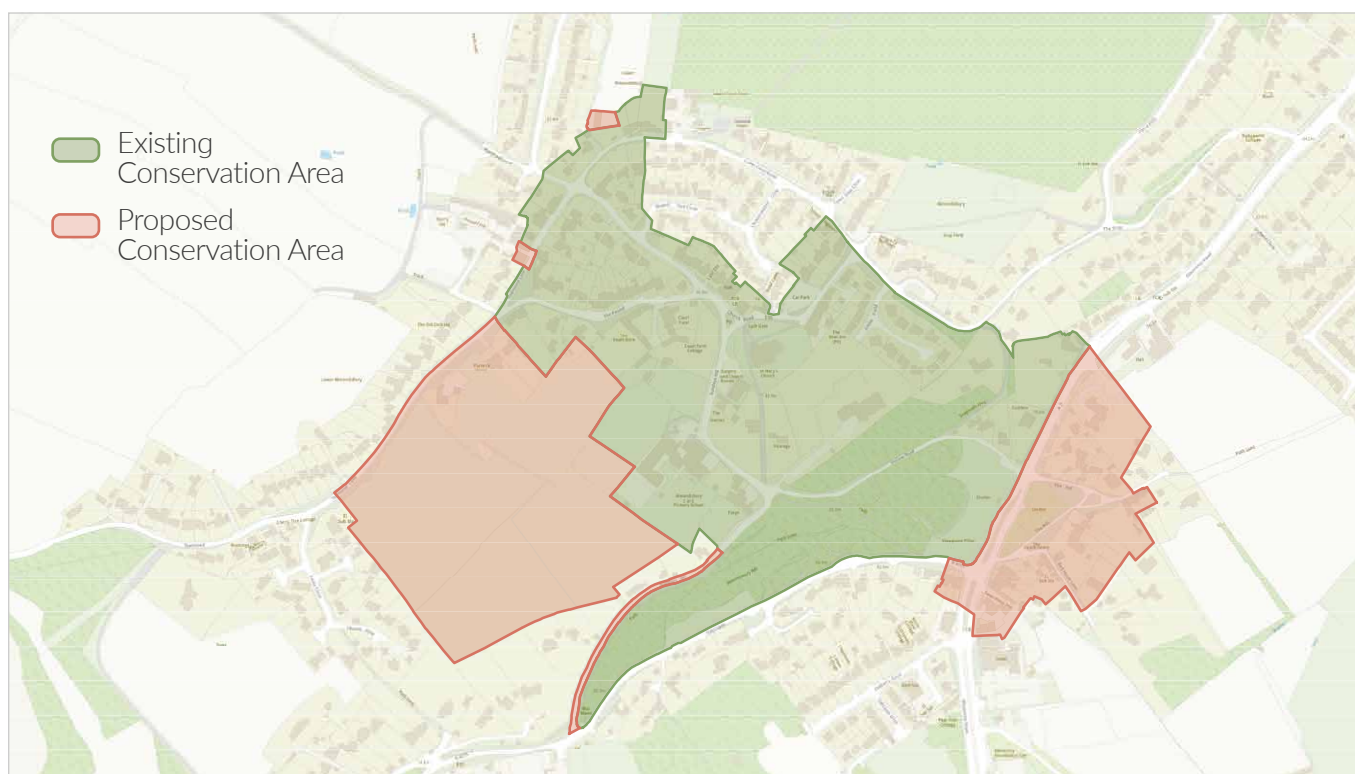
In line with the legislative requirement set out in the above chapter, the boundary of the Conservation Area has been reassessed as part of this character appraisal process, and reviewed using the parameters of:

- Architectural character and form
- Street pattern and layout
- Improved understanding of the historic significance and development of the settlement
- Natural and designed landscape features

This process revealed that additional parts of Almondsbury contributed to the wider appreciation and understanding of its special historic or architectural interest as experienced through its character and appearance and are therefore considered worthy of including within the Conservation Area boundary. As a result, it is proposed to extend the Almondsbury Conservation Area boundary in five places, as follows and highlighted in red on the following map – Plan 1:

1. A significant alteration is proposed to the boundary to the east of the village. Where previously the A38 formed a limit of the Lower Almondsbury Conservation Area, it has been considered appropriate as part of this review to assess the special interest of historic Almondsbury village as a whole, which includes Upper Almondsbury. As a result, the area of The Hill, common and several historic buildings on Gloucester Road, including the grade II listed former cottage hospital, are proposed to be brought into the Conservation Area in recognition of the contribution they make to the architectural and historic significance of the village. This area is analysed more fully within character area 5.

2. The boundary is also proposed to be extended to include a large, yet well defined, area of land within the village. This space, little changed since at least the eighteenth century, contains grade II listed Rock House, as well as the stone boundary wall which formed the boundary to Knole Park deer park. The fields contribute greatly to appreciation of the agrarian origins and development of the village and support and facilitate an understanding and appreciation of the architectural and historic interest of the wider Conservation Area and those elements of historic fabric, features and structures that it contains. The open and undeveloped fields facilitate views and legibility of the historic landscape and settlement pattern as well as providing a rural ambience and appearance. This area is analysed more fully within character area 4.
3. Three further small extensions to the boundary are proposed. Two include traditional farm buildings at Pound Farm and Lower Court Road, which contribute positively to the agricultural character of the lanes and the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The line of the boundary along Sundays Hill clarifies that the important traditional stone wall on the northern side, which provides enclosure and aesthetic interest, is included within the Conservation Area.

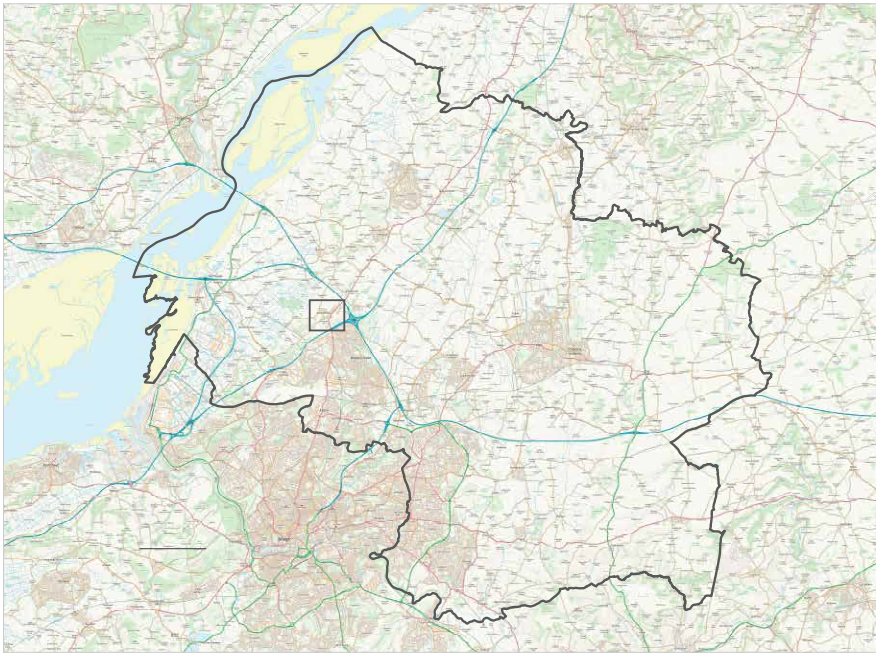


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Plan 1 The Existing and Proposed Almondsbury Conservation Area Boundaries

The landscape setting

Almondsbury's location and topography have been fundamental to its history and development, and heavily influence the present character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



Map 1 Overview map showing location of Almondsbury within the District

The village of Almondsbury is situated 7 miles north of Bristol, within the Bristol & Bath Green Belt. The village also lies within the Severn Ridges landscape character area, a distinctive, large-scale sloping landform, with sections of abrupt limestone scarps and gentle ridges, which rise up from the lower lying Levels to their west. The Severn Ridges are identified as Visually Important Hillside under Policy CS2, and within the adopted Landscape Character Assessment SPD. Spectacular views across the Severn Estuary and Levels and to the hills of South Wales beyond are afforded from Upper Almondsbury, as well as from the descent down the wooded hillside and Sundays Hill. The Levels are characterised by flat, small and regular fields, and blocks of woodland. The view from the Severn Valley scenic viewpoint along Over Lane, which overlooks both the Conservation Area, St. Mary's Church and the Levels is shown below.



The view from the Severn Valley scenic viewpoint along Over Lane. Green Infrastructure Assets can include private gardens, fields and hedgerows, and public areas such as woodland, verges, commons, footpaths and village greens

The towns and villages of the high limestone ridge have historically had an important relationship with the Levels to the west. It was from these settlements on the higher ground that reclaimed marshland was farmed, predominantly for dairy and livestock farming, as the heavy clay soils made ploughing difficult. For most of its recorded history Almondsbury has been an agricultural community with many of its inhabitants employed on the land or within an associated industry. An important feature of the historic landscape is the degree to which enclosure by agreement had taken place in the latter Middle Ages and post-Medieval period, well before the period of parliamentary enclosure. The beautiful and peaceful landscape surrounding the village is one of the defining characteristics of Almondsbury and elements such as footpaths, historic field patterns and views to the surrounding open countryside connect the village with its past.

Woodland is another important landscape feature of the conservation area. As well as Almondsbury Hill, pleasant routes from The Scop and Hollow Road lead through a beautiful woodland area with lush vegetation which provides good natural habitat for wildlife.

Many cider apple orchards were established in the locality in the seventeenth century as fruit grows well in this fertile environment. Sadly, many of the traditional orchards in and around Lower Almondsbury have gone, some at the centre of the village replaced by modern housing, although a large commercial orchard has been established to the north of the village.

In more recent times the village's relationship with the Severn Levels relies much less on farming, however the panoramic views of this wide rural landscape ensure that its historic association remain clearly legible. The village is near the M4/M5 Almondsbury Interchange, the first four-level motorway crossing in Britain, opened in conjunction with the Severn Bridge in 1966. The significant growth extending from the M4/M5 interchange remains screened from Lower Almondsbury village by the ridge landform at Almondsbury. The Severn Bridges provide national landmarks within the wider estuary landscape, and feature in views from the woodland scarp within the Conservation Area.

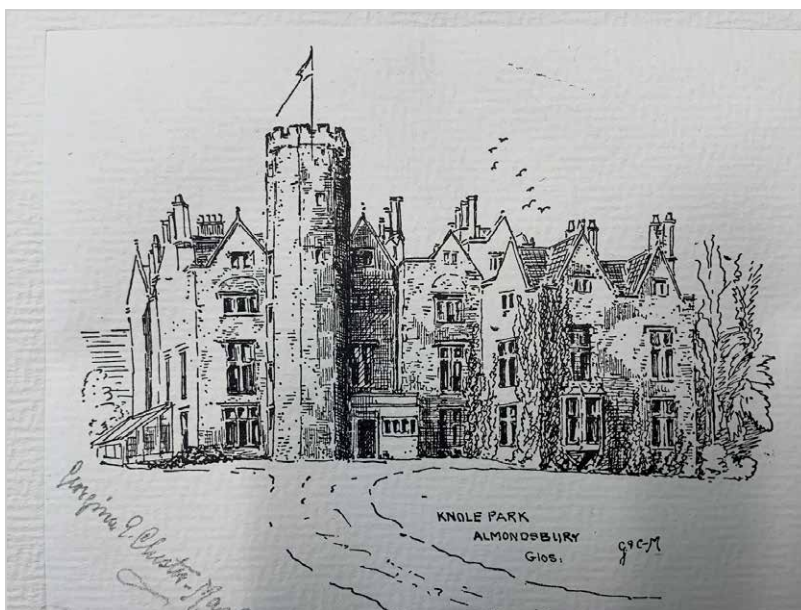
Much of the Conservation Area and its surrounding setting lie within the wider Strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) Network, as shown at Figure 1 of the Core Strategy, in recognition of its concentration of GI assets, including those associated with heritage, landscape, ecology and recreation. GI offers opportunities to protect, increase access to and understanding of landscape, geology/geomorphology, historic sites, conservation areas and heritage assets. The protection of these important features of the Almondsbury Conservation Area contribute environmental benefits for people, communities and nature and play an important role in the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy as a response to the challenges of the climate and nature emergency.

The historic context

The steep limestone scarp of Almondsbury Hill is a vantage point affording superb views across the Severn Valley to the Welsh Hills beyond and would have provided an excellent defensive site since earliest times of settlement. Knole Park Camp occupies one such naturally defensive position and there is evidence that the area around the Camp was inhabited from at least the Bronze Age as well as by early Roman-British settlers as a defensive post or lookout. Almondsbury is located on what has been an important route between Sea-Mills located on the River Avon's approach to Bristol and Gloucester since Roman times, roughly corresponding to the present day A38 and proximity to the River Severn and major ports at Bristol and Gloucester helped the area prosper.

Almondsbury was originally, as its name implies, the 'Bury' or camp of Alcmund or Alomond, a Saxon chieftain, who was said to have been buried at the church. In 1148, not long after the Norman conquest, The Manor of Almondsbury was granted to St Augustine's Abbey in Bristol by Robert Fitzharding; Court Farm at the centre of the village is known to have formed part of a manorial complex from the twelfth century. In the four centuries it belonged to St Augustine's the majority of the people living on the land were labourers and Almondsbury provided sustenance for the abbey through cattle, grain, poultry and wood. Following the Dissolution it was granted to Sir Arthur d'Arcy in 1553.

The manor was sold to Thomas Chester in 1569 and his heir, William Chester, built Knole Park as a family seat. Rather than Court Farm, Chester chose the splendid hilltop position at Knole Park Camp half a mile to the south, with a magnificent view over the Bristol Channel. The house was set in extensive grounds, including a deer park of 85 acres which extended to the west side of Almondsbury village. Although nothing of the original house survives today other than a tower, eighteenth and nineteenth century planting remains around the site of the original house and the north-eastern extent of the deer park is marked by a stone wall.



Knole Park

From collection of 'Some Gloucestershire Houses, sketches' by Georgina E Chester-Master [printed copies of her pen and ink drawings], late nineteenth century. Gloucestershire Archives, D9900



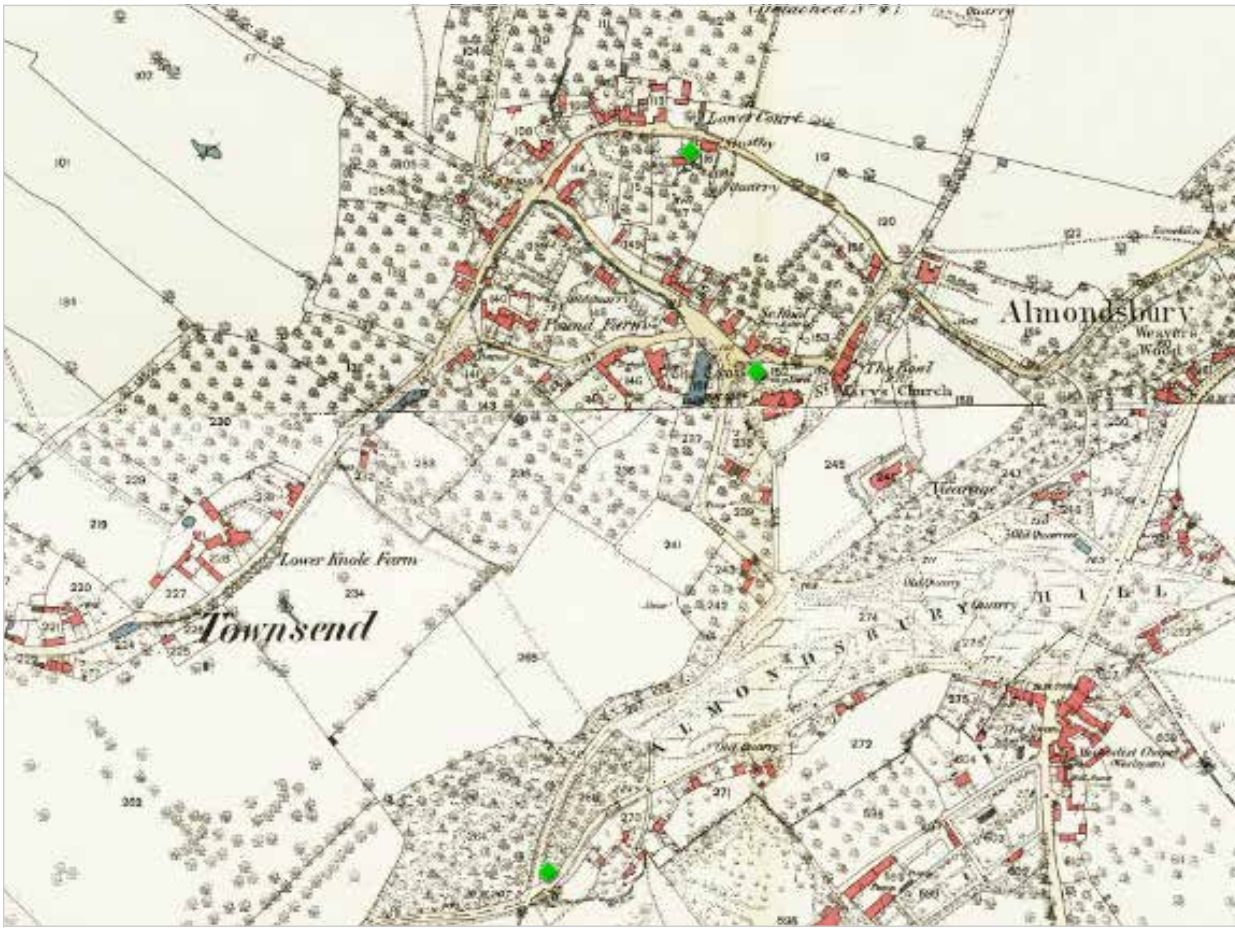
1871 map showing extent of Chester-Master Estate at Almondsbury Village (shaded blue)

Knole Park estate (from tithe map, copy D1606). Includes buildings in block plan, roads, woodland, acreages, land usage and arable land. Gives tithe map nos. Daniel Trinder and J.P.Sturge. Ink and watercolour on linen. Gloucestershire Archives, D674a/P6

For the following four centuries Almondsbury remained a close-knit agricultural community under their Lord of the manor and landholder of the Knole Park estate which, as shown on the 1871 map, included almost all property within the village of Almondsbury. Many of the traditional stone houses that make up the historic parts of the village were built by the estate as tenement cottages for farm labourers. These are stone built detached houses and terrace cottages which date from the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries. The families of Chester and Master were joined by marriage in 1742. Chester-Master remained owners and Lord of the Manor of Almondsbury until 1920 when they sold the majority of their holdings in the village.

The Bristol & South Wales Union Railway was built through the parish in 1863 and this acted as a catalyst for change, with many people obtaining work other than farming. During construction Charles Richardson, an engineer and pupil of Marc and Isambard Brunel, noted the type of clay and the hard bricks made from it. He bought some land and Cattybrook Brickworks began its long and successful history.

Almondsbury has grown considerably as a result of post war housing, however this largely follows the line of the historic roads and lanes, maintaining the historic street pattern and 'green' landscape setting, which along with other historic features allows a traditional, rural village character to prevail.



Circa 1880 first edition ordnance survey plan of Almondsbury

Summary of the Special Interest of Almondsbury Conservation Area

including assessment of the special features and characteristics

The Conservation Area is broken down and analysed more closely through the assessment of five discernible character areas (pages 28-46). This considers where aspects of character vary or transition throughout the Conservation Area. This may reflect differences in building density, use, design, topography, landscape features or resulting from a distinct phase of development, all of which contribute to the unique interest of a place. In some cases the change in character between the five areas is very subtle, in others more pronounced. There are however certain overarching qualities and distinctive attributes that contribute strongly to defining the special interest and character of the Conservation Area as a whole. The principal elements of special interest of the Almondsbury conservation are as follows:

- The position of the historic settlement, a large part of which nestles below the steep, wooded Almondsbury Hill, which shelters and largely obscures the village from above. The hilltop provides superb vantage points, with views across the Severn Levels and beyond to Wales and the Forest of Dean, with both bridges clearly visible.
- The historic, architectural and visual significance of the grade I listed Church of St Mary and its churchyard setting, prominently located at the heart of the village at the foot of the wooded escarpment. Its splendid lead broach spire reveals its position from the ridge against the expansive backdrop of the Severn Levels.
- Its rural, green areas and setting, including many retained views of the countryside, particularly that from the Severn Valley scenic viewpoint along Over Lane in the photo shown on page 14. Fields, woodland and other important green spaces within and adjacent to the Conservation Area provide an overwhelmingly rural village character.
- The small but picturesque village green with pump which is situated in the foreground of the church.
- The survival of the historic settlement pattern, with the steep and enclosed tree-lined entrances into the village via Sundays Hill and Hollow Road gradually opening up as the road levels out. The retention of open fields between Sundays Hill and Townsend Lane provides further legibility of the historic field and road pattern.

- The high concentration of cottages and walls of local limestone lining the narrow roads, many with generous and natural grass verges, further enhancing the rural character.
- The shared vernacular form of the traditional buildings dating from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, built of local limestone with clay roof tile and often relating to Almondsbury's farming heritage and the manorial tenure of the Chester and Chester-Masters family, which extended over four centuries.
- The architectural and historic importance of the buildings and grounds at Court Farm, which were originally part of a manorial complex belonging to St Augustine's Abbey and, together with St Mary's Church opposite, represent the earliest phase of building at the core of the village.
- The extent of common land at Almondsbury Hill and the 'Tump' which provides a connection to the agricultural history of the village as well as an area of high visual and amenity value.
- The juxtaposition against the vernacular stone cottages and farm buildings, of later nineteenth and early twentieth century phases of development which employ the use of brick, render and dressed stone in architecturally polite design. This is found particularly at Upper Almondsbury, where, together with the specimen trees and expansive views over the common, provide a character which is distinct to this part of the village.

THE SPECIAL FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The following features and characteristics which are key to the overall special interest of Almondsbury Conservation Area as identified above are assessed in further detail below:

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

The traditional buildings in the village are mostly built of stone in the local vernacular, with polite domestic architecture of the Victorian and Edwardian era limited to a later phase of development at Upper Almondsbury. Some buildings, such as those at Court Farm and St Mary's Church include medieval fabric, however the majority of traditional buildings date from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

The Conservation Area includes historic buildings of a variety of uses including residential, agricultural, educational and religious. The Primary School continues to thrive and a range of businesses and community facilities impart a vibrancy and sense of community that is so important to Lower Almondsbury's character. Traditional structures such as the war memorial, water pump, phone box and walls also contribute greatly to the character of the Conservation Area. Listed and locally listed buildings are identified on map 2. **The retention of traditional buildings and structures, including conservation of their original form, features and materials is very important to maintaining the character of the Conservation Area.**



The grade I listed parish church dedicated to St Mary the Virgin is said to have been consecrated by four bishops in 1148. The chancel and transept were reconstructed in the mid thirteenth century and the church was heavily restored in the nineteenth century. The most notable features are its Norman north porch and font and its elegant, distinctive diagonally patterned lead spire, one of only three in the country



In 1833 a National School was built adjacent to the Parish Church on the northern side of the village green. It later became known as the Old School when the larger village school was built in 1900



The War memorial, circa 1919 by Sir J Ninian Comper is grade II listed and provides an important focal point at the entrance to the Conservation Area

THE BUILDING MATERIALS

Almondsbury Hill sits on an outcrop of Lower Carboniferous Limestone. The majority of historic buildings and boundary walls in Lower Almondsbury are built of stone which was quarried directly from the steep scarp which forms the now wooded backdrop to the Conservation Area. Historic maps show at least seven small quarries along the scarp directly above the village, as well as a lead quarry. These limestones represent some of the most extensively quarried stones in South Gloucestershire, used in the past as building stones throughout the area, and burnt for lime. They provide a pale grey stone, some with pink and yellow tones, usually roughly shaped and laid in various uncoursed, or loosely coursed, walling styles. The Parish Church of St Mary is built of carboniferous limestone rubble, with ashlar dressings. **Sourcing stone that weathers and matches the traditional building stone of Almondsbury is important to sustaining the character of the Conservation Area.**

Occasionally the stone cottages are rendered or painted, but most often exposed. The stone of the earliest buildings, such as Court Farm, were set in loam while later buildings were constructed and pointed with lime mortar.



The local limestone provides the Conservation Area with a homogeneous character. The weathered stone varies in colour from pale grey to buff and orange tones. Cattybrook bricks are used in later buildings dating from the late Victorian and Edwardian era

The Cattybrook Brick Company was established in the parkland at Knole Park in 1864 and remains in production today. The village school building, which dates from 1900 is likely to be constructed of bricks from here. The use of render, brick and dressed stone on buildings, many in and around The Hill, represent later phases of building within the village during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The use of these materials often reflects a more conscious, polite architectural style. Many modern buildings in the Conservation Area are rendered.

ROOFS

The majority of historic buildings in the Conservation Area have clay tile roofs (double roman and pantile), as well as some examples of slate. Those dating from the seventeenth century or earlier will be steep, while nineteenth century buildings have shallower roof pitches. The large attic gables which are typical of the South Gloucestershire vernacular are not common, however small attic gables are a distinctive feature within the Conservation Area.



Many buildings in the Conservation Area have clay pantile and double-roman tile roofs

WINDOWS

The windows of historic houses in Lower Almondsbury are almost exclusively timber side hung casements. As there are only a limited number of 'polite' buildings in the Conservation Area, there are few examples of sliding sash windows. A notable exception in Lower Almondsbury is The Old Pound (grade II listed), with other examples found in Upper Almondsbury.

Traditional windows contribute significantly to the aesthetic value and visual interest of the Conservation Area, as well as illustrating the craftsmanship, technology and architectural taste of the period. **The repair and upgrade of traditional windows is the best way to maintain the significance of the Conservation Area.** Modern storm-proof or top-hung windows are seen on some historic buildings in the Conservation Area, as well as modern 'wood-stain' finishes. These non-traditional window forms and finishes can have a damaging impact on the traditional character of the area.

The council encourages the repair and retention of traditional windows that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. **Where traditional windows have to be replaced these are encouraged to match in materials, design and finish.** Windows are generally painted in a traditional manner.

Further advice about windows in the context of sustainability, as well as their replacement, can be found in the Sustainability chapter on page 52.



The large transom and mullion cross windows at Court Farm are likely to date from the secular ownership of the buildings around 1550's/60's, when Knole Park was built. The large windows are likely to have been influenced by the work at Acton Court, on a more modest scale, and indicate the exceptional age and status of this building in comparison to the simpler cottages and houses in the village



The cinquefoil-headed windows of the Old School House are distinctive and signal the novelty of the first school in the village at the time of its construction in 1833



A modern replacement window which successfully follows a typical traditional casement window design

BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

The traditional rubble stone boundary walls lining roadsides and enclosing gardens are a particularly attractive and unifying feature within the Conservation Area. Their position at the back edge of the roads or pavements creates a strong sense of enclosure. The height of the walls varies, often depending on the importance of the building they enclose. Walls to Court Farm for example are very high in some parts. Retention of traditional boundary walls is important to maintaining the character of the conservation area.



The wide use of traditional local rubble limestone for walls and buildings provides the Conservation Area with a homogenous character



The extensive and ornate red brick boundary wall at the Old Cottage Hospital in Upper Almondsbury is an important feature, distinct in materials and design from any other wall in the Conservation Area



The wall to the church yard of St Mary's is topped with distinctive large black slag block copings, a product of the copper smelting of the South Gloucestershire and Bristol area in the eighteenth century

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS INCLUDING WOODLAND, PLANTING AND OPEN GREEN SPACES

In addition to the important landscape setting, Almondsbury Conservation Area contains a wide variety of local Green Infrastructure (GI) assets including private gardens, fields and hedgerows, and public areas such as woodland, commons, verges, footpaths and village greens, many of which possess intrinsic historic interest. These GI assets contain a rich variety of planting and as well as being of ecological value, providing habitat for a variety of wildlife species, they also enhance the rural, tranquil character and beauty of the area. The limited light pollution provides 'dark skies' at night, encouraging wildlife and reinforcing the rural character. **It is important to maintain and sustain these special features which contribute to the character and appearance and setting of the Conservation Area, as well as the wider wellbeing of the community and the environment.** Further information about GI is contained within the Sustainability chapter.

VIEWS

Views are extremely important to the historic interest, character and appearance of Almondsbury Conservation Area and an essential aspect of how the Conservation Area is experienced in its setting. The ridge top position and proximity to the River Severn and fertile lands of the Severn Levels is fundamental to Almondsbury's establishment as a settlement, as well as its growth and prosperity through its agricultural history. Both physical and visual connection of the historic village to the surrounding landscape is therefore one of the key facets of the special character and interest of the Conservation Area.

Views from the high ground of the scarp provide the most dramatic and expansive views, and this is reflected through the designation of the hill as one of the districts visually important hillsides, together with the strategic viewpoint on Over Lane; both of which are described further in the refreshed Landscape Character Assessment SPD, due to be consulted upon autumn 2023. This highlights key positive features of the strategic viewpoint from Over Lane as:

- The panoramic views of the lower-lying 'Levels' landscape (characterised by flat, small and regular fields and blocks of woodland), extending to the Severn Estuary and to the hills of South Wales beyond which provide a distinctive background
- The Severn Bridge (Grade I listed) and Prince of Wales Bridge as notable landmark features within the view
- The historic settlement of Lower Almondsbury below and the distinctive spire of The Church of St Mary (grade I listed) visible through the trees

There are many other points within the Conservation Area where views of the countryside beyond the built settlement can be achieved and these reinforce its rural character and illustrate the important relationship between the historic village and its surrounding agricultural landscape. As well as from elevated views towards the Levels, views from the lower ground, with the wooded ridge and Almondsbury Hill forming a distinctive backdrop to the village and its historic buildings, are also important, as are views of the settlement in the approaches to it on roads, footpaths or across open fields.

In addition to wider views, contained and intimate views within the Conservation Area can contribute to its character. Informal views along roads or across an open space can often be important to the relationship between historic buildings and structures and to their setting.

St Mary's Church is an architecturally and historically significant building and a key feature of the Conservation Area. It forms an important landmark in many of the views within and towards the Conservation Area. These include intended vistas which reflect the historic importance of the building and its influence on the pattern of growth within the village, as well as more incidental, distant views of the settlement in the approach to it.

This document does not seek to identify every important view however it highlights where views contribute positively to the special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area reflected through its character and appearance. Views highlighted on map 2 are not exhaustive or exclusive, but indicative of types of views that are of importance to the Conservation Area. It is important to remember that the composition and the comparative openness of views can vary through the changing of seasons or as a result of alteration due to longer term changes in vegetation cover or the introduction of new built elements.

In considering development or change within the Conservation Area or affecting its setting it will be desirable as part of the assessment of significance to identify and seek to protect important views and vistas within, from and towards the Conservation Area, that contribute to the character, appearance or setting of the Conservation Area and the setting of designated heritage assets.



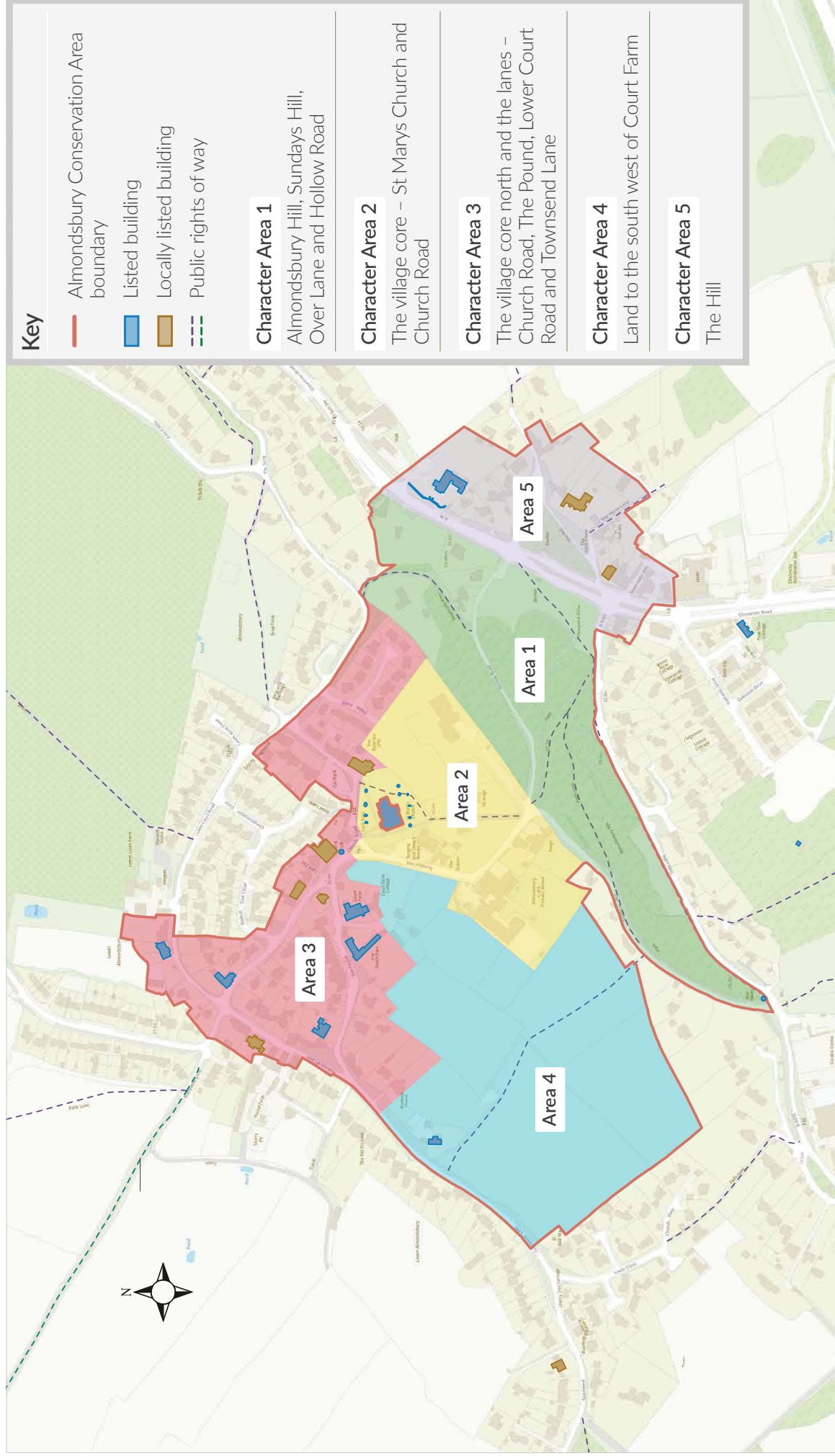
Character areas

The special features of the Conservation Area have been described above in chapter 6 above and to a greater or lesser extent these can be found throughout the Conservation Area. In order to aid an understanding of perceptible shifts in character throughout the Conservation Area a series of five character areas have been identified. Each area has been defined according to its predominant natural and built characteristics: topography and landscape pattern and features; as well as the grain, scale, age, design and materials of built form including key buildings and structures. An understanding of how the history of the village and wider area has contributed to character and appearance is also relevant and therefore key phases of development and notable events, places and people are highlighted where this has shaped the present character and appearance of a character area. Finally, less tangible features such as the varying levels of activity, shading, vehicle traffic and noise all have capacity to affect overall ambience of an area, and as such also forms an element of the assessment of each area where relevant. The boundaries of the five character areas are an attempt to define where characteristics notably change across the Conservation Area, although there will inevitably be characteristics shared across more than one area. Character areas should not be seen as 'hard edged' as there may well be a transitional character between two areas, where characteristics will overlap and be shared by both. Locations at the edge of a character area in particular may have shared qualities. Illustrating character areas on map 1 should therefore be seen as a method of breaking down the area as a whole for discussion and description purposes, and adjoining character areas should be considered in any response to context.

For each character area an identification and appraisal of the key elements of character and appearance will be followed by a strategy for preservation and enhancement.

MAP 1 ALMONDSBURY CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER AREAS

Boundary and Character Areas



AREA 1 ALMONDSBURY HILL – OVER LANE, SUNDAYS HILL (UPPER PORTION) AND HOLLOW ROAD

The steep wooded hillside above the village is a key aspect of Lower Almondsbury's distinctive and special character. The woodland, which contains mixed conifers and deciduous trees mostly of Elm, Larch, Ash, Pine and Beech with Elm and Lime coppice, provide a green and attractive backdrop to the village in views from lower ground to the north and west. It encloses the village, protecting it from modern intrusions such as traffic, development and light pollution. The hill also provides an essential and much used amenity space for local residents and visitors alike, as well as important wildlife habitat. A network of public footpaths traverse the verdant hillside, allowing glimpses of views through the trees, culminating in the expansive ridge top views over the Severn Estuary and to Wales and the Forest of Dean beyond.



The enclosure of Sundays Hill is broken by occasional gaps, providing views to the Severn Levels

The importance of the hill is reflected not only by its designation as Conservation Area, but also an area tree protection order, a common and natural green space and one of the district's visually important hillsides. The tree planting in this area lies within a strategic woodland corridor, reflecting the contribution it makes to South Gloucestershire's emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy Network.



The footpaths on Sundays Hill provide important views to the Severn Levels and St Mary's Church

Almondsbury Hill sits on an outcrop of Lower Carboniferous Limestone and the stone quarries along the scarp directly above the village can still be seen as interesting depressions in the ground today. Although motorway traffic is visible in the distance from some locations and the audible effects of traffic are a slight detractor from the rural character, the woodland is otherwise a tranquil place.

In contrast to the public woodland of Almondsbury Hill, the tree planting on the opposite side of the narrow and enclosed Hollow Road forms private land belonging to Glebe House. Historically developed by Knowle Park estate as plantation, it still today serves as an important undeveloped, natural backdrop to St Mary's and the wider Conservation Area and is designated as protected woodland. Soapsuds Alley which follows the line of a natural spring through the woodland to an outlet on The Scop takes its name from residents historically bringing their washing to this water source. The cool and shady pathway beneath the dense tree canopy follows the trickling stream providing a particularly pleasant walk.



The high degree of enclosure resulting from the traditional stone wall and planting is important to the character of Sundays Hill



The wooded Almondsbury Hill provides an important green and undeveloped backdrop to the Conservation Area

The hillside contributes a dual role to the character of the Conservation Area. The dense, wooded scarp forms a protective veil and backdrop, and the elevated height provides views down into the village and beyond, ensuring the historic landscape setting remains a strong feature of the Conservation Area. For this reason, the importance of the open spaces in and around the Conservation Area is heightened and particularly sensitive to change. Infill development on Sundays Hill or the loss of green space and planting which would undermine the rural and undeveloped character of the Conservation Area should be resisted. **Development affecting the wider landscape setting of the Conservation Area, and prominent from key viewpoints, would also need to be very carefully considered to ensure that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is not harmed.**

The historic stone walls lining Sundays Hill reinforce the enclosure created by the woodland slopes, and both impart a strong sense of rurality and age to the village. The War memorial provides an important focal point at the entrance to the Conservation Area. Views over the walls to the fields below provide relief from the enclosure, and an important connection to the landscape. As Hollow Road and Sundays Hill meet at the bend by the former forge, the space opens up and the character shifts as signs of village life and activity emerge.

AREA 1 PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

In addition to the preservation and enhancement strategies included from pages 47-49 the following factors will be taken into account when considering the preservation and enhancement of the Almondsbury Hill area.

- Protecting the important views from Almondsbury Hill over the village and to the Severn Levels beyond.
- Maintaining the contribution this open space provides to wider community and environment well-being.
- Resisting the loss of tree planting, other than to maintain views from important viewpoints, and ensuring that the woodland is maintained as an effective protective screen to modern intrusions beyond in views from lower ground to the north.
- Encouraging the provision of a woodland management strategy for Almondsbury Hill woodland to plan appropriate planting and felling, removal of invasive species, management of habitats and approach to footpaths.
- Maintaining the stone walls and planting, therefore preserving their attractive and traditional appearance and sense of enclosure on the approach into the village along Sundays Hill and Hollow Road.
- Where necessary, sympathetically replacing or repairing boundary fencing adjacent to Almondsbury Hill footpaths.
- Ensuring new boundary treatments, highway works and signage are appropriate to the rural and traditional character.
- Maintaining the green, natural and undeveloped character of this part of the Conservation Area.
- Maintaining the open, rural character of the common.
- Seeking to reduce the adverse impact of traffic and parking on the historic village and ensuring traffic management measures, street furniture and highway works are appropriate and sensitive to the historic character.

AREA 2 THE VILLAGE CORE SOUTH - ST MARY'S CHURCH AND SUNDAYS HILL (LOWER PORTIONS)

The entrances into the village via Sundays Hill and Hollow Road are attractive and enclosed, with the steep tree-lined descents gradually opening up at the wide bend in the road. The large pockets of open space around and between the buildings beyond the bend creates a transitional character, becoming increasingly developed as one enters the village centre. A grouping of historic buildings including the former national school, Court Farm and St Mary's Church, set around a small green, form the village core.

This central area of the village has a vibrant and bustling character. The village has walking and cycling connectivity to major employment areas in the Bristol North Fringe such as Aztec West and is on the public transport corridor between Bristol and Thornbury. Within the village itself a primary school, dedicated community centre, doctor's surgery, pub and community shop are all within an 800m walk. The combination of local level facilities within the village, proximity to the Bristol North Fringe and situation on a public transport corridor provide residents with a range of options to sustainably access key services and facilities.

In addition to vehicles passing through, these facilities also contribute to the dominance of traffic within this part of the village. The increased parking and congestion, especially at peak times, can detract from the character of the Conservation Area considerably.

Despite the bustling road frontage within this part of the Conservation Area, the plentiful green, open spaces, both public and private, offer a quintessential village environment. These spaces provide views to the wooded scarp to the south east and fields to the west, allowing this part of the village to maintain an overriding rural, green character.

At the junction of Sundays Hill and Church Road the small triangular green with village pump, forms the heart of the village between its two oldest sites: St Mary's Church and Court Farm. The robust and ancient north frontage of grade I listed St Mary's Church with its Norman porch and distinctive lead spire, dominate the village, inviting and welcoming the visitor in. The roads, as well as many footpaths, revolve around and lead to the church, and it remains one of the most significant physical, visual and cultural features of Almondsbury. In contrast to the public, open frontage of the church, Court Farm is set back from the road within large gardens bounded by high stone walls, indicating its historic status and importance. Court Farm is discussed in more detail in Area 4.



The undeveloped space between St Mary's Church and Court Farm is important



The traffic congestion and parking issues at this sensitive central location detract from the character, however any highways mitigation measures must be sensitive in design and appearance

Beyond the busy road, the churchyard is a place of tranquillity and calm. A list of churchyard monuments given by Ralph Bigland in his Gloucestershire Collections (1786), lists many of the yeomen families of that period. Many of their tombstones still stand in the churchyard and are listed for their historic significance. The peaceful and extensive grounds of Glebe House extend to the south of the churchyard. When part of William Chester Esquires Knowle Park estate, this land formed church orchards. Glebe House was built in the late Victorian period as the new Vicarage, to replace one that stood in the location of the doctor's surgery. At that time Almondsbury was a wealthy parish and the vicar's stipend at the top end of stipends for vicars nationally called for a more prestigious building to reflect this. The orchard trees were replaced with beautifully manicured lawns. Glebe House is now a care home and despite its enlargement and the modern development at Glebe Field, the gardens remain spacious and open. Together with the dense belt of trees to the south-east they form a green and tranquil backdrop to the church.



Public footpath providing a vista to St Mary's Church at the heart of the village



Extensive lawns to Glebe House form an important open space and setting to the church



The wooded Almondsbury Hill provides an important green backdrop to the church and wider Conservation Area

AREA 2 PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

In addition to the preservation and enhancement strategies included from pages 47-49 the following factors will be taken into account when considering the preservation and enhancement of the village core south area

- In considering any development ensure great weight is given to protecting the significance and setting of grade I listed St Mary's Church and its churchyard
- Maintaining the quality and character of the green, open spaces. The form, scale, position or design of proposals for new development should avoid diminishing the contribution that the open spaces make to the significance of the Conservation Area
- Ensuring the approaches and views and vistas towards St Mary's Church are conserved, upholding the importance and focus of the site within the village

- Maintaining traditional stone walls in their various historic forms, thereby retaining evidential value and the important contribution they make to the traditional appearance and sense of enclosure
- Maintaining stone kerbs and grass verges in order to preserve their rustic and traditional feel
- Seeking to reduce the adverse impact of traffic and parking on the historic village and ensuring traffic management measures, street furniture and highway works are appropriate and sensitive to the historic character
- Maintaining historic features such as the village pump, telephone box and village green
- Ensuring new boundary treatments, highway works and signage are appropriate to the rural and traditional character
- Maintaining the physical and visual connection to surrounding fields in order to preserve the historic association of the village with its agricultural land



Pretty and natural wide verges contribute to the rural character of the village



The attractive open green at The Pound with views to the countryside beyond

AREA 3 THE VILLAGE CORE NORTH AND THE LANES – CHURCH ROAD, THE POUND, LOWER COURT ROAD AND TOWNSEND LANE

This part of the village beyond the church and green is more tightly knit and rural in character. The abundant use of traditional stone in buildings and walls remain a prominent and unifying feature of this part of the Conservation Area, providing a strong sense of enclosure and a rustic charm and patina. Many traditional buildings line Church Road including the old school (now community hall), The Bowl Inn public house and a number of traditional, pretty terraced stone cottages, many of which were built as estate tenement cottages to house farm labourers. These are two storey rubble stone buildings with pitched roofs with clay tiles and chimney stacks, often incorporating small gables and freestone dressings. Their low, linear form and modest scale, as well as the predominance of stone and clay tile, strongly characterise this part of the Conservation Area.

The community shop is based in one such building. Originally a pair of estate tenement cottages, each 'cottage' is two storeys with a central gable dormer above a small, canted bay window on the ground floor. During the nineteenth century the cottages were enlarged, joined and reconfigured and recently have been converted for use as the village shop. The garden, enclosed by a natural stone boundary wall, is now used as a public seating area. This is the only shop in Lower Almondsbury and makes a hugely valuable contribution to the village. Local produce is stocked where possible and profits go towards running the shop or are donated to local causes. The shop enhances the range of facilities available within the village and is an important addition to the facilities needed to support the village such as the school, community centre, church, pub and surgery. It contributes to the vibrancy of this part of the character area, distinct from the quieter lanes beyond.



The community shop, housed within a pair of former estate cottages, is a valuable community asset at the heart of the village



This house on Lower Court Road (grade II listed) is a good example of a seventeenth century gabled vernacular farmhouse



Court Farm Barn, with its distinctive buttressed walls, dates from at least the early sixteenth century. It is likely to have been built as a lodging range for the manorial complex of St Augustine's Abbey, before being converted and adapted for agricultural use



Traditional stone cottages on Church Road

As with Church Road, the lanes are strongly characterised by the local vernacular stone cottages, boundary walls and grass verges. Here however, the built form is slightly less dense, with greater abundance of green spaces in the form of gardens, generous grass verges, planting and views to fields beyond.

The village's historic association with farming is evident in these narrow lanes. Dating from the sixteenth century, Court Farm Barn is now in residential use however its high solid stone rubble walls with narrow ventilation slits clearly demonstrate its agricultural origins. Lower Court Farm and Pound Farm remain in agricultural use. Traffic and the roads themselves are a less prominent element in the lanes, also contributing to a more rural, tranquil character. The Pound takes its name from being the location for the village animal pound. The walled enclosure is noted on the 1st edition OS map of 1880 to the south of the triangle of public green which remains today at the junction of The Pound and Townsend Lane. Framed beneath the boughs of mature beech and ash trees, this is a particularly pleasant and tranquil place within the Conservation Area.

The Bowl Inn, so named due to the shape of the land surrounding the Severn Estuary, is thought to be medieval in origins; the distinctive external batter towards the ground is generally indicative of medieval construction. It became a licensed inn in 1550. This building has a painted finish to the stone and the adjacent terraced cottages are render, which is not typical in the Conservation Area today other than more modern housing however contributes an interesting variation. The use of traditional lime renders and lime washes on the exterior of buildings is historically accurate. The car park here, although a modern surfacing, was historically free of built form and provides essential space for parking and traffic, helping to alleviate congestion on the village roads. The pub provides an important focal point to the village and local community, although additional boundary planting to soften the space would be beneficial.



The Bowl Inn is reputed to have originally been erected in 1146 as three cottages to house the monks building the adjacent church



The Church of St Mary can be viewed against the wooded backdrop of Almondsbury Hill



A typical low, gabled cottage identified as an estate workers cottage on the Tithe map

AREA 3 PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

In addition to the preservation and enhancement strategies included from pages 45-47 the following factors will be taken into account when considering the preservation and enhancement of the 'village core north and the lanes' area.

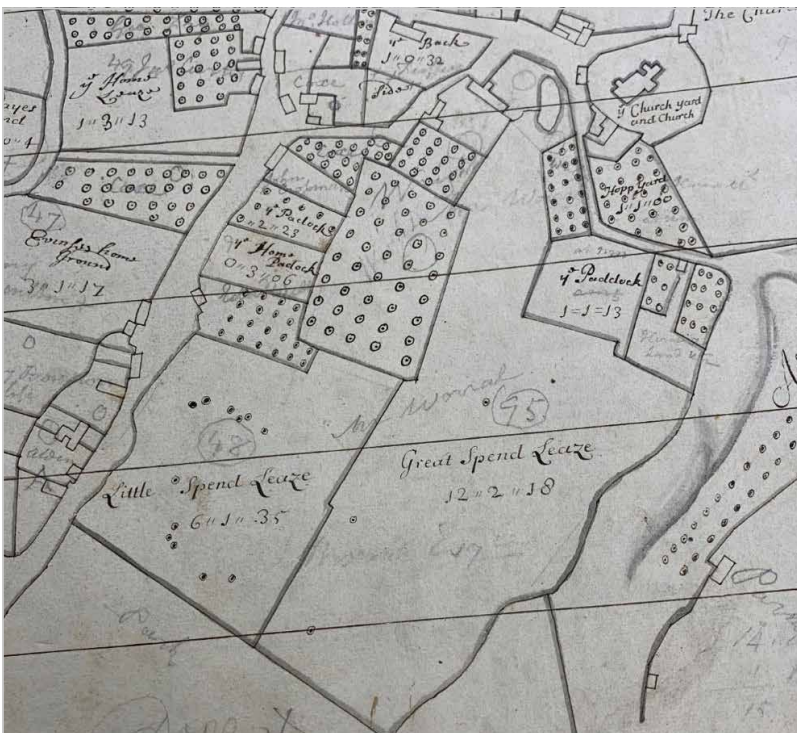
- Ensuring new development respects the local vernacular building form and predominance of traditional materials including natural stone and clay tile.
- Retaining traditional stone walls, trees, informal grass verges and pockets of green space which contribute to the rural charm.
- Ensuring new development does not harm or reduce views where these contribute positively to the character and significance of the Conservation Area, in particular its agricultural character and landscape setting or those affecting the historic village core and St Mary's Church.

- Maintaining stone kerbs and grass verges in order to preserve their rustic and traditional feel.
- Seeking to reduce the adverse impact of traffic and parking on the historic village and ensuring traffic management measures, street furniture and highway works are appropriate and sensitive to the historic character.

AREA 4 LAND TO THE SOUTHWEST OF COURT FARM

Court Farm has been identified as part of a manorial complex, the Manor of Almondsbury having been owned by the Augustine’s Abbey from the twelfth century. The current farmhouse and barn contain work dating from the fifteenth century, likely to have been built as subsidiary ranges to enlarge the accommodation of the manor. The raising of the roof and insertion of the large windows we see today is likely to date from the secular ownership of the buildings around the 1550’s/60’s, when Knole Park was built. Following this the medieval manor ceased to be a building of importance and became a working farm. The seventeenth and eighteenth-century parts of the building date from this phase of use.

The gardens and open fields in area 4 have a character which is distinct from the busier, more developed areas of the village. The open fields to the southwest of Court Farm and Rock House represent surviving agricultural land which is important to the wider setting of these historic buildings and the historic village core, including St Mary’s Church. A map of Almondsbury Manor c1700, below, identifies that the historic layout of the fields and orchards in this area remain clearly legible today.



'An exact delineation of Almondsbury Manour with the Tennant's Names and quality of each particular Ground', c1700 Gloucestershire Archives, D674a/P1

Historic photographs also demonstrate how little this area of the village has changed, especially in comparison with parts which have seen relatively high levels of new housing development, such as on the northeastern side of the village. Orchard planting has been lost and the school enlarged, however the green, rural character is well maintained and an extremely significant aspect of the Conservation Area which it is important to retain. The fields are expansive and open, which is an interesting contrast to many other parts of the village where enclosure and built form are strong characteristics.

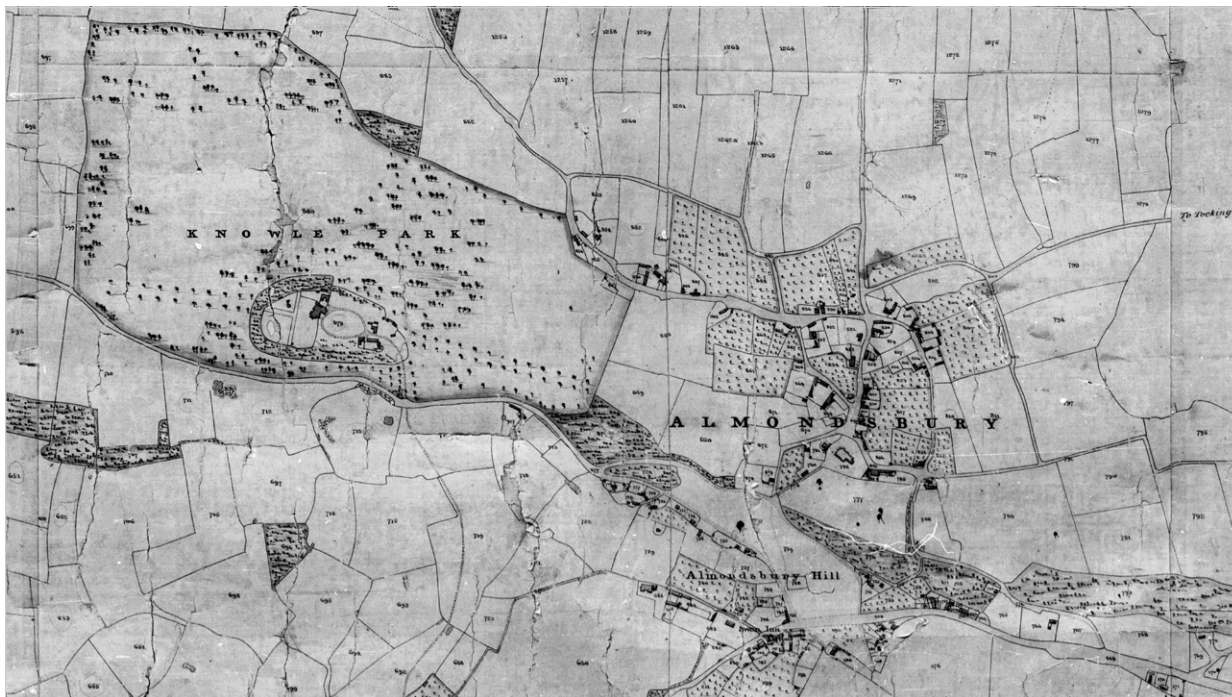


Photo c.1955 showing fields to southwest of Court Farm, courtesy of Francis Frith Collection

The stone boundary wall to the west of the fields is understood to be the original boundary line to the historic deer park for Sir Thomas Chester of Knole Park, now mostly built over though the site of the house remains surrounded by mature eighteenth and nineteenth century planting. A historic document dated 1631 records *'An agreement, signed by tenants, permitting Thomas Chester to inclose the Common on Sundays Hill between the brook that issueth out of Robert Hunt's ground called Broken-burrows unto Dayhouse ground called Spenlease up to the park gates of the said Thomas Chester'*. (Gloucestershire Archives, D674a/E51), indicating a private route from Sundays Hill to a gated entrance at the north-east corner of the park.

The early eighteenth-century Kip engraving of the house shows deer in the park, an important indication of status. At this date the park is shown enclosed by a pale, perhaps only replaced with a wall in the later eighteenth or nineteenth century. The division between the Lord of the Manor's private parkland and village fields would have been clear and robust, both for practical and symbolic purposes and this distinction between the park and fields, and the separation from the village core, is considered an important aspect of the historic interest of the area.

By the mid nineteenth century the three fields on the 'village' side of the wall were rented from William Chester's estate to Henry Robert Digby and other than the growth of the school and associated boundary changes their form and hedge boundary layout remain the same today as shown on the mid nineteenth century tithe map. Some limited sections of the wall have been rebuilt but is predominantly historic and continues to form a boundary in its original location. Despite modern development to the park side, the wall together with the open fields to the village, form a significant survival of the historic layout and development of the settlement. Retention of this open area of fields therefore allows the historic layout and road pattern to remain legible. The park and garden are locally registered to acknowledge their local importance.



1840's Tithe map showing extent of Knole Park deer park and relationship to the village of Almondsbury

Area 4 provides valuable open space within the Conservation Area, across which runs a well utilised historic public footpath. The open fields are visually strongly connected to Sundays Hill, the Severn Levels and the historic core of the village, including St Mary's Church, providing important views to these key features of special interest to the Conservation Area. As well as qualities of openness and 'greenness', intangible qualities experienced in this area such as the sound of the running water from the stream and limited activity are important aspects of a rural, tranquil ambience and character, which support wider understanding of the historic interest of the conservation area. It is important that development in this area is carefully controlled in order to preserve the rural character and maintain views which contribute to the significance of the conservation area, particularly those towards key features.



Part of the historic stone wall which enclosed the deer park at Knole Park



The views across area 4 to the Severn Levels provide a rural, open character to this part of the Conservation Area



View towards the village over the open fields – the spire of St Mary's is a prominent feature on the skyline, within a bucolic setting.

AREA 4 PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

In addition to the preservation and enhancement strategies included from pages 47-49 traditional, more sustainable the following factors will be taken into account when considering the preservation and enhancement of the 'Court Farm and land to the southwest' area.

- Maintaining the rural character and appearance of agricultural land where this makes an important contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area and the setting of listed buildings.
- Ensuring that views from or across this area towards key features of the Conservation Area such as St Mary's Church and the historic village core, the Severn Levels and Almondsbury Hill are carefully protected where these contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area.
- Ensuring new farm and other buildings/structures are appropriate in scale and sensitively designed, sited and landscaped.
- Ensuring any new tree planting is appropriate in terms of species and layout and is sympathetic to historic character and setting.
- Seeking to maintain and repair the historic stone boundary wall to Knole deer park using traditional materials.
- Retaining the historic hedge boundary layout.

AREA 5 THE HILL

The Conservation Area has been extended to include an important area of the historic village at Upper Almondsbury. Most of Almondsbury Hill and common fall within the original conservation boundary and character area 1, however this fails to fully reflect the development of Almondsbury village beyond the present A38 and important later phases of growth. This part of the settlement at the top of the hill originally formed around the large extent of common land either side of Gloucester Road and contained by Over Lane, Sundays Hill and Hollow Road. The mid-nineteenth century tithe map shows groups of modest houses and cottages fronting the roads and common, several being cottages of the Chester-Masters' estate. This traditional vernacular housing is of the same age and form as many cottages in Lower Almondsbury and many of these houses remain today albeit with alterations and additions.

Larger, public buildings such as The Swan Inn and the Hospital prominently address the road and remain as an important reminder of this part of Almondsbury on a coach and trade route. Historically shops, tea rooms and post office occupied some of the buildings at this busy 'gateway' point of the village.



Almondsbury Hospital was built in 1891 by C E Ponting. The use of red brick, white woodwork and an eclectic mix of architectural forms and features, such as the Renaissance style clock tower and curved Dutch gables, were common features of English Domestic Revival buildings.

By the late nineteenth century, Mr Sholto Vere Hare rented Knole Park, and on the death of his wife, decided to build the Almondsbury Memorial Institute in her memory. It was constructed in the English Domestic Revival style using Cattybrook brick with stone dressing and had illuminated clock faces in the tower. Opened in 1892 by the Duchess of Rutland, the Memorial Institute was used as a hospital and as a meeting place and library for parishioners. During the First World War it was used as a military hospital and then continued as a cottage hospital. The building is now used as a private house and is listed grade II as a reflection of its architectural significance. The building forms a prominent and distinctive entrance to Almondsbury and the tower can be seen from locations within Lower Almondsbury, providing an important connection between the two areas of the village.

At the turn of the twentieth century a successful businessman named Walter Frost identified a site at the eastern edge of the common at Almondsbury Hill for its wide view across the Severn estuary to the Welsh hills. He purchased and cleared a number of tenement cottages to make way for The Red House, built in 1901 to the designs of Henry Dare Bryan (1868-1909), a Bristol architect who worked mainly in the Arts & Crafts manner.



Specimen trees including mature Austrian Pines provide a refined character to this area of common land

Frost believed that all who owned land should be careful to see it well planted with trees, and the extensive gardens at The Red House reflected this ideal. It is understood that many of the specimen trees that are within the parish were planted by his direction. Today the original grounds to the south-west of The Red House are much reduced by new housing, however in views from the west the property still presents an architecturally pleasing composition, set within distinctive mature specimen tree planting, including lofty *Pinus nigra*.



The buildings in this area of Upper Almondsbury are eclectic in age, architectural style and materials, reflecting fashionable building styles of the Victorian and Edwardian era which would have been readily found in Bristol or the market towns such as Thornbury. This illustrates a more refined, polite phase of later village growth, distinct from the local vernacular housing associated with the agricultural origins of the area which predominates in Lower Almondsbury.



Polite buildings with classical detailing help define this part of the conservation area

As in other locations within the Conservation Area, the elevated nature of The Hill provides extensive views to Wales and the Forest of Dean. The informal surfacing of The Hill and the simple grass verges distinguish the character of this road from the A38 and should be maintained. While not as peaceful and rural in character as much of Lower Almondsbury, the tree planting, common and historic buildings provide an understanding of the significance of this area as part of the development of Almondsbury.

The twentieth century urbanisation of the A38 resulting from its increased width, intensification of traffic use and the modern ribbon development has resulted in a feeling of separation from Lower Almondsbury. The row of cottages at the top of Over Lane with buttressed gable indicates the unfortunate reduction of the terrace to enable the widening of the A38. There is a clear difference in character and appearance between Upper and Lower Almondsbury, however in many ways the distinction is not an entirely new characteristic of the village and reflect its historic development and special interest, which is worthy of preserving.

AREA 5 PRESERVATION & ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES

In addition to the preservation and enhancement strategies included from pages 47-49 the following factors will be taken into account when considering the preservation and enhancement of The Hill character area.

- Maintaining the tree planting and open character of the common land.
- Ensuring any new tree planting is appropriate in terms of species and layout and is sympathetic to historic character and setting.
- Ensuring that any traffic or highways works or improvements respect the refined, traditional qualities of The Hill.
- Maintaining important views over the common land to Wales and the Forest of Dean.
- Ensuring that new development maintains the architectural interest, appearance and the setting of historic buildings.

Keeping and enhancing the character: preservation and enhancement strategy

The overall aim is to **preserve or enhance the historic character or appearance** of the Conservation Area, including its historic buildings, features, views, landscapes and setting.

The following overarching preservation and enhancement strategies, as well as those contained within each character area, are considered to form a management plan that is specific to the Almondsbury Conservation Area, and which responds to this character assessment. This accords with the statutory duty of South Gloucestershire Council to *formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas* (**section 71[1 and 2] Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**).

A strategy for the preservation and enhancement of the area is also set out on the accompanying Map 2.

1) Preserve and reinforce the historic character

- Encourage the retention, maintenance and, where necessary, repair of buildings, structures and features that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- Ensure repairs are carried out sensitively and that any works to both the listed and unlisted buildings, features and surroundings are considered in relation to the historic context and use appropriate materials and detailing.
- Seek the retention and reinstatement of traditional details such as windows, doors, chimneys.
- Maintain traditional stone walls and native hedges and resist the introduction of inappropriate boundary treatments or materials.
- Maintain historic features such as village pump, telephone box and war memorial.

2) Ensure that any new development (or alteration) respects the historic context

- When considering any development seek to ensure that the significance and setting of the Conservation Area is appropriately considered and protected.
- Encourage good quality design in all new development (or alterations) that is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and, where possible, enhances or better reveals the significance of the Conservation Area.

- Proposals should have regard to the historic grain and pattern of development, scale, form, massing, building lines and open spaces that contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.
- New development should not adversely harm the setting of historic buildings or archaeological remains.
- New development should seek to protect important views and vistas, within, towards and from the Conservation Area, that contribute to the character, appearance or setting of the Conservation Area and the setting of designated heritage assets.
- Encourage the use of traditional materials and construction details that have regard to the distinctive character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and ensure that the architectural distinction between polite and vernacular buildings within the Conservation Area is maintained.
- Encourage sensitive redevelopment of visually intrusive or poor quality buildings when opportunities arise and promote high quality design that enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Seek to preserve or enhance the green, undeveloped spaces including woodland, commons, greens, verges, fields and gardens that contribute positively to the character or appearance of the conservation area and its landscape setting.
- Ensure that the change of use of land or buildings preserves the important character of the Conservation Area and its setting.
- Ensure that modern lighting schemes do not result in light pollution that would be detrimental to the 'dark skies' that are experienced within conservation area.

3) Minimise the impact of existing modern development

- Enhancement proposals should seek to reduce the impact of modern development and soften the impact of intrusive features by using native planting and natural stone walls.
- Seek to maintain front gardens and avoid the introduction of parking on front gardens, or loss of traditional front boundaries.
- Seek to reduce the adverse impact of traffic congestion and parking on the historic village and ensure traffic management measures, street furniture and highway works are appropriate and sensitive to the historic character.

4) Preserve and reinforce the vitality of the historic village

- Ensure alterations, new development or changes of use are appropriate and enhance the community function and vitality.

5) Preserve the Green Infrastructure (GI) Assets

- Ensure that local GI assets including gardens, public open spaces and commons, fields, public rights of way, woodland, trees, orchards, hedgerows etc are planned, delivered, managed and enhanced in a way that maintains and enhances the character and significance of the Conservation Area and its setting and for their contribution to wider community and environment well-being.
- Seek to protect and enhance the public rights of way as important Green Infrastructure assets and recreational resources.
- Planting is an important part of the Conservation Area and helps to soften the impact of new development.
- Encourage the provision of a Woodland Management Strategy for Almondsbury Woodland.
- The restoration of orchards in and around the Conservation Area would be strongly encouraged for the wide variety of environmental benefits they offer.

6) Preserve and reinforce the historic landscape setting of the Conservation Area

- Avoid new development or uses which would be harmful to the landscape character and setting of the Conservation Area or those which would reduce, remove, or harm important landscape views.
- Recognise the importance of the key views towards and across the Conservation Area and adjoining Severn Levels, including those from the visually important hillside area of the Severn Ridges.
- Maintain the wooded backdrop of the Severn Ridges.
- Encourage the retention (or replacement where appropriate) of trees, native hedges, stone walls, field patterns and other landscape features.
- Maintain public rights of way and other recreational access.

7) Maintain the character and quality of the public realm

- Ensure the treatment of the public realm – roads, footpaths, open spaces, verges, trees, common land and boundary walls – is sympathetic to the historic character and that street furniture, lighting, traffic restriction measures, signs and road markings are appropriate and kept to a minimum.

8) Support the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Network

- Maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the area, its functionality and connectivity.

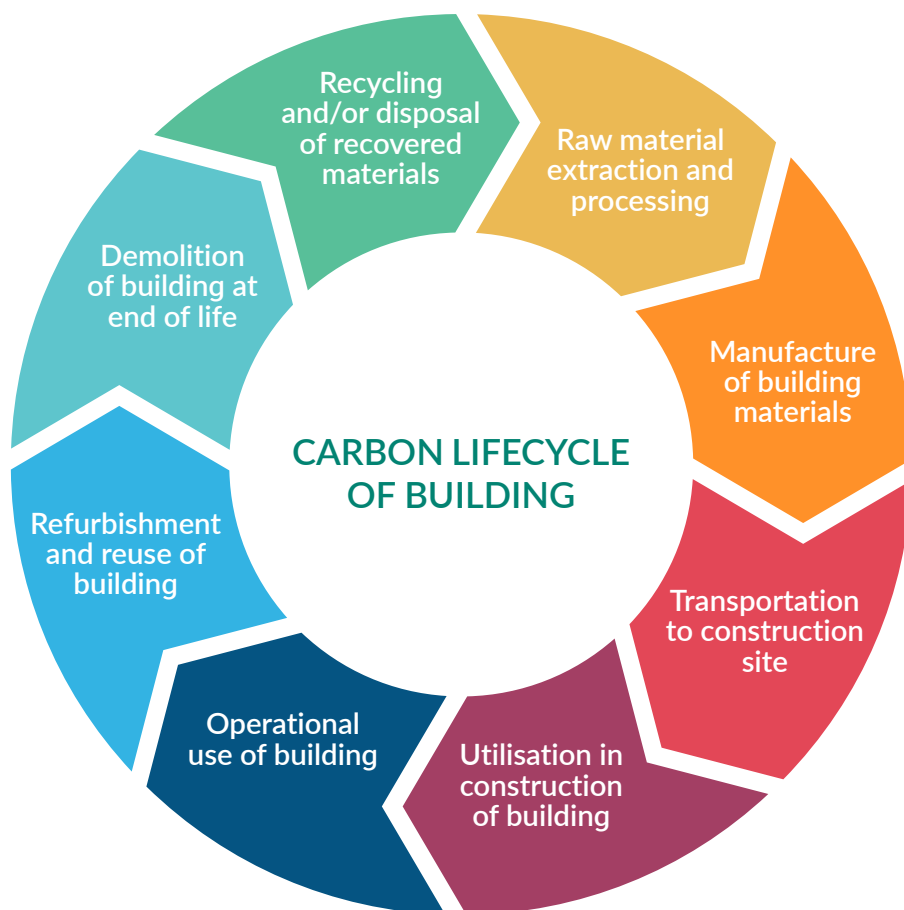
Sustainability

The Almondsbury Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan provides an opportunity to contribute to the Council’s work on the Climate Emergency in that strategies for preserving and enhancing the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area promote the **sustainable repair and reuse/recycling of existing traditional buildings and structures**. Sympathetically upgrading and reusing existing buildings, rather than demolishing and building new, can dramatically improve a building’s carbon footprint and make substantial energy savings because the CO₂ emissions already embodied within existing building fabric would not be lost through demolition.

The Almondsbury Conservation Area Appraisal also promotes high standards of design which include using **traditional, sustainable and renewable materials** as part of helping promote low carbon, energy efficient, renewably powered, climate resilient small-scale development within Almondsbury.

ADAPTATIONS TO BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

Buildings can be adapted in response to climate change. This can include measures to improve energy efficiency and decarbonise as part of reducing the impact of the “operational use” of a building when seen in the context of the “Carbon Lifecycle of a Building”. The process of improving the energy performance of existing buildings through technical interventions is commonly referred to as retrofit.



Improving energy efficiency will lower carbon emissions, however it is important to note that energy efficiency is not the same as carbon reduction. It is possible to improve the energy efficiency of a building while also increasing its carbon footprint when emissions associated with the sourcing, manufacture and transportation of materials are considered.

For responsible retrofit the 'embodied' impact of construction and materials should also be taken into consideration wherever possible. This can be substantial and sometimes even outweigh any savings in use.

Almondsbury Conservation Area contains many historic buildings, both listed and unlisted, which contribute positively to its special interest and character and are of traditional construction. These generally will incorporate solid walls and permeable construction materials. These require a different approach to buildings of modern construction, which typically have cavity walls and are vapour impermeable.

The relevant Approved Documents themselves recognise that historic and traditional buildings require a different approach to modern buildings and some flexibility is needed to mitigate the potential conflicts between the building and energy conservation.

Further guidance can be found within the Historic England publication: "Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings – How to Improve Energy Efficiency" which can be accessed via the Historic England website using the below link, <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/energy-efficiency-historic-buildings-ptl/heag014-energy-efficiency-pa>

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan cannot cover all potential retrofit measures to a building or every renewable energy technology, and the suitability of individual alterations will vary depending on the significance and designation of a building. However, the information set out below offers guidance in relation to some of the most common retrofit proposals.

Listed buildings are subject to specific legislative requirements and any works for the demolition of a listed building or for its alteration, internally or externally, which would affect their character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, requires listed building consent.

Planning permission is not required for **internal works** only to an unlisted building. Building Regulations may however be required.

WINDOWS

The council encourages the repair and retention of traditional windows that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. The repair or upgrade of existing traditional windows is a highly sustainable option as the carbon will be already 'locked up' in the fabric, with repair/refurbishment/upgrading adding little to their ongoing carbon footprint compared to complete replacement. However, where traditional windows on an unlisted dwelling are beyond economic repair and require replacement, matching the existing in terms of design, appearance, materials and size is encouraged. The replacement of modern, poor-quality windows is also encouraged, particularly where betterment of design and insulation can be achieved.

If you are proposing to replace existing windows in a dwellinghouse* with new windows that differ from the originals in terms of their:

- a) Design (for instance, replacing traditional flush-fitting casements with modern storm-proof casements)
- b) Appearance (for instance, replacing traditional vertically sliding sash windows with top hung 'mock' sashes or 'tilt and turn' windows, omitting/changing the configuration of traditional glazing bars, or introducing vent windows where none currently exist)
- c) Size (for instance, changing the dimensions of component parts of the window to result in a visual 'bulking-up')

then you may need to apply for planning permission. This is because the visual change to the windows could result in a 'material change to the appearance of the building', triggering the need for planning permission.

Changing the material of windows (for instance, going from timber to uPVC), will only require planning permission if the new windows will result in a material change to the appearance of the building as a result of the changes referred to above. This applies whether located within a conservation area or not.

* A "dwellinghouse" does not include a building containing one or more flats, or a flat contained within such a building.

RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES

Wherever possible the council encourages the use of renewable energy technologies where these are sensitively located so as to maintain the character, appearance and setting of the Conservation Area and any features of special interest.

Within a conservation area, solar and photovoltaic panels are permitted development on roof-slopes of unlisted dwelling houses or buildings within their curtilage, meaning planning permission is not required. Equipment installed on walls fronting a highway or placed as stand-alone equipment so that it is nearer to any highway than the dwelling house will require planning permission. All installations, free-standing or otherwise, within the curtilage of listed buildings will require planning permission. (*Schedule 2, Part 14, Class A of the GPDO*) Similarly, air source heat pumps are permitted development for an unlisted dwelling house or block of flats unless they are on a wall or roof fronting a highway or forward of the building line fronting a highway (*Schedule 2, Part 14, Class G of the GPDO*). Planning Permission is required for units on a building or on land within curtilage of a listed building.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL INSULATION

In most cases, unless the building is already rendered, external wall insulation is likely to be a material change to the building's appearance and therefore require an application for planning permission. (*Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A of the GPDO*). Planning permission is not required for internal works to an unlisted building in a conservation area.

It is important to remember however that if not specified correctly, the installation of insulation (particularly internal and external wall and underfloor insulation) has the potential to cause condensation. This can cause dampness within a building's structure, and can be harmful to the health of the building and its occupants. It is therefore important to get expert advice when considering adding wall insulation to a traditionally built dwelling.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

The construction of new buildings and extensions to existing buildings in the conservation area can be carried out using modern construction techniques and will be required to meet the energy efficiency standards required by building regulations. However, traditional materials are often fundamental to the character and appearance of any conservation area. They create a sense of place and local distinctiveness. The use of non-traditional, modern facing materials (walls and roofs) risks generic 'anywhere' development.

The use of local, traditional materials, where available, does not compromise energy efficiency and can also help improve sustainability as the materials may not need to be transported as far and will often therefore have less embodied carbon. Where alternative materials need to be specified to replicate traditional local construction, they should be as close a match as possible to the prevailing materials in the area to protect its character and distinctiveness.

The external appearance of any new building or extension within or adjoining the Conservation Area may be influenced by an energy efficient design in terms of orientation, materials, fenestration or the addition of renewable energy technologies such as photovoltaic or solar thermal panels and heat pumps. Consideration will also need to be given to ensuring that the design is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Green infrastructure is a network of green (land) and blue (water) spaces which when appropriately planned, designed, connected, and managed provides a wide range of environmental functions and multiple benefits for people, communities, and nature. Green Infrastructure includes all natural, semi natural and cultivated areas of land, public and privately owned, of all shapes and sizes. The benefits of green infrastructure include natural flood management, wildlife habitat, locked in carbon that reduces greenhouse gases, cooling and shading, as well as space for nature to thrive, social spaces and more attractive and healthier places to live.

Much of Almondsbury Conservation Area and its surrounding setting lies within the South Gloucestershire wider Strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) Network and contains a number of GI assets including commons, public rights of way, fields, hedges, woodland, gardens, greens and verges. The preservation and enhancement strategies which seek to preserve these open spaces and natural environmental features for their contribution to the architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area, as experienced through its character and appearance, also provide a direct link to the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy, which aims to respond to the challenges of the climate and nature emergency.

What happens now

The Almondsbury Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan, including amended Conservation Area boundary, was approved and adopted on the 30th April 2024. The contents of this document will be taken into account when assessing the merits of planning applications and other proposals in the area. In the preparation of this document the views of local residents and other interested parties were sought. Consultation on the draft document and boundary amendments took place between 11th October and 26th November 2023 by way of an advertisement and publication on the Council's Website. Comments received and proposed amendments to the document were subsequently reported to the Executive Member prior to approval. The Council is keen to work with the local community and other parties to help preserve and enhance this special area. The preservation and enhancement strategies set out ways we can help to achieve this. If you wish to assist in any manner or have any further suggestions, please let us know.

If you need this information in another format or language,
please contact us on **01454 868009**