

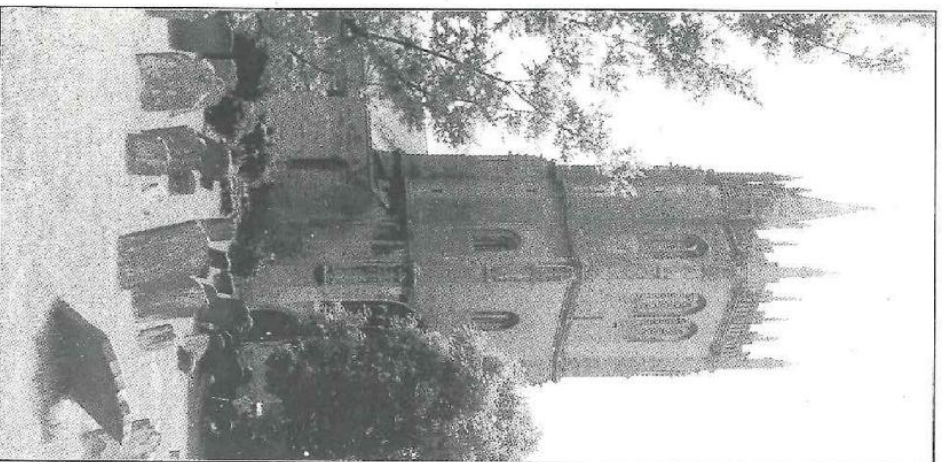
BITTON CONSERVATION AREA

The village of Bitton was designated as one Conservation Area on 23rd October 1989. This brought together and extended two smaller areas which had been designated in July 1972. It is important when considering the special character of Bitton, to distinguish between those areas which contribute to the special quality and therefore require preservation, and those areas of little or no distinction but which may detract from or unbalance the special character unless care is taken.

This leaflet describes:-

- how the open land both within and around the settlement contributes to the character and setting of the village
- the character & townscape quality of the village as a whole
- five areas of distinctive character within the village
- how the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the special character of the village

The boundary of the Conservation Area, and the Development Boundary of the village is shown on the main map. The Council will use this assessment and analysis of the special character to protect the essential qualities, and to provide guidance for development proposals.



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AREA?

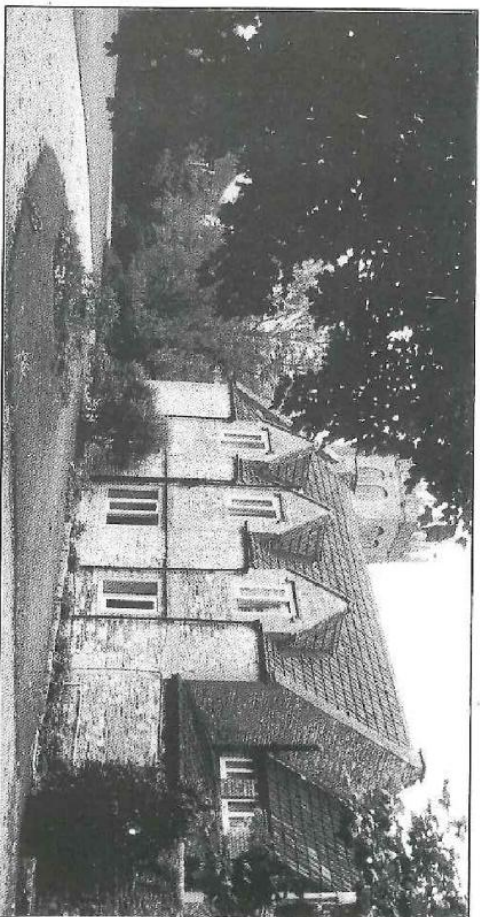
A Conservation Area is an area of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

Designation is a recognition of the group value of buildings and their surroundings and the need to protect, not just the individual buildings, but the character of the area as a whole. The special character usually derives from a combination of many features, such as - trees, hedgerows, walls, open spaces, groups of buildings, the degree of enclosure, the massing and detailing of buildings. Each area is unique.

WHAT CONTROLS APPLY?

Within the Borough's six Conservation Areas, a number of special controls apply. Planning policies seek to ensure that any development accords with the areas' special architectural or visual qualities. These are set out in Policies KLP.48-51 in the Kingswood Local Plan and further details are given in CONSERVATION AREA ADVICE NOTE NO.7. - available from the Council.

The emphasis is on preserving those buildings, spaces and features which gives each Conservation Area its special character. Where changes can be justified, great care must be exercised to ensure that there will be no adverse impact on this character.



The traditional Cotswold village charm through simple details & materials

LOCAL HISTORY

In the Domesday survey the area was called 'Betur' with the manor supposedly taking its name from the river i.e. - 'Boyd-Town', or 'Batten'. The village is one of the oldest in the Kingswood Forest and is situated on a Roman Road, the Via Julia

ST MARY'S CHURCH is supposed to stand on the site of a heathen temple, and there is some evidence of Roman remains. The Norman tower was built in 1377. The north Lady Chapel (St. Catherine's) was added in 1298/99 by Thomas de Batten, Bishop of Exeter. There are a number of interesting 18th century tombs in the churchyard and the building has a fine interior.

THE GRANGE (the original parsonage) was founded before 1280, and was rebuilt in the

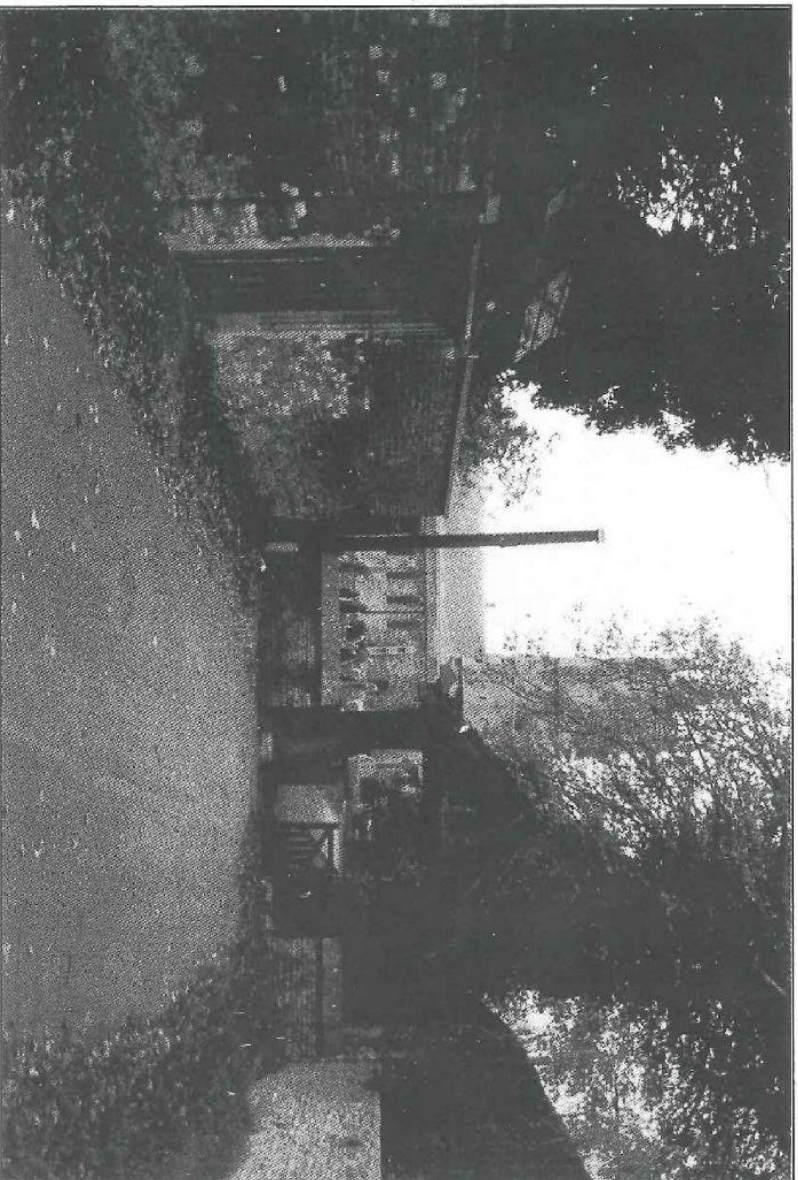
later middle ages. In the 17th and 18th centuries it was remodelled and rebuilt. The Bath architect, John Wood, lodged here.

THE OLD VICARAGE was rebuilt in 1823 and is famous as the residence of Rev. Henry Thomas Ellacombe (vicar of Bitton 1817 - 1850) and Canon Henry Nicholson Ellacombe (1850 - 1919). The father developed the fine garden, whilst the son wrote a number of notable books and founded the Botanical Gardens in Bath.

CHURCH FARM. This manor house dates from 1287 - and the adjacent dovecote from 1444. It is reputedly the oldest house in the village. Although remodelled in the 17th and 19th centuries, many interesting features remain such as the bars to the ground floor windows. These are reputed to have been introduced to exclude colliers.

CHARACTER ASSESSEMENT:

Bitton is a linear settlement straddling the A431 between Bristol and Bath. What is the special character that makes it unique?



Large mature trees, natural stone boundary walls, and an informal tranquility pervades Church Lane, by the lych gate.

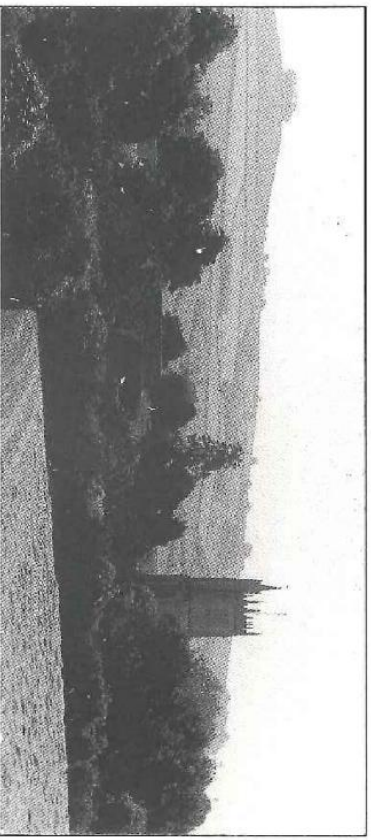
"An assessment of the character of each Conservation Area is advised by English Heritage to provide the basis of good practice."

SETTING

The village is dominated by its open countryside setting. This relationship arises from the historic development of the Roman Road, and then coach route, between Bristol and Bath, and its crossing of the River Boyd. The road skirts around the foothills of Bitton Hill and Brewery Hill - with development clustered around the junction of Golden Valley to the north and the River Avon flood plain (Micklemead, Holm Mead, etc) to the south.

To the west the slopes of Bitton Hill provide the setting for the essentially linear development along the A431. To the east, the setting is more open with longer distance views over the fields up to the village of Upton Cheyney. The flat open flood plain to the south is disguised by Barrow Hill and the Old Railway Line. The rural setting is emphasised through traditional open fields, hedges, and mature, free-standing trees.

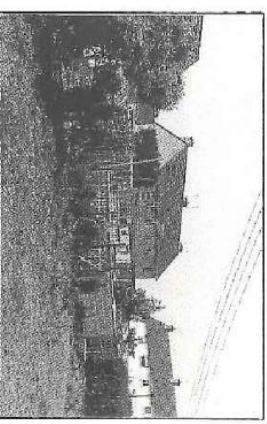
Given this dominant countryside setting in the Bristol/ Bath Green Belt, close to the urban fringe, there is a critical need to distinguish between the sharp Development Boundary, which defines the extent of built development, and areas of open space which fall both within and outside the Conservation Area boundary. The sharp edge to development is an important characteristic of Bitton. Any new development will need to reinforce this feature.



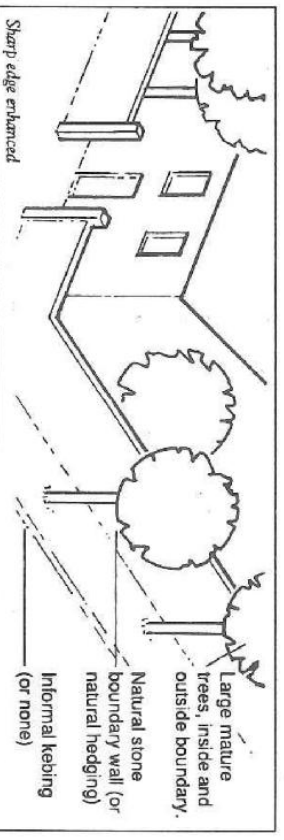
The tower of St. Mary's Church provides a landmark to the rural countryside setting



Existing sharp edge



Sharp edge weakened

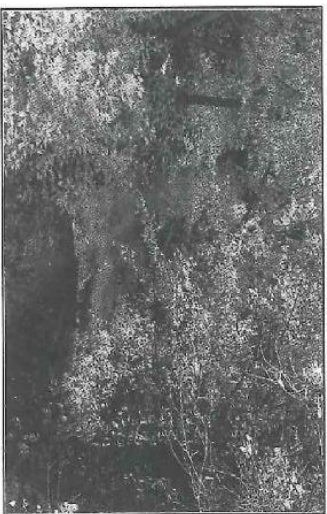


BITTON CONSERVATION AREA

LOCAL AREAS OF CHARACTER

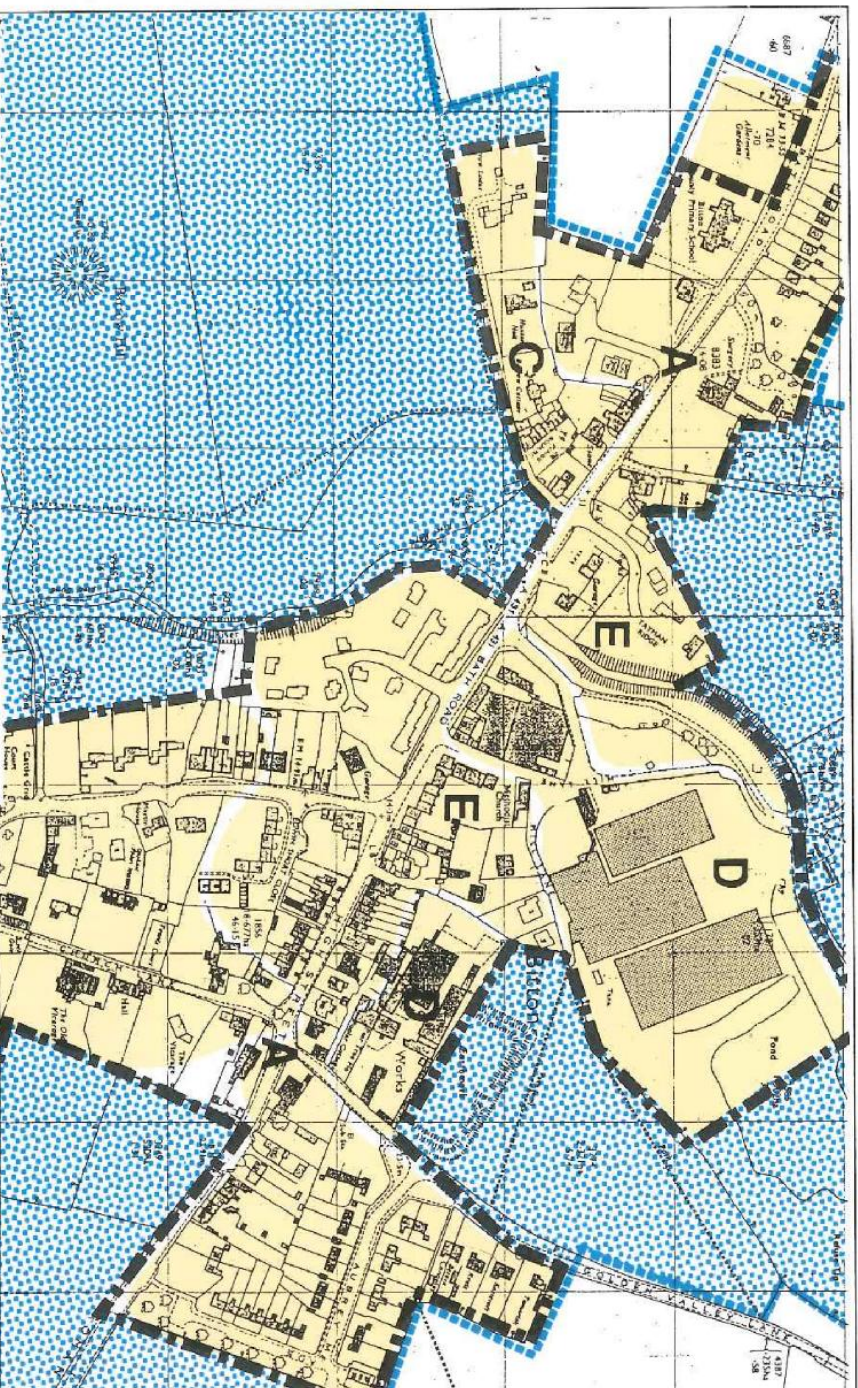
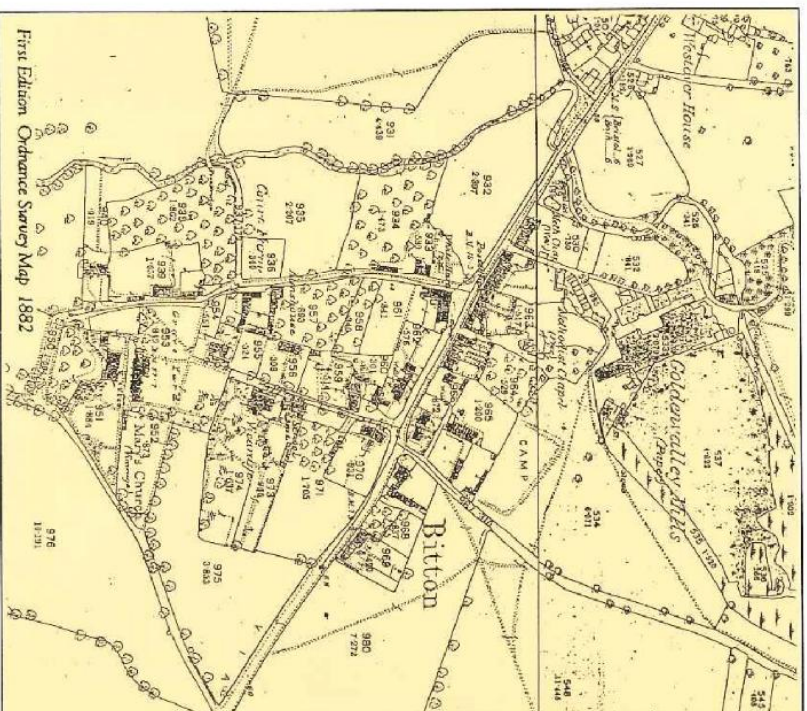
Historically there are three themes to the village character:-

- linear route skirting the higher land to the north and east
- industrial mills on the River Boyd
- St Mary's Church, in its quieter position off the main route.



The River Boyd is now largely hidden

This has resulted in a built form which is best analysed in terms of the five distinct areas shown on the map below and on the following pages. If Bitton is to retain its overall character then it is essential that the rural setting, and the character of areas A, B and C are reinforced and enhanced. It is equally important that changes within the adjoining areas of more recent development (D & E) do not unbalance and weaken the overall character. The edges of such new development are critical in enhancing the character of the village as a whole.



LOCAL AREAS OF DIFFERENT CHARACTER

- A** LINEAR THROUGH ROUTE (A4311)
- B** ST MARY'S CHURCH
- C** KINGS SQUARE
- D** INDUSTRIAL
- E** OTHER / MODERN INFILL

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Green Space inside Conservation Area
- Development Boundary

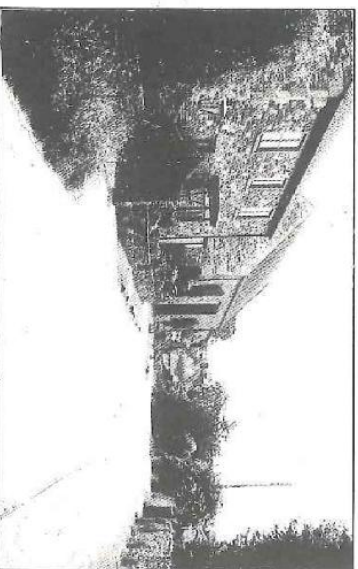
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VILLAGE CHARACTERISTICS

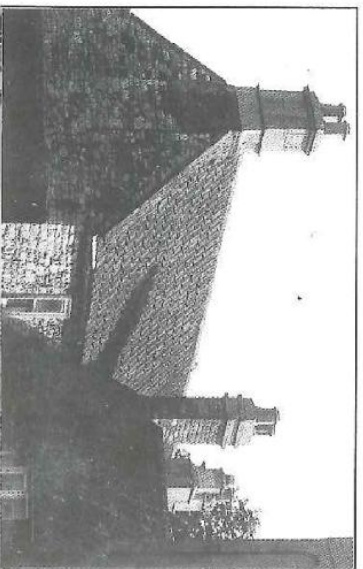
Before describing the local areas which have a distinctive character it is relevant to identify those features which are characteristic of the village as a whole.

(1) The DOMINANCE OF THE CHURCH TOWER AS A CENTRAL LANDMARK, at least from south of the main road. To the north the industrial flue provides a lesser focus. Development is 2 or 2 1/2 storeys - with only the industrial area on a non-domestic scale.

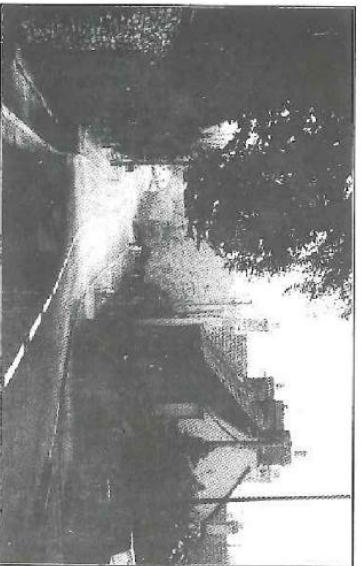
(2) The INFORMALITY OF THE VILLAGE as a whole, for example:-



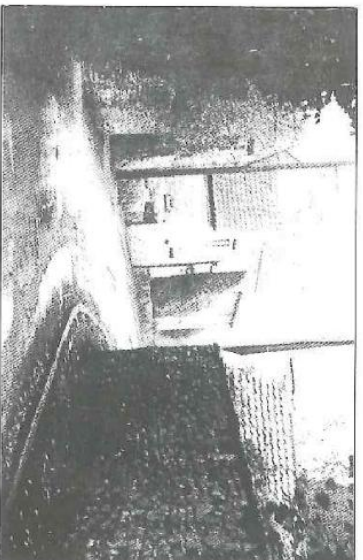
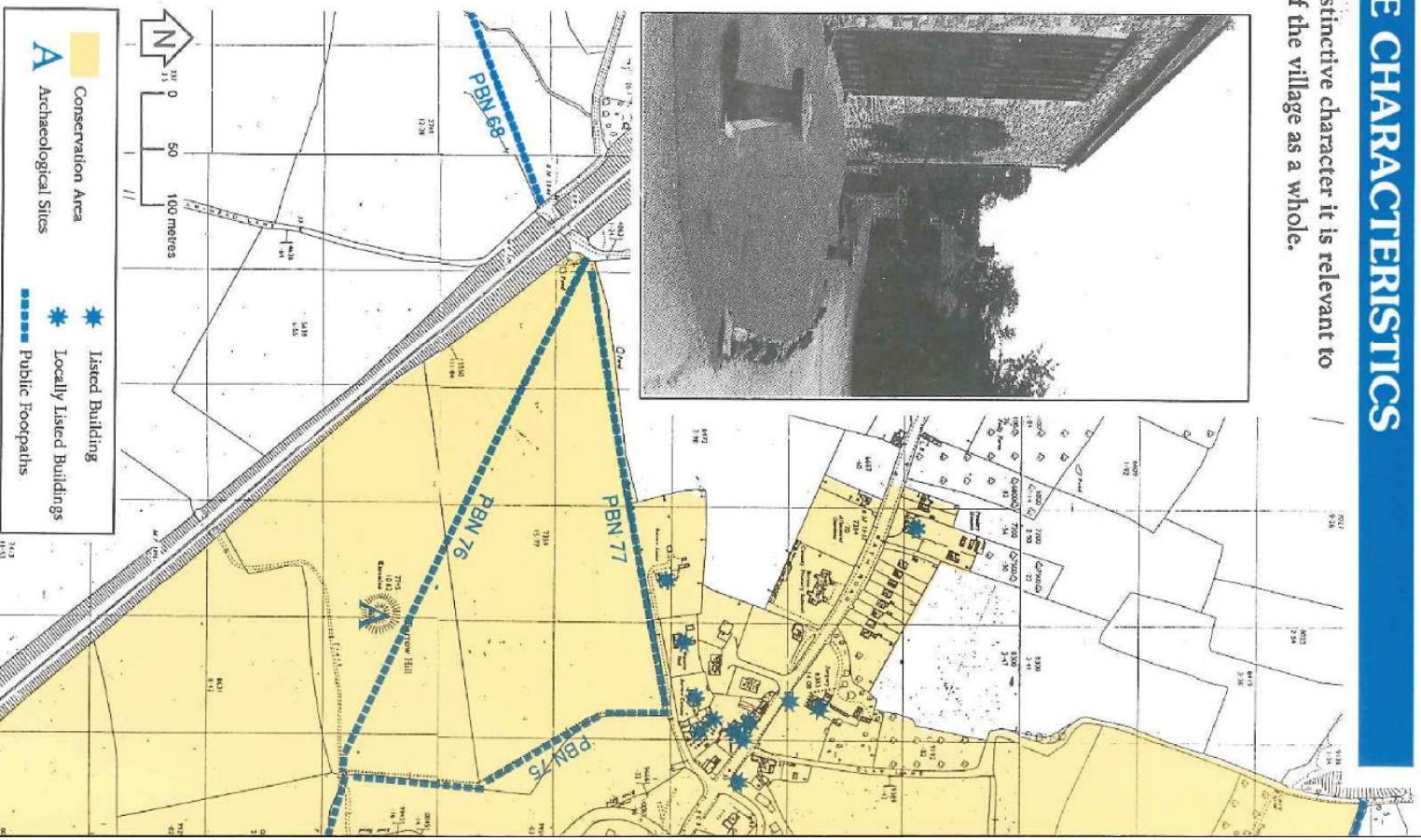
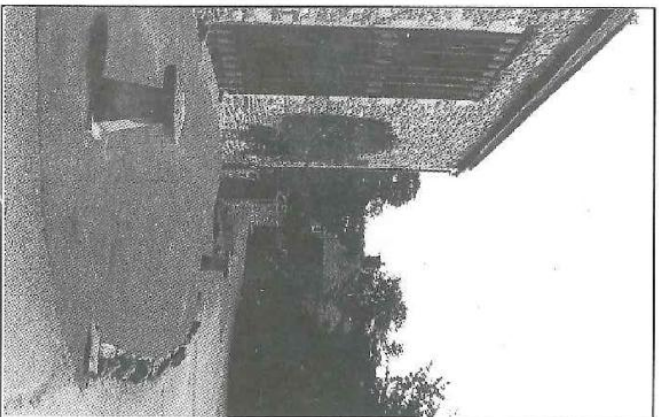
■ the concrete kerbing of the through route gives way to informal grass verges and edges. These do not need to be 'manicured'



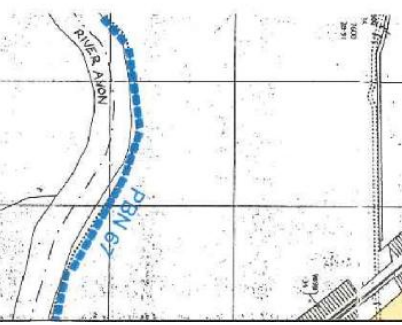
■ the ad-hoc roof pitches of slates, pantiles and double romans nesting informally below the hillside and mature trees. Roof profiles and silhouettes need to be varied without being over designed.

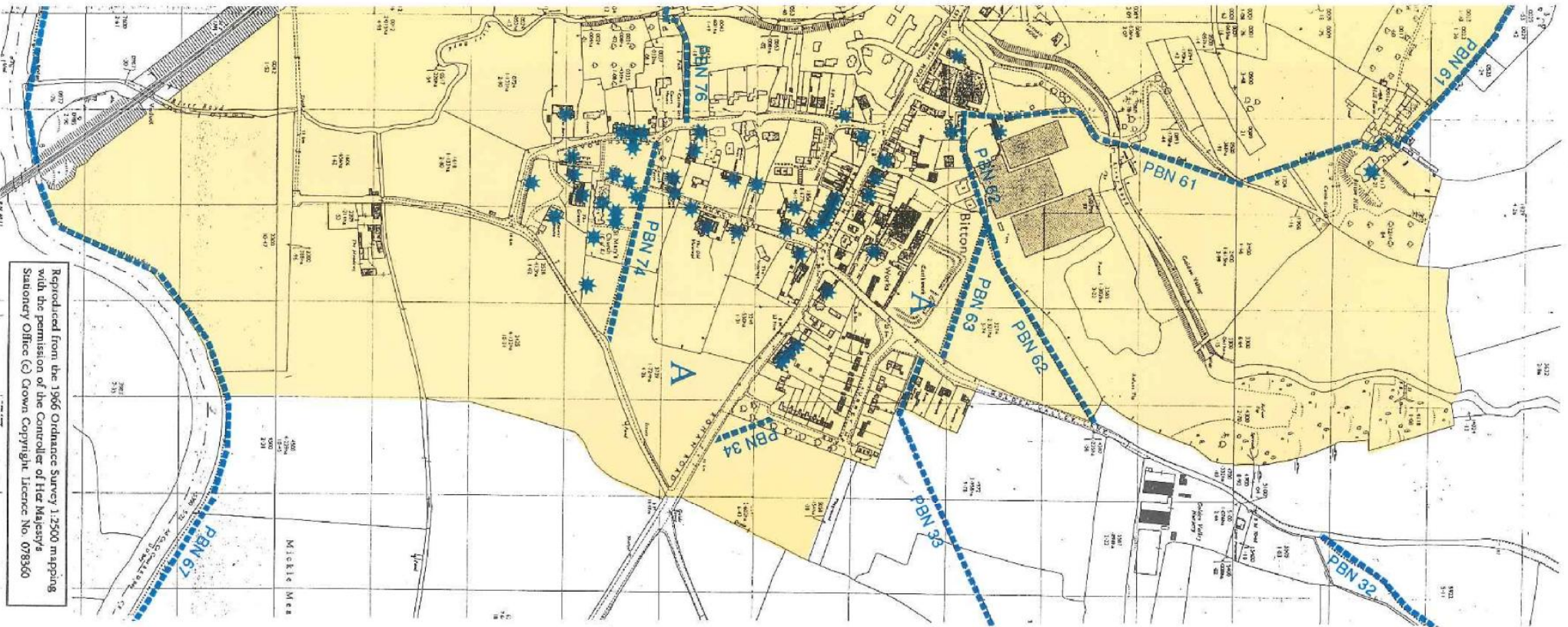


■ the subtle but important changes in road direction - whether on the High Street or Church Road. These changes facilitate interest by providing a sequence of views and surprises.

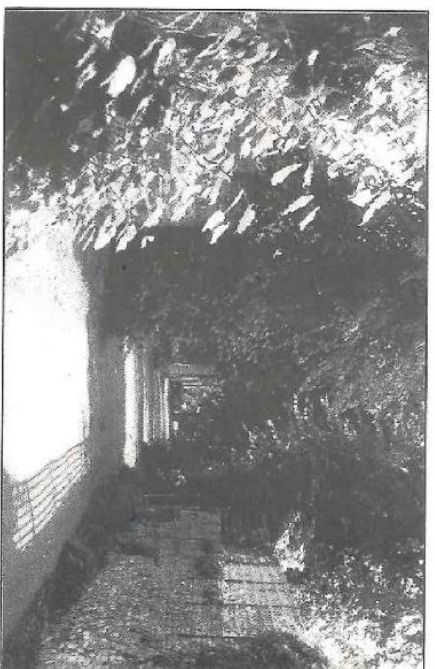


LOCAL PLAN POLICIES:
Development in Bitton will need to have regard to the policies in the Kingswood Local Plan - especially KLP36 - Green Belt and Bitton Development Boundary, KLP 39 - Avon Valley, and Listed Building policies KLP52,54.





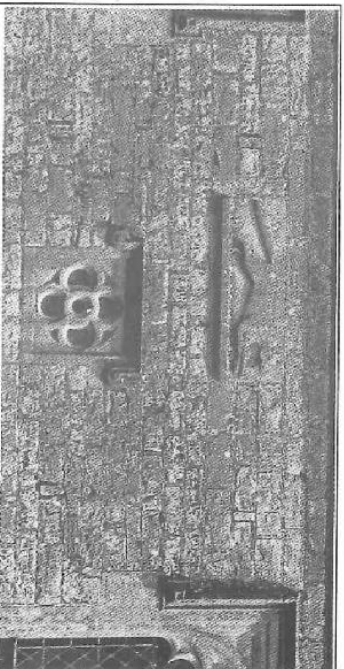
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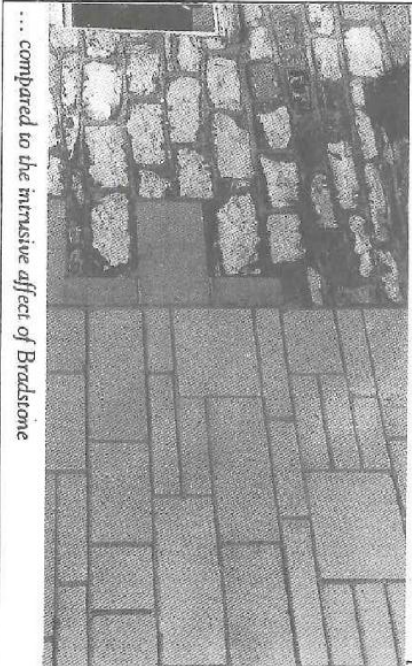
Large mature trees and mellowed stone in Church Lane

(3) The **LARGE MATURE TREES** in and around the village. Whilst these have been reduced in number over the last century, they carry the rural setting right into the village, even if the botanical focus of Ellacombe's garden is now much reduced. The planting of new "specimen" trees needs to be encouraged throughout the village.

(4) The overall **FEEL OF MELLOWED, NATURAL STONE** -reflects the village location right at the southern end of the Cotswold escarpment. Whilst most original stone is Lias, there are also some Penant stone buildings, and general use of Bath Freestone details. Where newer development uses natural stone boundary walls and extensive landscaping, it has fitted in better. Development in "Bradstone" or with a more open setting has tended to jar. Whilst there are also some brick and render mixes, these are generally out of character.



character derived from natural stone



... compared to the intrusive affect of Bradstone

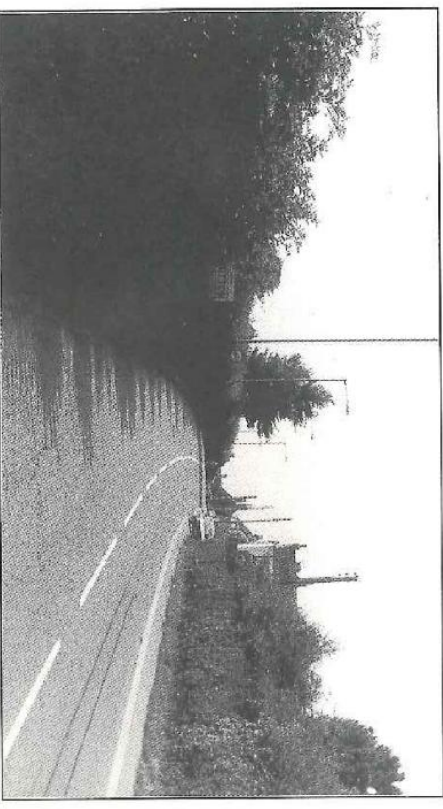
(5) Whilst set within open countryside, the village **TENDS TO FACE INWARDS**. Views out tend to be 'glimpses through' or an awareness of the 'pervasive countryside beyond' rather than wider panoramic openings. There is a general need to maintain and reinforce this sense of enclosure, with glimpses through the built form.

LOCAL AREAS OF CHARACTER

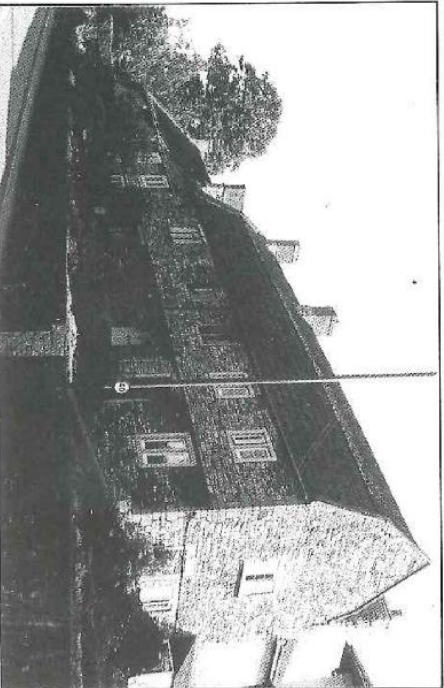
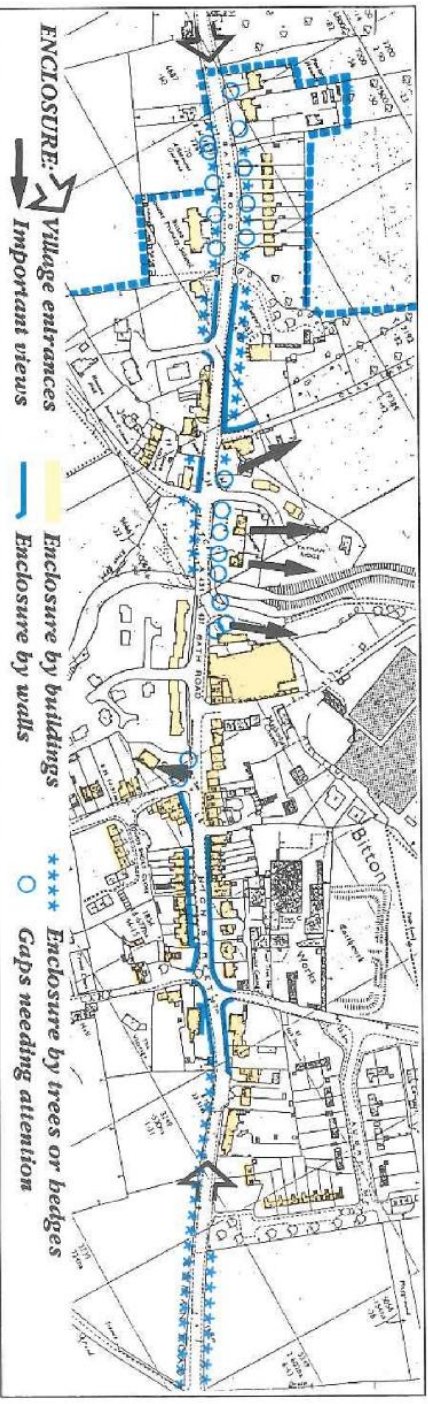
(A) THE LINEAR THROUGH ROUTE

The A431 provides an enclosed, "Victorian", feel to the village. The strong sense of enclosure arises from from the varied two storey terraces, retaining walls and mature trees. Existing gaps, or weak frontages (e.g. car sales sites) could usefully be built up to strengthen the sense of enclosure. Similarly, there is a need to strengthen and highlight the entrances to the village - to emphasise the contrast with the open countryside and to help generate a sense of place. Such measures could also help in slowing traffic speeds along the A431.

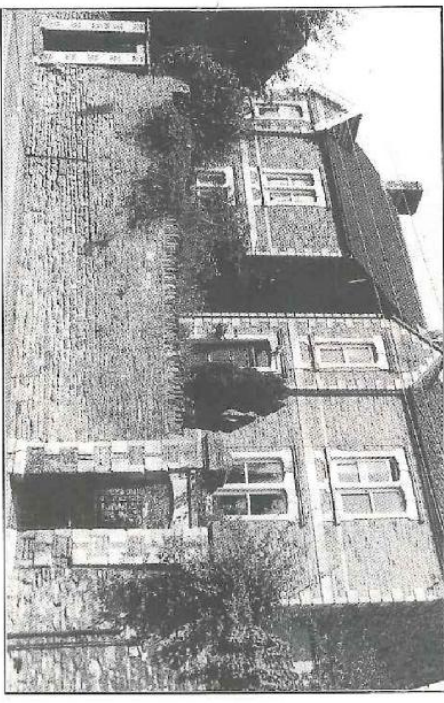
The sense of enclosure is frequently provided by simple, short 2 storey terraces, and is emphasised by retaining walls and raised ground levels. It is important that the boundaries to the A431 incorporate traditional materials and details.



The village entrances need to be emphasised!

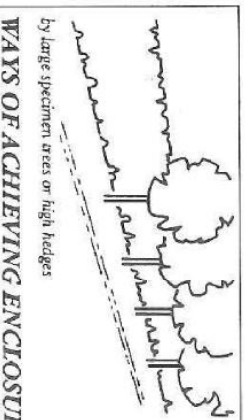
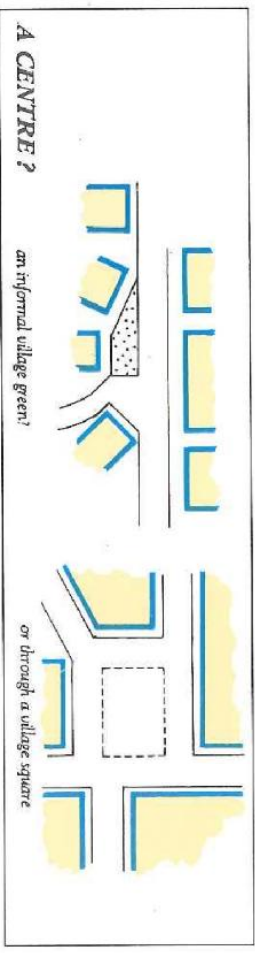


Raised ground level reinforces the sense of enclosure



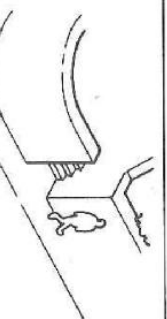
Enclosure provided by high retaining boundary walls

The emphasis on enclosure does not necessarily preclude the emergence of an informal village "centre", perhaps focussed on the existing shops / Post Office/ Public House (see diagrams opposite). This might be linked to the introduction of traffic calming measures as a means of reducing safety hazards in the village.

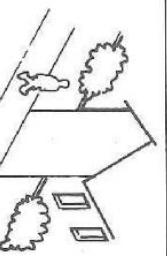


by large specimen trees or high hedges

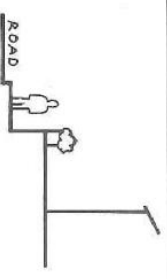
WAYS OF ACHIEVING ENCLOSURE



by high stone boundary walls (eg Westover House)



by gables to street



through raised ground level or retaining wall to street

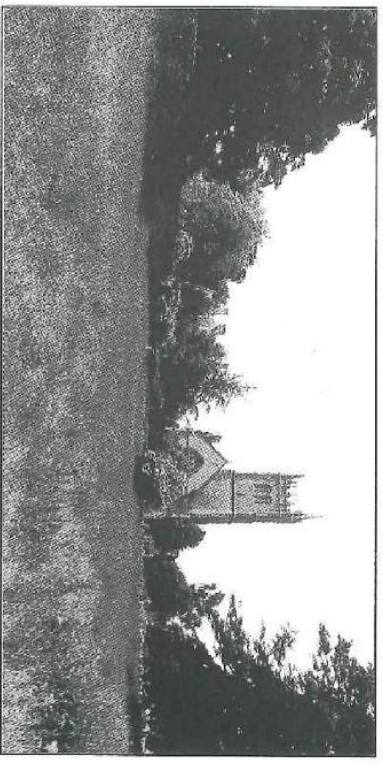
(B) ST MARY'S CHURCH

The tower provides the traditional village landmark. The manner in which the church is set back from the through route allows a sense of calm and tranquillity to pervade Church Road and Church Lane. The area is strongly characterised by a sense of informality which is achieved in the following ways:-

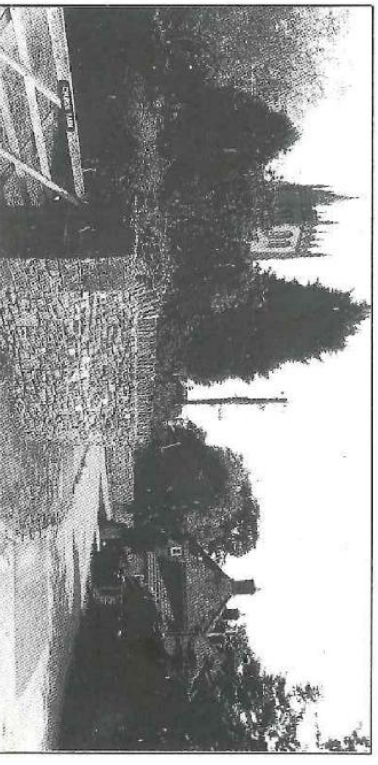
- (i) The cul-de-sac of Church Lane moves from the informal square around the chestnut tree through to the lych-gate - demonstrating a whole range of means of enclosing and framing views of the tower.
- (ii) Once Church Road distances itself from the more formal High Street, it emerges from around Church Farm Barn with a twist and sets off the classic view of the tower across the churchyard, subtly defining the space with a backdrop of simple cottages.

(iii) To the south the more formal Dower and Grange Houses are set behind the Ha-ha wall. To the east more open views of the church may be had across open fields.

This area is of the highest quality, and careful attention to detail is required in respect of new windows, garden fences, and the like, to ensure that the quality is retained. Any new development will need to use natural stone and other traditional materials and detailing. It is particularly important to retain the informality of Church Lane and Church Road; to try to remove the existing wirescape which has a disfiguring affect and to encourage the planting of new large specimen trees.



The open character of the Glebe land is important to the setting

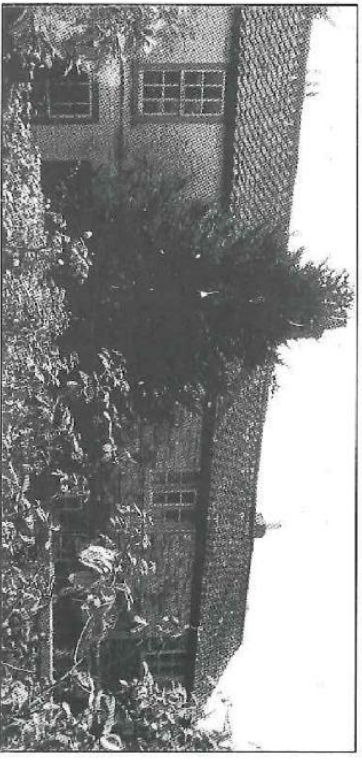


Rounding Church Barn the Church Tower beckons

(C) KINGS SQUARE

A more eclectic mix of stone buildings clusters together around Kings Square, at right angles to the High Street. The simple formality of the Kings Square terrace and nearby buildings is softened by a generally pleasant and informal mix of outbuildings, boundary walls and trees. Hunters Hall, a tribute to architectural salvage, contrasts with the open country setting to the south.

Again the emphasis is on natural stone and mature parkland trees. This area is, however, more 'ad hoc' than area (B) - more varied in the layout and disposition of dwellings, but still having a certain charm. Again traditional materials and details are an important aspect of the character.

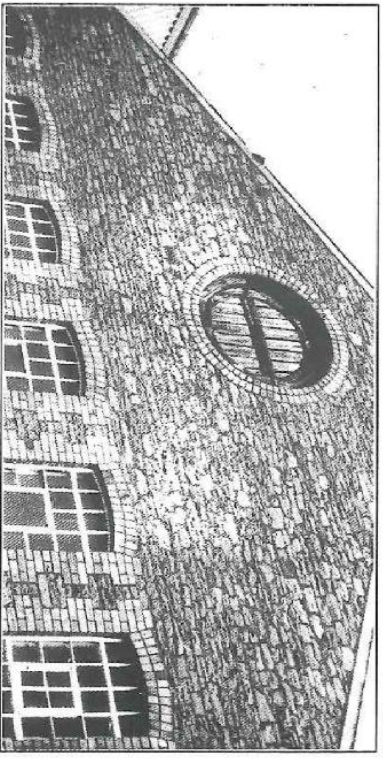


The simple formality of Kings Square terrace

(D) INDUSTRIAL AREA

The original paper mill has now given way to the large industrial sheds of the BMF complex. The culverting of the River Boyd has further destroyed the legacy of the past.

The large building masses show glimpses of the original strong pennant stone forms (with brick details). The high pennant stone boundary wall and large mature trees provide a sharp and acceptable edge to the north, west and east. To the south the open car parks and residential infill create a somewhat disjointed and confusing layout which might be enhanced through tree planting and a clearer, more legible, layout.

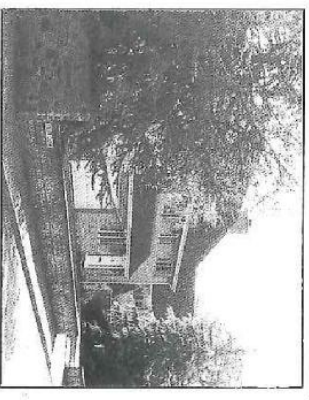


Learn from traditional buildings

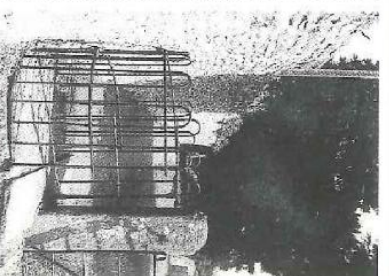
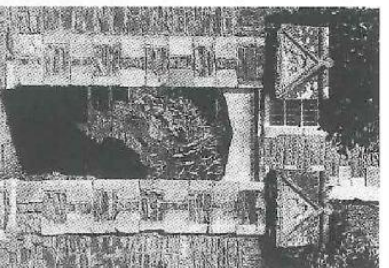
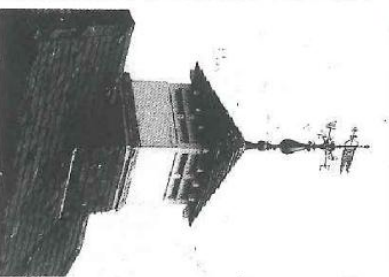
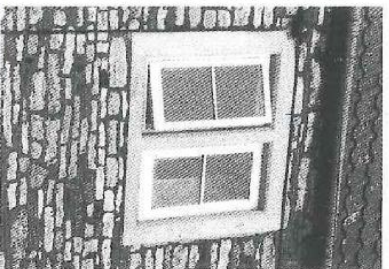
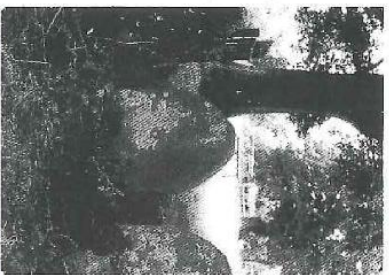
(E) OTHER/ MODERN/ INFILL

There are a number of new housing areas - namely Aubrey Meads, Edwin Short Close, Croft Close, Tayman Ridge, and on Church Road. These tend to detract from the special character of Bitton in two main ways - i) the use of imitation materials (Bradstone/pre-cast); and ii) the openness and lack of adequate landscaping. Where new landscape has been provided it is in general too small in scale and ornamental.

Where these sites have used traditional stone boundary walls, dense planting and hedging, and retained or added new tree planting they have tended to neutralise any harmful affect on the overall character of the area. The importance of the edges of new development has been stressed. New development needs to be informal, high quality and sensitively designed to enhance the overall village character.



New development at Croft Close



ENHANCEMENT SCHEMES

..... HOW CAN YOU HELP ?

The Council wishes to encourage schemes which will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and a number of enhancement ideas have been subject to public consultation. The key objective is to encourage the repair and retention of features of interest and to reinforce the special character of the area.

As most of the land is privately owned, we will need your support to achieve many of these enhancements. You can also help by:-

- Financial Grants (up to 50%) and other forms of assistance may be available to individuals and organisations towards enhancement schemes. The Council is particularly keen to encourage the following enhancements:-
- repairs to footpaths/ stiles/ gates
- repairs and maintenance to stone walls, gates and gate posts, and to traditional buildings

- telling us what needs to be done and notifying us when problems occur
- ensuring any proposed alterations to your property or land respect the special character of the area, eg by using the correct materials and details.

FURTHER ADVICE

This leaflet was originally published by Kingswood Borough Council after public consultation. It was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by South Gloucestershire Council in April 1996 and reaffirmed in March 2002.

How to contact us:

If you have any queries or suggestions:

Conservation Officer
South Gloucestershire Council
Natural&BuiltEnvironmentTeam
PO Box 2081
South Gloucestershire
BS35 9BP

Telephone: 01454 863578
Email: conservation@southglos.gov.uk

Further information from
www.southglos.gov.uk/ConservationAreas

- prevent sub-division of the open fields around the village (for horticulture, etc)
- encourage enhancements to prominent, sensitive sites (eg Golden Valley Lane; Water Board land off Church Road; and to the "car sales" sites fronting the High St).
- sharpen weak or blurred edges (eg private gardens) to reinforce, yet soften, the sharp edge to the Development Boundary. Particular attention is needed to maintain a distinct rural separation between Bitton and Willsbridge.

This is one of a series of leaflets aimed at encouraging good practice in the design and layout of new development. The advice supplements the policies of the Kingswood Local Plan and the Council will bear the guidelines in mind when assessing the merits of planning applications. This leaflet takes into account the Good Practice Guide from English Heritage. Ref. CPO/D/7B Dec 1994

This leaflet should be read in conjunction with the CONSERVATION AREA ADVICE NOTE NO.7 which gives general advice and details of special controls and policies which apply in Conservation Areas.



K I N G S W O O D
B O R O U G H C O U N C I L