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ADVICE NOTE

MARSHFIELD CONSERVATION AREA

Approved 29th March 2004

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 distinctive 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 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 the Local Plan and further details are given in **CONSERVATION AREA ADVICE NOTE - available from the Council**. The emphasis is on preserving those buildings, spaces and features which give 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.

PURPOSE OF THE LEAFLET

- 1 To provide a detailed appraisal of those buildings, features and spaces which characterise the Marshfield Conservation Area.
- 2 To set out a strategy for its preservation and enhancement.
- 3 To provide guidance for development proposals.

**THIS SHOULD BE READ
WITH A3 PLAN INSERTS**

Marshfield is a small medieval market town, linear in plan form with burgage plots, which lies adjacent to the A420 Bristol to Chippenham road. It occupies an exposed position on the dip slope of the southern Cotswolds. It is located within an agricultural area and is surrounded by attractive open countryside. The town possesses a wealth of historic buildings, many of which are listed. The High Street consists of C17 and C18 houses, all of which contribute to the historic character of Marshfield.

The Conservation Area was originally designated on 17 September 1973 with extensions agreed on 6 August 1998, mainly to include & protect the valley to the south.



The church tower dominates the medieval High Street

WHY IS MARSHFIELD IMPORTANT?

The special character of Marshfield derives from its typical planned medieval layout of a broad homogenous High Street with narrow burgage plots running back to a pair of back lanes called Back Lane and Weir Lane. Originally founded on an economy of barley and malhouses the small town was a staging post on the Bristol to London route. As it was bypassed by the industrial revolution, so it is now bypassed by the A420 to the north.

The village is compact and reasonably self contained - with a number of local shops, pubs and school, community facilities and services. The location has good access to the M4 and to several urban centres, whilst standing apart as a self contained and distinct entity.

The rural setting and exposed position ensures the Church Tower provides a local landmark, whilst allowing the tightly knit village to huddle together, but with important views in to and out of the village. The contrast between the exposed village location on the open flat Cotswold plateau and the enclosure within the village - particularly the historic medieval High Street - and the sloping valleys to the south contributes strongly to the character.

The Historic Context

Marshfield was an historically important local town, partly due to its strategic location in the Cotswold wool country but also due to its proximity to Bath and to Bristol with its port. From the Saxon settlement of AD931, "Meresfelde" appears in the Domesday Book. Deliberate planning started around 1265, leading to market status and the granting of a charter for a three day fair. Marshfield conforms to the typical planned medieval market town layout, with long narrow burgage plots running back from a broad High Street to a pair of back lanes now called Back Lane and Weir Lane.

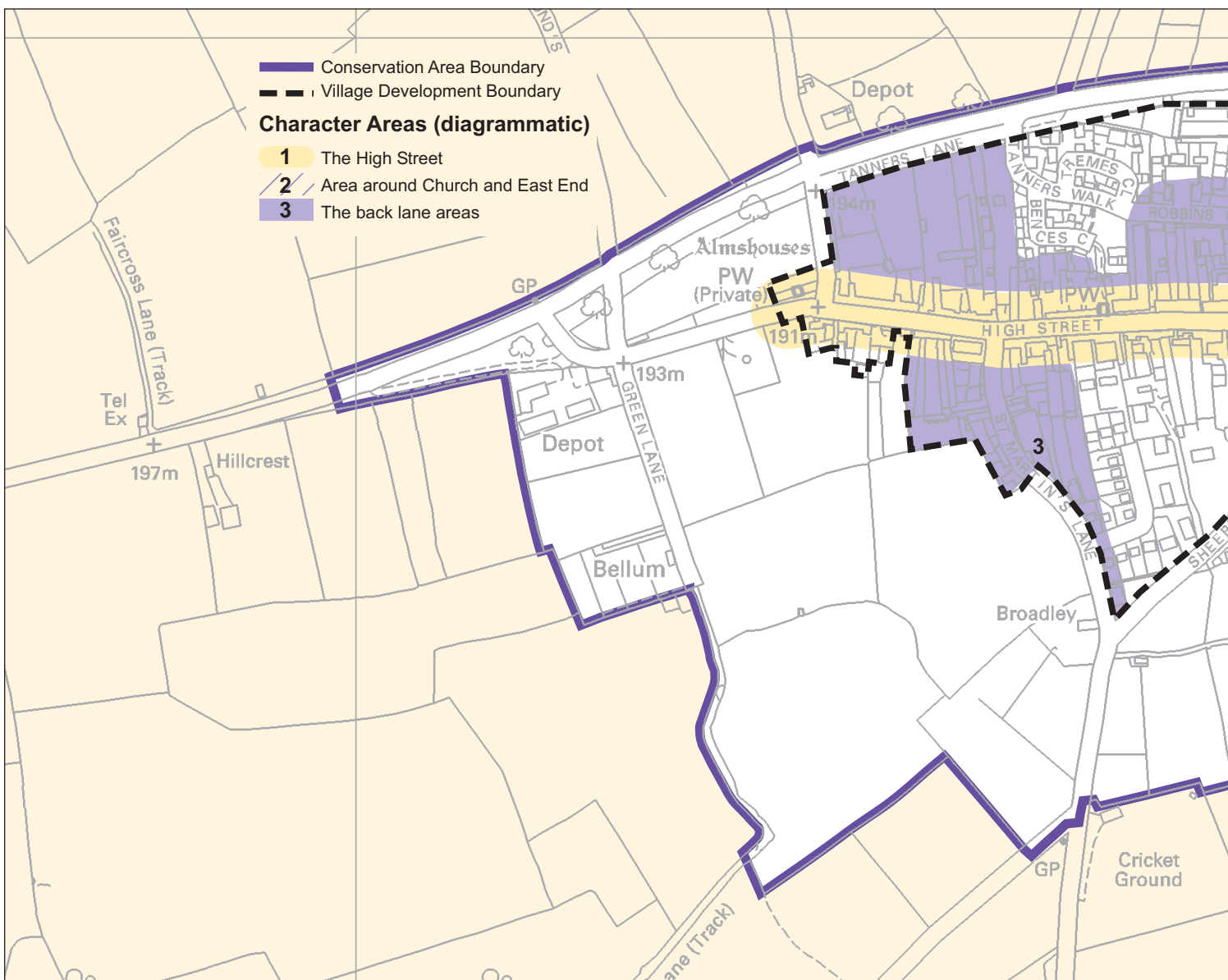
By 1334 Marshfield was the fourth most prosperous town in the area after Bristol, Gloucester and Cirencester. Its economy was built on barley (rather than wool) - leading at its peak to 18 maltings - and its rural location on the Bristol-London route. The industrial revolution passed Marshfield by leaving the medieval character remarkably intact.

The Church and manorial farm are situated to the east end of the village which may have existed before the planned town. On the present Church site there was an earlier church dedicated to St Nicholas in the early C13. In 1242 a new church was built on the site and was dedicated to St Mary the Virgin. In its present form the Church dates from around 1470 when the monks of Tewkesbury Abbey rebuilt it in a perpendicular style, and subsequent restorations (1860, 1887, 1902 & 1950).

For further information or advice please contact:

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The Conservation Area - see also plan insert



Character Assessment

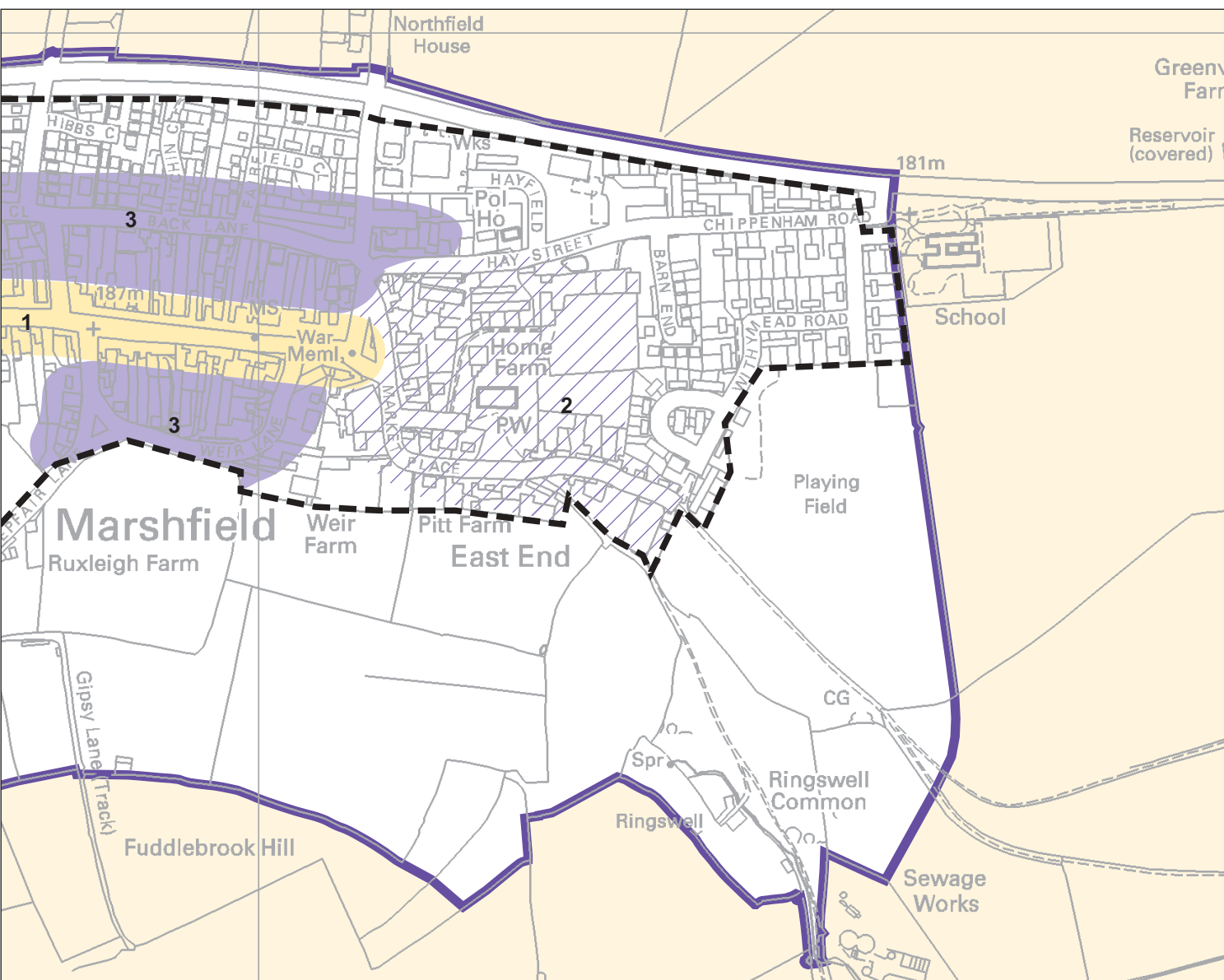


Marshfield has a very strong character as a medieval planned town with its historic High Street. It lies within the Marshfield Plateau (2) of the Draft Landscape Character Assessment. The lack of tree cover on the plateau makes existing copses and trees important - particularly around the edges of the settlement. The poor state of the Cotswold stone walls which divide the fields also needs to be addressed. The common use of Cotswold stone as a building material is important in uniting the buildings with the landscape.

The Conservation Area has been assessed in accordance with the English Heritage Good Practice Guidance and it is considered that there are four distinctive character areas :-

- 1 The homogenous High Street flanked by a variety of historic buildings.**
- 2 The area around the Church at the end of the High Street.**
- 3 The informal small scale back lanes and outbuildings.**
- 4 Other areas including modern development.**

The following pages will consider each of these areas in turn.



1: The High Street

The High Street is the single main thoroughfare of Marshfield and is approx 350m in length. The linear nature of the High Street has interest provided by a variety of historic frontages opening directly onto the pavement. It provides a strong enclosure and sense of place. The subtle variety in width, building design and height, and informal and irregular disposition of the buildings (not in a strict straight line) provides a very attractive appearance, held together by the homogenous use of natural stone and the interesting roofscape profile. There is both coursed rubble with plain freestone window and door surrounds and ashlar. Windows are typically vertically proportioned white painted timber sashes, with some timber casements. More important buildings have parapets but simple eaves details are more usual. Roof materials are either Cotswold stone slates, clay tiles or slate.

The west end is stopped by the fine C17 Almshouses whilst the High Street broadens to the eastern end where the market place was situated.

The character is helped by the pennant stone kerbs. Unfortunately the pennant paving has been removed and there are regular concerns over the maintenance of the tarmac. A main issue of concern is the dominance of cars parked in the High Street.



The Almshouses at the western end of the High Street

Enhancement Strategy

- *To ensure traditional materials, scale and details are strictly used to all High Street frontages. In particular, it will be necessary to retain Cotswold stone slates where currently in use and to refuse applications which are of insufficient quality. Action should be considered to tackle inappropriate materials or details e.g. of windows or dormers.*
- *To retain the pennant stone kerbs and to seek environmental improvements to reinstate natural pennant stone paving if resources can be found.*
- *Development (whether new or by conversion) needs to demonstrate how parking is able to take place wholly within the site and without detriment to the character and appearance.*
- *To ensure appropriate redevelopment of the old school site in line with the design principles in the separate guidance.*

2: Area around the Church & East End

The Church and manorial farm are situated at the east end of the village around the Market Place. The C17 former Vicarage (Marshfield House) sits opposite Church Lane which leads to the Grade 1 listed parish church of St Mary. The more formal buildings and mature trees around Market Place give way to more informal cottages of the East End and former farm buildings to Hay Street. The enclosure provided by solid natural stone walls and outbuildings is important with critical glimpses to the south.

There is an important transition from the grander setting of the church yard and the Manor and Home Farm to the north, through the enclosed Market Place, with its important view out over the valley to the south, to the simpler traditional cottages of East End. Whilst the buildings continue the homogenous character and traditional details found in the High Street, they are grouped to create distinct places (rather than linear) - thus providing a unique if simple character and sense of place. With the war memorial and the Lord Nelson pub there is a definite "centre". The state of the pavements and parking remain an area of concern.



The pleasant approach to the church

Enhancement Strategy

- *As for the High Street, with regard to traditional materials & detailing, paving and parking.*
- *To ensure that any development does not challenge the Church Tower as a focal point, particular with development to the south where the valley provides changing views.*
- *To respect the existing informal and ad-hoc layout (including the small open spaces) and the small scale nature of non-listed cottages.*
- *Ensure the retention & repair of stone boundary & retaining walls and outbuildings, trees and other features which contribute to the historic character, enclosure and maintain important glimpses and views out.*
- *To secure the repair in traditional materials of the Church Lane footway.*

3: The Back Lane areas and outbuildings

The linear nature of the public High Street is complemented by the long narrow burgage plots running to a pair of back lanes now called Back Lane and Weir Lane. Retaining the walls and character of the burgage plots is important. The back lanes provide a contrast to the High Street, but are nevertheless equally important to the overall character in a quieter, more informal way.

They are complemented by the important lanes linking the High Street through to the adjacent areas (such as Touching End Lane and by 26 High Street). These, and Back Lane and Weir Lane themselves, are characterised by the small scale informal and simple character of the buildings. They are typically defined by a mix of rubble natural stone buildings or walls, simple cottage or outbuilding details (white painted timber casements or sashes) and an informal relationship directly onto the street, often without pavements. The sense of enclosure and varying width (including “pinch points”) & informal grass verges contribute greatly to the character, as do the glimpses to the rural areas beyond.

Many outbuildings have already been converted to residential use. Further such conversions will be resisted along Back Lane and Weir Lane, but not to Robbins Close, in order to try and retain the quiet enclosed character of the burgage plots.



Natural stone walls provide a strong sense of enclosure



Walls & informal verges contribute to the character



Roofscape & scale are important - as shown in this unusual view from the Church Tower

Enhancement Strategy

- *Maintain the informal small scale character of development. This applies particularly to consideration of pavements and verges, boundary walls or buildings where minor works will be resisted where they would result in a cumulative loss of the informal character. An interesting roofscape is important.*
- *In any new development or alteration - the height, scale and details (particularly boundary walls, joinery & eaves) will need to be sympathetic to the traditional character, and subsidiary to the High Street. The introduction of too many new openings; changes to the size, scale or height of the building; and the use of unsympathetic modern details will be resisted.*
- *Proposals which lead to the removal or loss of the burgage walls or burgage plots will be resisted. Car intrusion should abut or be close to the public road, respecting the form of the plot and the quiet enclosed nature. Where development would lead to vehicles intruding further into the rear garden areas then refusal will be justified.*
- *The loss of enclosure by widening accesses or removing or lowering walls or buildings will be resisted. Works which retain and improve the sense of enclosure will be encouraged.*
- *To seek better boundary treatment, planting and screening where adjoining modern development.*
- *Seek improvements to the footpath network.*
- *To encourage the repair and retention of traditional outbuildings, stone walls and the historic layout.*
- *The use of former outbuildings as garages with modern up and over doors can be harmful to the historic character. The use of solid vertical boarded timber doors (non framed) may be more acceptable. These should be painted or stained very dark (not pine) or natural timber (eg. oak).*

4: Other Areas - including Modern Development

There are a number of other areas where development is essentially modern and seldom in keeping with the traditional character of the area. These include St Martin's Park, Robbins & Fairfield Close, Withymead and Chippenham Road (inc the Sports and Social facilities).

In these areas new development of the same style will be resisted where it simply perpetuates the harmful character and does not contribute to the enhancement of the area. Infill development should have regard to the Brief for the new Housing sites. In particular consideration of schemes will need to ensure that:-

- they include a high quality hard and soft landscape scheme which creates the appropriate character through small unit kerbs, natural planting, etc. (avoiding concrete kerbs and leylandii).

- they use appropriate **NATURAL MATERIALS** (natural stone, slate or clay roofs). **RENDER** will only be appropriate in non - prominent locations where it is of a traditional appearance, with soft edges and appropriate details and colour and where it is balanced by other traditional materials. **RECONSTRUCTED STONE** should not be used adjacent to natural stone - though it may have limited use in non-prominent locations where the detailed specification and type is appropriate.
- they are small scale & informal (low eaves; avoiding concrete kerbs and formal turning areas; etc).
- openings are well proportioned and use traditional painted timber casements or sashes.
- the disposition of boundary walls, buildings & outbuildings etc is arranged to retain or create informal enclosed spaces which provide a sense of place. This applies particularly to the site layout and access roads.



New development can be designed to fit in

Local Plan issues

NEW SCHOOL: The Local Plan has now been updated to conform with the decision on the new school site. It remains outside the Conservation Area and development boundary.

OLD SCHOOL SITE: A Design Brief was prepared in January 2002. This was welcomed and used to guide the discussions on the application to develop the old school site. It remains relevant.

POSSIBLE HOUSING SITE (H2): This site (to the west of the existing Crest development) has moved in and out of being allocated for development. It is not currently allocated for development in the Local Plan - a matter considered at the Local Plan Inquiry. Were the site to be allocated for housing development then the Design Brief for the Phase 1 Housing (Crest) and for the Old School Site would both be relevant in providing the design basis for any such development. It is also pertinent to note that any such development would need to:-

- be limited to 2 storey
- contribute to the wider enhancement of the Conservation Area
- be entirely in natural stone and
- build upon the non-standard layout of the Crest phase if it is to fit in to the character of the village without harm.

OPEN SPACE PROTECTION (L6): The open spaces within Marshfield were reviewed with the Parish Council in January 2002 with the results reported to the Council in January 2004. The 7 principal open spaces within the village development boundary identified as worthy of protection are shown on the attached plans.



Separate design briefs may be prepared for development areas

Other issues to be addressed

VALLEY TO THE SOUTH - & OTHER OPEN SPACE

There is a need to ensure that the rural setting, open fields and valley slopes around the village are preserved in line with Cotswold AONB policies and in line with the landscape strategies emerging from the Draft Landscape Character Assessment (SGC June 2002) - where the area falls within the Marshfield Plateau (2). The Preservation and Enhancement Strategy, plan 2 inserted in the leaflet, shows the principal open areas within the Village Development Boundary which it is considered important to protect to avoid harm to the local character. This will require careful consideration of the landscape, including:-

- Encouraging the retention & repair of the dry stone boundary walls and enclosed nature of the roads.
- Developing appropriate planting of specimen trees and hedgerows.
- Seeking to secure the retention of the open field character whilst having regard to the agricultural viability. Particular care will be required for new agricultural buildings or where there is an impact on key views or skylines.
- Exploring whether the western layby created by the bypass could be properly laid out as a parking area for the Cotswold Way.



TRANSPORT & TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

It is important that such works have regard to the character of the area and avoid excessive clutter (of signs, poles, bollards etc) or urbanisation (concrete kerbs, signs, etc). There are widespread concerns regarding:-

- Traffic speed (on bypass and in the High Street).
- Parking - especially to the High Street and key junctions.
- Public transport links to Bristol & Bath.
- Poor floorscape to the High Street - aspire to new pennant paving through funding bid.
- Bringing forward proposals to give positive uses to the laybys left at either end of the bypass, recognising their important role as "gateways" to the town (eg. walkers parking area).
- Promoting the existing informal and small scale character in new developments.
- Enhancing the existing landscape to provide a buffer between the bypass and development.
- Ensure a viable local economy and public transport system.



Character comes from simple traditional materials and details.

BUILDING MATERIALS

Traditional materials & details are an important aspect of the local character. This is particularly the case at Marshfield through the widespread use of natural stone. In general therefore buildings in brick or artificial stone will be resisted. Concrete kerbing will also be resisted. Where traditional lime render is used, it might usefully be complemented by traditional natural stone boundaries or detailing.

There is a more diverse range of roofing materials, but obvious modern concrete tiles or modern ventilation projections should be avoided.

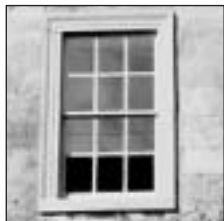
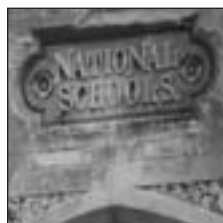


Natural stone is used for the kerbing and is an important aspect of the local character.

General Enhancement

- To secure the removal and undergrounding of electricity or other services cables & poles which intrude and harm the character.
- To encourage & support the repair and retention of natural stone walls.
- To retain trees and vegetation - including a replacement planting strategy. This is particularly important at village edges and to give scale and softening to new development.
- To review and enhance lighting where appropriate.
- To create a supportive framework for local businesses.
- Avoid masts or other equipment which affect the long distance views of the settlement and church tower.

Preservation & Enhancement Strategy



PRESERVATION & ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

The aim is to preserve and enhance the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area, its historic buildings, features and their setting as follows:-

1) To preserve and reinforce the historic character.

By encouraging repairs and ensuring that works to both the listed and unlisted buildings, features and surroundings are considered in relation to the historic context and use appropriate materials, scale and detailing.

2) Minimise the impact of modern development.

The historic High Street and back lane areas are increasingly surrounded by modern development which is starting to impinge on the character and setting. Enhancement proposals will seek to reduce this impact by protecting important views and establishing sound principles to minimise any harmful impact.

3) Ensure that any new development (or alterations) is sensitive to the historic context.

New development needs to be informal, small scale and sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is important that it does not adversely harm the setting of the existing historical features or harm the underground archaeological resource.

GRANTS AND FURTHER ADVICE

Financial support (up to 50%) and other forms of assistance may be available towards enhancement or tree planting schemes. For information and advice please contact The Director Planning, Transportation & Strategic Environment, Planning & Environment Section, Civic Centre, High Street, Kingswood, South Gloucestershire BS15 9TR. Tel: 01454 868004 www.southglos.gov.uk
email: Conservation@southglos.gov.uk

This advice note was consulted from 1998 and agreed for publishing in March 2004. It forms Supplementary Planning Guidance to be read with the policies of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan. The guidelines will be taken into account when assessing the merits of planning applications.
THIS LEAFLET SHOULD BE READ WITH A3 PLAN INSERT

The leaflet takes into account the Good Practice Guide on Conservation Areas from English Heritage & PPG 15. It should be read in conjunction with the general **Conservation Area Advice Note** which gives general advice & details of special controls and policies which apply in Conservation Areas.