



Listening Learning Leading

# **Stanton St John Conservation Area Character Study**

January 2003

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The Council first published the Stanton St John Conservation Area Character Study in draft form in June 2001. Following a period of public consultation, including a public meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2002, the Council approved the Character Study and the conservation area extension on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2003.

## Introduction

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act places a duty on every local planning authority to 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. The Act also states that the local planning authority should, from time to time, formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these Conservation Areas.

This document is an appraisal of the Stanton St John conservation area to give an overview of the established character to be preserved and to identify possible areas for future enhancement. It is intended to assist in defining what is of special architectural or historic importance, what should be protected and to give guidance as to the form, style and location of future change and development.

The document is divided into various sections as follows:

### 1. The History of the Area

This covers the period from prehistory to the present day. It includes significant architectural history, important dates and references to people and events that have helped to shape the area we see today.

### 2. The Established Character

This is an assessment of the existing character, including the topography of the area, the vernacular style, predominant building materials and natural or man-made features of local interest.

### 3. Possible Areas for Enhancement

This includes areas with potential for development and improvement and advice on extensions and repairs to existing buildings.

### 4. Summary of Possible Areas for Enhancement

### 5. Acknowledgements and Bibliography

### 6. Existing Conservation Policies

These are extracts from the 1997 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan and the 2011 Second Deposit Draft South Oxfordshire Local Plan identifying policies relating to listed buildings and Conservation Areas.

### 7. Plan of the Conservation Area

This is a scale plan of the area, which aims to identify the elements, which contribute to the character. The plan includes the Conservation Area boundary, listed buildings (buildings identified by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as being of special architectural or historic interest), former Grade III listed buildings (a now obsolete category but where the buildings may still be of architectural or historic interest) and other buildings of local note. This latter group consists of buildings that play a part in establishing the character of the street scene but have not yet been considered to be of sufficient importance to meet the current criteria for listing. Government guidance contained in **PPG.15- Planning and the Historic Environment** indicates, however, that there is a presumption against the demolition of such buildings. Important trees are also identified. These are usually highly visible from public places

and/or they contribute to the setting of a listed building. Important open spaces are identified, as these are a vital element in the character of an area. Character is defined not just by buildings, walls and trees, but also by the spaces between them. These contribute to the setting of buildings. They allow views around the area and they are often an important element in the historical development of a settlement.

Important unlisted walls are identified. These are usually built of local materials and help to define spaces and frame views. Lastly, important views into, out of and around the Conservation Area are identified. It should be appreciated that a Conservation Area's character does not end with a line drawn on a map. Often the character is closely associated with attractive views out to surrounding countryside, sometimes via gaps between buildings. Views within an area such as that to a church or particularly attractive group of buildings are also important.

## **8. Archaeological Constraint Plan**

The character and history of an area are closely linked to its archaeological remains. This plan identifies the location of ancient monuments, earthworks and known cropmarks, find spots, archaeological sites and linear works identified on the Sites and Monuments Record maintained by Oxfordshire County Council. If nothing has yet been identified within an area then this map will be blank, but this does not mean that the area is necessarily archaeologically sterile.

## 1. Stanton St John - the History of the Area

Clear evidence of prehistoric activity in the immediate vicinity of Stanton St John is sparse, only scattered artefacts and suggestions of possible settlements including a small Iron Age enclosure at NGR SP 577 088 (identified through aerial photography) having so far been discovered. In Roman times Stanton was on the edge of an area of major industrial activity, certainly of pottery production and probably also of iron working. There was a Romano-British settlement at Woodperry, then the major known centre of activity in what is now Stanton St John parish.

The heavy nature of the land around most of Stanton itself probably inhibited major agricultural exploitation until the Anglo-Saxon period. Once, however, the heavy land could be exploited the site of Stanton had much to recommend it. It had a dominant location, was well-drained but with a reliable water supply and had an adequate head of water to run a mill within easy reach. There was an abundance of good building material, both wood and stone, available close at hand, while not least it was just off, and in the lee of a major (inter)national highway, the pre-Roman ridge way (now the B4027) to the south-west of the village, the whole constituting almost the classic settlement specification.

This ridge road, referred to in Anglo-Saxon charters as a 'straet', while apparently peripheral to the village's development which has taken place almost exclusively to its north-east, has remained an important route. Used as a salt-way from Worcestershire to the south-east and a major route from

London in the east, through Islip and Worcester to Aberystwyth, and even Ireland, it was turnpiked in 1718 (the first Turnpike Trust in Oxfordshire) and its course through the parish no doubt influenced the siting of The George (now rather unfortunately renamed The Talk House) outside the centre of the village.

The name Stan-tun derives from the Anglo-Saxon 'homestead of stony ground' (the St John suffix comes from the St John family who held the manor from the 1140s to 1354) and reflects also the number of small quarries and stone pits, which provided sufficient material to build the medieval and early post-medieval village buildings and were also used as lime pits. Traces of these pits can still be seen near the B4027 and beyond the former school at the end of School Lane.

The first documentary reference to Stanton is in Domesday Book (1086). There are three entries, one of which (for one hide) refers to a part of Stanton which is now in Forest Hill. There is nothing to indicate why the remaining land is in two entries but together they show that the population consisted of eight slaves in the lordship held by Ilbert de Lacy from Odo, bishop of Bayeux, half brother of William the Conqueror, 17 villagers and eight smallholders.

The survey also records a total of 12½ plough teams, with 9 ploughs actually working, which may indicate under-cultivation at this period. The possible extent of the medieval open fields has been reconstructed [VCH (1957), Bond (1978)] and traces of ridge and furrow can still be seen in Hillcrofts Field to the east of the village with more clearly visible in early aerial photographs. The open fields never seem to have covered more than about a third of the

parish and Domesday records 60 acres of meadow and 60 acres of pasture, much of which had been enclosed by 1472, as well as a substantial area of woodland.

Both common and woodland existed in the medieval parish. Woodland was always important to the local economy and still forms a significant belt across the centre of the parish from north to south, the southernmost area, Stanton Great Wood, essentially still retaining what is probably its medieval, roughly oval shape.

Presumably the settlement started in the area around the church since there is no evidence to suggest that its centre of gravity has moved from elsewhere. This area is still both visually and historically the core of the village. A number of important buildings make up this nucleus, pride of place going to the church, the fabric of which dates from the 12th century and possibly earlier, and which stands on the highest ground. Nearby are Manor Farmhouse (now known as The Old Manor) of at least early 14th-century origins and its former farm buildings, the largest of which is the old barn, now in separate ownership, partly truncated and partly converted to residential use but which still makes a significant contribution to the street scene. Part of Rectory Farm House is also of this primary group. Originally there was another building in this core, the Rectory, located next to the church and demolished in c.1842. This dated from the 14th century at the latest and judging from drawings made just before its destruction was one of the largest and most prominent buildings in the village.

There was clearly a considerable amount of new building carried out in the village in the 13th and 14th

centuries, apparently peaking in the decades around c.1300 which saw major reconstruction work at both the church and manor house. The earliest record of a mill in the village is in 1279 (it was demolished in 1907) and by this time the settlement probably straggled down the hill towards it with random infilling of waste land. Another little group of buildings, possibly somewhat later, developed around what became The George and spread back down the hill towards the church.

Between the two groups and of particular interest in the evolution of the village's topography is the regular pattern of the property boundaries on both sides of the main street (Middle Road) to the south-east of the present village hall as far as what is now the Village Stores. This is likely to represent a regular, planned extension to the original settlement along the spring line and is perhaps of early 14th-century origin.

There were a number of constraints on the medieval parish since much of the area was subject to Forest Law and it is unlikely that the village was the principal seat of a 'lord of the manor'. After 1354 the manor left the St John family and its descent is confused by a number of disputes. In 1529 it was bought by New College, Oxford from Sybell Chamberlain, widow, of Shirburn, Oxfordshire. The college still owns large parcels of land in the village and parish today and nearly 500 years of ownership by a single corporate body has had considerable influence on the village's development. The college, through its copyholds, has been able to maintain tight control on its property and it is only since the 1960s that much individually owned development has taken place on land sold by the college, although the

Church and latterly the Thomson family and the County Council have also owned property here.

A disastrous fire in June 1793, reported in Jackson's Oxford Journal ("a more dreadful Spectacle cannot be imagined...the whole Village presented one general conflagration") to have entirely destroyed 21 dwelling-houses, five barns and many outbuildings, appears to have been concentrated along Middle Road, where there are now several early to mid 19th-century dwellings, but elsewhere the village continued to develop in the post-medieval period, as evidenced by further unplanned expansion towards the mill at the east end of Mill Street and around The Star and The George Inns.

Most of the built development which survives from before the 19th century is modest in character but while not of outstanding architectural interest includes some good examples of the local vernacular, namely small houses and cottages of random rubble construction under straw thatch or plain clay tile roofs. Much of this, when it has been sold by New College, has been extended and modernised, in a few cases almost beyond recognition. Most dwellings are set back from the road frontage and are enclosed by picket fencing, low stone walls or, occasionally, hedges. In much of the village the houses and footpath in front of them are set on an embankment or causeway ('the causie'), an important part of the streetscape. From this period, the former School House is a more substantial, designed building of 1767 with stone dressings and a hipped tiled roof. There are several agricultural buildings which are as visually and historically important as many of the dwellings, including the

barns at Manor Farm and Rectory Farm.

The early 19th century brought several designed, polite buildings to the village, among them Bassett House (which may in part be a remodelling of an earlier building), the house next to the village shop and the late Georgian Broughton Farm House (now called The Old Parsonage). The tiny former Primitive Methodist Chapel tucked away off Mill Street dates to 1844, the brick-built Freeland Cottages (outside the conservation area) to 1872 and the Village Reading Room, next to the Village Hall and now a house, was built in 1898. The other major building belonging to the age of Victorian educational improvement is the former schoolroom (now the Holford Centre), attached to the School House in 1874 and extended in 1960.

The two largest houses in the village were both built in the 19th century. The first was the new Rectory (now College House), designed by John Plowman and erected in 1839 to replace the old one by the church, which was demolished shortly afterwards. Both the siting and the style of the building are interesting and appear to represent the aspirations of Henry Stonhouse, probably the first rector to live in the parish for some time and who seems to have thought the old rectory inappropriate for an educated man of the cloth. In building the new Rectory, Stonhouse removed his house from the centre of the village, while remaining in convenient walking distance of the church, and its secluded location brought it both physically nearer and closer in social status to the neighbourhood gentry at Woodperry House. Indeed, it may even be that in choosing a conservative Georgian architectural style Stonhouse was

deliberately trying to evoke the image of a squire parson. The other major house in the village is similarly located away from the rest of the community, the picturesquely set Stanton House, built by John Thomson of Woodperry for his sisters in 1879.

In 1801 the total population of Stanton St John was 349. It then rose slowly but steadily to 555 in 1851, although this included some 32 people in Forest Hill. Like many villages close to large towns, Stanton St John was badly affected by the agricultural depression of the late 19th century and by 1901 the population had declined to 452. In 1951 the population stood at 440 since when it has fluctuated around this figure, being 429 in 1991.

The first half of the 20th century saw various minor infillings in different building styles, such as Woodman's Cottage, the police house (now Nimrod) and Rose Glen. It also saw the start of a series of planned developments, the rendered and slated Stanton Cottages in the 1930s, Hillcraft Road's war-time agricultural workers' homes (1943) and Courtfield Road's post-war utility council houses of 1948.

The first post-war private development was Simms Close (Banks, 1960), followed by Silver Birches (again Banks) in 1964, both in simulated stone with asbestos slated roofs. Cotterill's Close (Fletcher Watson) was built in the early 1970s and Chequers Close by the Cherwell Housing Trust in 1982. In the second half of the century individual houses were built along Pound Lane and Cox Lane, mostly in a style similar to Simms Close, as was the Village Hall in 1960.

The second half of the 20th century has seen major changes to both the social and physical fabric of the village.

Nevertheless, although in many senses a 'commuter' village, the majority of its inhabitants working in Oxford or elsewhere, Stanton St John retains a strong sense of community, despite losing its school in 1984. The village still retains its church, two pubs and village shop/post office which make an important contribution to its continuing vitality into the early 21st century. Most of the village was first designated as a conservation area on 13 December 1977.

## 2. The Established Character

The focus of Stanton St John is the area around the church and Manor Farm. These buildings stand at the junction of the village's three principal roads, Pound Lane, Middle Road and Mill Street, which have converged here since before the Norman Conquest. Indeed, the juxtaposition of manor house and church is the classic one and both buildings may originally have stood within a large circular enclosure at this, the highest, point of the village.

This area remains of the highest visual quality, defined still by the sense of enclosure on both sides of Pound Lane and Mill Street, the high stone boundary walls of Manor Farmhouse and its associated outbuildings (two of which directly abut the road) to the north and the grass bank, raised footpath and churchyard wall on the south. The view from the top of Mill Street towards the church is one of the finest village views in South Oxfordshire and has been drawn by many topographical artists, including J. and J.C. Buckler in the early 19th century.

It is indeed owing to the dominance of the church, which appears as a stepped architectural composition distinguished by the highly unusual tracery of its magnificent east window (restored in its present form in 1868), in this view that the predominantly modern and utilitarian farm buildings of Rectory Farmyard behind make so little impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area as seen from Mill Street. Rightly, it is the church which takes centre stage at this crucial vantage point.

Almost as significant a view is that northwards along Middle Road beyond

Cox Lane towards Manor Farmhouse, a view little changed in its essentials since it too was drawn by Buckler (Bodl., MS. Top. Oxon. A.39, f.120). Although partly screened by its high stone walls and outbuildings, the house is happily partly visible from the street to which it thus makes a major contribution. To the left is the churchyard, the yew tree overhanging the churchyard wall adding to the sense of enclosure and the brick on top of the predominantly stone wall (the boundary wall of the Old Rectory) making a delightful combination of colours and textures. Also a minor but important pleasure are the attractive stone steps through the raised pavement at the corner of Middle Road and Pound Lane and the iron gates and lanterns at the two entrances to the churchyard.

The sense of enclosure remains strong at the western end of Mill Street with high stone boundary walls and grass banks on either side of the road and several attractive 19th-century houses and cottages interspersed with both earlier and more recent buildings. Opposite Woodman's Cottage is a private footpath to Stanton House. Here, north of Gardener's Cottage (shown on the Ordnance Survey Map as Swallowfield Cottage) and once part of the Stanton House estate, a stream has been formalised to create small waterfalls and pools, an unexpected and delightful feature, which adds much to the attractiveness of the grounds of Stanton House.

Back in Mill Street beyond The Hive, a Grade II listed 17th-century stone-built and thatched cottage at right-angles to the road, the ground continues to drop, the stone boundary walls so characteristic of the centre of the village giving way to dense hawthorn

hedges and trees on either side of the road. On the south side is Silver Birches, a close of six houses built in 1964 and excluded from the conservation area. Here the stream, which flows through the grounds of Stanton House, forms a sluice and reaches the road. Diverted in the 1950s to pass under Mill Street in a culvert, it continues eastward to the site of the former mill, which New College dismantled in 1907, but where the sites of the old mill ponds are still evident. By this point, development is increasingly sporadic as open countryside is approached, and the stream (which is dammed below Mill Farm) runs in an open channel on the south-eastern side of the road.

Returning to the centre of the village, Middle Road runs due south from the church, turning beyond Cox Lane to the south-east. The northern part, beyond Cox Lane is, like Mill Street, bounded by stone walls, higher on the west, behind which is a dense screen planting, continuing to the south-west along Cox Lane and protecting College House from view. The wall on the east is lower and allows impressive, wide ranging views across the village hall car park and the Millennium Green to gently falling open fields beyond.

It is indeed at this point that the landscape setting of Stanton St John is best appreciated and the absence of large-scale housing development around the village most noticeable, giving the village the feeling of a truly rural and very special place. Likewise, looking towards the village from these fields, the view is predominantly one of a simple and low roofscape backing onto open fields. Also essential to the rural setting of the conservation area are what are now three large paddocks running up to the B4027 at the rear of

the building and garden lines along both Middle Road and Cox Lane, at least one of which was created by the amalgamation of the long plots to the south-west of Middle Road which were originally associated with the 'planned' part of the village. Recently, residents of the houses along Cox Lane have purchased land in this area as extensions to their back gardens. This land is also included within the conservation area and as with the paddocks it is important to continue to respect its essentially open nature in order to protect the rural setting of the conservation area.

The character of the village has been most affected by mid-to late 20th-century development along the course of Middle Road up to and including its junction with Hillcraft Road. The 1960s' houses of Simms Close and the single-storey terraced "cottages" of Chequers Close owe little or nothing to the local vernacular either in their materials or design. It is, however, in many ways fortunate that the former do not follow the usual historic precedent for small houses of being set directly on the street frontage and instead are now partially screened by well-established planting, which has done much to soften their initial impact. Their impact is also lessened by the partial retention of the old roadside wall at this point. Indeed, the long stretches of simply capped rubblestone boundary walls of gently varying height on either side of the road are an important feature of the street scene and this remains the case along the continuation of Middle Road up to its junction with the B4027, particularly on the eastern side. An unfortunate exception to this is at The Star where the large expanse of pub car park has blown apart the original sense of enclosure, while on a smaller

scale this character is also being progressively eroded by the breaching of the wall at various points to create individual vehicular accesses.

### **Proposed Extensions to the Conservation Area**

Of the three proposed extensions to the conservation area, the largest is that at the north-eastern end of the village where it is proposed to include the fields to the north and south of Mill Farm. The latter (Mill Field) is currently pasture and is well defined by a mature native tree and hedge boundary on its eastern side. Topographically, it in effect forms the other 'half' of the Millennium Green and is critical to the wider setting of the village. The views across it from the village are wide ranging and equally important are the views from it towards the village, which make clear the nature of the settlement's hillside location. The ploughed field to the north is separated from Mill Field by Mill Street, which here forms a deep hollow bounded by long-established hedgerows, part of which (to the east of Mill Farm) has recently been relaid in traditional style. The stream, which reappears as an open channel by the roadside near Mill Farm is another important element and contributes significantly to the setting of Nos. 32 and 33 New College, a pair of remarkably unaltered small 18th-century small houses, one thatched and the other stone-slated, at the extreme north-eastern end of the village. Also worthy of mention here is the simple 19th-century cottage at Holly Wood on the opposite side of the road, which has been identified as a building of 'local note'.

Of the two other proposed extensions to the conservation area comparatively little needs to be said. The tree-bordered

cricket field at the south-eastern end of the village belongs to the village rather than to the open countryside beyond, while the car park of The George is also fringed by trees and is brought into the conservation area in the hope that this will encourage an appropriate scheme of visual enhancement.

### **Buildings**

This Character Study is not the place to offer a detailed assessment of Stanton St John's principal historic buildings. These include the church and Manor Farmhouse, listed at Grade I and II\* respectively and the Grade II\* listed Rectory Farmhouse with its fine stone mullion-windowed front grafted on to an earlier building, directly opposite the church. Among Grade II listed buildings the most architecturally significant are the secluded ashlar-faced mid 19th-century College House (the Revd. Henry Stonhouse's new rectory of 1839, which replaced the earlier parsonage house demolished as a result in c.1842) and the predominantly early 19th-century Bassett House with its stone slate roof opposite The Star.

Both The Star and The George, where the diarist Parson James Woodforde had dinner with Peesley the New College woodman in 1763, although much extended, remain of interest but equally typical are several small 17th-century thatched cottages, built of the local Corallian limestone rubble, including The Hive on Mill Street and No.23 at the corner of Middle Road and Cox Lane. A number of listed former farm buildings remain in the centre of the village, including the large former barn to Manor Farm, the south-western part of which has now gone save for its heavily-buttressed gable end to the roadside with part of the

remainder converted to residential use, and those still associated with Manor Farm, in particular the thatched and buttressed stables abutting the roadside. Also here is the former cart shelter which until recently was particularly notable for the rare survival of its 'solid' thatch roof but still makes a significant contribution to the street scene.

Away from the nucleus of the village, the most important buildings are probably the mill house to the demolished former mill, partly timber-framed with a partial stone-slate roof and dating to the 16th century, and at the opposite end of the settlement the former School, largely Victorian but at the core of which is the original schoolmaster's house of Dame Elizabeth Holford's Charity School, built in 1767 (the site was given by New College), a stone building with hipped roof and large brick chimneys at each end. Detailed descriptions of all these buildings and the village's other listed buildings can be found on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, a copy of which is held by the District Council.

Equally important to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole are the large numbers of buildings of "local note", which have not yet been judged to meet the strict national criteria for statutory listing but which nevertheless make a vital contribution to the sense of place. The most distinctive are the 19th-century workers' cottages built by New College. These occur mainly in Middle Road near the junction with Cox Lane and are characterised by their slate roofs and gabled dormers breaking the eaves. Nos. 15 & 16, built in c.1875 at the expense of the Revd. John Murray Holland, are larger than the others and

slightly richer in their architectural detail with unusual Caernarvon-arched windows under dripstones. The isolated pair, Nos.24 & 25, at the junction of Cox Lane and the B4027 are simpler but also retain much of their original detailing. Brookside and Green Close Cottage are attractive 19th-century rubblestone houses occupying important corner sites at the junction of Middle Road and Hillcraft Road, while behind the Post Office and at right-angles to the road, Haymakers (once called Blackbird Alley) is the only unlisted building in the conservation area to retain its thatched roof.

There is a significant number of buildings of "local note" along Mill Street. Most of the houses and cottages are of the local rubblestone, with a mixture of stone slate, slate and plain tile roofs, the Bakehouse/Pitticks End and Hill Side standing out as particularly unspoilt examples, the first a pair of larger houses (probably of 18th-century date), the latter a smaller picturesque cottage. Stanton House (like its listed counterpart, College House) stands apart from the rest of the village. It is a substantial Victorian house in landscaped grounds (see above), built of stone with red brick dressings to its sash windows, with a projecting round-headed arcade on its entrance front, the whole under a hipped roof. Owing to its position on the settlement edge it has a commanding prospect of the surrounding countryside and is prominent in views along the eastern approach to the village.

Several non- (or former non-) domestic buildings and structures have been identified for the contribution they make to the village. These include the war memorial (designed by Thomas Rayson and erected in 1921) in the

churchyard and the red K6 telephone kiosk outside The George. The former primitive Methodist chapel, a simple barn-like structure off Mill Street, has recently been converted to residential use, while both the attractive stone barn in front of Spring House and the red oxide corrugated iron roof of the former farmbuilding close to Woodman's Cottage remain distinctive elements in the street scene. Equally characteristic are the small single-storey stone outbuildings, gable-end to the road, found in various locations along Middle Road.

Of new development in the village, Spring House (behind Rectory Farmhouse) sits remarkably well in the landscape when viewed across the fields from Hillcraft Road, the quality of its materials and attention to proportion and detailing making it a worthy addition to the conservation area. The Chequers in Middle Road is more modest in size and both its simple details and the absence of a separate vehicular access help to make it appear less intrusive in the street scene than might otherwise be the case.

### 3. Possible Areas for Enhancement

Stanton St John is an attractive village and it is clear that considerable care and attention are paid by its inhabitants to maintaining its character and appearance. Consequently, there is little scope for major environmental improvement work within the conservation area and attention should principally be focused on maintaining its existing character. However, there are a few areas where small improvements could be made to its appearance.

There are overhead wires and cables in Mill Street and Middle Road which disrupt attractive views and are generally ugly and intrusive. Particularly unfortunate are the clusters across Mill Street from Hill Top to Rose Glen and in Middle Road from The Star to Bassett House. These should all be laid underground by the statutory undertakers when the opportunity arises, as has already occurred owing to the efforts of the Parish Council and various individuals in other parts of the village. The work would, however, need to be carried out in a sensitive manner that does not destroy or permanently damage other important amenities, such as the grass verges which are themselves such notable features of the village. Indeed, the sensitive maintenance and management of the verges, open streams and raised footpaths so characteristic of the village is to be encouraged and should allow for the retention of wildflowers and 'micro' wildlife habitats, which is not only 'sustainable' but helps to give the village a truly rural feel.

Boundary walls in Stanton St John are for the most part well maintained, but in some cases lack of maintenance or the

use of inappropriate methods or materials for repair or rebuilding has spoilt their special quality. The wall to Brookside at the corner of Middle Road and Hillcraft Road has recently been rebuilt to a high standard but repairs to the boundary wall of College House along Cox Lane and the B4027 and to the raised pavement by the church are now needed. Also in need of attention is the low rubblestone wall on the field side of Hillcraft Road which forms the boundary of the conservation area. Much of this, particularly the coping is in poor condition, and a whole section of wall is missing which requires reinstatement. Owners are encouraged to contact the District Council's Conservation Section for advice prior to undertaking work to walls within the conservation area.

The use of traditional materials and detailing can have considerable impact on enhancing the character of a conservation area. The owners of historic properties are therefore encouraged to remove modern, unsympathetic materials such as plastic windows, which are found on several of the New College cottages, and to replace them with timber ones. The use of stained, rather than painted, windows in the village is unfortunately widespread and also has a detrimental effect on the character of the area. Plastic rainwater goods, which are common, could also with benefit be changed to traditional cast iron guttering, while the effects of inappropriate repointing can be seen on a number of buildings, including No.20 (Bumble Cottage), an otherwise attractive Victorian cottage.

As none of the buildings identified as being of "local note" (see above) is protected by the same level of detailed control as listed buildings, it is

particularly hoped that their owners will maintain them in good repair and avoid insensitive or inappropriate alterations. The Council's Conservation Team is always happy to offer advice on appropriate repair techniques to historic buildings, whether listed or not.

Some attractive granite setts and granite kerbing have been used as an edging material in several locations, including the junction of Mill Street and Middle Road and on the corner of Middle Road and Hillcraft Road. The slightly raised pavement on the west side of the latter also includes a number of Denner Hill kerbing stones, once commonly used as a road material in parts of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The opportunity should be taken to preserve these materials in preference to the use of ugly concrete kerbing when highway works take place. The existing widespread grass verges, which as noted above are such a feature of the village, should however be maintained without kerbing wherever possible. The recently installed street signs in the village are of far better quality than is often the case elsewhere and every effort should be made to retain these for the foreseeable future.

The large areas of car parking at both The Star and The George could benefit from better screening (the Council's Forestry Officer should be contacted for advice on this), while consideration could also be given to improving the surface material at the former. Similarly, consideration should be given to mitigating the impact of traffic along Pound Lane, a surprisingly busy road, where continuation of the existing raised footpath by the church could visually enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and improve pedestrian safety.

Of the few thatched buildings within the conservation area, only the stables and former cart shed at Manor Farm currently have traditional plain flush ridges. Owners of those buildings with the more recently introduced block-cut ridges are therefore encouraged to reinstate the traditional ridge type when rethatching becomes necessary. The impact of the recently applied and ornately patterned block-cut ridge at No.23 is particularly unfortunate owing to the cottage's prominent corner position, a situation exacerbated by the shiny stainless steel flue rising from the chimney.

A recent welcome change has been the limewashing of the lower range of The Star in a rich yellow ochre colour, an example that the owners of similar buildings of uncoursed rubblestone stripped of their original limewash or plaster in the 1960s to 1980s would do well to follow.

Many of the trees which contribute to the character of the conservation area lie within the grounds of its two principal houses, College House and Stanton House: the owners of these properties are encouraged to continue their proper management, including new planting where necessary and appropriate.

Small amounts of financial assistance may be available in some instances from the Council for the repair of historic buildings and walls within the conservation area and the reinstatement of lost original details or materials, including rethatching in traditional materials and style. Grants may also be available for tree planting (advice is available from the Council's Forestry Officer) and appropriate schemes of environmental improvement such as laying cabling underground. The Millennium Green to

the east of the church is a welcome addition to the village but great care will be needed to ensure that both it and the refurbished playground blend seamlessly with the surroundings. Certainly, the use here of simple 'park' railings and informal surfacing to the car park helps to ease the visual transition from village street to open countryside and respects the outstanding landscape setting of this part of the village.

Finally, planning permission has recently been granted for the redevelopment of the Rectory Farmyard site in the centre of the village. Here, great attention will need to be paid to detail and to securing the use of the best quality natural materials if the setting of the adjoining Grade I listed church is to be preserved and the character and appearance of the conservation area enhanced. It is hoped that the implementation of this scheme will be sufficiently successful to enable the site's future inclusion within the conservation area.

## 4. Summary of Possible Areas of Enhancement

The Council encourages:

- the overhead wires and cables in Mill Street and Middle Road, particularly the clusters across Mill Street from Hill Top to Rose Glen and in Middle Road from The Star to Bassett House, to all be laid underground by the statutory undertakers when the opportunity arises
- sensitive maintenance and management of the grass verges, open streams and raised footpaths
- maintenance, reinstatement and management of boundary walls
- replacement or reinstatement of modern, unsympathetic materials such as plastic windows with painted timber windows
- maintenance, replacement or reinstatement traditional cast iron rainwater goods
- repointing of the mortar joints should be raked out by hand, rather than mechanically cut out, and a suitable matching mortar used
- owners of buildings of 'local note' to maintain them in good repair and avoid insensitive or inappropriate alterations
- the use of granite setts and granite kerbing or to preserve Denner Hill kerbing stones in preference to the use of concrete kerbing
- retention of the use of quality street signs
- the large areas of car parking at both The Star and The George with better natural screening, while consideration could also be given to improving the surface material at the former
- consideration to mitigating the impact of traffic along Pound Lane, and the continuation of the existing raised footpath by the church
- the reinstatement of the traditional plan flush ridge when rethatching becomes necessary
- the owners of uncoursed rubblestone buildings stripped of their original limewash or plaster to reinstate it
- the owners of College House and Stanton House to continue the proper management of trees in their grounds, including new planting where necessary and appropriate

## 5. Acknowledgements and Bibliography

The Council gratefully acknowledges the information provided by a number of individuals in preparing this text. Particularly helpful were the comments provided by David Nutt and Roy Roden on behalf of the Parish Council, the notes and observations of Dr Nigel Gilmour and other local residents and the information and advice provided by Caroline Dalton, archivist to New College, Oxford.

Further material on Stanton St John can be found in the following sources:-

### **Bond, CJ**

'Stanton St John, Oxfordshire: Village Survey', CBA Group 9 Newsletter (1978), 76-87.

### **Nutt, David**

*Stanton St John Village Trail* (1979).

### **Sleaford, Richard**

*Three Chapters on the History of Stanton St John* (n.d., c.1960)

*Victoria County History for Oxfordshire*, v (1957), 282-93.

Further references to primary and secondary sources can be found in both Bond and the V.C.H.

## 6. Existing Conservation Policies

### South Oxfordshire Local Plan adopted by Council, April 1997

#### LISTED BUILDINGS

##### POLICY CON 1

Proposals for the demolition of any building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest will not be permitted except in most exceptional circumstances.

##### POLICY CON 2

The council will make full use of its powers to serve repairs notices to prevent the wilful neglect of listed buildings.

#### ALTERATIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS

##### POLICY CON 3

The use of modern materials such as aluminium and UPVC will not normally be permitted for the doors or windows of listed buildings. Sealed double-glazed timber windows will not normally be permitted unless their mouldings precisely match those of traditional windows. The use of secondary glazing will normally be acceptable.

##### POLICY CON 4

Listed building consent will not normally be granted for proposals which involve the use of cement-rich mortars, abrasive cleaning methods and chemically-based sealants, nor for the painting of unpainted brickwork and stone or the use of unsuitable colour schemes on listed buildings.

##### POLICY CON 5

The alteration or removal of historic internal features in buildings included on the statutory list of buildings of

special architectural or historic interest will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

#### CHANGES OF USE AND EXTENSIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS

##### POLICY CON 6

Any change of use of a listed building must be appropriate to its character, and any extension must be sympathetic to the original structure in design, scale and materials and must not dominate or overwhelm it.

#### THE SETTING OF LISTED BUILDINGS

##### POLICY CON 7

Proposals for development which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building will normally be refused.

#### CONSERVATION AREAS

##### POLICY CON 8

The council will use all its powers under the relevant acts to ensure that the character of individual Conservation Areas is preserved or enhanced.

##### POLICY CON 9

Consent to demolish a building in a Conservation Area will normally only be granted if the loss of the building would not adversely affect the character of the area, and if there are detailed and acceptable plans for the redevelopment of the site.

##### POLICY CON 10

When considering proposals for development in Conservation Areas, the council will require:-

- (i) the design and scale of new work to be in sympathy with the established character of the area;
- (ii) the use of traditional materials, whenever this is appropriate to the

- character of the area;
- (iii) the retention of existing walls, hedges, or any other features which contribute to the character of the area.

### **THATCHING STYLE**

#### **POLICY CON 11**

In order to protect the traditional thatching style of South Oxfordshire the District Council will generally promote the use of long straw and resist the introduction of patterned block-cut ridges on thatched buildings.

### **ADVERTISEMENTS IN CONSERVATION AREAS AND ON LISTED BUILDINGS**

#### **POLICY CON 12**

The council will not normally permit the display of signs on a listed building or in a Conservation Area which are in any way harmful to the character and appearance of the building or area. Where it is accepted that a sign is needed, its design and materials should reflect the best traditional practice.

#### **POLICY CON 13**

The installation of blinds or canopies of untraditional form or materials on buildings within Conservation Areas will not normally be permitted.

### **BURGAGE PLOTS**

#### **POLICY CON 14**

In the historic towns of Henley, Thame and Wallingford the burgage plots to the rear of the principal streets will generally be protected from amalgamation and from development which would diminish their historic interest and value.

### **PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS**

#### **POLICY CON 15**

In Conservation Areas, the council will take all available steps to ensure:

- (i) that the introduction or intensification of uses which conflict with the special character of the area is resisted;
- (ii) that existing walls, buildings, trees, hedges, open spaces and important views are retained, where they contribute to the character of the area;
- (iii) that whenever the opportunity arises, unsightly overhead wires and unnecessary signs are removed. The statutory undertakers will be urged to site their services underground;
- (iv) that where necessary, improvements are made to the visual quality of the floorspace, street furniture, lighting and signs; and
- (v) that development outside a Conservation Area would not have a detrimental effect on the Conservation Area.

### **ARCHAEOLOGY**

#### **POLICY CON 16**

The council will not normally permit development which would adversely affect the sites or settings of nationally-important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, or those of monuments of special local importance.

#### **POLICY CON 17**

Before the determination of an application for development which may affect a site of archaeological interest or potentially of archaeological importance, prospective developers will be required, where necessary, to make provision for

an archaeological field evaluation, in order to enable an informed and reasoned planning decision to be made.

#### **POLICY CON 18**

Wherever practicable and desirable, developments affecting sites of archaeological interest should be designed to achieve physical preservation in situ of archaeological deposits. Where this is not practicable or desirable, the district planning authority will impose conditions on planning permissions, or seek legal obligations, which will require the developer to provide an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation, recording and publication by a professionally qualified body acceptable to the district planning authority.

### **PARKS AND GARDENS OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST**

#### **POLICY CON 19**

Proposals which would damage the character, setting or amenities of a park or garden of special historic interest, especially those contained in the English Heritage Register, will not normally be permitted.

### **COMMON LAND**

#### **POLICY CON 20**

Proposals for development on or affecting common land, village greens and other important spaces within settlements will not normally be permitted.

## **2011 Second Deposit Draft Local Plan**

### **Demolition of Listed Buildings**

#### **Policy CON1**

Proposals for the demolition of any listed building will not be permitted.

### **Alterations and extensions to listed buildings**

#### **Policy CON4**

Any extension to a listed building must be appropriate to its character, must be sympathetic to the original structure in design, scale and materials and must not dominate or overwhelm it.

#### **Policy CON5**

Any alteration to a listed building must respect its established character and not diminish the special historical or architectural qualities which make it worthy of inclusion on the statutory list.

#### **Policy CON6**

A change of use of part or the whole of a listed building will be permitted only if its character and features of special architectural or historic interest would be protected. Proposals for a change of use should incorporate details of all intended alterations to the building and its curtilage, to demonstrate their impact on its appearance, character and setting.

#### **Policy CON7**

Proposals for development which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building will be refused.

### **CONSERVATION AREAS**

#### **Proposals affecting a conservation area**

#### **Policy CON9**

Consent to demolish a building in a conservation area will be granted only if the loss of the building would not

adversely affect the character of the area and, where appropriate, if there are detailed and acceptable plans for the redevelopment of the site.

#### Policy CON10

The Council will not grant permission for development which would harm the character or appearance of a conservation area. When considering proposals for development in conservation areas, the Council will require:

- (i) the design and scale of new work to be in sympathy with the established character of the area; and
- (ii) the use of traditional materials, whenever this is appropriate to the character of the area.

The Council will also take account of the contribution made to a conservation area by existing walls, buildings, trees, hedges, open spaces and important views. Proposals for development outside a conservation area which would have a harmful effect on the conservation area will not be permitted.

### **Advertisements in conservation areas and on listed buildings**

#### Policy CON13

The Council will not grant consent for the display of signs on a listed building or in a conservation area which are in any way harmful to the character and appearance of the building or area. Where it is accepted that a sign is needed, it should generally be non-illuminated, made of natural materials and to a design and scale reflecting the best traditional practice.

### **Blinds and canopies in conservation areas**

#### Policy CON14

The Council will not grant permission for the installation of blinds or canopies

of nontraditional form or materials on buildings within conservation areas.

### **Burgage plots**

#### Policy CON15

In the historic towns of Henley, Thame and Wallingford the burgage plots to the rear of the principal streets will generally be protected from amalgamation and from development which by its nature would detract from their historic interest, amenity and nature conservation value.

### **Archaeology and historic building analysis and recording**

#### Policy CON16

The Council will not permit development which would adversely affect the sites or settings of nationally-important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, or those of monuments of special local importance.

#### Policy CON17

Before the determination of an application for development which may affect a site of archaeological interest or potentially of archaeological importance, prospective developers will be required, where necessary, to make provision for an archaeological field evaluation, in order to enable an informed and reasoned planning decision to be made.

#### Policy CON18

Wherever practicable and desirable, developments affecting sites of archaeological interest should be designed to achieve physical preservation in situ of archaeological deposits. Where this is not practicable or desirable, the Council will impose conditions on planning permissions, or seek planning obligations, which will require the developer to provide an

appropriate programme of archaeological investigation, recording and publication by a professionally-qualified body acceptable to the Council.

#### Policy CON19

Before the determination of an application which affects a building of archaeological or historic interest, applicants will be required, where necessary, to submit a detailed record survey and analysis of the building. In some circumstances, further survey and analysis will be made a condition of consent.

### **Historic battlefields, parks, gardens and landscapes**

#### Policy CON20

Proposals which would damage the character, setting or amenities of a battlefield, park or garden of special historic interest, especially those contained in the English Heritage Registers, will not be permitted.

### **Common land**

#### Policy CON21

Proposals for development on or affecting common land, village greens and other important spaces within settlements will not be permitted.