

KENNET



HILCOTT CONSERVATION AREA

Designation Statement

Hilcott is an ancient tithing in the parish of North Newton. This parish differs from the typical narrow parishes usually found in the Vale of Pewsey as it is compact in shape and lacks extensive upland sheep pasture. Farms are devoted principally to dairying. Hilcott is probably older than North Newton village. Archaeological discoveries of the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods have been found and Hilcott is possibly the site of an early British settlement. Hilcott as we know it today, however, grew up on both sides of the Avebury to Amesbury road, which was turnpiked in 1840. The hamlet is located on slightly elevated land between two tributaries of the River Avon.

By the 16th century North Newton and Hilcott were of almost equal size but in the following centuries Hilcott retained its population whilst North Newton declined in size. Ambiguities have always existed between the two settlements. For example Hilcott had separate manorial court proceedings to North Newton, but from the 16th century church tithes were collected from the whole parish. The main church is at North Newton but in the early years of the 19th century there were plans to rebuild it at Hilcott. This scheme was abandoned, but in 1851 a new building, erected ostensibly as a school but fitted out for divine worship, was erected at Hilcott. Apparently it was not used for education and was known as the Mission Chapel for many years until it was converted to a dwelling in the latter part of the 20th century.

The Conservation Area takes in that part of Hilcott between the **Cemetery** and **Wilds Farm** and the loose knit area bounded by **Stitchings Lane** on the south side of the hamlet.

Key Buildings

Hilcott contains a high proportion of historic buildings of which seven are listed by the Department of National Heritage. This includes **Chestnut Cottage**, which, dating from the 17th century, has a characteristic half-hipped thatched roof and deep red brick walls with stone dressings to windows and quoins.

The agricultural legacy is represented by a fine staddle stone granary at **Hilcott Farmhouse**. A smaller granary can also be seen at **Manor Farmhouse** which dominates the western end of the street. This thatched house incorporates several stages of building. An early wing is timber framed. Another, perhaps the grandest, has ashlar quoins and tall stone moulded and mullioned windows. A third phase, with ceiling heights similar to the second, is a three bay extension in matching brickwork.

Building Materials

In the Conservation Area building materials are characteristic of those found generally in the Vale of Pewsey. That is to say apart from a small quantity of malmstone there is little good quality building stone available, hence cob and timber frame construction can be found at Hilcott. An agricultural building constructed of

chalk cob is prominent opposite **Chestnut Cottage**, and rendered cob garden walls are conspicuous at both ends of the Conservation Area on the north side of the road. Buildings erected or re-modelled from the 18th century, however, are usually constructed of red brickwork.

Thatch, particularly the Long Straw method, is the traditional roofing material and is still dominant today. Thatch lends itself readily to, and is characteristic of, the simple roof forms that epitomise vernacular building tradition in the Vale of Pewsey. A small number of buildings erected following the arrival of the Kennet and Avon Canal to nearby Honeystreet are roofed with slates imported from North Wales or pantiles from Bridgewater. Also, one or two buildings have plain clay tile roofs which, apart from thatch, will usually be the most suitable material for new roofs. Due to the relative isolation of the hamlet comparatively few buildings have been erected in the 20th century, but it is fair to say that red brick has become the most common material for use in contemporary construction. Provided it is not too hard in texture and has a 'through' colour, red brick can be acceptable for new building work in the Conservation Area.



MANOR FARM

Trees and Landscape

The Conservation Area is dominated by mature, broadleaf trees along the traditional Hawthorn hedgerows which surround pastures and gardens alike. Some of the finest trees are the Oaks to be found towards the western end of the settlement on the southern boundary of the road. A row of semi-mature Poplars running north to south dominate the views to the south of the village in the vicinity of **Hilcott Farm**. There has also been a considerable amount of new tree planting in this area and eventually a small broadleaf copse will be formed. Mature broadleaf trees such as Oak, Horse Chestnut and a fine, roadside False Acacia form major features in and around the fields to the south and east of **Hilcott Farm**.

Stitchings Lane and the green lane that returns to the main road form the eastern and southern boundaries of the Conservation Area is hedged with Hawthorn, with large quantities of young middle-aged Elm and Sycamore trees. This lane connects back into the road at the far western end of the Conservation Area and near an old pond.

Immediately outside the settlement pastures dominate but to the north substantial areas of broadleaf woodland composed of Oak, Alder, Poplar and Willow straddle the Avon tributaries.

Character and Land Use

The majority of buildings are in residential use although there are working farms near the western and eastern extremities of the Conservation Area respectively. Indeed most activity is centred around the farms. The **Village Hall** is also a periodic focal point. Fortunately traffic is not a particularly major problem at Hilcote and the hamlet has a quiet, rural character.

For much of its length the verge of the main road is characterised by earth banks and hedges which should be preserved. The metalled surface of the road is not contained by stone kerbs or separate footways giving the street a country appearance. A scattering of properties in **Stichings Lane** are, in fact, served by un-made up tracks which further emphasises the traditional rural appearance of the area.

Buildings are found to be informally sited. The absence of modern estate-type development, and of continuously built-up frontages, creates an unpretentious, even rustic, character where undeveloped gaps, for example between the **Cemetery** and **Manor Farm** or the paddock opposite **Hilcote Cottages**, are as important as the buildings in defining the quality.

On the north of the main road, at the eastern end of the Conservation Area, there are some particularly good examples of traditional cottage gardens. Those at **The Old Rectory** and **Queen Anne's Cottage** are fronted by attractive iron railings on low brick plinths. These should be retained wherever possible.

Development Constraints

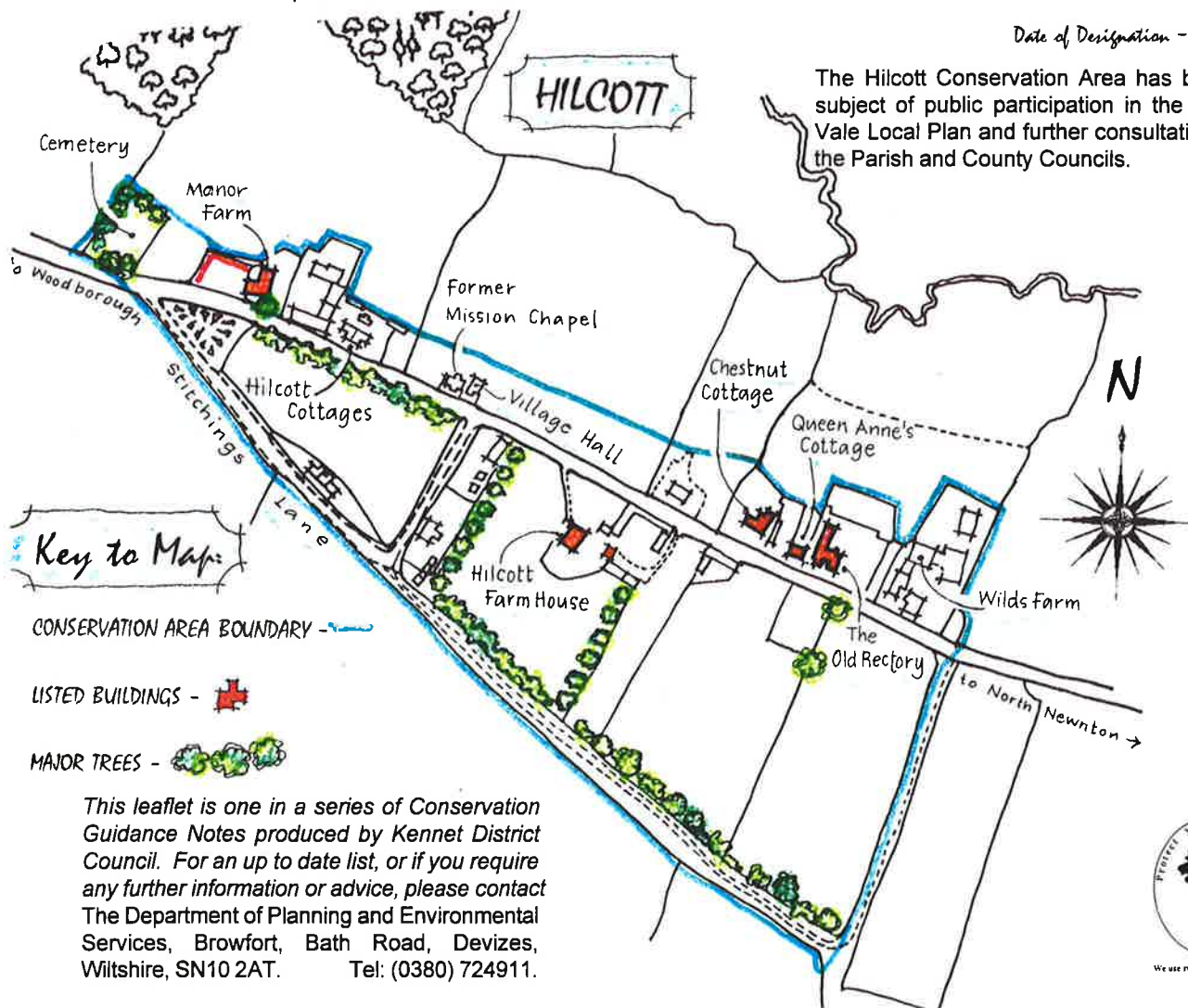
This Conservation Area is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the general planning policy treats Hilcote as being in the 'open countryside'. Accordingly, development will not normally be allowed except when justified in the interests of agriculture, forestry or some overriding special need. Thus new buildings in the Conservation Area are only likely to be considered when there is a clear functional need. Where development does take place it will be important to ensure that new buildings do not visually cramp or overcrowd existing buildings which are usually found widely spaced apart or set in their own grounds.

In considering applications for planning permission the Council will expect designers to demonstrate that they have had regard to the historical and physical context into which their proposals are intended to fit. Generally new buildings should match traditional materials and designs having regard to scale, massing and proportions. Occasionally, however, high quality buildings designed in a contemporary idiom can result in a satisfactory solution but this requires an intimate understanding of the site and its context. In most cases the Council will expect submissions to consist of detailed plans including drawings showing new development in its setting.

The emphasis of the designation will be firmly on protection of the existing character. There may, however, be limited opportunities for enhancement of the area. For example, the **village pond** at the western end of **Stichings Lane** is a significant feature. Yet, it is surrounded by slightly untidy rough grass area and for most of the year the pond is dry. It could benefit from restoration and there are various grant schemes exist that might continue to contribute towards this end.

Date of Designation - 20.01.94

The Hilcote Conservation Area has been the subject of public participation in the Pewsey Vale Local Plan and further consultations with the Parish and County Councils.



Key to Map

CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY -

LISTED BUILDINGS -

MAJOR TREES -

This leaflet is one in a series of Conservation Guidance Notes produced by Kennet District Council. For an up to date list, or if you require any further information or advice, please contact The Department of Planning and Environmental Services, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2AT. Tel: (0380) 724911.



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