

Bath and North East Somerset
Planning Services

South Stoke Conservation Area Appraisal



March 2014

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Introduction

South Stoke was identified as being of special architectural and historic interest and was designated a Conservation Area on 21 July 1982. The extent of its boundary incorporates the main core of the village.

The Council has a duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning powers, and to reappraise the boundaries from time to time. This appraisal will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The appraisal identifies elements which contribute to the character of the area and those that detract from it. This provides the basis upon which to develop proposals for preservation and enhancement.

The preparation of the statement also enables the local community to participate in the identification of features which are important to the special character of the area in which they live.



Summary of Special Interest

- Unusual hillside location and exceptional landscape setting on the southern edge of the Cotswolds within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Village built into the slope of a valley overlooking the Cam valley affording fine extensive vistas unencumbered by large scale modern development
- Contribution of natural landscape features such as ancient deciduous woodland and narrow (and often steep) lanes lined with hedgerows
- Spring-line settlement resulting from underlying geological character
- Small to medium irregular field patterns with hedgerow boundaries dating from mediaeval period
- Peaceful rural atmosphere with little intrusion from traffic despite proximity to Bath
- Absence of street lighting, traffic signage, adverts and footways
- Strong archaeological presence and potential including the Wansdyke 400 metres to the north, Roman villa sites and industrial heritage of the Somersetshire Coal Canal
- Facades and roof ridges follow topographic contours
- Prominent position of the Manor Farm which constitutes an early farm complex with rare surviving late mediaeval agricultural buildings
- A heritage anchored in a Saxon Charter of 961
- Prevalence of historic buildings and boundary walls built of local Oolitic limestone including the Parish Church of St James The Great of Norman origin
- Interesting historic street furniture and features including listed K6 telephone kiosk, historic post box
- Proximity to Somersetshire Coal Canal situated in the Cam Brook valley below
- Village pattern and grain that has undergone little change and witnessed limited modern development
- Nucleated village form with central village green
- Vibrant community aided by centrally located parish church, community hall and The Packhorse Inn





Modern OS map of South Stoke

Assessment of Special Interest

Location and Setting

The village and Parish name of South Stoke derives from Old English meaning outlying farmstead or hamlet, secondary settlement to the south. It is one of many small settlements to the south of Bath that has been able to maintain its historic rural character and tranquility despite its proximity to a busy urban centre. As the name suggests, it is located just to the south of the City of Bath on the side of a small but steep river valley typical of this area within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

There are three main brooks that flow through these valleys: the Cam and Wellow brooks merge to form the Midford brook, which is a tributary of the River Avon, and it is the Cam that the settlement sits above. The landscape is considerably influenced and characterised by these small brooks

deeply set with characteristic high banks that meander freely across the floodplains of these valleys. They are also an important contributor to local natural heritage and biodiversity.

These steep river valleys provide a striking landform on the southernmost escarpment of the Cotswolds. The landscape has typically been influenced by millennia of agricultural activity and there is a mixture of arable and pastoral land cover in roughly equal measure. The irregular field patterns tend to be small to medium in scale, with hedgerow boundaries.

There are principally two public footpaths within the Conservation Area: one to the west that joins the Limestone Link national trail and another to the east that progresses to the south. These paths offer an interesting opportunity to view the

interior of the Conservation Area that is otherwise hidden from view and a link to the landscape beyond from where its landscape setting and context can be viewed and understood.



The village has a precipitous and dramatic south facing position

General Character and Plan Form

The village possesses a nucleated village green form with the route through bisected by the Green, which creates an interesting circuitous route that necessitates a slow passage through the village. For the most part it has a compact and close grained townscape with some substantial buildings set within large grounds hidden from view by trees and general plant growth. The route out of the village to the south descending into the valley below is remarkably steep and narrow providing a sense of drama and atmosphere as one descends into the countryside beyond the village.

Having entered the village it is easy to forget that there is a bustling and busy city within close proximity, such is the particularly peaceful rural atmosphere and character of the village.

Because of the position of the village, built onto the south facing slope of the valley, vistas are a key and important element of the character of the place and views beyond the village are uninterrupted by development of any kind. South Stoke has miraculously retained its physical and emotional separation and its historical and architectural integrity despite its close proximity to Bath, an aspect noted by Nikolaus Pevsner writing in the 1950s:

'The happy sight of a village still entirely unurbanized, though only two miles from the main station of a city'.

The absence of modern development on the perimeter and the way in which the village and the landscape opens out before you to the south as you enter from a narrow and enclosed entrance creates a dramatic sense of arrival from the north. The juxtaposition and close proximity of the village and city offers an intriguing and interesting contrast. This, while not unique, is unusual for a settlement so close to a large urban area but again is partly due to the village 'having its back' to Bath in being located on the side of a steep escarpment within a different valley.

Landscape

The underlying geology originates principally from the Jurassic period and is dominated by Oolitic Limestone typical of the Cotswold range however the layers can be summarised thus in descending order:

- Forest Marble
- Great Oolite
- Fuller's Earth
- Inferior Oolite
- Midford Sands

South Stoke sits at the southern edge of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a recognition of the outstanding and special quality of the landscape. This designation provides a vitally important control for development that could be potentially harmful to such a sensitive area in terms of both its built and natural heritage. The settlement is located just outside the southern limits of the Bath World Heritage Site but within its immediate setting.

Despite its close proximity to the suburban fringes of Bath, the village feels entirely rural and distant from the city. There is a feeling of a settlement having developed organically within the landscape and fitting into, and working with, its geomorphology. This integration with the landscape is further enhanced and augmented by the use of local limestone in the construction of the buildings including the Parish Church of St James the Great.

The surrounding landscape is also close grained with a myriad patchwork of small irregular fields with narrow steep sided lanes often overhung with trees and lined with hedgerows. The surrounding fields, enclosed by hedgerow boundaries, have changed little since the mediaeval and post mediaeval periods. They were not, for instance, affected by the rationalisation of the Enclosure Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries. In the valley below the settlement there is evidence of mediaeval, or possibly earlier, enclosure of water meadows described as 'rich, wet grassland'. There are also areas of ancient mixed deciduous woodland consisting typically of native species such as ash and oak, with willow and alder lining the river banks.



The Conservation Area has an outstanding landscape setting within the Cotswold AONB



The buildings are typically constructed in local Oolitic limestone

Historic Development

From the archaeological record (see **Archaeological Significance**) that includes Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman pottery potsherds, including Roman Samian Ware bowls, it appears that the site has been occupied for thousands of years. The archaeological record from the Roman period, as one might expect, is especially significant and Roman villas have been discovered in close proximity to the Conservation Area.

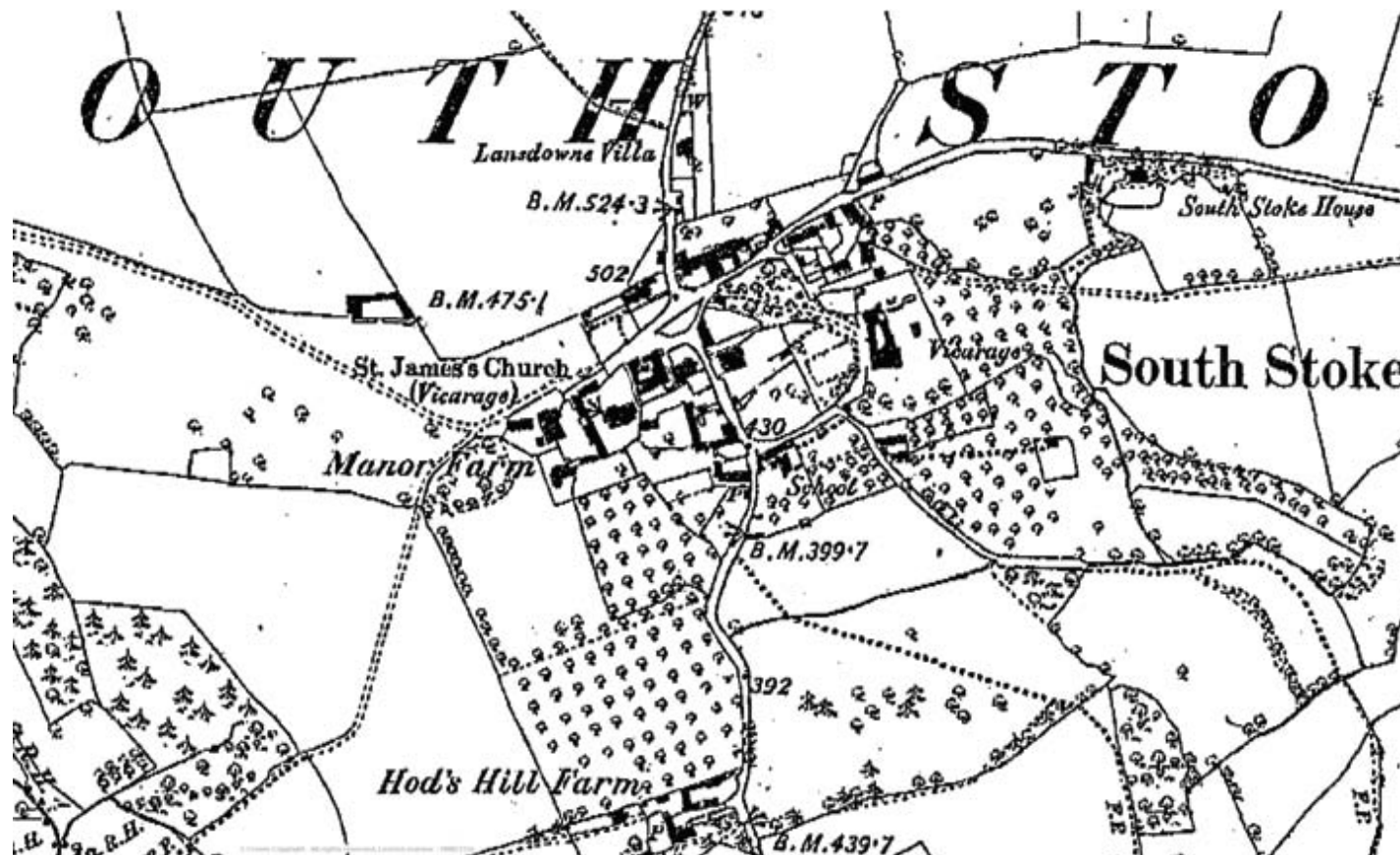
The settlement was later occupied in the immediate post-Roman period by the Anglo-Saxons who were probably responsible for the construction of the West Wansdyke to the north of the village possibly in the late 8th or early 9th century. It is thought that this formed a physical earthwork boundary between the kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex. Later Edgar, King of Wessex and crowned King 'of the whole land of Albion' at Bath in 973, in a charter of 961 gave the estate lands of South Stoke, known then as *Tottanstoc*, to Bath Priory, a Benedictine monastery of the 'Church of the Blessed Peter at Bath'. The estate developed into the manor and remained in the ownership of the Priory until the Dissolution at the time of Henry VIII in the mid 16th century.

Development of the manor gave rise to the settlement we know today and it would have accommodated the agricultural labour for the manorial estate. The Manor Farm complex of buildings still survives and constitutes an important heritage asset making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area's historic character and environment.

There is, however, no explicit mention of South Stoke in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and therefore its inclusion remains somewhat obscure. It has been suggested that its 5 hides were implicitly included in the 20 hides of



The ornate Norman north doorway to the Church of St James



Ordnance Survey first edition of 1885

Bath or the 9 hides allotted to Monkton Combe although both assertions are merely educated conjecture. What is clear, however, is that Norman culture impacted on the settlement and this is evidenced by the ornate north doorway of the Church of St James the Great, dating from between 1160 and 1170.

Following the Dissolution in the 1530s the Manor and its property were acquired by the Crown rather than being sold to private wealthy landowners, as was the case with much monastic property at this time. In 1555 the churchwardens commented that the Crown was a negligent absentee landlord whose neglect of South Stoke had resulted in the decay of the Church. Further destruction to the church was caused by the Great Storm of 1703 and the churchwarden's accounts of the time record the subsequent repairing of the Church.

The village has undergone some changes from the mediaeval period onwards and has witnessed development in each subsequent century, but the overriding impression is one of continuity and containment. This continuity is anecdotally evidenced by such reactions as the one expressed by Nikolaus Pevsner, included above. More objectively it is worth noting that in the 1801 census the population of South Stoke was calculated as being 188 (95 males and 93 females) and has merely approximately doubled since that time. The parish as a whole was noted as possessing just 42 dwellings at this time and although this has obviously increased, the village has experienced only minor development in the 20th century mainly along the ridge. In the Conservation Area there are now approximately 60 dwellings.

Activity and Former Uses

The settlement owes its establishment to the fact that the surrounding area afforded appropriate conditions for agricultural activity for all types, including fertile soils for cultivation and pasture for the rearing of sheep and cattle. The existence of Roman villa sites, which were essentially farm houses, is also testimony to the favourable agricultural conditions. As with most other settlements South Stoke's economy was principally agrarian until the latter part of the twentieth century. The Manor Farm and other farms in and around the Conservation Area provide the physical evidence for this. Also, the Tithe Map of 1840 provides evidence that strip farming was practiced in South Stoke in the four long fields shown where Plough Field is now, situated just to the north east above Springfield Nurseries.

The Old Post Office and Slipway were formerly the post office, grocer's and butcher's although both have since been converted to dwellings.

The Somersetshire Coal Canal, constructed in 1795 just to the south of South Stoke, was later superseded by the GWR branch line railway, which followed the route of the canal for much of its length. The canal surveyor was William Smith, author of the first geological map and regarded as the 'Father of English Geology'. There does not appear to be any evidence as to whether either route had a significant impact on the economy of South Stoke or its development.

While there is documentary evidence of a brewery at the village in the 18th century, the South Stoke Brewery was established in the 1830s. It was an important industry in the village which has left its architectural mark with a number of extant buildings in the village. These include the vaulted storage cellars fronting Packhorse Lane, which were used for the storing of beer barrels. The brewery, having suffered long-term decline, finally closed in about 1909 and some of the associated buildings were demolished in 1921.

The mining of Fuller's Earth was an important industry in and around South Stoke with extensive fulling, or tucking, mills at nearby Midford. It was an intrinsic element in the success of the Cotswold woollen industry. The South Stoke quarry, opened in 1886 and closed in 1894, was an open cast quarry situated just to south of Hodshill.

To the east there are the remnants of the former Clifford's Nurseries which was an important local employer within the Parish that took full advantage of the fertile south facing slope for horticultural propagation and market gardening in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The church, community hall and The Packhorse public house, all of which are centrally located, indicate a vibrant and active community.



Part of the Manor Farm complex



The brewery vaults of the former South Stoke Brewery

Archaeological Significance

South Stoke is rich in archaeology and there is a significant archaeological potential within the parish. The most important archaeology is arguably the West Wansdyke, a substantial linear earthwork of Anglo-Saxon origin and a Scheduled Ancient Monument situated just to the north of the settlement. Being the northern boundary of the Parish, it provides a physical boundary between South Stoke and Bath. As it proceeds through Bath, the Wansdyke has been severely compromised in places by the modern development of suburban expansion.

Predating the Wansdyke is an unsurprising and considerable Roman presence including the Fosse Way that runs just to the west of the settlement. A Roman villa site has been identified from the archaeological record, and two other sites are regarded as being possible villas: one to the east at South Stoke House described as being of 'high status', one to the south east at Southstoke Hall and another to the west at Sulis Manor.

Various artefacts have been discovered at these sites including carved masonry, such as columns and capitals, sarcophagi complete with human remains and grave goods of Samian ware pottery. The last excavation at these sites was in 2002. Samian ware and many other items have also been found in gardens in the Conservation Area and in surrounding fields. Finds have included items from the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Other Roman finds have been found to the south of the village at Hodshill. Fishponds of mediaeval origin have also been identified to the south of the village.

Much of the discovery of this archaeological record has come about from incidental activities over the last 200 years although there has been some limited archaeological field work and excavation undertaken by early 19th century antiquarians and latterly in the late 20th century.

There is also an industrial archaeological presence in the remains of the disused Somersetshire Coal Canal that lay just to the south of the Conservation Area and also the GWR branch line, Limpley Stoke to Camerton Railway, that superseded it. Indeed the railway was largely constructed along the route of the canal.

From the rich and significant archaeological record it is obvious that South Stoke has considerable archaeological potential and this should inform any decisions regarding future development both inside and outside the Conservation Area. This is particularly the case regarding the West Wansdyke earth work, which has already been significantly compromised by development in the 20th century. South Stoke, therefore, should be regarded as a fragile and vulnerable historic environment that requires careful consideration in all future planning decisions.



The Packhorse Inn and the Village Hall together with the church are important social centres for the village



There are outstanding views into and out of the Conservation Area

Key Views and Vistas

The elevated position of the Conservation Area, built on the side of a steep valley side, benefits from outstanding long range views to the south and into the valley below. There are many positions within the conservation Area where one can experience these views.

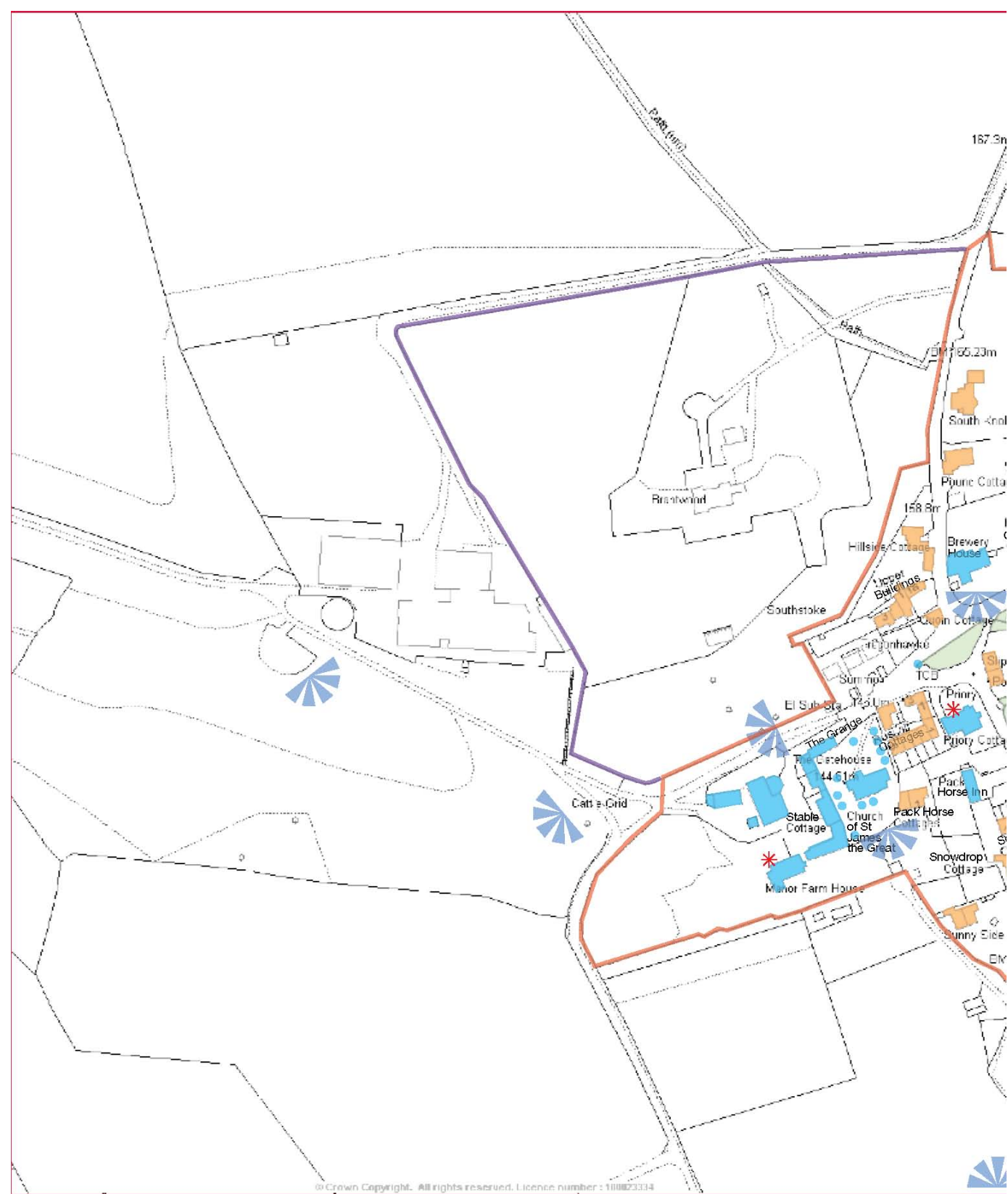
The principal view points are from the southern part of the churchyard; the Green; the north east corner at Pack Horse Lane; Old School Lane from the Packhorse Inn, which affords a medium range view into the valley; and from the far west of the Conservation Area, where there are medium range views to the north, long range views to the south west, and also views of the western edge of the Conservation Area.

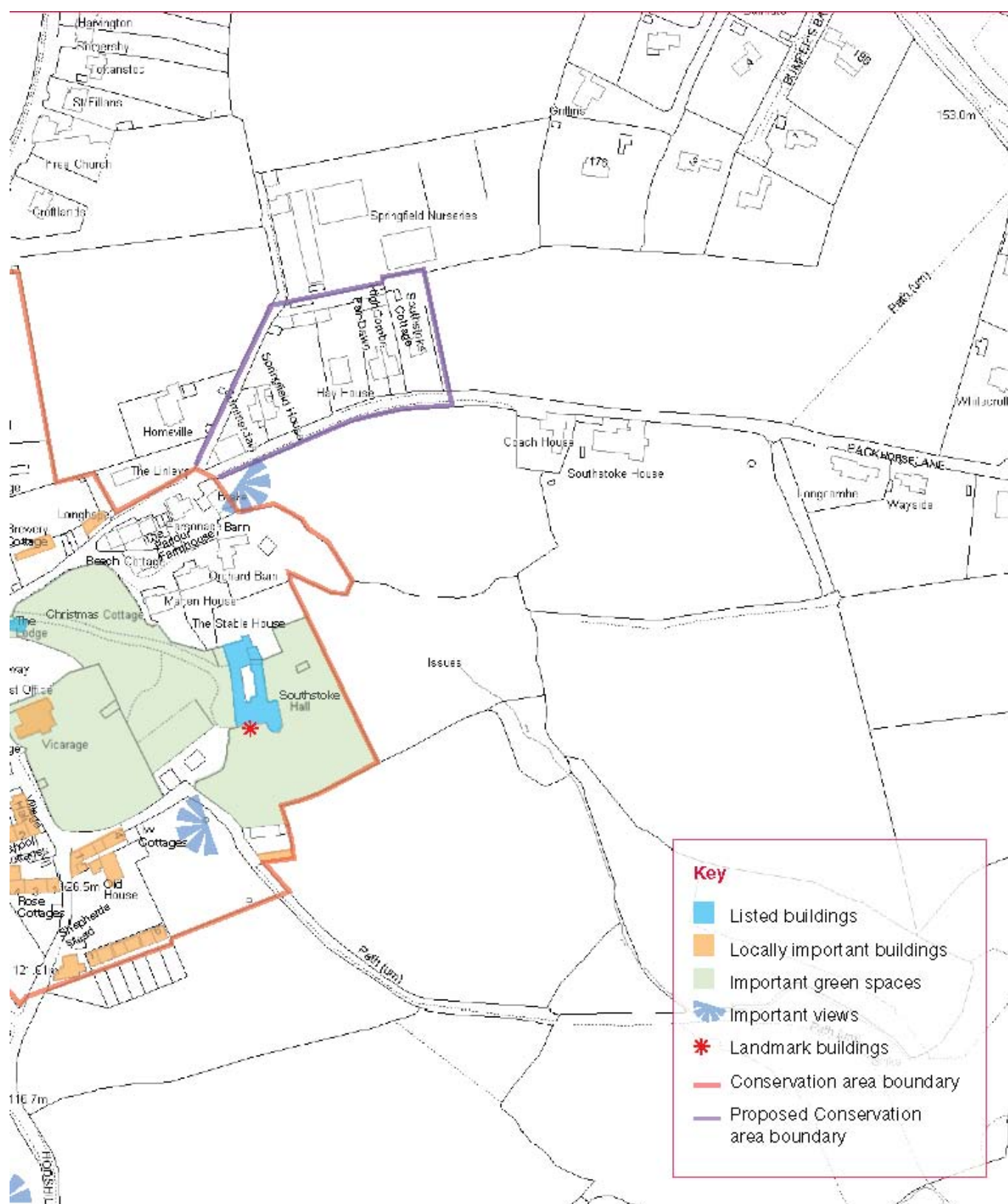
There are also outstanding views to be had looking outwards from just outside the Conservation Area from the Grove Path and from the Millennium Viewpoint to the west.

The principal views into the Conservation Area are to be had from Hodshill where the setting of the compact village and Conservation Area can clearly be seen. This view is important to understanding the setting of the Conservation Area and how it might be compromised by development 'spillage' from Bath. From this position the setting and landscape context of South Stoke and its short distance from Bath can clearly be appreciated as can the importance of maintaining the compact form of the village and its particular and separate historic identity.



South Stoke Conservation Area







The prevalent building style is mainly modest 2-storey cottages interspersed with more substantial, grander buildings which provides for an attractive variation in character

Architectural and Historic Interest

Qualities of the Buildings

The predominant building material is local Oolitic limestone and the architectural style is typical for the region. This could be described as Cotswold vernacular dating generally from the 17th century. There is architectural variety, however, with the presence of some substantial polite classical buildings and Gothic style Regency and Victorian villas. However the predominant style is modest 2-storey cottages.

The use of local limestone rubble in the construction of boundary walls and in many of the buildings is ubiquitous. Much of this is now exposed natural stone, although the earlier buildings would have been either lime washed or lime rendered. The general form of the buildings is low rise with several short terraces that follow the contours on the valley slope.

Roof materials vary with some slate and some local Forest Marble stone tiles that can still be seen on the Manor Farm buildings and the Church of St James. However, the predominant roof material is clay pantiles.

The Conservation Area benefits from a good number of attractive listed buildings including the Manor Farm and farm complex, which has some rare survivals such as the 15th century tithe barn, late 16th century dovecot and early 19th century horse engine house. The farmhouse itself dates from the early 17th century.

The Parish Church of St James the Great, constructed of local limestone, dates from 1160 to 1170 and has an outstanding ornate carved arch over the north door. The church has typically undergone changes throughout its history right up to the mid-Victorian period. There are some outstanding churchyard monuments many of which are listed in their own right. The churchyard is interesting in the way the north and west sides are closely bounded by the backs of some very attractive small cottages called The Grange at the Manor Farm with no back yards, gardens or boundary walls. This results in an unusually domestic sense of enclosure to the church and a feeling of intimacy to a beautiful and atmospheric historic environment.

The Church has a strong visual connection to the Manor Farm and other buildings in this area. Together, they form a very important group occupying a prominent position between the centre and the western edge of the Conservation Area.

The Packhorse Inn has a date of 1674, although it has been suggested that it incorporates an earlier building possibly of mediaeval origin. It is a typical Cotswold style building with attic gables, relieving arches and drip or hood mouldings above the windows. It is a former farmhouse originally named The Breath, although it seems likely that this is a misreading of "Breach" meaning land newly broken up by ploughing. It became a public house in the mid 19th century. This building, along with the Manor Farm and Parish Church, is an important and significant building within the Conservation Area.



A more substantial building to the east is Southstoke Hall constructed in Bath limestone. It was originally a small building dating from medieval times constructed around a courtyard. It was added to in the 17th and 18th Centuries and an ashlar facade was added to the south-facing front of the building in c.1800 at the same time as the east wing was added. It has an interesting building at the entrance named The Lodge dating from the mid 19th century in a Gothic style decorated with idiosyncratic carvings of green men and grotesques.

The Stable House, originally the stables to Southstoke Hall, is an attractive building from the late 18th century.

The Brewery House, which occupies a prominent position within the centre of the village just above the Green, was built for the owner of the former South Stoke Brewery. This is a Regency Gothic Revival villa dating from 1820 to 1830 and has stucco rendered finish and typical crenellated parapet detailing.

The Priory is another significant and prominent building in the middle of the Conservation Area dating from 1850 in a Tudor Gothic style and, although it differs significantly from the small scale local vernacular buildings, it is an impressive building.

Priory Cottage, adjacent to The Priory, is a mid 18th century barn conversion and is more typical of the local vernacular with ovolo mullion windows, timber casements and rendered finish to the walls.

The iconic historic K6 telephone kiosk occupies a prominent central position to the western edge of the Green and constitutes an important element of the historic public realm and street furniture.

The churchyard has many highly interesting, outstanding and unusual monuments one of which is on the B&NES Buildings at Risk Register.





Locally Important Buildings

There appear to be several unlisted buildings dating from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, mostly small cottages built of local limestone, that can be regarded as heritage assets. They make a considerable contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and to local distinctiveness. A good example of this is the group of houses and cottages to the north and north eastern corner including:

- South Knoll
- Hillside Cottage
- Quoin Cottage
- Upper Cottages
- The Old Post Office and Slipway (see Opportunities for Enhancement and Recommended Management Proposals)
- The Old Vicarage
- Brewery Cottage
- Longhope
- Pound Cottage
- Beech Cottage
- Chestnut Cottage
- Barleybrake

To the south there are The Parish Hall and a number of very attractive cottages such as:

- Packhorse Cottage
- Snowdrop Cottage
- Sunny Side
- Rose Cottages
- School House
- Malthouse Cottage
- Ivy Cottages
- Old School House
- Russell Cottages
- Victoria Cottages
- Packhorse Cottages
- Courtmead
- Shepherds Mead

The cottages just to the east of the churchyard, Russell Cottages and Victoria Cottages, form an attractive group and contribute positively to the setting of the Church and Manor Farm.

Within the Manor Farm complex there is an outstanding granary centrally located and a barn or cow shed to the north west corner. These buildings are protected by being within the curtilage of the Manor Farm.

It is clear that the architectural and historic interest in some of these buildings may warrant them being listed as designated heritage assets. They may, therefore, be worthy of further investigation as part of the recommended Management Proposals.



The locally important buildings make a significant and positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area

Trees and Green Spaces

Trees are an important feature of the Conservation Area particularly within the boundaries of the more significant buildings such as the Manor Farm, Southstoke Hall and The Old Vicarage. Species in these areas include mature Cedar and a number of beech trees.

The small gardens in the Conservation Area are mostly attractive cottage style gardens planted with classic varieties and vegetable plots. These gardens are often on an incline framed by ‘cock and hen’ limestone walling, which constitutes an important element of the character of the Conservation Area.

The presence of inappropriate tree species, such as Leylandii, is limited and instead there is an abundance of appropriate deciduous broad leaf trees including many native species.

The Green is centrally located and as such is an important feature. It visually ‘softens’ the hard surfaces that dominate this part of the Conservation Area. The churchyard is another important and attractive green space that also affords outstanding views.

The two footpaths within the Conservation Area to the east and west provide access to important green spaces. The footpath to the east is lined with mature trees, such as substantial chestnuts, and it affords glimpses into attractive formal gardens and hedged fields. The footpath to the west, known as the Grove Path, is bounded by soft verges with a thick tree canopy. It leads to the western extremity of the Conservation Area where there are outstanding views to the south west and into the Cam Brook valley.

The grounds to Southstoke Hall and the Vicarage offer significant and attractive green spaces that make a positive contribution to their settings and to the character of the Conservation Area.

Opportunities for Enhancement

Although the Conservation Area is obviously well cared for there are some opportunities for enhancement and, indeed, the community has already undertaken some important work. For instance the removal of telephone poles and the relocation of cabling underground. This has had an extremely positive impact on the village, particularly in the centre around the Green. Further telephone pole removal is being planned and the Council would greatly encourage this.

To the west of the Green there is a defunct water trough that could be rebuilt using local natural stone. This would provide an attractive central focus. The sound of running water would complement the appearance in an area much used by the community.

The Green itself is an important central feature and focal point much used by the community and visitors although there are some minor improvements that could be made. For instance there has been some planting with domestic plant varieties that detract somewhat from the traditional character of the Green and their removal would improve its appearance.

There are some utilitarian tubular steel handrails, such as those on the Slipway and also on the southern side of the main access to the Packhorse Inn, which could be replaced with a more appropriate design. The frontage to the Packhorse Inn would generally benefit from improvement works in order to enhance the setting of this important building within the Conservation Area.

The Slipway that runs to the eastern edge of the Green is an attractive and interesting historic footway although it has been much neglected in recent times and as such inhibits use by pedestrians. This requires considerable improvement in



Green spaces are an important element of the Conservation Area

order to make it more useable for pedestrians and also to return it to its former and original condition as an important, attractive and useable historic feature. It should be noted that the community has entered into discussions with the Council regarding this matter having identified it is a priority for works of enhancement within the Conservation Area.

Many of the boundary walls have been re-pointed using cement and any future work should be encouraged to use lime mortars to a colour that matches the local limestone.

Boundary walls are traditionally constructed in dry stone style, indicative of the Cotswold region, and any new or replacement walling should be constructed with reference to this vernacular style



Modern development and suburbanisation have had a negative impact on the Conservation Area



There are some opportunities for enhancement

Negative Areas

The modern development at the northwest of the Conservation Area occupies a prominent position and deviates considerably from the style and character of many of the historic buildings in the village. These buildings are of an architectural style that has a negative visual impact on the Conservation Area and adversely affects the setting of adjacent and significant historic buildings such as the church and the eastern part of the Manor Farm. Their open and prominent position exacerbates their negative impact as do the garages built into the bottom of the slope that they occupy.

There are a number of historic buildings, including former agricultural buildings, that have undergone insensitive conversion. The use of inappropriate plastic doors and windows gives them a suburban character, which detracts from the buildings themselves and also from the setting of listed buildings and the conservation area.

General Condition

The condition of the South Stoke Conservation Area is generally excellent and it is obviously a village that is being greatly cared for as a result of considerable local community pride. It has been able to retain its separate and individual identity and rural atmosphere notwithstanding its very close proximity to the outer fringes of Bath. Importantly this has been the case since its beginnings as a settlement approximately 1500 years ago.

Apart from one churchyard monument there are no other buildings at risk within the Conservation Area. Generally the condition of historic buildings, traditional walling and other surfaces and green spaces can be considered to be in excellent condition.

Recommended Management Proposals and Boundary Changes

Change is inevitable in most conservation areas. The challenge is to manage change in ways that maintain and reinforce an area's special qualities. Inappropriate development and increases in traffic on narrow country lanes, for instance, can have a negative impact that needs to be avoided if the character of rural conservation areas is to be maintained.

- The modern development just to the north of the church as discussed above constitutes one of the most significant negative features of the Conservation Area. As such careful management proposals should be put in place to mitigate its impact. However in the long term this may be regarded as an opportunity site for good quality redevelopment
- The utilitarian tubular steel handrails in evidence throughout the village should be removed and replaced in a more appropriate style. Indeed there are existing historic examples which could provide a pattern



The front of the Packhorse Inn

- The Slipway historic footway requires considerable improvement and following investigations and research this should be restored to its original condition using local craftsmanship and locally sourced materials. It is noted that there

is considerable community support for such a scheme and indeed preliminary proposals have already been put forward



Ivy Cottages form an attractive terrace of locally important buildings that have undergone insensitive alterations that have had a negative impact on their appearance such as inappropriate modern replacement doors and windows. The door on the right of the photographs is the original door.

- The use of modern materials such as cement should be discouraged when considering repairs to historic buildings and boundary walls. Where cement has been used in the past owners should be encouraged, when appropriate, to replace this with lime based mortars
- There are some historic buildings that have been fitted with inappropriate plastic windows at odds with their traditional style and construction. This has a detrimental affect on the buildings, on the setting of listed buildings and on the conservation area as a whole. Owners should therefore be encouraged to reinstate traditional timber windows. Such improvements will have significant benefits not least in terms of sustainability.

For instance, the owners of Ivy Cottages should be encouraged,

when replacing doors and windows, to use appropriate design and materials in order to reinstate the original appearance of what should be a unified terrace.

Where there are surviving original doors such as the right hand door in the image (left) these should be replicated and their removal discouraged. This attractive terrace could be further improved, for instance by replacing the hard standing to the front with a more appropriate surface treatment

- There are some unlisted historic buildings that should be considered for statutory listing
- The community has instigated and undertaken the removal of telephone poles and overhead cables. This has had a significantly positive impact on the character of the Conservation Area and, therefore, the removal of the remaining poles should be greatly encouraged
- The Green has been planted with some inappropriate domestic garden varieties which detract from its central community and civic function. The removal of these species would improve the appearance of this important green space making it more appropriately open and accessible as a community meeting place and leisure area
- The defunct village water trough to the west of the Green should be reinstated using local craftsmanship and locally sourced materials
- Any future boundary treatments should consider the local Cotswold vernacular style of dry stone walling with cock and hen capping

- An Article 4 Direction could be implemented to safeguard the traditional style of the doors and fenestration of the unlisted buildings
- The setting of the village and its Conservation Area is an intrinsic and highly important element of its character and the visual envelope that it is contained within should be preserved
- The churchyard of St James Church has a chest tomb that is on BaNES Building at Risk Register (BARs) and would benefit from some careful and sensitive conservation

2011 Conservation Area Boundary Changes

Reassessment of conservation area boundaries is one of the purposes of an appraisal and, following a review, the boundary has been amended to include:

- The area to the northwest to include the entire estate and parkland of Brantwood House, which is a significant historic building in the spirit of the Arts and Crafts and of a Jacobean style utilising local materials and architectural detailing. It is set within substantial and attractive grounds and ornate gardens which contain some significant tree species including a mature Cedar. When viewed from the south at Hodshill it is apparent that Brantwood is part of the village and makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area
- To the north east along Packhorse Lane there is a group of substantial late Victorian and Edwardian villas.



Brantwood

They were associated with the former Clifford's Nurseries, and they now form an attractive group of historic buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Furthermore this site from where the former nurseries operated contributed to the social, economic and cultural life of the village and can be regarded as a significant aspect of its later historic development.

Community Involvement

Public support and involvement is essential to the successful management of conservation areas. Accordingly, this appraisal has been prepared with the kind assistance of individual members of the Parish Council who have provided invaluable assistance and advice. In addition, the first draft of the document was sent to the South Stoke Parish Council for consideration and comment.

Planning Policy Context

Conservation Areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which places a statutory duty on local planning authorities to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest.

A conservation area is defined as:

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

The quality and interest of the area as a whole, rather than individual buildings, is the main consideration when designating such areas.

Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of most buildings and tree felling/surgery. The scale of extensions that may be added to existing dwellings as "permitted development" is also limited.

While there may be resource implications from higher expectations for the maintenance of existing buildings and the quality of new works, for most owners these are outweighed by the cachet of designation.

Designation also provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

Section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and an appraisal provides the means for this.

Section 72 requires that, in considering applications for development in a Conservation Area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of that area.

Conservation Area appraisals are considered by English Heritage to be vital to the conservation of these special areas. The content of this statement is based on the suggested approach set out by English Heritage.

South Stoke is a rural settlement located within the statutory Green Belt where the policy towards significant levels of new development is normally restrictive. This purpose of the Green Belt is clearly of the utmost importance to the integrity of the South Stoke Conservation Area.

Furthermore South Stoke is situated within the Cotswolds AONB where the significant controls and policy designations of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan apply to planning control in the Conservation Area.

The location of South Stoke within the setting of the Bath World Heritage Site is also a contributory factor in the need to preserve and enhance the area. The UNESCO Report on the management of the Bath World Heritage Site recognises the need, in paragraph 7 of its decision paper, *'to enhance the protection of the surrounding landscape of the (World Heritage Site) to prevent any future developments which could have adverse and cumulative impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site'*.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for sustainable development, which includes the conservation of the historic environment. When developments are proposed, the Framework requires the significance of heritage assets – archaeology, listed buildings and conservation areas – to be defined and it stresses that *'as heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.'*

The NPPF is further explained in the

National Planning Practice Guidance. Chapter 18 provides answers to a series of questions about the way in which heritage assets should be addressed through the planning system.

The Council's policy for planning, including the historic environment, is currently under review. Until the Core Strategy and subsequent local planning policies are adopted, the current policies, saved from the *Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan*, remain part of the Development Plan

Further information on the current Development Plan for Bath & North East Somerset can be viewed on the Council's website by following the link to the Planning Policy homepage or by contacting the Planning Policy Team on 01225 477548.



General Guidance and Policy

- *The National Planning Policy Framework*, DCLG 2012
- *The National Planning Practice*

Guidance, DCLG 2014

- Saved policies from the *Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan 2007*
- *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*, English Heritage (2011)
- *Conservation Principles: Policies & Guidance*, English Heritage 2008
- *Bath & North East Somerset, Living in a Conservation Area*, 2003
- *Bath & North East Somerset Streetscape Manual*, (Adopted April 2005)
- *Archaeology in Bath and North East Somerset: Supplementary Planning Guidance 2004*
- *Rural Landscapes of Bath and North East Somerset: A Landscape Character Assessment*, Adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance 2003
- *Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation Methodology*, Chapman, 1997
- *Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2008-2013)*
- "Analysis of Conservation Potential" – the original Wansdyke Council map defining the existing Conservation Area as designated in 1982
- *The 1984 revision to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest*
- *Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan 2007* as revised
- *Bath World Heritage Site Setting Study: Information Paper 2009*
- *Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation (1995)*

Further Reading

- *The Book of South Stoke with Midford: The History of a Parish*, ed Robert Parfitt (2001)
- *Rural Landscapes of Bath and North East Somerset: A Landscape Character Assessment*, Supplementary Planning Guidance, April 2003
- *The Archaeology of Avon: A Review from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages*, ed Michael Aston and Rob Iles, Avon County Council
- *Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol*, Nikolaus Pevsner, (1958)

Glossary

Listed Buildings: Buildings on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Conservation Areas: Defined by the 1990 Act as ‘*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*’.

Article 4 Direction: A direction under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 – as amended. Article 4 Directions remove specified permitted development rights and can be made to cover parts of a Conservation Area where there is a clear and immediate threat to the amenity of the area

Historic Environment Record (HER): This is a database of heritage assets and archaeology maintained and administered by B&NES Council. The information is primarily used as a planning tool for desk top assessments for the historical and archaeological significance of sites

Tree Preservation Order (TPO): An order made by a Local Planning Authority in respect of trees or woodlands to prohibit works to trees without consent (part VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999)

Contact Details

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Further contact details can be found on B&NES Council’s website:
www.bathnes.gov.uk

Contact for advice regarding:

- Listed Buildings and Listed Building Consent
- Archaeology
- Conservation Areas
- Works to trees within Conservation Areas
- Planning Permission
- Planning Policy
- Urban Design

All the above teams are located in Planning & Transport Development based at offices in Bath.

This document about the South Stoke Conservation Area can be made available in a range of community languages, large print, Braille, on tape, electronic and accessible formats from Planning Services on 01225 394100

Prepared by Bath & North East Somerset Council Planning Services.