

WISWELL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



This document has been written and produced by The Conservation Studio, 1 Querns Lane,
Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1RL **Final revision 25.10.05/photos added 20.12.06**

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WISWELL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Introduction

Purpose of the appraisal

This appraisal seeks to record and analyse the various features that give the Wiswell Conservation Area its special architectural and historic interest. The area's buildings and spaces are noted and described, and marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map along with significant trees, surviving historic paving, and important views into and out of the conservation area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by the legislation.

This appraisal builds upon national policy, as set out in PPG15, and local policy, as set out in the Local Plan 1998, and provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Wiswell Conservation Area can be assessed.



Vicarage Fold

Summary of special interest

The Wiswell Conservation Area was designated on 11 September 1972. The special interest that justifies the designation of the Wiswell Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Its rural setting with green fields and woodland that come right into the heart of the village;
- Its many brooks and bankside woods;
- The sunken lanes that thread the village, passing between stone walls, or banks and field hedges;
- The numerous 19th-century farm buildings as evidence of the agrarian history of the village;
- The historic interest of the village plan, with its 'folds' or rectangular enclosures lined with rows of cottages;

- Its buildings (listed and unlisted) of character and architectural interest;
- The homogeneity of the built environment, deriving from the use of locally quarried sandstone for the majority of the houses and their boundary walls;
- Its tranquillity and biodiversity.

The planning policy context

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. 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*”. It is the quality and interest of an *area*, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are designated as conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) – Planning and the Historic Environment. The layout and content follows guidance produced by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the English Historic Towns Forum.



Sunken lanes are characteristic of the village

Local planning policy

Local planning policies for the preservation of scheduled monuments and conservation of historic parks and gardens, listed buildings and conservation areas are set out in the Ribble Valley Local Plan which was adopted in June 1998 (Policies ENV14, ENV15, ENV16, ENV17, ENV18, ENV19, ENV20, ENV21) and the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016 which was adopted on 31st March 2005 (Policies 20 and 21, supported by draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) entitled ‘Landscape and Heritage’).

Location and setting

Location and context

Wiswell is located in the parish of Whalley, some 2km north east of Whalley itself and 5km south of Clitheroe. It lies very close to both the A59 and the A671, but is protected from the sight and sound of traffic by road cuttings, trees and the sheltering effect of the sunken lanes that characterise this village. The tranquillity of the village is increased by the lack of through traffic. The roads that pass through Wiswell lead only to Pendleton, Whalley and Barrow, all of which are more readily accessible from the A59, so the traffic entering the village is local and light.



Chapel Fold, views to open countryside

General character and plan form

Underlying Wiswell's complex network of alleys and lanes is a simple linear village, with properties fronting onto the western side of the Pendleton Road. Large square-shaped plots run back to Old Back Lane. Their shape suggests that they might once have been farmsteads grouped around a courtyard, or even animal enclosures, as the name 'fold' suggests. Three of these large plots can be discerned, bisected by Vicarage Fold and Chapel Fold but only the Vicarage Farm and Vicarage House plot retains its agricultural form, the other two having been built over with rows of simple two-storey stone buildings in the 19th century. From these three core plots, the village extended south westwards and north eastwards in the 19th century, with some larger detached houses at the extremities of the conservation area.

The steepness of the slopes on the eastward side of the Pendleton Road, and the existence of numerous springs on these slopes, has restricted development along this side of the main village street, which has far fewer dwellings than the westward side.

There has been a considerable amount of infill and expansion in the last fifty years, with around half of all the houses in the conservation area and more than half of the plots consisting of recently converted barns or newly constructed houses. Nevertheless, the historic appearance of the centre of the conservation area has been successfully maintained through careful positioning of these houses and screening by hedges and trees.



The medieval Wiswell Shay Cross

Landscape setting

Topography, geology, relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings

Wiswell is located on alluvial clay but with durable building stone available in abundance in the near vicinity. There are extensive quarries at Wiswell Moor, for example, a short distance to the south east of the conservation area.

The village is set amongst a patchwork of small woods, walled fields and riverside hay meadows, with an agrarian economy that was historically based on sheep and dairy farming and that today includes a riding school and livery stables.

Historic development and archaeology

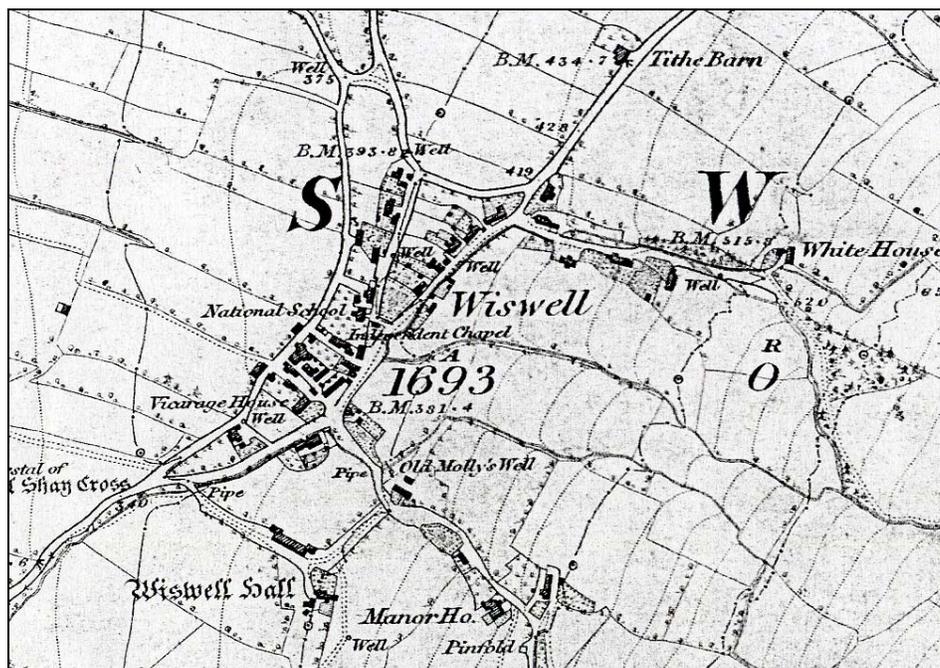
Origins and historic development

Wiswell is recorded in 13th-century charters as Wisewell (1207) and Wysewale (1292), all of which mean the Wise, Wyse or Wissey spring or brook. There are scores of springs and brooks within the village that could justify this name.

The Victoria County History (VCH) gives a detailed account of all the many landowners who possessed and bequeathed land holdings in Wiswell from the period 1207 to the 19th century, including the Abbot of Whalley. The only medieval monument in Wiswell is the Wiswell Shay Cross, which lies at the southwestern tip of the conservation area, and consists of a simple rectangular chamfered sandstone pedestal and a 19th century cross shaft and head.

By 1709 the Shireburne family had acquired most of the land and were established as lords of the manor. Large areas of land described as 'waste' was enclosed in 1790. Wiswell Hall, the manor house, stood to the south of the village and was demolished in 1895, having by then been derelict for many years.

The number of recusants recorded in Wiswell in the period 1626 to 1717 suggests that the village then had many Roman Catholics among the population. The Congregational Chapel was built in 1831, but closed in 1879, when the chapel was sold and converted to a dwelling (now No. 6 Chapel Fold). Wiswell School (built in 1835) hosted Church of England services from the 1870s.



O.S. 1848

Spatial analysis

Key views and vistas

Wiswell sits on the lower south-western slopes of Pendleton Moor, which is itself the south-western continuation of Pendle Hill. Parts of Wiswell – mainly Old Back Lane – overlook the Ribble and Hodder Valleys with views of the eastern scarp of Longridge Fell in the distance, and Great Mitton church tower at the foot of the Fell.

Apart from these distant views most of Wiswell is focussed in upon itself, with houses hidden behind high walls and hedges that help to heighten the sense of enclosure created by the sunken nature of Wiswell's lanes.



Walls, paddocks, springs and troughs are a feature of the village

The character of spaces within the area

On the eastern side of Pendleton Road the ground rises steeply up to Wiswell Moor and the stone walls that divide the lower slopes into paddocks all have ditches and brooks running alongside them, carrying water from the numerous springs along the 100m spring line above the village. These brooks are a very attractive feature of the village. Most of them have cut channels of 1 metre or so deep through the deep alluvial clay and hillwash surrounding the village top create deep streams whose banks support deciduous woodland, including wild daffodils, wild garlic and moss. The banks have been further enhanced (for example along Moorside Lane) by plantings of lonicera, clipped to form a low hedge, and cultivated daffodils.

On the corner of Moor Lane, a small Coronation Garden was created in June 1953, and this continues to be maintained, with benches and low maintenance plants and shrubs.

Along Old Back Lane, fields come right up to the conservation area boundary, bordered by post and rail fences, hedges and stone walls, bringing the countryside into the heart of the village.

Definition of the special interest of the conservation area

Activities/uses

Wiswell is primarily a residential village with one pub, The Freemasons, and a garage undertaking car repairs and servicing. Just outside the conservation area are working farms, a caravan and camping site and a riding stables.

Plan form and building types

Wiswell consists largely of farm buildings (now all converted to dwellings) with arched cart entrances, rows of simple two-storey cottages, and a few larger detached houses, most of which lie towards the extremities of the conservation area. In addition there is a former school, a former chapel and a public house.



Vicarage Farm cart entrance with corbeled lintel

Architectural qualities

The most architecturally significant buildings in Wiswell are all listed, and these are described in more detail in the next section.

The unlisted buildings are typical of the region, being constructed of gritstone rubble under roofs of Welsh slate. Window and door dressings are of simple unadorned sandstone slabs. Several buildings are rendered, or have projecting window and door surrounds, suggesting that they might once have been rendered. Others are slobbered, with a thin render coat that leaves the faces of some of the more prominent building stones exposed.

The agricultural buildings are usually distinguished by the presence of a projecting cart entrance with flat lintel supported on side walls (Vicarage Farm) or a segmental arch.

Listed buildings

Altogether, three structures within the Wiswell conservation area are listed. They include the medieval cross base (see 'Origins and historical development' above) and the following three houses:

- **Vicarage House:** Grade I, early 17th, a lobby-entry plan house of sandstone rubble under sandstone flag roof, with coped gables and ball finials, hollow-chamfered mullioned windows and hoods, and panelled rooms downstairs dating from the 17th but incorporating some early 16th work, possibly imported from another building.
- **Vicarage Farm, approx 50 m north west of Vicarage House:** Grade II converted 19th-century barn of rubble under slate, with a large projecting cart entrance with a timber lintel supported on big stone brackets.
- **Nos 17 and 19 Back Lane (Crabtree Cottages):** Grade II, late 17th, rendered and painted walls under a slate roof, of two storeys with four bays, the fourth bay having been a stable, with two-light mullioned windows, some being modern copies, with internal timber framed walls.



No. 19 Pendleton Road

Buildings of Townscape Merit

The Townscape Appraisal Map for the Wiswell Conservation Area identifies a number of *unlisted* buildings that have been judged as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, known as Buildings of Townscape Merit.

This follows advice provided in English Heritage guidance on conservation area character appraisals, and within Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15), both of which stress the importance of identifying and protecting such buildings.

Most of these buildings are 19th century cottages and houses, but they make an important contribution to the architectural character of the conservation area by virtue of their scale, style and materials:

- **Nos 4 to 10, Pendleton Road:** 19th-century cottages built of rubble under sandstone flags, with sandstone door and window surrounds.
- **No. 14 Pendleton Road:** 19th-century cottage of slobbered and painted rubble under slate with sandstone door and window surrounds (painted black), 4 by 4 sash windows and stone steps to the front door.
- **No 30 Pendleton Road (Prospect House):** Dated RW 1840, rubble under sandstone flags with sandstone door and window surrounds and a canopied front door.
- **No 36 Pendleton Road:** 19th-century cottage of rubble under slate.
- **Greenbanks Barn:** 19th-century rubble barn with slate roof, converted to a dwelling.
- **Nos 1 to 9 Pendleton Road:** row of 19th-century rubble cottages under slate roofs, with sandstone door surrounds, window cills and lintels, and stone gutter brackets.
- **No. 11 Pendleton Road (Rosehill):** mid-19th century house of rubble under slate, set on a bank approached by stone steps, 2 by 2 sash windows with hoods, projecting quoins, gutter brackets, coped gables ending in brackets.
- **Nos 15 and 17 Pendleton Road:** pebble dashed rubble under slate, with sandstone door and window dressings., and one 4 by 4 sash.
- **17b Pendleton Road (The Old School):** built in 1835, of squared coursed sandstone under slate, gutter brackets, coped gables ending in brackets, large porch with ball finial and coped gables ending in brackets; village war memorial set into the east-facing gable wall, an Arts and Crafts plaque inscribed with Celtic crosses picked out in gold and the names of the old boys of Wiswell School who fell in the two World Wars, in well-carved letters picked out in black.
- **No. 19 Pendleton Road:** dated 1876, a handsome detached villa set on a bank, front elevation of squared rusticated sandstone under slate, three bays, with a tall central door and rectangular overdoor light, coped gables with brackets and ball finials, projecting quoins, sandstone door and window surrounds, the door and window lintels having a slight curve and chamfer, the door having moulded canopy on brackets with the datestone above, original panelled door and 2 by 2 sash windows; rear elevations of rubble with 2 by 2 sash windows and hoods, and a 'Gothic' rear door with a pointed arch and spandrels.
- **Nos 23 and 25 Pendleton Road:** pair of 19th-century rubble cottages under slate.
- **No 27 Pendleton Road:** 19th-century rubble barn under slate converted to a dwelling.
- **No 31 Pendleton Road (Ivy Cottage):** large detached late 19th-century house with some hooded 4 by 4 sash windows, projecting quoins and blocking to some windows, stone gutters. There is a porch with coped gables and ball finial on the north-eastern elevation and above it, in the gable, is a datestone inscribed 'FS 1854 Ivy Bank', with an armorial shield carved with a blackbird holding an ivy leaf in its beak.
- **3 Back Lane:** 19th-century rubble cottage under slate with sandstone cills, lintels and door surrounds.
- **1 Back Lane:** has a datestone inscribed 'Stocks Hill Farmhouse MW 1850', coursed rubble under slate, with stone gutters and coped gables with brackets and

ball finials, neo-Tudor doors and windows, the front (south-facing) elevation having tall two-light mullioned windows with ovolo mouldings and hoods, while the door has a flat arch and hood; the front door and most windows are original.

- **Nos 2 to 8 Chapel Fold:** a row of rubble cottages under slate, built in 1831: No. 6 was purpose built as a Congregational Chapel (converted to a dwelling in 1879) and has a round-headed window first-storey window, as do its neighbours, Nos 4 and 8, but the latter look like more recent insertions copying No. 6; No 8 is slightly grander, with gutter brackets and ball finials on its gables.
- **Freemasons pub, Vicarage Fold:** 19th-century public house, of rendered rubble under a slate roof, with simple sandstone window and door dressings and a original moulded timber door canopy.
- **Nos 2 to 6 Vicarage Fold:** late 19th-century row of cottages of squared rusticated sandstone under slate, with chamfered door and window lintels, gutter brackets, stone doorsteps and sandstone flag paving.
- **10 to 14 Old Back Lane:** 19th-century cottages of rubble under slate with simple sandstone door and windows surrounds and stone gutters.
- **Arnside House, Old Back Lane:** 19th-century barn of coursed rubble under slate with a blocked owl hole.



Pendleton Road, spring-fed horse troughs

Local details

- **Boundary walls:** Some of the boundary walls look as if they might be older than the properties that they surround, having the character of field walls (loosely mortared randomly laid rubble with roughly shaped semicircular copings) enclosing paddocks that have subsequently been developed. This is true particularly of Old Back Lane, where most of the houses are modern. Finer walls, of coursed and mortared rubble with semicircular copings, line the eastern side of Pendleton Road and the southern end of Old Back Lane.
- **Troughs:** Wiswell has three troughs: one in Moor Lane and the other two set into the wall that runs along the eastern side of Pendleton Road. All are of stone and two are fed by running water draining off the nearby fields. The northernmost of the troughs on Pendleton Road is dry but could be restored; the southernmost is used as a drinking trough by horses from the riding stables at Wiswell Hall Farm.

- **Historic paving:** there are small areas of cobbled paving in front 14 Pendleton Road and the southernmost of the two water troughs, and in front of Nos 2 to 6 Vicarage Fold. A semicircle of modern cobbles has been laid in front of the war memorial on Pendleton Road, following a recommendation contained in the 1976 Conservation Area Appraisal.

Green spaces, trees and other natural elements

Prominent trees and tree groups are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map. Lack of a specific reference on the map does not imply that a tree or group is not of value. Trees make an important contribution to the Wiswell conservation area by screening modern development and by enhancing brookside banks along the roads leading into and out of the village and along Moor Lane and Moorside Lane

Wiswell has large numbers of house martins that nest under the eaves of converted barns and feed over the river and bankside meadows.



Village war memorial in gable wall of No. 17b Pendleton Road (The Old School)

Issues

This section provides a summary of the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) identified during the appraisal process.

Strengths

The most important *positive* features of the Wiswell Conservation Area are:

- the historic character of the village, which largely preserves its mid-19th century appearance;
- improvements within the village that have taken place since the conservation area was first designated, such as the demolition of concrete and asbestos-or metal-roofed garages and the removal of barbed wire fences at Clegg House Farm, now the site of two modern detached properties (Oakworth and Eastwood House), the introduction of a cobbled surface to enhance the area beside the war memorial and the removal of overhead electricity and telephone wires;
- some examples of sensitive modernisation or conservation of historic properties (No 14 Old Back Lane, No. 19 Pendleton Road, No 1 Back Lane, Greenbanks Barn);
- well kept houses and gardens, and neatly trimmed hedges;
- local amenities, including the public house and bus service, a public telephone box (red K9 variety, alongside Wiswell Coronation Garden), letter box (E II R set in the boundary wall on the southern side of Vicarage House), and a parish notice board with information about the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Light Clough (on the eastern edge of the village);
- evidence of community action to enhance the village in the form of the Coronation Garden and the bulb and flower plantings along verges and brookside banks;
- the use of the meadows and paddocks for grazing, which preserves the biodiversity.



No. 17b Pendleton Road (The Old School)

Weaknesses

The principal *negative* features of the Wiswell Conservation Area are:

- the over modernisation of many of the cottages and barns, almost all of which have received new windows and doors within the last two decades, most of them of uPVC or treated timber, often substituting large single-paned windows for traditional multi-paned casements or sashes (for example on the front elevation of Ivy House, No. 31 Pendleton Road);
- the use of concrete lintels instead of sandstone in some barn conversions, accompanied by harsh and dominantly coloured treated-timber windows with leaded lights (No 27 Pendleton Road, Nos 22 and 24 Old Back Lane);
- intrusive roof lights or poorly designed and overlarge dormers breaking up the homogeneity of the slate roofs (for example at The Old School and at Vicarage Farm)
- one example (at No 19 Pendleton Road) of large and visually dominant solar heating panels on the front roof pitch;
- overcleaning of the stone and repointing with thick bands of ribbon pointing (for example on the front elevation of Ivy House, No. 31 Pendleton Road, and the side elevations of Stocks Hill Farmhouse, No 1 Back Lane), sometimes coloured pink or brick red (No 27 Pendleton Road, for example), standing out from the face of the stone instead of being recessed, so that the mortar is the visually dominant element rather than the stone;
- the intrusion of large garages into the streetscape, often dominating the small cottages alongside which they stand (for example, the prominently sited garages at No. 14 and No. 17 Pendleton Road, between Nos 9 and 11 Pendleton Road, beside Greenbanks Barn and alongside Nos 16 to 24 Old Back Lane);
- some examples of prominently sited and characterless modern design that are not in keeping with traditional styles or materials (No 2 Pendleton Road, for example, which is the first house the visitor sees on entering the village from the south, No 29 Pendleton Road and Nos 18 and 20 Old Back Lane);
- some examples of extended and rebuilt structures that are too large or dominant for their site (for example, Rose Cottage, on Moor Lane, which is no longer a cottage and whose bulk needs screening because of the way that it intrudes into the green fields and woodland of the eastern side of the conservation area);
- there is no car park in the village, which means that the area around the Coronation Garden and parts of Old Back Lane can be congested with parked cars in the evenings and weekends.

Opportunities

- Some of the modernisation work that has taken place in the village is reversible, and applicants to undertake work in the conservation area in the future can be encouraged to use traditional materials and styles for doors, windows and boundary walls; some key buildings can be singled out for enhancement, should an

opportunity occur, notably the Old School House, a historic building that is a key component of the conservation area.

- Some of the road signs in the village are of modern metal design and are visually intrusive. Consideration should be given to replacing these signs with finger posts of more traditional design (for guidance on this, see the joint Department of Transport and English Heritage leaflet, *Traditional Direction Signs*). The village also has some older style street names signs (Back Lane, Cunliffe Lane, Chapel Fold, Moor Lane), which should be maintained and conserved (the Old Back Lane plate, by contrast, is modern and in poor condition).
- Vicarage Fold has a broken and potholed street surface, with some historic paving in front of Nos 2 to 6. Consideration should be given to repairing and maintaining the surface, using traditional materials. Chapel Fold is surfaced with crunchy gravel, which deters users because they feel they are intruding, and this alley could also be enhanced by paving with traditional materials.
- The stone trough in Moor Lane is overgrown and hidden by grass; with maintenance this could be a more attractive feature of the village, but care needs to be taken not to 'tame' the semi-wild appearance of this well, which has liverworts and harts tongue fern growing in and around it.
- The ugly plastic litter bin beside the Coronation garden could be replaced with a less obtrusive version.
- The derelict orchard and woodland on Old Back Lane opposite York House is a wasted asset that could be turned into a community garden.

Threats

- Few buildings in Wiswell yet have intrusive satellite dishes and burglar alarms and care has been taken not to intrude modern reflective materials into the barn conversions, but continued vigilance will be needed to guard against these potential threats;
- Alien garden materials have been introduced into the village scene; they include the larch lap fence at the Old School House, rising behind the stone boundary wall, a similar long fence spoiling the appearance of the fine boundary wall to the garden of 30 Pendleton Road, and the eye-catching yellow-brown timber fencing and chocolate brown conservatory in the garden of Bow Barn, on Old Back Lane;
- Continuing loss of original architectural details and use of inappropriate modern materials or details.

Recommendations

Conservation Area boundary review

A small extension to the Wiswell Conservation Area boundary is recommended and shown on the Townscape Appraisal map, taking in Cross Leys Cottage and Lane End Cottage in Moorside Lane, both of which are 19th-century cottages of rubble under slate with sandstone door and window surrounds and a well-built metre-high boundary wall of squared stone and semi-circular copings with original iron gate and sandstone gate posts, facing a brook that is planted with a mix of wild and garden flowers and lined by a low clipped hedge.



Loss of traditional timber windows to PVC

Article 4 Direction

The incremental loss of original building materials and detailing has already been noted on many of the historic buildings within the Wiswell Conservation Area, particularly the replacement of painted timber windows and doors with uPVC and treated timber alternatives. For family houses, such changes are called “Permitted Development” as set out in Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, and owners do not need permission from the Borough Council. However, these minor alterations can cumulatively have an adverse effect on the conservation area and powers exist to the Council to withdraw some of these permitted development rights (an Article 4 Direction) in the interests of preserving and enhancing the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

It is therefore proposed that permitted development rights are withdrawn for some of the unlisted family dwelling houses in the conservation area that have not already been too adversely affected by unsympathetic alterations, or which form notable groups within the townscape. This will ensure the preservation of unique architectural features and traditional materials by requiring an application for planning permission before carrying out any work.

The buildings which are proposed for inclusion within the Article 4 Direction are:

- Nos 14, 19 and 31 Pendleton Road;
- No 1 Back Lane;
- Nos 2 to 6 Vicarage Fold.

The kinds of work that it is proposed to control include:

- installation of new windows and doors;
- alterations to the roof, including changing the roof materials and installing rooflights;
- building a porch;
- the erection of sheds and other outbuildings;
- creating an access onto the road;
- building a hard standing;
- the erection or alteration of gates, fences or walls;
- painting the exterior of a building.

It is proposed that the restrictions will only relate to development visible from a public highway (this includes a footpath). It will not affect commercial properties or houses that are in use as flats (i.e. in “multiple occupation”), which are already controlled more rigorously as they have far fewer “permitted development” rights than family houses.

Monitoring and review

This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- An evaluation of changes that have taken place in the conservation area, ideally by means of an updated photographic record;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, including opportunities for enhancement;
- A building condition survey;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.

Bibliography

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