

Contents



► The Common, Olveston

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1.1 Using the Parish Design Statement

This Design Statement has been written for:

- **the community**, to encourage interest and involvement in the future development of the Parish, and greater care over building alterations which do not require planning permission
- **planning applicants**, to help ensure development proposals are in keeping with the special character of the Parish
- **the planning authority and the Parish Council**, to inform advice and decisions on planning applications
- **the highways authority**, to encourage a more sensitive approach to highway works

1. The civil parish of Olveston: including Olveston, Tockington, Old Down, Lower Hazel, Ingst and Awkley. The Parish is 1705 hectares (4215 acres) in extent following boundary changes in 1988

2. *Village Design: Making local character count in new development.* Countryside Commission (1996)

2 3. The South Gloucestershire Local Plan was prepared by South Gloucestershire Council and may be viewed at public libraries

This Design Statement has been produced so that those living in Olveston Parish¹ can have their views more clearly heard in the planning process. It describes what makes Olveston Parish distinctive and "special" and sets out guidelines to help ensure that new development and change respects the character of the area and is a positive contribution to the local environment.

The statement will be submitted to South Gloucestershire Council for adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It should be read alongside the South Gloucestershire Local Plan and other Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Only examples considered to reflect good practice are illustrated.

How the Design Statement was produced

The Government encourages local communities to prepare design statements for their area. This Statement was produced following guidance published by the Countryside Commission².

It is the community's document and was prepared in a way that involved as many residents as possible. Following a well attended public meeting in January 2002, a further public meeting confirmed the concept and process; a questionnaire survey to all 743 households in the Parish gathered views - this produced a response of over 30%; and emerging issues were discussed at a Workshop. To keep the work in the public eye and to encourage input, regular progress reports were made in the Parish magazine Meeting Point and a website was created. Finally, all residents were invited to view the draft and add their comments at an exhibition in the Parish Hall in January 2003 - over 200 residents took up the opportunity.



► Public meeting, Olveston Parish Hall

Planning policy for Olveston Parish is set out in the South Gloucestershire Local Plan³. This Design Statement is consistent with the policies in the Local Plan and provides supplementary guidance to reflect the special character of the Parish⁴.

The Parish is located wholly within the Bristol Green Belt⁵, in which new development is generally prohibited. The only exceptions should be for uses deemed suitable in green belts as defined in Government policy, namely: uses to do with agriculture and leisure; "infilling" within existing villages; and the conversion of redundant buildings constructed of traditional materials.

In Olveston and Tockington the older parts of the villages were designated as Conservation Areas in 1975 because of the concentration of buildings of historic and architectural interest. Designation is a recognition of the group value of buildings and their surroundings and the desirability of conserving the character of the area as a whole. Within conservation areas special policies apply and the design of new buildings and alterations to existing buildings must be handled with particular care⁶.

The community has been especially concerned about the nature of infilling in terms of the design of new buildings and their "fit" within the local environment, and that none of the recent developments has addressed the increasing need for lower cost/affordable housing.

Planning context 1.3



► Local Plan

4. In particular, this design statement amplifies policy D1 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan which concerns achieving good quality design in new development

5. The purpose of the Bristol Green Belt is to limit the further extension of the Bristol conurbation and prevent coalescence with neighbouring towns and villages

2.1 Landscape of the Parish



► Sheepcombe Valley



► From Catherine Hill looking towards Ingst and the Severn Bridge

The villages and hamlets within the Parish are set within an attractive landscape. This comprises a landform of visually prominent wooded scarp slopes and mainly pasture ridges on limestone which form a contrast with broad valley forms and extensive levels extending towards the Severn Estuary⁷. Amongst the watercourses flowing through the valley to the Pilning Levels are Olveston Mill Rhine and Tockington Mill Rhine with their tributaries.

One ridge extends to Alveston immediately north of the Parish, through Tockington Hill, Old Down and Stroud Common. The wooded scarp slopes, which include Sheepcombe Brake, The Slad and Little Down Wood, provide part of the setting and backcloth to the hamlet of Old Down and the villages of Olveston and Tockington. Old Down lies on the ridge. Olveston lies between the ridge and the somewhat lower Catherine and Eastcombe Hills. Tockington lies to the south alongside the grounds of Tockington Manor School with its historic garden and arboretum.

Another ridge extends from Rudgey to Almondsbury mostly just outside the Parish. There are areas of woodland on the high ground along the A38 providing a visual foil to the intermittent houses alongside the road.

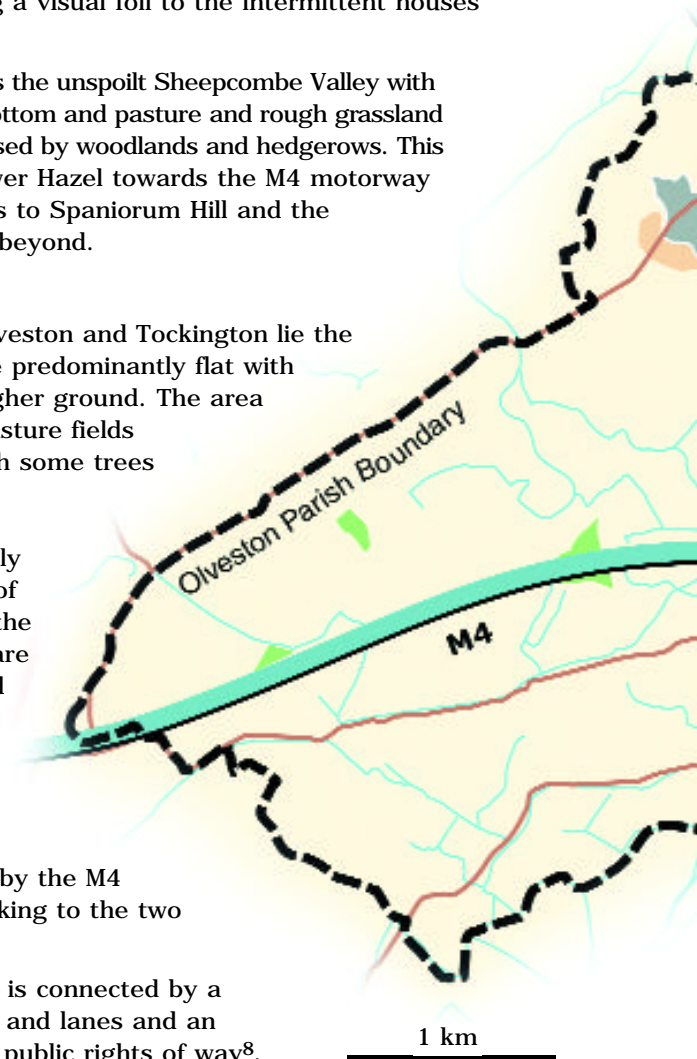
Between these ridges lies the unspoilt Sheepcombe Valley with arable fields along the bottom and pasture and rough grassland on the valley sides enclosed by woodlands and hedgerows. This valley extends from Lower Hazel towards the M4 motorway embankment with views to Spaniorum Hill and the industry at Avonmouth beyond.

To the south west of Olveston and Tockington lie the Pilning Levels which are predominantly flat with a few small areas of higher ground. The area is largely covered by pasture fields bounded by hedges with some trees and small copses.

The field pattern is partly defined by the pattern of rhines flowing towards the Severn Estuary. There are small settlements based around clusters of farmsteads at Ingst and Awkley on locally higher ground.

The Levels are crossed by the M4 and M48 motorways linking to the two Severn bridges.

The whole of the Parish is connected by a network of minor roads and lanes and an intermittent network of public rights of way⁸.



6. Information about the Conservation Areas can be viewed on the South Gloucestershire Council website

7. The landscape character of the Parish is described in the South Gloucestershire Draft Landscape Character Assessment, published by South Gloucestershire Council. It may be viewed at public libraries in South Gloucestershire

The Parish has been inhabited since at least Iron Age times. The Domesday Book records Alvestone (Olveston) and Tockington (Tockington) and 66 inhabitants! In 1711 the two villages and surrounding land had a population of 240. At the 1991 census it stood at 2045.

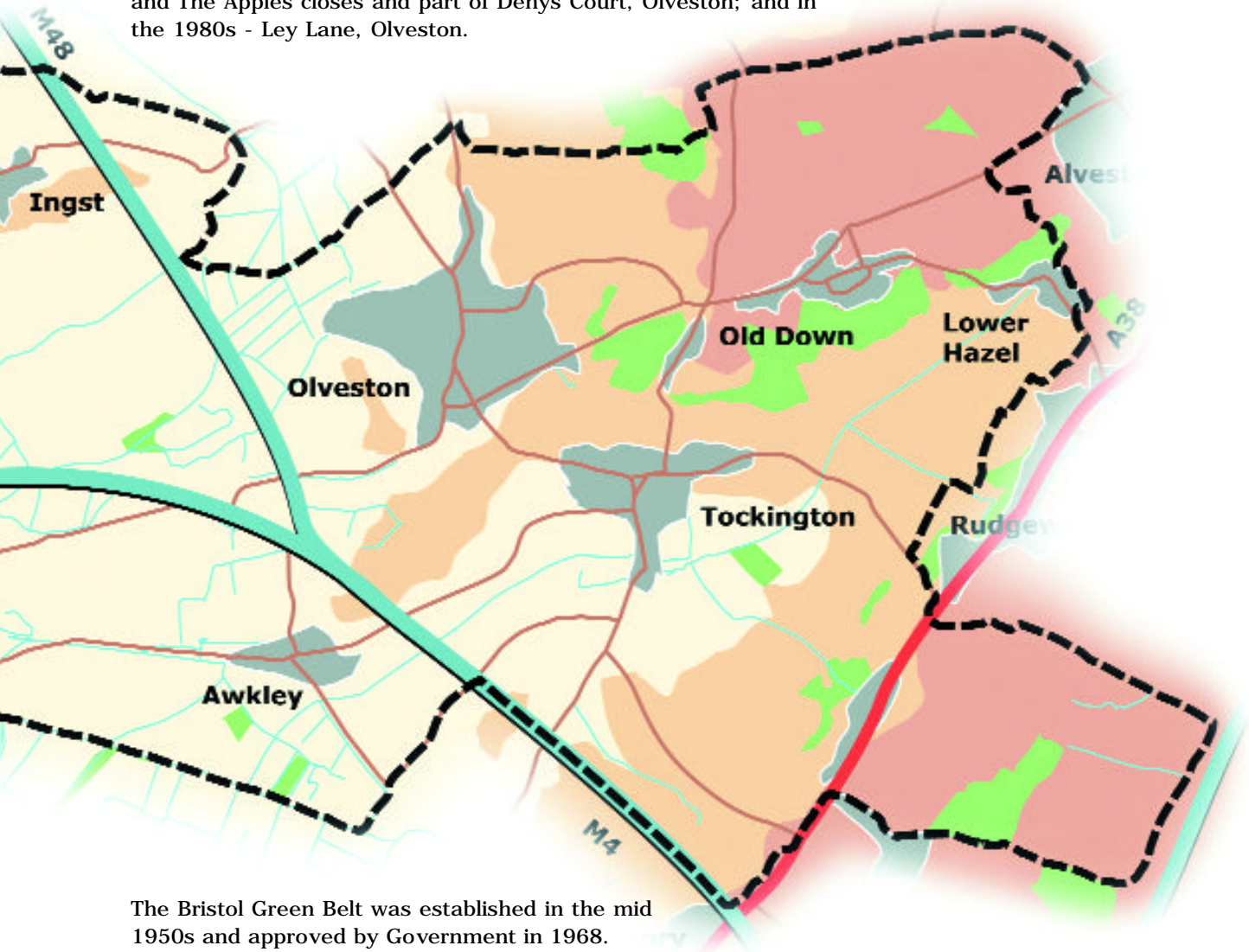
The first areas to be settled were on the land above the Levels above the 50 foot contour where Olveston, Tockington and Ingst stand today. Olveston is the largest village. It has evolved from a linear pattern of development along The Street. In contrast, Tockington is a compact village centred on a small village green. Ingst essentially comprises a group of farms. Old Down is a later settlement developed on higher land cleared from the woodland of the Kingswood Forest and from enclosed common land.

Much of the development in the villages took place between 1700 and 1900. Since then there have been further distinct periods of growth notably in the late 1920s and 1930s - with Council houses; in the early 1950s - with completion of The Crescent, Old Down and Orchard Rise, Olveston; in the 1960s - Manor Park, Tockington and The Apples closes and part of Denys Court, Olveston; and in the 1980s - Ley Lane, Olveston.

History and pattern of development 2.2



► Old Down at the time of the 1844 Enclosures Act



The Bristol Green Belt was established in the mid 1950s and approved by Government in 1968. Subsequent development has been limited largely to infilling.

8. Public rights of way include footpaths open to walkers only and bridleways open to horse-riders, cyclists and walkers. Most rights of way in Olveston Parish are footpaths

2.3 Notable buildings and structures

The Parish is enriched by its legacy of fine older buildings of architectural interest which contribute greatly to the character of the area. Over 50 buildings and structures are recognised as of national significance for their special architectural and historic interest and have been listed⁹. They span at least six centuries. The majority of listed buildings are in Olveston and Tockington but others are at Ingst, Lower Hazel, on Pilning Street and on Fern Hill. A further 34 buildings and structures in the Parish have been recorded by South Gloucestershire Council as of local architectural or historic importance.



► St Mary's Church Olveston and the White Hart Inn

In Tockington, notable buildings include the Swan Inn, Tockington Manor School, Grove House, Ivywell House, Lower Farm and Little Brobury Farmhouse (all listed), the Methodist Chapel (not listed) and houses and cottages around The Green (many listed).

Olveston has a fine Parish church, St Mary's (Grade II*) with its Norman tower. Olveston Court (Grade II*) was formerly a fortified manor house. Associated with it are the Great Barn and the Bee Garden (both Grade II). Near the War Memorial are the former Post Office and the White Hart Inn and adjoining cottages on Church Hill (all listed). Notable listed buildings along The Green and Catherine Hill include Hill House (Grade II*) with its Cider Barn and outbuildings (Grade II), Beechcroft, Little Grange, Osborne House, Green Farm, the Old Meeting House and Port Farm. Elsewhere, there are listed buildings on The Street and New Road including Churchill House, Cromwell House, The Elms and Paddock House; on Haw Lane including Hawleaze, Hawkfield House and Granville Lodge; and on

Vicarage Lane - The Old Vicarage and 1 & 2 Longhaven. Olveston School Hall is on the local list.

Outside these two villages, notable listed buildings include The Down House, Sheepcombe House, Lower Hazel Farm, Valley Farmhouse at Ingst, Lower Woodhouse Farm on Fern Hill and on Pilning Street, Pilning Farm House, Orchard Farmhouse and Ostbridge Manor Farm, reputed to be the oldest residence in the Parish.

Recorded structures of local interest worthy of special care include medieval walls associated with Olveston Court (listed), the traditional K7 telephone box in Tockington, the Victorian letter box in Ingst, the boundary wall and lychgate to the Friends' burial ground in Lower Hazel, the sheepwash on Washingpool Hill road, the village pumps in Olveston and Old Down, an iron kissing gate in Haw Lane, the waggon wash near Lower Hazel on Sheepcombe Farm land, and the ice house near Tockington Manor School.



► Ostbridge Manor Farm on Pilning Street

9. DCMS - the Department of Culture, Media and Sport - is required to list buildings of national significance. There are three categories. The most important are listed Grade I and Grade II*. The remainder are listed as Grade II. There are no Grade I buildings in Olveston Parish. There are three listed as Grade II*

The villages within the Parish have evolved over time to produce the rich and varied character we appreciate today. *It is important to understand the past and what has made our villages special in order to continue the process of harmonious evolution.*

A common character permeates throughout the Parish but subtle variation helps to distinguish each settlement from its neighbour.



► **The Green, Tockington**

Tockington

- Buildings clustered around The Green and the roads that radiate off it, with larger buildings and farmhouses set apart at the edge of the village.
- Medium height stone boundary walls which terminate at or below eye level allied with the surrounding buildings give a sense of enclosure to The Green.
- A degree of Georgian gentrification with elegant facades fronting onto The Green and major routes.
- A wide variety of timber and glass entry porch designs contribute to diversity.
- Occasional brick details frame doors and windows.
- A juxtaposition of individual 'simple' and 'refined' buildings side by side.
- A predominance of two storey buildings occasionally rising to three storey.
- Brick built Manor Park is centred around a separate "new" green.

Olveston

- The commercial, social and ecumenical centre of the Parish that accommodates the majority of shops and businesses.
- High density development gives a dynamism to 'The Street'.
- High boundary walls which terminate above eye level (a lasting legacy of Olveston Court) and buildings which front directly onto the highway give a distinct feeling of enclosure to tightly defined public spaces in the heart of the village.
- Continuous facades characterise the historic areas with minimal plot separation.
- Well framed views within the village and out into the surrounding landscape are widely enjoyed.
- A predominance of two storey buildings rising to three storeys at major junctions.
- 'Simple' and 'refined' buildings in separate groupings.
- Areas of new housing constructed from modern materials form separate centres of identity within the village.



► **The Street, Olveston**

Overview 3.1



► **The Inner Down, Old Down**

Old Down

- All buildings are residential except The Fox inn at the heart of the settlement.
- A 'top of hill' settlement. Low rooflines maintain the expansive skyline.
- Mainly open in character with large spaces between detached houses in large gardens.
- A loose pattern of development with indistinct edges gives rural informality and intrigue to the settlement.
- Informal grass verges and low irregularly capped boundary walls help maintain openness.
- No buildings extend above two storeys. A profusion of bungalows.
- A unique character to the Inner Down as a result of buildings with blank facades facing the highway.
- Nearly all older buildings are 'simple' in character.

3.2 Traditional built form



► Lower Tockington Road, Tockington



► Haw Lane, Olveston

Most of the older buildings are predominantly vernacular or agricultural in nature and traditionally constructed of stone walls under clay tiled roofs. They can be generally divided into two general type forms - 'simple' or 'refined'.

Simple buildings¹⁰

are typically small with low roof lines and irregular plan forms, often sited to maximise the potential of their constrained plot for the production of food. These buildings are unassuming and constructed from randomly coursed local stone often roughcast rendered. Wall openings generally have oak lintels and occasionally brick details with painted casement windows. Boundary walls are constructed from local stone with large irregular capping stones. All materials were locally sourced. Most historic and all agricultural buildings in the Parish could be described as 'simple'.

Refined buildings¹¹

are typically larger, grander, more assertive and set in gardens laid out for pleasure rather than food production. These buildings are formally planned within grounds which usually front directly onto the highway. Exterior treatment is either smooth render or exposed good quality local stone. Wall openings are carefully detailed, often stone or brick dressed, with painted sash windows. Boundary walls are constructed from local stone with carefully articulated 'cock & hen' or dressed stone capping, occasionally topped by decorative iron railings. Imported specialist materials were frequently incorporated.

Site topography, garden shapes and sizes and the proximity to neighbouring properties have helped to give each building and each settlement its own distinctive character. In steeply sloping areas, such as Church Hill, Olveston, buildings jostle for space, while in flatter areas, such as The Street, Olveston, a more harmonious form has resulted from continuous facades and well defined boundary walls. Towards the edge of the villages houses are set further apart within generous grounds, such as on Old Down Hill. Towards the centre houses are often joined together. Being close to relations, school, shops, church and water was essential in the days of foot transport.



► Church Hill, Olveston

10. 'Simple' buildings are frequently vernacular or agricultural in nature

11. 'Refined' buildings may have started life as 'simple' buildings and have been gentrified

To ease construction and minimise the use of expensive materials 'simple' buildings were originally only one room deep with low floor to ceiling heights. As a consequence rooflines are generally low which gives an overall impression that development in the Parish is of a small scale. Only a few buildings, such as Hill House, the White Hart and the Old Vicarage in Olveston; Grove House in Tockington and Old Down House extend above two storeys and form focal points.

Roofs were generally pitched at 45° to maximise the roof space for habitation and covered with overlapping clay pantiles topped by a round tiled ridge running from chimney to chimney. Occasionally, Welsh slate was used on 'refined' buildings with hipped roofs replacing the gable end typical of the area. Doors and windows were symmetrically arranged where possible. Glass was extremely expensive, so window sizes tended to be small.

A significant degree of gentrification took place during the Georgian period with many 'simple' properties 'upgraded' to reflect the style of the day.

The process continues today with properties enlarged or altered in response to current needs and aspirations. The challenge, which this Design Statement addresses, is to enable change but in a way which retains local character.



► Church Hill, Olveston

Prior to the advent of readily available transport, materials were generally sourced locally. Good quality warm-grey limestone quarried in the area formed the basis for most construction. Important buildings incorporated the best dressed stone while cottages and agricultural buildings were constructed from the random leftovers. Frequently, buildings were rendered or lime-washed depending on the quality of the stone and their exposure to the weather. Local timber was used for roof, floor, window, door and lintel construction. Fascias and bargeboards were kept to a minimum. Ground floors and well used external areas were paved with limestone flags.

As mechanised transportation increased, new building materials and techniques were adopted with brick largely replacing stone in the 20th century as the predominant material for new building for reasons of cost, fashion, ease of construction and ready availability.

Looking across the centuries, each development has incorporated the palette of materials, building techniques and styles popular during the period, with properties adapted by successive owners to give the variety we see today.

Traditional materials 3.3



► Lower Tockington Road, Tockington

3.4 Traditional detailing

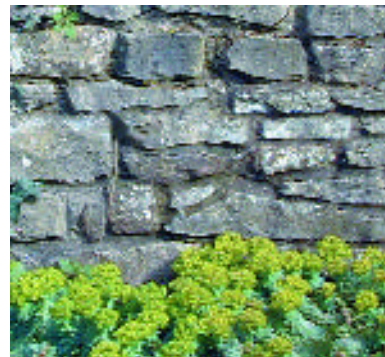
Over the years, building details have evolved which are typical of the older parts of the villages.



Walls - warm-grey limestone, roughly shaped, randomly sized and coursed. Buildings of importance used dressed stone for special details. Domestic buildings were frequently rendered



Wall openings - window and door heads are usually expressed, frequently formed by brick/stone flat arches or oak lintels that occasionally incorporate a characteristic stone drip on older buildings. Reveals are minimal and softly curved with sills incorporated within window frames



Mortar / pointing - soft flexible lime mortar naturally coloured, with grits and fire coke often added to give greater weatherability and brushed back to expose the stone. More recently Portland cement has replaced the lime mortar



Windows - originally small and always subdivided due to the cost and size of glass available. Side hung flush-faced casement windows are typical with sash windows common during the Georgian period on more refined facades. Windows are usually equally subdivided with continuous mullions from sill to head, occasionally with slim transoms between. Each period is typified by the relationship of window to wall with subdivided timber windows greatly contributing to village character

It could be said that details are to buildings as words are to sentences.

Sentences form stories and buildings together make villages. Without their distinctive details our villages would have no identifiable character or language of construction.

Conserving this characteristic juxtaposition of buildings and their surroundings and adding to the richness of our environment is what we seek to achieve.



Guttering - if fitted, was cast iron supported on metal brackets fixed directly to stonework or to fascia boards if present



Roofs - simple gable ended and covered in natural red/orange overlapping clay pantiles, later double Roman - that age to a mellow burnt orange. Dormer windows are not common. Cat-slide roofs (lean-to at a lower roof pitch) were utilised on more rural buildings to increase the ground floor area

Traditional detailing 3.4



Entrance - the method of entry - whether by bridge over a rhine, through a gate, under a plant covered archway or direct to the edge of the pavement - gives each property and adjoining road its character, degree of privacy and charm



Doors - usually unprotected from rain, solid timber panelled or planked and painted. If money allowed, a timber and glass porch was added to provide cover and express the individuality of the owner



Colour - timber was usually painted in soft, natural pigments and was typically white or cream. Ironwork was usually finished in white or black. Render was usually left natural or cream coloured (originally lime washed). Agricultural buildings were left naturally coloured



Chimneys - the ridge line was usually punctuated by simple rectangular stacks in brick or stone topped by clay chimney pots



Ironwork - mostly removed in World War II. Originally, many boundary frontages were designed to incorporate wrought iron railings and gates. The more refined the building the more likely that expensive ironwork was a feature, although even unassuming buildings would often have an iron gate. Ironwork was typically simple in form and in keeping with the style of building



Boundary wall - irregular stone walls form edges to gardens and building boundaries, usually topped by a distinctive 'cock and hen' random stone capping, or occasionally stone copings with wrought iron railings above. The grander the building, the more elaborate the boundary treatment. The walls around St Mary's Church are topped with unusual black slag block copings, a by-product of the 18th century brass industry around Bristol



Roof / wall junctions - typically unadorned with little or no eaves overhang or timber fascia. Usually the roof gable has no bargeboard

4.1 Guidelines for all development

There is no simple formula for good design but if the following guidelines are considered there is an excellent chance that future development will enrich rather than erode the character of the Parish. These guidelines are not intended to be a prescriptive set of rules but rather to stimulate the thought process.



Protect Parish character

4.1.1

Safeguard:

- valued buildings, features and architectural details
- existing stone boundary walls and associated ironwork
- important views from development, especially into and out of the Conservation Areas
- trees of significant value to the environment. Consider Tree Preservation Orders where appropriate

Produce development in keeping with the Parish

4.1.2

Ensure:

- the design process begins with a thorough site appraisal so that the design is appropriate, sensitive to its location and respects its context
- all new boundary walls that face onto public spaces are constructed from natural stone to match the traditional boundaries common in the area
- materials appropriate to the Parish are utilised, normally warm-grey natural limestone or roughcast render for walls and red/orange natural clay tiles for roofs
- workmanship, design and materials are of a quality equal to or better than that typically found in the Parish
- the traditional pattern of settlement, materials, built form and details highlighted in this Design Statement forms the foundation for all development

Avoid:

- reconstituted materials in the older parts of the villages, they seldom sit comfortably within an historic environment
- large bland areas of brickwork
- finishes or materials not common to the area



All development should enrich its context

4.1.3

Promote:

- high quality contemporary architecture incorporating imaginative and original design that may extend and invigorate the special character of the Parish. Utilise an architect¹², designer and builder with a good understanding of the local area to ensure that new building makes a positive contribution to the scene.

12. Refer to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) for advice and a list of registered architects

New development should embrace and integrate the traditions of local building with modern advances in technology to produce architecture that is appropriate for today but respects the past.

Guidelines for new building 4.2

4.2.1 **Maintain and enhance Parish character**

Safeguard:

- the unique character identified for each settlement. Study the form and pattern of surrounding buildings in order to fully understand and appreciate the context prior to the design of any development
- existing boundaries and onsite features



4.2.2 **Design all new buildings to be harmonious with, specific to, and appropriate to their location**

Ensure:

- the density of new development is appropriate to its location, generally with higher density towards the centre of the villages and lower at the edges
- new buildings respect neighbouring roof profiles and reflect any characteristic spacing between or in front of surrounding buildings
- window style and size reflects the character of surrounding buildings and the proportion of window to wall characteristic of the Parish. Top lights should be avoided
- new buildings are appropriate to their location in scale and design. Make each development unique and specific to its site:

Pay particular attention to the pitch of roofs. Around 45° is common within the older parts of the Parish. Generally use gable-ended roofs as opposed to hips

Incorporate chimneystacks to add variety to the skyline

Make details a genuine and intrinsic part of the building structure

Capitalise on the shape of the site and aim to add variety to the existing street scene

Keep ridgelines low, especially within historic environments. Consider lower than standard floor to ceiling heights, sloping ceilings in upper stories or double-ridge construction



Consider:

- innovative new design based on, but not slavish to, the principles of good design set out in this Design Statement
- new construction techniques and materials that can complement the surrounding area

Avoid:

- nation-wide standard house types and "in vogue" styles that are inconsistent with local character
- ill-considered dormer windows and flat roofs or sharp edges on corners and window reveals on rendered properties.

4.3 Guidelines for alterations and extensions

Note that alterations to listed buildings or within the Conversation Areas may require specific approval from South Gloucestershire Council¹³.



Retain and enhance the condition and character of existing valued buildings

4.3.1

Safeguard:

- existing structures by regular maintenance using materials and techniques appropriate to the age of the building. Keep buildings in good general repair
- the stock of historic buildings. Repair and renovate rather than replace or demolish
- the character of the Conversation Areas from continuous erosion from ill-considered small-scale alterations

Encourage development sympathetic to existing buildings

Understand:

- how the building appeared when first built. Remember many alterations may have been made by previous generations
- that opinion varies greatly. There is no *correct* way to alter or extend a building. Successful works are usually based on the knowledge gained from a thorough study and investigation and subsequent understanding of the original building

Ensure:

- alterations and extensions complement the building and its surroundings and respect the inherent form, style, materials and detail of the original property
- extensions do not detract from the original building. Roof lines should step down where possible and facades be set in such a way as to retain the scale and proportion of the existing building. Large scale extensions that overwhelm the character of the existing building should be avoided
- alterations to shopfronts and signs are carefully considered
- any change of use is supported by the local community



4.3.2



Take care with small alterations which can easily disfigure existing buildings

4.3.3

Avoid:

- replacement windows, doors or roof finishes that fundamentally alter the character of the original building, whether old or new
- ill-considered mortar re-pointing that spoils an existing facade
- a proliferation of skylights in converted properties
- conservatories designed or constructed from materials out of keeping with the host building

13. The need for specific approval depends on what is proposed. The advice of South Gloucestershire Council should be sought

The impact of development on Parish character is greatly influenced by the nature of ancillary external works and by the landscape treatment of private open spaces. Private gardens, with their trees, planting and greenery, can make an important contribution to the environment.

Guidelines for external works and private open spaces 4.4

4.4.1 **Design external works and private open spaces with the same care and attention shown to buildings**

Ensure:

- the visual impact of parking areas is minimised through appropriate surfacing, attention to detail and careful location. Utilise new buildings and boundary treatment to prevent cars from dominating the view wherever possible
- satellite dishes and aerials are carefully sited to minimise visual intrusion. Incorporate aerials in roof spaces where possible. Satellite dishes may require specific consent in Conservation Areas
- private external lighting is not intrusive. Minimise light pollution by careful siting and use of shaded lights of minimum power. Be considerate to your neighbours
- trees and shrubs are incorporated and selected with care to soften the impact of new development. Select indigenous plant species that are common to the Parish to enhance the natural environment
- ironwork is preserved and enhanced. Incorporate simple gates and railings where appropriate

Avoid:

- plants that become too large for the space available, especially fast growing alien species such as *Cupressus leylandii*
- the use of concrete as a surface finish



Any development within the Conservation Areas of Olveston and Tockington must be consistent with the policies set out in the South Gloucestershire Council Conservation Area Advice Note¹⁴. The boundaries of the Conservation Areas are due to be reviewed by South Gloucestershire Council. This will provide an opportunity to consider whether there is a case for extending the boundaries to provide added protection for the older parts of the villages.

Guidelines for the Conservation Areas 4.5

4.5.1 **'Development should preserve or enhance existing character'** ¹⁵

Whilst the Conservation Areas within the Parish are, in part, protected by specific regulations, particular care is needed when considering any development proposals. The special character and quality of the Conservation Areas is fragile and could easily be eroded through inappropriate new development and alterations to buildings and boundaries.

Conservation Area consent is usually required for any demolition and for works to trees.



14. The Conservation Area Advice Note is available from South Gloucestershire Council.

15. Extract from the 'Conservation Area Advice Note'

5.1 Open spaces

The extent and variety of greens and open spaces makes a vital contribution to the life and character of the villages.

In Tockington, The Green forms the focal point of village life and a green foil to the predominantly local stone buildings and surrounding walls. The largely uninterrupted open space, punctuated by a couple of shapely trees, makes an attractive

traditional setting for village events. The green space at Manor Park is a model of simple communal open space with its mainly native trees and a surrounding of newer housing.

In Old Down there is much valued green space at The Crescent while the old orchards and paddocks within the hamlet lend a distinctive charm to the surroundings. The pine trees at the top of Old Down Hill are a notable feature.

In Olveston the pond with its ducks alongside Catherine Hill is fed by local springs and bordered by profuse vegetation making a special feature. The open land at Olveston Common forms a setting for houses on the edge of the village. However, Olveston's most distinctive feature is the lack of open space in the centre of the village. Its village green was lost as a result of land enclosure in 1844. The high stone walls, even around the churchyard, give Olveston a unique character.



► Catherine Hill, Olveston

There are a number of dispersed public and private recreational facilities in the Parish. In some cases there is associated car parking as the facilities serve the whole area. Although some of the facilities depend on the Parish Council, voluntary enthusiasm helps to ensure the future of others.



► Queen Alexandra Memorial Pavilion, Old Down

At Tockington facilities include the children's playground and tennis courts adjacent to the Parish Hall, and playing fields at Tockington Manor School set alongside attractive grounds and overlooked by the fine Manor.

At Old Down is the Queen Alexandra Memorial Pavilion and social club with associated football and cricket pitches, bowls club and scout hut and children's playground, each serving the whole Parish and beyond. In Olveston there are children's play facilities in open space near Russet Close and allotments in Elberton Road that are an asset for the whole area.

Care is needed in the planning and maintenance of open spaces and recreation land if the rural character of the villages is to be retained.

5.1.1 Retain rural character of open spaces and recreational land

Safeguard:

- natural features, including ponds and watercourses
- existing trees. Trees need special consideration as they are a vital component of the village scene but have a finite life
- existing recreation areas and share facilities where possible
- grass verges within the villages

Use:

- simple areas of grass and keep existing areas natural
- materials in keeping with their surroundings
- native trees and shrubs¹⁶

Design:

- for ease of future maintenance. Manage open spaces in sympathy with rural character
- to minimise intrusive structures, such as signs, kerbs, advertising and lighting. Locate dog bins and litter bins discreetly
- for the long term. Encourage the development of a Master Plan for tree planting



The Parish is fortunate that much of its attractive setting of farmland, hedgerows, woodland and copses has survived despite increasing economic pressures and Dutch elm disease. There are also registered historic parks and gardens at Down House, Tockington Manor School, Old Down House and Olveston Court.

Most skylines are dominated by deciduous trees and occasional groups of pines that are appreciated from within the villages and from the lanes and public rights of way which interlace the surrounding countryside.

In recent times landowners¹⁷ have been encouraged to supplement traditional farming and woodland management by diversification into provision for leisure and management for conservation. This has been aided by management agreements and grants from public authorities and by voluntary work. Land is also increasingly being given over to horse grazing, bringing with it stables and new fencing which can, without care, have a damaging impact on the landscape.

Landscape and access 5.2



► The Park, Old Down

16. For a local list of native trees and shrubs, refer to The Natural History Museum's Postcode Plant Database, available on the Internet at www.nhm.ac.uk/science/projects/fff

17. The main source of public support to landowners for conserving the countryside is through the England Rural Development Programme administered by Defra - the Department for Food, Farming and Rural Affairs

5.2 Landscape and access

The whole of the Parish lies within the Forest of Avon Community Forest. A number of areas are recognised as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, and Old Down Quarry is managed as a nature reserve. Management agreements include Countryside Stewardship agreements for grassland management at Stroud Common and at Old Down Park on Tockington Hill and to conserve ancient woodland at Sheepcombe Brake. Other countryside initiatives include planting associated with Second Severn Crossing link roads, the work of the Olveston Parish Countryside Group including management of Wildacre Wood on the Pilning Levels, and the development of a management plan for Old Down Woodland at The Slad.

The Old Down Circular Walk forms part of an initiative to encourage informal recreation in the Community Forest. Permissive access to Sheepcombe Brake is of great local value and the toll rides organised by landowners enable local riders to exercise their horses away from traffic.



Encourage landowners to conserve and enhance the countryside

5.2.1

Promote:

- planting of native trees in appropriate verges, hedgerows and more widely to enhance the landscape
- woodland planting, particularly to act as a foil for newer development and motorway structures and to soften views towards Avonmouth
- sympathetic management of the landscape to benefit wildlife, particularly of notified sites
- dialogue between landowners and the Internal Drainage Board to ensure effective land drainage and sensitive management of rhines for wildlife
- careful siting of stables and fencing for equine uses to minimise any adverse impact on the landscape

Enhance opportunities for enjoyment of the countryside

5.2.2

Promote:

- the existing network of public rights of way that link the villages and the surrounding countryside

Encourage:

- improvements to the network of public rights of way for the benefit of the community and landowners¹⁸
- extension of the successful network of toll rides to provide further safe routes for riders
- initiatives to conserve structures of local interest, particularly those recorded as of special interest by South Gloucestershire Council



18. South Gloucestershire Council are required to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This should provide an opportunity to input community and landowner views.

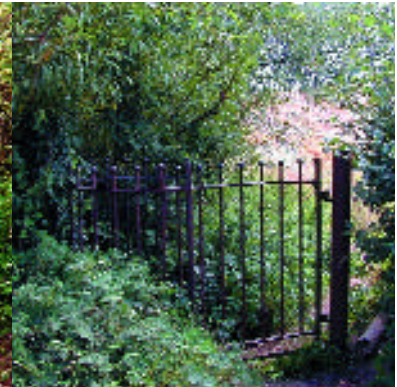
Highways 5.3

The villages have developed around roads, often at important junctions, marked perhaps by a green, like Tockington where markets were held, or an important group of buildings, like the church and pub in Olveston. All these roads, tracks and footpaths were used for the daily business of getting around the villages and to the farms where the majority of people worked. Some were also routes to other places, like that to the Aust Ferry through Tockington and Olveston, and that to Thornbury, the local market town.

All roads were unpaved and changed over the centuries according to their use. The main roads were the first to be widened and, with the village roads, surfaced, adopted by the local authority and maintained at public expense. Others were used only locally and remained narrow, whilst some fell out of use by vehicles, remaining only as footpaths - like that from Tockington over Eastcombe Hill to Olveston and on to Elberton.



► The Snicket, Old Down Hill



► Kissing Gate, Haw Lane, Olveston

Roads today

Modern vehicles move fast and roads are now subject to rules aimed primarily at drivers. Road markings and signs are of specified size, design and distance from junctions, and visibility is improved by the creation of vision splays, by setting back walls and by widening verges.

Narrow roads, of uneven width, with tight corners are an important part of the character of our villages and act as a powerful influence in calming traffic. Generally cars are free to park at the kerb on all roads. In the villages their presence makes drivers slow down. The availability of roadside parking outside shops is important in maintaining their viability. Parking outside Olveston School is a particular problem, with safety implications.

Concern is growing over the increasing speed and number of motor vehicles in both villages and open country and more speed limits are being applied. Variation in speed limits from one road to another causes confusion, and the size, height and number of signs damages the environment.

In residential areas elsewhere, 20mph speed limits are being tried. European examples, described here as Home Zones, restrict through traffic and reduce the width of existing roads. Sometimes all signs and even footpaths are removed to encourage drivers to slow down.



► Upper Tockington Road, Tockington



► Elberton Road, Olveston

5.3 Highways



► Alveston Road, Old Down

Highway Maintenance

Most residents like the rural appearance of roads surfaced with tar spray and chippings, with grass verges between road and footway. However, more regular maintenance is necessary if this form of construction is to remain effective. Increased traffic tends to damage the road edge. The temptation for highway authorities to kerb roads and move footways to the kerb edge should be resisted.

Grass verges in open country are traditionally flail mown two or three times a year. If they are mown regularly or garden flowers planted, the verges lose their rural character.

When changing roads, their surroundings and associated signs always consider the special character of the Parish

Ensure:

- the traditional form and maintenance of roads and associated footways in open countryside is continued, avoiding the use of kerbs wherever possible
- where kerbs are necessary, standard concrete kerbs are avoided in favour of materials more in keeping with the Parish character
- signage is minimised in both number and in size and sited with care
- higher priority is given to the needs of pedestrians in the villages
- speed limits are simplified and enforced
- road markings are kept to a minimum



5.3.1



Investigate new highways initiatives within the villages

Consider:

- improvements to parking arrangements at Olveston School
- a footway between Old Down and Alveston.
- a possible new pedestrian route between Olveston and Old Down
- the implementation of 'Home Zones' within the villages

5.3.2

Utility poles are visually prominent in parts of the villages and there is pressure for new masts for telecom services. More street lighting has been debated for many years, but a majority of households responding to the questionnaire were opposed to lighting as being out of character with the rural nature of the Parish.

Services 5.4

5.4.1

Minimise the visual impact of services

Ensure

- the visual impact of new communications masts or equipment is minimised
- telecoms providers share masts wherever possible

Encourage

- placing telephone and electricity cables underground in the villages when these need to be renewed



The Parish of Olveston is fortunate in retaining vibrant communities and local services. However, there are adverse factors which are undermining this position. These include: rising house prices which make it difficult for local people to enter the housing market; competition from large retail outlets in the surrounding area which threatens the viability of local shops; a lack of local employment opportunities; and poor public transport.

Improving village life 6.1

South Gloucestershire Council's Housing Needs Survey in 2002 confirmed the need for more low cost housing. The questionnaire survey for this Design Statement identified threats to local shops and poor public transport as issues which should be addressed, and there was support for the creation of new employment opportunities in the Parish where this could be done without environmental harm, for example through the re-use and adaptation of otherwise redundant agricultural buildings.



► Fern Hill Business Units

6.1.1

Sustain a vibrant community

Encourage:

- the provision of sympathetically designed affordable housing
- greater use of local shops to ensure their retention
- the development of appropriate small scale employment uses, especially in redundant traditional agricultural buildings
- improvements to the local bus service, particularly to Thornbury and central Bristol



6.2 Looking to the future

We have written about our community as expressed in its buildings, its landscape and its open spaces. It is changing and will go on changing. Careful consideration of the guidelines in this Design Statement will help ensure that new development, and other change, fits well in the Parish and is change we can all be proud of.



► Playground, Olveston

Thanks are due to

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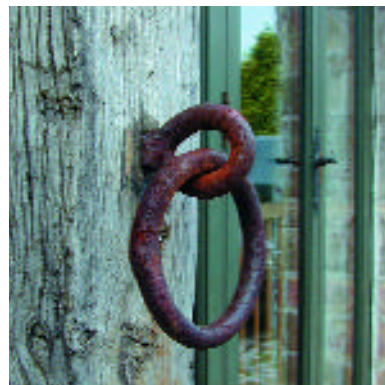
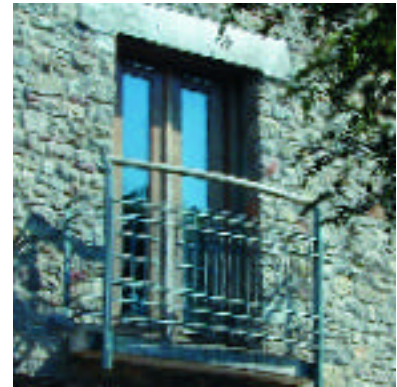
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Attention to detail



Sympathetic alterations and new buildings



Successful landscape treatments



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Parish of Olveston

Design Statement



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Ingst Lower Hazel Awkley