The special architectural and historic interest of Wellow was recognised by its designation as a Conservation Area on 14th September 1983.

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

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

The preparation of the statement also enabled local residents 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

- The exceptional landscape setting in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- The views across the Wellow Valley to the south
- The contrast between intimate enclosure and the fine open space of the surrounding countryside
- The proximity of Wellow Brook and its tributaries as a landscape feature and formerly a source of power for mills
- Narrow lanes leading off the main street
- The prevalent use of local Oolitic limestone
- The range of buildings of varying status within a small area
- High raised pavements
- The particular contribution of the natural landscape, especially orchards, mature trees and hedges
- Restrained use of road markings, signage and other paraphernalia
- High stone boundary walls and walled gardens
- Remnants of the industrial past, particularly the disused Somerset and Dorset Railway and associated buildings, and the Somerset Coal Canal
- The large number of listed buildings
Assessment of Special Interest

Location and Setting

The parish of Wellow lies around three miles south of the city of Bath and five miles north east of Radstock, on the southern edge of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The village lies on the Oolitic limestone belt which continues as the Cotswold Hills to the north. This area is different in character from the northern Cotswolds, being generally flatter with smaller field enclosures and hedges instead of dry stone walls.

The settlement sits on a south facing valley terrace above the Wellow Brook. Most of the village is within the Conservation Area boundary, with some modern edge development excluded.

Wellow Conservation Area lies within the ‘Cam and Wellow Brook Valleys’ area of Rural Landscapes of Bath & North East Somerset Landscape Character Assessment which may be read in conjunction with this document.
General Character and Plan Form

Wellow is a linear village extending east-west along Bull’s Hill, the High Street and West End, following the contours of the hillside. The village extends down Mill Hill to connect with the river; this was originally associated specifically with industrial development.

The linear nature of the village is emphasised by the lines of the disused railway and Somerset Coal Canal which followed the contours of the hilly countryside.

The centre of the village is The Square, which was formerly used for the Wellow Annual Sheep Fair and still provides a focal point for village activity.

Landscape Setting

Wellow is blessed with an exceptionally fine landscape setting, and its location is essential to both its physical form and the mellow character of its buildings, built almost exclusively from the creamy Oolitic limestone supplied from the surrounding hills.

The landscape surrounding the village has been managed and cultivated over the centuries, and the landform retains some evidence of late medieval enclosures and field boundaries. These contribute to the wider historic interest and appearance of the area but can be easily lost through insensitive development.

The village feels secluded and tranquil, set well down in the valley, surrounded by mixed arable and pastoral farmland, away from busy roads and not visible from major built up areas. Vestiges of past industry are still discernable in the countryside around the village and these relics add further interest to the setting of the Conservation Area, prompting memories of rather less tranquil times.

The Wellow valley bottom and lower valley sides have greater tree cover than the upper valley sides. This is mainly due to a combination of the well-tree’d Wellow Brook and rather smaller fields with generally good hedgerows. Historically Wellow was particularly well endowed with orchards which almost surrounded the edges of the village. These have now largely disappeared due to a combination of grubbing up and development pressure over the last 20-30 years.

The Cotswolds AONB and the Bristol-Bath Green Belt designations signify the importance of the landscape setting and help prevent development which would be harmful to the area.
Historic Development

In 766 AD the King of the West Saxons granted land on the ‘Welwe River’ (later the Wellow Brook) to the monastery at Wells and this land seems to have developed into a thriving community by the Norman Conquest. The Domesday Book however makes no mention of the village.

Despite suffering the ravages of the Black Death in the 14th century, Wellow continued to thrive on the wealth generated by agriculture and the wool trade.

It also benefited briefly from the ‘coal rush’ of the late 18th century, during which time the Somerset Coal Canal was built, although the branch through Wellow was never fully completed.

Mining in this area was soon abandoned as richer seams were discovered near Radstock. Wellow’s prosperity was boosted by the construction of the Somerset and Dorset Railway (S&D) in the 19th century, which followed the bed of the redundant canal in places.

Archaeological Significance

The land around Wellow has been occupied as far back as the middle Neolithic period. The most important monument from this period is Stoney Littleton Long Barrow, situated a mile south of the village, which was built between 4000 and 3000BC.

Substantial evidence of Roman occupation is found around Wellow including the remains of a significant Roman Villa found just outside the village. Roman occupation in Wellow lasted until around 400AD.

Little is known about the area following the Roman withdrawal although there is some evidence of Saxon finds associated with the site of the church.
Spatial Analysis

The Conservation Area was originally split into two parts, with the eastern area containing a large proportion of the older buildings including the church and Manor House.

The buildings are arranged along the main road and vary from small cottages clustered together around The Square to large buildings set in more generous plots behind stone walls. However many of the larger plots have been subdivided resulting in a fairly dense grain overall, particularly west of Mill Hill.

The oldest phase of the village around the church is characterised by large houses in generous plots with a more open character than the rest of the village. Sub division of these plots would alter the character of the area.

From the north Bath Hill runs down into the village. Modern housing developments have replaced the farm yards which formerly framed the entrance to the village at this point.

Farm Lane is an historic ‘hollow lane’ which follows an old route through Manor Farm to Upper Twinhoe. Mill Hill continues steeply down to Wellow Brook and the site of a former corn mill. Tall hedges on either side emphasise the enclosed character of these narrow lanes.

Narrow lanes emphasise the enclosed feel of the village
Key Views and Vistas

There are superb views south from several vantage points in the village, especially from the elevated ground of the churchyard. The built form is fairly enclosed, but occasional gaps between buildings and trees allow glimpses through to the landscape beyond.

Despite its location in open countryside, views into Wellow are fairly restricted – mainly due to its position set into the hillside and the considerable tree cover within the village.

There are long views towards the village from the southern side of the valley and along the valley to the east. The church tower is a distinctive landmark.
Wellow Conservation Area
(extended 15 August 2007)

Key
- Principal listed buildings*
- Unlisted buildings which contribute to the character of the Conservation Area
- Landmark buildings
- Important views
- Conservation Area boundary
- Significant green spaces
- Areas for enhancement

*This map does not show all listed walls or curtilage listed buildings
Character analysis

Character Areas
(see centre page map)

There are clear phases of development in the village, giving rise to noticeable differences in character in a relatively small area. Larger buildings in generous plots contrast with modest cottages and there is a pleasing variation in the hierarchy of building types.

**Area 1** centres on the church and covers the eastern end of the village, up to the school. This is the oldest part of the village. Houses in this area have historic associations with the church and it is characterised by generous plots, large, attractively detailed buildings, mature trees and green spaces. The area has a more open character and a feeling of being distinctly separate from the bustle of the village centre.

**Area 2** centres on The Square and the older buildings around the Manor. Here the buildings are generally smaller and close grained, huddled hard up to the road and with narrower frontages. This is the focal point of the village containing the pub, a stone memorial bench, the post-box and a red K6 phone box as well as a parking area.

The Batch (adjacent to The Square) formerly served as a 'village green'. Recent development has affected the rural character of this space but appropriate remodelling could return it to an attractive communal area.

**Area 3** covers the western area of the village. Large old houses in generous plots have been largely subsumed into later development and subdivision of the plots gives this area a fairly dense grain. There is a wide variety of detached houses, bungalows and modern terraces, as well as conversions of barns and outbuildings, some more successful than others.

**Area 4** covers Mill Hill which is more intimate and modest in character, leading down to Wellow Brook and connecting directly with the countryside beyond. This area has strong links with former industries within the village including a corn mill, malt house and coal miners’ cottages. It also contains structures associated with the railway and the former fullers’ earth works.

Large buildings contrast with modest cottages giving a pleasing variation in character.
Activity and Former Uses

Agriculture has always been a major contributor to the local economy although changing technologies mean that it is no longer the mainstay of the rural community.

Throughout the 19th century, there was an annual sheep fair on St Julian’s day (17 October). Sheep and cattle were penned from The School House to the west end and horses were tethered from The Manor House down Mill Lane. Up to 500 sheep were for sale. The fairs came to an end in the early twentieth century.

There was formerly a large forge, a maltings and a steam mill in the village as well as a water-powered corn mill. The steam mills were used to grind fuller’s earth for use in the wool industry. All these industries, and much of the infrastructure which served them, have now gone, leaving the village a much more tranquil place than it would previously have been.

The S&D Railway made a major contribution to life in the village. As well as the bridges and railway buildings, there were sidings in the field now used as a car park, which enabled the cargo of processed fuller’s earth, agricultural machinery, grain and watercress to be taken away.

The loss of the railway in 1966 left a significant gap in Wellow, both physically and in terms of the noise and activity that it once generated. It is important to the history and character of the village that the railway heritage is not further lost through modern development.

While most of the buildings within the village are now dwellings, many served other purposes in the past. Wistaria House was a Ladies Academy in the 1870’s, while both Holly Tree House and George House housed the post office before it closed. George House was also formerly an Inn.

Some buildings suggest former uses both in their architectural styles and their names, such as Blacksmiths Cottage, Cobbler’s Cottage and The Granary, while Weaver’s Orchard, Orchard Cottage and Old Orchard indicate the profusion of apple trees which were once such a familiar feature of the area.

The village benefits from a healthy population of children, and the school injects a welcome bustle and vibrancy into an otherwise quiet rural community. The Wellow National School was built by the Church and opened in 1843 with the Infants’ Department added in 1893.

A shop and pub ensure that the residents and many visitors are well catered for and the pub provides a hub of activity in the very centre of the village, especially during the summer.
Architectural and Historic Qualities of the Buildings

The Parish Church of St. Julian the Hospitaller is the most important building in the village, set on a prominence at the eastern end of the Conservation Area. The church is described by Pevsner as ‘a proud, little altered, stylistically very uniform church, masculine rather than refined’\(^1\). The church tower has some interesting gargoyles which considerably enliven this otherwise simply detailed building.

The churchyard houses a number of Georgian chest tombs, many of which are listed in their own right. The chest tombs represent a good collection of classical and traditional tomb forms and contribute to the setting of the church.

There are more than 50 listed buildings within the Conservation Area, contributing to the village’s exceptionally rich historic character.

Apart from the church, the Grade II* listed Manor and its associated buildings forms the most important group of buildings. The setting of the Manor is enhanced by high walls, decorative gates and outbuildings, all listed in their own right as well as a picturesque thatched Dovecot, dating from the 17th century or very possibly earlier and listed Grade II*.

Most buildings are built from local limestone, commonly rubblestone, with ashlar used only for some later buildings, such as Greenhayes and Wistaria House, both fine early 19th century buildings. Wellow House has been rendered and lined out to look like ashlar. Many rubblestone buildings would have originally been lime-rendered, and where there is evidence of this, appropriate restoration may help enhance some of the early character of the village.

Roofs are predominantly steep pitched with red clay tiles, although original Cotswold stone tiles survive in places. These are rare and should be preserved. Up to the beginning of the 20th century most buildings had thatched roofs which would have presented a much softer appearance than the replacement tiles.

The narrow packhorse bridge over Wellow Brook dates to the early medieval period and is listed Grade II. Sturdily built of rubble stone with two low arches and framed by hedgerows and apple trees, it contributes to a charmingly pastoral scene at the entrance to the village from the south.

Some pennant stone paving, kerbs and setts survive and make an important contribution to the streetscape.

The simple cast iron finger posts found at road junctions are appropriate in this rural setting and in some cases would benefit from restoration.
Unlisted Buildings of Merit

Many modest cottages, barns, mills and other buildings make up the bulk of the built form and knit the village together into a coherent whole. In such a small community almost every building, from the fine houses to the humble cottages and outbuildings, contributes to the exceptional value of the village as a whole and to the overall character of the Conservation Area.

There appears to be a lack of excessive gentrification, which can rob traditional buildings of their charm. Retaining the hierarchy of structures and materials which contribute to the varied character of the village is key to conserving its historic character.

In addition to the statutorily listed buildings there are a number of buildings which are of local significance and could be considered for inclusion on the Council’s list of Locally Important Buildings.

Unlisted buildings of merit include the Station (now converted to a dwelling), and the group of former railway buildings including the signal box and Station Master’s cottage, the railway viaduct and other structures. These are a reminder of the past importance of the S&D Railway to Wellow, and the mark it left on the village. The signal box is the only survivor of this type of building from the S&D Railway and is therefore of particular interest.

Other buildings of note include Church House, Church Farm Cottage, Chapel House, and the row of cottages opposite the school which form an attractive group.

Unlisted buildings make a major contribution to the streetscape.
Trees and Green Spaces

The most notable green spaces are the walled enclosures behind and adjacent to the church. The churchyard itself is also a pleasant space to sit and enjoy views.

Trees and garden shrubbery are a strong feature of the character of the village. There are particular concentrations of mature trees associated with the larger properties and their grounds especially Wellow House, The Manor House and Church Farm. The lime trees on the eastern end of the High Street by the church are particularly prominent.

The Recreation Ground is a valuable facility and pleasant open space. It is noted as a high value space in the draft Green Space Strategy.

The former quarry and line of the Somerset Coal Canal in the immediate vicinity of the village to the east is an important remnant of the industrial landscape and a significant green space within the setting of the village. The old canal is now lined with dense tree cover indicating the route while camouflaging the canal bed itself.
Opportunities for Enhancement

Road signage and markings tend towards the suburban in some areas, often associated with modern development. In places traditional signs have been replaced by standard, modern signage, detracting from the area’s appearance. Removal of unnecessary signage and markings and the conservation of traditional fingerposts would enhance the shared space within the village.

Modern housing tends to deviate from the grain of the historic village, while concrete tiles and other modern materials contrast poorly with existing traditional details. The use of local materials should be encouraged in future development.

Some rubble stone buildings have had their traditional lime-wash finish removed or replaced with inappropriate modern paint. Reinstatement of traditional finishes would enhance the character of the area.

Neutral Areas

Like most villages, Wellow has absorbed a small but significant amount of post-war housing, most notably Hungerford Terrace and Henley View at the western end of the village. Some of the later development uses local materials and, although lacking the traditional detailing of the older buildings, blends fairly unobtrusively into the street scene. Other development is uncompromisingly modern and sits rather incongruously within the traditional village setting.

Development within the setting of Wellow should take into account the proximity to the historic village and the effect on the setting of the Conservation Area and the wider landscape.

General Condition

There are no buildings in Wellow on the Council’s Buildings at Risk Register, but there are several buildings which are currently suffering from neglect.

One of the most prominent of these is the fullers’ earth works building, a large brick building in Railway Lane, which is a significant remnant of the village’s industrial heritage. Sensitive repair or conversion of this building is desirable.

Other buildings potentially at risk are Weaver’s Barn, the group of buildings near the Station Master’s house on Mill Hill and the unoccupied buildings on The Square and Railway Lane.

Finding a new use for derelict buildings would enhance the character of the area.

The conservation of traditional road signage should be encouraged
2007 Boundary Changes

See centre page map

Reassessment of the Conservation Area boundary is one of the purposes of an appraisal. The boundary was amended to include:

- Hungerford Terrace, Cranborne and Greenacres to join the two areas together. While this includes a ‘neutral area’ it is a small section within the overall village, and it is illogical to exclude this small area when considering the management of the Conservation Area as a whole. Policies relating to Conservation Areas and the specific management recommendations for Wellow should not exclude small neutral areas such as this. A single Conservation Area rationalises the boundaries and emphasises the importance of the village as a whole rather than individual areas of exceptional merit. English Heritage advise that Conservation Area designation should be seen as the means of ensuring that conservation policy addresses the quality of townscape in its broadest sense as well as the protection of individual buildings (PPG15, 4.2).

- A larger area east along Bull’s Hill, up to and including the railway viaduct. This large industrial structure is a remnant of the S&D Railway and is a prominent landscape feature which is worthy of protection. This extension also includes a section of the Somerset Coal Canal including the north entrance to the tunnel which is listed Grade II, and vestiges of tramways from the former quarry. These are remnants of the important industrial landscape within and around the village and are worthy of conservation.

St. Julian’s Well is also included in this extension. This historic well consists of a spring which flows into a stone trough about half way up the side of the now dry Somerset Coal Canal. It is probable that the well takes its name from the parish church, rather than the reverse and the water is still used in the font at the church. Inclusion within the Conservation Area helps to highlight the importance of the historic features within this landscape and encourage their conservation, as well as helping to prevent inappropriate development which may harm the special character of the area.

- Manor Barn, which is a Grade II listed barn (now converted). This area around the Manor forms an important part of the historic development of the village and is worthy of inclusion in the Conservation Area.

Summary of Issues and Recommended Management Proposals

- The retention of the remaining facilities is essential for the continued prosperity and character of the village. Applications for change of use which may detract from the character of the area should be considered in line with existing policies in the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan (emerging).

- It is recommended that an Article 4 Direction be considered to regulate external alterations to unlisted buildings. This would help prevent loss of traditional details which cannot currently be regulated.

- Some alterations to traditional buildings in the area have not been sympathetic to the character of the village, such as alterations to boundary walls and driveways, and the addition of conservatories or inappropriate modern extensions. Applications for development of this type will be carefully assessed and unsuitable proposals will be refused. Enforcement action is recommended in cases of unauthorised works which adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area.

- Alterations to boundary walls or inappropriate repair techniques such as the use of cement mortars or unsuitable pointing has occurred in some cases. Protection of the boundary walls is a high priority and they should not be neglected. Traditional lime mortar repair should be encouraged. Enforcement action should be considered in cases of unauthorised works which adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area, and an Article 4 Direction is recommended to control demolition of walls under 1m high (walls over 1m are protected under the Conservation Area designation).

- The replacement of hedgerows within the village with hard boundaries such as railings or fences can detract from the rural character of the area. The retention of hedgerows should be encouraged and, where appropriate, enforced under the Hedgerows Regulations (1997).

- Unlisted buildings of particular local importance for their architectural interest, their contribution to the local environment or for their historical associations should be considered for inclusion on the list of Locally Important Buildings which is currently being prepared by the Council. Locally Important Buildings are protected by existing policies in the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan.
Community Involvement

Public support and involvement is essential to the successful management of Conservation Areas. Following the production of a first draft by Bath and North East Somerset Council, copies of this appraisal were provided for the Parish Council, Local Members and the general public. A copy was posted on the Council’s website and a press release sent to local papers. Six weeks were allowed for comments to be submitted, after which the final version was completed. The appraisal was approved by the Council on 15 August 2007.

Planning Policy Context

A Conservation Area is designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990). The quality and interest of the area as a whole, rather than individual buildings, is the main consideration when designating such areas.

Section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to periodically formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas within the district. Section 72 requires that in considering applications for development in a Conservation Area, attention shall be paid to the desirability of conserving 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 approach suggested by English Heritage5.


More detailed policies are to be found in the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan (emerging). This was examined at a Public Inquiry in 2005. The Council has now prepared a response to the Inspector's Report from this Inquiry and modifications to the plan have been proposed. The Local Plan is programmed for adoption in 2007. It will then be 'saved' for three years in the Council's Local Development Framework.

General Guidance

Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan (emerging)


Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation Methodology, Chapman, 1997

Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2005

Guidance on Conservation Area Management Plans, English Heritage, 2005


Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment


3 Manual for Streets, DCLG et al. 2007
4 Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2005
5 Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

The unmarked, rural character of the road and the cast iron fingerposts and boundary markers contribute significantly to the character of the village. Any works to the highway or streetscape should take into account the special character of the area and, where relevant, be considered with reference to the adopted Streetscape Manual and Manual for Streets.

Trees provide a significant contribution to the special character of the Conservation Area and there are special provisions for their protection under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990). Where appropriate the Council will use its powers to make Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees that are under threat. Planting new specimen trees should be encouraged to provide and maintain a varied age range of trees and sustain the appearance of the area for the future. New small scale orchard planting should be encouraged.

The use of underground cables for services would help prevent the streetscape and wider landscape being interrupted by overhead wires.

Sub-division of plots for development would alter the character of the area. Applications for development of this type will be carefully assessed and unsuitable proposals will be refused.

The policies that govern development in Conservation Areas in the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan (emerging) should be carried forward into any replacement Local Development Document.

3 Manual for Streets, DCLG et al. 2007
4 Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2005
Further Reading

Wellow Parish Plan (2006)
The Story of Wellow, Violet M Cosh (1953)
Wellow and Shoscombe, Parish Resource Pack, Bath & North East Somerset (available from the archives at the Guildhall in Bath)
Guide to St. Julian’s Church, Wellow (1995) Original written by the Churchwardens (available from St Julian’s Church in Wellow)
www.wellowparish.info Community website providing business directory, details of local amenities, councillors, churches and accommodation in Wellow, as well as old photographs of the village and local history.

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 Area: Defined by English Heritage as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Some permitted development rights are removed for owners of buildings in a Conservation Area and special planning controls may apply.

Article 4 Direction: A direction under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. 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.

Locally Important Buildings: Buildings of particular local importance for their architectural interest, their contribution to the local environment or for their historical associations. Although these buildings do not benefit from the same statutory protection as listed buildings, their inclusion on the local list will be a material consideration in determining applications for planning permission. The council is currently in the process of drawing up a list of Locally Important Buildings.

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

Contact Planning Services for advice regarding
Listed Buildings and Listed Building Consent: 01225 477632
Unlisted Buildings and Conservation Area Consent: 01225 477632
Works to trees within Conservation Areas: 01225 477520
Planning Permission: 01225 477722
Archaeology: 01225 477651
Planning Policy: 01225 477548

Email: historic_environment@bathnes.gov.uk
All the above teams are located at Planning Services, Trimbridge House, Trim Street, Bath, BA1 2DP

This document about the Wellow 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