

Priston Village Design Statement

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT



AUGUST 2018

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The Priston Village Design Statement has been produced after consultation with the residents of Priston in a number of ways. An open meeting produced many initial ideas and opinions and was used to ask for nominations for a VDS committee. Following the meeting an Open Day was well attended and showed that there was a strong desire for a village policy. The committee formulated a questionnaire and it was distributed to all 89 households of the village and the surrounding area. The 75 responses (84%) gave the opinions of 132 villagers to the questions asked and these have been used in compiling the Village Design Statement. The initial draft document was presented to the villagers for comment and also reviewed by B&NES before this final version was released complete with the resulting recommendations which are to be found at the end of this document.



Following consultation in July 2018 the Priston Village Design Statement has now been adopted by B&NES as a Supplementary Planning Document to B&NES Local Plan (currently comprising the Core Strategy, adopted July 2014 and the Placemaking Plan, adopted July 2017) and other planning documents.

This gives the Priston VDS significant weight and the document and its recommendations will be used by B&NES Planning department as material considerations when determining planning applications affecting the village.

In addition it will also be used as part of the criteria on which Priston Parish Council and all other decision makers will base their comments when consulted on planning applications.

1.0 Introduction. It is recognised that in order for Priston to survive and prosper it must meet the challenges of both the present and the future. There is no reason why development consistent with the guidance contained within this Village Design Statement cannot be imaginative, innovative and a statement of individuality. This Village Design Statement aims to ensure development is carried out sensitively and sustainably, and enhances the environment in which we live.

1.1 Purpose of the Village Design Statement

These recommendations are designed to ensure that, despite the proximity to Bath, Priston remains a truly rural settlement. New developments will need to respect the character of Priston, make a positive contribution to the village and ensure the village is not overtaken by suburbanisation. The recommendations will not in themselves ensure good design. Anyone considering a development is urged to closely follow the sections on the Desirable features in planning applications (Section 6) and Recommendations (Section 7), choose architects and other advisors carefully, and seek recommendations and references wherever possible.

1.2 How to use this document

This document provides a reference point for the code of practice and recommendations to be considered in the design of any new developments or alteration to existing properties within the historic village, including small extensions and alterations to housing, gardens, open spaces, roads and boundaries. It also offers guidance on the pattern of settlement, the scale, height and proportion of new and extended buildings, the use of materials and finishes, the treatment of boundaries and the importance of trees and landscapes.

These VDS recommendations are a material consideration in any planning application and should be adhered to whenever possible. Since the VDS is also a Supplementary Planning Document the recommendations will be reviewed by B&NES Planning department when considering any planning application within the village. The VDS provides an insight into the character of the village and the information within the VDS will allow development that is sympathetic to the desires of the community.

1.3 Relevant planning policy

There are several planning related documents with sections that are relevant to villages such as Priston. These will be used together with the VDS in determining the outcome of planning applications.

- a) National Planning Policy Framework sets the government’s planning policy for England.
- b) B&NES Core Strategy 2014 document is part 1 of the Local Plan and has a role to protect and enhance the District’s natural, built and cultural assets and provide green infrastructure.
- c) B&NES Placemaking Plan (July 2017), also forms part of the Local Plan. It outlines detailed design principles and supplies specific planning policies to enhance the quality and diversity of localities within the area.



1.4 Summary

The Priston Village Design Statement gives potential developers an insight into the rural nature of the historic village, together with the diverse environmental, ecological and economic considerations that need to be taken into account in any development within the village. The recommendations and guidance provided should ensure any developments, including permitted developments, will be in accordance with the wishes of the community.

2.0 About Priston village. Priston is a small historic village near Bath. It continues, as it always has, to be associated with farming and is surrounded by farmland. People have lived here for hundreds of years and will continue to do so into the future. It is the centre of the Parish of Priston and it continues to prosper as it embraces the changes of the 21st century.



Farmland adjacent to Priston Church

2.1 Priston's Heritage

The key positive characteristics contributing to the significance of the historic village of Priston are:

- A well-preserved historic linear village astride ancient road and footpath routes
- Attractive rural landscape setting and topography with the village set deep within the valley of Priston Brook, largely hidden from surrounding views
- Significant views of the village approaching from the upper part of Priston Hill and the lane from Marksbury
- Survival of the early road and track pattern, lined with vernacular and more prestigious historic buildings
- Road surfaces primarily shared with pedestrians, some with grass verges adjoining them
- Townscape largely unaffected by modern street furniture or highway development
- Consistent use of local building materials, primarily lias stone, lime based mortars, clay pantiles and natural slate
- The Parish Church of St Luke and St Andrew with Church Farm House representing early settlement, acting as a focal point in the village
- Front boundaries typically enclosed by distinct coursed rubble stone walls and/or hedging and planting
- Mainly residential and agricultural uses, but also a parish church, village hall and public house
- Important groups of former historic farm buildings now primarily converted to residential use
- Verdant mature trees and greenery
- Important green spaces including front and side gardens visible from the public realm which reinforce the spacious low density and rural qualities of the village
- Priston Brook, particularly contributing to visual character in High Street



c1793 MAP

Priston manorial estate
map of William Davies c.1793
by C. Harcourt Masters
detail



View from Priston Hill showing open spaces within the village, c1900



View from below Hill Farm towards church, showing open spaces within the village. Taken from Priston estate sale catalogue, 1919

2.0 About Priston Village
2.1 Priston's Heritage continued





Horse and Dray cart, The Dog Inn, c1890s



Village Farm, 1920-1925



Priston High Street and Green, c1900



Priston Vale from Priston Church Tower, c1900



Underhill Cottage, 21 Priston, c1900



Ring O'Bells, c1908



Cows from Hill Farm being driven by George Reed along Priston Lane, past one of the two village pumps, c 1950



Boy on Pony and Trap outside Ring O'Bells and Village school, c1908



Priston Rectory, c1900



Mr & Mrs King, Ivy Cottage, demolished, c1900



High Street towards Dog Inn and Church, c1900



Backs of numbers 9, 10, 11 High Street, c1946

1884-6 MAP
Priston 1st Ordnance Survey map 1884-6 detail



2.2 History and evolution of the village

There is firm evidence of occupation of the Priston landscape over a long period following the recent finding of a Homo heidelbergensis hand axe dated to over 250,000 BC and two Bronze Age round barrows by Priston Brook reported by Reverend John Skinner in 1821. These barrows no longer exist but in 2014 Bath & Camerton Archaeological Society (BACAS) showed that a Bronze Age round house may have existed to the north of the village in Town Hill field. In 2007 BACAS also found evidence of two Roman farmsteads in the nearby Great Croft field, near the site where a Roman coffin was found in 1917. This coffin now resides in the porch of Priston church. In the 1950s Bill Wedlake of BACAS found Iron Age and second century pottery in the same field.



The name Priston is derived from that of an early settlement with a fairly rare place-name combination of Brythonic 'Prisc' (meaning copse or thicket) and Anglo-Saxon 'tun' (for settlement). Priston's Anglo-Saxon Charter of 934 granted much of the land to Bath Abbey and the Domesday Book lists 20 tenements. Priston developed over the centuries, primarily as a rural farming community. There was no medieval manor house as the estate was administered from the Abbey (later Priory). A medieval or earlier hamlet is believed to have existed at the west end of the village which later became known as Westend Town.

After the Dissolution Priston was owned by absentee landlords, but in the 1750s the estate was sold to William Jenkins who swept away the remains of the old medieval land system and allocated blocks of land to individual farms. The estate itself was broken up and sold off in 1919.

In the early part of the 20th century the Somerset coalfield reached its peak production and the Industrial Revolution reached Priston when a mine was sunk locally. Priston Colliery (1917-1930) gave employment to 180 local men, several of whom lived in Priston village. At 750ft it was the last deep mine sunk in Somerset.

2.3 Demographics – The statistics of population

The National Census of 2011 and the Priston Survey of 2008 have both shown that the inhabitants of Priston vary widely in age from families with pre-school infants to retired couples. It is mostly families who live in Priston, many have resided in the village for a long time and in general the population turnover is very small. Most of the families that have moved to Priston have done so to be near to Bath or Bristol for employment and to be in the countryside. With farming becoming a minority occupation most workers commute to Bath or Bristol or work from home.

The census suggests that almost 50% of the adults in the village have qualifications beyond A levels with many qualified to professional levels. Almost all the residents are white Europeans. The Parish church of St Luke and St Andrew is well supported with, unusually, two services each Sunday. There is an active group of Bell Ringers who make full use of the church's well known bells and there are many social events within the year in aid of the church.

Priston is fortunate to have a cricket ground and the Cricket Club is in action throughout the summer, in winter the members organise the annual Priston Duck Race in the brook. The villagers are entertained on May Day and other events throughout the year by the Somerset Morris and other visiting morris sides.

The Ring o' Bells, the village pub, actively supports skittles teams and is a popular village amenity. The well attended Priston Festival has become an annual 3 day music event each autumn attracting many people from the local area and the Maypole is brought into use each May Day with a day of entertainment and fund raising for the Village Hall which is itself in use almost every day of the year.

top: William Jenkins memorial plaque in Priston church
left: Roman coffin in Priston Church porch



top left: Festival, village green stage • top centre: Morris Dancing at Wassail • top right: Local children Maypole dancing
centre left: Priston Church, St Luke and St Andrew's in winter • centre right: May day spectators
bottom: Priston Cricket Club Field



2.4 Infrastructure

There are five minor lanes into Priston village, all of these are in part single lane with passing places and there are no major roads. The roads are generally quiet except at commuting times when there is a certain amount of through traffic. There is also one designated cycle route passing through the village down Priston Hill and on towards Marksbury.

Most of the homes are on a mains drinking water supply though five still remain on the original Priston water supply derived from a spring to the east of the village. The local sewage treatment works serves most dwellings and provides mains foul drainage. Electricity and telephone line connections are generally via overhead cables and broadband internet connections can be either via a land line connection or superfast broadband by fibre. There is no mains gas supply to the village. Most homes are heated by oil, though a few do use stored gas.

Priston has its own web site (www.priston.org.uk) which covers all aspects of village life and an independently edited monthly magazine (The Link) which is delivered to almost all homes in the village, and a number in the surrounding area. The Link is subscription funded.

The village owns two defibrillators, one situated outside the Village Hall, the second in lower Priston, and the health care is provided by GP surgeries in nearby Timsbury and Combe Down. Emergency service provision is from Bath, Radstock or Paulton (for fire) and can take some time to arrive.

Timsbury, two miles away, also provides the nearest shops and there are farm shops within a few miles. There is a local garage for vehicle repairs in Camerton. Public transport is limited to the bus that runs on Monday to Friday between Bath and Tunley calling at Priston 4 or 5 times a day.

top: Wilmington ridge
centre: Signpost on Marksbury Lane
bottom: Priston Brook



2.5 Economic and social structure

The 2011 census suggests that about 60% of economically active people in the village work in professional or managerial roles, and a further 20% run small businesses or work on their own account. There are no long-term unemployed. About 70% travel to work by car, 8% by public transport, and 25% use other means or work at home. The average distance travelled to work is about 12 miles.

2.6 Topography and settlement pattern

Priston parish occupies a position south-west of Bath amongst the characteristic combes and downs of Liassic limestone. Priston village is located on a stream known as Priston Brook, in a valley between two distinctive downs: that of Wilmington ridge to the north and Priston Hill which is part of the Southdown ridge running from Tunley towards Duncorn Hill. There are a few isolated outliers of oolite such as Pensdown and Priestbarrow hills and the soil is often brashy.

Much of Priston is characterized by its historic or even prehistoric origins (boundaries, roads and settlement patterns). The parish boundaries were largely established along a series of ancient upland roadways: the Salt Way which runs from Saltford to Camerton; the Mendip trackway running via Marksbury towards Bath; the “Jurassic Way” running from Somerset into the Cotswolds, and most of the village roads connected into either of the latter two ancient roadways.

Although only elusive signs (a possible Bronze Age round house site, late Iron Age pottery) of prehistoric occupation have been found in the village environs, during the Roman period there is clear proof of settlement just north of the later Saxon Village and this perhaps succeeded an earlier Iron Age presence.

Through a Saxon Charter of 934, Priston was granted by King Aethelstan to Bath Abbey, with which it remained until the Dissolution. There was no medieval manor house as the estate was administered from the

Abbey (later Priory). The medieval village was made up of some 20 feudal tenements, each comprising a holding of about 30 acres of arable land from the lord [in this case the abbot]. The group of dwellings at the west end of the village are shown on early maps as a separate hamlet, which was more densely populated than it is now.

There was some early enclosure by agreement, with a number of new pathways laid out to enable access to the various strips, and by the late 17th century the process of enclosure appears to have been substantially complete.

In the 1750s the estate was sold to William Jenkins who swept away what little remained of the old tenement system and the whole manor was divided into consolidated blocks of land with their corresponding farmhouses rebuilt mostly in village locations, many of which remain some of the most attractive buildings in the parish today. Between 1840 and 1884 there was further renewal and modernization of farm buildings, (which included the emergence of labourers’ cottages), using traditional materials and techniques. In more recent times some of the farms have been split up and the land incorporated either into other farms or into the holdings of the Duchy of Cornwall, whilst the farmsteads themselves have been converted into residential dwellings.

Since 1949 the number of houses in Priston has doubled. Around 50 new dwellings have been created within the eighteenth century village boundaries by building in many of the green spaces or converting farm buildings for occupation. The numerous green spaces were an important aspect of the historic village which, with the implementation of a housing development boundary policy, became potential sites for infill and much post-war construction has been located on these green plots. So whilst the village itself preserves its ancient outline, the earlier distinctive quality of a small farming settlement interspersed with plots and small fields, has been lost.

3.0 Priston landscape setting. The landscape around Priston village is typical of North Somerset, being ridges and valleys in succession. Sometimes the valley is steep sided, as it is to the east of Priston by the brook, and sometimes it widens to more of a plateau as it does near Pensdown to the west.



3.1 Significant views in and out

Priston village lies deep within the valley and is mostly hidden from view until the crest of the surrounding hills is reached. Even then only the buildings on higher ground can be seen. The high hedges at the sides of the deeply cut sunken lanes obscure almost everything but gradually the village is revealed. The best and most charming view of the village and the widest vista is obtained when coming from the east and looking down onto the village from the upper part of Priston Hill. When walking north from Tunley towards the village it cannot be seen until suddenly it is right below deep in the valley fold whilst in the distance the view to the Wilmington escarpment gives an impression of a big sky with open farmland. The lane from Marksbury across to the Wood Lodge poplars also presents a striking view.

As more of the village comes into view it is revealed to be predominantly a ribbon development where the buildings are at the sides of the roads with green gaps of garden between them. Only houses are to be seen although some have associated outbuildings. Many have gardens to the front, and side, and these contribute hugely to the attractiveness of the High street. There are gardens to the rear of the dwellings but these are often out of view from the lane. Many of the views from the rear gardens offer distant grand vistas as they are high on the valley sides.

3.2 Trees

There are many significant trees scattered throughout the village which positively contribute to the local character. The Manor House has large beech and horse chestnut trees overlooking the village green, which itself supports a walnut tree. The churchyard and the lane to the cricket ground also have large horse chestnut trees and the Village Hall has a fine hornbeam in its car park. The willow avenue at Brook Cottage, the Lombardy poplar avenue at Wood Lodge and the Churchyard yew are all significant whilst the new oak on Pressbarrow Hill will become an important landmark. There is a predominantly hazel nuttery (nut cultivation area) overlooking Priston Lane near the cricket ground.

Significant Trees in the Village

- Beech** *Common/European*
Fagus sylvatica
Manor grounds.
- Horse Chestnuts**
Aesculus hippocastanu
in the churchyard, Manor grounds and the Cricket field.
- Hornbeam**
Carpinus betulus
in the Village Hall curtilage.
- Walnut**
Juglans regia
on the village green.
- Lombardy Poplars**
Populus nigra 'Italica'
at Wood Lodge.
- Oak**
Quercus robur
on Pressbarrow Hill.
- Willows**
Salix fragilis
in the avenue at Brook Cottage.
- Yew**
Taxus baccata
in the churchyard.





top: Priston Brook • centre: Towards Wilmington Ridge from below Tunley • bottom: Blind Lane bridle path above Rockhill

3.0 Priston Landscape Setting *continued*

3.3 Priston Brook

Priston Brook is of major importance within the village as it provides a primary link to the surrounding landscape and a focal point for those entering the village from the east over the ancient angled bridge. The visual impact of the brook on a walk through the village is a treat and it is probably the first outing that many Priston babies make. The brook rises 2 miles away near Timsbury to the south west and flows through Priston to join Conygre Brook to the north of the village just below Priston Mill. It continues as the Newton Brook which then flows into the River Avon at Twerton near Bath.

Within the village the brook runs from the lower part of the fields by the cricket pitch, behind The Old Coach House, under the road and past The Old Smithy. It then turns east to run along the south side of the High Street until it crosses under the bridge near to Village Farm, and flows north to join the Conygre. It runs past the local sewage treatment facility near to Village Farm on its route.

The brook is very important to the Village for its appearance, its sound when it is running fast, and its ability to float hundreds of plastic ducks in the Cricket Club Duck Race on New Year's Day.

The brook and its banks plays host to a wide range of flora and fauna including amongst many others, flag irises, wall valerian, ragged robin and other champions, brooklime and marsh orchids as well as voles, frogs, newts, toads and kingfishers.

3.4 Roads

Priston lies hidden from many angles and is served by minor lanes rather than roads. These picturesque narrow lanes lead to and from the village in five directions linking the village to Priston Mill, Englishcombe, Tunley, Farmborough and Marksbury. They are all winding and hilly, often secluded and sunken, and mainly lined with hedges. When the lanes enter the village they retain their rural character with no pavements or kerbstones and are edged with stone walls.

Within the village there are several small roadways or lanes and un-adopted tracks. These include the route to the church and Church Farm, Hill Farm and Summer Lea. Of these only Summer Lea and a short section of High Street have kerbing and pavement. Car parking is difficult in the narrow roads and where space permits there is much on- road parking. None of the roads in Priston have street lighting.

Adjacent to the village pub and hall a wider section of tarmac includes the village green and its walnut tree which is itself surrounded by a circular memorial bench. This section of roadway is well used for May Day and Priston Festival as the only open area in the village centre. Further along the High Street, at Priston Lane, there is another, smaller, triangular grass island which has been nurtured with native planting.

Routes are marked with finger posts on lane junctions and the lanes contain intermittent passing places to allow vehicles to pass each other.





3.5 Boundaries

The most popular boundary material in the village is walling of white lias stone, much with historic value. At least 60% of the houses use this stone in a front or side wall of coursed rubble stone (a traditional Somerset construction) capped either with cock and hen stones, domed cement or flagstone tops. There are many hedges and a few fences of wooden panels.

3.6 Footpaths and bridleways

The roads in the village do not, in general, have footpaths alongside them. The exceptions are Summer Lea and the short section of High Street below the village green, which both have tarmac paths. However, the village is surrounded by public footpaths and bridleways. Several footpaths lead from the village into the open farmland beyond. One leads to Tunley via Rockhill and another goes past Village Farm and on to Inglesbatch and Priston Mill. There is also a footpath and bridleway leading towards Camerton passing alongside the cricket pitch and via Lammashfield. The footpath by Wood Lodge and the dutch barn loops back to the bridleway to form a circular walk.

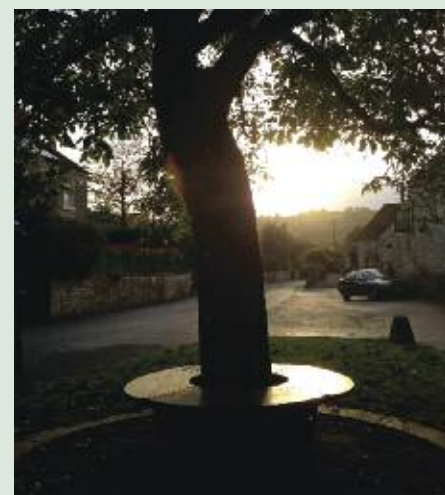
All the lanes, footpaths and bridleways around and through the village are popular with walkers and horse riders alike and on the footpaths many stiles are being replaced with kissing gates. The national cycle route from Priston Hill and on to Marksbury is also well used.

3.7 Street furniture

The electricity and telephone cables for most buildings are carried on wooden poles, though in some cases these have been transferred to underground connections. These poles are also often used to carry the small number of signs for the 20 mph speed limit, the bus stop by the village green and direction signposts in the village. With the valued absence of street lighting and no wish for it, (over 90% of villagers consider the dark sky a benefit) there are no lamp posts and no lamps are carried on the electricity poles or street signs.

One village defibrillator is kept outside the village hall, near to the no longer functioning telephone box. The second defibrillator is located in lower Priston. A mobile phone is required if the defibrillator is called into use and a mobile phone is located inside each defibrillator box. The single post box is also located alongside the telephone box.

Village signs are often fixed to the electricity poles but more formal Parish Council and Church information is displayed on two notice boards on the wall of the village hall. There is a salt bin near the village green beside the Millennium well and water trough and further bins are strategically located on the lanes around the village.



4.0 Priston's buildings. The buildings of Priston vary from the grand, as in the Manor and Church, to the functional like the Granary. Having been developed over several hundred years they reflect the necessities of the moment and the aspirations for the future. Most are simply houses in which the villagers live, some include business opportunities, either past or present and they all represent what Priston is today, a thriving rural community in an idyllic setting.





4.1 Housing stock

Priston has a wide range of housing including bungalows, terraced and semi-detached houses, large and small detached houses and converted farm buildings. There are no multi-storey buildings and none with 3 floors above ground except where the loft or roof space has been adapted into a room. Very few buildings have dormer or gabled dormer windows.

Most houses have parking space for at least one car in either a drive or garage. The garages have on occasion been converted into additional rooms, but this is not common as most are separate buildings adjacent to the property.

A large proportion of the houses (55%) were originally constructed before 1900 giving the village an extremely rural feel. Very few were built between 1900 and 1950, but in the period between 1950 and 2000 (mainly in the period 1960-1980) much of the spare land within the village was developed. Unusually this construction boom did not take place on the village edge but infilled the centre of the village where there had previously been allotment and open spaces. The Summer Lea bungalows and council houses were built during this period.

Since 2000 the few remaining infill sites have been used up until there are no remaining clear areas inside the development boundary. Many houses do have significant garden space which could allow future building within the village. The village had 4 main farms prior to 1900 and these all included stone built outbuildings, cottages and barns. With the trend to barn conversions in the latter 20th century most of these old buildings have now been converted into living accommodation.

4.2 Construction

The vast majority of the houses (66%) constructed before 1900 are made from local stone using white lias rubble stone and lime mortar with a coursed construction (ref: Priston Farm Survey of 1991). White lias, locally sometimes called grey lias, was laid down in the late Triassic period, and is more than 205 million years old. A particularly fine-grained form of limestone, it is usually quarried in Somerset, though also occasionally quarried in Warwickshire.

With some of the older pre 1900 houses the front part of the house has been faced using ashlar dressed Bath stone, presumably to give the property a more valuable appearance, though this is only in a few instances. More common is the use of ashlar dressed quoins in Bath stone on the corners of some of the houses. Where there is rendering of the walls this is often from quoined corners. Faced stone surrounds are also used around windows to enhance the appearance.



Roofs from this period are generally clay tile or slate though some have been replaced with cement tile, pitched and without barge boards.

Conversion and extensions of the original farm buildings from this period have in general continued with the use of the same materials as the original construction, though in one or two cases more modern materials have also been incorporated together with increased window space.

The period between 1950 and 2000 saw a large increase in the housing stock. Numbers 1-6 Hill View were built at this time by the local council using blockwork construction. When they were sold into private ownership, around 1980, four houses were faced with grey brick and the other two were rendered. They are brick built semi-detached pairs with cement tile roofs. The bricks are grey in appearance so as not to stand out against the other stone buildings in the village. Numbers 4-6 front onto High Street and have the only pavement on this street.

This second half of the 20th century also saw the construction of Summer Lea, a cul-de-sac with 10 bungalows, mostly built of reconstituted stone and with cement tile roofs. It is the only street in the village to have pavements and be without significant front boundary walling or fencing.

The other houses in the village built in this period are generally constructed with reconstituted stone and also with some rendered walls.

4.0 Priston’s Buildings *continued*

Since 2000 only a few houses have been built as infill. They have been built using stone or reconstituted stone and cement tiles or slate roofing materials.

The houses in the village use mainly wooden doors and windows, some with sash windows. Often multi-pane windows are used and a mixture of multi-pane and single pane with small openers occurs on many houses. Windows are white framed or brown framed in general. A substantial number of houses (30%) use upvc for doors, windows or both, which, in some cases, fails to positively contribute to the local historic character.

4.3 Building types and numbers

A 2015 analysis of the housing stock within the village showed that there are 84 houses of the following types:

- 17 Bungalows and chalet style
- 3 terraced houses
- 24 semi-detached houses,
- 26 detached houses, large and small
- 14 houses from converted farm buildings
- 64 houses have garages and 76 have off road parking.

No buildings are more than 2 storeys high except for the Church, Church Farm House, the Manor, the Old Rectory and Village Farm which are all key historic buildings in Priston.

4.4 Traditional historic buildings

Several buildings in the village are included on the National Heritage List for England as ‘listed buildings’. The church is grade I with the remainder grade II, the list is as follows:

- Parish Church of St Luke and St Andrew
- Five chest tombs in the churchyard
- Village Hall
- Manor House
- Church Farmhouse
- Granary (east of Church Farm)
- The Old Rectory (formerly known as Priston Place)

The farming roots of the village have resulted in local vernacular stone built cottages and farmhouses similar to those found throughout Somerset. The village is centred on the old school building (now the Village Hall) and the Ring o’ Bells public house, with the Church and Old Rectory located close by. This historic core area has a distinct character. It is supplemented with pre-1900 detached stone cottages that were associated with the four farms of the village. The Manor in its spacious grounds to the west. The areas between these cottages, farm buildings and the church with its rectory have been developed by additional ribbon infilling along the access routes in and out of the village in the years since 1850. Many of the original farm outbuildings have been converted into dwellings.

The buildings and farms sold by the Priston Manor estate of Mr Vaughan-Jenkins in 1919 were almost all built of local white lias stone. Many of these buildings are simple in design though some feature ashlar-dressed Bath stone and mullioned windows.

Of major importance to the character of the village, the Old Rectory and Church form a green space to the south of the manor house and the village centre. These fine buildings are further augmented by the cricket field to the west. Near to the church is the Granary, an ancient wood, brick and stone storehouse set on staddle stones, a building which epitomises the farming nature of the village.

Priston had several ale and cider houses, although only the Ring o’ Bells still functions as a public house. The Dog Inn, standing at the corner of Priston Lane, still represents a fine example. Built from traditional white lias stone with faced stone window surrounds, it provides a tangible link with the history of the village.

The most significant buildings in the historic village are listed, but there are also many other positive buildings of fine character. They vary, but are generally good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings, including walls, where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly they make a positive contribution to the special character and interest of the village.



4.5 Recent buildings

Since the 1950s housing development has been limited to the addition of Summer Lea, the Council houses, and the infilling of spaces along the main streets with housing of varying types. Some of these can be considered sympathetic to the original character of the village whilst others may not be.

The period between 1950 and 1980 produced the least ‘in character’ buildings in the village. The use of reconstituted stone and rendering, plus cement tile roofs goes against the earlier designs.

More recently most of the post 1980 new builds and barn conversions have made use of traditional materials, and in general kept to the earlier standards in their design. Stone, both cut and rubble, is usually white lias and stone window surrounds have returned in some of the designs. More traditional window design and roofs of clay tile or slate appearance (even when using modern materials) have helped to retain the character of the village.



4.6 New development

The village is surrounded by the green belt and new development opportunities are limited by this and by the housing development boundary. With the very limited infrastructure in the village and poor transport, there is currently no desire to increase the area covered by the housing development boundary. Within the boundary there are very few open sites both suitable for building and with access to the highway, and no sites conforming to the definition of infill (see glossary right). There is a small opportunity to develop new housing by demolishing an existing dwelling and replacing it with new.

The existing gardens, particularly between the church and the village hall, contribute greatly to the overall open aspect of the village and the nature and characteristics inherent in Priston as a whole, and should be protected.

Any new development within an existing property will have to meet strong criteria in design and materials to ensure the retention of the character of the village.



Glossary

Ashlar is finely dressed (cut, worked) masonry, either an individual stone that has been worked until squared or the masonry built of such stone. In Priston, the ashlar walling is usually of Bath stone, a type of oolitic limestone found especially near Bath, grey to yellowish in colour.

Rubble stone is broken stone, of irregular size, shape and texture; undressed especially as a filling-in. Rubble naturally found in the soil is known also as ‘brash’

White Lias is a rare, fine-grained form of limestone and varies in colour from white-cream to pale grey and is traditionally used for building. It is most prevalent in Somerset and gets the name ‘lias’ from the quarrymen’s dialect for ‘layers’, referring to its natural state when quarried.

Coursed construction is where the stone masonry is laid in horizontal rows or courses as best fits the stone being used. The rough nature of rubble stone means these courses are not fully defined and may run one into another.

Mullion is a vertical element that forms a division between units of a window or door. It may be used decoratively or to provide structural support to a lintel above the window opening.

Quoins are masonry blocks at the corner of a wall.

Infill is the filling of small gaps within existing development. For example the building of one or two houses on a small vacant plot in an otherwise extensively built up frontage. The plot will generally be surrounded on at least three sides by developed sites or roads.

5.0 Village Map



Significant Buildings

- 1 Holt House
- 2 Priestbarrow House
- 3 The Manor *
- 4 Village hall and Ring O Bells
- 5 17th Century Granary
- 6 Church Farm House *
- 7 The Church *
- 8 The Old Rectory *
- 9 Hill Farm
- 10 No's 9, 10, 11 High Street
- 11 Edgehill and Rozel
- 12 Brook Cottage
- 13 Village Farm *

* Buildings over 2 storeys

Major Trees

- A Lombardy Poplars
- B Beech
- C Horse Chestnuts
- D Walnut
- E Hornbeam
- F Nuttery
- G Indigenous tree line
- H Oak
- I Field Maple
- J Willow Avenue



1 Holt House



2 Priestbarrow House



3 The Manor



5 17th Century Granary



8 The Old Rectory



12 Brook Cottage



9 Hill Farm



13 Village Farm



J Willow Avenue



6.0 Desirable features in planning applications

An application for planning permission is often a complex aggregation of several documents, drawings and specifications that can present a daunting picture of the proposed changes or construction. This situation may be relieved when the following requirements are followed.

All applicants and developers are actively encouraged to follow the Code of Practice (6.3, pages 28 and 29). This includes recommendations on the expected process to be followed with respect to liaising with the community as well as the form and content of planning applications and provides guidance on the management of the construction phase. It also details what support planning applications will receive from the Parish Council.

All users of this document will find the Planning and Policy Background extracts from the NPPF and from B&NES Local Plan contain valuable additional information. These extracts are available on the Priston website at www.priston.org.uk and they form Part 2 of this VDS.



- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Features | Vistas |
| 1 Finger post on Mill Lane | A From Priest Barrow Hill |
| 2 Village Green | B From Holt House |
| 3 Millennium well and water trough | C From Pensdown Hill |
| 4 Seat around walnut tree | D Towards Wilmington Ridge |
| 5 Church Yard | E Towards Priston Brook Valley |
| 6 Priston Lane Green | F Towards Hill Farm |
| 7 Priston Brook | G Towards Tunley |
| 8 Priston Brook Bridge | H Towards the Church |
| | I From Priston Hill |



top (2) Village Green with Pub and Village Hall beyond
bottom (D) Towards Priston Brook Valley, Priston standing stone

6.1 Visual Impact Assessment

It is often difficult for those involved in the planning process (applicants, neighbours, Parish Councils) to interpret the plan, elevation and section drawings normally submitted as part of planning applications so they can truly understand the visual impact of the proposed development. To enable better understanding of this impact it is strongly recommended that planning applications are accompanied by easy-to-understand visual information in an appropriate format which clearly reveals the relationship to existing surroundings and the potential effect of adding the proposed development. For example the application could include one or more of the following:

- Perspective drawings;
- Computer-generated views;
- 3D-models.

In addition, where proposals are likely to impact on the landscape character of an area or on views, these proposals are expected to be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment undertaken by a qualified practitioner to inform both the design and location of the development [cf B&NES Draft Placemaking Plan 2015 NE.2].

6.2 Relation to height datum

It is crucial that all applications are related to a height datum/spot height which is incorporated into the plans/drawings provided with the proposal, and which allows the impact on neighbouring roof-lines to be easily and unambiguously established.

6.3 Code of practice for developers

6.3.1 Applicants and Developers:

- 1 All are expected to contact the Parish Clerk at the earliest opportunity and be positive and proactive in engaging constructively with the Parish Council at an early stage. They should respect the rights of the Parish Council to express their views.
- 2 They should submit a report with any planning application showing how the policies within the Priston Village Design Statement have been used to inform their proposals.
- 3 They should also submit a report to the Parish Council which explains any changes to an application as a result of discussions with the Parish Council and B&NES Planning Department.
- 4 Planning applications must take account of all applicable National and Local Planning Requirements. The whole of Priston lies within the Green Belt and therefore any planning application should show awareness of this constraint.
- 5 Planning applications must take account of the Priston Housing Development Boundary and any plans submitted should show the development’s position in relation to this boundary.
- 6 Planning applications for a new build or total replacement development should provide detailed survey drawings for the entire plot showing all existing boundaries and features, including contours and critical boundary locations, referenced to Ordnance Survey datum. Subsequent drawings indicating proposed buildings and landscaping should also show final contours and building positions and levels all referenced to the same Ordnance Survey datum and contours.
- 7 Planning applications should provide comprehensive drawings and details of all external works, including hard and soft landscaping, proposed materials, proposed planting and any external features such as steps, walls, external lighting, garages and outbuildings etc.

6.3.2 Planning Applications:

- 1 In order to facilitate a clear understanding by neighbours and other stakeholders of the impact on surroundings of any proposed development, planning applications should be accompanied by easy-to-understand visual information (e.g. perspective drawings, computer generated views, 3-D models) in an appropriate format.
- 2 Proposals should include an assessment of the landscape and visual effects to a level commensurate to the scale of the likely effects.
- 3 All planning applications should demonstrate adequate planning and design for complete surface water management and foul drainage management to ensure that existing localised flooding and treatment plant overloading events are not exacerbated.
- 4 All planning applications should demonstrate that issues of sustainability have been considered and incorporated into the planning process.

6.3.3 Construction Management:

- 1 During construction it is anticipated that developers and contractors will abide by the Code of Considerate Practice as defined by the Considerate Constructors Scheme.
- 2 At all times developers and contractors will respect the community by minimizing the impact of deliveries, parking and work on the public highway. They will ensure access and delivery routes are viable taking into account the narrowness of the lanes and roads. They will ensure that all roads are kept clean and open to traffic, including buses, farm vehicles and emergency vehicles.
- 3 At all times developers and contractors will respect and protect the environment, including all ecology, landscape, vegetation, wildlife and water courses.

6.3.4 Priston Parish Council will:

- 1 Provide a single point of contact.
- 2 Agree an approach to community involvement that is appropriate to the proposed development.
- 3 Be prepared to engage constructively with developers, B&NES and other service providers at an early stage.
- 4 Help provide information to the community and represent a full range of interests.
- 5 Identify at an early stage the issues that are a priority for the Parish Council.
- 6 Help in establishing evidence of gaps or pressures on existing services or facilities and quantify need for local infrastructures improvements.

Glossary

Core Strategy – The B&NES Core Strategy is part of the Local Plan. It sets out the long term planning framework for Bath and North East Somerset. It includes the spatial vision, objectives and policies for a 10 year period from adoption but also looking ahead to 2026. A key diagram will define the broad locations for strategic development sites. It also sets out policies to protect the environment.

NPPF – The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government’s requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.



7.0 Recommendations. The Recommendations in this document are the result of the consultation processes employed by the Village Design Statement committee in accessing the views of villagers of Priston. The villagers showed an overall desire to retain the rural nature of the village and to ensure that any changes were in keeping with the present day features of the village.

The preceding sections have described the village and its surroundings, the housing and the countryside, the history and the traditions to be found in Priston. Change will come, but if the recommendations of the villagers are respected then Priston will develop in a manner that will be enjoyed by all the residents.



7.1 Building design features

RECOMMENDATION 1

- **The design features of all new buildings should respect their immediate surroundings**
Proposals for the addition of any new building in the village should ensure that the integrity and design of the new development retains or enhances the character and appearance of the village as a whole.
 - The size, form and proportions of the building should harmonise with its surroundings and should be sympathetic in scale and height to those surrounding it. (see map showing village building heights).
 - A pitched roof of traditional clay tile or slate materials is to be preferred and any solar panel installation should be discreetly mounted.
 - The use of traditional timber and glass materials in doors and windows, including the appropriate use of stone surrounds around windows should be encouraged

RECOMMENDATION 2

- **Maintain the existing character in changes to existing buildings**
 - As many of the existing historic features of the building should be retained as possible. Reintroduction of such features where lost should be based on historic evidence.
 - The materials used in changes to the building should be in character with those existing and the use of traditional materials encouraged.
 - The size and form of the alterations to the building should harmonise with the surroundings and should be sympathetic in scale and height to the neighbouring properties (see map showing village building heights).
 - Pitched roofs are preferred to flat roofs on any extensions or alterations and should use the same materials as the original building roof. The use of traditional materials should be encouraged. Solar panel installations should be discreetly mounted.
 - The use of similar traditional materials and design in doors and windows to the existing structure should be encouraged and if stone surrounds around windows already exist they should be retained.

RECOMMENDATION 3

- **Provide provision for parking**
It is essential that any new building should provide adequate off-road parking within the boundary of the site and that it should have minimal visual impact. Alterations to existing buildings should ensure that adequate off-road parking is retained within the changes.
www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Evidence-Base/Transport/car_parking_standards_december_2015.pdf

7.2 Design features immediately surrounding buildings

RECOMMENDATION 4

- **Retain existing vistas and landscaping**
 - Many properties within the village have historical and architectural value and possess important vistas. These should not be compromised by new or altered buildings.
 - In addition the views from the lanes approaching the village are also spectacular. These views are important to the village as well as the property owner and should not be compromised by the new development.
 - Gardens around buildings, and shrubs and trees that contribute to the visual character of the village should be treasured and protected.
 - Existing trees, many of which make a significant contribution to the landscape, should be preserved. The design of the landscaping should consider its immediate surroundings and harmonise with it by use of suitable shrubs and plants.
 - Developments should be considered in the light of their impact on these views and landscaping, which should be protected as far as possible. (See map of village features and views)

RECOMMENDATION 5

- **Ensure boundary materials are appropriate**
The village contains many natural stone walls. The use of natural stone walls of white lias rubble stone with lime based mortar should be used for street frontages in preference to hedges, railings or wooden panels.

RECOMMENDATION 6

- **External lighting should be minimal**
Priston's dark sky is valued by 90% of the residents. Any new or altered development should not increase the level of light pollution.
The village supports a maternal roost colony of pipistrelle bats from the Englishcombe protected bat colony and any increase of external lighting may seriously affect their flight corridor and foraging ability. Any additional external lighting should, where possible, be controlled to be on only when needed.

RECOMMENDATION 7

- **Surface water run-off should be controlled**
Any new or altered development should be designed so as to prevent flooding in the village.
 - Permeable materials for hard standing should be used and the protection of existing ditches and run off areas should be ensured.
 - Designs should minimise the run off of water into the roadways and not impair the water flow within the brook.

7.0 Recommendations *continued*

7.3 The relationship between buildings and their surroundings

RECOMMENDATION 8

■ **Avoid inappropriate changes to housing density and size**

The maximum height of any new building should not be higher than any adjacent neighbouring property in order to maintain the existing village character. Any infill housing between existing houses should be sympathetic in scale and height to those surrounding it.

Open views should be maintained.

It is essential that all applications are related to a height datum which is incorporated into the plans/drawings provided with the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION 9

■ **Ensure new or altered properties blend well with the village character**

Developments should be planned to ensure preservation of the visual impact character of Priston as a rural village served by lanes rather than roads and with generally widely spaced small-scale buildings of single house depth, mature trees, and green coverings in all directions.

RECOMMENDATION 10

■ **Design and locate outbuildings with consideration to their visual impact**

Attention should be paid to the design and siting of new outlying sheds, stables or similar buildings so as to minimise their visual impact.

RECOMMENDATION 11

■ **Include a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

All planning applications should be accompanied by an easy-to-understand visual assessment of the anticipated effects of the application on the landscape and the surrounding area to a level commensurate to the scale of the likely effects This information should be in an appropriate format which clearly reveals the relationship to existing surroundings and the potential effect of adding the proposed development.

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should also inform on both the design and location of the development.

7.4 General planning recommendations

In addition to the specific recommendations relating to the design of new buildings or alterations to existing properties, the survey of the villagers and the other consultation exercises used to produce the VDS produced a number of recommendations relating to more general issues in the village.

RECOMMENDATION 12

■ **When development is allowed, improve the village infrastructure first**

All new or replacement buildings in the village should ensure that, when needed, the existing infrastructure is enhanced or improved in a manner capable of supporting the changes. Developers should ensure that the capacity of the water supply (potable and sewage), electricity supply and communications facilities are capable of supporting the changes. Transport, roads and pedestrian access should be examined and updated when required.

The re-routing of overhead utility services underground should be encouraged.

Developments should be designed to ensure they do not adversely impact on accessibility or settings of local footpaths and other rights of way.

RECOMMENDATION 13

■ **Respect the village green spaces**

The village green, the walnut tree and the seat around it and the small green at Priston Lane should all be maintained.(see map of village features and views)

RECOMMENDATION 14

■ **Telephone and postal services**

It is essential that the mobile phone coverage to the village is maintained to allow calls the emergency services should either of the two village defibrillators have to be used. The post box next to the old telephone box serves for posting mail. Both these facilities are valued by the community and should be retained if at all possible.

RECOMMENDATION 15

■ **Enhance road safety**

The finger posts direction signs around the village are in character with the rural area and should be maintained. The proliferation of other street signs and road markings should be avoided. Any signs which are considered essential for safety reasons should be erected in such a manner so as not to obstruct passageways, sight lines and turning areas.

Further information on planning and architectural design may be obtained from:

The Royal Institute of British Architects
(www.architecture.com)

The Royal Chartered Institute for Landscape Architects
(www.landscapeinstitute.org)

Bath and North East Somerset Council Planning Department
(www.bathnes.gov.uk).

This VDS is subject to ongoing change as planning policy evolves and the latest version may be found online at www.priston.org.uk

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Design and production
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Winner of the
Priston emblem competition:
Tom Cantwell