










KNIGHTCOTE

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



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LOCATION

Knightscote is an attractive hamlet situated in open countryside almost equidistant from encircling major towns, Stratford-upon-Avon, Leamington Spa and Banbury and due east from junction 12 (the Gaydon turn-off) of the M40 motorway. The Burton Dassett Hills and Country Park are easily seen a mile and a half to the south of the hamlet.

The hamlet lies on the winding road between Bishops Itchington, two miles to the north, and the Fenny Compton to Northend road a mile to the south.

INTRODUCTION

This Design Statement refers to the natural and man-made characteristics that make Knightscote distinctive.

Knightscote is a small hamlet that nestles within the surrounding open farmlands and is distinctive through its smallness. A row of thatched cottages might be the subject of many a Victorian painting and at least one retains a natural garden. Several farmhouses are built in local Hornton stone. The residents of Knightscote have a friendly spirit which is warm and quite special.

The Design Statement describes the character of Knightscote, highlighting the qualities & features that are highly valued by the residents. It has been written by members of the community following the opportunity for all residents to contribute their views through a questionnaire, a community workshop/presentation, through draft documents and an exhibition prior to the submission of the final Statement.

The hamlet is currently identified in the Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan as a Category 4 settlement with very few services. In policy terms the opportunities for further residential development are therefore constrained.

AIM

The aim of this Design Statement is to guide design and influence future changes that might occur in a way that respects the majority views and preserves the character and distinctiveness of the village. The views of the community expressed in this Village Design Statement will become Supplementary Planning Guidance and should be read alongside the policies of the Stratford-on-Avon District Local Plan, Parish Appraisal, the District Design Guide, Countryside Design Summary and other forms of Supplementary Planning Guidance when considering design issues.

POPULATION

The population of Knightscote consists of 169 residents in 69 households (1998). There is a nucleus of 'old' local families, but the majority of residents have moved into the area within the last 25 years. Age groups are varied with approximately 30 children and the remainder of the population being young or middle-aged couples mainly commuting to work in nearby urban centres, together with a substantial number of elderly retired folk.



HISTORY

The late C L Matthews, well known Bedfordshire archaeologist and author of many papers and books on pre-Roman Britain, visited Knightscote in 1984. He noted that the man-made flat area on the hills with earth mounds at its eastern extremity, is the typical configuration of a Saxon fort. This overlooks the southern approach to Knightscote. From the layout of the terrain he concluded that there was probably a Saxon village in the valley to the south of the present hamlet and the inhabitants relied upon the fortified settlement for shelter and protection in case of attack.

Knightcote is mentioned in the Domesday Survey (1085) as having 12 villaines with 3 ploughs and 3 knight's cots (dwelling from which the word 'cottage' derived). It was a subsidiary manor to that of Dasset but sufficiently important to enjoy considerable autonomy, having its own Lord of the Manor with three attendant knights and its own clergyman.

It was held as half knight's fee by Ralph de Knightcote in 1242 and by his successor Simon de Knightcote in 1270 (at that time amounting to two and one half virgates). In 1302 Simon made conveyance of 3 messauges and about 150 acres of arable and meadow to Mr Henry de Bray. In 1350 Joan Dyson, daughter of Julian, daughter of Simon de Knightcote, conveyed the Manor to William de Sutton and Amice who, in 1356, sold it to William de Peyte. He 'held it of Sir John Sudely' in 1367 as one quarter of knight's fee. It then passed to Laurence Dine in 1380 and shortly after to Thomas Purefrey whose descendent and namesake conveyed it in 1495 to William Hussey.



The manor was then purchased by John Smythe, a solicitor from Coventry, who before his death in 1501 settled it on his son Henry. When Henry died in 1514 the manor passed to his wife for life and one year later to their son Walter (later Sir Walter Smythe). His grandson Sir John Smythe of Crabbet in Sussex owned it until his death in 1662 when it was sold by his son, John, to Elizabeth Yardley. Her direct descendant, William (Bill) Yardley still farms Manor Farm to this day.

The Manorial rights appear to have lapsed about this time, alterations were made to the Manor House the present building (Manor Farm) being only a part of the original which was substantially larger. It was moated, traces of the moat can still be seen together with Norfolk reeds which were probably cultivated as the most durable type of thatching available. Virtually all of the hamlet houses, including Manor House, were thatched until 1840 when the Public Health Act called for minimum ceiling height in bedrooms and roofs of slate or clay tile replaced the thatch on heightened walls.

The hamlet was essentially agricultural in character and retains a small agricultural hamlet aspect although mechanisation and modern farming methods have meant that only a few of the residents are employed directly in farming while the remainder commute to nearby industrial centres, work from home or are retired.



LANDSCAPE SETTING AND CHARACTER

CHARACTER & DESIGN IN STRATFORD ON AVON DISTRICT: A COUNTRYSIDE DESIGN SUMMARY (Stratford on Avon District Council 1998)

Knightcote Village Design Statement provides additional detail to the Countryside Design Summary prepared by Stratford on Avon District Council. The Countryside Design Summary sets out some of the issues relevant to design that the District Council considers necessary in order to maintain and enhance quality and character of the District.

It divides the District into five main areas and Knightcote lies in the region known since mediaeval times as Feldon, a term derived from the Old English 'feld' meaning 'open land'. Feldon comprises three areas, Mudstone Vale which includes Long Itchington, Lias Uplands with Bishops Itchington, Kineton and Ladbroke and Clay Vale running perpendicular to the drainage lines of the rivers Stour, Dene and Itchen where Knightcote is situated. Lower Lias Clay underlies this broad flat vale with its occasional small, rounded hills, small geometric field pattern, pockets of permanent pasture often with ridge and furrow, wide road-side verges bounded by ditches and hedges with numerous elm stumps. The vale has relatively few longer straight roads. Its small villages, along with scattered farm-steads and dwellings, include Knightcote, Whatcote, Oxhill, Idlicote and Fulready where the principle wall materials are Lias stone, marlstone and brick. The term Hornton Stone is

the local name for Middle Lias Ironstone quarried from under the Marlstone that caps the ridge above Feldon Vale on Edge Hill.



RELIEF AND APPROACHES

The hamlet harmonises naturally into the landscape, having two main approaches, from Bishops Itchington in the north and from Fenny Compton in the south. Both are via quiet, narrow, meandering country lanes with hedges and wide verges passing through open farm land.

Knightcote lies in flat countryside at an elevation of 90 metres above sea-level with the Burton Dassett Hills directly to the south rising up to 183 metres.

RECENT ADDITIONS

During the past seventy years, the number of residences in Knightcote has doubled. Most of the older properties, pre-1930, were built of local Hornton stone but the later additions have been predominantly brick, this being a cheaper and more readily available material.



The first major extension to the hamlet was Poplar Close in the 1930's, built by the Council and typical of public building of the period. Over the next few years a number of brick properties were built as in-filling between some of the stone properties. The last major extension was Kimble Close, which replaced the old broiler farm in the centre of the hamlet. Named after the local benefactor, John Kimble, it was built in the early nineties and consists of eighteen detached houses of brick, stone and timber in a variety of styles.

The latest addition to the hamlet is the new village hall. Built of brick with a front elevation of Hornton stone, it replaces an original wooden structure erected in about 1952 on land leased at peppercorn-rent from Mrs I Griffiths of Knightcote Hall Farm and, later donated by Mr W A L Griffiths. The new hall was funded by money raised by the residents from community functions together with community grants from the Rural Community Council, Stratford District Council and Burton Dassett Parish Council.



WATER

The higher ground of the Burton Dassett hills to the south of Knightcote has given rise to natural water sources. Our local one is known as Stockwell Spring. Before mains water was piped into the hamlet the supply came from the south via pipes supplied by the 'John Kimble Trust' to three stand pipes situated at the 'dog kennel' features, one at each end of Knightcote and one at High Ledge Farm (now known as Knightcote House). There is one natural, but several man-made ponds within the hamlet, in Kimble Close and Knightcote Hall and a moat within the grounds of Manor Farm, which also has an outlying saline pond.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

- *Knightcote, despite recent additions, remains essentially a rural Warwickshire hamlet largely characteristic of the Feldon area, still reflecting its proximity to the fringes of the Cotswolds. The peace and tranquillity that this engenders, which is enhanced by approaches through quiet country lanes, must be preserved in any future development*
- *Knightcote lies snugly on the 'bed' of the geological feature known as Lake Harrison. Any new evolution should maintain and reinforce the lowland character of the hamlet as a Feldon Clay Vale Settlement*
- *Local hydrology patterns, waterways, ponds & springs together with the fauna surrounding them should be preserved. The conservation and management of existing water features and, where appropriate, the creation of new ones should be encouraged.*
- *With the exception of Leylandii, the protection of existing trees and naturalised plants should be a priority. Roadside verges should be preserved and suitably maintained to encourage wild flowers & grasses. Likewise, roadside hedges and those around properties and in surrounding countryside should be retained and maintained to preserve habitats for animal and birdlife and a source of food.*
- *Care should be taken to ensure that the overall aspect from the Burton Dassett hills remains unspoilt and that the views from the hamlet are properly assessed when considering location and design of new development.*
- *'Upgrading' country road approaches by widening, straightening or kerbing should be avoided. Utility Companies should be encouraged by the Parish Council to route their services underground.*



SETTLEMENT PATTERN

HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

The hamlet extends for approximately half a mile and the properties lie both sides of the road with Kimble Close and Poplar Close branching off. On entering the hamlet from the north the road takes a sharp 90 degree left hand bend and leaves by a sharp 90 degree bend to the right, which has a traffic-calming effect.

The public footpaths consist of:
 SM199 to Bishops Itchington
 SM134 to Northend
 SM118 to Watergall



Further footpaths take you onto the Burton Dassett Hills, Gaydon and Kineton. Over recent years all these footpaths have been improved and refurbished with new stiles and finger-posts.

HOUSING

Settlements often evolved around water courses and other natural features. Knightcote hamlet followed the road and grew around the oldest buildings with the gaps gradually being filled in. Smaller buildings tended to be enlarged and the only remaining spaces are now seen to be at the front and rear of existing buildings leaving little room for development. With the disappearance of some older buildings at the eastern end, the main body of the hamlet is clustered around the chapel and the village hall with a number of out-lying farms and dwellings. There is a varied mix of houses and styles but the older original properties provide the main visual impact and should, it is felt, be preserved at all costs. There are strong feelings held by many of the residents, that to achieve this,



new developments such as conversions or extensions to existing buildings must be very closely controlled in order to maintain the present balance and harmony.

DESIGN GUIDELINES



- *The redevelopment of disused buildings and opportunities for the enhancement of sites can be the guide for any changes in the hamlet.*

- *Any new building project should follow the existing settlement pattern incorporating, where appropriate, its own space.*

- *Urban standards of lighting are inappropriate in the rural environment and no more than already exists should be adopted. Footway standard lighting is the norm for all areas.*



- *Any further lighting that might become necessary could make use of existing poles or be of traditional design using materials more in sympathy with the hamlet's character. When existing lighting needs to be replaced opportunities should be taken to explore these higher standards of provision.*

- *The landscape approaches to the hamlet are significant to the overall character of the setting of Knightcote and should be conserved.*

- *Recycled tarmac and not slabs is preferable for pathways in the hamlet. Concrete curbing should not be expected along country roads. Where necessary the bordering of pathways in the hamlet would benefit from granite setts or other sympathetic materials.*

- *Street furniture, particularly signage, should be kept to an absolute minimum to satisfy requirements.*



SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

Through the Village Design Statement a boundary has been identified which gives the hamlet identity. The boundary to the north appears readily to coincide with the garden hedges of the thatched cottages. To the east it joins in and around the immediate confines of Manor Farm. Then it goes south along Hambridge Lane to the SM118 stile, west along SM118 to the next stile around the Manor Cottage Gardens and thence south again to join the stream at Hambridge Lane finger-post turn. It turns west again along the watercourse to and around Kimble Close to the garden boundary of Knightcote Hall Farm. It then goes west and north around New House Farm garden west along the farm car park, around the rear garden fence of Knightcote Lodge and Old School House to complete the boundary around the HGV entrance.

OPEN SPACES AND BOUNDARIES

The pattern of open spaces within the hamlet tends to be the result of changed agricultural practices. Two or three old or redundant farmyards and small fields have become garden space. Knightcote House, formerly High Ledge Farm, is an example. All remain in private ownership and for the most part are not easily seen from the road. Land and holdings have changed ownership over the years creating larger farms resulting in use of redundant farm buildings for residential purposes with quite large gardens. Crab Castle Farm, Ongar Farm and The Byre (Poplars Farm) are examples.

The high hedges which front many of the old properties are a reminder that until recently animals were herded though the hamlet.

Knightcote is surrounded by privately owned agricultural land which has left no publicly owned 'open space' suitable for community use, although the hamlet itself is well spaced within its boundaries. Local functions such as 'Open Gardens' are voluntarily supported by landowners allowing fields to be used for car parking spaces.

The area in front of the village hall is used regularly for summer entertaining.

TREES

Knightcote now has few mature and stately trees following the effects of Dutch Elm disease which destroyed all of the trees on the approaches to the hamlet. Residents appreciate the Coronation Oak, the village hall chestnut and its larger fellow in Kimble Close together with those north of the thatched cottages. A smaller tree in Poplars Close is the only subject of a Tree Preservation Order.

Hedgerows typically contain hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, hazel, ash and oak and occasional damson trees and are a distinctive feature to the approaches of the hamlet.

FLORA, FAUNA AND VEGETATION (ECOLOGICAL CHARACTER)

The surrounding countryside is of mixed farming; arable land and permanent pasture being the most predominant. Hedgerows consist of a mixed planting of trees and bramble and the generous verges, remnants of the old Drovers' Roads contain a profusion of wild flowers.

The countryside supports a variety of mammals and birds, including roe or fallow and mountjack deer, rabbits, hares, badgers, foxes, herons and owls. Our gardens contain many national birds.

BOUNDARIES AND WALLING

Properties in the established part of the hamlet have high hedges that are well maintained and treasured. Newer developments are more open-plan. There are comparatively few walls; one of stone at Knightcote House entrance and a long garden wall of red brick at Stockwell Farm are examples. Fencing is mostly in the new development and has been screened by careful planting.



VIEWS: LOOKING INTO AND OUT OF THE VILLAGE

There are views of open countryside from almost everywhere in the hamlet which are greatly valued. Several properties have striking rural views themselves, which are treasured by their occupants.

There is a panoramic view of the hamlet from Burton Dassett hills and this view devolves on the southern approach by road or the SM134 footpath.

The Burton Dassett hills provide the major focus when looking south out of the hamlet and the eye is particularly drawn to the beacon.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

- *The retention of features such as boundary hedges and open spaces is essential to the overall character and feel of the hamlet. The preservation and maintenance of existing trees and footpaths is very important. All these should be given full consideration in the design and layout of any new development and enhanced where necessary.*
- *To retain the character of the hamlet the spaces between buildings must be maintained. No two hedges are the same and this variety should be retained. Hedges are often high. These features of spaces and boundaries should be reflected in any new development design.*
- *For the same reason mixed hedge planting for hedging & screening should be encouraged in preference to wire fencing.*
- *The views into and out of the hamlet as described and illustrated in this document contribute to the overall character of Knightcote. These should be both preserved and respected in the design and layout of new development.*

BUILDINGS AND LANDMARKS

NATURAL FEATURES

The Burton Dassett Hills, designated a country park, are seen from miles around. To the north and south are pockets of permanent pasture, some with preserved ridge and furrow. Roadside verges are wide in Knightcote bottoms, Hambridge Lane and the road south to Northend. Hedgerow stumps stand as memorials to the elms they once supported and the whole of the clay vale now in the broad, flat openness mourns their passing.

LISTED BUILDINGS

There are seven listed buildings in Knightcote. These are The Lodge, Sundial Cottage, Pear Tree Cottage, The Old Forge, The Manor House Farm, barn and stables at Stockwell Farm and Stockwell Farm itself. They are already covered by regulations for listed buildings.

HOUSING FORM

Most of the older buildings on the main road through the hamlet are of stone and in the long narrow form with little external decoration of the traditional Warwickshire farmhouse style such as Knightcote Hall and Poplars Farm. A notable exception is The Old Forge (until recently a Post Office) which is painted timber



Tudor style. They are two storey, mostly detached but with a terrace of thatched cottages in the centre.

The few modern buildings are the village hall, three bungalows and two or three two-storey houses. In retrospect it may have been preferable if these had all been built in traditional style. The stone front elevation of some and the style and positioning of the others, behind large gardens and high hedges, tends to soften the lines. So they do not detract overall from the appearance of the street.

The houses in Poplars Close are of late thirties construction with rendered elevations and some brick features. They have mellowed with the passage of time and, thanks to well-kept gardens, do not detract from the general rural aspect of the hamlet. Those in Kimble Close have a variety of styles and of external decorative features which give them individual character and interest but unfortunately are not in any way characteristic of the Feldon area.

LAYOUT

From Bishops Itchington the early Victorian Old School House is the first building one notices on the right while the three modern bungalows on the right hand corner are scarcely noticeable due to their positioning and screening. Turning into the main street of the hamlet the three modern houses, the Methodist Chapel and the village community hall also fit in quite well with the general picture. This again is due to their position well back from the road, visual screening to the front and sympathetic treatment of the front elevations.

MATERIALS

Hornton Stone was used for most of the original buildings, all with a common design style. Roofing is of thatch, slate or clay tiles, the two latter having replaced original thatch around 1840 owing to the requirements of the Public Health Act of that time.

The newer construction has mostly been in brick with or without stone front elevations.

There is scarcely a stone chimney to be seen, existing ones being recent. Any old stone ones have been replaced by brick.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

- *Some of the older houses in the hamlet are listed and, therefore, internal and external changes are subject to listed building consent. Alterations and possible extensions to remaining older houses should be done sympathetically especially in relation to the materials and style to be used for windows, doors, porches, chimneys, eaves and roofs. Change in the shapes and window openings can be particularly damaging.*
- *In the Hornton part of the hamlet, Hornton stone should be used. Wherever brick is the building material it should be characteristic of the Feldon area. Care should be taken to ensure that coursing and pointing materials are in sympathy with existing buildings. Gables with old slates, plain tiles or thatch are preferable to hipped roofs.*
- *Existing materials (such as tiles, slates, bricks and stone) should be reused wherever possible.*
- *Conversions, extensions and new buildings should match and harmonise with original buildings and neighbouring properties in their building materials and design and be in keeping with the size and scale of the rest of the hamlet.*



CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS PART OF FELDON AND SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE ARE ILLUSTRATED HERE AND ARE TO BE ENCOURAGED:

- Where the planning process allows for the adoption or conversion of buildings, for the purpose of some other use such as a cottage industry, planning conditions should restrict use to that one purpose only. Extensions of IT services should be foreseen in controlling further expansion.
- Agriculture is our local "heavy industry". Urban type light or heavy industry would not fit comfortably in the rural environment, as it would destroy the character of the hamlet as described above. Employment opportunities might arise through advanced technology with more people working from home or in sensitively designed and converted redundant buildings. The latter might also provide space for craftsmen or small-scale commercial activity, which brings little noise or pollution risk.
- For any proposed development, change of use or conversions within the hamlet or outlying farms the inclusion of an elevation plan or perspective drawing should be encouraged. For properties within the hamlet the features detailed in these guidelines should be shown. For outlying farms or dwellings the effect on the views from the hamlet and on the locality generally should be illustrated because the impact on the hamlet could be significant.
- Utilities should preferably be routed underground when they are renewed or installed to help reduce the intrusion of poles and overhead lines.
- Private Property Security lighting affecting neighbours and road users should be carefully placed.
- There are drainage problems with surface and highway water flowing from the north to the south of the hamlet. In any future development consideration should be given to the increased flow of water through the present drainage system.



WINDOWS and EAVES

Casement and fixed lights generally have a single transom and are surmounted by painted lintels.



Painted lintels
Hornton



Cement fillet



Painted wooden
barge board

Dormer windows should be unobtrusive, preferably not hipped and discreet in number.

WALLS



Rounded coursed
house wall



Rounded random
coarsed house wall



Brick

ROOFS & CHIMNEYS



Slate with brick
chimney



Tile



Thatch (with parapet)
and brick chimney

Chimneys should be in stone or brick with an oversailing course below the top course or cut stone capping.

PORCHES and DOORWAYS



Hornton



Cottage

Joinery on domestic buildings should be painted

ROAD KERBS



Granite sets



DESIGN AND A SENSE OF PLACE

Knightcote is a hamlet and, if the diversity of the countryside is to be preserved, Knightcote should remain a hamlet. We record in this Statement the influences of geology, which in turn influences the landscape, the location of the hamlet, its settlement pattern, history and the mix of buildings, population and occupations that have resulted. Knightcote remains a small working hamlet despite the rapid changes of the 20th Century and there is no reason why it should not evolve whilst maintaining its still unique character.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Graphic design by the DESIGN AND CARTOGRAPHICS department at Stratford District Council.





TO BISHOPS ITCHINGTON →



Knightcote House

Poplar Close



Maner House



New House Farm



The Old Forge



Knightcote Hall Farm

Kimble Close



Poplars Farm



Stockwell Farm



Stockwell Spring



TO NORTHERD and COMPTON →



Knightcote VILLAGE

