

# DESIGN IN PRESTON



A Parish Design Statement prepared by the Residents of the  
Parish of Preston Nr. Cirencester

## Introduction

Successful Parish/Village Design demands a harmony between traditional and new buildings. This enhances both the appearance of the environment and community life. Future design should, therefore, consider patterns and details which give Preston its special character.

This statement is intended to encourage good design by analyzing the characteristic style of Preston and suggesting ways in which it might be applied to all future landscape and building activity in the Parish.

This Statement provides guidance to all interested parties; including Cotswold District Council, the Parish Council when considering any planning applications (e.g. developers of new housing in the Parish) and homeowners contemplating work to their property.

## How the Statement was prepared

Further to a decision by the Parish Council a Steering Group was set up to prepare the Design Statement. This Steering Group met on a regular basis during 2015/2016 to discuss the content of the Statement and the most suitable way forward. This resulted in the distribution of a questionnaire in October 2015 to all the residents of the Parish. The number of questionnaires returned represented 43% of the properties. Approximately 50% of the Village responded. Analysis of the responses to the questionnaire has enabled the Steering Group to prepare this document which, following completion was presented to the Parish Council for approval. The approved

document was then submitted to the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council for their comments following which it was then submitted to the District Council for them to put it on their web-site as informal guidance to interested parties.

## Preston

The Village of Preston lies approximately 2 miles to the South East of Cirencester Town Centre with the Roman Roads of Fosse Way (now Kingshill Lane) to the West, Ermin Way (now A419) to the South and the new A417 dual carriageway Cirencester By-pass to the North East. A majority of the housing development lies alongside the main and only road that runs in a north easterly direction through the village.

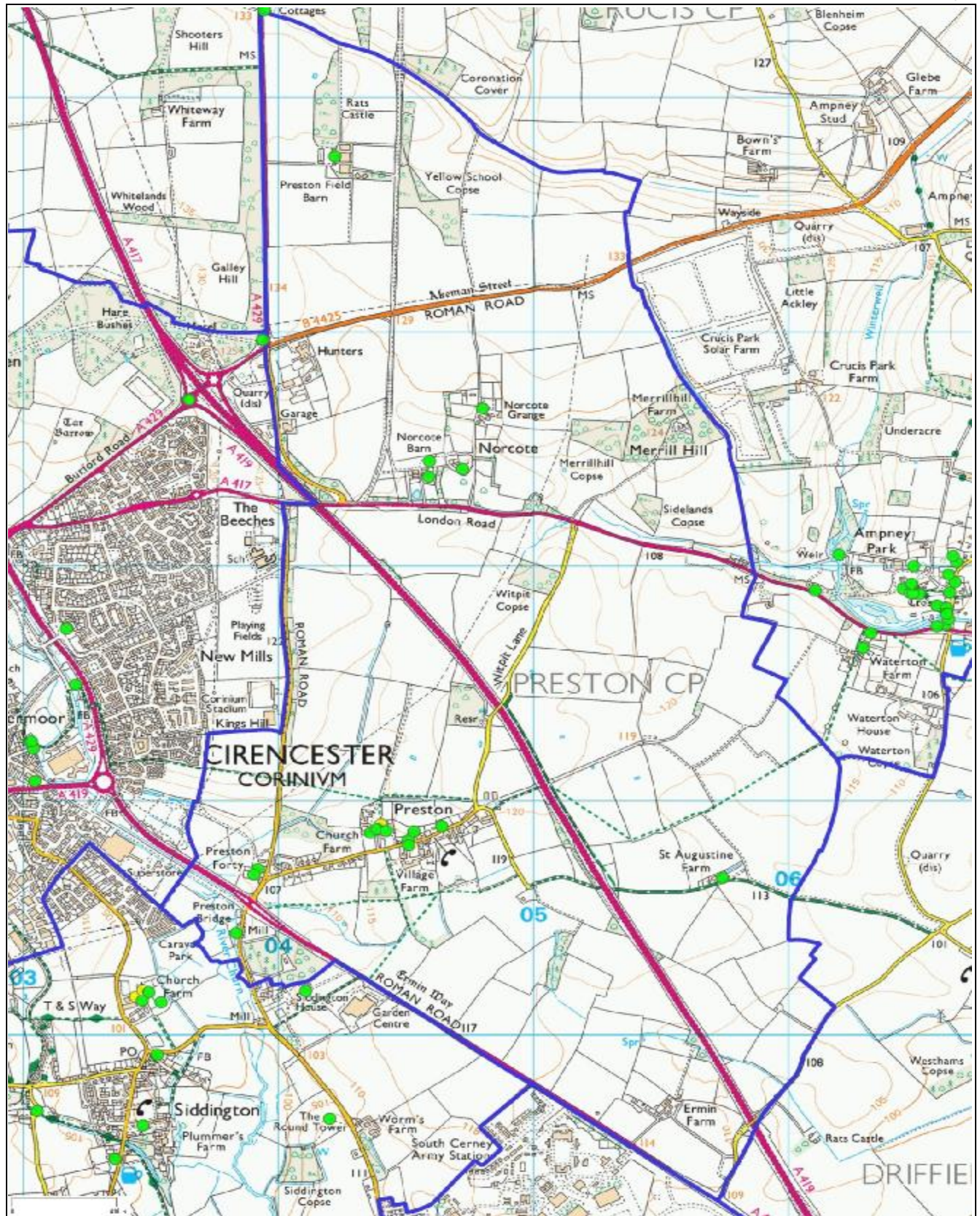
The Parish of Preston extends North along the Fosse Way (A429 Stow Road) to Ragged Hedge Covert, East along London Road (A417) to near the entrance of Ampney Park, South to the A419 road junction opposite the South Cerney Airfield and West towards Cirencester. Part of the new Kingshill Meadow development on the outskirts of Cirencester used to be in the Parish but, as part of boundary reorganization, the boundary was moved in 2015 to enable the whole of this development to be part of Cirencester Town.

This Design Statement is intended to provide guidance for development throughout the Parish.





Preston Parish showing Listed Buildings



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## Landscape and Natural Environment

The parish area consists mainly of undulating arable fields, typical of the Cotswold landscape, that are surrounded by hedges and dry stone walls. The area is crossed by numerous drainage ditches and is prone to limited localized field flooding.

To the north of Preston village the fields are dotted with a number of old dew ponds and an underground reservoir is located to the south of the A417, along Witpit Lane.

There are no areas of designated SSSI within the parish, but the area north of Akeman Street is within the Cotswold ANOB.

The parish is crisscrossed by the routes of old Roman Roads (the Fosse Way, Ermin Way and Akeman Street) and also includes the route of a dismantled railway, now the main access road to the Organic Farm shop at Abbey Home Farm.

Most of the farmland is arable, though the Abbey Estate does have some livestock. The parish is also dotted with a number of copses, which help to break up the skyline. The copses and drainage ditches also provide excellent wildlife corridors. Buzzards and Green woodpeckers are resident and Red Kites, Heron, Otters and roe and fallow deer are often seen.

Despite its proximity to Cirencester, the fact that most of the land is arable farmland and subject to rotational cropping helps to maintain the distinctly

rural feel of the parish. Within the village of Preston, the farmland “gap” in the middle also helps add to that rurality.



## A brief history of the Village

Archaeological finds in the local area show evidence of occupation back to Neolithic times, through Roman, Saxon and medieval times to the present day.

The agricultural hamlet of Preston has stood in the Cotswold countryside for more than a thousand years. Documented in the Domesday Book as being held by Regenbald, (debatably) the chancellor of Edward the Confessor, it formed a part of the endowment to the Abbey of Cirencester by Henry 1<sup>st</sup> in the mid part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century along with the majority of Regenbald's estates.

So it remained over the course of the next four hundred years, until the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 1540s. The Church of Preston, like other possessions of the Abbey, stayed in royal hands until it, along with other estates in the area was purchased from Queen Elizabeth by her physician, Dr. Richard Master, in 1564. That purchase began a relationship between the Master (subsequently Chester Master) family and Preston that continues to this day.



Early maps, including those prepared at the time of the Inclosure of the parish in 1772, and aerial photographs taken both before and after the Second World War show a community much unchanged clustered around the church at its centre, with an imposing new rectory erected in 1820.

Two or three more substantial farmhouses near the centre were interspersed with smaller cottages, forming a ribbon-like settlement along the central part of the village road. Research at Historic England reveals that there are 17 Listed Buildings in the Parish with 11 in the Village; these range from the 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century Anglican Church with some monuments in the Churchyard to individual houses, mainly farmhouses, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> (c25%), 18<sup>th</sup> (c20%) and 19<sup>th</sup> (c45%) centuries.

Between 1950 and 1980 that basic structure was expanded with new dwellings being built on intermittent sites along the roadside from the crossroads at the western end to the junction at the eastern end to the Ampneys one way and Harnhill and Driffield to the other. That development was continued into the 1980's and 1990's with the conversion of farm buildings into both residential and small commercial property. However the

fundamentally rural nature of the outline of Preston has been maintained, despite a change in the demography of the village from the historical, purely agricultural, to the more varied background of today.

## Movement Routes

The Village and Parish is served by major roads that link quickly to the National Road network. The nearby A417/A419 dual carriageway links the Parish with the M5 to the North (less than 30 mins) and the M4 to the South (about 20 mins), whilst the local roads connect with Fairford to the East, Stroud to the West, Malmesbury to the South West and Stow on the Wold to the North. Cirencester is approx. 10 minutes drive away or a 40 minute walk along quiet footpaths or streets. In addition there are well used Rights of Way around the village and to the villages of Ampney Crucis and Siddington as well as alongside the uncategorized road through the village where there is a mixture of unlit footpaths and grass verges.

A short walk along unlit routes will take Village Residents to well stocked supermarkets and an hotel and restaurant whilst, slightly further afield in Cirencester, Siddington, South Cerney and Ampney Crucis there are many Public Houses and restaurants. There are many local and national shops in Cirencester.

In addition an occasional bus service that connects the Village to nearby villages, Cirencester and the Hospital.

From the responses to the questionnaire Villagers expressed their concern about

the safety of crossing the A419 dual carriageway at its junction with Kingshill Lane (Preston Toll Bar) on foot and the situation has worsened with the recent changes to the road layout.

In addition the recent Cirencester developments along London Road have increased the flow of traffic along Kingshill Lane resulting in the strong request from Villagers for a cycle/pedestrian path alongside to provide access to the Primary and Secondary Schools and Sports facilities on Kingshill Lane.

### The Village Settlement

Preston Parish is made up of a range of housing characterized by the age, size and design of the property. How the Village has changed in the last 75 years is shown on the maps on the following pages. Until the 1900s the community was largely agricultural with farmhouses, cottages, a school and Rectory close to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Parish Church. These original buildings give the village its rural character and Cotswold charm. The school building is now the village hall.

During the early 1900s a few larger individual houses were built in and around the village (Foxleaze, Preston Cottage and Ermine Cottage)

Further residential development started in the 1950s with three bungalows at the west end of the village. Housing for farm workers at Forty Farm were also built in 1952.

The village continued to grow in the 1970s and 80s, with a small Housing Association Development (Kingsway) in 1974 for over 60s at the west end of the village then a

small number of detached family homes following the line of the single village street in Preston.

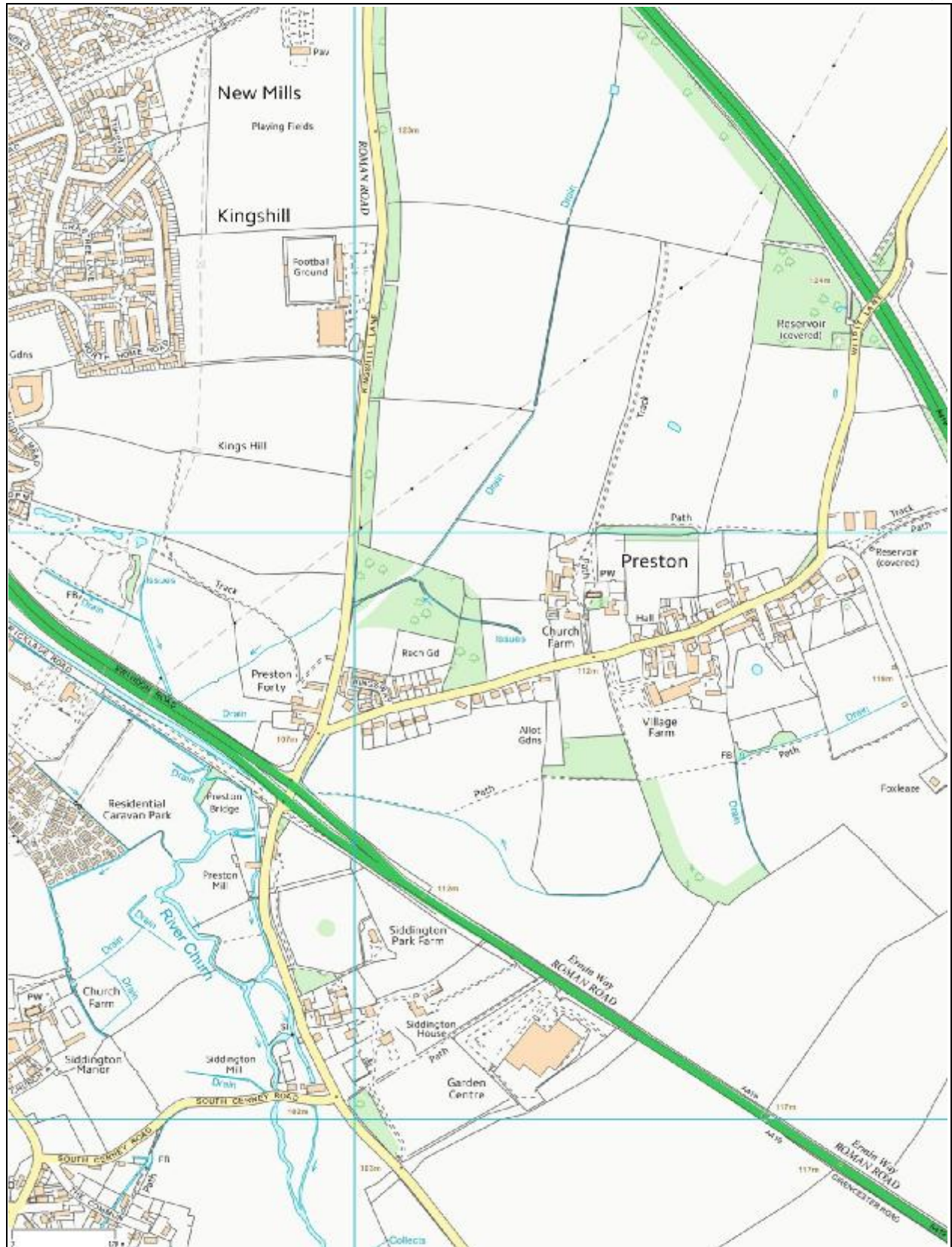
The village has also seen in-filling of houses, these being built in the gardens of existing properties and the more recent conversions of farmyard buildings into residential developments in the late 1980s. Remaining farm buildings in Village farm that are unsuitable for residential development have been converted into light industrial units. These are not generally visible from the village street.

The detached houses built from the 1900s onwards are 2 storeys high but the older detached and terraced cottages are generally 1½ storeys high.

The original and oldest cottages and houses in the village were built from natural coursed Cotswold Stone. Recent developments have used a modern stone substitute being of sympathetic colour and texture. Roofs are covered with natural stone tiles or reconstituted concrete tiles that mimic the natural features and colours.







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All newer properties are constructed with gable roofs and many have eye brow and dormer window features.



The majority of houses have large gardens. Historically farm workers will have had this land to use to feed their families. More recent barn conversion developments have smaller gardens.

The majority of driveways are finished with gravel which retains the country character of the village as well as assisting with drainage.

Going eastwards from the church houses tend to be situated closer to the road. Any extensions to existing houses have been done sympathetically using similar materials and design features. Where porches have been added their roofs match the pitch of the main house and use the same wall construction maintaining the original Cotswold character of the village.

With a few exceptions the majority of windows in the older properties are standard four-bay casement windows.

The newer properties have, generally used a more modern window design. The majority of doors are partially glazed.

The property boundaries are either of Cotswold stone or hedges. The east of the village tends to have more walls and the west, hedges.

The main village road winds gently through the village. It is narrow in places and care has to be taken for cars to pass each other. The road is tarmacked with a footpath on one side of the road for most of its length. The other side of the road is grassed with planted trees. There is a 30 mile an hour speed limit throughout the village. Access from the main road to Kingsway, Village Farm and Barn conversion developments are off this road.



The village is surrounded by farm land and there are still some large green spaces along the village's single street which contribute to giving the village its rural and tranquil feel.

The main part of the village has no street lighting but two street lights were installed in Kingsway at the west end of the village.

## Conservation area

In the centre of Preston village is a conservation area. This is the oldest part where the church, letter box, telephone box and village hall can be found. The conservation land stretches on the North side of the road from Church Farm to the Old Farmhouse and on the South side of the road from Preston House to Village Farm Cottage. This includes a number of listed buildings which are an important part of the village's history. The location of the Listed Buildings is shown on the plans of the Village and Parish. The strange numbering system of the houses reflects their origins as part of the Abbey Farm Estate. Numbers begin at 77 and end at 97. The numbers below 77 being in the village of Baunton approximately 4.5 miles away! All other houses, apart from Kingsway, have names.

## Facilities

*All Saints Parish Church* – this is part of the Churnside Benefice along with churches at Siddington, South Cerney and Cerney Wick.



*The Village Hall* is the social hub of the village. It was renovated by the residents in 2008. It is a well-equipped and a welcoming space and is used by various clubs and organizations, as well as social events organized in the village.



*Village Playing Field*, located to the rear of what were Forty Farm Cottages (now part of Kingsway) is provided and maintained by Preston Parish Council. It is a safe and enclosed area for children with play equipment and football posts.

*Allotments*- an area of Allotments is available for rent these are situated centrally to the south side of the village, behind The Barn.

## Buildings

The 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century church of All Saints is the oldest building in the village. It was restored in 1862. The original schoolhouse which is now the village hall was built in 1851. The original Farmhouses and Rectory are notable for their grandeur which reflects their importance in the history of the village.





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The Millennial Stone which is situated at the entrance to the church, illustrates the recorded continuity of habitation for almost 1000 years during which the number of residents in the parish has not materially changed.



### Distinctive features

The village has welcoming gates at both entrances to the village. As you walk along the village street there are pleasant/charming views across the local countryside. The rural character of the village is defined by the use of natural stone for the construction of buildings and walls and the green spaces that break up this line. The Conservation area in the centre of the village, which includes the Church, the Village Hall and many of the older houses, reinforces the Cotswold charm with its range of architectural styles that reflect times gone by.

The agricultural roots of the village are still evident with working farmyards and the working of the land that surrounds the village.



### Scattered Settlements

Beside Preston Village the parish has only one other recognized Settlement – that of Norcote. Norcote consist of only half a dozen houses, accessed from the A417 or the B4425. Access roads to the hamlet, whilst once a through road, is not so now. As a result the majority of properties within the Norcote area are individual dwellings down private driveways. The hamlet has no facilities at all apart from a post box on the A417 outside Norcote House.

Within the area of Norcote is an Auction House and vehicle hire company. The access road along the route of the old railway, from the B4425 Barnsley Road, to the Auction House, no longer carries through to the A417. As a result this small light industrial site has no impact on either of the settlements within the parish – traffic generated by its activities is entirely self-contained.



At the Northern edge of the parish is the hub for the Abbey Home Farm. The site contains an organic farm shop and Café plus conference and residential facilities. This site is also accessed off a no-through-road from the B4425 Barnsley Road, this time along the route of the old railway. The shop and café are well regarded in the area and support local activities such as the village fete and harvest festival with donations of prizes for raffles etc.



## Summary

Despite its proximity to the ever growing metropolis of Cirencester both the Parish and village of Preston have managed to retain their rural atmosphere. Although there are very limited facilities (no shop or Public House) the Village and Parish are easily accessible to the Town of Cirencester and other surrounding Villages, all of which provide a complete range of facilities so that, generally, travel to the larger City of Gloucester, and Towns of Cheltenham and Swindon, is not required.

In response to the questionnaire the respondents valued the existing rural atmosphere in the Village and Parish and particularly valued the “greenbelt” between the Western extremity of the village of Preston and the Eastern extremity of Cirencester which, therefore, needs to be preserved in order to ensure retention of the rural “atmosphere” and individual identities.

Other key elements that the Residents considered to be essential are:

- The Village/rural environment
- Easy access to the countryside via the surrounding footpaths
- The surrounding wildlife
- Easy access to Cirencester and the National Road Network

In response to a question whether the current Local Plan statement that there are “*no allocations of land for development in any of the rural settlements*”, 87% of respondents stated this policy should be retained.

Further, in response to the statement that “*the Parish consists predominantly of farm land, with domestic accommodation and a small industrial provision*”, 94% of the respondents considered the current land use is well-balanced.



Rural Buffer between Preston Village and Cirencester

## Guidelines

### G1 – Green Areas

The existing green areas between the East and West parts of the Village illustrate the rural character of the village and should be retained. Any development or refurbishment around these areas should be similar in character to adjacent properties and respect the existing boundary construction and proximity to boundaries.

### G2 – Conversion of old farm buildings

The retention of the industrial use of the existing Village Farm buildings is essential to the distinctive rural character (as stated by the majority in the consultation). Thus the conversion into residential use is not in character. However, there are a number of examples of good conversions at Mildreds Farm Barns which retain many of the original features and could be used as guidelines for other buildings.

### G3 – Materials for new/refurbished/extended buildings.

These material proposals have been extrapolated from the questionnaire as preferences of those who live in the Parish:

- Walls – Stone
- Doors and windows – Natural wood, unpainted or stained
- Roofs – Natural or reconstituted stone
- Boundaries – Hedges or Stone walls depending on location

### G4 – New/refurbished/extended buildings

The materials and constructional details of these properties should match, or be in sympathy with, adjacent properties and in accordance with the CDC Cotswold Design Code.