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Cricklade – Wiltshire's Forgotten Gem

A Study of Cricklade's Unique Community and Culture

for

Farfield Eco-Village

Farfield Lane, Cricklade, SN6 6HZ

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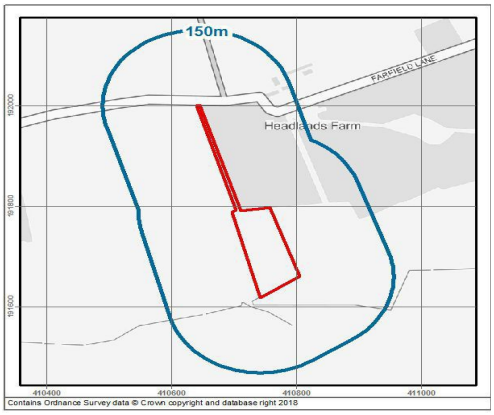
1. *Introduction and Background*

Study prepared on:

Farfield Eco-Village,

Farfield Lane,

Cricklade, SN6 6HZ



Site Area – 1.2174 hectares

shown edged red on the plan to the right and below



Current use commercial proposed use commercial

The subject land was previously part of Ox House Farm, and is now separately owned and kept as grassland.

The subject land is accessible via a separate entrance and track from the private road known as Farfield Lane SN6 6HZ.

This land is bordered by a hedgerow on two sides and by ditch to the rear of the property. The whole is screened by a row of small copse trees of single density. The area outside of the land is grassland with no overseeing properties.

The subject land is on a low trajectory to any properties to the north of the site. Any development will have no visual impact to existing properties on Farfield Lane.

Farfield Lane is an active commercial area, supporting several farm facilities including cattle production, woodland production and a variety of commercial diversification operations: from Holiday accommodation to holiday vehicle storage.

Farfield Lane is privately owned by the land owners on the lane and is actively managed and maintained by the owners; it is used daily.

The site of Farfield eco-village has been created to embody the local community's need for diversification and increase to available locally based employment in the area

2 ***Cricklade's Heritage and Culture***



Cricklade town is an ancient borough included in the Domesday Book should be a magnet for longer-term visitors. As long ago as 1066, Cricklade was in the ownership of the Abbey of St Peter, Westminster, and by 1086 the annual value of Cricklade was £9 to the Abbey, testament to Cricklade's size and importance and the prosperity of its residents and commercial activity. https://opendomesday.org/book/wiltshire/06/

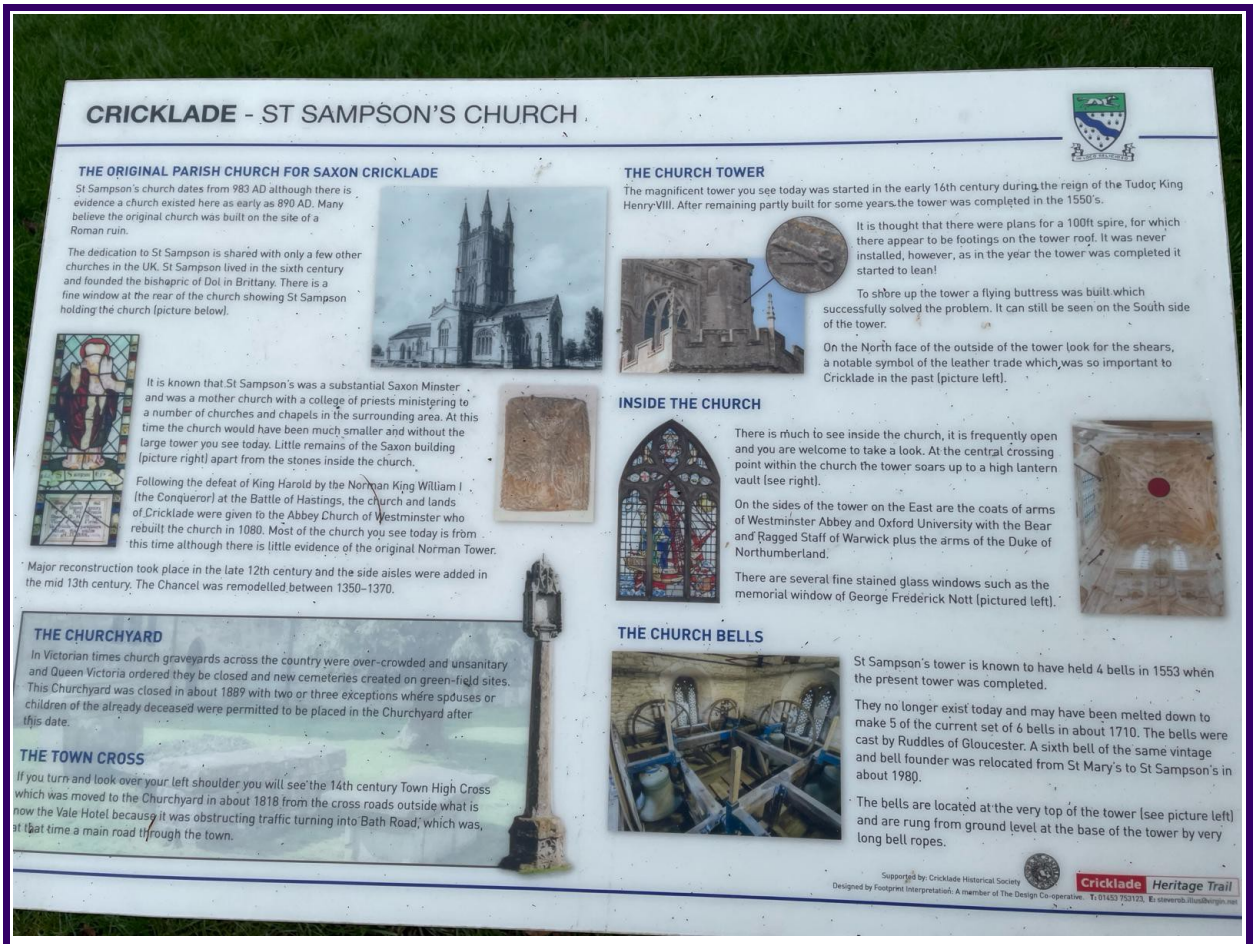
Cricklade had the importance of being both an Anglo-Saxon burh and parliamentary borough. From at least the early Iron Age, there is evidence of farming in the environs of the modern town of Cricklade. From the establishment of the Roman period in Britain, when important and lasting transport arteries were engineered, Ermin Street passed through Cricklade effectively making the then Roman settlement a hub for access to Bath, Cirencester and Gloucester.

By the late Tudor period, the Crown retained Cricklade, having forfeit the Abbey of St Peter,

Westminster on the Dissolution. In 1564, the Bishop of Salisbury acquired Cricklade and other nearby property from Queen Elizabeth I.



During the second half of the 18th century, Cricklade's importance as a transport hub was reinforced when it became the crossing point for four turnpikes: west to Malmesbury; east to Blunsdon and Highworth; north to Cirencester; and south to Wootton Bassett and Calne. https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol18/1-12#h2-0003



From the late 10th century, Cricklade became an important member of the burghal system where coins were minted. The earliest known coin minted in Cricklade is from King Eadgar's reform period from 959-973 and appears to have proliferated at the mint during the Anglo-Saxon period with 53 known coins struck at Cricklade between 978 and 1066 and subsequently examples of most types of coinage issued by King William 1. Recent evidence has been found that while the Cricklade mint was thought to close by 1096, that the Cricklade mint continued to strike coins into the reign of Henry I. https://www.silburycoins.co.uk/hoards-and-research/a-coin-from-cricklade-discovering-a-new-mint-of-henry-i/





3 ***Modern Cricklade's Place in South Cotswolds Tourism***

Cricklade is a small market town situated in the North of Wiltshire and is the most southerly town of the Southern Cotswolds area.

The Thames Path National trail passes through the town: Cricklade occupies a unique status being the first town on the River Thames, where the Roman Ermine Street crosses the river. The town is a key tourist destination for day ramblers and longer-term holiday makers to the Cotswolds and the Cotswold Water Park.



While the town is superbly located as a gateway to the local water parks, it is still some 15 to 20 minutes' drive to the Cotswold Water Park area from Cricklade town. Cricklade has little accommodation provision within the town and surrounding areas. The town therefore loses

out considerably to the holiday parks near to Cirencester when it could and should be at the centre of tourism for the environmentally conscious holiday visitors and provide eco-friendly leisure experiences.



It is a sad fact that Cricklade is not mentioned in Visit England's suggestions for places to visit in Wiltshire – https://www.visitengland.com/things-to-do/wiltshire. Even more shocking, Wiltshire does not feature among any of the suggested English short stay break locations: https://www.visitengland.com/things-to-do/countryside-breaks. While a helpful description of Cricklade with attractive pictures is displayed at: https://www.visitwiltshire.co.uk/towns-and-villages/cricklade-p462673, there is a dearth of overnight accommodation for visitors listed in Cricklade and its environs. Checks were made of some of the major online booking sites together with the major hotel and accommodation guides resulting in a very few resources being found.

Our researches found only only 75 hotel rooms in the immediate vicinity of Cricklade, some of which were at the more expensive end of the market, leaving only about 30 hotel and B&B

rooms available to the wider market. Visit Wiltshire identifies only one hotel at Cricklade with an out of date listing giving prices less than 50% of those currently (24 January 2024) on the hotel's website. https://www.visitwiltshire.co.uk/accommodation/cricklade-house-hotel-p12383



The same site is unable to offer any suggestions other than for the one hotel referred to and no offer of any other type of holiday accommodation at all – no farm stays, no B&Bs, no self-catering – no place for an eager visitor to stay.



While the results of searching holiday and leisure accommodation in and around Cricklade from public sources are disappointing and indicate that Cricklade may be greatly overlooked, that does not mean there is no accommodation privately available from private bricks and mortar and online rental and booking sites. A concentration of holiday type self-catering accommodation is listed in South Cerney amounting to some forty bedrooms, these are five miles north of Cricklade and in Gloucestershire, whereas Farfield eco-village is a rural 1.5 miles from Cricklade town.
https://www.theaa.com/route-planner/route?from=Cricklade,%20Swindon,%20UK&to=South%20Cerney
https://www.theaa.com/route-planner/route?from=Cricklade,%20Swindon,%20UK&to=Farfield%20Lane,%20Swindon,%20UK

Why is Cricklade left to play second fiddle to the larger and less culturally significant towns merely because they provide the necessary holiday accommodation in locations towards Gloucestershire?

The locality of Cricklade has several existing small holiday ventures and the popularity of Cricklade and the surrounding areas has created fresh demand for the provision of touristic accommodation.

4 Cricklade's Residential Housing Market

In recent years Cotswold towns and villages have struggled with the loss of local housing to external property investors. These landlords buy up local housing to rent out for holiday use, thus depriving local residents of long term residential accommodation. This not only creates pressure on the private rental sector, but also on the local authorities whose ability to provide suitable long term residential accommodation for the local population.



The increasing pressure on Wiltshire's council housing stock and of the increasing numbers on the waiting list for residential accommodation and the “chronic shortage” has been recorded in the local press recently noting the slow down in provision of affordable housing across the county. While not every worsening statistic and tragic tale of a family with nowhere to call home directly affects Cricklade, every emergency in the county impacts every part of Wiltshire due to the knock on effect. With Wiltshire Council's own figures showing homelessness having increased by 70%, there's a real need to ensure that every long term residential property is brought into service to help ameliorate the problem – even as the number of unoccupied houses throughout Wiltshire is increasing to concerning levels.

news/council-housing-crisis-wiltshire-warning-7278285

https://www.wiltshiretimes.co.uk/news/23908433.wiltshire-council-not-hitting-affordable-social-housing-targets/

https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/23919650.wiltshire-town-facing-housing-emergency-prices-force-families/

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-65766513

https://www.salisburyjournal.co.uk/news/23208685.nearly-6-000-empty-homes-wiltshire-shocking-says-campaign-group/

The holiday use of residential properties creates peaks and troughs of availability as well as a drain on councils to provide accommodation for residents and young people who wish to remain in their local community and are at a significant disadvantage in competition against external buyers of residential housing stock.

While the holiday use of residential housing stock brings some financial advantages for the community and local area, there is also a conflict for local authorities. Too often, they have to balance the promotion of local towns and villages as leisure and visitor attractions high on the regional tourist map with, and benefit their economy and future succession with income from visitors. On the other hand, the detriment to the economy when local residents are unable to find accommodation can serve to hamper economic growth and unsustainable pressure on local authority housing requirements in the current financial climate.

5 ***Development of Bespoke Sustainable Holiday Properties at Cricklade***

The development of new sustainable properties, built specifically for the commercial holiday market, removes the threat to local residential housing while still bringing employment income and further opportunities and benefits for new and associated businesses in the local community.

At the same time, the economic and social benefits to the community should not be to the detriment of the environment.

In the area of Cricklade, the key attraction is exactly the environment and the ecology of the surrounding countryside. It is, therefore, extremely important to the developers that there should be very little adverse impact to the area.



The development of Farfield eco-village has been designed to reduce impacts on the environment by applying the latest technology and research to determine how the properties are built, installed and lived in. Full consideration given to design and sustainability of the products used.

The developers are inspired by Paragraph 88 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that Planning Policies should support economic growth in rural areas, in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new developments and that the policies should promote a strong rural economy. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a11af7e8f5ec000f1f8c46/NPPF_December_2023.pdf

At the same time the NPPF indicates that local and neighbourhood plans should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings. And the policies should promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses, support sustainable rural tourism,and leisure development that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside.



Land at site of Farfield eco-village viewed from the South East

The NPPF states that this should include supporting provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities and service centres. And promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in towns and villages. Such facilities should or may include such as local shops, meeting places,sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

6 Benefits of Farfield eco-village for Cricklade and the Local Area

Farfield eco-village will aim to achieve the following benefits for Cricklade locality;

1. Support Sustainable Tourism within the local area
2. Create a platform that will encourage other businesses to develop a market place for tourism and inspire new businesses to be started
3. Use leisure development to create employment for young people and encourage a spending footfall into the local economy
4. The creation of jobs will bring new skills into the area
5. Setting quality standards for renewable energy will bring a new commercial focus on the area and encourage associated businesses to move to the area boosting the economy
6. The opportunity to create new staycation tourism will boost local tourist attractions allowing them to develop and expand in growth
7. Other leisure and tourist opportunities will follow as the footfall to the local area makes them viable
8. The boost to the local economy will allow local and regional government to retain and develop local services and community facilities
9. Local retail, meeting places, sports venues and cultural buildings will benefit from increased use and demand as the economy increases, enhanced by with new and developed commerce benefitting from the additional usage from this development
10. The attraction of tourism, in particular, has been shown to greatly improve and elevate the pride, care and attention residents have for their locality and homes. This encourages improving quality and positive aspects of existing housing and environment, with a concomitant reduction of negative components such as local crime

