



# Whitchurch

Hampshire

**DESIGN STATEMENT**

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# The Whitchurch Design Statement 1

## What is the Whitchurch Design Statement?

The Whitchurch Design Statement has been produced to illustrate the distinctive character of town and parish, as seen by residents, and to provide a set of guidelines that will help to preserve this character for future generations.

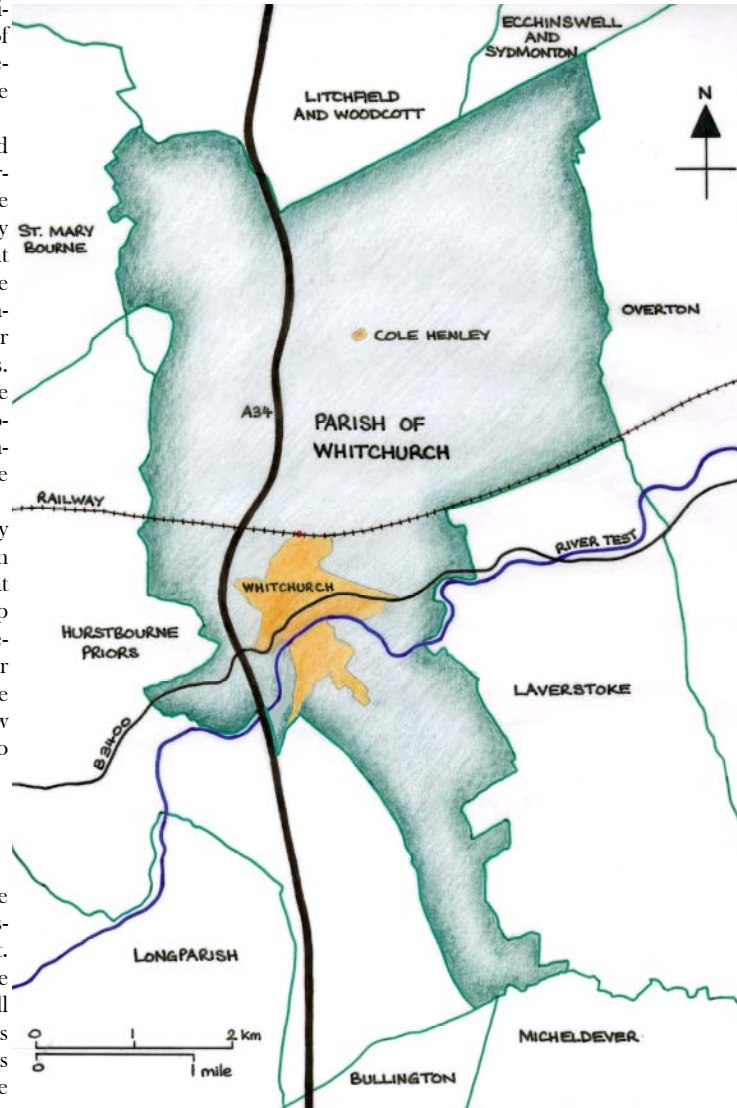
This document was adopted by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council on ....[date to be confirmed]. As supplementary planning guidance, the statement must be used by all parties in the planning process as an active planning document when making or reviewing planning applications. The document should also be referred to when changes are proposed that may not require planning permission but will affect the appearance of the Parish.

There is other supplementary planning guidance used when making planning decisions that affect Whitchurch. In drawing up this statement, we have often referred to such guidance in our work, but our aim here is to give the local view by describing how Whitchurch seems to those who live and work here.

## Why does Whitchurch need a design statement?

Almost all communities in the south of England are under pressure to allow more development. When properly enforced, the guidelines in this statement will help to balance these pressures against the desire of the residents of Whitchurch to preserve the character of the parish.

## The Parish of Whitchurch



## Who is the design statement for?

The statement has been written with two groups of people in mind:

- those who propose any changes that may affect the appearance of the parish or the quality of the environment, such as land and property owners, developers, public utilities, commercial organisations, government bodies and agencies.

**“Whitchurch should not become so large that it loses its character. We need to encourage people to use facilities we have”**

- Public Opinion Survey

- those who assess and decide on proposed changes, for example, members of the Whitchurch Town Council, who are consulted on all planning applications affecting the parish; the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, as the local planning authority, whose officers and Development Control Committee determine the applications; and the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State, who have the final decision about the outcome of planning appeals.

## How to use the design statement

Those who are proposing to make any changes that will affect either the appearance or the quality of the environment within the town or parish should review them with this statement in mind.

Such changes may include new development (including roads, access, lighting, parking and associated works), changes to a building, changes to site boundaries, loss or planting of trees and hedgerows, features, and structures or change of use, particularly in rural areas.

Ask the question: “Will such a change go against any of the guidelines?” If in doubt, read the description and look at the photos, drawings and maps that come before the guideline to see what is meant and why it is there.

If the proposed change conflicts with these guidelines or other planning guidance, seek advice from the local planning authority or try to redesign the change so that it fits the guidelines. By doing so, you can avoid having to withdraw the application or having it rejected. You will also help to keep Whitchurch a special place in which to live and work.

## How was the design statement compiled?

The statement was drawn up by a group of volunteers (“the team”) using feedback provided by local residents in many different forms. Section 8 gives the details of this extensive consultation process.



## 2 Historical Influences

Although the Celtic Harroway and the Roman Portway bypassed the area where the present town of Whitchurch is located, the pattern and growth of the town has been laid down over time by other trade and communications routes and influenced by the natural features of the countryside.

### Early history

After the Romans left Britain, the Saxon settlers of the Wessex area founded their communities along the river valleys of southern England. The river Test (Map:1) was the centre of the economic life of the community, providing water for wool processing and power for weaving and grinding (A). Now the river gives enjoyment to walkers and fishermen and remains at the heart of the community.

By the end of the first millennium the Saxon town of Hwitancyrice, White Church, marked the junction of the trading routes (Map: yellow circles) used by travellers on foot and horse making their way from London to the west and from the midlands to the south coast.

The conquering Normans encouraged trade and commerce, and the town of Witcerce, recorded in the 1086 Great Book of England, had mills practically every half mile along the banks of the river Test. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Whitchurch was given a charter and became a borough, its centre moved from around the parish church to the present Market

Square and burgage tenements were defined. From 1586 to 1832 Whitchurch sent two members to Parliament, and since the right to vote in parliamentary elections was held by these tenements, few of their boundaries were altered and can thus be traced today.

The original overland trading routes were reinforced by Charles I in 1635 with the introduction of the Royal Mail, followed soon after with the growth in stagecoach travel. Later, in 1644, Charles I stayed at the manor, now King's Lodge (B), prior to the second battle of Newbury.

The natural pattern of growth along the coaching routes (Map:2) continued until 1854, when the Victorians opened up the east-west route of the London and South West Railway (Map:3). The long deep cutting through the chalk downs to the north of Whitchurch created the first artificial boundary to the town. The historical trade route, crossing the railway, was reinforced with the construction of a brick bridge (C) at the crossover point.

The artificial boundaries doubled in 1885 with the construction of the north-south steep embankment carrying the Great Western Railway from Didcot through to Southampton (Map:4). The route lies just to the west of the town centre and runs transverse to the natural lie of the chalk downland. Brick bridges carried the railway over the earlier roads along the valley. The closure of this rail link

in 1964 left behind a man-made backbone that over time became a tree-lined boundary of the western edge of the town.

### The inter-war period

The footprint of the town, shown on the 1919 Ordnance Survey map, is not difficult to see: south of Oakland Road, roofed predominantly with slate brought in on the railway from Wales, development was confined to the flood plain and lower foothills on the northern side of the river following the river from the parish church to the eastern edge of town.

### Post World War 2

Subsequent residential growth follows the pattern imposed by the natural and man-made constraints.

The latest and loudest man-made physical barrier to westerly growth came in 1976 with the opening of the A34 bypass (Map:5). Like the disused north-south railway line, the A34 runs against the natural land form and therefore becomes elevated to the south west of the town (E). The prevailing winds remind the town of its noisy presence.



Lord Denning's birthplace, Newbury Street

### Area south of the river Test (Map:6)

This area of the town (D) includes the town's schools. Residents feel it has limited scope for more housing because it is constrained by the river and its floodplain, agricultural and recreational land, and the restricted vehicular access to the centre of the town.

### Area northeast of the disused railway and the B3400 (Map:7)

This zone is enclosed by the present and disbanded railway routes to the north and west, the older town to the south and the agricultural land and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the east.

### Area between the river and the B3400 from the town centre eastward (Map:8)

This ribbon strip is squeezed between the tree-lined ridge of the chalk to the north and the alluvial

river plain to the south. East of the town is Wells in the Field, and beyond that development is constrained by the designation of the adjacent land as part of the Laverstoke Conservation Area.

### Area west of the disused railway (Map:9)

This zone is enclosed by the A34 to the west and the railway routes to the north and east, where large and small estates have been built. Potentially there may be scope for further development in this area without detriment to the distinctive character of Whitchurch.

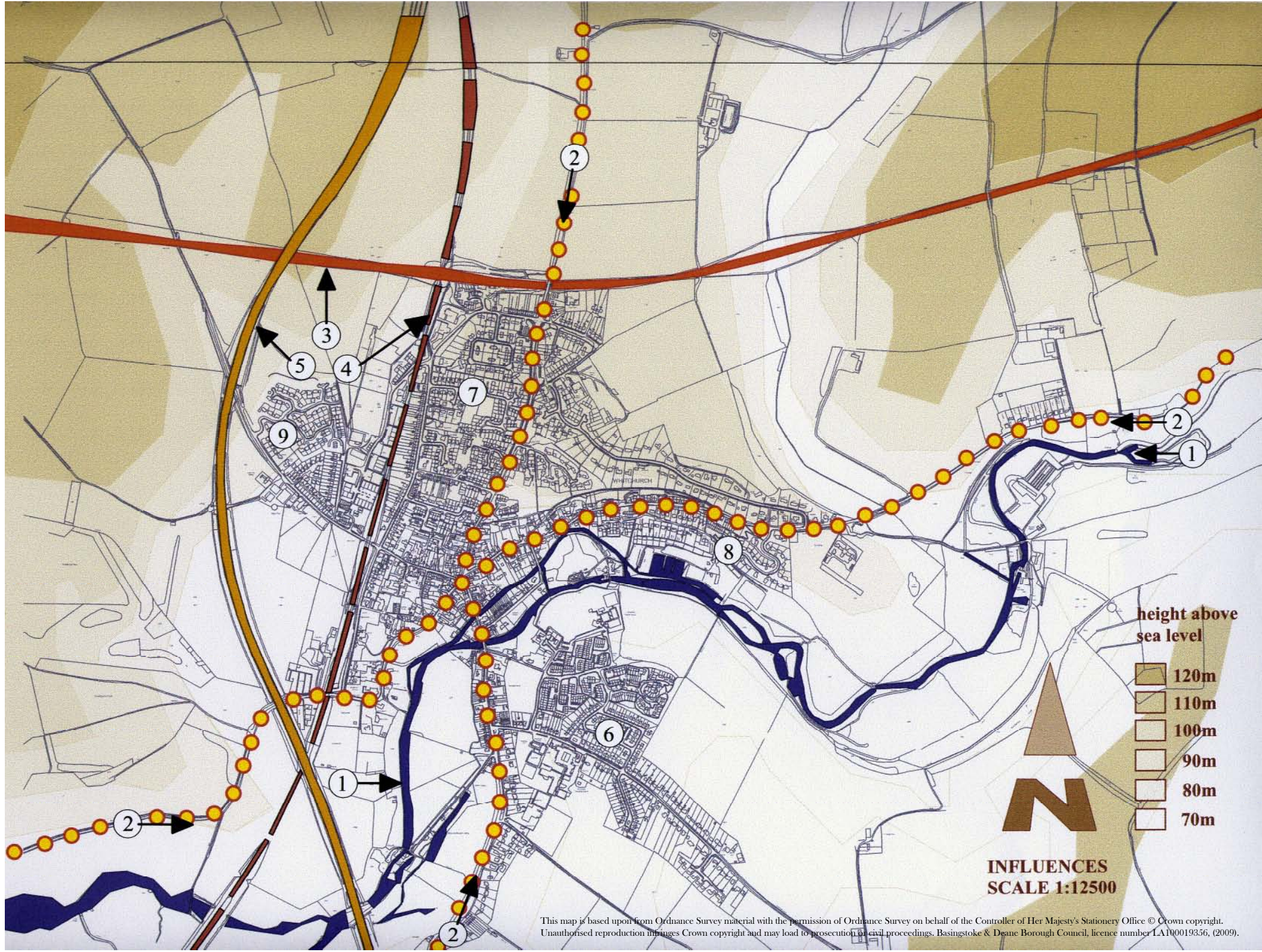
Any further development in this zone should incorporate effective noise reduction and screening measures to counter the traffic noise pollution from the bypass that is becoming intolerable (see 4. *The Built Environment*).

### Present-day Whitchurch

These historic influences have resulted in a settlement made up of disparate groups of buildings, dissimilar materials and unrelated land uses tied together by roads and footpaths.

This pattern has resulted in a town of comfortable size and intrinsic charm.





height above sea level

- 120m
- 110m
- 100m
- 90m
- 80m
- 70m



**INFLUENCES**  
**SCALE 1:12500**

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# 3 Landscape Setting and Shape of Whitchurch

## The setting of Whitchurch

The town of Whitchurch lies in an attractive rural setting within the valley of the River Test, in the centre of the parish of the same name.

The parish has a sloping, irregular shape (see map in Section 2), with the highest point in the north, sloping gently south, where the chalk landscape is more open to the river valley and starting to rise again to the south. The character of Whitchurch town and parish is greatly influenced by its medieval origins.

Whitchurch is a parish of contrasts. The wide, open views and large field systems at the higher levels surrounding the town (A) differ sharply from the enclosed and intimate feel of the town snuggling on the hillsides down into the river in the Test valley. Residents value this and do not want to see sprawling development that blurs or eliminates this contrast. They wish to retain the attractive qualities of the approaches and

the brick arches over some roads as gateways to the town.

Whitchurch has a special 'in-town' countryside. Even within a densely populated and built-up town, the fleeting glimpses and broader views of the Test, its water meadows and other green spaces, remind people on foot and in vehicles that this is, indeed, a country town.

**“I love the look and feel of Whitchurch, but it needs to be allowed to grow and develop to meet the needs of the community.”**

- Public Opinion Survey

In *Section 6. Open Space* we cover this subject in more depth and suggest some guidelines to retain the country feel to the place.

Whitchurch has a leafy roof. From many directions, those approaching the town at the higher levels see only a church spire emerging through a canopy of

leafy trees that extends over much of the built environment.

### Northern setting

The main London to Exeter railway line with its wooded cuttings creates a definite physical and visual man-made barrier on the northern edge of the town, beyond which no town development has taken place. (see the *Section 2. Historic Influences* map). Existing vegetation along this line helps to screen the town when viewed from the rural scene beyond.

### Eastern setting

The north eastern edge of the town has developed along a spur of higher ground on the upper valley slopes. Further east Wells in the Field and neighbouring dwellings are bounded by the trees of Laverstoke Park beyond the parish boundary.

### Southern setting

To the south of the town the land slopes up from the broad valley floor to a ridge line that forms its southern boundary and from which views of the town can be

seen. Beyond this natural boundary are large open arable fields with low hedgerows and some wooded areas. The southwestern edge of the town is the low-lying open landscape and flood plain of the River Test as it leaves the parish.

### Western setting

Physical and visual man-made barriers define the western edges of the town. The first is the elevated A34 bypass (see *Section 2. Historical Influences* map). The other boundary is the open landscape of largely arable fields and woodland, the latter in Hurstbourne Park being clearly visible on the skyline.

## Approaches and gateways to the town and parish

All approaches into the parish of Whitchurch are in rural surroundings with no clear definitions as to where the parish boundaries are. The six main road approaches into the town of Whitchurch, however, have quite clearly-defined gateways. Each of these six approaches and gateways

has important design and scenic characteristics.

### Northern road approach: Newbury Road

A concrete water tower and a line of trees and houses along Station Road and Bere Hill provide the clearly-defined town boundary. Here the southbound traveller sees the scenery change from the open fields of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to town streets and houses. A two-lane bridge over the railway cutting serves as a gate-

**“To retain its character Whitchurch must remain a small country town.”**

- Public Opinion Survey

way to emphasise this change from country to town.

### Eastern road approach: London Road

This approach along the curving B3400 follows the river valley and plays hide-and-seek with the River Test and views beyond. It is a more gradual transition from rural to built environment as it



Below: Newbury Street with Town Hall (centre) and The Square beyond



A

6

passes through the hamlet of Wells in the Field, past the Gables on the hill and the entrance to Lynch Hill Park before beginning the descent of London Road, where Victorian and earlier terraced housing say you are in Whitchurch town.

**Southeastern road approach: Micheldever Road**

A single-track road emerges from rolling countryside at the top of a ridge, affording views of the town to the north, where houses in Micheldever Road mark the edge of the built development.

**Southern road approach: Winchester Road**

The escape from the busy elevated A34 bypass brings travellers onto the sweeping curve of the approach road to Whitchurch, then under the A34 past cottages, fields, the Millennium Meadow and the Whitchurch Silk Mill into the town centre.

From the A34, there are far-reaching open views of the countryside, to be replaced by a fleeting glimpse through trees of roof-tops at the top of Micheldever Road and finally local views seen through abundant trees and hedgerows either side of the approach road into town.

**Western road approach: Andover Road**

Immediately after passing Hurstbourne Park estate, defined by its mellowed brick boundary walls and wrought iron gates, the traveller meets a mix of new and old in rapid succession. First met is the



A brick arch of the disused railway line defines a western gateway to Whitchurch town

austere, concrete underpass for the A34, the soft edges of the town cemetery with mature box hedging and feature gate, a small commercial area and a car showroom/forecourt.

This is quickly followed by the round brick archway of the disused railway embankment that serves as a distinct and attractive gateway leading immediately into the historic part of the town.

**Northwestern road approach: Blosswood Lane**

The first gateway here is the bridge of the London to Exeter railway. After this comes the mod-

ern A34 bridge and an older brick disused railway underpass. These together make a distinctive double gateway to the town, this time with much new and old housing in between them. Like the western approach, the brick archway provides the more attractive final gateway into the centre of the town.

**Rail approaches**

Rail passengers travelling to Whitchurch and beyond on the London to Exeter line are treated to sweeping views of the town and parish because of the railway's routing along the ridge overlooking the valley of the Test. To the

north they see the fields and woods of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; to the south are the houses of the town and occasional views of distant hill ridges.

**Viewpoints and scenic stretches in Whitchurch**

During the Whitchurch Design Day held by the team in March 2003, we asked visitors to put stickers on a map to mark their favourite views of Whitchurch. More than 100 views were identified, covering both built-up areas and country scenes.

Although they were well scattered across the parish, certain viewpoints and what we can call "scenic stretches" emerged as clear favourites among residents.

The six most favourite were:

**Church Street stretch (A)**

...from All Hallows parish church, curving around The Lawn, The Mount and past two 16<sup>th</sup> century cruck-frame cottages;

**Fulling Mill stretch (B)**

...along a public footpath bordering the Test, with fields, King's Lodge, St Cross House and All Hallows spire in the distance;

"I moved to Whitchurch because it was a small country town. I do not want it to become another commuter dormitory town."

– Public Opinion Survey

**The Weir viewpoint (C)**

...looking west across a water meadow with a tithe barn, the river Test and the spire of All Hallows in the distance;

**Town Mill Lane stretch (D)**

...along the lane from London Street past fields with ponies and a leat of the Test with splashing ducks and moorhens to Town Mill itself;

**Upper Lynch path viewpoint (E)**

...from a footpath along the chalk-digging escarpment looking south with the houses of London Street immediately below, the River Test in the middle distance and wider views of the fields and ridge beyond;

**Winchester Road stretch (F)**

...from the A34 exit road past Ivy Cottage along the tree-lined southern approach to the town, with



A

B

7

F



houses set well back on the right and the Millennium Meadow on the left.

### The shape of the parish and town of Whitchurch

The parish of Whitchurch has an irregular shape and a north-south orientation.

The town of Whitchurch has always been a ‘place between places’, and its star-like shape, its internal road and street network and its connections with the outside world all reflect this. It lies midway between Newbury and Winchester, Basingstoke and Andover, and, as the intersection for roads connecting these two pairs of larger towns, Whitchurch has both thrived and suffered from its position.

Before the age of the motor car Whitchurch was the centre for local markets and a stopping off point for transport. Residents say that the advent of the motor car, however, has brought more pain than prosperity, with the convergence of cars and heavy goods vehicles causing acute traffic congestion, noise and air pollution to the relatively few and sometimes

“The character of Whitchurch exists because of the beauty of the landscape within and surrounding the town. Any future building must preserve the views and existence of both.”

– Public Opinion Survey



All Hallows church

narrow through streets of the town.

The heavy traffic and the limited parking close to shops both reduce the prospects of any revival of a thriving retail economy in the town and seriously detract from the quality of life of those who walk its streets. In spite of the building of the A34 bypass and some traffic-calming measures, traffic and parking problems remain at the top of the list of concerns that residents voiced in our public opinion survey and other feedback exercises. These problems should be considered in any future developments in the town.

The shape and road pattern of Whitchurch means that any development of new houses or commercial premises will increase traffic congestion in the centre of town unless some peripheral roads can be built to relieve the

pressure on the through streets by taking traffic away from the centre. Such peripheral roads, however, will be difficult to build without destroying the country feel and the views which so many residents say they treasure.

### Local issues and concerns

In the 500 questionnaires returned from the team’s public opinion survey, 73 per cent of the respondents said they came or stayed in Whitchurch to be in the countryside and think that it is the surrounding countryside (84 per cent) and the River Test (80 per cent) that give Whitchurch its character.

Looking beyond these survey results to the comments received at its Design Day, the team has identified several major concerns and issues of local residents regarding any plans that might threaten this rural setting.

These concerns are translated into some specific guidelines listed in the coloured panel on the right.

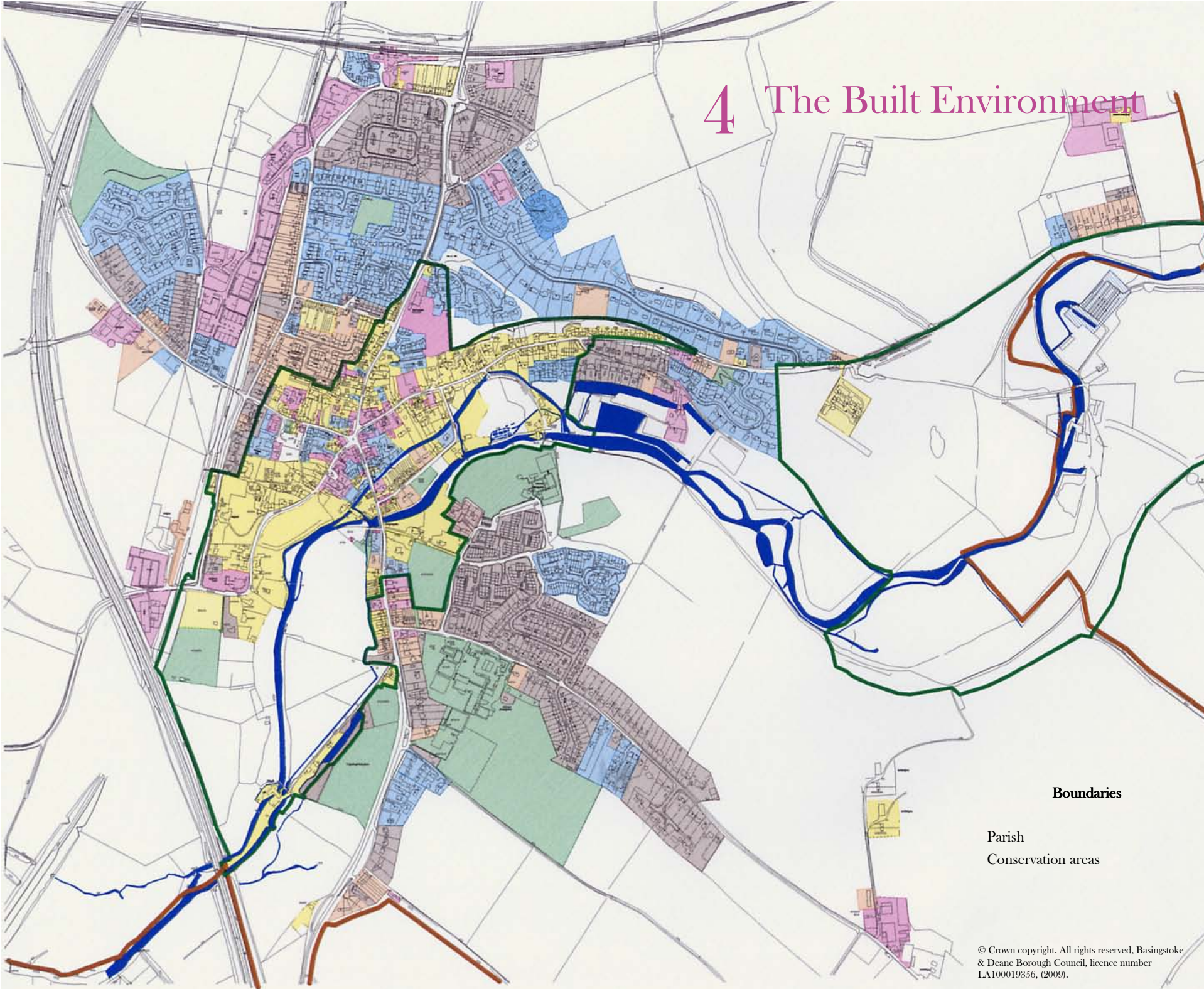
Voter’s Cottage, London Street



## Guidelines for the Setting and Shape of Whitchurch

1. Retain existing trees and encourage new planting to maintain and enhance the green canopy that blankets the town when viewed from higher elevations.
2. Preserve the brick arched underpasses of the disused Didcot-Southampton railway line so that the town continues to have these distinctive gateways for the future.
3. Provide substantial native mix planting to screen and contain any new development on the edges of the town and avoid the use of artificial embankments to provide immediate screening, unless it is visually sympathetic with the surrounding ground profile.
4. Adopt measures at every opportunity to reduce the impact of the A34 bypass on Whitchurch and the surrounding area, particularly regarding noise and light pollution.
5. Retain important public views, particularly those listed in this section, by preventing the erection or alteration of buildings or structures or any change to the landscape setting that would adversely affect these views.
6. Retain the rural character of the parish by containing town development within recognised man-made and natural boundaries as described in this statement. Where an overriding and essential public need is identified that may extend beyond these boundaries, provide substantial new planting to screen the development.
7. Avoid making changes to the height or shape of natural and man-made features - particularly the disused and operational railway line embankments and cuttings, chalk diggings on London Street, the Lynch Hill Park and Gables ridges - when implementing new developments.

# 4 The Built Environment



Historical:  
Before 1918



Inter-War:  
1918 - 1945



Post-War:  
1945 or 1970s



Modern:  
Early 1970s - now



Industrial  
and Commercial



Educational  
and Leisure

**Boundaries**

Parish  
Conservation areas



## Building form and materials

The built environment of Whitchurch is variable and complex, so it is necessary to generalise rather than itemise what makes it distinctive and special to those who live and work in the parish.

Official bodies have already recognised the special nature of some of Whitchurch's built environment.

In 1978 the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council recognised the town's special architectural and historic interest by designating a large area of the older part of the town as a conservation area (see the map on the previous page).

In 2003 it gave the area additional planning protection by adopting the *Whitchurch – Conservation Area Appraisal* as special planning guidance. The report plan shows that the majority of the 50 Grade II listed buildings (comprising 70 individual properties) in the parish lie in the conservation area. The appraisal also recognises some 150 unlisted buildings considered to be of 'particular individual or group value' as well as identifying views and key features that are considered as essential to the special character or appearance of the conservation area.

In our own opinion-gathering, team surveys have identified several buildings in the parish that residents believe have individual or group value in their settings, and some of these do not appear

in any published document and do not have any planning protection. These are listed on page 14.

## Settlement pattern

One respondent to our public opinion survey said, "Whitchurch must remain a hotchpotch". This is illustrated by the map on the previous page which uses different colours to show when the town's buildings were constructed, in terms of four major historical periods.

The buildings – their styles, materials and how they relate to each other within their settings – are fairly distinctive for each of these periods, providing a useful way of showing how the development of the settlement has influenced the local character of the town.

**“To retain its character Whitchurch must remain a small country town; whilst building is inevitable, it should be on a small scale. No large estates, please.”**

– Public Opinion Survey

## Historical period: before 1918

Most of the older buildings lie within the conservation area, with the Market Place as the centre, and consist mainly of two and occasionally three-storey buildings. They include residential dwellings (A) as well as commercial establishments (B).

Many of the buildings open directly onto the street frontage, some with small front gardens or railings. Occasional archways, narrow openings and tracks provide discreet access to further dwellings, small courtyard developments (C), infill sites and off-road parking behind this street frontage development. These create the appearance of an uninterrupted building line, particularly around the Market Square and on approach roads.

There are also some larger detached dwellings within extensive grounds, located further away from the town centre, such as King's Lodge, The Lawn, The Mount, The Roos, The Limes, Berehill House, Redleaf and The Elms, as well as The Gables (D) and Ivy Cottage on the edge of the town.

Not only are these dwellings important in terms of their history, but their grounds also contribute to the green canopy and open space so highly valued within the town.

In our surveys we found that some residents have concerns about the "scruffy" appearance of some of the buildings in the older parts of the town centre. Most residents regret that there aren't more shops and services in the town.

Also included within this period are small developments of two-storey red brick Victorian houses including those on Station, Oakland, Winchester and London roads and Edwardian houses



The design of Burgage Field, a small modern housing development in the northeastern part of the town, uses a wide range and mix of traditional styles, colours and materials with discreet central garage parking accessed through an archway. These features help to achieve the "diversity within a pattern" that local residents value.

on Test Road, all with characteristic small front gardens.

Having been built in the era before the motor car was in wide use, these dwellings seldom have garages or car standing areas off the street. This means that cars are parked on most of the narrowest streets in the town.

Although this provides low-cost and effective traffic-calming, it also creates vehicle congestion and increased noise and exhaust

pollution. We discuss traffic and parking issues in Section 5: *Road and footpath networks*.

Recent historical research has revealed some old structures in the town that exist behind relatively modern facades. Although not listed, these buildings are historically important, and any planning applications for them should avoid damage to this historical heritage of Whitchurch. These are shown in the separate panel below, and others may exist.

## Unlisted Old Structures Behind Modern Facades

- 4 Bell Street: open hall dated 1441
- 9 Newbury Street: timber framed dated c1600
- 3-9 London Street: timber framed dated c1650
- 'The Cottage', Fairclose: small cottage dated c1690
- 16, 18 Bell Street: timber framed cottages dated c1600
- 19 Newbury Street: old tenement probably dated c1670
- 21 Winchester Street: tenement dated c1700



**Inter-war period: 1918 – 1945**

Very few dwellings were built during the inter-war period, the main development being on Evingar Road. These are two-storey red brick terraced and semi-detached houses, some with driveways and garages, and many with long rear gardens bordering the disused railway embankment.

**Post-war period: 1945 – early 1970s**

The buildings of this period varied considerably in style, comprising local authority housing with some private housing. Semi-detached and linked houses may be seen at Fairfields (A), Bere Hill, The Knowlings and Bellvue, semi-detached houses in Queens Road, bungalows at The Green and a mix of houses and bungalows in Blosswood Lane and Drive and Micheldever and Winchester Roads. Some are built of local red brick, but others have facings of stucco or light-coloured brick.

Many of the later new estates include landscaped areas, greens and grassed verges to improve the appearance of these larger areas of development along with private garages and spaces for parking



Bell Yard

vehicles. However, this is often offset by the introduction of central banks of garages. Our feedback survey shows that residents think that central garage blocks detract from the special character

of the area and should not be repeated in future developments.

The presence and convenience of the fire station and petrol service station (B) are welcomed by

all residents, although some decry the industrial-like appearance of these buildings located so close to historic buildings.

**Modern period: early 1970s – present day**

The construction of the A34 bypass in the 1970s significantly affected the built environment. After that Whitchurch experienced much additional development, when privately-built estates replaced swathes of wooded, agricultural and horticultural land, particularly between the centre of town and the London-Exeter railway to the north and the A34 bypass to the west. These consist of relatively large (40 to 70 unit) developments of two-storey linked and detached houses and bungalows.

The first of these was built at Kingsley Park, with some bungalows of light brick beyond which is a development whose builders used dark brick, dark timber and dark roof tiles on deep roof lines in a linked “cottage style” design (C). The estate includes an informal grassed open space that now has a small children’s playground. Other developments of this period include Lynch Hill Park,

“Maybe you cannot avoid new housing, but let’s make development in harmony with the current diverse but generally older buildings.”

- Design Day comment

Bicester Close, King’s Walk, The Rookery, Burgage Field, Hillside, Hartley Meadow, Meadow View, Micheldever Close, Micheldever Gardens, and Charlcott.

A different form of housing development is the static caravan site (D), a long-standing facility that was recently relocated next to Burgage Field .

Housing Association developments have provided affordable housing at Greenwoods and Firsway which have been effectively designed to fit in with the surrounding area. The two/three-storey Seeviour’s Court building constructed in this period provides housing for older residents and is convenient for the surgery, the library and local shops. The surgery itself is a modern facility set on the edge of the town’s Bell

The A34 bypass (left) has relieved the town of Whitchurch of much unwanted through vehicle traffic, but has become a major source of noise, light and air pollution to residents



A



B



C



D



Street central car park built on a site formerly occupied by a gasometer and some cottages.

So-called 'executive' housing estates appeared at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in two developments on the eastern and western edges of the town.



Hillside, set in a cul-de-sac on the hillside off London Road, overlooks the Test valley (A) and Caesar's Way, another cul-de-sac development, lies close to the A34 bypass (B). They comprise 4- and 5-bedroom houses set on relatively small plots with some local authority mandated affordable housing as well as public open spaces and designated play areas.



**"It is vital to have a commercial centre to the town with shops that offer non-supermarket services. There should be NO empty shops."**  
 – Public Opinion Survey



In the southeastern part of town, the large Knowlings, Aliston Way and Daniel Road estate contrasts with smaller cul-de-sac developments near the primary school and off Micheldever and Winchester roads. The smaller ones have been built on pockets of land made available through the demolition of houses within large garden plots. Feedback from our surveys indicates a general preference for smaller develop-

ments rather than large estates of a monolithic design.

Residents have commended the recent introduction of small infill developments in the form of town centre mews, which sit comfortably behind the main street frontage, without interrupting the building line. They comprise smaller linked or detached housing on small plots with parking space, accessed through narrow vehicular passages off the town's narrow historic area streets. Examples of these include Clark's Mews, Test Mews, Town Hall Court and Waterloo Court.

Higher density three-storey buildings have been successfully accommodated in the Long's Court and Mulberry Mead developments within the town centre.

The construction of the A34 bypass and embankment created a man-made western boundary to the town, leaving an open area between the A34 and the town that may be seen by some as an opportunity for further infill development. However, residents feel that this is not an ideal location for housing, because it is so close to the A34 with its lack of acoustic and visual screening, and that road noise reduction measures are needed as well as substantial and mature tree shielding above road level before further housing development proceeds.

### Industrial and commercial development

The town's commercial premises - including shops, pubs, takea-



The King's Arms pub, Church Street

ways, chemist, builders, a bank, building society, estate agent, solicitors, a petrol station, a car repair garage and hairdressers - are mostly housed in the old buildings of the town centre (C), while its industrial buildings are on the edges of town.

The Ardglen industrial estate (D) is in the north west corner of the town, just south of the London-Exeter railway line, and a used car showroom and factory are at the western entrance opposite the town cemetery. The disused railway embankment provides effective screening of the Ardglen industrial estate from residential areas to the east, while the main railway line screens and contains this area from rural open views to the north.

Although trees give some visual protection to Blosswood Drive residents to the west, the absence

of any landscape structure between the housing and factories has given residents of the Hartley Meadow estate unwelcome views of the Ardglen industrial estate, which cannot easily be remedied. This oversight should not be repeated if similar circumstances arise in the future.

The buildings on these industrial estates are modern and are a

typical mixture of standard designed premises and those designed for their sites.

Inadequate provision for parking however, has led to widespread parking on the verges and roadway of the estate's narrow main road, making vehicular passage difficult and creating an untidy appearance to the estate.

Thatched storage barn sits beside the cricket field off Church Street



Timber-framed granaries from the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, sitting on staddles and of contrasting construction provide a pleasant reminder of the parish's agricultural past. One is in the field adjacent to the cricket field (see previous page), another in the water meadow next to the Weir and a third one is in the Manor Farm buildings in Blosswood Lane.

### Town Services

Sited at the highest point of the town, the water tower (A), a plain concrete structure painted white is visually prominent from the north and provides a gravity feed of water to the area. The water tower has also become a central supporting structure for many radio and mobile telephone aerials. Single aerial masts are also located next to the railway station and in the Ardglan industrial estate.

There are no other significant masts within the town or parish

Buildings built of red brick faced with knapped flint are typical of houses in the older part of town



boundary. The residents want this situation to be maintained to minimise the visual impact of new masts and preserve the existing country character of the town and parish.

### Educational and leisure areas

The main educational and leisure facilities in the southeastern part of the town include the Whitchurch C of E Primary School (B) located north of the Knowlings, built in 1972 and recently extended; this is set in extensive grounds that slope down towards the River Test. The Testbourne Community School (C) located nearby, south of Micheldever Road, takes pupils from 11 to 16 and is housed in a mixture of inter-war and post-war traditional designs in red brick and post-war system buildings. As well as providing facilities for full-time students during school hours, the campus is well located as a base for community activities such as

The Whitchurch Silk Mill



further education, individual and local club, indoor and outdoor sports, theatrical and musical events and exhibitions.

Situated at the rear of Testbourne is the Longmeadow Sports Centre (D), accessed from Winchester Road in functional post-war buildings that are well used socially. The facilities provided include changing rooms for the sports facilities that are complementary to those at Testbourne and include squash, indoor and outdoor bowls and a football pitch used by the local and junior football teams.

The Whitchurch Cricket Club pitch is located on Church Street opposite the parish church and the thatched pavilion has been augmented by a newly-built struc-

ture with shower and changing facilities.

Other facilities elsewhere in the town include the Rising Fives preschool off Wells Lane, the play centre off Evingar Road and a nursery in the Bere Hill area.

### The built environment outside the town

There are two small settlements outside the town of Whitchurch and within the parish boundaries.

Wells in the Field consists of a line of houses built in the inter-war and post-war periods along the B3400 eastern approach to the town. The settlement sits above the River Test and is surrounded by fields and the edge of Laverstoke Park.

Cole Henley, at the northern end of the parish, contains a

number of listed historical period buildings. In addition, the 17th century Bradley Wood farmhouse in the north of the parish is listed.

Throughout the rest of the parish are scattered single and small groups of farm houses and farm buildings.

### Materials and features

Many of the buildings in the older part of the town are a mixture of red brick, stucco and rendered walls painted in muted colours. Some brick buildings are faced with knapped flint, using a local material to great effect, and this is also picked up in the design of many boundary walls.

Although some of the newer brick buildings and walls are also faced with the knapped flint, builders of modern estates such as Hillside have tried to imitate this by using flint-effect panels as facing on brick walls. However, the difference between the regular pattern of the imitation and the randomness of the real thing is evident. Recent developments have introduced variety in materials used on properties and between properties, using bricks of varying colours, rendering, hung tiles and other materials, with differing levels of success.

Likewise, roofs vary depending on the area in which they are located. Roof materials on older buildings include darker red and brown clay tiles, slate and thatch. More recent developments use red and concrete tiles. Bright orange-red tiles used in some of the recently-built estates should be





A



B



C



14

avoided. Although weathering may eventually mute their brightness, they do not blend in well with the existing town roof-scape and are clearly visible from afar.

Windows also vary depending on the era in which the houses were built. Older dwellings have casement or sash windows, and more modern ones have windows of metal, wood and PVC materials. Some owners, however, have replaced original windows with ones whose style is inappropriate for the era in which the house was built and conflict with adjacent properties.

Paving materials influence the look and feel of the parish. Most of the pavements comprise concrete slabs or tarmacadam. In the town centre we can see the effective use of mellow block paving, the sealed gravel quality finish in Fairclose and other town mews and the quality resurfacing of car-parks in Church and Bell streets. Existing Victorian kerbstones should be retained in any landscaping or paving schemes. Attention to detail here is important and is now being recognised more in design.

### Summary of the built environment

The built environment of Whitchurch is a patchwork of different character areas: modern in-fills set within historical period neighbourhoods, housing authority-built estates cheek by jowl with Victorian terrace houses, pockets of early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses now surrounded by modern estates

and historic buildings refurbished or converted to retain and enhance the distinctive local character of the area.

Interspersed within this patchwork are the open areas used for education and leisure – the lungs that allow the residents breathing space to enjoy the open air of Whitchurch’s country setting. There are also the industrial and commercial areas that provide some employment for local residents and services to the community.

Like a patchwork quilt, Whitchurch’s appeal lies not in the individual pieces but in the way the seemingly incompatible and clashing pieces fit together to make an appealing whole.



E

The secret to its future development lies in ensuring that variety is preserved, while retaining quality within the built environment and resisting all attempts to homogenise the look of its buildings and open spaces.

### Other Local issues and concerns

In addition to the concerns already mentioned, comments received from residents in the



F



G

### Buildings Valued but Unlisted

In our Design Day buildings survey, residents suggested that the following buildings or groups of buildings have individual or group value, although they are not listed buildings:

- Whitchurch Station (A)
- Cottages at the top of Lynch Hill (B)
- Replacement houses next to the Methodist Church (C)
- Test Mews (D)
- Gryphon House, Bell Street (E)
- Former station building, Wells Lane (F)
- Postal sorting office, Church Street (G)

team’s public opinion survey and design day exercise highlighted several issues about the design of Whitchurch’s built environment; these are summarised below and then followed by guidelines to address them.

### Mix of housing designs

Almost a third of respondents to our survey said that future housing should be “mixed”, meaning that it should consist of different sizes, shapes and designs, including a portion of smaller, affordable dwellings. These views in effect endorse the patchwork nature of the built environment and are evi-

dence that local residents want to see that variety maintained and extended in any new development.

Residents expressed their unhappiness with national ‘anywhere’ designs in some of the modern period estates, in which non-local features and materials combine to dilute the local character.

‘Diversity within a pattern’ is what local residents appreciate.

### The country feel to Whitchurch

Those buildings that are actually in the small settlements and farms outside of the town need to retain

their rural character, but, for the town of Whitchurch, keeping the rural nature of the built environment is not a straightforward matter.

As a town and not a village, Whitchurch has many urban characteristics arising from the need to cope with traffic, parking, communications, personal and building security and other issues.

Trees and open spaces are particularly important to Whitchurch residents. When asked in our opinion survey to identify the most important aspects in the design of new developments, 82 per cent of respondents identified “provision of trees and open spaces” as essential.

If the existing rural character of the town is to be retained, the link between trees and buildings is vital to integrate the built form into the surrounding landscape.

The traffic noise from the A34 bypass has become a major irritant to many of the residents of the town. Particularly affected is the area west of the disused railway, almost all elevated parts of the town, as well as low-lying areas close to the bypass: Micheldever and Winchester roads, Church Street and The Weir. Thus an external force not of Whitchurch’s making and outside its control is seriously damaging the

**“Encourage a balance of housing types and ensure that infrastructure keeps pace with developments.”**

– Public Opinion Survey

country feel of the place that residents so much like.

The residents appreciate the benefits to the town of the bypass but want every possible measure taken to minimise noise and light pollution from it.

Some of the guidelines aim to ensure that Whitchurch has a built environment that preserves a country feel to the place, while accepting modern transport and communications systems.

*“I really like brightly coloured houses, especially on rainy days when it stops everything looking so grey.”  
“No more horrible bright orange, yellow paintwork. Natural colours blend in much better with the environment.”*

*- Design Day comments*

#### **Materials and Features**

In our public opinion survey, 49 per cent of respondents said they considered the use of compatible materials as “essential” in new developments. “Compatible” here means compatible with materials that are used in other local buildings. This was only slightly lower in the ranking they gave to the scale (52 per cent) and style (51 per cent) of local buildings.

Other guidelines reflect this interest in compatibility of materials used in the built environment of Whitchurch.

## **Guidelines for the Built Environment**

- 1. Give preference to proposals for restoring or converting older buildings of character and retaining their setting, instead of demolishing and replacing them.**
- 2. Preserve the variety of roof lines and roof styles in Whitchurch, ensuring that any three-storey buildings are appropriate for their immediate surroundings.**
- 3. Retain the appearance of an uninterrupted street frontage, while giving the pedestrian priority by allowing for wider pavements.**
- 4. Provide a variety of house types, frontages and roof lines in all new developments, ensuring that units of different sizes are intermixed and avoiding separated areas of affordable housing.**
- 5. Prevent cars from dominating the streetscape. Where car parking is provided, it should be within the limits of the site. Alternatively, provide individual garages or small areas of local car parking spaces behind or close to new dwellings, avoiding exposed central garaging.**
- 6. Ensure that vehicular access arrangements do not destroy or damage the character of the street scene.**
- 7. Ensure that new buildings or conversions of or extensions to existing rural properties retain the rural character of the setting and that any industrial-scale buildings on these properties are screened from scenic public views and, as far as possible, from other public areas.**
- 8. Encourage the concentration of radio masts onto the existing water tower to minimise the visual impact of new masts and to preserve the distinctive character of the town and parish.**
- 9. Ensure that future industrial and commercial developments provide adequate employee and customer parking, loading/unloading facilities, access and on-site storage so that vehicle traffic flows in the town are not interrupted or increased.**
- 10. Ensure that adequate and effective bypass noise reduction and screening measures are in place for future development of housing between the A34 and the disused railway embankment.**
- 11. Design new buildings and extensions to respect the materials, shapes, styles and proportions of walls, roofs and other features of the buildings in the area.**
- 12. Encourage the retention and repair of existing windows and original glass; where windows need to be replaced, they should have a style that is sympathetic to the age and style of the building or adjacent buildings.**
- 13. Encourage the use of high-quality materials for all paved areas, giving preference to combinations of patterned brick and stone paving; break up large areas of paving by using planting or raised paved areas using contrasting materials.**
- 14. Define plot boundaries beside public roads, paths or scenic views by using natural features: weathered brick, flint or other traditional walling, railings or hedging.**
- 15. Ensure that new industrial estates are visually and acoustically screened from any adjacent residential areas, using the boundary-screening materials suggested in guideline 14.**





# 5 Road and Footpath Networks

Section 2 describes the history of Whitchurch's road, rail and river network. Here we treat its road and footpath network in more depth and suggest some guidelines to help ensure that changes to it preserve its character.

## Roads

Almost all of the built-up areas in Whitchurch are accessed by motor vehicles using the five roads that intersect in Market Square. As this is also the hub of the bus routes and main through route for all traffic in the area, the centre of town is inevitably dominated by vehicles and busy roads during parts of the day.

The narrowness of these streets, coupled with increasing volumes of traffic, lead to serious congestion at peak times. On-street parking, large industrial and agricultural vehicles and deliveries to shops impede the flow of traffic and add to this congestion. Although this calms the flow, it can also stop it completely. The resulting start-stop traffic is unsatisfactory as it increases air and noise pollution and creates a safety hazard for pedestrians.

## Footpaths

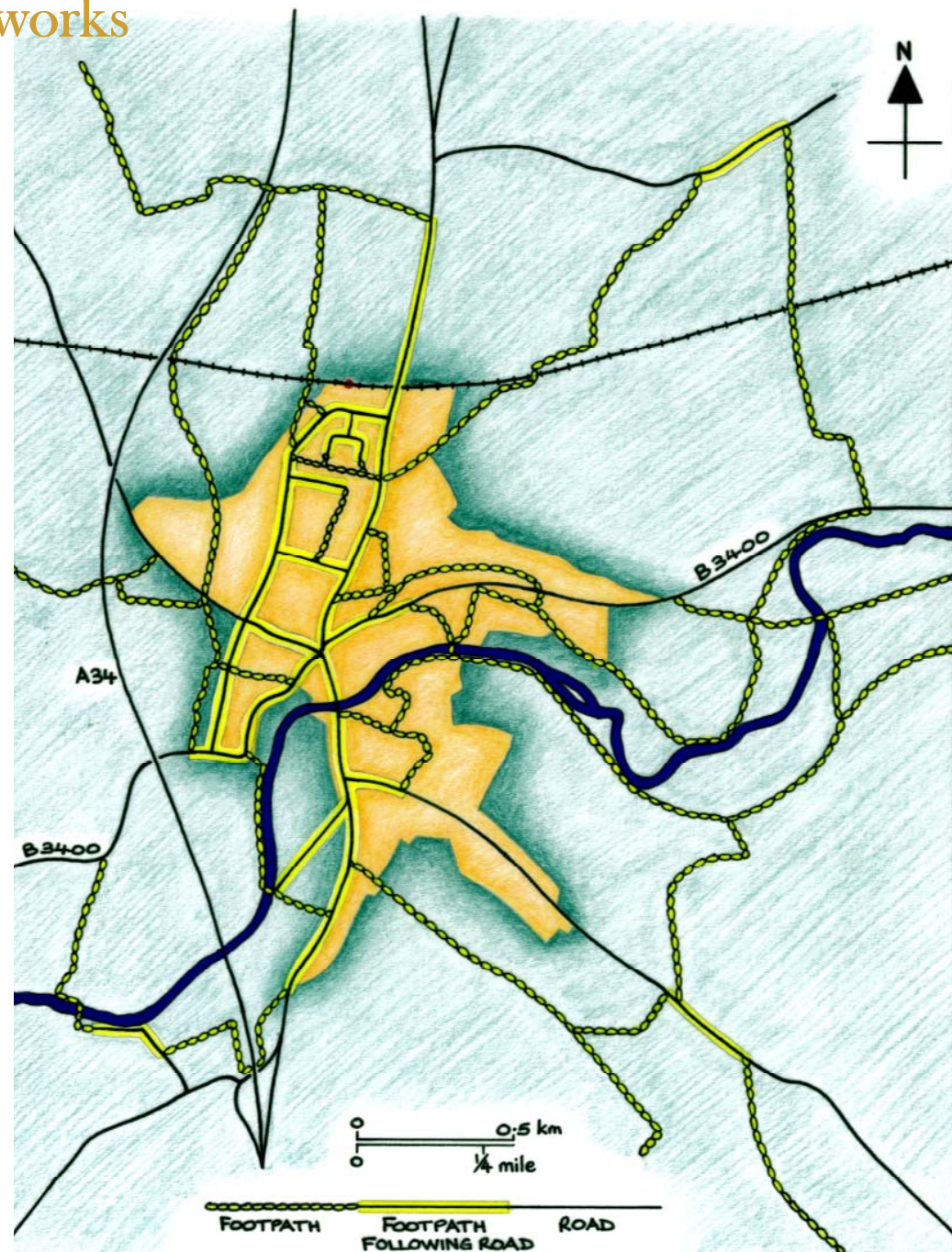
One of the most widely appreciated and important characteristics of Whitchurch is the well-established network of interconnecting footpaths, roads, streets and alleyways throughout the parish (see map, right).

They vary greatly in appearance depending on their age, use and location. Some of these footpaths are ancient and rural in character, unpaved and running along the edges of fields or through wooded areas, such as Chatter Alley and the footpath extension to Lynch Hill through the woods below Lynch Hill Park (A). A pathway running north through the town and up through the woodland scenery of Bere Hill woods (B) runs between the lines of old burgage field strips, an historical vestige of the town's early origins (see also Section 2).

Many of these ways are short cuts (C) across the web of roads within the town, and they encourage people to move safely on foot or sometimes by bicycle. They allow pedestrians to move easily across the town, often avoiding the heavily trafficked main roads. This helps to reduce traffic and may also contribute to the town's low crime rate, by encouraging a high 'people presence' on our streets.

The traditional pathways that join up the main strands of the Whitchurch road web are vital links and well-used, although some are not accessible to pushchair users. The footpath linking London Street, Town Mill and the recreation ground (D) provides country-like walks that are enjoyed by children on their way to the primary and secondary schools.

## WALKWAY NETWORK



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In addition to 'rights of way' registered on footpaths and roads in the parish countryside, there are 'bridleways' and 'byways open to all traffic'. This network of 'rights of way' also extends into the town and links with the comprehensive town network of roads and footpaths.

This network in the town also links to footpaths and cycleways within the parish and beyond, so that walkers can reach the surrounding countryside very quickly. In addition to an active Ramblers group, many people – residents and visitors – walk the local footpaths for pleasure throughout the week and at weekends.

### Local issues and concerns

Based on the feedback from our public opinion survey and design day comments, we have identified below several issues to do with transport that are causing concern to Whitchurch residents. Each of the concerns is linked to one or more design guidelines shown in the coloured panel at the end of this section of the statement.

#### Vehicle traffic

Vehicle traffic and parking have become major issues for the residents of Whitchurch. As a rough indication of this concern, 39 respondents raised traffic and parking issues in their public opinion survey forms. We also received more than 50 comments (15 per cent of all comments) from our design day exhibition about these issues.

Traffic congestion and parking needs are not primarily design

issues, and planning guidelines will not on their own either solve these problems or prevent them from getting worse. However the design of Whitchurch has evolved around its star-like through road pattern. As this is a main contributing factor to the traffic problems within the town centre, this shows that inappropriate design can cause day-to-day problems.

**“Place pedestrians’ and peoples’ needs over cars; encourage safe streets and open spaces through good design; create a strong framework in which to introduce any future developments.”**

*– Public Opinion Survey*

Of particular concern to residents are the increasing numbers of very large articulated lorries moving through the narrow streets of the town, particularly along the east-west B3400 and southbound from Newbury Street onto the B3400 and the A34. By their sheer size and weight these large vehicles:

- block traffic and occasionally cause serious disruption to free movement of other vehicles;
- damage street furniture;
- shake the foundations of buildings on their route;
- intimidate pedestrians and make walking on the pavements hazardous and unpleasant;
- emit polluting exhausts that cause health hazards and add considerably to damage and deterioration to the roads, the built environment and the nearby property furnishings.

Developers are now buying up older properties with large plots, and replacing the existing houses with multiple units with smaller gardens, creating more cul-de-sacs off the few main connecting roads. These building patterns are adding to the traffic congestion on the town's roads and streets.

While most of the the new cul-de-sacs have streetside pavements, few paths have been built to link with the existing web of footpaths, which allows pedestrians to navigate through the town away from traffic.

Two lorries confront each other on London Street



#### Parking

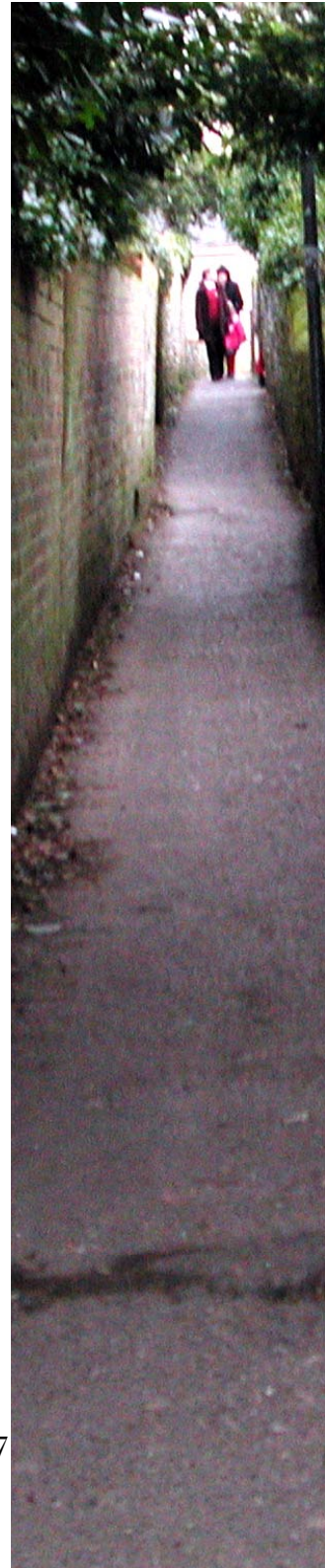
Feedback to the team shows that a significant portion of Whitchurch residents want to see more off-street parking for residents, for shoppers and for users of Whitchurch Station. Some would like to see Long's Court available for

public parking during the daytime, when it is largely empty.

However, the feedback is often contradictory, and guidelines can only try to ensure better planning for parking in new developments.

## Guidelines for Roads and Footpaths

1. **Ensure that the cumulative impact on parking and congestion caused in the area by incremental development is taken account of for each small infill site.**
2. **Require that new developments provide paths, lit where appropriate, which link with the existing network of interconnecting footpaths, roads, streets and alleyways.**
3. **Retain and improve the existing footpath and bridleway network throughout the town and parish.**
4. **Discourage traffic from commercial and industrial development with appropriate regulations and signage to ensure that such traffic is routed directly out of the town and not through it.**
5. **Apply traffic calming measures consistent with signage guidelines at the entrances to the town to slow down traffic and make drivers aware that they have entered the town.**
6. **Require that all new developments and alterations to existing buildings give priority to pedestrian movement over vehicle traffic within the town centre, especially around Market Square.**



## 6 Open Space

In Section 3. *Landscape setting and shape of the parish*, we described Whitchurch in its beautiful rural setting, part of which is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

This section describes how the open space in the parish and town seems to its residents and what aspects of the open space the people of Whitchurch are most anxious to preserve.

### Open countryside

The fields and farms in the parish are largely devoted to raising arable crops such as wheat, barley and oil seed rape, although a few fields are used for livestock or paddocks for horses.

In earlier times traditional farming took place in small fields surrounded by mixed hedgerows, but modern techniques, as elsewhere, have resulted in the cultivation of larger fields. Although this has resulted in the loss of some hedgerows, many remain throughout the parish, particularly alongside tracks, approach roads, footpaths/bridleways and existing and former railway land.

The undulating contours of the surrounding open countryside

Left: This aerial photograph demonstrates the prevalence of trees in the townscape of Whitchurch, with the dark shadows of the morning sun emphasising their height and mass

provide far-reaching attractive views from the higher ground around the town, particularly to the south where there is very little shelter or containment. This does, however, make Whitchurch susceptible to the strong prevailing winds from the south-west with associated unwelcome increase in the traffic noise from the elevated A34 bypass.

### Trees and hedgerows within the parish and the town

Where the land is too steep for agriculture, wooded areas have evolved. These vary from mature deciduous mixtures of beech and oaks to introduced species such as sycamore and conifers. Some of the more mature trees and tree groups have tree preservation orders on them.

“The green areas in Whitchurch and the pathways are used frequently by local people and in fact enable people to meet in a place other than the centre.

“They are important to our community spirit as well as beautiful.”

- Design Day comment



View of the Lynch from Town Mill Lane

The open countryside is interspersed with many small, wooded copses, tree belts and hedgerows that provide vital corridors for a diversity of flora and fauna. Bluebells are a particularly valued asset in the copses to the north of the town.

Complete hedgerows of hazel coppice may still be found either side of Micheldever Road, forming a tunnel of growth as you descend into the town from the

“Many natural features are rapidly disappearing; if we are not careful the surrounding ‘natural’ identity of Whitchurch will disappear.”

– Design Day comment

southeast. These were used for fencing as well as wattle and daub house and wall construction. Yew and box are natural to the area, and, as evergreens, provide attractive, permanent and locally characteristic screening between roads and properties.

Grassed verges soften the effect of roads on the approaches to the town on Winchester Street and Newbury Street, while providing suitable conditions for the introduction of roadside trees.

### Feature groups of trees

Large tree groupings form valuable green backgrounds; for example the poplar plantings at The Lawn in Church Street (A). Large trees or groups of trees close to buildings and roads need to be effectively managed, however, to prevent possible nuisance or structural problems evolving. On a much smaller scale, some plant invasion is desirable such as the

Below: Trees along the Lynch Hill Park ridge make a distinctive leafy silhouette to frame this view from the Test valley floor



valerian growing in the pathside wall on London Street.

Another important group of trees lies to the east of Newbury Street and around Berehill House and the Lynch, comprising a large area of mature beech with conifers. It is a valuable backdrop in this elevated location as well as a roost for large rook colonies.

### Feature specimen trees

There are many important specimen trees within the larger gar-



Above: Beavers rest on the “fish seat” in the Millennium Meadow during a nature study visit

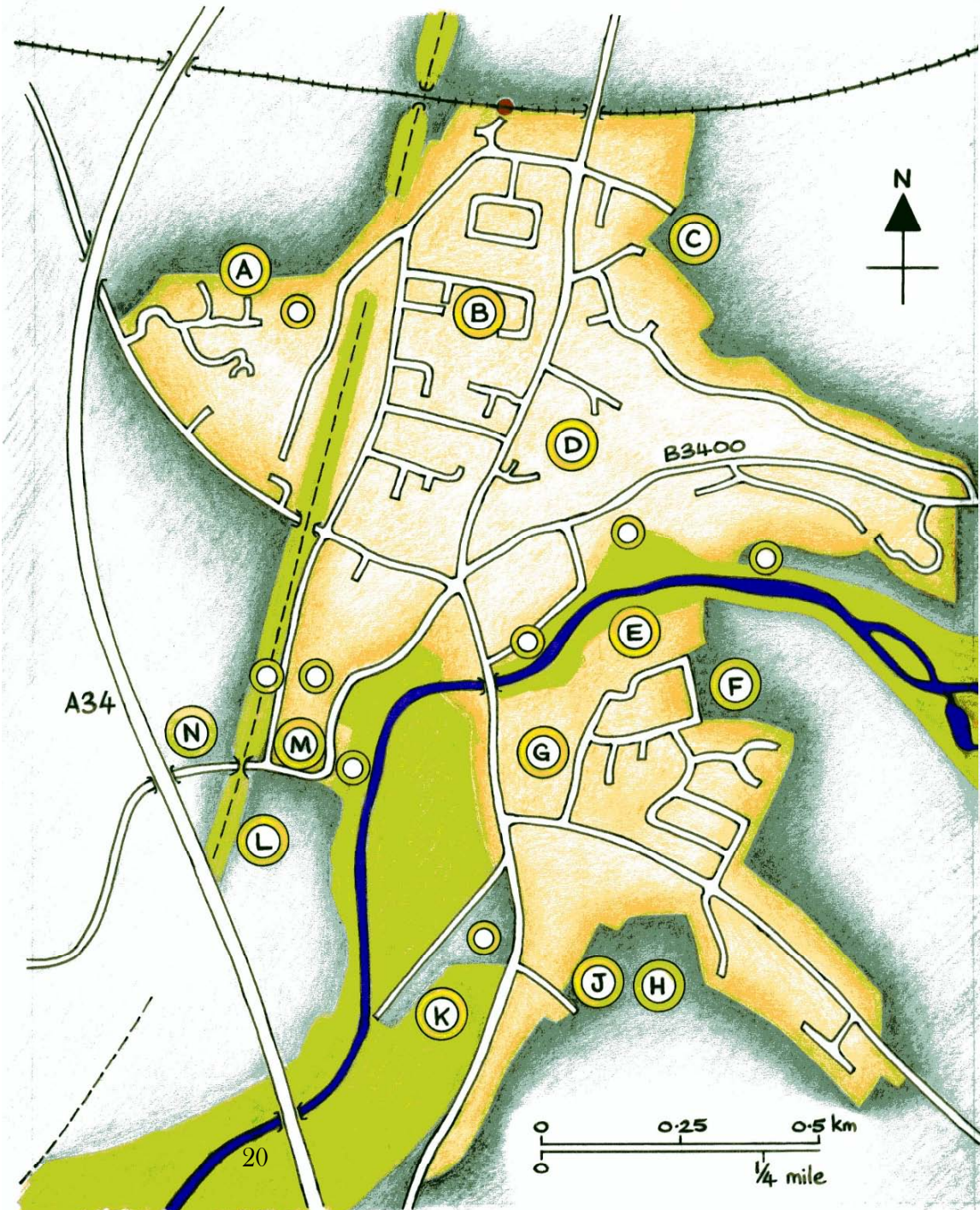
dens and open spaces throughout the town. These include:

- mature copper beeches such as those on Winchester Street
- lime trees on the southern boundary of the Winchester Road recreation ground
- mature Lebanon cedar (*Cedrus libani*) at Kings Lodge (B)
- evergreen oaks and mature beech in Lynch Hill Park (below)
- lime trees by the Longmeadow Sports Centre
- large willow trees by the Millennium Meadow (C)
- horse chestnut by the primary school and Town Mill
- evergreen yew trees in the old churchyard at All Hallows.

The yew (D) by the front door of All Hallows church is probably the oldest tree in Whitchurch, and the sculptural form within the exterior trunk one of the town’s best kept secrets.



# IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES



## LEGEND

- (A) CAESAR'S WAY RECREATION GROUND
- (B) KINGSLEY PARK RECREATION GROUND
- (C) SCOUT FIELD
- (D) BEREHILL WOODS
- (E) PRIMARY SCHOOL
- (F) SKATEBOARD PARK
- (G) ALLISTON WAY RECREATION GROUND
- (H) TESTBOURNE SCHOOL
- (J) LONGMEADOW SPORTS CENTRE
- (K) MILLENNIUM MEADOW
- (L) CRICKET FIELD
- (M) ALL HALLOWS CHURCH
- (N) CEMETERY
- INFORMAL GREEN SPACE
- GREEN CORRIDORS

## Informal open spaces

There are many informal open spaces throughout the town and parish which have not been maintained or managed in any way, providing abundant tree cover with scrubby understorey. Every effort should be made to retain these important areas as they provide a wide variety of important habitats for birds and other wildlife and contribute significantly to the 'country character' of Whitchurch.

## Green corridors

The map on the left shows the two distinct green corridors linking the parish with the town of Whitchurch: the disused railway line and the Test valley.

These areas are very important for both the community and the natural environment, because they provide a wide range of wildlife habitats, tree cover and footpath links. They are particularly highly valued as they provide continuous corridors that are separated from the disturbance associated with buildings and traffic. It is essential to retain the unspoilt character of these two corridors and to encourage and reinforce footpath links throughout.

## The disused railway line

The north-south railway line of the former Didcot-Southampton service and adjoining open space (by the former railway station) is

Left: a reedmace seed head explodes in spring beside one of the scrapes in the Millennium Meadow





The River Test near Fulling Mill

often used by cub and beaver scouts and by those seeking the solitude of natural surroundings within the town.

The railway embankments have been colonised by banks of trees that provide a physical barrier and natural boundary between the inner town and the A34 bypass. However, in recent years, private gardens have encroached on to the embankment, particu-

larly to the rear of Evingar Road. This has resulted in native trees and shrubs being replaced with more ornamental planting and areas being fenced off. This is changing the natural appearance of the embankment, reducing the tree cover and adversely affecting the natural, unspoilt character of this important green corridor.

Footpath access is still possible along this section of the rail-

way line, including passage across the two brick railway arches, linking with the cricket ground and other existing footpaths. Access is restricted, however, by the dumping of garden rubbish towards the northern end of the embankment.

### The River Test

Flowing through the heart of the town and parish, the River Test provides a continuous, unspoilt area of open space that is visually attractive and gives the whole valley its special character.

The sound of running water and the splash of waterfowl landing are important parts of town life. Although public access to the river bank is restricted to only a few locations, residents and visitors enjoy

feeding the ducks, and the sight of ducklings swimming in the river brings great springtime pleasure. Fish watching and fish feeding are also popular recreational pursuits where the public have access.

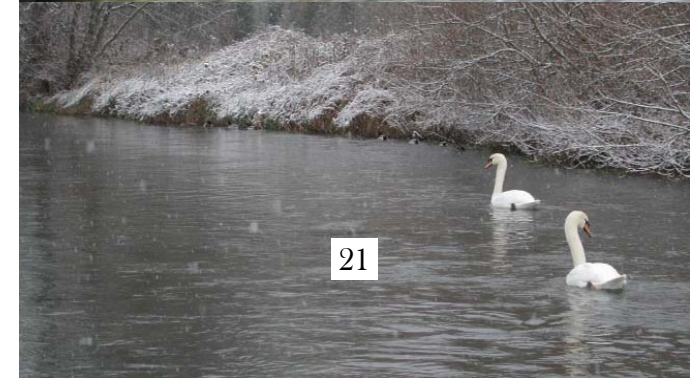
### “More riverside walks” – Public Opinion Survey

As one of the most famous trout streams in the country, the Test is carefully tended by its owners, whose water bailiffs preserve a quality riverscape enjoyed by fishermen.

The river once provided power for several mills as it passed through the parish. The one remaining working mill is the Whitchurch Silk Mill, now a working museum with skilled weavers producing high-quality silks to order for theatrical costumes, interior designers and historic houses.

### “Landscaping of approach roads from Basingstoke, Newbury and Southampton should present a welcoming and eye-catching atmosphere to the town, including grass and maintaining flowerbeds.”

– Public Opinion Survey





A

In the past the fresh spring water supported watercress beds. One of these is now a private area for wildlife, and the other supports another commercial aquatic plant nursery growing a wide range of indigenous and exotic water plants.



B

Management of the river is an important function in preventing pollution and flooding and ensuring that the river is scenically attractive and abundant in fish and other fauna. This work includes keeping springs open and free from pollution and ensuring that the various sluices which are part of the river management heritage are maintained and restored.



C

The Millennium Meadow off Winchester Road provides an escape for walkers, who can enjoy expansive views of sky, meadow and woodland. In the adjacent Orchid Meadow there is an ancient spring, between the Millennium Meadow and the A34 bypass, a rare and historic vestige of a spring fed feeder to the River Test.



D

There is an active horse-riding community in Whitchurch with paddocks located mainly within the Test valley. The horses provide a valuable role in grazing in the water meadows, thus keeping the views open, similar to how they were when sheep grazed there. However, the introduction

**“It is vital to maintain natural features – trees and old and wild hedgerows: less or no greenbelt development.”**

**– Public Opinion Survey**

of buildings for shelter, access for horse-boxes and other changes associated with the keeping of horses needs to be carefully controlled if it is not to adversely affect this rurally sensitive area.

Below: Children playing at “The Rec” on Alliston Way



Riverside walks offer unique views to residents and visitors – these are illustrated in the Walkway Network map in Section 5. From the direction of Bere Mill in the east there is limited access to waterside scenery, and from there the wilder countryside, rich in wetland flora, gives way to a private conservation area that was once full of watercress beds.

This links with an area on Town Mill corner, where the natural vegetation forms a visual



Two-legged and four-legged creatures enjoy an outing in the Millennium Meadow

background to the new houses in Pound Meadow. The water meadow beside Town Mill Lane conserves ancient grazing scenes and is a favourite view of residents (see Section 3).

Another popular river walk is the one from the parish church in Church Street to Fulling Mill and on through the Millennium Meadow – this links with countryside walks to the east of Winchester Street and also ranks high in the residents’ list of favourite views.

### Recreational open spaces in the town

The map on page 20 shows the locations of some of the important open spaces in the town of Whitchurch. Most of these spaces are set aside for personal

or group recreation, but there are others that are used informally to enjoy as green oases amidst the more urban townscape.

### Active recreation

The largest area of open space used for organised sports is in the southwestern corner of the town. There are grass football pitches at the Whitchurch C of E Primary School, Testbourne Community School and the Longmeadow Sports Centre (A). The Cricket Club plays in traditional surroundings near to the parish church, and for the energetic young the skateboard park (B) near the primary school presents new challenges. Groups such as the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts use the scouts’ field for outdoor pursuits to the north of town in Bere Hill.



An open gate provides passers-by with a glimpse into a private garden

### Play areas

Although there are some children's play areas scattered around the town, Whitchurch suffers from a shortage of open spaces for children and young adults to enjoy casual informal ball games such as football, rounders,

**“It's very important to preserve the views of buildings and natural features -- people can gain a lot from the natural beauty of many areas in Whitchurch and to ruin these areas is to deny the residents; it's why we chose to live here.”**

- Design Day comment

rough cricket and other activities, particularly in the north of town. The aerial photograph at the beginning of Section 6 shows clearly the density of the housing and absence of accessible spaces within the town boundaries. Building in-fill has often eradicated suitable open space close to where the active younger people of the town live.

The existing facilities include the three main play areas at Winchester Road, Kingsley Park and Caesar's Way (P22: C), that are set in attractive grassland so they can be enjoyed by all when viewed from surrounding roads, pathways and homes.

### Allotments/organic smallholding

A less strenuous recreational use for open space is gardening.

There is a successful organic smallholding on the Kingsclere Road on the outskirts of town, while the Town Council's allotment site on Winchester Road now provides long term secure facilities for the increasing numbers of amateur growers of vegetables. Other sites off Blosswood Lane and Test Road also offer allotment facilities.

### Private gardens

Much of the town's tree cover is situated within the larger gardens in private and commercial use. Private gardens, large and small, provide colourful interest (P22: D) and variation within the town landscape so often enjoyed by passers-by. Higher housing densities in recent developments, however, have reduced the average size of gardens.

### Local issues and concerns

In our public opinion survey, when we asked Whitchurch residents to rank the importance of different aspects of new developments, the provision of trees and open spaces came top of the list, being ranked as “essential” by 82 per cent of the 500 people responding to the survey.

In second place was access to the River Test, with 63 per cent ranking it as “essential”. When asked which aspects of the character of Whitchurch should be preserved, the River Test came second, after the countryside.

It is also not surprising that in the list of the top six favourite views of

## Guidelines for Open Space

- 1 Encourage the retention of all hedgerows, trees and copses for both ecological and scenic reasons, particularly in the rural parts of the parish.
- 2 Ensure that adequate space is allowed on development sites for successful retention of trees through to maturity.
- 3 Retain existing and encourage new areas of public access to the River Test and adjoining open spaces. Ensure the conservation of the rich flora of the river banks and the animal and wildfowl habitats along the River Test.
- 4 Retain pedestrian access onto and along the disused north-south railway line, and also the existing footpath through the tunnel beneath the main east-west railway line, which links the town with the open countryside.
- 5 Provide effective long-term management of the disused railway line corridor and existing native tree cover to retain this important green area and natural boundary.
- 6 Retain and encourage informal open spaces in their natural state where they provide a visual public amenity and habitats for flora and fauna.
- 7 Ensure that plans for larger housing developments provide open space for informal recreation, either on the site or in another part of the parish.

Whitchurch shown in Section 3. *Landscape setting and shape of Whitchurch*, three of them were of river scenes.

From the Design Day exercise there were 38 different comments from visitors about the need to keep and to open up more views and access to the River Test: words like “open up” and

“access” appeared repeatedly in their remarks.

Thus there can be no question about the value that local residents place on open spaces and the river setting of Whitchurch. The guidelines listed in the panel above aim to ensure that these aspects of its character will be retained.



# 7 Street Furniture and Lighting

## Street furniture

Traditional, black painted metal bollards, posts and other street furniture installed in recent years in the older parts of Whitchurch (A) complement existing black vertical railings in places such as the River Test and the Silk Mill. They sit comfortably alongside the local materials used in the buildings and boundary walls.

Other types of street furniture beyond the town centre include older style benches with metal slats painted dark green on Winchester Road and Newbury Hill. Residents are keen to see these benches retained and restored for future use.

Timber bollards and benches on the outskirts of the town and in

the amenity open spaces enhance the more rural aspect of town and parish alongside existing timber footbridges and post and rail fencing.

## Road signage

Striking a balance between size/ clarity of road signs and visual clutter in an old town like Whitchurch is always difficult.

Generally road signage in the town is sufficient without being obtrusive, an exception being the excessive use of posts at the railway arch in Bell Street (B). Road surface markings for additional traffic-calming measures are likely to go against the desire of most residents to preserve the town's rural character.

## Street features and local detail

Features and landmarks that are unique to the streets of Whitchurch include the specimen *Gleditsia* tree with seat surround outside the Town Hall, the clock and flag-pole on the Town Hall, the entrance gate to the Millennium Meadow (B), the water-wheel at the Silk Mill, the old Hovis sign outside One Stop (C), the partially-restored seed merchant's sign on Church Street, weather vanes, pub signage (D) and the White Hart statue overlooking the centre roundabout.

Hanging baskets and window boxes on pubs, businesses and private dwellings, are appreciated by both residents and visitors and add colour and variety to the street scene.

Local detail includes the various plaques on building frontages, such as the one on Lord Denning's birthplace on Newbury Street and the one about the Salvation Army located over the Beehive Stores. Individual features, such as door knockers, boot scrapers and intricate patterns of manholes display local colour and character for the passer-by.

## Lighting

Traditional black metal lanterns and columns on Bell Street go well with the street furniture and local building character, and the wall-mounted lanterns are particularly effective around the Market Place roundabout, avoiding the

need for additional columns. The more standard, post-mounted utilitarian lighting used elsewhere (F) provides strong lighting but does not enhance the local character of the older part of town.

Low-level amenity lighting has been used to great effect on some of the town's buildings, such as the Town Hall and some of the pubs, creating an attractive setting at night.

Residents have expressed their concern about light pollu-



tion affecting the town and the surrounding rural area. Typical examples are the floodlights at Long Meadow football ground, night traffic from the elevated section of the A34, security lighting on both residential and commercial properties and large numbers of light columns on the edges of the town, which adjoin countryside and are within the more rural areas of the parish.

## Guidelines for Street Furniture and Lighting

- 1 Ensure that road, street and directional signs are erected only where absolutely necessary, are as unobtrusive as possible and do not impede pedestrian flow.
- 2 Install paving, bus shelters, street lights and other street furniture to respect the traditional character of the older part of town and the more rural character of the remaining built-up environment and parish beyond.
- 3 Ensure that when street, site and security lighting is installed or replaced, it is no brighter than needed for the purpose and that it is directed only to the area(s) required, without causing nuisance or pollution of the sky at night.
- 4 Maintain and refurbish existing street furniture and fixtures where their style is compatible with the style of the older parts of the town and parish.



Benches: modern version (right) is solid and functional, contrasted with the traditional favourite all-metal delicate one (right, below)



## Taking the local pulse

The team used as many means as were reasonable to collect and analyse what Whitchurch residents feel is most important about the look and feel of the place. This public pulse-taking included:

- **An A5 four-page leaflet (A)** distributed throughout the parish primarily with the February 2003 parish magazine to more than 1,700 households in the parish. The leaflet explained what a design statement is and how it is used, who the team members are, why such a statement is needed by Whitchurch and the team's plans for collecting opinions and producing the report.
- **A public opinion survey, (B)** two copies of which were distributed with each of the above leaflets to be returned to a special box at the Newbury Building Society in the town centre. The survey questionnaire sought views on why people stayed or moved to Whitchurch and which features they most valued. An open-ended question at the

end of the questionnaire allowed respondents to express their views on anything that they thought might help the team draw up these guidelines. A total of 500 people returned their completed forms – a very high response rate for this type of exercise.

- **A Whitchurch Design website and forum (C)**, in which Internet users could ask questions and give their opinions about planning issues related to this design statement and also about specific planning applications. The website itself reported on progress on the design statement and gave users the chance to download design statement project documents.
- **A Whitchurch Design Day (D)** exhibit held at the Parish Hall on March 8, 2003, displaying maps, photographs and draft guidelines. Visitors were asked to complete a buildings questionnaire and also to put their opinions on these exhibits

onto yellow sticky notes on the exhibits themselves. More than 150 residents dropped in during the day (E) and left more than 500 comments for the team to evaluate and use in drawing up this design statement. Children were asked to draw what they liked about Whitchurch (F).

- **Review panels**, made up of a cross-section of volunteers who are residents of Whitchurch, who read a draft version of the statement and met to compile suggestions for improving its content and appearance. The Whitchurch Town Council also sat as a review panel and made suggestions for improvements to the draft.

A draft of the statement was uploaded to the project website and publicised in the local press. In addition, printed copies of the draft were made available for viewing and comment at the Town Hall and at Whitchurch Library. From these comments some further revision of the state-

ment was done, and the statement then submitted to the Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council, who approved it as supplementary planning guidance.



An evidence file containing details of all the consultation with Whitchurch residents carried out during the preparation of this statement is available in the Town Clerk's office of the Whitchurch Town Council and can be accessed during normal opening hours.

## Acknowledgements

The Whitchurch Design Statement team would like to thank the following people and organisa-

tions who helped in the preparation of this statement:

- the people of Whitchurch, who filled in and returned questionnaires, participated in design day events and website forums and commented on drafts of this statement;
- the Whitchurch Town Council and the Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, who provided financial support and encouragement;
- the Newbury Building Society and the All Hallows parish magazine distributors, who helped to distribute and collect public opinion survey questionnaires;
- members of the review panels who provided advice and guidance based on a draft of this statement;
- the Whitchurch Baptist Church who provided display boards and a temporary team meeting venue;
- Jeanne Titchiner, who allowed us to use her line drawings in

# Compiling the Whitchurch Design Statement 8



**Whitchurch Design Statement**

**Will you help us guide the future of Whitchurch?**

We are a group of Whitchurch residents who responded to two public meetings held in 2002 and volunteered to draw up a Whitchurch Design Statement to help preserve the distinctive character of our parish. We are asking you to help us do this by the town and borough councils, although we are independent of these bodies.

Under the auspices of the Countryside Agency, many communities have drawn up design statements, and these are being used to protect the 'feel' of the place and its surroundings – the setting and the form of the community, its buildings and spaces. But Whitchurch has no design statement to say what the residents themselves want for their town. We aim to fill this gap.

But we need your help to do this...

**We need your views and opinions** about the look and feel of Whitchurch – what you like and what you dislike about our town.

**We need your skills** to help us gather information, write up findings, take photographs, design posters and documents and other similar work.

**We need your participation** in workshops, in answering questionnaires, in responding to our proposals.

**We need your support** to encourage as many of this work and to make sure that the statement reflects everyone's views.

**Whitchurch Design Statement**

**PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY**

The Whitchurch Design Statement is being compiled by a group of Whitchurch residents who wanted to preserve the distinctive character of our parish. We are asking you to help us do this by the town and borough councils, although we are independent of these bodies.

Under the auspices of the Countryside Agency, many communities have drawn up design statements, and these are being used to protect the 'feel' of the place and its surroundings – the setting and the form of the community, its buildings and spaces. But Whitchurch has no design statement to say what the residents themselves want for their town. We aim to fill this gap.

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**We need your support** to encourage as many of this work and to make sure that the statement reflects everyone's views.

How many years have you lived in Whitchurch?	How long have you lived in Whitchurch?	How long have you lived in Whitchurch?	How long have you lived in Whitchurch?
Less than 1 year	1 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	More than 10 years
1 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	More than 10 years	Other

**Whitchurch Design Statement**

**Will you help us guide the future of Whitchurch?**

The Whitchurch Design Team is drawing up a design statement for the parish of Whitchurch. This website tells you all about the project: who we are, what we are getting on and what you can do to help us.

**Who are we?**

We are a group of Whitchurch residents who responded to two public meetings held in 2002 and volunteered to draw up a Whitchurch Design Statement to help preserve the distinctive character of our parish. We are asking you to help us do this by the town and borough councils, although we are independent of these bodies.

**Who are we?**

The co-ordinator of the Whitchurch Design Statement is Steve Hoffman, 76 London Street, Whitchurch, Hampshire, RG26 2JY. Telephone: 01256 352200.

Members of the team and their phone numbers are as follows: Sarah Bright (01256 352200), Graham Burgess (01256 352200), Denise Wainwright (01256 352200), Claire Gibber (01256 352200), Alan & Sandra Miller (01256 352200), Caroline & John Mead (01256 352200), Andrew Stevens (01256 352200), Susan Vernon (01256 352200), Watts (01256 352200). Feel free to ring any member of the team if you have any questions about the project.

**More than 100 visitors came to our public event – the Whitchurch Design Day – on March 8. It was called 'The best weekend planning I've ever seen!'**

Click for more pictures and details of the day.

**Join our forum...**

Whitchurch Design Statement will be a document to be used by residents to describe the character of the town of Whitchurch. It will set guidelines for protecting the distinctive character of our parish. It will record what local people value about the place, so this can be considered when anyone is applying for planning permission – whether a builder of a house, or a resident wanting to extend or improve their property.

It has been approved by the planning authority – Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council – it will become supplementary planning guidance, and this will have an effect on all planning applications that are submitted to the council.

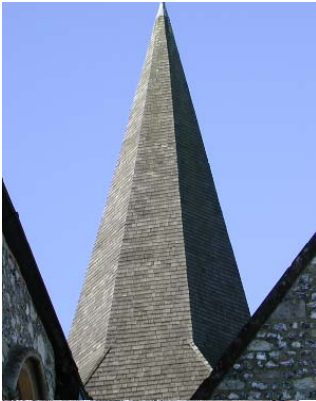
Statement will describe the visual features and the feel of Whitchurch – the landscape setting, the way we use our buildings, etc.

**Whitchurch Design Day**

**HAVE YOUR SAY**

**SATURDAY MARCH 8**  
**Parish Hall**  
**10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

- Find out the results of our public opinion survey
- See displays of maps and photographs
- Tell us what makes Whitchurch special for you
- Comment on some Whitchurch Design guidelines
- Suggest new design guidelines
- Encourage the kids to draw pictures of Whitchurch



our launch leaflet and in this statement;

- Phil Turner, RIBA, MRTPI, who gave independent advice and encouragement to the project;
- Liz Jones, who proofread the final draft
- Kim Byatt, who designed the statement and advised on printing
- Mark Stickland, who created the hand-drawn maps.

### Sources of information

#### Documents

The following documents were used in the preparation of the Whitchurch Design Statement:

- 1 *Analysis of Buildings & Materials Questionnaire Replies*, Whitchurch Design Statement Team, March 2003.
- 2 *Analysis of Favourite Views of Whitchurch*, Whitchurch Design Statement Team, March 2003.
- 3 *Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Assessment*, Landscape Design Associates and Wessex Archaeology, June 2001.

- 4 *Conservation Area Appraisal - Whitchurch*, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, Basingstoke, Hampshire, February 2000.
- 5 *Places to Live - Urban Design guidance for residential development*, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council Planning, Environment and Transport Department, Basingstoke, Hampshire, April 2002.
- 6 *Views and comments offered in the public opinion survey that could be helpful in producing a design statement*, Whitchurch Design Statement Team, March 2003.
- 7 *Visitor Comments Made at Whitchurch Design Day*, Whitchurch Design Statement Team, March 8, 2003.
- 8 *Whitchurch Design Statement Opinion Poll*, Whitchurch Design Statement Team, March 2003.

#### Maps

Maps are reproduced from Ordnance Survey material on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office ©

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The map of the built environment in Section 4 is the work of Derek Verran and uses data taken from the published Schedule of Listed Buildings in Whitchurch and a map published by B&DBC in the *Appraisal of the Whitchurch Conservation Area*. The rest of the information superimposed in colour relies on information from long-time residents of the parish. While every effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate, this cannot be guaranteed.

#### Photographs and drawings

Most of the photographs in this statement are the work of Andrew Reeves-Hall; a few were taken by Graham Burgess, Steve Hoffman and Phil Turner.

The copyright to all photographs, drawings and maps rests with the originators listed above, and these may not be reproduced in any form without the permission of the originators.



### The Whitchurch Design Statement Team

**Steve Hoffman, co-ordinator**  
**Graham Burgess, Dennis Goodwin, Brenda Hide, Geoff Hide, Claire Isbester, Geraldine Mouat, Andrew Reeves-Hall, Linda Thomas, Derek Verran**

Below: part of a 50-foot long composite panorama done by the children at the Whitchurch Design Day in March 2003 to show some of the features of Whitchurch that they like





