



MICHELMERSH & TIMSBURY VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



LANDSCAPE

INTRODUCTION

The hilltop with its lanes around Michelmersh Church was designated as a Conservation Area in 1987, and ten years later a Village Appraisal took place which served, among other things, to raise people's awareness of their community and its surroundings. Following this, and with the encouragement of Test Valley Borough Council, the Parish Council set up a design team to assess the significant features of Michelmersh and Timsbury. (Throughout this Statement, references to 'the village' apply to Michelmersh and Timsbury as a joint entity).

That assessment has resulted in this 'Village Design Statement', which incorporates relevant sections of the earlier 'Appraisal'. It also reflects the concerns expressed by Hampshire County Council's Landscape Strategy about urbanisation of the rural landscapes, and the associated effects of traffic on country lanes.

The recommendations that are made are themselves the result of a detailed survey and public review. The whole of the built-up area, and its surroundings, were studied by nine teams of villagers, of three to four members, photographing and taking notes. The results were presented, and a consensus opinion developed, during the course of three Workshops conveniently timed for all who wished to participate and make their views known. A large proportion of the village population did so.

The final Workshop comprised a major exhibition of photographs, maps and explanatory notes. It was used to obtain further written opinion on the developing Statement and also to hold a drawing/painting/poetry competition for the children so that they too could show what they liked best about their village. The outcome was most instructive.

This Village Design Statement was adopted by Test Valley Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 18th July, 2001. It has been issued to all households and businesses in the parish. The Village Design Statement is to be taken into consideration when Planning Applications are made for the construction of new buildings, and the modification or extension of existing properties.

The landscape of the Test valley in this area has been shaped, in geological terms, mainly by the chalk in the north and the clay in the south, through which the river has cut its way, leaving an alluvial valley edged with sand and gravel deposits. The clay overlying the chalk provided the material for brick-making, while the sand and gravel created opportunities for mineral extraction. Some of the pits formed by this then became lakes, and have evolved into varied habitats for wildlife.



It is interesting to note that the main road in the valley, the A3057, generally follows the line between the chalk and the alluvium, except at Timsbury where advantage was taken to set the original hamlet on an outcrop of sand and gravel west of the road. Michelmersh, on the other hand, lies on the clay, but both are on one side of the valley floor and the rising slopes to the east. The River Test is seldom seen as it flows through private land, but one is aware of its presence as one travels along the A3057.





SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY



Scattered prehistoric and Roman finds show that people have lived in this area since the Stone Age, but the earliest evidence of the villages is from the Saxon period. Both village names are Saxon in origin, Michelmersh meaning 'the great marsh' and Timsbury, either 'the timber fortification', or possibly 'grove of timber'. The original settlements were probably near the churches: Michelmersh church is perched on almost the highest point of the ridge overlooking both the valley of the Test and the land to the east; Timsbury church, in contrast, is close to the river where there may have been an early crossing-place over the Test. The present crossings, at Greatbridge, Kimbridge, and Mottisfont, have provided east-west routes at least since Saxon or Norman times and probably much longer. The main north-south route along the valley which dominates the area now, was probably of less significance in early times.



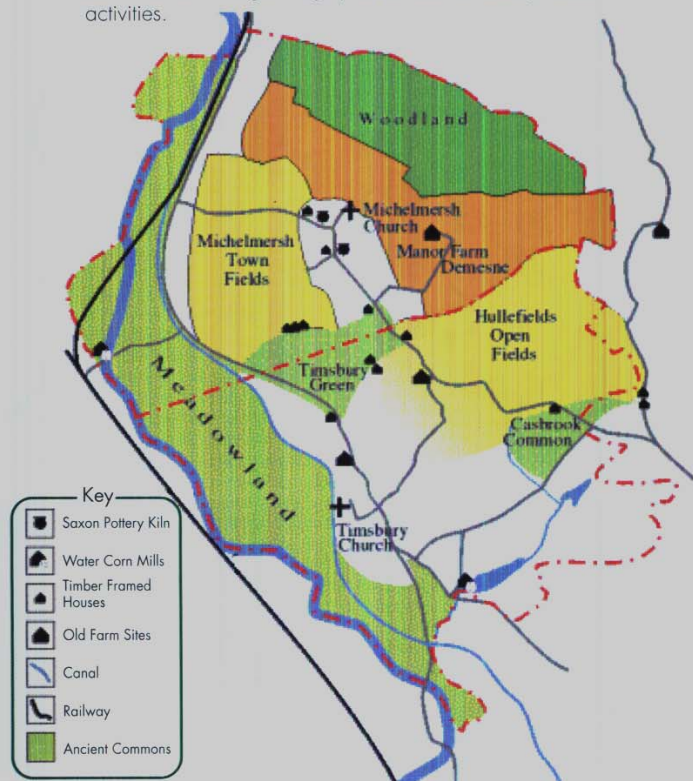
This high quality Saxon pot produced in a kiln at Michelmersh shows both the quality of the local clay, and that the village was a significant industrial centre, trading its products over an area from Winchester to Salisbury in the tenth century. Although pottery-making did not last, tiles were made in Michelmersh and Timsbury from about 1300, and their manufacture still continues. Commercial brick-making started in the nineteenth century. In the Middle Ages records of manor courts show that both villages practised open field agriculture, with separate areas of land held by the villeins, and by the ecclesiastical landlords: St Swithun's Priory and St Mary's Nunnery in Winchester, and Mottisfont Priory.

Both villages had extensive pasture for large flocks of sheep with the meadows of the Test valley providing valuable hay for overwintering livestock.

By at least the sixteenth century, and possibly throughout their history, both villages had a scattered form. Isolated farmsteads, or small groups of houses, were spread around the edges of large open commons: Timsbury Green, and Carisbrook, or Casbrook, Common were shared between the settlements. Casbrook Common derives its name from the stream flowing along its western side, which was known as the (Water-) Cress Brook as early as Saxon times. The last of the open fields and commons were enclosed in 1796, but the scattered settlement pattern persisted into the nineteenth century when more cottages were built for farm labourers. Large families and low wages tempted a number of local people into taking part in protests like the 1830 Swing riots, when four men were transported to Australia.

The north-south route along the Test valley gradually became more important than the east-west routes, and more dwellings were built along it. From the eighteenth century the main road was improved by a Turnpike Trust, but it still had to follow the route on higher ground up Yokesford Hill to reach Romsey. In 1784 the Andover to Redbridge canal was dug, following the contour line which marked the edge of the alluvial water meadows. This lasted a very short time, and part of its course was destroyed when it was reused as the track of the 1859 railway. By the early nineteenth century road traffic increasingly used the valley route from Romsey to Timsbury, and northwards, other than during times of exceptional floods.

While the general pattern of the two villages has been determined by their ancient agricultural roots, the settlements are today very much the product of the industrial and economic forces of recent centuries. In the late nineteenth century improved transport allowed the further development of local industries. The provision of a Post Office, schools, and local shops helped to produce a close-knit village community. By the late twentieth century these amenities had been lost, but village integrity is still maintained by social activities.





NATURAL HISTORY

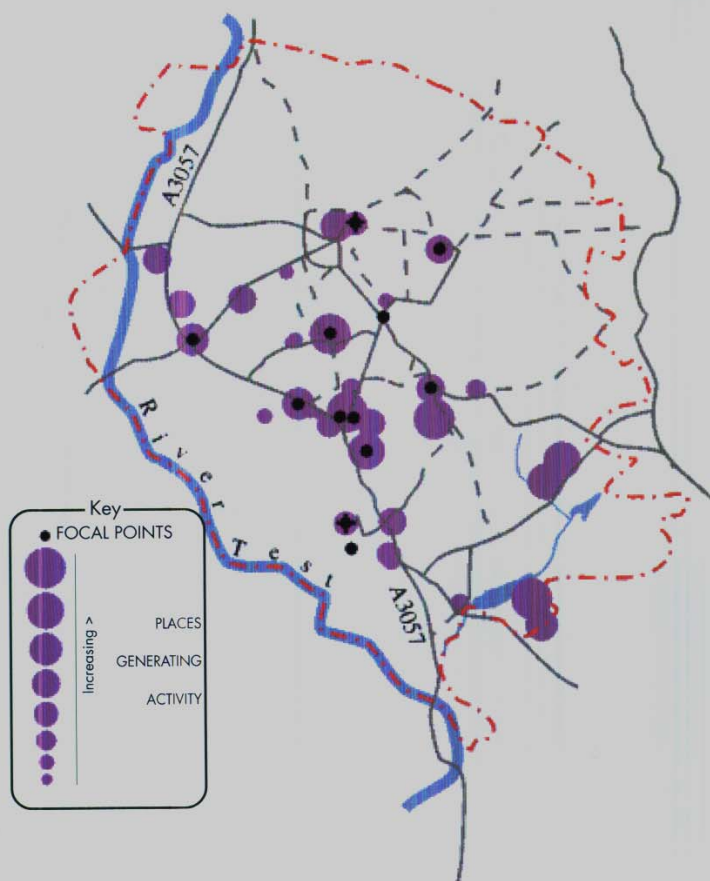
The village has a wide variety of plants and animals, which need sufficient of a certain type of habitat to survive. This habitat is usually a network of suitable areas which can be thought of as 'islands', where the management by man is consistent from year to year, and not too devastating. For most species the network must have 'corridors' joining the islands for replenishment of



THE FORM OF THE VILLAGE TODAY

Unlike many traditional villages there is no High Street, village green, pond, or other form of nucleus to the village's layout. Various focal points and centres of activity, with their buildings, are well-dispersed over a network of minor roads and lanes all mainly to the east of the A3057. This road, with its increasing traffic, is not the heart of the village even though there are many houses along its west side. It is a useful through road, with the two village public houses beside it, aimed at passing travellers, rather than being within the core of the settlement.

The 'centre of gravity' of the village could be said to be at the junction of New Road with the A3057. This has been nearly emphasised by the newly-erected Millennium landmark at this point. Nearby are the much-used Jubilee Hall and the sports pavilion with the Recreation Ground and playing fields, creating added activity in this area. The Pocket Park in Haycroft Copse is also an important recreational facility.



The two historic churches are at extreme locations from this centre on the very outskirts of either settlement, at the end of their access roads. They form part of a united benefice with Awbridge, Braishfield and Farley Chamberlayne which encourages some sharing of village facilities. Other community buildings are also well-dispersed, as are industrial and retail structures. Farmhouses and their ancillary buildings are fairly evenly distributed around the outskirts of the built-up areas.

The residential area of Timsbury has spread from its nucleus, by the church and manor house, onto the main road where it has taken on the typical ribbon form of the inter-war years. Many of the small bungalows built in the 1930s have been substantially enlarged as economic conditions improved and allowed. Although Michelmersh has not generally seen ribbon development there has been much infilling over the last twenty to thirty years of the earlier, scattered pattern of housing. Improvement to the older stock has been considerable and almost all buildings have been renovated, extended or replaced; some have almost doubled in size, not necessarily to their enhancement.

As a consequence, the village contains a wide variety of properties. These range from a few historic, timber-framed houses, through small bungalows to adaptations of almost every style of dwelling of the eighteenth to twenty-first centuries - the majority being in good order, and set in appropriately-proportioned gardens.



populations and for inter-breeding. Hedges are vital for the small mammals and as nest sites for many birds; verges and uncultivated strips are used by butterflies and flowering plants, while amphibians and marsh plants make use of ditches. So far, the village is very well endowed with islands and corridors. There are still many little paddocks, copses, ponds, hedges and verges, but each house that is built, each pond drained, meadow 'weed-killed', or hedge grubbed-out may threaten a vital link in this network.



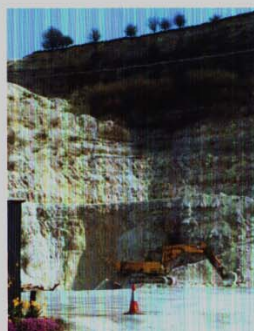
AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY



Despite the low number of farm workers, the landscape is still very open and dominated by the agricultural scene. Woods, coppices, grazing - sheep and cattle - and arable lands rise gently from the water meadows surrounding the Test, where some fish-farming also takes place. Industrial activity tends to be centred on the site of both current and old mineral working, and in former farm buildings.

A chalk quarry and a major sandpit remain active, while clay is still extracted for brick- and tile-making. Clustered around the brickworks are offices, a vehicle workshop, an engineering fabricator and concrete product manufacturer. Various other enterprises are also to be found elsewhere in the village, including general engineering, plant hire, television repair, the manufacture of stringed instruments, scientific instrument design, printing, glass-reinforced plastic construction, the supply of agricultural chemicals, and a service depot for the local Water Company.

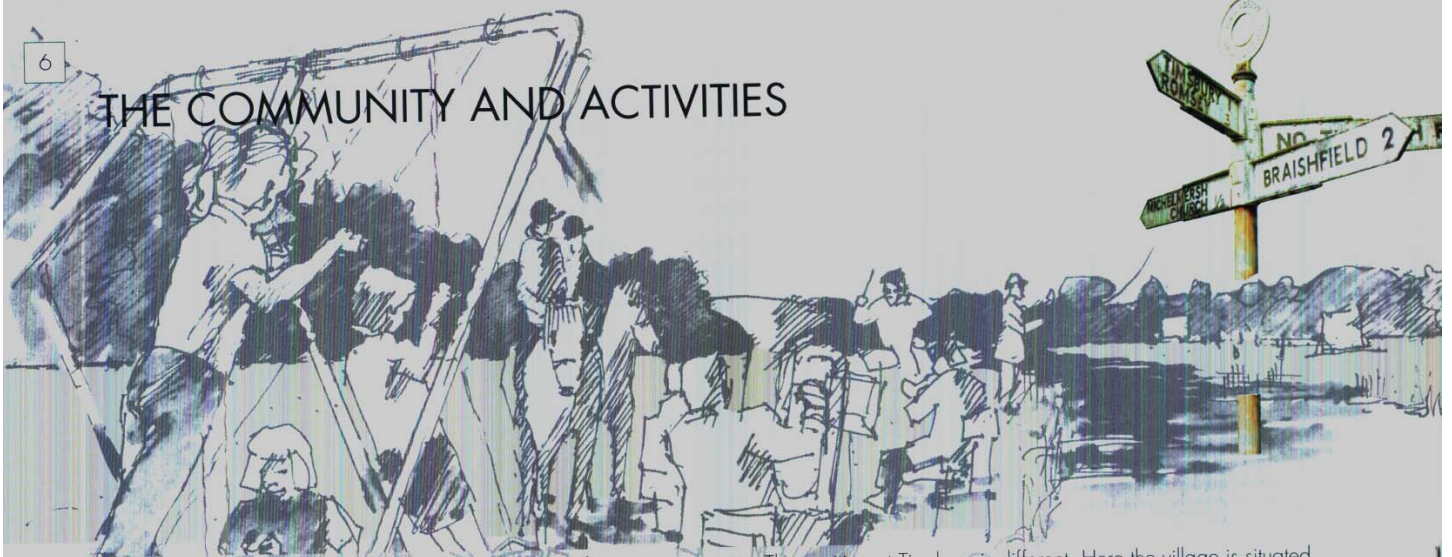
Although not major employers, the salvage, reclamation and landfill industries make use of the worked-out mineral pits on a substantial scale. The old pits that have not been water-filled stretch, largely unseen because of either screening or elevation, across wide tracts of the countryside. While they scarcely impinge visually upon the village, they do offer, in part, the opportunity for the development of recreational areas once restoration is complete. Those that have become lakes are well-known to bird-watchers.



By comparison with the industrial activity, there is almost no retail activity beyond one car sales business, the sale of plants by horticultural specialists, and a tyre sales and repairs outlet.



THE COMMUNITY AND ACTIVITIES



The 'Village Appraisal' (1997/8) demonstrated that a fair proportion of the population of the village actually worked there, but that very few of the residents are now engaged in agriculture. Only a small proportion are of retirement age and, although there is no school in the village, there is a large number of children. Very few houses are second homes.

In addition to the two parish churches, the village is served socially by two public houses, the Jubilee Hall, Timsbury W.I. Hall and a sports club which has the use of a pavilion and associated grounds, the latter containing a children's play area. The village recreation ground, which provides for team games, is only narrowly separated from the Borough's sports ground, and together they present a wood-flanked vista which adds much to the general feeling of space that pervades the village. The listed barn at Old Michelmersh Farm close to St Mary's Church is also used for special church and village functions. At Timsbury, the modern Kingdom Hall serves a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses drawn from a wide area.

Because of its attractive, open aspect the area around the village allows various country pursuits - fishing, walking, riding and cycling are very popular. So much so, that the picturesque route along the easterly ridge of the valley is well known even to continental cyclists who are frequently seen along it.

Among many social activities, the village has an active Horticultural Society, a Silver Band (over one hundred years old), a renowned annual Pumpkin Show, two Womens' Institutes, as well as pre-school and youth groups.

The position at Timsbury is different. Here the village is situated on the valley floor with most of the development being at the southern end of New Road, and along the west side only of the extremely busy A3057. Because of this road linking Romsey and Andover, Timsbury does not enjoy the same freedom from traffic that Michelmersh does, but a relatively quiet cul-de-sac leads off the main road to Timsbury Manor, to recent housing development, as well as to St. Andrew's Church, and private water meadows beyond.

Both Michelmersh and Timsbury are on bus routes offering a limited service. Test Valley Borough Council has plans for a cycle route linking Stonymarsh, Michelmersh and Timsbury to Romsey.

Footpaths

The village is able to enjoy a large number of public footpaths (twenty-six, including one bridleway). These provide excellent opportunities for off-road walking and recreation within the village, and also out into the countryside beyond, with links to other parts of the County. For example the Test Way and the Monarch's Way can be reached by two different footpaths that run through the village.

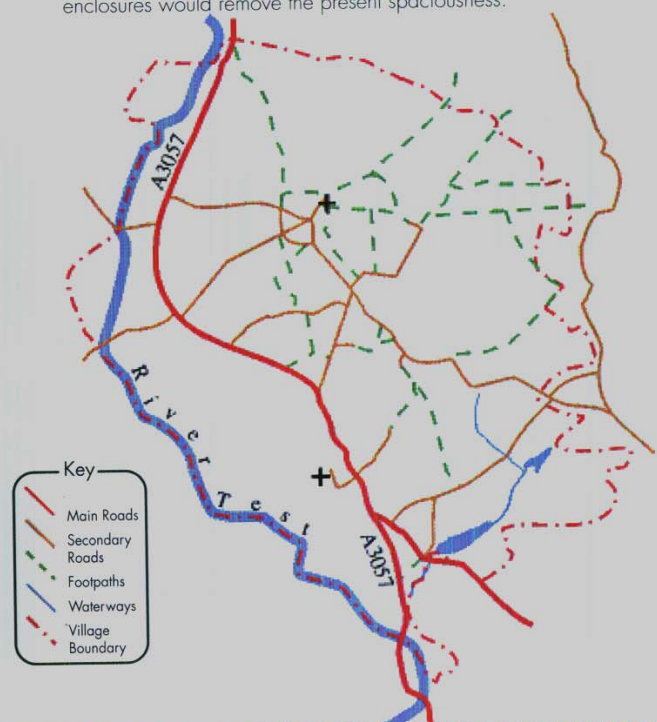
The benefits of these open paths are important. It would be unfortunate if their character were to be changed by new development which might require the marking of boundaries by close-boarded fencing - hedging would be preferable - as such enclosures would remove the present spaciousness.

CIRCULATION



Public Highways

On a map of Michelmersh the village roads resemble a spider's web with its centre in the Conservation Area. The pattern is such that Michelmersh is not a through route to anywhere else and, as a result, traffic in the village is, by and large, limited to vehicles serving it. If the essentially rural nature of these roads, with their hedgerows, grass verges, trees and fine views, is to be maintained, then great care will be needed when considering planning applications that might prejudice these characteristics.



Street Furniture and Signs

Great care needs to be taken over the design, quantity, and layout of street furniture and signs. Designs which are harmonious and suitable to a village environment are needed. The traditional country signposts as at the Haccups Lane/Manor Farm Lane junction are to be preferred. Obviously some white lines at junctions are necessary, but they should be kept to a minimum. Signage of the footpaths, using timber posts with incised lettering, is entirely appropriate.

Services

There is no mains gas, but other services - electricity, mains water and drainage - are available to almost everyone.

The electricity and telephone cables are carried on poles throughout the village, with transformers in several locations mounted high on the poles. These are particularly obtrusive, and it would be desirable to explore the possibility of lowering them, and even burying the cables at some future date.

DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING



Housing

Housing is generally arranged along most roads pleasantly integrated with land that is mainly in agricultural use. A particular characteristic of the village is that most houses are set in their own gardens and face open land on the opposite side of their road, giving enjoyable views over open countryside, often to considerable distances, across and up and down the valley. Typical examples of this characteristic can be seen in Hillview Road, Rudd Lane and Haccups Lane as well as along the A3057. Where housing is on both sides of the road, such as in New Road, the buildings tend not to be opposite each other, so maintaining open land on the other side. This is considered to be an important feature that should be maintained.



Enjoyable views over open countryside between houses

Most properties restricted to the ribbon development along the west side of the A3057 have open aspects to the rear across the river meadows, while their front gardens have a fine variety of high hedges as a barrier against the noise and activity of the main road. Many of these houses have their main facade facing the road, but there are a few examples of both recent and older buildings which are not at right angles to the road. This alignment can form an interesting relief to the repetitiveness of the rest of the development, as well as reducing the internal noise level.

The typical size of housing plots generally permits houses to be set well back from the road so that hedges and trees can be planted to maintain a green setting. Buildings are usually low-lying in the landscape, but some of the larger houses are set in more imposing gardens and are seen in isolation. On smaller plots visual separation and some privacy is usually achieved by substantial hedges and planting. There have been some recent high density housing developments with detached houses disproportionately large for their plots. This is not a rural characteristic and is not desirable for the future. If a greater density than that generally seen about the village is needed, the partly-terraced housing with variety in the carefully-designed Milburns scheme could give a lead.



A development in terrace form employing rural design in a creative way with a high density, but low-lying satisfactorily in the landscape. Matching brick garden walls help to integrate the buildings



A recent development of houses that are overlarge for their plots in a village, and a building line too close to the roadway

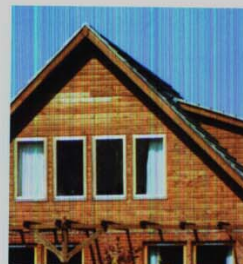


Noise

A particular feature of many parts of the village is the relatively low level of ambient noise, providing a tranquil environment, with background noise levels being largely due to wind in trees and birdsong. However, properties close to the A3057 are adversely affected by traffic noise, the main contributors being heavy goods vehicles. Where possible, any new housing near the A3057 should be located and orientated to minimise the impact of noise on sensitive facades and gardens. While a certain amount of noise from various industrial sites is inevitable, good management practices are known to have reduced noise from some premises and processes over recent years.

Lighting

The village appreciates its rural situation with the absence of street-lighting which would blight the view of the night sky, and contribute to the urbanisation of the roads and lanes. While such lighting might spread its inescapable illumination throughout the area, the presence of domestic security lighting left on for some hours at a time can create the same effect near houses that have installed it. The use of heat-detecting systems would go some way to overcoming this problem, but the provision of street-lighting should be discouraged if the village is to retain its quality and individuality.



The 'styles' of building throughout the village are extremely diverse, representing different

DESIGN AND MATERIALS



The earliest surviving houses are timber-framed cottages dating from the sixteenth century, often thatched, that are dispersed around the village. These are usually two-storey with the upper floor tucked well into the roof space so that the overhanging eaves are close to the ground. Their walls have exposed timber framing, with wattle and daub infill panels, or brick, which may also be rendered. The core of these houses is a large brick open fireplace, and sometimes a bread oven, with combined brick stacks. Windows are leaded lights in iron or timber frames. Rendered walls of this period, and later ones, are seen in various pastel shades as well as white and cream.



In Mesh Road there is a small terrace dating from the mid-eighteenth century, of brick with a tiled roof. Simple houses in the nineteenth century were economically built with slate roofs, red brick walls and well-proportioned casement windows. These same materials continued to be used for larger houses which were given more elaborate detailing, such as ornate barge-boards to gables, and sometimes clay-tiled roofs with patterning and ornamental finials. Flintwork - a free material from the fields - is used in hidden construction and in garden walls. When flints are exposed they may be knapped, squared, and laid in courses, giving a wall a fine embellishment in combination with brick trims and quoins.





architectural periods, and leading to a mixed development of cottages, bungalows, and houses.



During the twentieth century many varieties of materials became available and fashions changed, but generally the earlier materials were still used as well, giving an overall continuity of building throughout the landscape, particularly if the local bricks formed the main structure.



A simple modern house using traditional village materials, details and proportions. The dormer, wooden windows and chimney stacks are particularly pleasing.



A sympathetic extension to a fine Victorian semi-detached house. The elegant iron gate, hedge and grass verge maintain the rural setting.

Critical to the appearance of any house is the pitch of its roof, as well as the material with which it is covered. A thatched roof should have a 50° slope, with its dormers no lower than 45°. Slate roofs in all but the most exposed areas may be as low as 30°, but a tiled roof should not be lower than 45°, though 50° is more attractive.

Roof tiles, made from the clay under the village, are being superseded, unfortunately, in some more recent construction by concrete tiles in various colours. These are more acceptable if they are the same size as the clay tiles, but the larger, pressed concrete tiles are out of scale in a context such as this. They are also generally used on very shallow pitches which jar with the more traditional steeper roofs.



Somewhat oversized dormer in roof of green concrete tiles - not a traditional material in the village, nor are the brown bricks.

Slates were introduced with the coming of the railway, cheap transport, and development of the quarries in Wales, and many houses in the village were roofed with them from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. They are lighter than tiles, and are still a suitable material in the village.

Window types, materials and proportions vary and are strong features that can enhance or disfigure the appearance of a building. Medieval leaded lights which were originally used because of the small sizes of glass available, have become an incongruous feature of some recent housing design.

It could be considered that these dormers are too large and too close together. Imitation "medieval leaded lights" for glazing - plain glass with adhesive lead strips.



Dormer windows which have been used through all periods, and were traditionally an attractive feature as a means of giving light to the lesser rooms in roof spaces, often now tend to be too large proportionately, reflecting the desire to gain as much usable volume as possible inside a roof. 'Velux' windows are a modern, less obtrusive invention that have overcome the lighting problem more successfully, and are now produced in a special design more appropriate to the conservation of an older building.



timber fencing



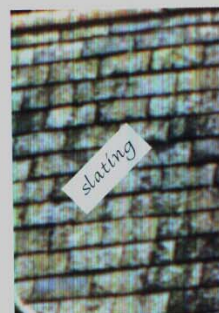
roman tiles



local brick



day tiles plain



slatting

RECOMMENDATIONS

Typical materials used

FOR MAINTENANCE AND NEW BUILDINGS

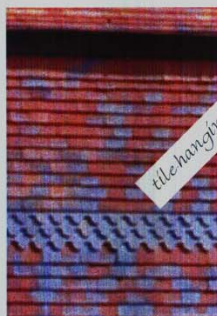
- Existing buildings should be maintained using materials and methods of construction sympathetic to their original design.
- New buildings should be in keeping with the existing designs, proportions and materials of buildings which are in the surrounding area.
- New housing should reflect, but not necessarily copy, the past. The variety in the village that has historically evolved should be continued. It is recognised that there should be scope for innovative design in appropriate locations.
- Buildings are generally low lying in the landscape, and this should be respected.
- In any future development care should be taken to reflect the settlement pattern of the village. Its layout and scale as well as design and character should be respected.
- The layout and density of new housing should take account of, and respect the form of the surroundings. Some recently-built schemes have detached houses disproportionately large for their plots.
- The mix of housing stock should primarily better reflect the requirements of young local families, and also of the older relatives of those in the village.
- New building should respect the existing building lines. These are generally well set back from the roadways throughout the village. Backland, or 'in tandem' development - building another house in front of, or behind, an existing one - should be avoided.
- The provision of sufficient off-road parking in relation to housing accommodation within plots is a necessity. This should be allowed for, and preferably screened from general view.
- Newly-created boundaries should preferably be defined by hedges, or traditional building materials and types of construction. These are usually brick matching the brickwork of their houses, or fences in wood or iron of a traditional rural construction. Gateways and entrances should respect such traditions also.
- The scale and form of roof lines, chimney stacks and windows of existing buildings should be taken into account in any new buildings, alterations or extensions.
- Roofs should have pitches that relate traditionally to their finish materials. Concrete tiles should be of colour and size that matches traditional finishes, but should not be used on historic nor, ideally, on pre-1960 buildings.
- Brick walls should preferably be of Michelmersh or similar brick. This is the local material that gives integrity to the village.
- Rendered walls should be white or cream finished, or coloured as some of the pastel shades used elsewhere in the village. Excessive areas of rendering are undesirable.
- Any form of exposed timber framing should express the construction system of the building, in preference to being applied as decoration.
- Windows and doors and their frames should preferably be made of wood. This is particularly important in the maintenance or extension of pre-1960 buildings. Plastic and composite material frames, when copying traditional patterns, should not only reflect the size of their overall proportions, but their component parts as well.
- Garages should have pitched roofs and not be out of scale with their adjoining properties, or be obtrusive.



timber boarding



brick garden walling



tile hanging



knapped & squared flints



thatch

d traditionally throughout the village



FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

& NON-RESIDENTIAL SITES

18. Areas of undeveloped land which contribute to the character of the village should remain open.

19. Infilling between existing pockets of development should be strictly controlled.

20. The network of 'islands' and 'corridors' for plants and wildlife should be maintained.

21. The preservation, maintenance and replacement of existing mature trees that are of value to the landscape is most important. Trees can give and change scale, be focal points and create interesting spaces when grouped, as well as giving screening and protection.

The planting of Cupressus Leylandii hedges should be discouraged, and only native trees and shrubs should be planted.

22. The open views across the landscape should be retained.

23. The border of the Conservation Area should not be considered as a cut-off line, and the areas and aspects adjacent should be similarly conserved to the enhancement of the whole village. Emphasis is laid, in the Conservation Area Report, on fine views outwards from the Area, with some important landscape and buildings noted outside its perimeter.

24. There should be an avoidance of light pollution by security lights particularly in residential environments.

Downlighting should be used rather than uplighting which can illuminate the sky. Security lights with detectors should not be triggered by traffic or pedestrians moving outside their properties and should preferably stay on for short periods only.

25. Any future street lighting proposal should be strongly discouraged.

26. The consequences of further traffic in relationship to any new development should be taken into account.

27. The traditional character of the village roads, lanes and verges should be maintained. Their urbanisation by the insertion of kerbs and tarmac footpaths should be avoided. Maintaining these essential rural characteristics should particularly apply to any new development.

28. Footpaths and bridleways should be maintained, protected, clearly signposted and monitored as legally required.

29. Any future services should be laid underground. Utility lines and cables are at present an unsightly aspect of the village landscape. Transformers at ground level should be adequately screened by rural fences or hedges.

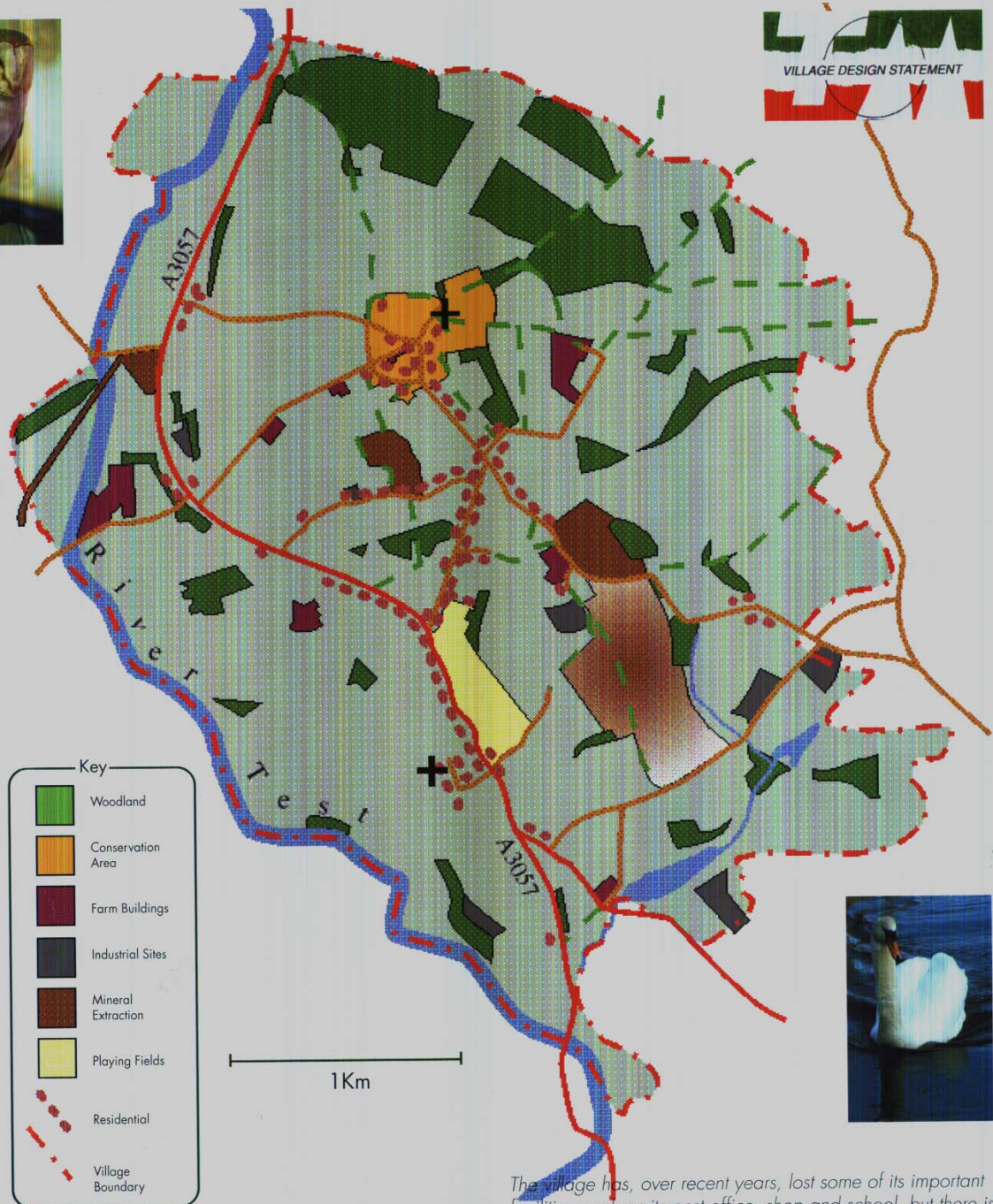
30. The existing signage should be reviewed, simplified and tidied up. Any unnecessary signs should be resisted. Street furniture should be unobtrusive and in keeping with the rural setting.

31. Any new industrial or commercial premises should be developed in a sympathetic way in what is primarily an agricultural and residential village. Incorporating traditional materials and careful detailing can break down the scale of large structures.

32. Any proposal for new industrial or commercial development should include the provision of landscaping and tree-planting in order to screen it, and to respect the rural character of the area.

33. The appearance and setting of some existing farm and industrial buildings could be improved by planned tree planting and screening.





The village has, over recent years, lost some of its important facilities, such as its post office, shop and school, but there is still a strong community spirit as shown in the enthusiasm and support both from the old and young while making the survey, and taking part in the Workshops in the preparation of this Statement.

CONCLUSION

This parish has been essentially an agricultural settlement throughout history, until the twentieth century, when mineral working took place on a greatly increased scale. Although the majority of the population is no longer engaged in these activities, the working countryside remains, consisting of undulating woodland and meadow, arable land and river management.

The community in general, whether they are long-established local families, or more recent residents, cherishes this rural beauty and the characteristics of the village as brought out in this document, and they reject an urban environment. Were there to be widespread changes, the special quality of the village would be destroyed.

We, the Design Team, do not wish to conserve the past in its entirety as there must inevitably be progress and historical continuity. Many properties have been altered or extended in the last few decades, and there have been some new buildings, not always to the enhancement of their neighbourhood. It is our intention to bring out the best aspects of local traditional and new building in this Design Statement.

We do ask that those who are considering maintaining, modifying, or building anew in any way, should develop their designs in the light of this document. In addition they should consider carefully the effect of their proposals on this environment before taking action. We sincerely hope that the finished work will then contribute to, and sustain, the quality of life of this rural parish.