

CABINET: 5 NOVEMBER 2008

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN DESIGN STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In line with Natural England's initiative to encourage communities to prepare Village and Town Design Statements a steering group consisting of Fordingbridge residents has produced a Town Design Statement (TDS) for Fordingbridge. The purpose of this report is to consider whether the TDS should be endorsed by NFDC, which should then give it a status commensurate with Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the New Forest District Local Plan. A copy of the text of the TDS is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 New Forest District Council (NFDC) has been closely involved with the development of the TDS since an inception meeting was held on the 23rd January 2007. Council Officers and Councillor Mike Shand as chair of the Fordingbridge Community Forum attended the inception meeting. Council Officers also attended the majority of subsequent meetings that were held to develop the TDS into a document that could be supported by the District Council. In addition to the assistance of Council Officers the Fordingbridge TDS Steering Group has received support and advice from Philip Turner (Planning Aid South).
- 2.2 The Fordingbridge TDS Steering Group consulted on a draft version of the TDS in December 2007. Comments from within the local community overwhelmingly supported the draft, in both the shape of document and content of the sections. Some errors of fact were identified and corrected. On the 13 August 2008 the planning committee of Fordingbridge Town Council endorsed the final draft.
- 2.3 Having regard to the advice in recently revised Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning (2008), it appears to be the case that NFDC cannot simply "adopt" the Town Design Statement as a Supplementary Planning Document, but rather – on the basis that the document is to be supported and given some status in planning decisions – the Town Design Statement can be endorsed by NFDC and this should afford the document "a weight commensurate with that of Supplementary Planning Documents in decision making." (PPS 12, paragraph 6.3)

3. CONTENTS OF THE TOWN DESIGN STATEMENT

- 3.1 The first section of the TDS provides an introduction on why the TDS has been produced and the purpose of a TDS. The second section goes on to provide some historical context about Fordingbridge. Section four of the TDS provides a description and information on the rural areas surrounding the town. The majority of the rest of the TDS focuses on different parts of the built up area of Fordingbridge considering a range of different issues including 'Area Setting and Landscape', 'Settlement Pattern', 'Buildings and Details', 'Property Boundaries', 'Open Spaces', 'Streets and Street Furniture'.
- 3.2 Throughout the document reference is made to a number of different guidelines. All of the guidelines are outlined in section 13 of the document. The guidelines are in accordance with policies in the existing New Forest District Local Plan (Adopted August 2005) and subsequently should become material considerations in the determining of planning applications and appeals if the TDS is endorsed by NFDC.

- 3.3 In addition to the guidelines a number of recommendations have been made throughout the TDS. These are matters of concern that the local community wishes to bring to the attention of New Forest District Council and other relevant authorities with a view to influencing policy in a way that will secure appropriate action to achieve the change sought. NFDC is not being asked to endorse the recommendations included in the TDS, but rather to consider these recommendations in future Development Plan reviews.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The TDS seeks to protect and enhance the character of the built environment in Fordingbridge.
- 4.2 A Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out on the TDS.

5. FINANCIAL, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY, CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder supports the recommendation as set out in section 7 of this report.

7. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- (i) the Fordingbridge Town Design Statement be endorsed as having the status of Supplementary Guidance which, in the terms of paragraph 6.3 of PPS12, should be afforded a weight commensurate with that of a Supplementary Planning Document in decision making (noting paragraph 3.3 above);
- (ii) The Planning Policy Manager, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, be authorised to agree any necessary minor editorial changes to the document in preparing it for publication.

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Background Papers:
Sustainability Appraisal

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN DESIGN STATEMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As an important adjunct to the Fordingbridge Health Check, work began on a Town Design Statement for Fordingbridge in 2005. A revised remit resulted in a fresh attempt being made in 2007. To ensure that the ultimate statement would be a document from the local community, an invitation was circulated to many organisations and individuals inviting participation in the project. Nearly 50 people attended an initial meeting in January 2007, some of whom agreed to join working parties to survey the area. Each working party wrote a detailed description of its section. These were subsequently combined and edited to form this document.

The editors would like to acknowledge the work carried out by many local residents in surveying the area, writing the descriptions and taking photographs. They are indebted also to the smaller number who attended several meetings to review, amend and agree the document's various drafts.

The Fordingbridge Community Forum also acknowledges with thanks the advice and guidance provided by officials from the New Forest District Council and Planning Aid South whose knowledge and experience informed the process and preparation of the Statement. The street map of Fordingbridge and Ashford (¹) is reproduced by kind permission of Codair Design & Publicity Ltd.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is well over ten years since the concept of the local design statement was launched nationally. Since then there has been a steady progression of statements covering towns and villages across the country. Each one represents a substantial volume of hard work by volunteers who have looked hard at the character of their own localities and tried to describe them in terms readily understood by others. In so doing they have highlighted aspects that are important to the well-being of the community and should be considered when improvements or further developments are considered. They have also noted matters of concern, indicating aspects that are capable of improvement.

A town design statement is not intended to replace existing planning policies, some of which are listed in the reference section. Nor is it a substitute for the protection given to the two particular areas of Fordingbridge through conservation area status. Once adopted by the local planning authority as a Supplementary Planning Document, it allows the local voice to be heard when applications within these policies are considered. The intention, though, is not to fix the area in a 20th / 21st century time warp. Such an intention would be quite contrary to the varied building styles that indicate the town's gradual development over several centuries. It is important that this sense of the town as a living organism is maintained, as the varied styles give both opportunity for diverse occupancy and an overall richer environment for its inhabitants. A town design statement can thereby help to shape the nature of developments so that they fit within the rural or built environment for which they are proposed. The Fordingbridge Design Statement should therefore become a valued reference source for the local planning authority, the New Forest District Council, when it considers applications for new development and for significant alterations to existing properties.

It should be consulted by those seeking design guidance to prepare development proposals that will be acceptable, and also by local property owners considering alterations to their premises that require planning consent.

The statement may also help local residents to look more appreciatively at the physical fabric of our own area. The recommendations included suggest areas or aspects capable of improvement and could act as a spur to the community action necessary to secure them.

The statement itself will be open to review in the years ahead, when a new generation will reconsider these matters. It is the hope of those who have prepared this statement that their efforts will assist the development of Fordingbridge in a way that secures its essential nature, and that it will provide insight and encouragement to those who will take up this task in the future.

Note 1

The statement has been prepared by a group of volunteers, members of the Fordingbridge Community Forum, drawn from many backgrounds, none of whom had previous experience of drafting a document of this kind. It is offered as 'the people's voice' and may contain, therefore, terminology and phraseology that are not 'planning speak'. However, its authors have made every endeavour to write the statement in terms that will be clear to both lay and professional readers.

Note 2

A **Guideline** sets down design principles based on the distinctive local character of a town or village. Once a design statement has been adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, guidelines become a material consideration when planning applications or appeals are being considered.

A **Recommendation** expresses a matter of concern that the local community wishes to bring to the attention of the relevant authority with a view to influencing policy in a way that will secure appropriate action to achieve the change sought.

Note 3

Appendix 1 offers an overview of design related issues. The remit of a design statement sets the parameters of what may be included in a supplementary planning document. The matters referred to in the Appendix fall outside those parameters but are clearly concerns of importance to the community. They cover issues:

- of broad concern to the community;
- not readily conveyed by the more detailed and very local descriptions in much of the statement; and,

- relating to the development of future policy, some of which arise from the draft Local Development Framework (LDF) for the period 2006-2026.

For these reasons, it is considered that, though not formally part of the design statement, they should be held together with it, expressing as they do both concern and hope.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Sometimes known as the Northern Gateway to the New Forest, Fordingbridge now stands just outside the boundary of the New Forest National Park. Boundaries are not unimportant. It is important, however, to note that they are a human creation for the convenience of ownership and administration. Landscape itself knows nothing of them.

So the location of Fordingbridge is to be seen within its natural, not its administrative, context. Chosen as early as pre-Roman times as the most suitable crossing point on this stretch of the river Avon, the town's name introduces this long history. 'Forde', as it is described in the Domesday Book within the manor of Nether (Lower) Burgate, was extended at a later date to include the increasing importance of this mediaeval town now approached from the east over a fine stone bridge. The town sits primarily on the gravel terraces along the river's west bank, this alignment determining its linear structure.

The town is approached from all directions through countryside and villages, a setting that determined its character as both a market town and the centre of a number of small industries supplying local needs, such as brick making, ticking and milling. Planning legislation following the Second World War has limited the town's expansion and preserved its essentially rural context. It is vital to the integrity of the town that this protection be maintained.

The structure of the town bears witness to its long history. The extensive fire in the 1700's destroyed most of the medieval town of which only traces exist but did not lead to extensive redesigning of its basic layout. The town today, therefore, is primarily a post 1750 development on the medieval structure. It carries within it most of the small town building styles favoured at various times since. As has been noted, planning regulation has deterred the worst types of urban sprawl. As with the earlier part of the town, the development that has been permitted bears the architectural style and preferences favoured over the decades.

Towards the end of the Victorian period, the town gained prominence as a centre for tourism not least because of its annual regatta which at the time was as important as Henley. This was strengthened by the convenient access provided by the railway, the station for Fordingbridge being at Ashford. With increased personal mobility extended by the motor car, the town's role as a commercial centre declined though its shops and facilities remain important for many in the surrounding villages. Its tourist potential has survived both the demise of the regatta and the closure of the railway.

Among the features valued by many people is the spread of open spaces throughout the town. Many of these are public space with some including small recreational provision for younger children. The largest public space is the recreation ground that borders the eastern bank of the river Avon. This has been enhanced over the years through updated facilities and some, albeit limited, riverside walking. It is now an attractive sporting venue which doubles up for particular events, some of which are drawn to the town by its availability, excellent situation, and the willingness of the town council to welcome well-organised event use. Such use also brings economic benefit to the town.

It may be stating the obvious to say that the town's position and the broad range of facilities are important elements in its attractiveness. However, this should not be underestimated. The public consultation undertaken as part of the research for the statement made it very clear that the town plays a very important part in the life of neighbouring communities through its ability to service the needs of the area.

Recommendation: *An important objective within planning policy should be the maintenance of a vibrant community with a diverse retail component.*

The quality of the town's built environment is of equal importance. The central area of this has been afforded conservation protection for many years. Though commercial pressures have forced significant changes, possibly abetted in the past by inadequate historical and architectural understanding, conservation area protection has ensured that such 'modernisation' has not removed all evidence of the town's historic development. The built environment retains many features that reveal how the town grew up, and the design and practical skills of its

builders. Many of these are noted in detail in the full conservation area statement, and a similar document covers Bickton. The town design statement does not attempt to repeat the details given in the two conservation documents but, by setting both areas in their wider context, relates closely to them and should be read alongside them.

The story of Fordingbridge is not ended. It is essential, for the well-being of the town, its immediate area, and for the local communities that surround it, albeit that some are several miles distant, that the care given by this generation to its built environment and rural setting help to maintain what is good and to improve what is not.

3 MAP OF AREA COVERED BY THIS DESIGN STATEMENT

4. THE RURAL AREAS SURROUNDING THE TOWN

Description

Fordingbridge is an ancient town situated on the River Avon. It is approached from north and south along the river valley, from the east through the New Forest, and from the west through the west Hampshire and east Dorset villages. The town itself is compact, spanning several centuries of gradual development. It is set in the midst of a rural area containing a few hamlets, and smaller residential areas gathered round farms and former agricultural holdings.

Of the hamlets, Bickton – approximately 1 mile south of the town – is traversed by the river Avon with Hucklesbrook lakes to its south west. The lakes, the result of a managed regeneration plan following years of mineral extraction, comprise a series of linked waters with grassed banks of broadleaved trees and shrubs creating an area of spectacular natural beauty and a haven for wildlife. The fields in this area are mainly meadows used for grazing and the production of hay. They are separated by hedgerows with areas of light coppicing.

The river Avon is one of the most significant chalk streams in the UK, with over 180 species of plants, one of the most diverse fish populations, and a wide range of aquatic invertebrates. Its importance is recognized both nationally as a Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI] & within Europe as a Special Area of Conservation [SAC].

Historic use of this waterway has resulted in extensive water meadows to the north east and the south of the town. These have an important seasonal role for both agriculture and drainage management along the river valley. Views across the water meadows provide important vistas from the western escarpment of the National Park. For these reasons, there is a strong case to be made for the retention of the water meadows. Elsewhere, much of the agricultural land has changed use from traditional grazing to equine and recreational activities, with the formerly open pastures now increasingly divided by post and wire fencing. For the most part hedging is still the preferred option for roadside boundaries though in some places this has been replaced with post and wire.

To the east of the town, a small number of dwellings lie along Southampton Road. Most were built before 1900 and are of brick construction with slate roofs. Terraced cottages line both sides of the road immediately to the east of the Avon Bridge and are succeeded on the northern side by semi-detached houses built in the second half of the 20th century. The Victoria Rooms, again constructed in red brick with slate roof, occupy the final portion of the development on the southern side. Thereafter, the area is bisected by the by-pass with some housing nestling in its south-western aspect. Beyond the by-pass is the petrol station and shop, car sales site, workshop and the East Mills depot of the Environment Agency. Opposite the petrol station is a small nursery. The few remaining properties to the town's boundary along the escarpment below the Sandy Balls holiday complex are a mixture of residential and agricultural dwellings.

To the east of the town but on the northern side of the Avon is the early 19th century Burgate Manor which is now the base for the Game Conservancy Trust. Still to the east, but on the southern side, a little way down the Ringwood Road, lies the former Redbrook Farm and its attendant brick built cottages with slate roofs. This eastern area of the town includes five listed buildings.

To the north west of the town is a rectangular tract of land bounded by Whitsbury Road, Marl Lane and the former railway that divides it from the developed area of Parsonage Park. The tract is divided in one dimension by Puddleslosh Lane, and in the other by Sweatsford Water. Primarily devoted to livestock grazing, with some of the paddock sub-division now increasingly a characteristic of the town's rural aspect, it is part of the Western chalk

downland. Gently undulating, with copses of indigenous broadleaf woodland, it borders the Water's flood plain which has a number of lakes within it. In many ways, this tract of land is one of those least affected by the growth of the town.

Ashford, to the west of the town and a settlement in its own right, developed with the arrival of the railway. The station provided both its *raison d'être* and determined its character as a significant supply route into the town. It is separated from the town by a Local Gap, a designated planning control that severely restricts development to conserve the character of an area with important landscape or other features. The physical gap between town and settlement offers views of open farmland and meadows criss-crossed by water courses – primarily Ashford Water – that are now of major importance in the flood relief measures for the town centre. [For these and other rural vistas, see section 7.]

Beyond Ashford to the south west, adjacent to the county boundary, there is little built environment, the countryside retaining its essentially pastoral character. Roadsides and fields are bounded by mostly high hedges. Midgham Farm is the only large complex of buildings, some of which are subject to use diversification. Midgham Wood and Midgham Long Copse form an extended elongated stretch of mixed woodland along a north/south axis to the east of the farm buildings. Further to the east, beyond the woodland, a patchwork of fields separated by long established hedgerows with frequent mature deciduous trees (see Guideline G4), slope downwards to the banks of the Avon. The lower terrain is traversed by several streams that flow into the Avon in the region of Bickton. Within this area, on the opposite bank and slightly to the north of Bickton, just below the southern end of the town itself is the sewage treatment works.

Access

There are many footpaths throughout the whole rural area of Fordingbridge, some of which are ancient localized routes linking farms or hamlets. Considerable work has been done in recent years by the Footpaths Society in conjunction with Hampshire County Council and local landowners to improve access to and the quality of some of these footpaths. More substantial and of recent development is the Avon Valley Way. Linking Salisbury with Christchurch through a continuous footpath that wends its way down the Avon valley, the Way enters Fordingbridge across the water meadows at Burgate, passes through the town centre to enter the countryside again just below St Mary's church. It continues down the west side of the river valley until leaving the town towards Harbridge. It thus provides access to some of the loveliest countryside within the town's boundary with a rich diversity of flora and fauna.

Environmental note

Now is the time, belatedly but perhaps as never before, to emphasise the importance for the rural environment of safeguarding and encouraging habitats that support healthy populations of flora and fauna. Agricultural needs will undoubtedly change, as they have done over the centuries, and these will determine how the countryside is managed. This management must recognise that 'bio' systems inter-depend to such an extent that if wildlife is suffering because of loss of habitat, it is certain that humans too are suffering for, in truth, our habitats are the same even if our needs differ.

Changes of Use

The importance of retaining 'green corridors' is noted elsewhere in this design statement. Green corridors connect habitats and allow the movement across landscapes that is critical for species survival. However, just as important, and perhaps even more so, is the retention of hedgerows which form narrow corridors necessary for some species to have the mobility that ensures healthy reproduction. In many places such corridors have already been removed through the impact of development. The damage resulting from their destruction can be somewhat compensated for if the importance of the domestic garden is also acknowledged. Gardens offer wildlife an enormous variety of mini environments that could prove critical to species survival if the effects of climate change are as serious as predicted. Their treatment as brown-field sites for potential development should be resisted.

The current trend to turn an increasing amount of arable and grazing land into post and wire fenced paddocks for equine use must also be regarded with deep concern. Whilst providing a leisure and recreational facility for some, their expansion constitutes a double assault on an eco-system that has nourished the countryside for centuries. The replacement of hedgerows with post and wire destroys a 'corridor' habitat that will take decades to reverse should usage change, whilst the degradation of the soil through intensive grazing has the same impact

on wildlife, though not so visible. Current planning legislation is supportive of land usage for equine purposes but stresses the importance of 'maintaining environmental quality (including soil quality) and countryside character'. Within the policies covering diversification and equine use, there are provisions relating to field division, etc. These appear to be largely unknown or ignored.

See Guideline 4.1 concerning changes of use in rural areas

Mineral Rights

Geologically, much of Fordingbridge is situated on valley gravel with some plateau gravel where the ground rises to the east and south west. In addition, there are areas of Bagshot Sands, London Clay and Reading Beds. The river valley itself includes large areas of alluvium that is periodically refreshed by seasonal and flash flooding. This varied geophysical base makes for a variety of mini-environments, some of which are replicated more extensively in surrounding areas. Far from diminishing their significance, this variety allows an important diversity of landscape and habitat within the overall environment. No part is too small to be without importance within the whole.

Large tracts of land around Fordingbridge are held within long established mineral rights agreements for the extraction of gravel, and the possibility of future gravel extraction in this area cannot altogether be precluded. Mineral rights have been implemented with vigour further down the Avon Valley, not least in the Blashford and Ibsley areas immediately to the south of Fordingbridge. Here there are currently both working gravel pits and a series of former workings that have been allowed to flood in the interest of wild life conservation, and for leisure use. Such use of former excavations would be termed "restoration" by the planning community, meaning 'make fit for a useful purpose'. Restoration of gravel workings does not necessarily mean restoring the landscape to the pasture that was once the character of the site.

The Hampshire Minerals Plan does specify the form of restoration required following land-won sand and gravel extraction. The Restoration and Comment section within the Regulation 26 Consultation suggests a bias towards allowing former workings to flood with associated wetland. Fordingbridge already has extensive wetlands in the water meadows alongside the river Avon and the many rivers and streams that drain through the area into it. It is unlikely that the creation of further hydrated areas will do anything to enhance the character and amenities of the town.

It is noted that the current Hampshire Minerals Plan (valid until 2020) does not include extraction from sites in the Fordingbridge area. However, it is **recommended** that any future applications for mineral extraction should be accompanied by a clear statement about the nature of the restoration intended when the resource is worked out, such restoration needing to sit comfortably within the area described in the town design statement. In the spirit of consultation with local communities that is the raison d'être for the Fordingbridge statement itself, it is much to be hoped that there will be extensive consultation with the local community before restoration policy is agreed between the Hampshire County Council and the licence holders.

5 STREET MAP OF FORDINGBRIDGE AND ASHFORD

6 MAP OF FORDINGBRIDGE CONSERVATION AREA

7 PLAN OF IMPORTANT VIEWS

8. FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE

AREA SETTING AND LANDSCAPE

Landmarks and Views

The area is in general flat, and water plays a major part in its landscape. It is bounded by the River Avon on one side, and the Ashford Water and Sweatsford Water run through it, Ashford Water running parallel to Church Street for about fifty yards beyond the Bridge.

On each main thoroughfare into the central area there is a landmark building – some listed, some not. From Ringwood the road passes the Victoria Rooms and then over the Great Bridge. Salisbury Road enters the town by the Old Court House. From the south, from Alderholt, there is a view of St Mary's Church and from Sandheath it is the Avonway Community Centre.

The views from the car park are unremarkable apart from glimpses of the tower of the Old Workhouse and the spire of the Town Hall. In the commercial centre of the town views are confined to vistas running the length of the various major streets. Views along the narrow road called Roundhill at the back of the High Street have been spoiled by unsightly security fencing on a flat-roofed extension to a bank. The only views of the River Avon are from the recreation ground and from the bridge. At the southern end of the High Street, at the junction with Provost Street, a pedestrian space facilitates the admiration of the Victorian town hall, and the adjacent row of 17th century shops. The view of St Mary's Church looking south from the Provost Street/West Street junction (**View No. 1**) is marred by neglect of the open spaces along Church Street and by parking. There is a view of the 19th century Methodist Church from Knowles Bridge on Provost Street.

Views of the Water Courses

The Great Bridge allows crossing of the river and access to the Recreation Ground, but the only view of the river is northwards from the footway (**View No. 2**) or from the recreation ground itself (**View No. 3**). Ashford Water and Sweatsford Water meet at Knowles Bridge on Provost Street, where there is a good view of both streams (**View No. 4**).

Vegetation

There are mature trees in the large gardens running down to the river behind the High Street, Provost Street and Church Street, which form an important aspect of the view of the town from the recreation ground. The main Car Park contains a number of mature trees, including a row of pollarded plane trees. The shrubs lining the parking bays have been hard pruned in order to maintain the sight lines for approaching traffic. There is a high hedge to the west, between the car park and the hospital complex. Within the built environment there are a number of trees and hedges which were planted many years ago and may now have outgrown their original space; e.g. those in Church Street. In the centre of the town there are some small trees where the footway is wide enough to form an amenity space, but most of the buildings abut directly on to the footway. However, some of the 19th century terraces in Provost Street and Shaftesbury Street do have small front gardens. There are a number of trees in the grounds of the hospital complex and a row of tall trees along Sweatsford Water between Shaftesbury Street and the start of the single track section of Bartons Road.

See Guideline 8.1 concerning trees

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The town is linear, with a single route running south-west from the Old Court House at the junction of Green Lane and **Salisbury Street** down to the central roundabout and then along the length of the **High Street** to its junction with Provost Street. There the route splits into two, the main south-westerly road continuing as **Provost Street** and **Church Street** to St Mary's Church, where Church Street becomes **Bowerwood Road** leading to Alderholt (the B3078). The other branch is **Shaftesbury Street**, running in a westerly direction. The majority of the commercial and service properties in Fordingbridge are situated along these two routes. Properties on the east side of the High Street have long gardens leading down to the river, except where original entrances to the rear of the properties have been used to access small clusters of modern housing where the original gardens have been developed.

The far ends of Provost Street and Shaftesbury Street are linked by **West Street**. At West Street, Shaftesbury Street becomes **Station Road** and the conservation area has its boundary here, just beyond the Police Station, which is a listed building. Next to the Police Station is the modern Fire Station, and behind this is a cul-de-sac of late 20th century housing called **Flaxfields End**.

There are several cul-de-sacs of contemporary housing off Church Street, Bowerwood Road, Shaftesbury Street, West Street and the south end of **Bartons Road (Brook Terrace, Timbermill Court, Mulberry Gardens, Bushells Farm, Padstow Place, Orchard Gardens, West Mills Road, Moxhams, Mill Court, Saddlers Close)**.

There is also a short spur of commercial development along **Bridge Street** turning east from the central roundabout to the Great Bridge. This ends with the George Inn next to the river.

Beyond the Great Bridge is an area called **Horseport**. This consists of a small number of residential properties, a garage, a filling station, a furniture restoration business and the Victoria Rooms, which provide a venue for meetings, lectures and other events. Also on this side of the river are a long-stay car park, the recreation ground, memorial gardens, and playing fields. These are a popular asset to the town, especially for visitors in the summer months.

Between Salisbury Street and the river is a recent 20th century development of townhouses fronting on the river, with shops and flats on Salisbury Street. **Roundhill** links Salisbury Street to the High Street behind the buildings to the west of the roundabout. Roundhill is a one-way street and is an entrance to the main Car Park. At the junction between Roundhill and Salisbury Street is King's Court, a 21st century development of flats for older residents.

To the west of the High Street lies the main car park. This is extensive, accessed from Roundhill to the east, from Bartons Road to the north and from Avonway Community Centre in the south. It is large enough to meet the needs of visiting tourists, local residents and people from the outlying villages coming to Fordingbridge to shop. The Public Library – a mid 20th century building.- is also situated next to the car park behind the shops in the High Street..

West of the main car park are the Cadet Training Centre and the buildings forming the medical complex. **Bartons Road** is a narrow street running to the west of the hospital site to join up – via Parsonage Close – with Green Lane, the road that marks the beginning of the central area on the northern side of town.

BUILDINGS AND DETAILS

The majority of properties on the east side of the High Street were originally 17th and 18th century domestic dwellings, two-storey with steeply-pitched ridged roofs running parallel to the street, many with dormer windows. These have subsequently been converted to shops with storage/ accommodation above. The 17th and 18th properties on both sides of the main streets were later adapted to take shop fronts. Unfortunately few of the early shop fronts have survived and most shop fronts are not sympathetic to the buildings that now house them. In the 19th century purpose-built retail premises were built with accommodation above. There has been some redevelopment that is unsympathetic to the scale and appearance of the rest of the area, e.g. the Co-op in the High Street, and the disused Post Office in Salisbury Street.

See Guideline 8.2 concerning shop fronts

Residents are often asked “what makes Fordingbridge special?”. The High Street is undoubtedly the part of town used by most people, residents and visitors alike, as it contains a wide selection of shops and businesses. It is part of the Conservation Area, and most of the pre-20th century buildings are listed. The variety of elevations combine to form a pleasing collection of buildings, ending at the imposing and unique Town Hall. Enjoyment of the street scene is marred by the traffic, especially heavy lorries going to the industrial premises to the west of the town.

Recommendation: *Consideration should be given to a 20 mph speed limit along Salisbury Street, Bridge Street, High Street, Provost Street, Church Street and Shaftesbury Street. All these streets have narrow footways and pedestrians have to take extra care when two large vehicles with protruding mirrors have to pass.*

At the southern end of the High Street is a varied collection of buildings from many periods dominated by the Town Hall, originally built in 1878 as the home of the Loyal New Forest Lodge of the Ancient Order of Oddfellows.

In Shaftesbury Street there is an imposing large three-storey 19th century commercial building for Sarum Insurance Brokers, the mid-20th century cinema building now used as a china factory and showroom, and some 19th and 20th century terraced housing, some with very small front gardens, most abutting directly onto the footway.

Church Street leading to the ancient parish church is also part of the Conservation Area and also contributes to the special nature of the town. There is a mix of properties dating from the 17th to 20th centuries. There is a terrace of 19th century properties and a variety of detached and semi-detached houses most fronting directly on the street or with vestigial front garden areas. There are 18th century houses – possibly with 17th century cores. The predominant style is ‘two and a half’ storeys with third floor in the roof area with dormer windows. The roofs are steeply pitched and usually tiled, although one thatched property, at no’s 59-61, survives. Mulberry House (formerly the Old Vicarage) is listed, as are two other properties. There is a 21st century residential development for older residents at Timbermill Court behind Church Street. The Quadrant Almshouses (1919) on the corner of

Church Street and West Street are half-timbered in appearance, but the design is sympathetic to the rest of the Church Street buildings. The terrace of houses on the Church Street/Provost Street boundary is of more modern construction but still in sympathy with its surroundings.

A major feature at the junction of Bartons Road and Shaftesbury Street is the old Victorian Church Primary School, now the Avonway Community Centre. This has a handsome frontage on Shaftesbury Street but the side facing Barton's road is marred by a scruffy area currently used for parking. Between Bartons Road and the bank of Sweatsford Water is a row of detached houses, in an assortment of styles probably most dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Several of the properties are thatched. All have gardens surrounded by hedges and containing a number of mature trees.

The medical complex consists of the 21st Century Arch Clinic Building, the late 20th century building housing Fordingbridge's General Practitioners, the old 19th century Workhouse now used for out-patient clinics, and the late-20th century hospital building (Ford Ward). The Cadet Training Centre has various early 20th century office buildings and a 1930's drill hall and parade ground.

Materials and features

Until the 1960's many of the bricks used in Fordingbridge were made locally at Sandleheath. These bricks are orange-red in colour with some showing shades of plum. There is virtually no use of stone in domestic or commercial buildings in this area, except in the Old Court House in Salisbury Street, a 17th century house having two-storey bay windows and stone dressings. A number of buildings have painted brickwork; a few have rendered bricks.

St Mary's parish church is constructed from stone and flint.

Most roofs are tiled, with clay tiles or with slates, although many would previously have been thatched. The roof pitch along the High Street is significantly steeper than in other parts of the town, giving a more imposing image to the street. However, there are only two thatched buildings remaining, one in Church Street and one – the butchers - in Salisbury Street. The building at 45-47 Salisbury Street has a slate-hung elevation.

There is little particularly characteristic local detailing to buildings in Fordingbridge. There are splayed straight or segmented arches over window openings, some with keystones, stone effect window ledges, and many door canopies on consoles or brackets in Church, Provost and Shaftesbury Streets. These features help to break up the flat fronts of the terraced properties.

See Guideline 8.3 concerning new buildings

PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

Within the central area of the town, many buildings have frontages that are on the line of the back of the public footway. To the south of the town some of the buildings have low walls and hedges and fences, for example, one of the older terraces in Provost Street is set back slightly from the road, with a low brick wall separating a sliver of garden from the footway, but new terraces in this area have unfortunately not followed this pattern.

There is an attractive wall on St Mary's Church boundary. Boundary fences in the Avonway area are in some cases in poor condition. Trees and hedges form the boundaries of the hospital area with gaps for access to the town centre through the car park.

In the area of newer and very new buildings in the West Street area, houses are set back in individual front gardens behind hedges at the Church Street end and rails on the far side of Tanyard Bridge. The block of flats for elderly residents in West Street has a narrow landscaped strip – without fence or hedge – between the building and the footway, and the footway here has a raised central section with a protective handrail.

See Guideline 8.4 concerning front boundaries

OPEN SPACES

Within the town centre and associated streets there is only one open space for recreation, a children's play area off Flaxfields End. The main town open space is the recreation ground and playing fields on the east bank of the river.

There are several small spaces where seats and small trees have been installed to provide resting-places for shoppers and visitors:

behind the Co-op,

in the High Street at the junction with Roundhill,

at the Salisbury Street end of Roundhill,

either side of the car park entrance in the middle of Roundhill. However, Roundhill is constantly busy with traffic cutting through or entering the car park, making this area unpleasant for pedestrians.

Recommendation: *The small seating areas at both ends and in the middle of Roundhill and the area at the back of the Co-op are valued by the community and should be maintained and, where possible, enhanced with better lighting to create a safer environment.*

At the junction of High Street, Provost Street and Shaftesbury Street road realignment has created a space and given an opportunity to view the surrounding buildings. This has great potential to be a focal point in the town, but parking and deliveries, public, private, legal and illegal, detract from the enjoyment of this space.

STREETS AND STREET FURNITURE

Footways

In the High Street pedestrians are often forced to move off the footway to allow others to pass and as a result are in danger of stepping into heavy traffic. Along the western side of Salisbury Street some sections of the footway are extremely narrow (28 cm) where pedestrians have to step into the road and even on the footway risk being hit by large vehicles.

See Guideline 8.5 concerning Salisbury Street footway

Crossing the Great Bridge can be difficult and dangerous for those with mobility problems and those with wheelchairs and/ or prams. This is further exacerbated as there is no pedestrian crossing on the town side of the river. Leaving the Great Bridge, there is very little width of footway as pedestrians walk towards the Recreation Ground.

See Guideline 8.6 concerning developments close to the river

Areas such as Church Street and Provost Street have footways on one side only. In Provost Street new developments in some cases have service boxes and steps on the footways which can impede pedestrians as do the stays from telegraph poles. The unpaved area of Church Street has paths which are in poor condition, and both unsightly and dangerous.

Parking

Parking is a problem in most of the central area of town. Many of the older houses, especially those that front directly on the street, do not have any parking space or garages. The density demanded in the newest housing developments means that they have been built with the minimum off-street parking. The parking area in front of the shops at the northern end of Provost Street is inadequate for larger cars or vans, causing vehicles to overhang the footway and force pedestrians into the roadway.

See Guideline 8.7 concerning Provost Street shops

The wide part of Church Street close to St Mary's church frames an attractive view of the church from the direction of the town centre, but this view is marred by parked cars and overgrown trees. There are some attractive hedges, but little evidence of continuity or planning. There are a number of low walls which may be intended to define the footway, but these are intermittent, with no evidence of controlled design and are frequently damaged by parking cars.

At the junction of West Street, Church Street and Provost Street there is another area used for parking, preventing access to, and any view of, Ashford Water which flows under West Street and along Church Street. The area is unkempt, at times litter-strewn, with unsightly telegraph poles and lines and poorly maintained trees and bushes. It could be redeveloped as an open space, with new trees, flowers and seating, but the conflict between demand for parking and the enhancement of the environment will have to be resolved. A seating area in this location is particularly important in view of its position between the shopping area and the residential developments for elderly people which are situated to the south and west of the town.

Recommendations:

- *The hedges and trees in Church Street should be pruned as appropriate. Walls should be repaired and an area in front of St Mary's Church reinstated as an open space.*
- *Efforts should be made to reduce parking in Church Street and on the open area alongside Ashford Water.*
- *The area on Provost Street alongside Ashford Water should be landscaped and seating provided.*

Street Furniture

In Church Street there are period-style lamp standards which are in keeping with the surroundings. These are also found in the Roundhill area. Otherwise the street lighting is modern and utilitarian.

See Guideline 8.8 concerning streetlights

There is a considerable amount of overhead electric cabling in the area, and this detracts from the appearance of Church Street, Provost Street and Roundhill, among others. In some places, such as at the north end of Provost Street, the stay to hold a pole for overhead cables encroaches onto the footway in a dangerous manner.

See general Guideline G.1 concerning overhead cables

9. THE URBAN AREA OF FORDINGBRIDGE OUTSIDE THE TOWN CENTRE

Almost all of this area is defined by the by-pass to the east, the alignment of the old railway line to the north, Marl Lane to the west and the town centre to the south.

The main area is split into two distinct parts by Sweatsford Water, which runs from north to south leaving the area under Shaftesbury Street. This watercourse provides an important 'green corridor' of trees, water meadows, allotments and open spaces through the developed areas linking the countryside to the north into the centre of the town.

THE AREA TO THE WEST OF SWEATSFORD WATER

AREA SETTING AND LANDSCAPE

The residential developments to the west of Sweatsford Water are set on gently undulating land, but views within this area are mainly two dimensional, whilst displaying a large amount of foliage and shrubbery that is both integral from the original planning, and now spreading from within peoples' own gardens.

From Marl Lane there are attractive views westwards over grazing land to the imposing building of Allenbrook Nursing Home (**View No. 1**). From the old railway line there are views of Forres Sandle Manor School (**View No. 2**) and of the pasture land towards Whitsbury (**View No. 3**). Interesting water features off Normandy Way are a medieval moat in the grounds of Parsonage House and the Bishops Pond, a small nature reserve. Views in this area are dominated by a plantation of tall poplar trees in a water meadow east of Normandy Way (**View No. 4**).

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

There is one long north-south through road in this area, made up of **Normandy Way** and **Parsonage Park Drive**. This is a fairly wide road, lined with modern housing and some grass strips between footway and road. It is often used as a town centre by-pass when the High Street or Salisbury Street are blocked by emergencies or for processions and street activities. Several roads branch off this spine road.

Allen Water Drive is the longest, which itself has several short roads and courtyards branching off. Most of the 1980's houses and bungalows in this area have very small front gardens, single garages to the side or integral with the house, with short driveways and rear gardens approximately equal in area to the building. Space is limited, leading to problems with visitor parking at two-car homes and on the narrow roads.

Off **Normandy Way** are three courtyard developments of detached houses with separate garages or carports. Front gardens are small or non-existent, but there is generous visitor parking. One of these (Cottage Mews) lies within the town's Conservation Area, as does the large old house called Parsonage House close by.

Off **Parsonage Park Drive** are several short roads built in the 1970's with wide roads, generous open plan front gardens, but small back gardens. Parking is not a problem in these streets.

The only part of this area that is not already used for housing or public open space lies between Normandy Way and Marl Lane and comprises three fields visible from the lane. Marl Lane is an un-adopted winding gravel lane that is mostly bordered by deciduous hedgerows that also contain a variety of mature trees such as the oak in the illustration. The lane is well used by walkers wishing to experience the countryside close to the town.

See Guideline 9.1 concerning Marl Lane

BUILDINGS AND DETAILS

The development that took place in the 1980's along **Normandy Way** and to the west of Parsonage Park Drive (**Allenwater Drive, Avon Meade, Pealsham Gardens, Stephen Martin Gardens**) comprises semi and detached houses and bungalows. Predominantly the area is of brick and tile. There are two types of local brick, and a proportion of the buildings have timber cladding stained dark brown, whilst others are rendered, producing some variety within the whole. There are some old cottages on **Marl Lane**. Some of the large detached houses along Normandy Way are set sideways to the road into the rising land behind. One side of these houses is next to the footway. Some have bay windows with dark timber framing and painted walls giving a Tudor effect.

The area mainly bounded by Parsonage Park Drive and the Sweatsford Water consists of bungalows and houses set back from the roads, producing a more open frontage and expansive appearance (**Mayfly Close, Willow Avenue, Riverdale Close, Meadow Close, Meadow Avenue, Meadow Court, Charnwood Drive and Oaklands Close**). These buildings have low pitched roofs and large picture windows, with mainly white frames. Many of the semi-detached houses to the east of Parsonage Drive have white weatherboarding or tiles on the front upper elevation. In the Charnwood Drive area most houses have tile roofed porches to match the main roof, sometimes combined with an extended front room or a garage front also with roofs to match. These are successful in breaking up the elevation of these properties.

PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

There are very few fences dividing the footways from front gardens. Many residents have planted shrubs or low hedges in their front gardens to provide interest and some privacy. The exception is Normandy Way, where there are attractive 2-metre brick walls and thick shrub beds lining the footway.

See Guideline 9.2 concerning front boundaries

Back boundaries are mainly a mixture of 2-metre wooden fences, in many places also forming the boundary to a public footpath or an open space.

See Guideline 9.3 concerning public footpaths

OPEN SPACES

Within the area there is a generous proportion of open space, with large areas available for public use as playing fields, defined mainly by property boundaries, rather than having its own hard demarcation. These areas are behind Allenwater Drive and along the old railway alignment. The original bridge carrying Marl Lane over the railway has been restored as an interesting feature.

See Guideline 9.4 concerning public open spaces

STREETS AND STREET FURNITURE

The area from Parsonage Park Drive to the boundary of the disused railway line has a meandering enclosed nature, without continuous footways. The other roads have a footway on each side.

The area has a number of roads with interconnecting passages between, which encourage walking to the town for shopping and to the local schools. The lighting is modern in style, installed when the developments were built. In contrast to the housing area east of Sweatsford Water there are no poles supplying electricity or phone services in this area.

THE AREA TO THE EAST OF SWEATSFORD WATER

AREA SETTING AND LANDSCAPE

To the east of Sweatsford Water the land is flat, and most properties do not have any views beyond their own road. The exceptions are properties in Picket Close and Whitsbury Road which face or back onto the meadows and allotments alongside Sweatsford Water (**View No. 5**). There are a few large mature trees which provide some visual interest in the area, especially those which have been retained in the open spaces of the modern development to the east of Salisbury Road (Manor Park). Other trees in the boundaries of the large gardens in Park Road, Alexandra Road and Waverley Road are important both visually and for nature conservation. There is an important avenue of tall lime trees along St Georges Road.

See Guideline 9.5 concerning St Georges Road

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

There are two main through roads in this area, **Salisbury Road** (the main entry road to the town from the north), and **Whitsbury Road** (which leads to the hamlet of Tinkers Cross and eventually to the village of Whitsbury).

These two roads are joined by several parallel east-west roads. The most southerly is **Green Lane**, leading from the town centre to Whitsbury Road and The Bartons. The first part is narrow, one-way and without adequate footways, despite being a major access road to the Royal Mail sorting office and the town car park. It leads on to a footpath across Sweatsford Water, which is a well-used pedestrian link to the housing on the west side of this stream. The next two cross roads are **Park Road** and **Alexandra Road**, built in the Edwardian era. These now take exit traffic from the car park and through traffic from Whitsbury, but because most of the Edwardian houses do not have driveways or garages street parking obstructs two-way traffic. The other link road is **Waverley Road**, built in the 1930's as part of the expansion of housing northwards. With the short **Burnham Road** this links Salisbury Road with Whitsbury Road close to the junction with Parsonage Farm Drive, and is therefore used extensively by cars wanting to reach the housing to the west of Sweatsford Water from the A338 or from the Burgate schools.

The housing lining these main roads has small front gardens and large rear gardens (three times building area). This has encouraged small in-fill developments, particularly in Waverley Road and St Georges Road. This basic grid has been filled in and added to by small housing developments of mainly bungalows and semi-detached houses in cul-de-sacs.

See Guideline 9.6 concerning back-garden in-filling

Pennys Lane (joining Whitsbury Road and Waverley Road) provides access to the Junior and Infants schools, and is crowded with parents' cars at the start and end of the school day. Access to the schools is difficult for large delivery vehicles.

Recommendation: Any new developments in the north of this area should incorporate a dedicated access road to the junior and infant schools in order to improve safety and accessibility.

BUILDINGS AND DETAILS

Green Lane contains a mixture of properties; the historic 17th century Old Court House at the corner of Salisbury Road (in the conservation area), a small crowded industrial estate, the Royal Mail sorting office and telephone exchange, a residential home converted from a large Victorian house, some small bungalows, a modern two-storey block of flats, a small office building, a modern residential home, and some semi-detached houses forming part of the **Picket Close** development. Where Green Lane crosses Sweatsford Water there is a fishing lodge which is included in the town conservation area.

Salisbury Road is lined on its western side with imposing two-storey brick Edwardian or Victorian properties with slate roofs in-filled with a variety of later bungalows and houses. At the town end there is a large modern brick-built three-storey block of flats and the Catholic Church, both set well back from the road. Behind the church is a large modern block of retirement flats.

Between Salisbury Road and the by-pass is the **Manor Park area** - a residential area built in the 1980's - mainly of houses and bungalows in red brick. All properties have garages and other parking space, and are grouped around areas of lawn with some mature trees and shrubs. The houses have two-storey weather-boarded projections forming part of the bathroom and an entrance porch. These and the window frames in this development are stained dark brown. Most of the buildings are set sideways to the roads, with small courtyards for car and pedestrian access. At the south end of Salisbury Road are two blocks of flats with three floors and a modern two-storey complex of Sheltered Housing run by a Housing Association.

Park Road, Alexandra Road and Albion Road comprise a variety of detached and semi-detached two-storey Edwardian properties about 100 years old, built of red brick (probably from the local Sandleheath brickworks) with slate roofs. These buildings have distinctive stone-effect window ledges and lintels, chimneys with fancy brickwork, and bay windows. The larger detached houses often have projecting bays, some two-storey with gable end on the roof. **Park Road** itself is distinguished by two large Victorian/Edwardian red brick houses characterised by their lead covered spires which stand as sentinels at opposite ends of the road and on opposite sides. There has been extensive post-war in-filling, usually in the style of the time, although the latest properties have been designed to blend with the original Edwardian houses. Parking is a problem, as the older properties often do not have garages or driveways. There is a motor workshop in **Albion Road**, which again suffers from lack of parking space. The north end of **Albion Road** has three blocks of modern two-storey flats facing a large grassed area. **Queens Gardens** is a 1970's cul-de-sac off Alexandra Road consisting of semi-detached houses.

See Guideline 9.7 concerning Edwardian properties

St Georges Road contains some pre-war semi-detached houses covered in stucco individually painted in an avenue of large mature trees. These houses have front-facing gables at each end to break up the roofline. The road has been extended with a variety of post-war modern bungalows. Player Court off St Georges Road is a two-storey development of flats, mainly for older residents. **Waverley Road** consists of pre-war chalet bungalows and some more recent brick semi-detached houses with unusual central gables breaking up the roofline. There has been some back garden in-filling with more modern bungalows. There is a group of cottage style semis at the corner of **Waverley Road** and **Pennys Lane**. These have steep roofs and dormer windows to the first floor rooms. **Waverley Close** is a small development of modern bungalows obviously on land taken from gardens along Waverley Road.

Picket Close is a pre-1961 post war development of brick semis on generous plots, originally with no garages or driveways. This can lead to parking problems and spoiling of grassed amenity spaces. Many have tile or lead-roofed bay windows breaking up the front elevation. There is a block of flat-roofed garages along the edge of the allotments.

A later area of social housing was built post-1960 at the end of **Pennys Lane**, consisting of a mixture of bungalows, three-unit terraces and semis in brick with large windows. Some of the houses have tile-hung elevations between the first and ground floor windows. There are some flat-roofed garage blocks but many of the properties have no driveways leading to parking problems in the narrow roads.

Burnham Road, Dudley Avenue, Hertford Close, Bedford Close and Merton Close. This is an area of 1970's bungalows and semis with garages. The semis have white weatherboarding under the very large first floor windows, and all the properties have large downstairs windows. Several have been extended. **Dudley Avenue** has a very wide area of grassed amenity land in front of the properties.

The eastern side of **Whitsbury Road** has several Edwardian houses built at the same time and in the same style as those in Alexandra Road and Park Road. Facing them is part of the Picket Close development with its own access road and a grassed amenity area. Further north along the west side of Whitsbury Road is a row of chalet bungalows having their own private gravelled access road, hidden behind a tall fence and small trees.

The latest development in this area is **Burgate Fields**. This consists of 1980's brick detached houses with linking garages, with brown stained window frames. Various colours of brick have been used, none being the red Sandleheath type. There is a large grassed amenity space with flowering shrub borders. The road is narrow and visitor parking therefore limited.

PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

The only "open-plan" areas are Burgate Fields and the Burnham Road/Dudley Avenue development. Almost all the other roads have front property boundaries consisting of 1-metre fences, walls or hedges. Some high front hedges exist (privet and laurel) and these often take up footway space and cause problems if not maintained. An

important feature of the old Edwardian properties is their low brick walls and brick gate pillars, topped with stone cappings. Back garden boundaries are a variety of hedges and fences, along which many medium height trees have been allowed to grow. These provide valuable food and nesting sites for wildlife.

Because few of the Manor Park properties face a footway, the visible boundaries in this development are mainly 2-metre walls or fences, to provide privacy to the back gardens.

Recommendation: *Owners of tall hedges that encroach onto the footway should be encouraged to cut them back or replace them with lower hedges, walls or fences.*

OPEN SPACES

There are attractive grassed areas in front of the houses in Picket Close, Waverley Close, Albion Road and Dudley Avenue. Some are spoiled by parking. The existing parking arrangement along Whitsbury Road of laybys and grassed areas protected by wooden posts could be extended to the corner of Picket Close and Whitsbury Road, to minimise parking on grassed areas.

The improved play area on the Whitsbury Road approach to the town is a much-needed recreational facility for younger children. Important environmental variety and enrichment is offered by:

- the allotments to the west of Picket Close,
- the meadow between them and Sweatsford Water, and
- the small plot of ground at the junction of Whitsbury Road and Parsonage Park Road that is now being managed in the interest of spring wild flower conservation.

There is no space in this area for older youngsters to play football in safety or without annoying other residents. They have to walk through the town and across the bridge to the recreation ground.

See Guideline 9.8 concerning new developments north of the town

STREETS AND STREET FURNITURE

Streets are mainly provided with footways on each side of the carriageway (except for the old part of Albion Road, Green Lane and parts of Whitsbury Road). There are several narrow paths linking streets in this area as 'short-cuts'. These encourage walking to town and to the schools.

Recommendation: *Improvements to Green Lane should be considered to segregate pedestrians from traffic, especially as this road is used by elderly people accessing several residential homes in the area.*

Many of the properties in this area are supplied with electricity from overhead cables. This is extremely unsightly. The same poles are also used for telephone wires, which makes the appearance even worse. Poles are used to distribute telephone wires even where the electricity supply is underground. There have been instances of high vehicles bringing down these wires.

Where electricity is supplied overhead the street lights are often attached to the wooden poles. Otherwise modern lamp standards are used.

10. BICKTON

AREA SETTING AND LANDSCAPE

Bickton is situated on flat land approximately 1 mile south of Fordingbridge town centre. Ingress and egress to the hamlet is obtained through an unclassified road leading from the A338. The hamlet is traversed from North to South by the River Avon, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and part of the Avon valley walk from Salisbury to Christchurch. The west bank of the river north of the old mill building is occupied by a fish farm, providing a rather untidy view of nets and fish feeders.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The hamlet of Beckon has a recorded history dating back to the Domesday Book at which time its population was greater than that of Fordingbridge. Bickton is of a linear design probably dating back to the middle ages, centred around the 15th century manor house and now comprises 34 properties.

Bickton is in a Conservation Area to safeguard it from inappropriate development and alterations. The individual buildings and the history of the hamlet are comprehensively described in the Conservation Area Appraisal, and therefore are only summarised in this document.

The properties have spacious plots and most are well set back from the road. Land to the rear of the properties backs onto farmland. Although the older thatched cottages and 19th century brick houses are well separated throughout the hamlet, the more modern in-filling has created a compact street giving the settlement the feel of a small close-knit community.

BUILDINGS

The buildings are mainly two-storey houses of differing sizes and a few modern bungalows. There are several old thatched houses, some with rendered and painted walls, some with brick walls, and one with an exposed timber frame in-filled with brick. The other houses and bungalows are brick built, many rendered and painted white and some with tile hung elevations. Their roofs are slate on the older houses and tiles on the more modern ones. There are some pre war corrugated outbuildings.

One of the medieval barns has been converted to residential accommodation. Another medieval barn, mounted on staddle stones is used as farm storage. At the west end of Bickton is situated the mill building. In recent years the granary section of the mill has been converted to apartments and the mill and the mill house have been replaced. The conversion and the new buildings blend together to form an attractive group overlooking the mill pond. Several of the buildings in Bickton are listed as being of historic interest.

PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

The front boundaries are various: brick walls (some painted) with various vegetation cover, picket fencing, hedging, and some wire fencing. A few buildings have no front boundaries. Rear gardens are divided by an assortment of trees, hedging and wooden fencing.

OPEN SPACES

There are no public open spaces in the Bickton hamlet. However, the well-maintained wide grass verges in front of most of the properties give an impression of a compact hamlet set in a rural environment, and the large well-stocked gardens provide a rich habitat for wildlife and contain many trees which enhance the landscape.

STREETS AND STREET FURNITURE

The road is un-kerbed and in most of its length through the hamlet has wide grass verges up to the front boundaries of the properties. There are no streetlights, and the overhead utility supply is less obtrusive than in Fordingbridge because there is only one strand of cable between the poles.

11. ASHFORD

AREA SETTING AND LANDSCAPE

The settlement lies on rising land about half a mile to the west of Fordingbridge and is separated from the town by a flood plain and the grounds of the nursing home, Allenbrook. This gap has been officially designated a 'Local Gap'. The Ashford Water runs from west to east along the southern boundary of Ashford. The northern edge of the built-up area is formed by a strip of woodland which extends along the old railway line to Marl Lane. The old railway forms a cycleway and footpath from Station Road through Falconwood Close north to Marl Lane and Allenwater Drive in Fordingbridge.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The development of this area probably started with the arrival of the railway in 1866, axed by Beeching in 1964. The original properties are in **Station Road, Ashford Road** and **Victoria Road**. Station Road and its continuation towards Sandleheath is the only access route for lorries serving the industrial estates in Ashford and Sandleheath. Station Road in particular is not quite wide enough for heavy lorries to pass safely.

Jubilee Road was added in the 1930's, followed by **Jubilee Close** in the 1960's. These are situated to the west of Station Road and are bounded by the disused railway line (now part of the Fordingbridge Business Park) to the south-east and Sandheath Road to the north.

Ashford Close, Falconwood Close, Rookwood Gardens, Elmwood Avenue with Downwood and Brympton Close and Marbream Close. This area is to the north of Station Road and was primarily built in the 1960's, with the exception of Falconwood Close and Rookwood Gardens, 1990's developments alongside the old railway alignment. The Augustus John pub and the Corintech factory are to the south of this area.

Victoria Gardens, Beechwood and The Pantiles were developed in the 1970's and 1980's. These roads lie to the south-west of Station Road, between the Ashburn Hotel to the east and the industrial estate to the west on the Ashford Road.

Jubilee Crescent is the latest road, produced by demolishing some bungalows in Jubilee Road and using the space to build a road which now extends round the back of the properties in Jubilee Road.

BUILDINGS AND DETAILS

Station Road, Victoria Road and Ashford Road all have a scattering of Victorian and Edwardian properties. Jubilee Road consists of 1930's bungalows, some much extended in recent years. Post 1945 produced most of the recent buildings. Victorian houses on the north side of Victoria Road are being replaced with higher density housing. Two blocks of four flats are already occupied, and six town houses are being constructed. These developments will completely alter the character of this road.

See Guideline 11.1 concerning developments in Victoria Road

All the parts of Ashford include a mixture of detached, semi-detached and bungalows. With the exception of Jubilee Crescent and Falconwood Close, they have spacious gardens, garages and additional parking. They are all brick built with tile or slate roofs and some with tile or wood cladding on the walls.

Falconwood Close and Rookwood Gardens were built nine years ago to a much higher density than the rest of the area. Its appearance is cramped with small gardens and fussy detailing on some of the properties.

Jubilee Crescent was built one year ago. Two bungalows were demolished and replaced by 8 detached house, all with open plan front gardens and very small back gardens.

PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

With the exception of Jubilee Crescent, all the properties have either wooden fences, low brick walls or hedges around their properties. The older areas to the south of Station Road have a number of large established trees in contrast to the area to the north. Most of the roads have footways on either side of the road.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

This is centred around the junction of Station Road and Ashford Road. To the north is Corintech, a thriving electronics manufacturer using the premises of a former flour mill. To the south-east off Ashford Road is the Ashford Marine Works housing 16 small businesses. To the south-west (on the old station site) is the Fordingbridge Business Park which comprises John Loader (Wessex Feeds), Corralls Coal Centre, and more recent industrial units housing a variety of small business ventures. There is also a new development built in 2006 offering 4 business units on the junction of Ashford Road and Station Road.

The future of the Ashburn Hotel is uncertain. Some of the land was sold in 2005 at the rear and several large private houses were built. Access is along the west side of the hotel. There is a planning application to demolish the hotel and replace it with a home for the elderly.

Recommendations:

- *Any future commercial development in the Ashford and Sandheath areas should take into account the inadequate width of Station Road.*
- *The hedge on the northern side of Station Road between Ashford and Fordingbridge should be cut back to improve safety for cyclists. Implementation of Policy DW.T10.14 in the Local Plan would provide a proper cycleway.*

12. TINKERS CROSS AND BURGATE

AREA SETTING AND LANDSCAPE

To the North & West of Fordingbridge lie rolling chalk downs; and as one travels NNW from the centre of Fordingbridge through this area towards the downs at Whitsbury, the highest point of this part of Fordingbridge is only some 15m or so above the River Avon. This is the setting for Tinkers Cross, where the principle views are eastwards across the A338 towards the river Avon and into the New Forest. Burgate lies along the A338 which runs close to the west bank of the River Avon. On the east side of the river are a set of historic water meadows protected by their designation as a SSSI.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Tinkers Cross is situated at the junction of Whitsbury Road and Fryern Court Road. This small group of dwellings extends northwards along Fryern Court Road, and then the properties become more spaced out, separated by small fields, along the west-east branch of Fryern Court Road which eventually meets the A338 at Upper Burgate. Here there is another group of houses and old farm buildings. Moving south along the A338 properties become spaced out again before reaching another group of properties at Lower Burgate.

BUILDINGS AND DETAILS

Tinkers Cross comprises mostly detached bungalows, many with dormer windows, interspersed with two storey detached housing. The properties, largely built mid 20th century, are heterogeneous in design & detailing. They are built of brick, although many of them are rendered with tiled and pseudo slate roofs. All have off-road parking, and front gardens.

The Glasshouse Studios (formerly The Avonvale Nurseries) are to the east of Fryern Court Road at Tinkers Cross. This is a modern business park comprising single storey buildings faced with brick or cladding housing 15 businesses employing about 50 people. These sit down in the landscape rather than intruding. The narrow width of Fryern Court Road constrains how the site can be used. Next to this development is a residential home for the elderly, comprising a long single-storey building with extra rooms in the roof.

Fryern Court Complex: Surrounded by agricultural land, the Fryern Court complex to the northwest of Fryern Court Road comprises one Grade II* and five Grade II listed structures, and two more that are Grade II listed for group value. The complex is essentially hidden from public view, and contains listed properties from the 15th through to the 20th centuries. It includes a painted brick and concrete studio, with a flat asphalt roof, that is an unashamedly modern (1932) and clearly visible from the road.

Beyond Tinkers Cross & before reaching Upper Burgate there are a few scattered houses, mainly 20th century, and mainly post-war bespoke red brick two storey buildings with a variety of roof types, including thatch & tile. They all have off road parking – essential with such a narrow road.

Upper Burgate comprises various Grade II listed vernacular properties dating back to the 16th & 17th centuries plus more modern buildings from the Victorian, and post war periods. The properties are an eclectic mix of timber framing with brick infill (sometimes painted), red brick, and stucco, with roofs of thatch and tile. They are all detached or semi-detached with front gardens and most have off-road parking. On the east side of the A338 is a white painted stucco building of Edwardian appearance, tucked well back from the road.

Most of the buildings at **Lower Burgate** are Grade II listed, timber framed, with painted brick infill and thatched roofs, some used for commercial purposes such as antiques and hostelryes. They variously date from the 16th & 17th centuries with later additions. An industrial park is located at Burgate Farm with a narrow entrance on the west side of the A338. The buildings comprise various former farm buildings and a row of red brick single storey light industrial buildings (parallel to the A338 but screened from it) with a tarmac parking & loading area in front of them. Adjacent to the industrial estate is a range of battered glass houses.

Recommendation: *Any proposals for the expansion of the industrial estate in Lower Burgate should be accompanied by a review of its accessibility to and from the A338.*

Opposite the industrial site is a two storey red brick, apparently Victorian building; and then Burgate Court, an apparently Georgian 2-storey stucco building under a slate roof that has been recently restored & converted into flats. About 200 m east of the road is the Burgate Manor Farm complex of farm buildings and holiday cottages.

PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

The predominant form of front boundary is hedging, either semi-natural and including species such as holly and hazel, or planted with various domestic hedging species. There are some wooden picket fences. There are many well-established trees in the hedges and gardens and along adjacent field boundaries.

OPEN SPACES

There are no public open spaces in these hamlets. Gardens are usually large with many trees which contribute to the landscape. There is a large grassed area in Upper Burgate containing the old Burgate Cross. This and the adjoining thatched properties form an attractive gateway to Fordingbridge and should be well maintained.

STREETS AND STREET FURNITURE

As is normal in rural areas, electricity and telephone services are supplied from overhead cables. Because the properties are spread out and there is a significant number of trees along the roadside these cables are not obtrusive.

There is a good footway up Whitsbury Road from Fordingbridge to Tinkers Cross, but there are no footways on Fryern Court Road. For this reason, and because this road is narrow, there is a 30 mph speed limit. There is a footway along the west side of the A338 linking Upper and Lower Burgate.

Important footpaths

The Avon Valley Path runs from Pennys Lane in Fordingbridge around the playing fields of Burgate School to Lower Burgate just south of the industrial estate. Walkers then have to cross the A338 to reach the next part of the Path through Burgate Manor Farm and across the River Avon. This river crossing is a most attractive white suspension bridge which is a prominent feature on the water meadows.

13. GUIDELINES

General Guidelines for Fordingbridge, Ashford, Bickton, Tinkers Cross and Burgate

- G.1 Electricity and telephone supplies should be put underground when new developments are proposed.
- G.2 Off-road parking provision for at least two vehicles should be provided for each dwelling with 3 bedrooms or more. (Refer New Forest District Supplementary Planning Document – The provision of car parking space in residential development) Off-road parking areas should be constructed of materials which minimise excessive water run-off and incorporate a permeable surface. Because garages are often used to store domestic and garden articles they are counted as half a car space per single garage, but only if minimum dimensions are 6m X 3m. The above SPD takes this into account in its recommendations.
- G.3 Major new developments should be designed to include grassed amenity areas at road junctions and areas where trees could be planted to provide shade and visual interest. Access roads should be wide enough for both car parking and access for refuse lorries and emergency vehicles;
- G.4 Where it is necessary for large trees in public open spaces to be removed, or for new trees to be planted, it would be advisable for the new trees to be chosen from deciduous species that will both enhance the environment and make a contribution to conservation, such as hornbeam, rowan, holly, plane, oak, and ash. A variety of species should be encouraged to prevent widespread foliage or tree loss through infestation or disease. (English Nature, the Forestry Commission, the District Council and the National Park Authority, are all able to supply fuller information about species that are suitable for particular situations.)
- G.5 Adequate lighting of public footpaths is necessary to ensure a safe environment at night. When replacing lighting used both here and in the streets the fittings should minimise light pollution and should not be sited to shine directly into bedroom windows.
- G.6 Any extensions in these areas should be constructed to take into account the character of the existing building. Flat roofs should be avoided, and roof pitch and material and window design should match that of the existing building.
- G.7 New buildings in these areas should not have more than 2 storeys below the roof, although rooms in the roof space are acceptable. Flat roofs should be avoided.
- G.8 New streets should be linked to existing streets by “short-cut” footpaths, to encourage walking to the shops and schools.

(Note: The following Guidelines are numbered to correspond with the appropriate Section which should be consulted for amplification.)

Guideline for Rural Areas surrounding the Town

- 4.1 Any proposal to change the use of buildings within an agricultural holding should seek to preserve its rural character, enhance rural employment and economic opportunities, and include measures to prevent degradation of the natural environment.

Guidelines for Town Centre, including the Conservation Area

- 8.1 In the town centre any new developments or changes in the road layout should include the planting of trees. Care should be taken to choose trees without low branches.
- 8.2 New or replacement shop fronts should be of high quality traditional materials and be modern interpretations of an established traditional style being sympathetic to the character of the building and the area. National commercial enterprises should be encouraged to modify their standard signs and shop fronts to take into account the historic nature of the town centre. (refer to Policy DW-E22 in Local Plan)
- 8.3 Developments in the town centre should be of two storeys, plus in some cases rooms in the roof with dormer windows (not flat-roofed). The elevations should be of red/orange brick to match those from the old Sandleheath brickworks. They should not be painted or rendered. The roof pitch, alignment and materials should match that of surrounding buildings.
- 8.4 New buildings set close to the footway should be provided with low walls enclosing a small strip of land for flowers and meter boxes (if these cannot be placed in the walls). These boundaries would serve to break up and soften the join between walls and footway, and encourage residents to contribute to the appearance of the town.
- 8.5 If alterations are proposed to Nos. 33-37 Salisbury Street, the opportunity should be taken to incorporate a widened footway as part of such proposals.
- 8.6 Any new developments linking the east side of the High Street, Provost Street or Church Street to the west bank of the river should include a public right of way to the river bank, which would enable a pedestrian bridge to be constructed across the River Avon to improve access to the recreation ground and children's play area. (refer to Policies FB-2,3,4 in Local Plan) There is also an existing proposal for a new footpath along the northern edge of St Mary's churchyard to the riverbank (Policy DW.T10.15 in Local Plan).
- 8.7 Any redevelopment of the shops on the east side of Provost Street should include a redesign of the footway and parking spaces to prevent vehicles obstructing both the footway and the main roadway.
- 8.8 When replacement of street lights is required in Provost Street, Salisbury Street and Shaftesbury Street, (the streets which contain a mixed collection of modern lamp standards), a uniform design should be chosen which is no higher than the eaves, inconspicuous and which is suitable for inclusion in a conservation area.

Guidelines for the urban area of Fordingbridge outside the town centre

- 9.1 Any developments in the Marl Lane area should seek to retain the described character of the lane and its recreational and ecological value.
- 9.2 Care should be taken in the design of any new front boundaries for which planning permission is required so that the elevation consists of a variety of materials and/or designs (such as a combination of brick and wooden panels).
- 9.3 Boundaries separating public footpaths and residents' gardens should be designed to minimise the intimidating "tunnel" effect of such footpaths by variation in design and/or materials.
- 9.4 Every opportunity should be taken to maintain the public open spaces off Allen Water Drive and Whitsbury Road to avoid dark hiding places and ensure that young children cannot wander onto open countryside.
- 9.5 The avenue of trees in St Georges Road should be preserved and the trees gradually replaced when necessary by those of a comparable deciduous species. When replacement is necessary, the bodies identified in G4 above should be consulted for guidance about suitable replacements.
- 9.6 Back-garden in-filling in Salisbury Road, Park Road, Alexandra Road and Whitsbury Road should be resisted. Such developments would have an adverse impact on the character of the original street pattern, reduce car parking capacity due to access roads, and destroy valuable wild-life habitat in large gardens and large trees which enhance the views from existing properties.
- 9.7 Developments close to Edwardian properties in Whitsbury Road, Park Road and Alexandra Road should incorporate front gardens or parking spaces bounded by brick walls and gateposts to match neighbouring boundaries. Features such as stone window cills and lintels and front-facing gables should be incorporated into the design.

Demolition of good quality Edwardian and Victorian houses in Salisbury Road, Park Road, Alexandra Road, Albion Road and Whitsbury Road should be resisted. In addition to providing the architectural heritage of the initial expansion of the town due to the coming of the railway, these properties make a necessary contribution towards a diverse social mix in the community.

- 9.8 Any new developments off Whitsbury Road to the east of Sweatsford Water should include a simple field for ball games and other play activities, similar to the field in the Allen Water Drive development. (Refer Local Plan)

Guideline for Ashford

- 11.1 The original Victorian properties in Victoria Road had mature trees and bushes in hedges and gardens which contributed to the appearance of the street. New developments in this street should also incorporate or retain such planting in front of new parking areas.

Guideline in Appendix 1

- App1.1 Planning applications to break new ground should demonstrate that the proposed development is of appropriate scale and style, and in a suitable location, to enhance the town's built environment and encourage ecological benefit.

Appendix 1: OVERVIEW OF DESIGN RELATED ISSUES

The Town Design Statement is a street by street, area by area account of the town and its environs. There has to be room in the future for residential and commercial development but it is important that significant planning proposals take this Overview into account when considering the detailed guidelines set out above so that the overall character of the area is maintained and, wherever possible, enhanced.

To this end, four main concerns are highlighted that are not adequately expressed in the more localised detailed descriptions.

1. Traffic

Traffic concerns were raised at all stages in the preparation of the Town Design Statement and fall into three categories.

a) Parking problems. These are caused by the growth of car ownership and by the increasing use of garages for general storage. The problem is further compounded by the inadequate size of the garages in many recent developments which even medium sized family cars can only enter with difficulty. This suggests that the current requirement to provide a certain number of parking spaces is not the only issue. The spaces provided need to be fit for purpose. The provision of adequate internal storage space within domestic developments and/or garages suitable for family cars would considerably ease street parking problems.

See Guideline G.2 concerning parking in new developments.

b) The extensive increase in street parking. In some areas, such as the Parsonage Park development, the roads are so narrow that residents fear that the emergency services would on occasion be delayed while parked vehicles are moved. In other areas, such as Park Road, which is a through route out of town, parking on both sides of the road results in larger vehicles having difficulty getting through, and occasional damage to the wing mirrors of parked vehicles. A similar, though more visible, problem exists in both High Street and Salisbury Street where stationary delivery vehicles frequently cause traffic jams. These can be compounded by the difficulty that very large vehicles, including buses, have in making the turn from Bridge Street into Salisbury Street.

There is increasing evidence that daytime street parking by non-residents is affecting roads close to the town centre at present without parking restrictions.

c) Large vehicles using streets in the town. A number of visitors to the public consultation spoke of their fear of coming into town because of the very large vehicles that come through with tyres rubbing the kerb edges and wing mirrors overhanging the footways. When two such vehicles meet, in some places it is necessary for one at least to mount the pavement in order for them to pass. Pedestrians, particularly older folk and those with young children, feel intimidated by this, and also by the speed at which some vehicles travel through the town.

See Recommendation about 20 mph speed limit in Section 8

Concern about traffic in Fordingbridge town centre is not new. The High Street and Salisbury Street are at present necessary access roads to the Fordingbridge Business Park, and the Ashford and Sandheath Industrial estates. The problems that arise from this are well recorded elsewhere and are acknowledged in the Local Plan. To date, the considered response has been one of resignation to an intractable problem.

If nothing is done, the problem created by through traffic will eventually solve itself because trade will fall as it becomes less and less attractive to shop and do business in Fordingbridge. The diversity of retail outlets serving the needs of the town itself and the surrounding villages is one of its main attractions, together with the range of other facilities it offers. It would not take the demise of more than a few retail outlets for this to be lost. To retain it, the traffic problem must be dealt with so that the town gains a new reputation for pedestrian friendliness.

Though such traffic issues do not lie directly within the remit of the Town Design Statement, they are a crucial aspect of the overall 'design' of the town. Good planning will have this in mind, with proposals for major developments including an assessment of their impact on the traffic issues affecting the town and containing proposals to ameliorate this growing problem.

Recommendation: *As a first step towards solving 'the intractable problem' identified above, the Highway Authority should be requested to undertake a feasibility study to ascertain the viability of creating a one way system to reduce the pressure of heavy traffic through the town centre. Several schemes proposed in the 1980's could be re-examined.*

2. Space with development potential

As has been stated, Fordingbridge has a tradition of gradual development spread through several centuries. It will not be desirable to make what is currently the town into a museum to past domestic and commercial architectural achievement. The town is a living entity and will require future development to retain this character. The issue is where such development can take place.

The land available will be either infill / brown site or hitherto undeveloped ground. It is clear that the land currently available is severely restricted. The town is surrounded by open countryside, the Ashford gap, flood plain and water meadows, and extensive areas affected by mineral rights. In addition, some areas are within vistas from the western escarpment of the New Forest National Park and can only be developed if there is agreement between the neighbouring authorities.

These constraints will tend towards increased density within developments and further erosion of the surrounding countryside. Increased density is likely to exacerbate the traffic problems identified above. Incursion into the countryside will be detrimental to the natural environment, with potentially injurious consequences to the valuable ecological position of the town within the Avon valley. The treatment of gardens as brown field sites works against environmental benefit and risks producing ecological wastelands. In consequence, the location of new developments is critical.

See Guideline App1.1 concerning planning applications for new developments.

3. Area wide enhancement

Earmarked land One piece of ground is earmarked in the Local Plan for leisure and recreational use. This lies to the east of the Whitsbury Road and the north of the old railway track, and borders the north-westerly aspect of the Burgate schools complex. Some people question whether this site is suitably located for the purpose identified, some considering that the old railway track would make an ideal relief access road for the schools complex. It is possible that the two ideas could be combined, the greater use of the boundary for access also offering increased security for children who may one day use the recreational space if the intention of the Local Plan is carried through.

A wasted asset? There can be little doubt that the situation of Fordingbridge on the river Avon is a huge attraction. The view from the ancient bridge opens up vistas of great beauty but these are restricted by the absence of a walk way on its southern side. The narrowness of the walkway extension on the north side does not encourage the visitor to linger. The western boundary of the recreation ground affords the only access for riverside walking. The view from here is mainly of the rear of the properties on the opposite bank.

The desire of very many residents for greater access to the river bank was quantified in the preparation of the Town Health Check and is clearly set out within it. In earlier generations, leisure activity on the river itself was a significant focal point. Such activity is unlikely to be regained but the resource of the river side holds considerable potential. A scheme some years ago to throw a bridge across the river to create a circular walk along the riverside and through the town centre was not adopted.

Recommendation: *The Planning Policies already set out in Policies FB-2, 3 and 4 of the Local Plan should be pursued with vigour by the relevant authorities to enable access to the west bank of the river.*

An extended circular walk could be created using the Avon Valley Path southwards from the rear of St. Mary's church, an existing footpath crossing the water meadows to Bickton Mill, and a new footpath/cycleway northwards from Bickton to the recreation ground along the east bank of the river. The latter has already been proposed in the current Local Plan.

The evidence of local desire for greater access to the riverside suggests that the creation of such a circular walk would greatly enhance the leisure and recreational facilities available to local residents and would be of attraction to visitors to the area.

4. Wider policy concerns

The draft Local Development Framework (LDF) for the period 2006-2026, will, when approved, replace the current Local Plan. It envisages the completion of up to 290 new dwellings in and around Fordingbridge during that period (approximately 15 per year). Up to 170 (9 per year) of these are to be provided within the current built-up area, presumably by in-filling and development of small parcels of land. The remainder would have to be built on land around the boundary of the current built-up area.

The LDF states that developments within the town should be "consistent with maintaining and enhancing its character and quality of life". In the light of the character of Fordingbridge described in the town design statement, it is suggested strongly that this should be interpreted to mean -

(a) In-fill development

The **Guidelines** listed in Section 13 numbered **G.1 to G.8** should be followed as far as possible.

(b) New-ground development

Although a town design statement cannot suggest where the new developments should be situated, it is accepted that some will probably be on the northern edge of the town, close to the Burgate schools campus. It is **recommended** that any development in this area should include:

- *the provision of a grassed recreational area of sufficient size to allow ball games to be played;*
- *improvements to the access to the primary and junior schools to alleviate the additional vehicular and footpath requirements arising from the increased number of children associated with the new development;*
- *consideration of the need for a one-way system for Park Road to offset the extra traffic to and from the centre of the town;*
- *retention of the gap between Fordingbridge and Tinkers Cross to preserve as far as possible the area's rural aspect and environmental value that will be jeopardised if it is completely in-filled with housing.*

Appendix 2: REFERENCES

The following documents were consulted during the preparation of this Town Design Statement:

- Fordingbridge – A Conservation Area Appraisal, June 2001
- The Health Check, 2007
- Bickton – draft Conservation Area Appraisal, 2007
- New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration, February 2005
- NFDC Housing Design, Density and Character, April 2006

- New Forest District Local Development Framework, Core Strategy Development Plan Document, Preferred Options, October 2007
- Hampshire Minerals Plan – Regulation 26 Consultation
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Area, 2004
- New Forest District – Supplementary Planning Document – The provision of car parking space in residential development, February 2008

Appendix 3: CONSULTATION PROCESS

In the autumn of 2006, Councillor Mike Shand as chair of the Fordingbridge Community Forum wrote to the many organisations within the town inviting them to send representatives to a meeting to be held in January 2007 to begin the process of preparing a new Fordingbridge Town Design Statement. This would replace an existing piece of work that had been overtaken by changing parameters set by the local authority.

The process started with a meeting on 23 January 2007 attended by 40 or so local residents who responded directly, or were representatives of various organisations. This meeting was held under the auspices of the Community Forum, with representatives of the New Forest District Council and Phil Turner MRTPI, of Planning Aid South present to help describe the task to be undertaken. Several working parties were formed to examine and describe different areas of the town against a number of parameters.

From February to November 2007 seven meetings were held to review the work submitted by the working parties and agree the content of the Design Statement. The final meeting on 27 November made arrangements for the latest draft to be submitted for public consultation at the town's Late Night Shopping programme of events to be held on Friday, 14th December 2007.

On the 14 December 2007 a display was set up in the Salvation Army hall adjacent to the main access to the central car park. The consultation itself had been widely advertised through posters placed around the town and in local media content. Key sections were displayed in large print format and full copies were also available. Over 50 people attended, some spending considerable time reading the display and/or discussing issues with members of the working group. All spare copies of the draft were given to members of the public, and a further 20 copies were delivered after the meeting. All copies included a response form to obtain comments from the community. Six replies were received and where appropriate the draft was amended. Several issues raised did not fall within the remit of the town design statement.

On the 22 January 2008 a meeting of the working group was held to discuss the results of the public consultation, and agree any amendments necessary. An extra Appendix was added to reflect the wider concerns of several members of the team and the public on the future development of the town. The revised text was circulated to all who had expressed an interest in the project seeking any additional comments and, in particular, identification of any errors of fact that remained.

Comments from within the local community overwhelmingly supported the draft, in both shape of document and content of the sections. Some errors of fact were identified and corrected.

On 13 August 2008 the planning committee of Fordingbridge Town Council endorsed the final draft for adoption by the New Forest District Council.