



# *Overton*

*Village Design Statement*



*A.D. 2002*

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**Entering the village from Basingstoke down Overton Hill**



**Winchester Street**



**Town Mill, converted and extended to provide retirement flats**



**Leaving the village by the B 3400 at Southington**

Unedited comments lifted from the questionnaires...  
*"The feeling that Overton has – the real village community."*

# INTRODUCTION

## What is the Village Design Statement?

Overton's Village Design Statement is a document which aims to record the characteristics, natural and man made, which are seen by the local community as contributing to the area's distinctiveness.

In order to be effective, a Village Design Statement must be produced by local residents and reflect local opinion.

It records, in text and pictures, the key features which local people regard as important and suggests ways in which these can be maintained and enhanced.

The VDS cannot **prevent** change, but it can be used to **manage** it, and aims to be relevant to both small scale and larger scale development.

Both the natural environment and the built environment are included, as well as the historical, community and business aspects of our village's life.

It also provides **guidelines** which will assist residents, the Parish Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and potential developers to maintain or enhance the distinctive nature of Overton and its associated settlements.

This document was formally adopted by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in February, 2002.

## How was the Village Design Statement produced?

An initial public consultation meeting was held to discuss the idea of producing a Village Design Statement and this was followed by two VDS workshops. Each of these events was very well attended and all comments were recorded. A questionnaire was distributed to every household in the Parish and the results carefully collated.

**Guidelines relate to large and small, old and new**

**Above: 'Hazel Combe' under construction**

**Below: rear extension to 'Finders Keep' - one of Overton's oldest homes**



Following on from the workshops and questionnaire, five groups worked on the key areas of the Design Statement (Landscape and Environment, Settlement and Transport Patterns, Open Spaces and Buildings) to produce a draft document. After further consultation, including a public display and discussions with the Parish Council, the VDS was submitted to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council for adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

## How will the Village Design Statement influence development?

The VDS is not intended to directly influence whether development should take place in the village - that is the role of the Local Plan - but it will play a vital part in endeavouring to ensure that any future development which does take place is appropriate to Overton and reflects the wishes of the local community.

## It will be of value to:

- **Local residents in providing guidance to ensure that alterations and extensions are in sympathy with the character of the village**
- **The Parish Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in considering planning applications**
- **Developers, architects and designers by ensuring that their proposals are in keeping with village expectations**
- **Farmers and landowners in maintaining and improving the landscape, rights of way, and wildlife habitats**

**We hope it will also provide an attractive and informative record of the village as it enters the 21st century!**

*(Overton's)... "community spirit and groups - eg the public consultation behind this questionnaire"*

# THE VILLAGE CONTEXT



**The signpost at the junction of Winchester Street and the High Street places Overton neatly in its geographical context**

## Location and Population

The village of Overton is built along the valley of the River Test, a few miles from its source, and is surrounded by rising land so that a traveller, from any direction, comes upon the village with little forewarning. Most of the village is spread to the south of the river with the church on a slight rise to the north. It has a population recently risen to 3,800 and is still growing.

The county town of Winchester lies 13 miles to the south, and the intersection of Winchester Street and the B3400 Basingstoke to Andover road forms the historic focus of the village.

The civil parish includes the smaller settlements of Northington, Southington, Quidhampton, Polhampton, Ashe and South Litchfield together with a number of isolated cottages and farms.

**Overton High Street about 100 years ago**



**The same view of the distinctive cream or whitewashed houses in 2001, with Overton Hill visible in the background**



**Overton Sheep Fair in 1905. Many older villagers clearly recall the annual July sheep fair**

*Reproduced by permission of the Rural History Centre, University of Reading*



**Winchester Street during The Millennium 'Sheep Fair' in 2000**



*"Its own strong character.. the families who have lived here for generations have helped to form its character."*

## Historic Development

The first mention of Overton is in 909 when King Edward the Elder granted the estate of 'Uferanton', to Frithestan Bishop of Winchester. The manor was held by the Bishop at the time of the Domesday survey and remained in the Church's possession until the 19th century. In Saxon times the village was probably concentrated to the north of the river, where the church and Court Farm still stand. Once the Bishop's palace, where his Steward held manorial courts, the house was rebuilt around 1500 for the yeoman farmer who took on the tenancy.

In the 13th century Bishop de Lucy founded two 'new towns', Alresford and Overton, at about the same time. Both were sited on a river, and both were laid out on a grid system with a wide market street and back lanes which remain to this day. The broad expanse of Winchester St. still echoes its original function as a sheep market, first set up by charter in 1246. A letter written after the Black Death (1348-9) tells us that the outlying settlements from Ashe to Northington "were depopulated... and reduced to penury". The survivors probably moved to the newer areas of Overton on the south side of the river.

## Village and Community Aspects

Overton is fortunate in possessing a range of community facilities which are the envy of many other villages.

There is a thriving primary school and playgroup, doctors' surgery, nursing

home, pharmacy, library, post office and veterinary practice as well as a good selection of shops.

The village has two churches, a wide range of clubs and societies, including the Overton Memorial Institute, and four pubs.

Overton Recreation Centre, set up in 1966 as a community based initiative, aims to

provide for the widest possible range of organised sport and recreation in the village and maintains Town Meadow, Bridge Street sports ground, Berrydown sports ground and Overton Primary School playing field.

There is a well used community centre and two public halls with plans to develop a new village hall on Overton Hill.



**Overton Community Centre, formerly the Village School and now used by the library, playgroup, lunch club and the Parish Council amongst others**



**Overton Dramatic Society's Millennium celebration**



**Overton Primary School children who completed the junior Village Design Statement questionnaire**

*(Important to maintain)... "local shopping facilities and local organisations, particularly ORC."*

# THE VILLAGE CONTEXT

## Overton Paper Mill

For over 200 years Portals Paper Mill, now owned by De La Rue plc, has had a major impact on many aspects of village life which have given the village its distinctive character as an industrial community.

Overton Mill has for many years produced banknote paper used by the Bank of England and other banknote printers around the world.

The Mill relies on water drawn from aquifers deep below the catchment of the River Test and returns the water, after use, treatment and cleansing, into the river at Quidhampton.

Overton Mill has provided employment for generations of local people and this has encouraged many families to remain within the area providing a remarkable degree of social cohesion and community spirit.

Although security paper making is now a highly mechanised industry, the Mill remains the major employer of local people in the area.

In addition to providing employment, the Mill contributed to the housing stock of the village and also played its part in community matters, for example by making land available for the sports ground opposite the church and by supporting local clubs and societies as well as Overton Primary School.



## Affordable Housing

Overton's location within the affluent south east of England, with its diverse employment prospects, good road and rail links and rural surroundings, has led to a rapid increase in the price of houses.

Many houses which have been built, particularly on smaller developments, have been large 4 or 5 bedroom properties with fewer 1 or 2 bedroom 'starter homes' than many residents would prefer.

The lack of dwellings to purchase or rent at affordable prices has led to some local people moving away from the area to find housing elsewhere, even if they work in the village.

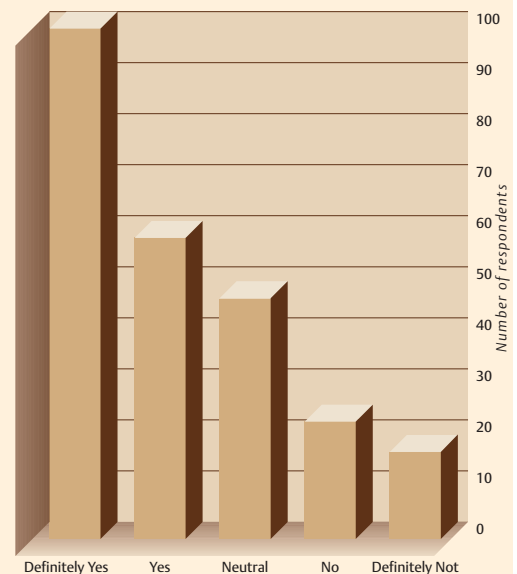
Unless affordable housing is provided, the community spirit for which the village is noted will be eroded.

**Phases 1 and 2 of the Foxdown Estate (above) developed in 1994**

**Questionnaire results (below) showing the desirability of low cost 'affordable' housing**

**Q10 Should there be a greater provision of 'affordable' housing above the current national recommendation of 20%?**

Definitely Yes	Yes	Neutral	No	Definitely Not
100	59	47	23	17



*(Cherished views)... "to the Mill and the bungalow where I lived all my young days."*

## Community Guidelines

- New developments should provide a range of dwellings to encourage social cohesion and meet the needs of as wide a range of people as possible
- Where local need can be shown, developers should be asked to provide a higher percentage of 'affordable housing' than the Local Plan currently requires. This should include both small and medium sized dwellings and should apply to medium sized as well as larger developments, to accord with Basingstoke and Deane's 'Designing for Accessibility' guide and national regulations
- The housing needs of an increasingly elderly population also need to be addressed
- The provision of social, educational and recreational facilities in the village, such as the proposed new village hall, should be supported and developed. These should include facilities for young people, the elderly and disabled
- The role of Overton Recreation Centre in providing recreational facilities for the whole community should be encouraged and developed
- Suitable time intervals should be allocated between the completion of one development and the start of another to allow landscaping to mature and for the integration of new parishioners into the community.



*A wide variety of shops in Winchester Street...*



*...and the High Street*



*Light industrial units at Overton Station*

## Business and Employment

One of Overton's distinctive characteristics is that it has always seen itself as a 'working' village providing a range of employment and business opportunities.

In the past this was centred around agriculture and related industries such as milling, the agricultural supply trade, and later by Overton Mill and the Air Pak factory.

Very few inhabitants are now involved in agriculture and their numbers continue to fall.

As agriculture has declined, however, a wide range of other industries has

developed to take its place.

For its size, Overton has a surprisingly large business community. There is a thriving and diverse selection of over 100 shops and small businesses, some of which are very specialised.

Most day to day shopping requirements may be purchased locally without trips to large supermarkets.

Overton is, of course, also renowned as a centre of security paper printing with De La Rue currently employing more than 700 staff.

These businesses enhance both the prosperity and social fabric of the village and in return they require the support of the village community as a whole.

## Business Guidelines

- Proposals which lead to local employment opportunities should be treated sympathetically provided they do not lead to unacceptable noise, traffic flows or light pollution. New industrial buildings should be sited carefully and screened. The conversion of former farm buildings for light industrial, farm shop or office use should be encouraged where appropriate
- A mixture of housing and small scale retail, commercial and office premises should be encouraged
- The loss of viable commercial properties through conversion to residential use should be resisted
- Local shopping should be encouraged through the provision of public transport within the village, more parking facilities close to the village centre and by maintaining the character and appearance of the village and its surroundings
- Many of the more specialist shops and other businesses rely on attracting customers from outside the village. A lack of sufficient parking is causing problems for these businesses and their requirements should be considered in future transport and parking planning.

*"Maintain high levels of employment opportunities and maintain a high level of recreation facilities."*

# LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENT



The parish of Overton lies within the north Hampshire Downs with the River Test running through it.

The northern part of the parish is included in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the river valley forms part of the Test Valley Environmentally Sensitive Area.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Draft Countryside Design Summary classifies Overton parish as being composed of three 'Countryside Character Areas' shown on page 10.

The whole of the River Test is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest as are the Micheldever Spoil Heaps in the south of the parish.

Many areas of ancient woodland, unimproved grassland and wetlands have been recently designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.

The village of Overton itself nestles in the river valley, surrounded by high ground to the north, east and south and by gentler slopes to the west where the Test flows seawards.

The encircling ridges, often capped by hedges and trees, form a natural boundary to the village and provide a vantage point for magnificent views over Overton and the surrounding countryside.

*"We lived in cities for ten years. I want my children to see the seasons changing."*



**Above: looking north from Sapley showing how Overton is hidden in its valley**

## Outer Landscape

Beyond the river valley most of the parish consists of an elevated chalk landscape of predominantly arable land with areas of pasture and woodland. It has a sense of openness, space and tranquillity.

To the north the land rises gradually from the valley, with the London to Salisbury railway line forming a prominent feature. Fields are large, open and regular with low hedgerows and only a few areas of woodland.

Southwards the land rises more steeply with some of the newer developments in Overton already starting to invade the natural ridge line. This area provides extensive views across much of the chalk uplands of north Hampshire. Despite these wide views, the village of Overton lies largely concealed within its valley. Field sizes are more varied than to the north with more trees, hedges and woodland.

Much ancient woodland survives, particularly

in the southern part of the parish. Although parts of this are being sensitively managed, some is in a neglected state.

There are many fine old hedgerows with some good examples of sympathetic management and recent hedgelaying in the traditional style.

Both the landscape value and wildlife of this area have been much influenced by agriculture.

Recent changes have seen a swing away from mixed farming to intensive arable cropping based on the production of winter cereals. Farms have become larger and highly mechanised. Traditional farm buildings have become redundant and hedges removed to accommodate larger machinery.

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy may lead to the introduction of new forms of land use such as willow crops for biofuels, leisure facilities and increased emphasis on managing the environment.

**Left: aerial view of Overton looking east showing its location mainly on the south side of the River Test**

*“The upper reaches of the Test Valley is a beautiful part of Hampshire and should be protected for future generations.”*

# LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENT

(Draft Countryside Character Areas shown in brackets)

## Northern area

### (North Wessex Downs)

- large arable fields or pastures enclosed by low trimmed hedgerows – some scattered mature trees (oak, hawthorn)
- long rural views – a few, isolated, farmsteads
- sense of openness, space and tranquility
- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

## Valley of the River Test

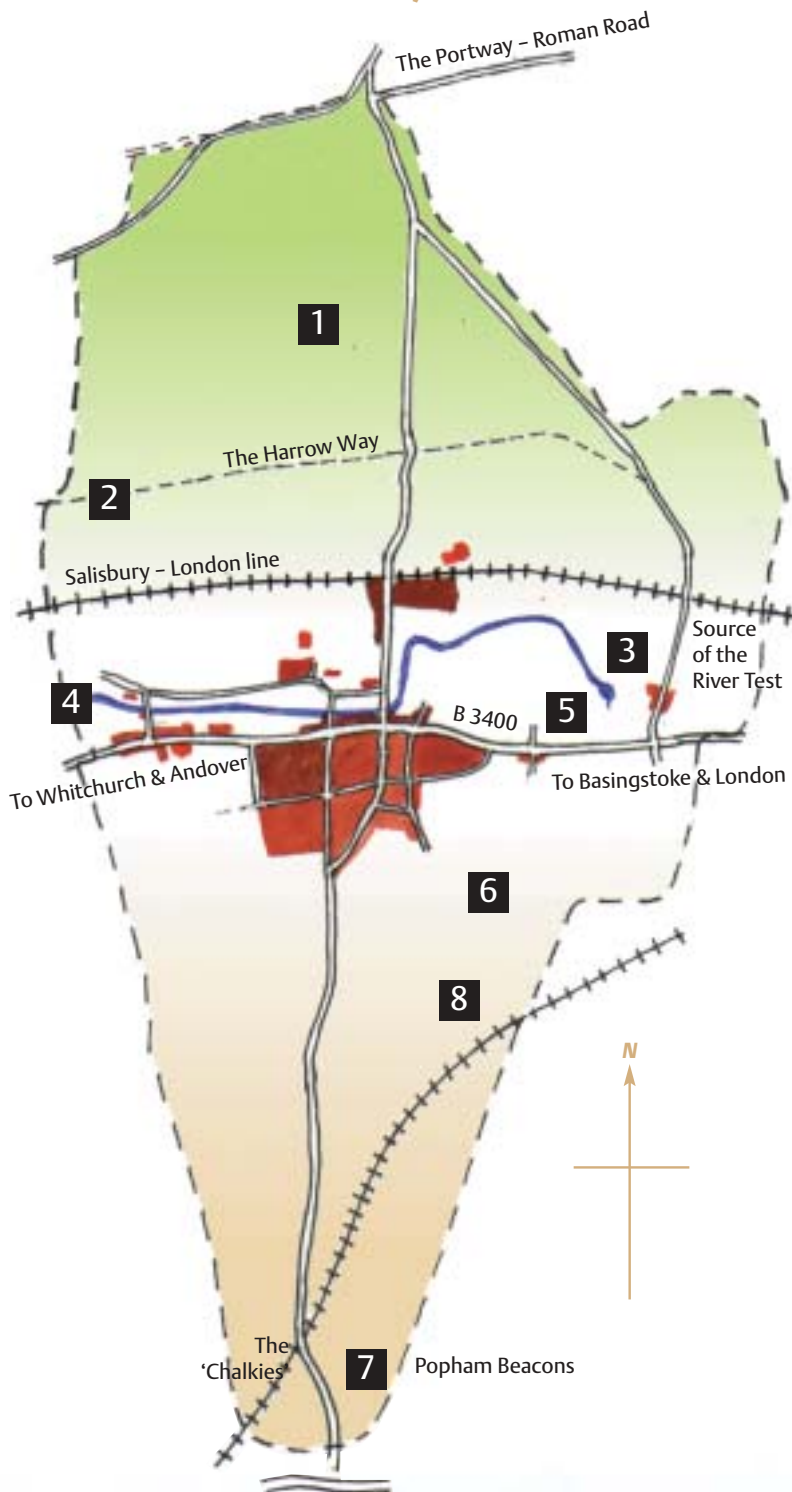
### (Test and Bourne Valley)

- River Test Site of Special Scientific Interest
- former water meadows at Ashe are now parkland scenery
- abandoned watercress beds at Polhampton
- settling beds to cleanse water used at Portals Mill are part of the Flashetts area and surrounded by willow carr
- Overton contained by the river valley
- large landscaped private gardens especially around Southington

## Southern area

### (Chalk and Clay Downs)

- smaller arable fields with some livestock farming
- steeper rise from valley floor onto chalk and clay ridge
- more hazel and oak coppices and spinneys – some ancient and some neglected
- two organic farmsteads
- sense of smaller scale tree enclosed landscape with some stunning panoramic views to the north and west
- Micheldever Spoil Heaps (SSSI) known as 'The Chalkies'.



*“Attractive chalk country traversed by an important chalk stream all within three quarters of a mile of the village centre.”*



1

**1: looking south from the large arable fields at Willesley Warren Farm**



3

**3: the source of the River Test at Ashe Manor Farm**



5

**5: hazel coppicing at Berrydown**



7

**7: the Bronze Age barrows at Popham Beacons**

**8: two organic farmsteads - Big Northdown Farm and Northdown Orchard (foreground)**



2

**2: Harrow Way, a prehistoric trackway**



4

**4: the River Test at Southington where it leaves Overton Parish**



6

**6: the smaller field pattern to the south creates a more intimate, wooded landscape**



8

*“There is nothing more beautiful than nature, birds, the river, trees, which bring peacefulness and quality to everyone’s lives.”*

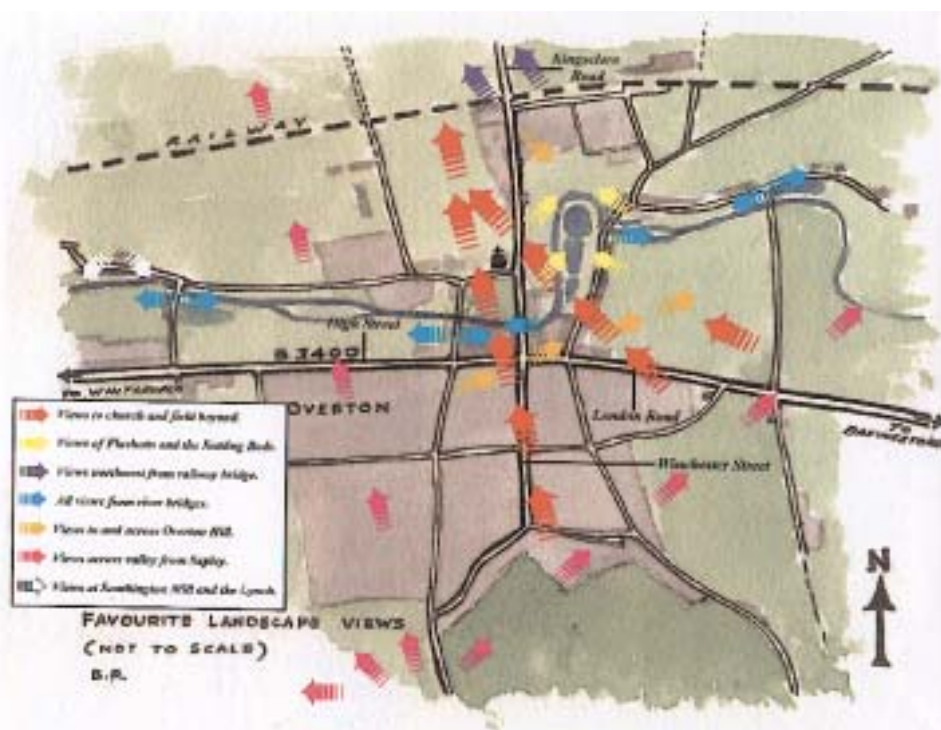
# LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENT

## The Inner Landscape - within the Village and adjacent countryside

From within the village the views outwards are framed by the valley ridges with vistas of fields, hedgerows and both coniferous and deciduous woodland.

Particularly significant views include:

- Those of St Mary's Church, Court Farm and the Old Rectory. The church stands against rising ground with its spire as the focal point of many views within and across the village
- The River Test, particularly at the road bridges at Southington, Bridge Street, Town Mill, Quidhampton and Straight Lane as well as the footbridge at Polhampton
- Winchester Street with its broad, tree lined vista leading the eye down to the historic hub of the village and beyond to the church in its rural setting
- The green fields and open spaces including private gardens within the village, often framed by mature trees and hedges.



**Top right: the view upstream from Bridge Street**

**Left: Great North Field which provides the backdrop to St Mary's Church**



**Middle right: the River Test looking upstream from Southington bridge showing natural banks and some 'green corridor' vegetation left intact**

**Bottom left: St Mary's Church and Great North Field from Winchester Street**

**Bottom right: view across Overton Hill to the church and beyond**

*"Lovely views and a good network of footpaths, a feeling of being in the countryside."*



## Landscape and Environmental Guidelines

The source of the River Test lies within the area and the river has a key role in determining the hydrology, landscape and environmental character of the area.

- **Developers must recognise this role and seek to maintain or enhance it**
- **New developments should respect the river valley setting of the village and its significant buildings and natural features. Further building encroachment on the skyline should be avoided**
- **Grass verges should be maintained and encouraged**
- **Developers must aim to maintain or improve the landscape characteristics of the village and in particular respect the landscape setting of buildings within the conservation area such as St Mary's Church**
- **Views into or out of the village such as views of St Mary's Church from Overton Hill, Kingsclere Road and Winchester Street must be safeguarded. Views from public rights of ways throughout the parish should be maintained in accordance with current local planning authority guidelines**
- **Development outside the village such as agricultural buildings or telecommunication masts should be carefully sited, appropriately screened and of a sympathetic height and mass which avoids undue impact on the landscape**
- **New developments within the area should be sensitively landscaped and screened using indigenous species appropriate to the location and ideally of local provenance. The use of fast growing, coniferous species such as Leylandii should be strongly discouraged**
- **Sustainable farm diversification schemes should be supported particularly where they will provide small scale employment and maintain traditional farm buildings**
- **Diversification schemes which would lead to excessive traffic movement, light or noise pollution should be resisted so that the tranquil rural nature of the area can be maintained**
- **Developments, for example golf courses, which could diminish the distinctive rural character of the area through increased traffic, inappropriate buildings or field divisions should be restricted in area and location**
- **The impact on landscape and wildlife of novel land uses such as biofuels should be carefully monitored and if necessary controlled**
- **Landowners should be encouraged to maintain and enhance the biodiversity and landscape character of the parish by participation in initiatives such as the Countryside Stewardship, Organic Farming, Woodland Grant, Farm Woodland Premium and Environmentally Sensitive Area Schemes**
- **Farmers should be further encouraged to seek advice on improving the wildlife value of their land through the production of Farm Biodiversity Action Plans produced with the assistance of local conservation organisations such as the Hampshire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group or the Hampshire Wildlife Trust.**



*A new woodland area on Polhampton Farm*

*“... loss of the countryside is too low a priority.”*

# SETTLEMENT AND TRANSPORT PATTERNS

The settlement pattern of Overton is still influenced by its planned development in the 13th century on a distinctive grid layout. This early pattern of three north-south streets and two east-west streets and the associated lanes still forms the basis of the older part of the village.

Until the 19th century development was focused on the two principal roads, namely the High Street and Winchester Street. Later development saw the filling in of the old burgage plots with Victorian terraces, while successive 20th century housing has extended out of the valley to the surrounding higher ground. Further development for housing continues with significant building at Foxdown, Overton Hill, Waltham Road and the upper part of Winchester Street while infilling of large gardens and other open spaces is common.

Before the coming of the railways Overton was an important staging post on the stagecoach route from London to Exeter.

The main railway line from London to Salisbury lies a short distance to the north of the village and has been of great significance in the development of the village as it influenced the siting of the nearby paper mill in the 1920s.

The main traffic route is the B3400 road linking Overton to Basingstoke in the east and Whitchurch in the west. Traffic using this route includes both commuters and heavy goods vehicles travelling to Overton Paper Mill. All of this traffic has to pass through residential areas. The differing transport and access requirements resulting from the mix of residential and commercial properties in the village centre sometimes create traffic flow problems at peak times.

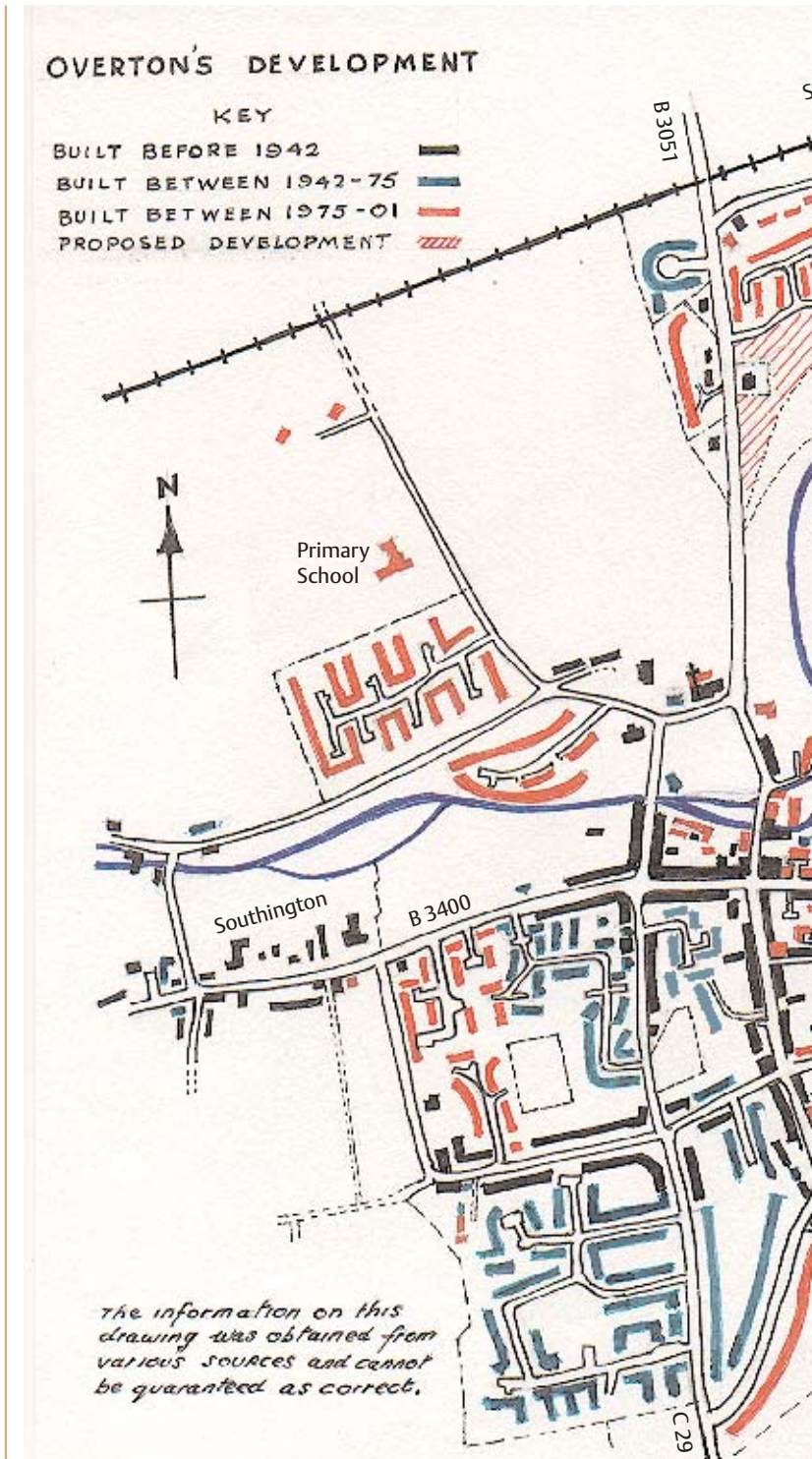
Other significant routes include the B3051 to Kingsclere and Newbury and the heavily used lane (C29) linking Overton to the A303 and M3 near Micheldever.

Within Overton the street pattern is such that cross village journeys avoiding the main junction are difficult.

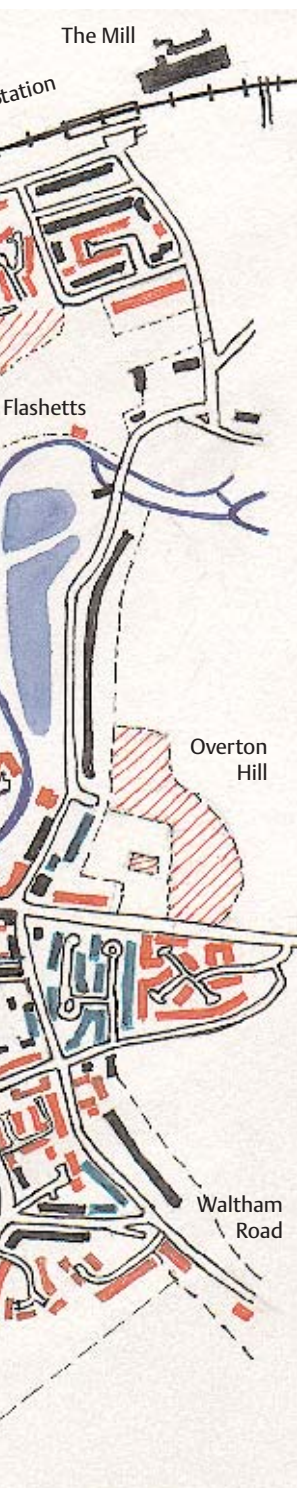
Streets in newer areas tend to be of the cul-de-sac type, providing few opportunities for alternative routes avoiding the centre.

New development, and increasing car ownership, are starting to lead to severe congestion in some of the narrower village streets such as Waltham Road.

Lack of parking is an increasing problem in Overton, particularly in the village centre and at the railway station. This will eventually have an impact on the viability of local businesses.



*“...its size – overdevelopment will kill Overton.”*



**Three typical narrow streets in the Conservation Area, all fronting directly onto the road**

**Above: Red Lion Lane**

**Left: Bridge Street**

**Right: Battens Avenue. The road separates the dwellings from their front plots**



***“Overton should remain a village – not a town or a Hatch Warren.”***

# SETTLEMENT AND TRANSPORT PATTERNS



**Above: parking congestion in Winchester Street and below, at Overton Station**  
**Below: Overton Station on the northern edge of the village**



## Settlement and Transport Guidelines

- New development should be limited to sites where building can be integrated into the existing valley settlement pattern
- New development should be linked into the community through the provision of footpaths and cycle ways to destinations such as the school, village centre and railway station
- Two way routes are preferred to cul-de-sacs in new developments, provided these are linked to traffic calming measures
- Infilling of gardens should be avoided where this would lead to a loss of the distinctive settlement pattern of the village
- The impact of development on the use of existing roadways and footways should be considered when planning applications are made
- In association with new development and highway works, opportunities should be taken to secure a more accessible environment for all, whilst respecting the character of the area
- Highway works associated with new developments and maintenance to roads and footways should respect the character of the area and should avoid removing locally distinctive features from rural lanes such as grass verges, hedges or traditional walls
- Parking facilities for the village centre and at the railway station should be improved
- Transport operators and local authorities should be encouraged to continue and expand public transport facilities to reduce reliance on the car.

*“Houses for youngsters  
(too many had to move away).”*

# OPEN SPACES WITHIN THE VILLAGE

The variety of open spaces, both public and private, within Overton greatly enhances the village's attractiveness and contributes to its distinctive character.

Overton is fortunate in possessing an excellent range of sports fields for golf, tennis, cricket and football managed, on behalf of its members, by Overton Recreation Centre at Town Meadow, Bridge Street and Berrydown.

The Parish Council maintains public open spaces at the Edward Kersley and Sapley Lane playing fields. A number of other sites also provide children's play equipment.

The grounds of Overton Primary School have been developed to enhance their wildlife interest and also provide outstanding views over the village.

A proposed neighbourhood park at Overton Hill will provide a further area for quiet informal enjoyment and a garden of rest is to be planted adjacent to the burial ground.

Open spaces, such as Town Meadow and the fields to the west of Dellands Lane, are essential to preserve the separate identity of Southington, while the hamlets of Quidhampton, Polhampton and Ashe are maintained as separate settlements by their setting within a distinctive, enclosed, river valley landscape.

Other important open spaces include the wide grass verges in Winchester Street and the Community Centre forecourt. The open area of rising land to the north of St Mary's is greatly valued in providing a rural backdrop to the village and giving prominence to the church itself. (See pictures on Page 12)



**Above: an aerial view of Overton from the north, showing most of the important open spaces within the village**



**Left: Edward Kersley Playing Field with St Mary's Church in its rural setting in the background**



**Left: the Overton Mummers performing on Boxing Day in the Community Centre forecourt**

*(Cherished views)... "all of them – like my father said, Overton is a pretty place."*

# OPEN SPACES WITHIN THE VILLAGE

## The River Test

The River Test and the open spaces associated with it provide a common theme running through the village and its neighbouring hamlets. These areas include the old watercress beds at Polhampton, the typical water meadows and associated willow carr of the flood plain at Flashetts and the large landscaped private gardens, particularly those around Southington. With sensitive management, all of these can contribute positively to the character of the area and be appreciated by the whole community.

These areas also provide a range of habitats for wildlife, some of which, such as dormice and water voles, are increasingly threatened by inappropriate clearing and urban style landscaping and garden maintenance.

Although the clear waters of the river and its associated open spaces are greatly valued by both young and old, access is very restricted. With the exception of views from the bridges, public access to walk beside the Test is limited to small areas at Flashetts and along the Lynch. Increased access to the river is generally seen as very desirable.

Recent high rainfall has highlighted the need for careful drainage and river management, a factor which has declined in recent years.



**Flashetts: this special place is the only area of public access along the banks of the river in the village**

**The wildlife-rich willow carr beside the public footpath through Flashetts**



**Above: the River Test in the centre of Overton looking towards Town Mill**

**Left: the water meadows at Polhampton Farm**

**Bridge Street: another route over rather than along the river**

*"The River Test from any of the bridges over it, all the bridges give you a lovely view."*

**The playing field at Overton Primary School**



**The wide tree lined grass verges in Winchester Street lend a feeling of spaciousness**



**The village allotments provide an additional leisure resource and an opportunity for putting sustainable living into practice!**



**The Recreation Ground at Bridge Street with the church as its backdrop**

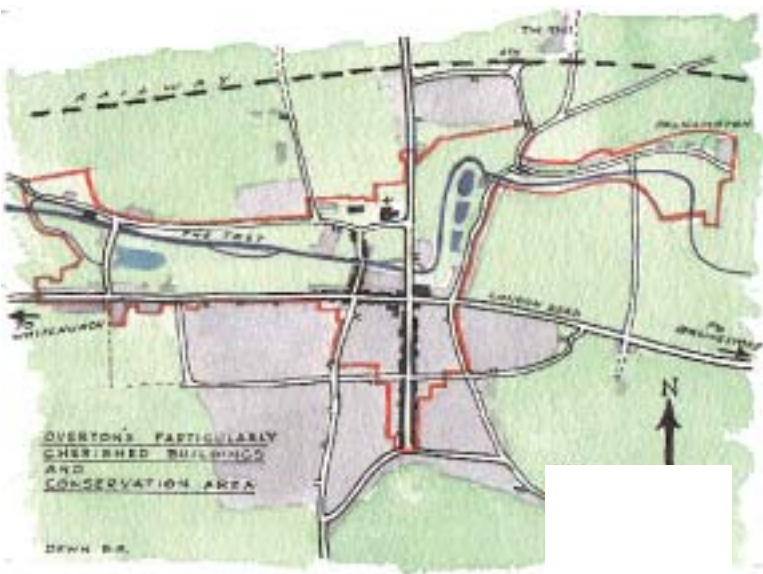


## Open Spaces Guidelines

- The open spaces managed by Overton Recreation Centre should be maintained for their benefit to the community and for their importance in preserving open spaces within the village
- The need for further recreational areas should be monitored in view of any increase in population. The necessity of children's informal play areas must be considered in any housing development proposals
- Landowners should be encouraged to provide opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the River Test. Any proposals which restrict access or limit views of the river must be resisted
- The natural landscape and open spaces adjoining the River Test are greatly valued by the local community and should be maintained, or enhanced, for their scenic and wildlife value
- Landowners should be required to consider the impact on existing and potential wildlife of any changes to existing open spaces. E.g. preserve river bank habitats by avoiding hard revetments and conserving the remaining 'green corridor/buffer strip' along the river
- The open spaces separating the settlements of Southington, Quidhampton, Polhampton and Ashe from the village of Overton and from each other should be preserved
- Winchester Street, Town Meadow, Bridge Street Sports Ground and the open spaces around Court Farm, The Old Rectory and Great North Field are particularly cherished for their scenic quality and any development must respect this.

***"Town Meadow Golf Course – what about access to the river from here?"***

# THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



**Map showing Overton's cherished buildings and the boundary of the Conservation Area**

Overton contains a wide range of building styles reflecting its development over the centuries.

The Conservation Area covers the older village core and extends along the valley to the adjacent hamlets of Southington, Quidhampton and Polhampton. Within it lie most of Overton's 26 listed buildings including several of particular landscape and historic interest such as St. Mary's Church, Court Farm with its medieval barn, the Old Rectory, Southington Mill and Polhampton Farmhouse. A group of older buildings around the central cross-roads, including the White Hart (an old coaching inn), and the Community Centre (the former village school), form a distinctive focal point in the Conservation Area. The White Hart, Greyhound and Red Lion pubs retain many of their original outbuildings dating back to the coaching era.



**The design of the 15th century great barn at Court Farm is mirrored in the new Church Rooms behind St Mary's Church**

Stretching outwards from that core, but still within the Conservation Area, Winchester Street, the High Street and Bridge Street also contain many smaller but equally distinctive properties whose Georgian or Victorian exteriors often conceal a much earlier origin while others have remained largely unchanged since the 14th and 15th centuries. The ground floors of some of these properties now function as shops. This area includes many late Victorian and early 20th century houses developed by the infilling of the medieval 'burgage' plots. There have, however, been some inappropriate designs, such as the HSBC bank, which must not be repeated if the village centre is to retain its character. Although lacking a unity of design or style, the total composition conveys a vibrant sense of place at the heart of the community.



**The White Hart and surrounding buildings form a distinctive focal point in the heart of the Conservation Area**

Outside the Conservation Area housing estates have been

*"Sense of community – you meet so many friends on a day-to-day basis (ie not too big or impersonal)."*

erected, reflecting the building styles of specific periods, particularly since the Second World War. Properties are generally of one or two storeys, terraced or semi-detached and include former council housing. The older developments such as The Green and along Charledown Road are often well proportioned and situated in good sized gardens with mature trees and trimmed hedge boundaries.

Within the last decade, the appeal of Overton to the commuter has led to the development of larger 'executive style' houses and a comparative shortage of smaller 'affordable' houses. The VDS questionnaire results strongly suggest that terraced and semi-detached homes are more desirable for the future development of housing than detached houses and bungalows.

Some infilling has occurred with larger gardens being developed for new dwellings. In some cases this has led to overdevelopment.

The northern skyline from within the village is dominated by Overton Paper Mill, adjacent to the railway station and a constant reminder of Overton's industrial heritage. Smaller business units have been developed nearby.

The outlying hamlets of Ashe, Quidhampton, Polhampton, Southington and South Litchfield have seen comparatively little development and consist of a pleasant mixture of older farmhouses and former estate workers' cottages, along with larger properties such as Litchfield Grange with its historic barn, Ashe House and Grade 1 Listed Berrydown Court designed by Edwin Lutyens in 1897.



**Above: the flint walled church, left, and a pair of typical Victorian cottages, right, at Ashe**



**Papermakers: gabled porches and dormer windows fit well in the village context**



**Turnpike cottages - a recent small development that blends in well**

*"...extensions should be made to look as if they were part of the original design wherever possible."*

# THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## Building Details

**Roofs.** Within the Conservation Area roofing materials are predominantly local clay 'multi red/orange' plain tiles and slates with a few old thatched roofs. Roof pitches are normally over 40 degrees with varied, often staggered, ridge lines. In more recent developments, roofing materials include modern slates, brown clay tiles, pantiles and concrete tiles with roof pitches under 40 degrees. Generally there is a consistency of line and height in adjacent buildings but with a degree of variation which enhances the composition and harmony of the streets. Half-hipped 'flying' gables are a distinctive feature of some properties.

**House walls.** In the older areas many of the buildings retain evidence of their original timber framing on side and rear elevations while front elevations are generally clad in the local 'multi red/orange' brick, some with decorative brick coursing. Victorian buildings, such as both former village schools, demonstrate brick and natural flint construction. Boundary walls of brick and flint or weathered brick are a pleasing feature of many properties and have been successfully included in modern developments and extensions.

A particular feature of the High Street and Winchester Street is the presence of many rendered, cream or whitewashed buildings, some with inscribed coursing, which contribute to the distinctiveness of this area.

Modern buildings are constructed from brick often with wooden or plastic fascia boarding.

**Windows, doors, porches and garages.** In the Conservation Area traditional sash or casement windows, doors and door cases have generally been retained, but in newer developments most windows are now plastic framed double glazed units with matching doors. Dormer windows and gabled porches are a feature of many properties.

Few of the older properties have their own garages, which leads to problems with car parking particularly in Winchester Street, High Street, Bridge Street, Red Lion Lane, Battens Avenue and Waltham Road. In the newer developments most houses either have an integral garage or one in a communal garage block. Multiple car ownership, and the use of garages for storage, however, means that parking is often still a problem in these areas.

***Tithe Cottage, recently rebuilt using traditional materials including thatch, timber framing and brick-and-flint. Note the half-hipped flying gable***



***Staggered ridge lines and variations of pitch on adjoining properties are an important feature***



***An harmonious conversion and extension of two farm cottages to a single dwelling at Polhampton***



***The new surgery is a fine example of sympathetic modern design, maximising solar gain and the use of traditional materials***



***Overton's housing stock includes 1950s council houses, many of which are enhanced by carefully maintained hedge boundaries of hawthorn and privet***



***"Building on the hills will mean we lose the natural countryside views."***

## Built Environment Guidelines

- New developments should aim to complement the predominant scale and style of nearby properties with care being taken, particularly in the Conservation Area, to use traditional colours, materials and techniques
- Within the Conservation Area, hand made multi red/orange bricks should be used wherever possible. Brick constructions should utilise a range of brick laying styles to provide visual interest
- New buildings and extensions should harmonise with their surroundings. Extensions must conform to the principles laid out in Basingstoke and Deane Development Control Design Guide 2 'Extending Your Home'
- Within new developments designers should utilise traditional building elements from elsewhere in the village but should avoid a cocktail of features. 'Mock' styles such as 'Elizabethan' timber framing on modern houses or the use of artificial flint panels must be avoided
- Where modern buildings are rendered, the rendering should be coursed to reflect local styles
- The use of more modern design features and materials may be encouraged away from traditional buildings and if in sympathy with the local environment
- Ridge lines and roofing materials should match the majority of surrounding properties. Flat roofs should be avoided
- Within the Conservation Area every effort should be made to conserve or renew existing wooden doors and windows
- If replacement windows are

desired, consideration should be given to using the traditional slim section sash or casement styles

- In new developments with porches and dormers, roofs should be consistent in style with the main roof design
- A better mix of housing including smaller, lower cost dwellings with 1-3 bedrooms is strongly preferred to dwellings with over 4 bedrooms. These should be terraced, multi unit, or semi detached and of 2 storeys or less. Buildings over 2 storeys should only be considered where there will be no adverse effect on the skyline, surrounding ridge patterns or significant views
- The conversion of garages to residential accommodation should be discouraged unless adequate off-road parking to current standards is available. The conversion of front gardens to off-road car parking should not be allowed if it would detract from the distinctive character of the area, e.g. Winchester Street
- Development should be avoided where impact on the skyline would detract from views within the village. New developments should not dominate the landscape and should be designed to maintain or enhance existing views e.g. From Overton Hill looking across to St Mary's Church
- New developments and associated landscaping should harmonise with the site maximising any benefits from its topography in terms of aspect, slope, and views
- New housing must be encouraged to meet high standards in terms of resource conservation with particular attention paid to maximising solar gain and recycling rainwater and 'grey' water. The use of recycled or reclaimed building materials should also be encouraged.

*Traditional style side opening casement windows in UVPC with the half-elliptical brickwork over the top which is typical of Test Valley villages, as is the use of occasional blue bricks*



*Right: some houses have tile-hung gable ends*



*Below: new outbuilding using reclaimed timbers, well matched slates and bricks, appropriate rural fencing, with a sapling hawthorn hedge*



*A new traditionally built brick-and-flint wall with half-round capping in Red Lion Lane*



*“disabled access” ... “water recycling”  
... “avoid ‘anywhere’ styles”*

# OTHER FEATURES

Some features are common to a number of sections of the VDS. For example, footpaths are mentioned in passing in Settlement and Transport Patterns but also require a section on their own.

## Walls and Plot Boundaries

Some fine examples of chalk cob and both old and new brick and flint walls exist within the village. These greatly enhance the character and distinctiveness of the area.

Both within and outside the village, hedges of native species such as hawthorn, guelder rose, beech and hazel, provide a soft, natural edge to boundaries and encourage a wide variety of wildlife.

Residents, landowners and developers should be encouraged to:

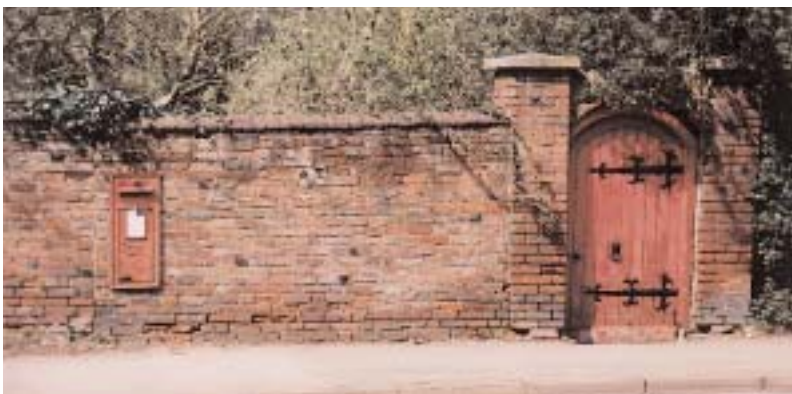
- **Retain, repair or improve boundary walls using traditional materials and styles**
- **Match new boundaries to existing ones in the neighbourhood, avoiding the use of timber fencing panels where they may be seen from public highways and other rights of way**
- **Maintain and enhance existing native hedges and use indigenous species for establishing new hedges. The use of quick growing conifers such as *Leylandii* should be avoided.**

## Footpaths and bridleways

Overton Parish benefits from an extensive and well used network of public rights of way. These include the ancient Harrow Way track which dates to the Iron Age or earlier and, forming the northerly boundary, the Portway – a Roman road from Silchester to Old Sarum.

The local community values this network of rights of way greatly and there is an active Ramblers' Association.

- **Public rights of way must be maintained, protected and made more accessible to all where possible**
- **Landowners should be encouraged to provide new rights of way, particularly where these would link up existing routes**
- **Applications to divert or close public rights of way must be resisted unless overwhelming need can be shown and an acceptable alternative route provided.**



*Above: The garden wall of Southington House is a fine example of the use of soft red brick*



*Right: new hedge laying at Berrydown*



*Above: Overton's many mature trees maintain the rural character of the village looking west from Overton Hill*



*Left: the footpath from Court Drove to Kingsclere Road*

## Trees and Field Boundaries

Trees as individual specimens, groups or woodland, form a key part of Overton's distinctive character and wildlife heritage.

A wide range of tree species are found, ranging from the ubiquitous beech to the much rarer black poplar. A number of ancient trees are found in the area, particularly in Polhampton and Quidhampton.

- **The process of recording significant trees within the parish should continue and landowners assisted in managing them appropriately**
- **The removal of hedgerows must be resisted and new planting encouraged**
- **Plans for new developments should include details of new tree planting using appropriate native species of a significant size, to give effective screening as soon as possible. Mature trees should be retained whenever possible.**

*(Cherished views)... "The tree lines down the hill to Overton."*

## Lanes within Overton

Lanes such as Silk Mill Lane, Dellands Lane, Waltham Road and Two Gate Lane form part of Overton's distinctive rural character. They provide quiet back routes around the village with their associated hedgerows and banks contributing to the landscape and wildlife value and forming leafy green tunnels.

Increasing traffic is now using these lanes to avoid congestion in the village centre and in some cases is starting to damage banks and roadside vegetation. Hedge and tree management is sometimes inefficient, resulting in torn, rather than cut, branches.

- **Traffic flows should be managed to minimise overuse of the back lanes**
- **Roadside hedge trimming must be of a high standard**
- **Inappropriate use of street furniture and signs should be avoided.**

*Silk Mill Lane: the quiet leafy-green back routes provide a haven for both wildlife and people*



*Overton's wild flowers: preserved by carefully timed mowing to allow seed setting*

## Street Furniture and Place names

Seats, bus shelters and street lighting are appropriate for a village of Overton's size although the street lighting (largely installed 30 years ago) is not wholly in keeping with the Conservation Area.

Road signs have become more intrusive in the interests of road safety and to ensure that heavy goods vehicles avoid missing the only recommended route to the Mill.

- **New signs should be restricted to the minimum appropriate to maintaining road safety and should not be unduly intrusive**
- **The Parish Council should continue replacing street lights within the Conservation Area with appropriate designs**
- **All new road and development names should echo geographic, historic or personal links to the area.**



*Above: public footpath sign to Flashetts*



## Lighting

Security lighting on domestic, sports and commercial premises can be excessive. Glare from intrusive lighting may lead to light pollution and detracts from the village's rural character.

- **Design details for external lighting should be shown on planning applications and should be restricted to the minimum necessary to ensure safety and security**
- **All opportunities should be taken to replace old street lighting, or install new lighting, with designs which minimise light pollution.**

*"... correct design of street lighting to minimise light pollution."*

# OTHER FEATURES

## Shop Fronts and Signs

Some shop fronts and signs integrate well into their surroundings and enrich the streetscape. However, others use a style which is inappropriate to the village and ignores Overton's distinctive village character.

- **Shops and other commercial premises should respect Overton's distinctive character and avoid using 'off the shelf', ubiquitous designs and internally illuminated shopfronts**
- **Shop fronts and signs must conform to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Development Control Design Guide 'Shopfronts and Advertisements'.**

## Overhead Lines and other Utilities

Overhead lines and cables detract from the village setting particularly in the Conservation Area.

- **Within the Conservation Area a programme to complete the resiting of overhead wires to underground should be considered**
- **All public utility companies should be required to consider ways of minimising the visual impact of their installations.**

*Two examples of sympathetically designed shopfronts*



*Public utility companies should consider the visual impact of their installations*



*"The friendly atmosphere and self-supporting nature seen in the Post Office, baker's and butcher's shop."*

# WHAT THE CHILDREN SAY...

And last but definitely not least, some contributions from Overton Primary School. Seventy-five children completed a junior VDS questionnaire, whose

results were remarkably similar to the adult responses. Not surprisingly, the issue of access to the River Test was high on their agenda!

## My Special place

My special place is flashers a river down a road called section road, its a short way off section approach the road joined to section road.

I used to watch the water shrimps and fish we caught and put in jars filled with water, also I paddled near the dam and I watched cat fish while I was splashing.

When I was young I remarked flashers as a waterfall because of the giant log and fast water.

BY

JACOB BARRATT

Aged 7



## My Special Place

My special place is the Overton Swimming pool. It is special to me because I can go there on a blazing hot summer day. I really enjoy swimming because it is relaxing and refreshing. Sometimes when I get out I like to just sit and watch the clean, glittering water sparkle in the sun. I like to dive in and play about under the deep blue water. I really appreciate the swimming pool.

Hannah  
King

Aged 9



## My favourite place

My favourite place is down by the river Test. It is very quiet there and you can only hear the river flowing and trickling. You can see trout. I really enjoy going for a paddle in the river in summer time. Ducks flap about and play with each other. It looks very beautiful. It's relaxing watching the water meander around the rocks. I really appreciate the river Test.

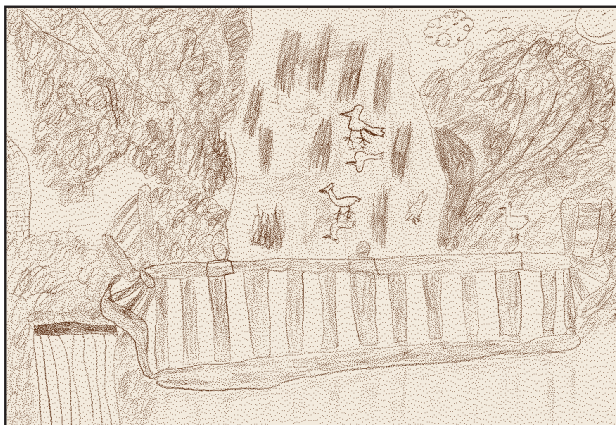
Emma  
Lister

Aged 10



*"I feel lucky that we live in the countryside in Overton because I like being able to go and have a paddle in the River Test"*

## ...AND HOW THEY SEE IT



**The River Test at Bridge Street**

Scott Thomson Aged 9



**Court Farm**

Christina Cox Aged 10



**Community Centre**

Dominic Duell Aged 9



**Community Centre**

Cameron Hardy Aged 8

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*“...I would always want to live in Overton”*