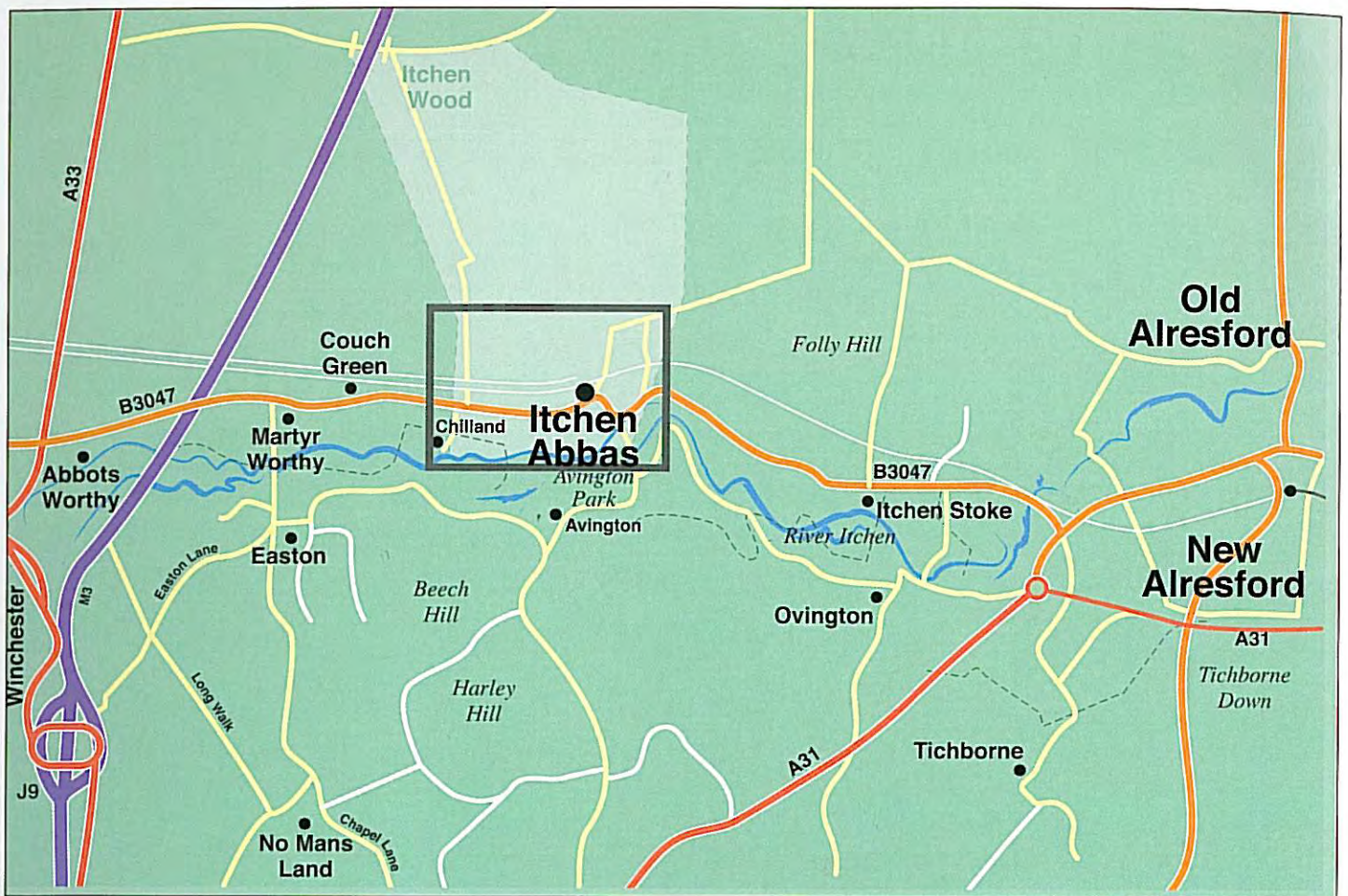


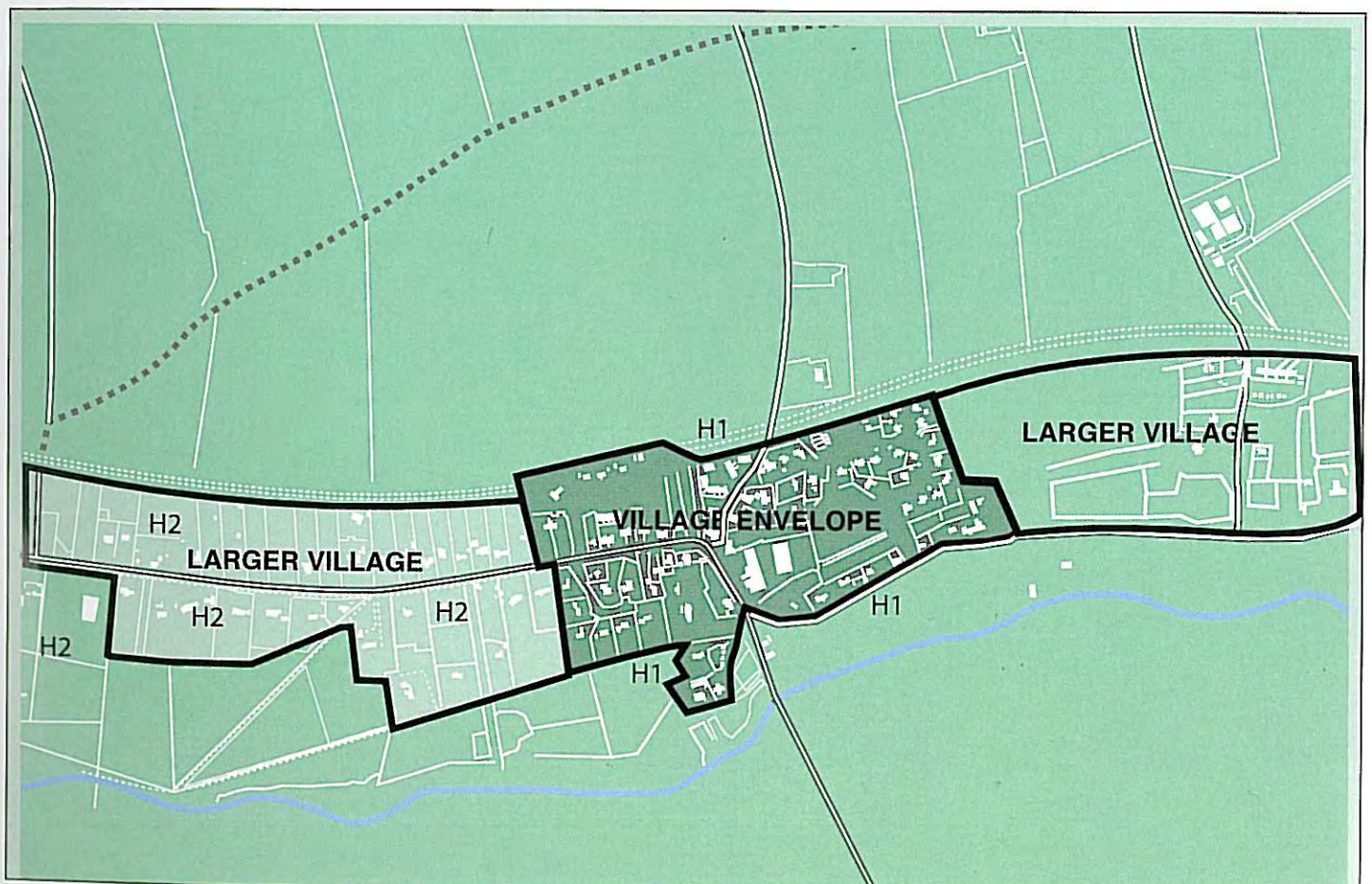
Itchen Abbas

Village Design Statement





Map 1 Itchen Abbas in relation to Winchester/Alresford and surrounding countryside



Map 2 Planners map of Itchen Abbas village and parish (see p.5)

Itchen Abbas

Village Design Statement



The heart of the village

Introduction



What are Village Design Statements for?

The purpose of a Village Design Statement (VDS) is to influence the planning process in such a way that the changes and developments that will inevitably take place in a village will reflect local characteristics and will preserve the qualities which the community values in its surroundings, absorbing harmoniously any necessary enlargement or innovation. Produced by the community itself, a VDS, once it has achieved the official status of 'Supplementary Planning Guidance', gives detailed and practical guidance to supplement the broad outline contained in the relevant local authority plan, in our case that of Winchester City Council. The provision of such guidance in advance enables residents to participate positively in the planning process at an earlier stage than they might without it, when too often their role is confined to reacting to planning applications after they have been made public. Additionally, those making proposals for development, and the planners who assess such proposals, have access to considered guidance on local feeling and opinion. Finally, it provides residents with the opportunity to consider the impact on their village of the minor changes they themselves make, when the formal planning process is not involved. It is concerned primarily with the visual environment, both buildings and landscape, but recognises the influence of social and economic factors.

Why a VDS for Itchen Abbas?

Itchen Abbas lies at the heart of the Upper Itchen Valley and forms part of the Parish of Itchen Valley. Situated as it is in an Area of Special Landscape Quality (ASLQ) and with a Conservation Area on one border, a Design Statement for Itchen Abbas will further contribute to the existing safeguards for the Upper Itchen Valley by setting guidelines for development within the village itself and in its surroundings.

What area does it cover?

This Design Statement covers the ecclesiastical parish of Itchen Abbas together with that area of Chilland which lies to the north of the Chilland Conservation area and is contiguous with the western end of Itchen Abbas. Although for convenience it will refer to 'Itchen Abbas', the inclusion of the upper part of Chilland should always be understood. In addition, the River Itchen which forms our southern boundary, and the downlands to the north are integral parts of the local environment, help shape its character and ambience, and are also considered in this document.



Oxdrove Way



The Church of St John the Baptist

Who is it for?

It is intended to guide everyone involved with the future of the village, be they residents, developers or planning authorities. It will be as useful to individual householders planning maintenance, extensions or garden enclosures as to those planning single or multiple housing projects and to the planners who will assess such proposals. It is intended to build on the lively sense of community pride by encouraging residents to look at, value and enhance the details of their surroundings as well as being alert to the larger issues as they arise. Every household and business will have a copy.

How was it produced?

The Statement has been produced by the residents of the village themselves. Working in survey teams, in workshops and in public meetings, the residents have been supported by the Parish Council, by Winchester City Council planning officers and by independent professional advice. All residents have had the opportunity to see and comment on the Statement, both as it progressed and before final submission. A detailed chronology of events is provided in the Appendix.

Summary

The Itchen Abbas Village Design Statement aims:

- To be a positive and continuing influence in shaping the Itchen Abbas of the future
- To provide supplementary planning guidance to Winchester City Council within the context of the Local Plan for Winchester District
- To provide a framework of description and guidance against which those who propose developments or alterations of any nature can assess their visual impact

This is the community's own vision of Itchen Abbas, as it is at the new millennium and as it can be shaped in the years ahead.

Authority

This document is based on the current Winchester District Local Plan, dated April 1998 and issued by Winchester City Council.

Definitions

This document refers to:-

- 'the village envelope', within the H1 boundary of the Local Plan
- 'the larger village', stretching from Chillandham Lane to The Elms, covering the village envelope, the development frontages (H2 in the Local Plan) on the B3047 west of the village envelope, and that part to the east of the village envelope, where Countryside Policies apply
- 'the surrounding environment,' i.e the agricultural downlands to the north of the disused railway track and the water meadows

(see maps 2 & 3 – inside front and p.8-9)

Textual Conventions

For clarity, the following conventions are adopted in the document:

- *Planning guidance points directly related and subordinate to the Local Plan are printed in italics*
- *Broader issues and concerns are printed in italics and underlined*
- *Guidance points relating to Highways and Traffic are printed in italics under a heading referring to Hampshire County Council as Highway Authority*

Background



A pastoral scene in the Itchen Valley – an "Area of Special Landscape Quality"



A quiet reach of the river

Setting

The whole of the Upper Itchen Valley, from the western outskirts of New Alresford to the northern outskirts of Winchester, is widely recognised as a rural asset of particular value and beauty.

- The whole valley is designated an Area of Special Landscape Quality and a Countryside Heritage Area
- There are several designated Conservation Areas within the Upper Itchen Valley including the southern part of Chilland immediately to the west of Itchen Abbas
- There are along the length of the Upper Itchen several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and a proposed Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The river and its margins form a designated SSSI
- The beauty and peace of the Valley have long been recognised and frequently celebrated in print. Winchester City includes it among the areas of particular value which define the City and its setting, mentioning as playing a crucial role in the perception of the city "...the historic cores, the River Itchen Valley floor and the surrounding downs to the east west and north...."*
- The village of Itchen Abbas lies on the north bank of the River Itchen, at the heart of this scenically important valley. Its present shape and character result from many centuries of human action to exploit and develop its features.

**Report: Winchester City and Its Setting. Various Sponsors. (1999)*

Landscape

The land on which the village lies is the northern slope of the east-west aligned Upper Itchen Valley. It falls in smooth undulations from the open landscapes of the chalk downs to the north to the more intimate surroundings of the water meadows along the river with their treelined pastures and wetland vegetation. Overall, the gradients are gentle. However, a minor north-south valley, now occupied by Northington Road, is formed by the higher ground on each side of it reaching close to the river, particularly on the eastern side. Where this minor valley meets the Itchen Valley are to be found the principal 'public' buildings, the church, the inn, the village hall, some commercial units, and, close by, the school, as well as several of the oldest houses and a former water mill. Here, too, is the main crossing point to the settlements on the south side of the river. This is the centre of what is now an extended linear village with small offshoots. It now lines a busy through road which probably follows an ancient trackway picking out the drier terrain above the marshy river margins. There are two other minor lanes, Chillandham Lane and Rectory Lane which run northwards from the main road at the western and the eastern end of the village respectively, but which follow no particularly marked physical features. There are also vestigial traces of some other minor lanes which may in the past have led to bridges over the river, but these are of little contemporary impact.

Settlement Pattern

The area has been continuously settled and farmed since pre-Roman times. Archaeological sites date to the Iron and Bronze Ages, and include a Roman villa and pavements. In recent years the Saxon graves near the school have been excavated with the participation of the children, and the nine hundredth anniversary of continuous worship on the site of the present church has been celebrated. The church itself, mainly a Victorian rebuild following a fire, still contains some of the original Norman building. In the 11th century the Domesday Book records the 'Manor of Itchen Abbas' as the property of St Mary's Abbey in Winchester. Apart from the group of buildings around the church and the inn, which now form the centre of the village, two other groups of houses on the higher ground to the east and overlooking the river, each provided an early focus, around Rectory Lane and Itchen Abbas House.

The railway, built in the 1870s to connect Winchester with Alton and now dismantled, followed a line just to the north of the larger village. Since its construction there has been no development to the north of it and what remains of its line still effectively forms the northern boundary of the larger village.

In the late 1920s the sale in small lots of an estate centred on nearby Avington resulted in the construction of a number of substantial properties in large gardens which line both sides of the B3047 and form the western end of the larger village. Since the Second World War there has been a rapid expansion in the number of dwellings (roughly from 40 to 200), all achieved by infill within the larger village

area, and a much slower rate of population increase (roughly from 300 to 450). The most recent increases, in Little Hayes Lane and School Lane, have increased the number of dwellings by some 30%.

The surroundings of the village, too, carry their history. The footpaths and bridleways on the downs are of ancient origin and some pre-date their use as sheep walks during the mediaeval period when the wool trade with the near continent ensured the prosperity of England. Here, too, are traces of mediaeval field systems. Many field boundaries were established by the enclosures of the early years of the 19th century. The water mill, now out of commercial use, and the many sluices and channels of the river, bear witness to continuous and careful management, albeit with changing objectives - navigation, water power, agriculture and, latterly, fishing - over the centuries.

A Sense of Continuity

The sense of continuity is preserved not merely in the buildings and landscape, but also in the minds of many residents. This is the village through which pilgrims walked on the journey from Winchester to Canterbury on paths still in use. In its inn Charles Kingsley is said to have written part of *The Water Babies*, no doubt with the river in sight as he did so. These are the fields where Foreign Secretary Grey introduced a former President of the United States to the glories of the English countryside in 1910. The lime avenue down which Grey often walked from the village station to his cottage still remains, as a private unmade road now serving several dwellings one of which is known as Grey's Lea. The little copse at the foot still reveals the foundations of his treasured country retreat. Another avenue, near Abbey House, dates from the time when that house was the rectory.

Other names help to recall the past. Old Station Road, Shelley Close, Little Hayes Lane, Rectory Lane, from among the roads, and Abbey Cottage, Kingsley, Old Post Cottage, Bignell's Cottage, among buildings, are examples. The sense of continuity is ever present and the sense of place is strong.

But the historical record is essentially a record of change, and change in the century just ended has accelerated. In 1930 Grey recorded, sadly, the sweeping changes he had seen in his forty years' acquaintance with the area.* In the seventy years since then, there have been more extensive changes, in house construction, road improvements, and with the loss of a level of self sufficiency formerly based on local employment and

services. Since the 1920s the village has changed from one integrated into the agricultural activities of its immediate surroundings to one overwhelmingly residential in character, where contacts with the surroundings are largely recreational. Few of those in employment work locally, and a high proportion of residents are retired. In the same period, the village has lost the railway, the post office, the shop and an industrial works. It no longer has its own rectory following mergers with first one, then two more, neighbouring parishes to form a united benefice. It has, though, acquired a fish farm, a number of small commercial units on part of the site of the former works, and, on the rest of that site, a new village hall, successful both in its striking architectural design and in providing a focus for renewed interest in community activities.

Changes of equal or greater magnitude may be anticipated. An informed community will succeed in sustaining the quality and continuity of this village and its surroundings.

**Grey of Falloden, Viscount. Fly Fishing. (1930)*

The Village and Its Surroundings Today

The larger village extends for just over a mile from west to east along the central axis of the B3047 and is contained within the two roughly parallel 'natural' boundaries of the river to the south and the disused railway track to the north.

The railway track is, on average, less than half a mile from the river and the building to the south of the road is less continuous and dense than to the north. The essentially linear character which this layout produces is modified by housing on the three side roads leading northwards and by five small groups of houses in culs-de-sac, one of which is on the south side of the main road. To the north of the railway track lie farmlands and agricultural buildings.

There is a high proportion of large houses in large plots. In spite of recent infill, therefore, average density is low. There are several areas of open land in the form of fields but no common land. Most gardens are enclosed by hedges, fences or walls. Trees conceal or soften the outlines of buildings. The several small groups of local authority housing, some intended for retired occupancy, also feature gardens and most of the few street lamps in the village. A significant number of these houses are now in private occupancy. Other than several cottages, there is little low cost or affordable housing in the private sector within reach of average national incomes.



The 'Beeches' footpath



Lime Avenue leading to Grey's Lea

Apart from the many footpaths, which are widely enjoyed, and the recently completed village hall, with open-air play facilities in its landscaped surround, there is no provision for public recreation. However, Couch Green playing field and Avington Golf Course are both within easy reach.

The few openings for local employment are mainly on the farms, the fish farm, the Veterinary Laboratory Agency, in the small commercial area, and in self-employed service activities. The majority of residents still in employment work outside the village, mainly in Alresford, Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton and London.

Of great importance to the village, as well as to a much wider community, are its surroundings. A lattice of paths and wider tracks, linking the mix of woodland, trees and hedgerows, arable and meadow lands, provides immediate access. Many paths penetrate and link the different parts of the village itself, and, along with its gardens, trees and fields, integrate it fully with the landscape.

Its rural surroundings, their ease of access and integration with the village, and the river itself, constitute the principle treasures of Itchen Abbas



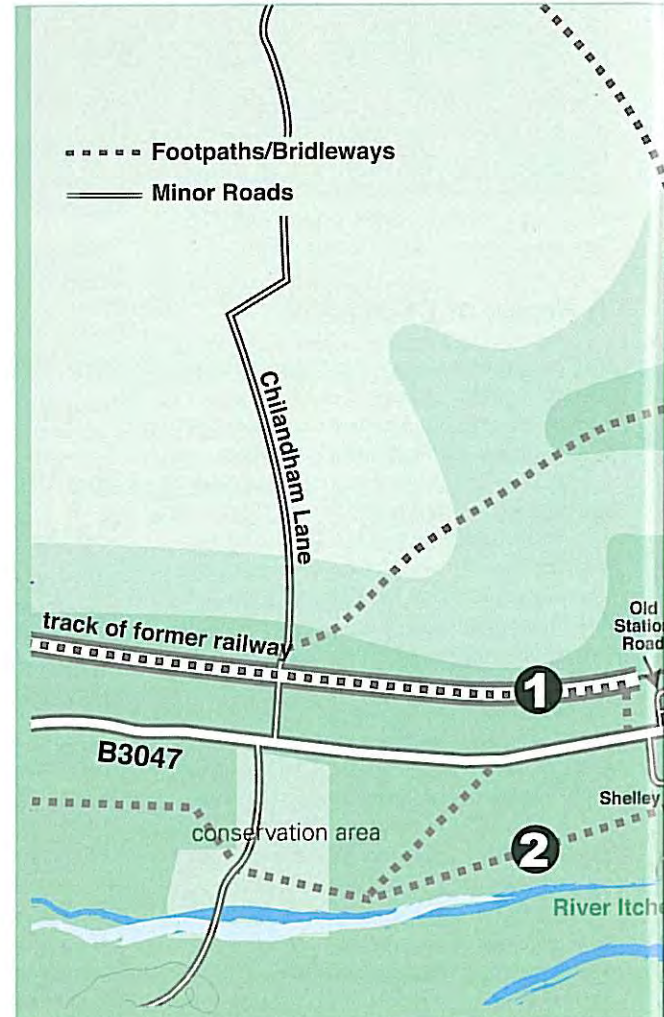
1. Part of the track of the former railway line is now a footpath



9. The Veterinary Laboratory Agency



3. Mill House, with the church of St. John the Baptist in the background



2. Pilgrims' Way



4. The Trout Inn

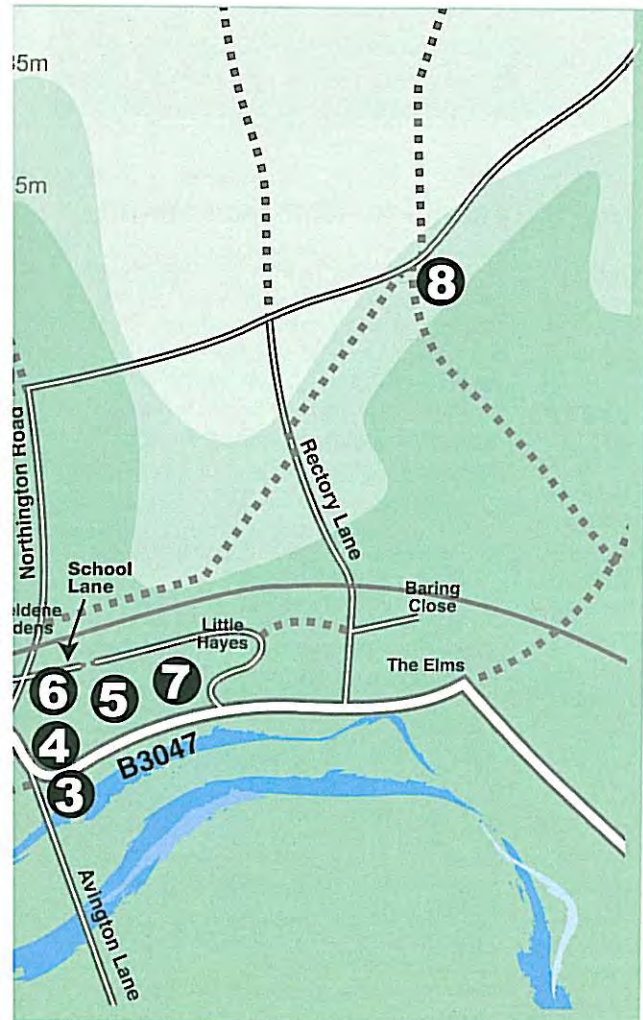
Some Places of Interest



6. The Village Hall



5. The new commercial unit



7. Itchen Abbas Primary School



8. A bridlepath across the downlands