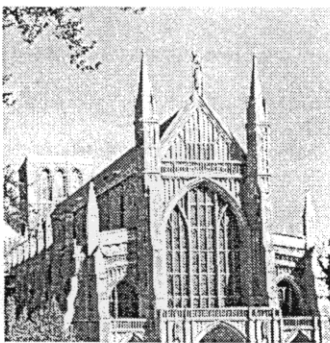


6.0 CONCLUSION

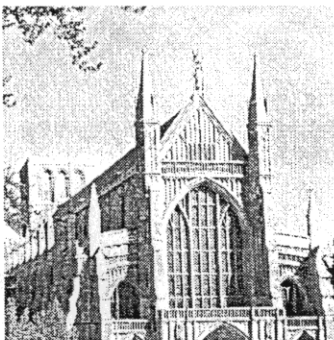
- 6.1 The historic, aesthetic, visual and nature conservation qualities of Winchester and its setting are exceptional. The city and its landscape display a continuity of human settlement, farming, trade, commerce, culture and patronage stretching back to the Iron Age. This report has attempted to identify the synergy between many individual features that define Winchester and its setting. The rich characteristics, interest and value of townscapes and landscapes and their interrelationship produce the whole setting of the city, which is greater than the sum of the parts. This is the essence of Winchester.
- 6.2 Features are identified and recur as constant influences of most importance and value in creating the distinctive Winchester sense of place. This layering process, where a single feature may have multiple values, is an indication of its importance and contribution to the critical capital of the area.
- 6.3 In this concluding section, the distillation of the many features that define Winchester and its setting and convey the rich lineage of the city may best be summed up in three interlinked themes.
 - The threads of history
 - Appreciation of the built and natural landscape
 - Arriving at a sense of place



THE THREADS OF HISTORY

- 6.4 The landscape in and around Winchester clearly displays its origins and progress over the past two thousand years. Archaeological evidence indicates a continuing activity from the earliest appearance of people in these islands during the Palaeolithic period, many thousand of years ago, right up to the present day.
 - The unbroken thread of settlement at Winchester clearly runs through its landscape and townscape.

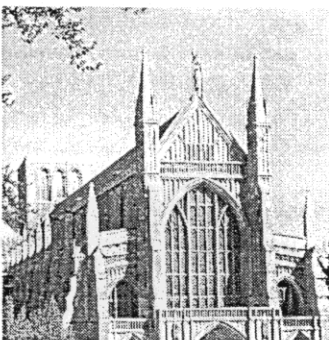
- 6.5 Visible heritage influences are recorded back to the Middle Iron Age enclosures at Oram's Arbour and St Catherine's Hill, both of great significance amongst many local archaeological sites. Records show the lineage of human occupation throughout the area. The relationship of early dwellers and their patterns of farming the downland and nearby river valley remained little changed for centuries, although modern farming practices have altered the balance between arable and pasture considerably. There remains evidence in the downland for historic field patterns that date back to the Middle Ages and possibly earlier.
- 6.6 One of the most pervasive influences on the formation of Winchester is the River Itchen. The city is founded on a strategic crossing of a river which continues to exert a strong hold over its form and development. With a very high quality watercourse, bounded by water meadows, streams and grassland of high nature conservation quality the river divides the city which also acts as an important thoroughfare for wildlife, with potential for controlled public access. The river demonstrates the multiple layers of interest that combine to define the essence of Winchester.
- The River Itchen juxtaposes fine ecology, high scenic quality and neighbouring historic buildings set off against a verdant backdrop, which is exceptional.
- 6.7 The city centre remains largely the same size as it was in King Alfred's day. It is a compact, permeable city, easily crossed on foot, with a varied mix of uses, spaces, streets and routes. Residents can live, shop, work, worship, study and pass their leisure time within the city centre without having to travel great distances.
- The retained Saxon Street pattern is exceptionally important.
 - Intermingled houses, shops, places of work and worship stemming from the permeable, historic city form a strong model for good quality, modern, urban life.
- 6.8 Winchester's development has been influenced variously by the Crown, College, Church, Military, Local Government and Commerce. The past clearly shines through in the historic city street pattern, largely unaltered in a thousand years. This pattern has variously been the setting for some of this nation's most prestigious institutions, in more than one culture, including Royal households and Treasury, an important bishopric and a medieval college of learning. The buildings which housed these uses testify to their former greatness. They act as a close-knit centrepiece around which the rest of the city was originally formed and continues to gather.
- The Cathedral, Great Hall, Winchester College and remnant fragments of the city's walls and gates are a constant and valued reminder of former grandeur and importance, and are a valuable prompt to the city's memory of its heritage.
- 6.9 Outside the city centre, the nuclei of other historic suburbs are retained, although incorporated within later modern development. The Hospital of St Cross remains the most outstanding example.
- The stunning St. Cross chapel, hospital and lodgings preside over the southern water meadows and remarkably convey a tranquil, historic character close to the modern city.
- 6.10 The adjoining medieval suburb of St Cross, with its 17th and 18th century terraced houses, overlooks the River Itchen which frames the dramatic backdrop of St Catherine's Hill to the east.



- Views from St Catherine's Hill over the river valley to St Cross, with a backdrop of the downland on Bushfield and at Whiteshute Ridge are dramatic and convey a remarkable sense of stability and continuity.
- 6.11 Other historic city suburbs such as Hyde, St John's, St Giles's' Hill, Weeke and the prehistoric site of Oram's Arbour are further examples of the continuity of settlement enjoyed by Winchester's residents. Elsewhere the city has expanded over the adjoining downland, particularly in Victorian times with the arrival of the railway and the provision of modern facilities such as the hospital, prison and police headquarters.
- 6.12 Development this century, for example, the eastern suburbs at Winnall and Highcliffe, and western suburbs at Stanmore and Badger Farm, has blurred the city's relationship with its past. However, links are discernible, primarily through the strong landform which enables views from these modern estates across the city to the river valley and the surrounding landscape, giving a strong context to a visually weak series of suburban developments.
- The synergy between the city, its spiritual and secular influences and natural landforms has produced a setting where the threads of history influence the present and reinforce local character and identity.

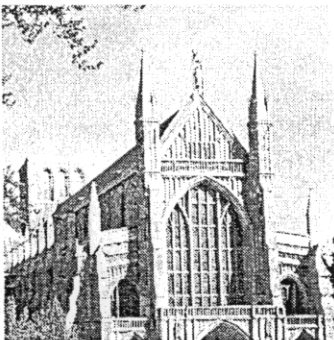
APPRECIATION OF THE BUILT AND NATURAL LANDSCAPE

- 6.13 The city sits on a platform raised above the river valley floodplain contained within a broad, undulating chalk downland.
- The clarity of the landforms provides a powerful setting for the city.
- 6.14 The valley setting distinguishes Winchester from many other English cathedral cities. Winchester and its cathedral are subservient to the landscape. This is the reverse of the English tradition found at Salisbury, Ely or Lincoln for example, where the cathedral dominates the landscape and rises above the landform with the cathedral spire or tower attracting views from the surrounding landscape.
- 6.15 Winchester's attractions are rather secluded and require discovery. Due to its valley setting, Winchester does not feature in long distance views across the landscape. Nor does the cathedral, its principal building, have a soaring spire to act as a landmark in long range views. The city has an intimate relationship with its landscape setting.
- The landscape dominates the city.
- 6.16 Chalk downland, ridgelines or spurs, often capped by mature stands of forest trees, feature in the majority of notable views into, out of, across or within the city. The compact urban form can be surveyed from many surrounding, elevated viewpoints, its containment is clearly visible and respectful to the landscape setting. The urban area only extends beyond the enclosing landform at the south-west edge. Mature tree cover threads through the city, maintains the distinctive landscape features of the Itchen Valley, St. Giles's and Sleepers Hills and links to tree lined city roads.
- Well defined wedges and corridors of countryside penetrate up to and into the heart of the city.
- 6.17 The recent Hampshire historic landscape assessment indicates strong areas of historic continuity within Winchester's landscape setting. Many are well known such as the River Itchen, St Catherine's Hill and remnant unimproved chalk grasslands on



downland scarp slopes. These share high landscape and nature conservation values that reinforce their importance as places of strong local identity. Less well known but of equal value are the historic field patterns south-east of the city around Longwood Dean Lane and south of the Itchen Valley near Ovington, together with semi-natural ancient woodlands such as Crab Wood, Little Grove and Shroner Woods. The continuity of these landscapes, their high nature conservation value, scenic diversity and visual interest is a major factor in distinguishing these historic landscapes in their own right.

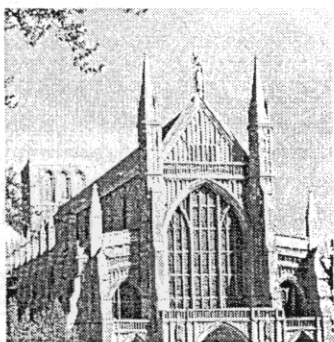
- Intimate contact with historic landscapes resonate clearly and amplify the importance of the city's setting.
- 6.18 The River Itchen, a high quality chalk river with its ditches, species rich meadows, trees and scrub, penetrates the heart of the city and contributes a rich and diverse series of landscapes high in ecological value.
- The close juxtaposition of the Itchen Valley with the imposing St Catherine's Hill, both of outstanding nature conservation and recreation value, and the historic settlement based around the Hospital of St Cross, is a fine example of the essence of the city.
- 6.19 Remarkably, the small scale Itchen Valley contains the river, Roman Road, canal, railway and a modern road within the same gap, which is particularly narrow between Bushfield and St. Catherine's Hill. Nevertheless these elements are absorbed into the landscape by landform and mature vegetation.
- 6.20 Construction of the M3 is of a much greater scale and could not be absorbed into the Itchen Valley. The route, behind St. Catherine's Hill, together with screen mounds and planting will, in time, mature and become absorbed into the city setting without totally disrupting its qualities despite considerable damage along the route corridor.
- 6.21 The countryside enclosing Winchester is a strong counterpoint to the rich diversity of the River Itchen, its valley and flood meadows. To the east, the rolling downland is a muscular landscape of broad open spaces and sweeping views occasionally interrupted by distinctive dry valleys and steep escarpments. The progression of summits at Cheesefoot Head, Deacon Hill, Magdalen Hill, St Giles's Hill and St Catherine's Hill, often topped by mature tree clumps, are identifiable skyline features east of the city. The latter two are significant city landmarks particularly now, following construction of the M3, St Catherine's Hill has been returned to Winchester. On the north-east edge, Winnal Moors adds a distinctive dash of a wilder landscape contrasting with neighbouring landscape tamed to provide for organised recreation.
- The Eastern Downs give a clear scale and orientation for the city and its setting.
- 6.22 Complex landforms of the Western Downs define the immediate horizon in views from the city and surrounding landscape. An intricate series of minor ridges, now often heavily wooded, spread down and have been incorporated into the city. The complexity of these landforms produces a strong sense of place which distinguishes the western suburbs, even when covered with relatively undistinguished development. Strong buildings or structures, when coincident with ridgelines, provide skyline features such as the 1970s police headquarters, the prison watchtower, the hospital and the telecommunication masts at Teg Down.
- Built elements present distinctive silhouettes in the Western Downs that are clearly visible from the surrounding landscape. They announce the proximity of Winchester.



- 6.23 The Northern and Southern Downs, whilst enclosing Winchester, play a subsidiary role to that of the Eastern and Western Downs. More subdued in character and landform, they provide occasional highlights such as the views from Compton Down or Whiteshute Ridge to the city and river valley. However, of most significance is the relationship of the countryside to the city boundary, for example at Barton Farm, in the north, and Bushfield and Whiteshute Ridge in the south. Views from Bushfield uniquely feature the city's three major medieval building groups seemingly isolated amongst mature trees.
- Extensive blocks of mature forest trees enclose the city centre to reinforce the interdependence of the city and its setting.
- 6.24 Extensive areas of mature trees which help to define the present city edges, screen areas of new development and form the setting for the historic cores are a relatively recent addition. Previously, open downland punctuated by occasional hedgerows and trees came up to and entered the city. For example, the impressive treescape on St Giles's Hill now such an important feature, would have been impossible to maintain when it was used for the important medieval fair. Equally, the arcadian Sleeper's Hill is due, in part, to the extensive gardens of Victorian and early Edwardian houses where trees had space to mature and flourish. The magnificent avenue of beech trees beside the Roman Road at Compton were planted to commemorate soldiers in the First World War. These trees, now approaching 80 years old, are a major asset to the city and frame a distinctive view to the cathedral.
- 6.25 Mature trees influence the city's character and quality. However, trees are subject to the natural cycles of growth and decline and many of the city's trees are approaching over-maturity. This is a major issue facing the city's future character. Replacement planting with suitable forest-scale trees takes time to establish, as well as demand space to grow.
- Strategies for maintaining the city's tree cover should be implemented before the existing trees decline and have to be removed, leaving a void in the city's character.
- 6.26 Winchester's landscapes are as rich and varied as its many buildings. Natural and built forms co-exist in harmony. Their value and importance greatly benefits all who live and work in the city and its surrounding countryside.

ARRIVING AT A SENSE OF PLACE

- 6.27 Approaches to Winchester are based upon trading routes that can be clearly dated back to prehistoric and Roman times. Only with the arrival of the railway, followed more recently by the M3 motorway, has the strength of this pattern been disrupted.
- There are clear stages in the approaches to Winchester which are informed by characteristic landscape patterns, views, silhouettes or entrances.
- 6.28 In the wider landscape, glimpsed views from the motorway and railway, as well as the historic routes, focus upon features such as the masts on Teg Down, the prison watchtower, hospital or police headquarters. These are the first clear indications of the city's presence. Moving closer, landform or mature woodlands often screens or interrupts longer range views, particularly on the more modern routes of the railway and motorway which so often disappear into cutting. Thus the city is often largely hidden from view.
- 6.29 Closer in, the extent of the city's buildings are again obscured, usually by mature tree belts particularly alongside Stockbridge and Andover Roads to the north-west as well



as mature vegetation along Sarum and Romsey Roads to the west. East of the city, strong landforms are significant in restricting views although features like the clump at Cheesefoot Head, Deacon Hill and St. Giles's Hill are distinctive indicators of the city's approach.

- 6.30 The feeling of entering the city is particularly strong along Andover, Stockbridge, Worthy and Sarum/Romsey Roads to the north and west. From the east, the city approach at high level across Fairdown which then rapidly descends St Giles's Hill is very distinctive. From the south the approaches from Shawford and Twyford Downs have been compromised by the M3 motorway although its intrusion is relatively limited and once passed, these routes are strongly influenced by the adjoining riverine character.
- A sense of arrival at Winchester's urban area is remarkably distinct with clear cut divisions between city and country on most approaches reinforced by mature tree cover alongside roads and within housing areas.
- 6.31 Many of the routes penetrate almost to the city centre from the countryside without passing through amorphous modern developments. This is a key factor in the enduring quality of Winchester. Within the historic core the ancient Westgate is a reminder of former city gateways, now lost. The approach from St Giles's Hill to the river crossing and into the old city is a reminder of the original reason for the city's location.
- The sense of arrival at the city centre is clear and unambiguous.
- 6.32 Modern traffic engineering, in a search for an approach to dealing with the demands of access by the private car, has disrupted the outer edges of parts of the historic core, such as at North Walls. An integrated transport strategy should be developed to avoid future disruptions to the historic street pattern. The integrity of the historic Saxon street pattern has been largely retained and it is perhaps appropriate that important routes such as the busy High Street, the cathedral and its precincts are mostly pedestrianised, as are those beside the river.
- Maintaining a liveable city whilst respecting the rich and varied heritage is crucial to ensuring the future quality of Winchester and its setting remains high.
- 6.33 The warp and weft of the three themes outlined above contains a variety of natural and manmade elements. The Cathedral, St Catherine's Hill or the River Itchen exemplify the range of values that are present in each element. These values flow from a rich cultural heritage, high scenic value, important nature conservation interest and significant recreational value. The scale, variety, proximity and close intermeshing of these individual, high quality features makes Winchester and its setting so distinguished.
- The quality of the city and its setting would be fine if it had one or two of these individual features. Winchester has a multiplicity of such features which fulfil valuable functions for different sections of society. Their combined might provides an exceptional landscape and townscape.
- 6.34 This intimate relationship is however finely balanced. Damage to one integral component would echo throughout the city and lead to degradation of the whole. The future of Winchester lies in the balance. By clarifying its current environmental values it is anticipated that the debate on the future of Winchester will be better informed. This study should enable enlightened decisions to be taken that are informed by, recognise and respect what matters and why.

