





River Whitewater

Biodiversity Action Plans For Hook

Action Plan One

The River Whitewater and Floodplain

The east of Hook parish is very rural, with relatively small fields, divided by a network of hedges. Through the middle of this landscape flows the River Whitewater. This plan considers the waters and wetlands of Hook Parish and the land within and adjacent to the floodplain. This unit is considered to be essential in ensuring the long term sustainability of biodiversity in Hook Parish, but also as an essential unit of the functioning of the Loddon Catchment as a whole.

Chalk rivers and their floodplains receive the highest priority in the UK BAP process. There are as few as 35 in the UK, all located in south and east England. These rivers have clear waters with a generally stable flow and temperature regime. They support a rich BAP flora and fauna, and are a valuable habitat for fisheries, with the upper reaches being a significant salmonid spawning area.

The Water Framework Directive is the most powerful piece of water legislation from Europe and will drive water conservation. It requires all inland and coastal waters to reach at least “good status” by 2015. The Directive therefore sets a framework which should provide substantial benefits for the long term sustainable management of water in the UK. The purpose of this Directive is,

“To establish a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater which, prevents further deterioration and protects and enhances the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystems.” (Water Framework Directive, 2003)

Current status

The River Whitewater rises from chalk springs at Upton Grey and flows on to Bramshill, where it is joined by the River Hart. It is a slow and meandering river creating a broad and shallow valley, criss-crossed by braided streams and ditches. The water is clear, rated as good to very good by the Environment Agency General Quality Assessment.

At its source, the river is protected as either SSSI or SINC, but as the river flows downstream beyond Hook Parish, it is currently undesignated. SINC designation should be considered for this section as well.

The River Whitewater has been assessed as part of the Loddon Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMs) and has been found to be ‘over-abstracted’. Whilst there is no ecological evidence to show how this may be impacting the environment, a precautionary principle has been taken to prevent any new licensed abstractions.





To prevent this problem being compounded by nutrient enrichment from diffuse pollution there should be a wide buffer strip adjacent to the water course. This strip is currently quite narrow and the marginal vegetation kept short. Sections of taller vegetation would benefit species such as water vole and many insect species.

The adjacent floodplain habitat in this area has developed as a result of management by man, especially use of the land for grazing. The grasslands would have provided early fertile spring growth for livestock. This fertility was also ideal for growing crops, and with the advances in technology, farmers were able to drain the land to grow food. Once the fertility was lost from these soils, artificial fertilisers were added which ultimately reduced floristic diversity.

The semi-improved grasslands that currently border the river have the potential for wetland restoration.

The potential for restoration is being realised at Holt Lane, where a Section 106 agreement has secured land for the Parish Council. The site could best be restored, to benefit the wildlife of the river, in the following ways:

1. Moving the fence away from the river bank at least 5-10m, to increase the area of marginal vegetation.
2. Reducing nutrient levels in the soil by chisel harrowing, or sowing with green hay in the first instance.
3. Blocking up drainage ditches to create wet grassland, managed through grazing.
4. Increase age structure in the wet alder woodland at Holt Copse by selective felling.
5. Undertake ride management to increase diversity.

This example could be repeated both up and downstream of the Holt Lane site, and on both sides of the river. The management could be undertaken by private individuals, with grant aid from agri-environment schemes, or under planning agreements.

This management would create a corridor of habitat along the Whitewater, which would allow many species to return and flourish in the area. It would also provide a natural strategic gap to limit development from Hook eastwards.

Threats

Development – Both direct and indirect impacts including loss of habitat, increase in demands for water, effluent discharges and flooding risk.

Abstraction – A reduction in the amount of water available can lead to an increase in sediment load and deposition. In chalk stream this can produce a silted substrate which impacts on the river fauna, suppressing growth of beneficial aquatic species.

Drainage – Creating ditches to drain the land faster will reduce the floristic diversity of the grassland, and can also increase soil and fertiliser run-off into the river.

Pollution – There is little point source pollution on the Whitewater but diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off could be lowering water quality. This can be resolved by wide buffer strips adjacent to the water course.





Intensification of agriculture – Increased use of fertilisers to increase production reduces floristic diversity of the grassland and can lead to diffuse pollution. A move away from low intensity grazing to high stocking densities or arable crops further reduces diversity.

Invasive alien species – The River Whitewater has been invaded by three species which are causing damage to the native flora and fauna.

1. Mink - Releases into the wild have caused declines in the numbers of water vole and waterfowl.
2. Signal crayfish - The decline of native crayfish has been largely attributed to fungal plague introduced by signal crayfish. This bigger, more fecund species also causes bank erosion.
3. Water fern *Azolla filiculoides*. A rapidly spreading species that can swamp rivers to the exclusion of native species.

Eradication programmes are being developed, but there is a need to raise awareness amongst the general public about the dangers of introducing alien species in to natural habitats.

Current action

The Loddon Biodiversity Strategy is a partnership document funded by the Environment Agency, which considers the factors affecting biodiversity on a catchment scale and determines where action could be taken to achieve sustainable biodiversity.

The Environment Agency is also responsible for preparing CAMS. One of the first produced was for the Loddon Catchment. This strategy identifies licensing practices and highlights issues that require resolution, and facilitates the identification of changes that may be necessary to achieve sustainability.

Hook Parish owns a section of the river floodplain east of Holt Lane. Here they are creating a wide buffer strip adjacent to the river. There is also management of the adjacent grassland by cutting twice a year.

Reforms to agri-environment grants will create Environmental Stewardship Schemes that will have entry and higher levels providing more flexibility and choice for landowners wishing to undertake management works to benefit wildlife.

The Water Framework Directive will be a powerful tool in lobbying government agencies and local authorities to create sustainable water policies, to protect our water resources and the habitats and species that depend on them.

The Forest of Eversley Project will work with landowners and the public to raise awareness of the importance of the River Valley and the historical landscape.





Targets

T1: Ensure that current initiatives take account of the quality of the River Whitewater and prevent declines in river water quality and protected species.

T2: Work towards the creation of a wide corridor of good quality habitat along both sides of the River Whitewater. Ensure that adequate measures are in place for long term sustainable management of the site.

T3: Raise awareness amongst policy makers, planners and the general public of the importance of the River Whitewater in terms of ecological quality, landscape history and as an important unit of the larger Loddon Catchment.

Proposed actions

T1: A1: Monitor water quality and flow, and determine if abstraction is having an adverse impact on river flora and fauna. Review licenses, or enforce restrictions at times of low flow. (EA, HWT, HPC, WVPS) MT

T1: A2: Ensure that adequate policies are in place to comply with the Water Framework Directive and provide sustainable water resources, without impacting on wetland habitats. (EA, HDC, HCC) MT

T1: A3: Review quality of River Whitewater against SINC designation criteria. Work towards achieving the standard for designation if it does not currently meet the criteria. (HBIC, HCC, EA) ST

T1: A4: Implement programme of eradication of invasive alien species as part of a co-ordinated programme of control across the whole catchment. (EA) MT

T1: A5: Ensure that there are policies within the local plan to protect the quality of the River Whitewater and its floodplain. (HDP, HPC, WVPS, HWT) ST

T2: A6: Produce restoration and management plan for Holt Lane proposal, seeking advice from conservation advisers on best practice. (HPC, HCC, HWT, FEP) MT

T2: A7: Ensure that future development proposals for Hook Parish include an equal or greater benefit for biodiversity by securing land for conservation management and informal recreation adjacent to the River Whitewater. Seek opportunities to manage the right (east) bank and floodplain of the river. (HDC, HPC, CW, WVPS) LT

T2: A8: Provide advice on habitat management to landowners as well as information on the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme. Aim to link the floodplain of this section of the Whitewater to the headwaters at Greywell. (HWT, FEP, EA) MT

T2: A9: Monitor impacts of management on populations of priority species, e.g. water vole, salmonids, lapwing and freshwater invertebrates. (HWT, HOS, EA, SpC, HBIC) LT



T2: A10: Investigate potential for reconnecting the rivers natural flood plain and water storage capacity, to reduce flooding pressure on developments further downstream. (EA) LT

T3: A11: Raise awareness of the importance of the River Whitewater with local residents and councillors though guided walks and talks. (FEP, HPC, WVPS, EA) ST

T3: A12: Involve local residents, land owners and river users in species surveys on the River Whitewater. (EA, FEP, HPC, HPR, WVPS) MT

T3: A13: Use management of Holt Lane site as a best practice example and demonstration site for other land owners. Publicise progress on management, use on-site interpretation and hold guided site visits. (HPC, FEP, HF, HWT) LT

Lead partners

EA = Environment Agency
FEP = Forest of Eversley Project
HBIC = Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre
HBP = Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership
HCC = Hampshire County Council
HDC = Hart District Council, HF = Hook Focus
HOS = Hampshire Ornithological Society
HPC = Hook Parish Council, HPR = Hook Parish Residents
HWT = Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
SpC = Sparsholt College
WVPS = Whitewater Valley Preservation Society

Links to Hampshire BAP

Topic Plans	Water and Biodiversity
Habitat Action Plans	Lowland wet grassland
Chalk streams	Standing open water
Fen, carr, marsh and reedbed	Species Action Plans
Book Lamprey	European otter
Water vole	Bechstein's bat
Pipistrelle bat	Serotine bat
Birds of wet grassland	White-clawed crayfish
Bullhead	Stream water crowfoot
Locally Important Species	Kingfisher
Banded Demoiselle	





AREA

Bartley Heath and Hook Common SSSI: 122.2
ha. Butter Wood SSSI: 134.96ha
Total designation: 307.16ha

Action Plan Two

The Heathland

This plan focuses on the complex of habitats designated as SSSI. These are Bartley Heath and Hook Common SSSI and Butter Wood SSSI, below South of Hook on the border of Hook Parish. Whilst some of the site lies outside the parish boundary it is sensible to consider this as one unit.

Despite being quartered by the M3 and A287, the surviving fragments of common land in Hook Parish are nationally important for their wet heathland and ancient woodland habitats and the rare species they support. At one time they would have formed the southern edge of the Thames Basin Heaths, where the underlying soils change from those of acid sands to calcareous chalk.

“Lowland heathland is one of the most valuable, yet severely threatened, wildlife habitats in Europe. It is rare throughout the world. Delightful native wild species like the marsh gentian, Dartford warbler, natterjack toad and silver studded blue butterfly depend on it for survival. More than that, it has inspired great artists, musicians and writers - people like Thomas Hardy - down the centuries. The UK holds about a fifth of all the world’s lowland heathland. Yet since 1800, more than 80% of this country’s stock has been lost. If the wildlife is to survive, and if we are to continue to draw enjoyment and inspiration from it, then we must stem the loss of lowland heathland and start to re-instate it.” (Tomorrow’s Heathland Heritage)

Ancient and semi-natural woodland is that which has been in existence since at least the 1600s. The habitat is important for the rich assemblages of ground flora, lichen, fern and fungal communities it supports. An estimated 50% of woodland has been lost in Hampshire over the last 50 years.

Historically the residents of Hook would have grazed their stock on the open common, and used the woodland for fuel, timber and hazel coppice. Species would have benefited from this low intensity management of the landscape. To maintain a diverse woodland and heathland flora and fauna the right balance of management is required.

Current status

Bartley Heath is a registered common that was designated as a SSSI in 1991. It is owned and managed by Hampshire and Isle of White Wildlife Trust.

Once regularly used by commoners, as the practice of grazing died out, the grasslands became ranker, and trees, particularly Birch, began to dominate. These trees shaded out the specialist heathland plants with a subsequent reduction of associated animals.

The site has been undergoing restoration for the last ten years and with the clearance of trees and grazing of New Forest ponies, species are returning, making it possible to walk once more over an open landscape.

Of particular note on the site is a population of marsh gentian. This is the only





site in Hampshire where it is found outside of the New Forest. Interestingly the species survived as a small colony during the deterioration of the habitat, due to the clearance under power lines by the electricity company who needed access. Once grazing management was reinstated the species is once more flourishing across the heath.

Other species and features of interest are sneezewort, ruddy darter, festoon moth, silver-washed fritillary and tree pipit. The site supports a diverse invertebrate fauna, including freshwater species. A series of shallow gravel workings with a wide variety of shade levels add to the diversity.

Another species of UK importance, recorded on the heath in the 18th Century is Starfruit. This species is found in muddy or gravel margins of shallow ponds. It is very susceptible to local extinction and is currently only recorded from three counties. Whilst no plants have been found in recent years, it may be that conditions will become suitable again and there may be potential for reintroduction to strengthen the UK population.

Hampshire Wildlife Trust have recently signed a long term lease for the management of the adjacent Hook Common site. Once restored, the two heaths will be a nationally important habitat block. This will benefit the species found there, by creating a larger area that is more robust to local changes. The site will also be a focus for informal recreation in the north of Hampshire, and could be an important draw for visitors to Hampshire.

Hook Common is currently a derelict heath dominated by purple moor grass. The site became invaded by secondary woodland and birch scrub when grazing ceased after the war. A felling licence has been granted to remove 19ha of the species-poor woodland, staggered over the next five years. This will create suitable conditions for species such as nightjar and woodcock, and allow heathland plant species such as creeping willow and marsh gentian to return. A fringe of secondary woodland will remain around the boundary of the site to block out views of the main roads.

In order to maintain this habitat there is a need for grazing, to prevent rank acid grassland developing on the site. Ultimately this requires a sound local grazing economy. In other words, a source of local stock, lay-back land to graze animals in winter and a market in which animals are sold at a sustainable price for the grazier.

There are three main blocks of woodland, which are worth considering for action in this plan. Bull's Bushes is a small neglected block of ancient and semi-natural woodland. The structure of the under storey suggests that it was once a worked hazel coppice, however it is now too small in size to make this a viable option. It would benefit from management to open up the canopy and allow some more light to the ground flora.

The second woodland block is North Butter Wood. This refers to the section above the M3 which is currently plantation. While this will have less species richness than ancient and semi-natural woodland, ride management could create pockets of habitat for species such as water avens, bugle and butterflies, such as purple emperor.





The remainder of Butter Wood is ancient woodland, designated as a SSSI in 1986. The variety of underlying soils means that it has an interesting ground flora of heath species on the north of the site. The southern section of Butter Wood was historically managed as hazel and ash coppice-with-oak-standards. This has allowed species such as lesser celandine, wood sedge and primrose to develop. Dead wood supports insects including the black-headed cardinal beetle and longhorn beetle *Grammoptera ustulata*.

A number of small ponds, though now largely overgrown, are found within the wood. These are presumed relic stock ponds, from a time when cattle grazed the wood. They would benefit from management, but require a full species survey before decisions about management are made.

Threats

Lack of management – Due to increased levels of protection, few heathland or woodland sites are being lost to development or changes in land use, as they were in the past. The greatest threat is a lack of appropriate management. On heaths this can be over, or under grazing. In woodland a lack of management such as coppicing will degrade habitat quality. However, if the site is too small, or there is a significant problem with browsers such as deer, coppicing may be inappropriate.

Fragmentation – Around Junction 5 of the M3 the habitats have already been cut up into separate blocks, preventing species dispersal from one area to the next. It may be that innovative ideas will be needed in the future, such as tunnels or wildlife bridges to re-connect these blocks.

Public perception – Communication is essential to ensure that management practices are explained to local users of sites before works begin. The need for fencing and tree removal can often be contentious issues which require diplomacy and understanding.

Socio-economics – Unless there is a sustainable market in place for local produce from grazing or coppice goods, there cannot be sustainable management of sites. In the case of grazing, this includes suitable lay-back land for stock when they are not required on site, and graziers to ensure animal health and safety.

Current action

The Thames Basin Heaths are being considered in Europe for designation as a Special Protection Area. Whilst this site is outside the boundary under consideration, it was historically part of the same heathland block. An increase in conservation initiatives in this area may be beneficial in securing the long term future of Bartley Heath and Hook Common.

Also, at a European level are the proposals for the changes in the Common Agricultural Policy. In the UK it is hoped that there will be increased opportunities for landowners to diversify and manage their land for wildlife. This could be beneficial in restoring land adjacent to the designated sites and in providing lay-back land for conservation grazing stock.





At a local level Hampshire County Council has a number of projects focussing on the need for a sustainable economy to support traditional management practices. These include the Hampshire Grazing Project, Hampshire Heathlands Project and the Woodlands Officer.

The Forest of Eversley Project will raise awareness of the management of habitats in this area with local residents, and promote this landscape to a wider audience.

Hampshire Wildlife Trust will continue to restore its own land, and work with adjacent landowners to explore opportunities for managing land to benefit wildlife on a landscape

Targets

T1: To create an extensive heathland landscape of at least 350 hectares with a fringe of ancient and semi-natural woodland.

T2: To monitor and maintain a diverse heathland flora and fauna in favourable condition.

T3: To raise awareness of the importance of heathland habitats with Hook Parish residents, local companies, local authorities and to work in partnership with other conservation agencies to ensure sustainability.

Proposed actions

T1: A1: Maintain Bartley Heath in favourable condition through grazing and keep silver birch under control through cutting. (EN, HWT) LT

T1: A2: Continue staggered removal of secondary woodland from Hook Common, over the next five years. (HWT, FC) MT

T1: A3: Reinstate grazing on Hook Common. To ensure the long term sustainable management of the site. (HWT) MT

T1: A4: Undertake some management work within Bull's Bushes to open up canopy and increase light to ground flora. (HWT, HCC) MT

T1: A5: Explore potential for coppicing within Butter Wood with support from the land owner. (HCC) LT

T1: A6: Explore potential for ride management with plantation woodland for flora and fauna. (HCC, BC, FC) LT

T2: A7: Continue to monitor flora and fauna on Bartley Heath to determine impacts of management. (HWT, BC, HARG, HOS, HBIC) LT



T2: A8: Undertake survey of ponds within Butter Wood, assess species and undertake restoration with landowners' support. (HWT, HBIC) ST

T2: A9: Undertake assessment of habitat status for starfruit. Explore potential for re-introductions. (PL, HWT) LT

T3: A10: Continue to lobby for reforms in agri-environment schemes to benefit wildlife. (HCC, HBP, HWT) ST

T3: A11: Continue with an inclusive and transparent consultation with local residents on the management of Hook Common and Bartley Heath (HPC, HPR, HWT) ST

T3: A12: Use the Forest of Eversley project to raise awareness of these sites with local residents and local authorities. (FEP, HS) ST

T3: A13: Use access and interpretation on these heathland sites to raise awareness of the wider issues that surround heathlands in the Thames Basin area, as well as allowing informal recreation for visitors. (HWT, FEP) ST

Lead partners

BC	Butterfly Conservation
FC	Forestry Commission
FEP	Forest of Eversley Project
HARG	Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group
HBIC	Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre
HBP	Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership
HCC	Hampshire County Council
HDC	Hart District Council
HF	Hook Focus
HOS	Hampshire Ornithological Society
HPC	Hook Parish Council
HPR	Hook Parish Residents
HS	Robert Mays School
HWT	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
PL	Plant Life

Links to Hampshire BAP

Habitat Action Plans	Heathland, Acid Grassland and Bog Ancient and Semi-natural Woodland
Species Action Plans	Marsh gentian Starfruit Dormouse
Locally Important Species	Adder Ruddy Darter Grass Snake Dwarf Willow

ST – Short Term, MT – Mid Term, LT – Long Term



AREA
Ancient Semi-natural woodland: 228.1ha

Action Plan Three

The Ancient Woodlands

Woodlands and ancient trees are an integral part of the character of the Hampshire landscape, and the Parish of Hook is no exception. This plan looks at the fragments of woodland to the north of Hook Parish which at one time would have formed part of an extensive woodland block.

A well managed woodland supports a great diversity of species, the oldest woods holding the greatest number of Ancient Woodland Indicator Species (AWIS). Woodlands also have significant historic value and can provide important opportunities for managed public access.

The Forestry Commission's vision is for:

"A great variety of well-managed woodlands. These will include woodlands for timber production to strengthen local economies; woodlands for economic regeneration to re-clothe industrial dereliction; woodlands for access and recreation; and woodlands for biodiversity to enhance our environment. Linking all of these together are benefits for society – in social, environmental and economic terms" (Elliot Morley, 1999)

Current status

The first block to be considered is Hook Woodlands which includes College Copse, Hill Copse, North Runten's Copse, Shirlen's Copse, Great Nightingale's Copse, Twelve Acre Copse and Little Nightingale's Copse. All of these have been designated as SINCS. Although some of these woods are outside the Parish Boundary, they will be considered together.

Individually, and more so when considered together, these woodlands have a rich diversity. They are predominantly neglected hazel coppice with oak standards and ash woodlands interspersed with wood grasslands along paths.

The ground flora when combined across all the copses has a species list of 148, 51 of which are AWIS, in an area of less than 30ha, including bluebell, yellow archangel and Solomon's seal.

The small streams which flow through the woods add diversity, and have a rich ground flora including species such as goldilocks buttercup and hartstongue fern, under an alder, ash and maple canopy. These wet woodlands are also important for their invertebrates. The ditches themselves are also used as breeding sites by amphibians.

Ponds within this area have the potential for restoration and would be beneficial for great crested newt, dragonfly and other invertebrate species. Some areas of the woods and some copses have been clear felled e.g. North Runten's Copse, and in some cases planted with non-native species, such as Sycamore and Sweet Chestnut.





There is public access to some of the woods, and it would be fair to say that these are now suburban woods, which face the problems of litter and vandalism, although there is little sign of this yet. A greater problem is the network of random footpaths which are developing through the woods. Interpretation and visitor management is required to protect the flora of the site. Other copses such as Little Nightingale Copse have little access, but also little management, which will in time reduce floristic diversity, because of the lack of light reaching to ground level.

The block is further enhanced by Owen's Farm Meadow, which is species rich grassland SINC, adjoining Hill Copse and College Copse.

An example of a species rich hedgerow can be found in the area of South Runten's Copse. Here they represent remnants of ancient woodland, and could form an important corridor for species between woodland blocks.

The second block of woodland is in the north east of the Parish. Dogtail's Copse and Borough Court Copse are also designated as SINC, because of the assemblage of ancient woodland indicator species.

However, both of these woodlands are isolated and relatively small in size: 12ha and 4ha respectively. A well managed hedgerow network in this area would increase the area of potential habitat for species colonisation.

Threats

Development – Loss of habitat as a result of development is a significant threat to biodiversity. This is compounded further by the increased pressure on the remaining habitats. In particular, disturbance from residents seeking informal recreation.

When this access is unmanaged, multiple paths will be created within the woodland. These paths will widen over time as they become muddy and people step around the worst areas to get through. Woodland flora is delicate and cannot survive under high levels of trampling.

Another threat comes from the accidental and deliberate release of alien plants from gardens, e.g. Rhododendron. These species are often aggressive in their growth and can change the composition and character of woodland, to one which is less diverse.

The domestic cat can also impact adversely on adjacent habitats because of the threat they pose to feeding birds and young fledglings. Putting a bell on a collar or keeping cats indoors first thing in the morning can help to reduce this threat.

Fragmentation – With changes in land use, there has been a steady reduction in the size of habitats. There have also been increasing distances between habitats and the creation of barriers such as roads to species dispersal. These isolated habitats are less sustainable and species populations can become isolated and unable to maintain a breeding population.





Lack of management – In woodlands, traditional management practices such as coppicing have died out, due to a decline in the market for locally sourced woodland products. This is leading to neglect and an overall loss in biodiversity.

Deer can also prevent the re-generation of coppice within recently managed woods. Measures need to be taken to keep them away from recently coppiced stools.

Current action

The Woodland Grant Scheme is a scheme offered by the Forestry Commission and can help with costs of tree felling, removal of non-native trees, capital works and deer fencing.

SINC status has been given to all ancient and semi-natural woodlands over 2ha in size in Hook Parish. There is also the potential to designate any grasslands that meet the criteria. SINCs are recognised in Hart Local Plan and there is a presumption against development.

However, development may occur up to the boundary of these sites, which can be detrimental to their quality. Particularly if the hydrology of the site is affected by drainage, urban run-off, or cable and pipe laying. There is also no guarantee that SINCs will be managed to maintain their quality.

The SINC Officer at Hampshire County Council is working with land owner advisors such as the Woodland Officer, Forest of Eversley Project Officer and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) to provide support and advice for land owners, to maintain the quality of protected sites and the land adjacent to these sites.

The Woodland Forum is a partnership of organisations and individuals involved in the management of woodlands, including the Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission and Hampshire Woodland Officer.

They are lobbying for the creation of a sustainable market for woodland products. The intention being that this should become a sustainable form of management, with timber being used locally for construction, and coppice products used in gardens and traditional cottage crafts.

The Forest of Eversley Project aims to promote the value of the historical landscapes within the north east of Hampshire. The project includes guided walks and talks, liaison with landowners and the local authorities and local surveys, to assess the status of priority species.

Hart District Local Plan has policies on the protection of designated sites, areas of high biodiversity value and priority species. There is a need for comprehensive surveys before permission is granted for any development.





Targets

T1: Restore Hook Woodlands following a plan of management which treats the SINC network as one habitat block, ensuring connectivity between woodland copses.

T2: Increase biodiversity value of woodlands in the east of Hook Parish by enhancing the hedgerow network.

T3: Create a sustainable market for timber and coppice, produced in the management of woodlands to benefit biodiversity.

T4: Raise awareness of the biodiversity of Hook Parish outside of the urban centre, with local residents, landowners and planning authorities.

Proposed actions

T1: A1: Provide advice to land owners on management techniques to maintain and restore the biodiversity of Hook Woodlands, including grant aid schemes. (FC, FEP, HCC, FEP) MT

T1: A2: Put in place interpretation and way markers to reduce the negative impacts of visitors to the woodlands, whilst creating a pleasant environment for informal recreation. (FC, FEP) MT

T1: A3: Explore potential for restoration of ponds within woodland. Conduct a survey for great crested newt. (HARG, HWT) ST

T1: A4: Monitor the status of priority species and SINC process by undertaking a rolling programme of survey. (HBIC) LT

T2: A5: Provide advice on the management of hedgerows to maintain and enhance biodiversity, especially where this is between existing woodland blocks. (HWT, CPRE, FWAG, FEP) MT

T3: A6: Lobby for the creation of a sustainable market for woodland timber and coppice products. Raise awareness of the potential for people and contractors to source wood locally in order to support this market. (HCC, WF, FEP) LT

T3: A7: Raise awareness of the problem of deer grazing in woodland. Provide advice to woodland managers on the methods available to control deer and protect newly established coppice. (HCC, WF, FEP) MT

T4: A8: Publicise the importance of the biodiversity of Hook Parish in all available media. Ensure that local plans take account of this biodiversity and contain measures to protect and enhance this resource. (FEP, HDC, HPC, HPR, CW, HBP, HF, HWT) ST

T4: A9: Conduct a survey for bat species to identify roosting and maternity sites within the woodlands. Determine where important foraging sites are to support these populations within the floodplain and consider sites for designation as SINC. (HBP, HBIC, HWT) MT



Lead partners

FC	Forestry Commission
FEP	Forest of Eversley Project
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
HARG	Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group
HBG	Hampshire Bat Group
HBIC	Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre
HBP	Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership
HCC	Hampshire County Council
HDC	Hart District Council
HF	Hook Focus
HPC	Hook Parish Council
HPR	Hook Parish Residents
HWT	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
WF	Woodland Forum
WVPS	Whitewater Valley Preservation Society

Links to Hampshire BAP

Habitat Action Plans	Ancient and Semi-natural Woodland Hedgerows
Species Action Plans	Dormouse Pipistrelle bat Yellow necked mouse Purple Emperor Silver-washed fritillary
Locally Important Species	Bluebell Bullfinch Grass snake

ST – Short Term, MT – Mid Term, LT – Long Term





Cemetery Gardens



A30 through Hook

Action Plan Four

The Urban Environment

Over 20% of Hook Parish is urban. We spend most of our time living and working in the urban setting and it therefore follows that a loss of biodiversity here will have a big impact on our quality of life. The increasing extent and density of development, as a result of our needs for living space, will have a major impact on biodiversity and natural resources. We are obviously the root cause of this problem, but we can also become part of the solution, if we adhere to the principles of sustainable development.

Gardens and parks cover a far greater area than if all sites designated for wildlife were combined. There is scope to make these areas hospitable to our native species, and to education opportunities for tomorrow's generation.

"Parks and private gardens can be important for wildlife and are the main day to day contact points with wildlife for most of the population. Given the right conditions, wildlife can thrive in towns. This can help to raise awareness for the natural world and a concern for its conservation." (UK Biodiversity Steering Group, 1994)

This plan considers the area within Hook Parish where there are concentrations of people living and working, and the infrastructure and open space on which they depend. There is a matrix of both built and semi-natural habitat within the urban environment.

Hook Parish has a population of approximately 9,000, with a marked distinction between the urban and rural environment. The village of Hook to the South West forms the hub of development in the parish. This is mostly medium density residential with some light and high tech industries.

The A30, and the Southampton to London railway line dissect the parish and the M3 forms the southern boundary. This means that Hook is an ideal location for commuters, adding pressure on the road and rail infrastructure and increasing the demand for housing.

To the east of Holt Lane, a Section 106 agreement, attached to development, has secured 10 ha of land adjacent to the River. This is owned by the Parish and is being managed for biodiversity.

Green space within the urban area is a significant resource for wildlife and can be categorised into private gardens, school playing fields, formal open spaces and fragments of original habitat left behind after development, such as Ashwell's Copse. The road verges and railway embankment may also support remnant species from the former habitats.

Some plants and animals have adapted to become associated with the urban habitats of Hook Parish, such as swift and house martin. Other species are able to utilise urban habitats when their natural habitat is diminished, such as song thrush, great crested newt, slow worm, stag beetle and bats.

Green space should be managed sustainably to enhance biodiversity within urban areas.





Threats

Isolation – Urban green spaces are, by nature of the development surrounding them, fragmented. This makes them vulnerable to isolation, which can lead to local species extinctions. They are also small in size and can therefore suffer from damaging external influences such as pollution and spread of non-native garden plants.

Disturbance – In areas with a lack of public open space within the urban environment, residents often congregate on the same small sites. This can cause undue pressure on the most sensitive sites. Dogs and cats can also have a detrimental impact on the local wildlife.

Pollution – Air pollution and road run-off particularly around the M3 are harmful to plants and animals. Roads are also the major cause of death to mammals and birds. Light and noise pollution have also been shown to cause stress to wildlife.

Future developments – Unprotected land will always be under pressure from future development. Plans must include adequate open space within new developments. Where there is little brown field land, there will be increased pressure for expansion outwards. Clear policies are needed within the local plan to guide the forward planning process.

Lack of data – Valuable habitat may be lost if there is a lack of information of the species utilising a site.

Site management - A “tidy” site may be a habitat desert for wildlife. An unmanaged site may also become unsuitable for the species which depend on a certain management regime.

Involvement – Many people do not realise how beneficial a small change in their behaviour can be to the UK’s biodiversity. Recycling, composting, saving energy and water, having a small patch of wildlife garden or supporting local conservation initiatives can make a difference.

Current action

Control of development to protect our environment is achieved through legislation such as the Town and Country Planning Act, Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPG3 and PPG9).

PPG9 considers protection of designated sites but also gives due regard for protected species and other areas of wildlife interest.

Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) states that there should be “economic success throughout the region, ensuring a higher quality environment and management of natural resources”. RSS should cross-refer to rather than repeat other regional strategies to achieve sustainable development in the SE Region.





Both the above must be taken into account in the review of Local Plans and may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals. Hart Local Plan guides development to protect designated sites and has powers to enter into legal agreements with the developers. Groups with local knowledge, such as the Whitewater Valley Preservation Society exist to lobby local authorities to remind them of these powers and responsibilities.

The Forest of Eversley partnership project will contribute to sustainability through public involvement and understanding of biodiversity.

Species surveys have been conducted in urban areas, e.g. stag beetle, song thrush, bats and moth traps in gardens, but more survey is needed.

Local wildlife initiatives are available to residents in Hook Parish such as the Tree Warden Scheme, Pond Warden Scheme, Wildlife Watch Group and the Gardening for Wildlife Campaign.

Targets

T1: Educate and raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity to all sectors of the Hook Parish community.

T2: Encourage individuals, community groups and local businesses to take action to conserve our natural resources and take responsibility for biodiversity.

T3: Lobby policy makers to ensure that the protection and enhancement of biodiversity is an integral part of the forward planning process.

T4: Ensure that the biodiversity of Hook Parish is recognised as an indicator of the state of our health, the health of the environment and therefore a measure of Quality of Life.

Proposed actions

T1: A1: Raise awareness of biodiversity. LT

- Through publicity and a launch of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Hook Parish. (HPC, HBP)
- Through school projects and initiatives such as the Wildlife Watch Group. (SLP, HWT)
- Hold guided walks and talks on local wildlife sites to engage people with the wildlife on their doorsteps. (FEP)

T1: A2: Promote schemes which people can become involved in such as Pond Wardens, Tree Wardens and Local Wildlife Recording Groups. (BTCV, HDC, HF, HWT) ST

T1: A3: Ensure that all data collected from projects and surveys, are incorporated in the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre. (HOS, HBIC, HWT) MT





T1: A4: Promote conservation organisations working to enhance biodiversity in the Parish e.g. Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership, Forest of Eversley Project and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. (HBP, FEP, HWT) ST

T1: A5: Promote biodiversity principles and targets to councillors and officers through informal seminars. (HDC, HF, HPC, FEP) ST

T1: A6: Provide information on the availability of grants for local groups wishing to undertake works for biodiversity which will benefit the community. (HDC, HBP) MT

T2: A7: Encourage Hook Parish Community, including individuals, schools and community groups to enhance biodiversity through promotion of Gardening for Wildlife. (HPC, HCofC, HF, HPR) ST

- Create demonstration gardens.
- Plant a wildflower border.
- Build a pond.
- Provide nest sites, food and water for birds
- Source native plants from garden centres.
- Don't use peat based compost.
- Hold a Hook Parish in Wildlife in Bloom event.
- Control pets.

T2.A8: Raise awareness of the need for sustainability in the home and in the office environment, to save resources which will ultimately impact on biodiversity. (HCofC, HDC, HBP) MT

- Save energy and water.
- Recycle and compost waste.
- Take fewer journeys by car and offer to car share.
- Promote and publish examples of businesses, which are supporting biodiversity.

T3: A9: Hart Local Plan review must include adequate policies and guidance for the protection of biodiversity. (HDC, HPC, HPR, WVPS) ST

- Sites designated for nature conservation, SSSIs.
- Non-designated sites of conservation value, SINC.
- Key species and habitats in urban areas.

T3: A10: Where development is proposed there should be equal or greater gains for biodiversity. (HDC) LT

T3: A11: All local authorities should have in-house biodiversity, species and habitats expertise. (HDC) MT



T4: A12: Ensure that new developments incorporate the principles of sustainability by providing green space, wildlife corridors and buffering sensitive habitats. (HDC, HPC) ST

T4: A13: Ensure that there is natural green space no more than 300m from each dwelling, with managed access. (HDC) MT

T4: A14: Ensure that land managers within Hook Parish e.g. Local Authorities and Highways Agency have management plans and strategies in place which recognise the biodiversity value of sites such as playing fields, road verges and street trees. (HDC, HBP, HPC) LT

Lead partners

BTCV British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
 FEP Forest of Eversley Project
 HARG Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group
 HBIC Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre
 HBP Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership
 HCofC Hart Chamber of Commerce
 HDC Hart District Council
 HF Hook Focus
 HOS Hampshire Ornithological Society
 HPC Hook Parish Council
 HPR Hook Parish Residents
 HWT Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
 SLP Schools Landscape Project
 WVPS Whitewater Valley Preservation Society

Links to Hampshire BAP

Topic Plans	Education, Awareness Involvement Urban Areas
Habitat Action Plans	Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland Standing Open Water
Species Action Plans	Pipistrelle bat Stag beetle Great crested newt Song thrush
Locally Important Species	Frog Hedgehog House sparrow Peacock butterfly Slow worm

ST – Short Term, MT – Mid Term, LT – Long Term



AREA
Ponds: 1ha

Action Plan Five

The Ponds

Ponds are high profile freshwater habitats of interest to the general public and the scientific community. For the purpose of this plan, ponds are defined as man-made or natural water bodies between 1m² and 2ha in area, which hold water for 4 months of the year or more.

The Habitats and Species Directive, 1992 identifies the need to promote conservation features that might act as corridors to promote species movement through the countryside. Article 10 of the Directive identifies ponds as one of these features.

"Ponds are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wide (ranging) species." **(English Nature, 1995)**

Nationally about two thirds of all Britain's freshwater plants, and an estimated 400 species, can be found somewhere in ponds. 150 of the 280 wetland invertebrates listed in the Red Data Book for Invertebrates occur in ponds. There are also many mammals listed in the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan, which are associated with ponds, including Daubenton's bat.

There are approximately 228,900 ponds in lowland Britain, in the wider countryside, i.e. those outside of private gardens. This resource has declined by 75% in the last 100 years. Between 1990 and 1996, 17,000 (approximately 3,900) ponds were lost and only 15,000 (approximately 6,400) were made. There is evidence that a large majority of the remaining ponds are degraded.

In Hampshire there are believed to be over 1,000 ponds in the wider countryside, which can be classified as wildlife ponds. The majority of these were man made at some point in the past, to provide water for livestock, as decoy ponds, as abandoned clay pits or as restored gravel pits.

Current status

Ponds in and around Hook have long been known to support an exceptionally rich and diverse wildlife interest. Ponds are a habitat vital to the survival of many of our native plants and wild creatures.

In Hook Parish, ponds have been known to support the nationally rare and threatened wild flower, Starfruit and also the Great crested newt

In Hook Parish ten ponds have been mapped by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC).

This does not account for all the ponds in the Parish. In the first instance it omits all garden ponds which can be a huge resource for wildlife, particularly as ponds in the wider countryside have declined.





Garden ponds in the centre of Hook have records of Great crested newt. It seems likely that they are able to travel from ponds in the surrounding woodlands and farmland along habitat corridors such as hedgerows, to use this resource. The more ponds available to species, such as newt, the stronger the population.

HBIC has also not mapped recently created ponds. An example of this is a pond on land adjacent to Carleton Close and Newnham Road.

In 2000 Hampshire Wildlife Trust were asked by the Hook 2000 Group to provide advice on the creation of this pond. A suggested programme of works was provided and given to the Hook 2000 Group to implement. This included the digging of test pits in order to check the substrate, to determine if the pond would hold water. Post pond creation works included the monitoring of vegetation and animal life in the pond, and establishing a coppice rotation of willows to the west of the pond area.

Hook Parish who had taken over responsibility of the pond from the Hook 2000 Group approached the Wildlife Trust in 2004, over concerns that the pond was drying out and very overgrown.

A conservation officer from the Trust visited the pond and found that, although it had no water in it, foos water-cress and other aquatic vegetation were thriving in the soft mud and the surrounding vegetation had been recently cut. There were problems with dumping of garden waste.

It is a common misconception that in order to be of value, a pond should maintain a constant water level. In fact, many ponds are seasonal and dry out in summer. As a consequence they develop a plant and animal community that has adapted to these particular conditions. For example, Starfruit, which thrives in the muddy edges of ponds with fluctuating water levels.

For this reason, the pond at Newnham Road, Hook is a valuable habitat in its own right and should be maintained as such.

Outside of the urban area there are a number of other ponds which are important for the biodiversity of Hook Parish. These include the large ponds within the floodplain between the M3 and railway line.

These fishing lakes could provide important breeding grounds for species such as toad and waterfowl which are tolerant of fish, and can co-exist alongside them. The habitat is further enhanced by the presence of an island in the centre of one lake, which allows nesting sites in the absence of predators. An area of reed managed in one area of the lake would further increase diversity.

Ponds within Hook Woods have the potential for restoration and could be important for amphibians, dragonflies and other invertebrate species, particularly those which are tolerant of some shading.

Ponds within Butter Wood, which at one time would have provided water for grazing stock, appear to have high existing biodiversity, although they may be slightly over-shaded. They would benefit from management, but require a full survey before work commences.





Threats

Changes in land-use – Agricultural techniques have advanced, resulting in a reduced need for ponds in the landscape as stock drinking holes. They are also often filled in, to improve the efficiency of farm machinery around fields. There has also been a reduction in ponds within or close to urban developments as they often have no conservation designation, and are filled in to allow development to continue. Once developments have been allowed, they or their access roads often limit dispersal of species from one pond to another, which is essential for species such as newt, toad and grass snake.

Succession – Ponds are transient habitats. As their basins accumulate sediment, they gradually fill in. In ponds over-shaded by riparian trees, a lack of aquatic growth leads to poor oxygenation and general deterioration. However, a degree of shading can provide an important habitat for some species.

Invasive alien species – Many ornamental pond plants sold in garden centres can be aggressive in their growth and suppress native pond plants. In garden ponds this is not so much of a risk, but should they accidentally escape into the wild they can have a devastating effect.

Water abstraction – Many ponds dry out naturally during summer months. This can be adversely compounded by abstraction which artificially reduces the water table. If ponds are permanently dry aquatic flora and fauna will be lost.

Failure to consider surrounding habitats – Many species, especially amphibians and reptiles, require moist, shady vegetation and grasslands, woodlands or hedgerows adjacent to ponds to forage for food and to hibernate. Therefore, treating the pond habitat in isolation can have a detrimental impact on these species.

Lack of understanding – People may not realise the value of ponds in the landscape and therefore view them as less of a priority than some other habitats. It is vital to conduct surveys of ponds to determine their use by toads, newts, reptiles and bats, as this can determine the best type of management to implement.

Current action

The Forest of Eversley Project will work with landowners and the public to raise awareness of the importance of natural habitats such as ponds and their associated flora and fauna. The Forest of Eversley Officer can offer advice on the management of ponds on publicly owned land and those in the wider countryside.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust are running a successful Gardening for Wildlife campaign. Leaflets and fact sheets are available from the Trust on a variety of garden projects from creating a wildlife pond to peat free gardening.





The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) organise a series of Pond Warden Schemes throughout the County. They can provide training for local residence to become Pond Wardens, who are then able to assess the distribution and status of ponds in a local area.

Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group (HARG) hold the County Recorder and conduct county surveys for amphibians and reptiles. They can offer expert advice and information on the management and protection of native amphibians and reptiles.

Targets

T1: Make the public aware of the importance of garden ponds as a resource for wildlife, and the damaging affect that invasive alien plants can have on native aquatic habitats.

T2: Maintain the pond at Newnham Road, Hook, as a temporary pond (one that holds water for more than four months of the year, but which can be dry at other time).

T3: Protect and enhance ponds in the wider countryside (outside of the urban area) from drainage and succession.

T4: Monitor the status and distribution of ponds in Hook Parish. Identify ponds with high biodiversity value and designate as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) as appropriate.

Proposed actions

T1: A1: Raise awareness of the importance of ponds in Hook Parish though a guided walk/talk. Aim to appoint a Pond Warden from local residence to monitor the status of ponds in the Parish. (HWT, FEP, BTCV, HPR, HF, HPC) ST

T1: A2: Promote the importance of garden ponds, and wildlife gardening in general, to help off-set the declines observed in the wider countryside. (HWT, HPR, HPC, HF) MT

T1: A3: Raise awareness of the disastrous consequences of introducing alien species from gardens into the wider countryside. Involve local garden centres in dissemination of this information. (HF, HPC, HPR, HWT, BTCV) ST

T2: A4: Produce a management plan for Newnham Road Pond, including community involvement and ownership. (HPC, HPR, FEP, BTCV) LT

T2: A5: Provide some form of interpretation to raise public awareness of the value of the pond and the fact that it is being managed. This may help to tackle the garden waste issue. (HPC, FEP) ST

T2: A6: Monitor water levels in order to provide a better understanding of the seasonal nature of ponds. (HPC, HPR) MT



T2: A7: Maintain a range of habitat in the surrounding vegetation, including long and short grassland and coppice. (HPC, HPR) MT

T3: A8: Offer advice to land owners with ponds in the farmed landscape. Determine if biodiversity enhancement measures can be incorporated within day-to-day working practise. (FEP, HARG) LT

T3: A9: Conduct full survey, and produce management/restoration plan for ponds in Hook Woods. (FEP, HARG, HBIC) MT

T3: A10: Conduct full survey, and produce management/restoration plan for ponds in Butter Wood. (FEP, HARG, HBIC) MT

T4: A11: Maintain a survey programme to assess the distribution and status of ponds in Hook Parish. Conduct specific species surveys for great crested newt, and priority BAP species such as Daubenton's bat and Starfruit to identify ponds that meet SINC criteria. Highlight these ponds in Hart District Local Plan. (HCC, HBP, HBIC, HARG, HDC, HPC, HPR, BTCV) MT

Lead partners

BTCV British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
FEP Forest of Eversley Project
FWAG Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
HARG Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group
HBIC Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre
HBP Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership
HCC Hampshire County Council
HDC Hart District Council
HF Hook Focus
HPC Hook Parish Council
HPR Hook Parish Residents
HWT Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Links to Hampshire BAP

Habitat Action Plans

Standing Open Water
Ephemeral Ponds

Species Action Plans	
Water vole	Great crested newt
Downy emerald	Keeled skimmer

Locally Important Species	
Common Frog	Common Toad
Grass snake	

ST – Short Term, MT – Mid Term, LT – Long Term





Hook Hedgerows

Action Plan Six

The Farmland

The valley sides, which are predominantly improved grassland and arable, interspersed with hedgerows, are an integral part of the Hook environment and are essential features for sustainable biodiversity of the River Whitewater, the Heathland and Hook Woods.

The farmland, grasslands and hedgerows are the connection between these three important ecosystems, enabling mobile species to move seasonally, to avoid isolation and to feed and find a mate. Species such as buzzard, hare and bats need an extensive area to maintain a sustainable population.

Grants are available to increase farmland biodiversity, by implementing measures such as grass margins, beetle banks, conservation headlands, ponds and spring-sown crops and winter stubbles. However, small changes in the management of farmed land can also have great benefits for wildlife, for example planting farmland bird seed mixes in set-aside and managing hedgerows at certain times of year.

Hedgerows are an important for wildlife habitat in their own right, and as wildlife super highways, connecting otherwise isolated habitats. They can be remnants of former woodlands, or a Parish boundary or medieval field, which were often delineated by hedgerows. Remnants of ancient hedgerows are also present within the urban area of Hook. If managed well, hedges and their associated headlands can greatly enhance farmland biodiversity.

"Today's countryside has been shaped and maintained largely by farming. Agriculture is a key determinant, and is the most significant potential deliverer, of Biodiversity in England." **(Working With the Grain of Nature, 2002)**

Current status

There are four farmland areas within Hook Parish which have the potential to most beneficial for biodiversity, and which, if managed sensitively, could help to maintain the sustainability of other core areas for biodiversity.

The first of these is Owen's Farm Meadow, which is species rich grassland SINC, adjoining Hill Copse. This site is also mentioned in the Ancient Woodland Booklet (3 of 6).

This area is further enhanced by the presence of species rich hedgerows, on average containing 5.4 woody species every 30m. Using Hooper's Law*, as a rough guide to dating hedges, it would suggest that hedges in this area could be over 500 years old.

Species rich hedgerows in this area should be considered for SINC designation to enhance and maintain the woodland block in this area.

The second, key farmland biodiversity area lies between the A30 and tributary of the River Whitewater. Here provisional hedgerow surveys show that they





contain between 4.5 and 6 species per 30m section, suggesting they may be over 600 years old.

This area is particularly important because of the connections it provides between the valley floor and the woodlands, allowing species such as pipistrelle bat to move from their roosting to their feeding sites.

Records of Great crested newt from within Hook, presents the possibility that this species may be using the hedgerows within this area, to move to other ponds, thereby creating a stronger population. Further survey is required.

The open arable and improved grassland within this area is also important. Species such as buzzard and brown hare, as well as many farmland bird species, e.g. yellowhammer and grey partridge, have adapted to this habitat type over the centuries and are now dependent on a low intensity farming system.

Simple measures can be taken to enhance this habitat for biodiversity. For example, creating a 2-6m grass margin around the base of hedges, will increase habitat for mammals such as field vole and in turn food for birds such as barn owl.

Another example of a species rich hedgerow can be found in the area of South Runten's Copse. Here they represent the remnants of the ancient woodland, and could form an important corridor for species between woodland blocks.

The final key area for farmland biodiversity are some aircraft fields just north of the M3, which have the potential to be botanically interesting. They have not been dressed with fertilisers for a long time and on first impressions, seem to be a semi-improved meadow. They require survey and may be of SINC quality.

*Hooper's Law states that the number of woody species within a hedge x100 can be used as a guide to the overall age of the hedge. Assuming that hedges will become more diverse with age. However, this rule is obviously flawed in the case of planted hedges and where management has affected the diversity of a hedge. The type and therefore diversity of a hedge is also dependent on other factors such as soil type.

Threats

Development – Significant pressure from the lateral extension of Hook, the M3 and the railway will further restrict or segregate land available to wildlife. In addition there may be more pressure from human disturbance during daylight hours.

Fragmentation –Development and increases in agricultural intensification mean that already fragmented habitats are under increasing pressure. Hedgerows and field margins are important in providing a link between these habitats, and as habitats within the landscape, where semi-natural habitat has been lost.





Lack of management – Whilst most hedgerows are now protected by legislation, many are losing biodiversity value due to inappropriate management, such as flailing. At the wrong time of year this can be very damaging to flowering woody species, small mammals and nesting birds.

Agricultural intensification – The intensification of agriculture that has occurred in the last 50 years has reached a peak. This has caused declines in many farmland species. This has been coupled with a change in the timing of crops. Spring sown crops provide a better habitat and food source for breeding bird species. A lack of winter stubbles has also been one of the major causes in the declines of many farmland birds. As farmers seek to diversify there are new opportunities for wildlife management, especially under the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme.

Agro-chemicals – applications of herbicides and fertilisers have caused declines in many of the more sensitive arable flora. This has had the knock-on effect of reducing abundance of non-target invertebrates, and so on, up the food chain. Another impact of chemicals is spray drift into the base of hedges, reducing diversity and therefore reducing the amount of good quality habitat.

Current action

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme, offers payments for a variety of conservation works over a number of years, and will soon be superseded by the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme. As part of this there are two tiers of payment, the Entry Level Scheme (ELS) and Higher Tier Scheme (HTS). The ELS will give payments for environmental features across the farm, based on awarding points. HLS will provide payments for management and creation of additional wildlife habitats.

There are a number of organisations offering land management advice to farmers to help them with applications for agri-environment grants, and to advise on minor changes to management, which would benefit biodiversity. These include the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT), the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and the Game Conservancy Trust (GCT).

Hart District Local Plan has policies on the protection of priority species outside of designated sites. There is a need for comprehensive surveys before permission is granted for any development. Where sites are identified that are of high value for biodiversity, they should be considered for designation as SINC.

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 require a license to be sought from the local authority before removal of a hedge. This has been successful in protecting over 80% of England's hedges. However, the regulations do not require the maintenance of locally important or species rich hedgerows. The regulations are being updated and will be in place by 2005.

DEFRA have produced a Hedgerow Survey Handbook to assess the status of the hedgerow network. CPRE in partnership with Hampshire Wildlife Trust are piloting a survey in 2004, which will extend to cover more of Hampshire in 2005. Many local groups are also receiving training in this survey technique to produce reports on the status of the hedgerows in their parish.





The Forest of Eversley Project aims to promote the value of the historical landscapes within the north east of Hampshire. The project includes guided walks and talks, liaison with landowners and the local authorities and local surveys, to assess the status of priority species.

Species recording and monitoring is on-going to monitor population trends. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Hampshire Ornithological Society (HOS) are involved in long-term monitoring of farmland bird populations.

Targets

T1: Ensure that there is up-to-date information on the distribution and status of hedgerows within Hook Parish.

T2: Provide land managers with advice on hedgerow management, to enhance the existing hedgerow network and to link existing habitat blocks.

T3: Enhance farmland biodiversity in Hook Parish, through provision of management advice and information on agri-environment schemes. Establish a baseline of information on the distribution and status of species and habitats. Designate important sites for farmland biodiversity.

T4: Raise awareness of the importance of farmland biodiversity.

Proposed actions

T1: A1: Identify old field hedge boundaries in urban areas. (HPC, HPR, HWT, CPRE) ST

T1: A2: Identify all species rich hedgerows and species, utilising hedgerows in Hook Parish and take steps to maintain them. (HWT, HPC, HPR, HARG, WVPS, CPRE) ST

T2: A3: Provide advice on the management of hedgerows to maintain and enhance biodiversity. (HWT, CPRE, FWAG, FEP) MT

- Protect hedges from spray drift
- Do not cut road verges and grass margins in one go and manage on rotation
- Cut hedges every other year to allow woody shrubs to fruit
- Cut hedges in rotation so that there is always food and cover for wildlife
- Manage hedges between November and February
- Fence hedgerows from livestock
- Retain trees and deadwood within the hedge
- When planting new hedges, use a variety of native species, from local sources
- Set up a local hedgerow survey group



T3: A4: Conduct a survey to assess the value of the airfield grasslands. Consider designation if it meets SINC criteria. Offer management advice and information of grant schemes to enhance biodiversity. (HBIC, FEP, HCC) ST

T3: A5: Monitor the status of priority species and SINC process by undertaking a rolling programme of survey. (HBIC) LT

T3: A6: Achieve a continuous block of habitat for biodiversity from Hook Common, along the north of the M3 and up the River Whitewater. (HWT, FWAG, GCT, FEP) LT

T3: A7: Provide advice on agri-environment grant schemes and management techniques to benefit farmland biodiversity. Ensure that the valley sides retain connectivity between core biodiversity areas. (HWT, FWAG, GCT, FEP) MT

T4: A8: Publicise the importance of the farmland biodiversity, in Hook Parish, in all available media. Ensure that local plans take account of this biodiversity and contain measures to protect and enhance this resource. (FEP, FWAG, HDC, HF, HPC, HPR, HBP, HWT) LT

Lead partners

CPRE Council for the Protection of Rural England
 FEP Forest of Eversley Project
 FWAG Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
 GCT Game Conservancy Trust
 HARG Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group
 HBIC Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre
 HBP Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership
 HCC Hampshire County Council
 HDC Hart District Council
 HF Hook Focus
 HPC Hook Parish Council
 HPR Hook Parish Residents
 HWT Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
 WVPS Whitewater Valley Preservation Society

Links to Hampshire BAP

Habitat Action Plans

Neutral Grassland	Hedgerows
Arable	

Species Action Plans

Yellow hammer	Pipistrelle bat
Grey partridge	Brown hare
Harvest mouse	

Locally Important Species

Buzzard	Badger
Marbled White	

ST – Short Term, MT – Mid Term, LT – Long Term



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Hook Parish Design Statement



The Parish Plan





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Hook Parish Design Statement

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Bartley Heath



Hook Sign



Ancient woodlands to the north of Hook

Hook Parish Design Statement

Introduction

Hook Parish has many features and characteristics that are important to its community. These should be preserved and ideally enhanced to maintain the quality and distinctiveness of Hook and should therefore form the backdrop for any future development decisions.

This document first provides an overview of the Parish of Hook, and then details those features and characteristics, which are important to Hook Parish, together with some historical narrative. The document then concludes with some Development Guidelines to be used for the assessment of, and decisions on, future development in the Parish.

It represents a distillation of the views of the residents of Hook that can be referred to by planners, architects and developers, and by the Parish Council and Hart District Council when considering planning applications. It is anticipated that this document will be formally adopted by Hart District Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Overview of Hook

Hook is situated in the north east of Hampshire and sits astride the old coaching route, now the A30, from London to the south and south-west. Located to the north of the M3 between Reading, Basingstoke, Farnham and Camberley it is one of a series of attractive places that lie along the Whitewater River. Hook was originally a small Roman settlement that was primarily agricultural until the 17th century when it became a staging post for coaches between London and the south and south-west. In the 19th and 20th century small industries developed and the village expanded post 1960 into the commuter Parish it is today.



The Tin church (1912), now Budgens supermarket (2007)

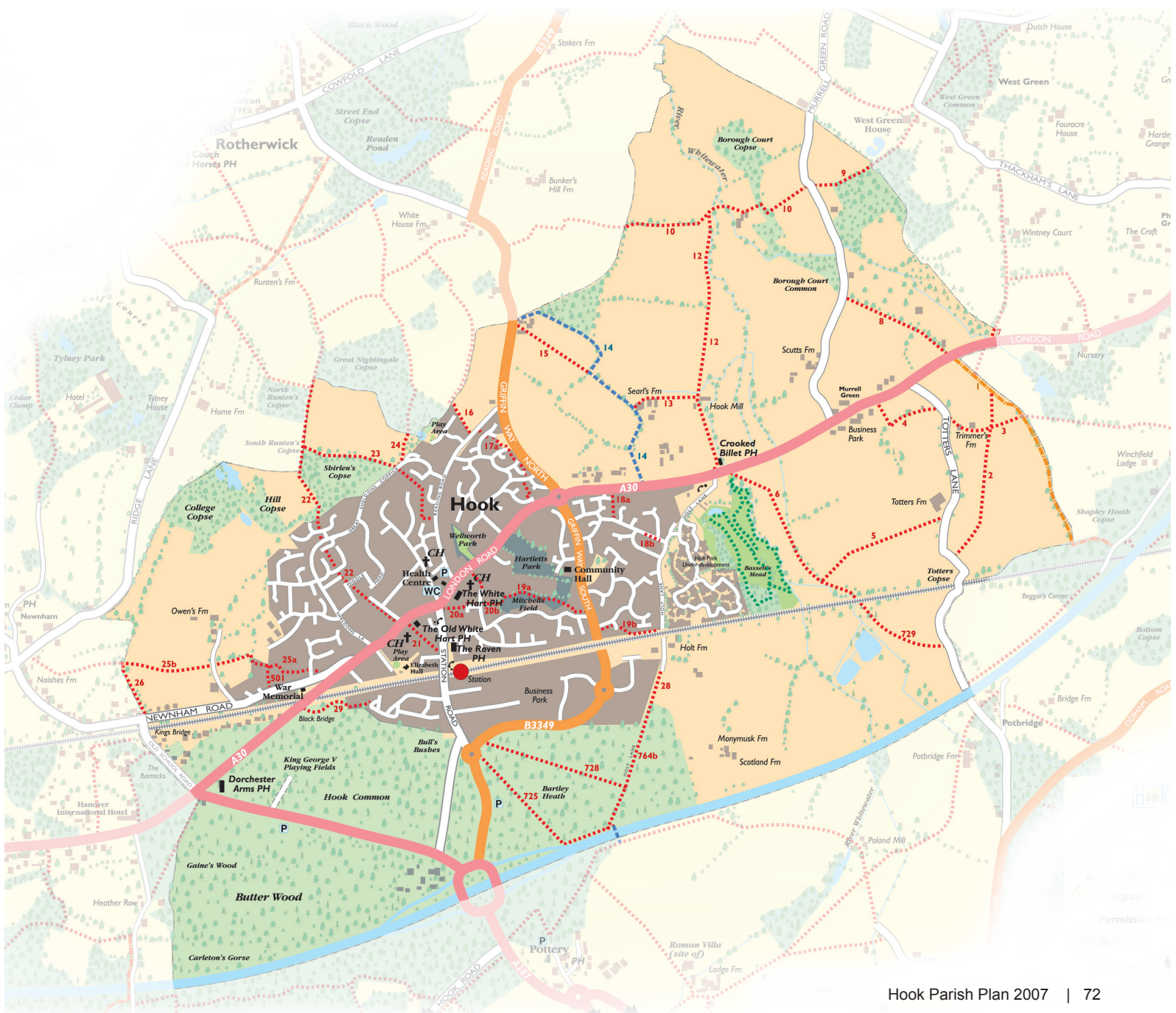


Map of Hook Parish

Hook was a small Roman settlement that was primarily agricultural until the 17th century when it became a staging post for coaches between London and the south and south-west. In the 19th and 20th century small industries developed and the village expanded into the commuter Parish of today.

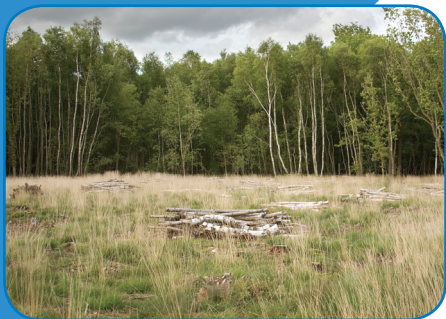
The landscape is varied, from mixed farmland to heathland and forest. There are many public rights of way in and around the Parish (the path numbers are shown on the map) which can be used to create attractive circular walks. Hook Common and Bartley Heath (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) are particularly worth visiting. The River Whitewater is a pristine chalk stream containing wild brown trout.

There are several points of interest and places to look out for; adjacent to the public car park is a plough, a reminder of Hook's agricultural heritage; the War Memorial in Newnham Road commemorates local people who died during two world wars; Hook Mill is the only surviving mill on the River Whitewater and along the A30 there are a number of milestones recalling the days when the A30 was a major road from London to the south-west.





The Geography and Landscape



Hook Common



River Whitewater



Bartley Heath



Deer behind a log

“The accessibility of Nature and open spaces is the aspect of Hook most cherished by the residents. Hook Common, Bartley Heath, the northern footpaths and other open spaces are easily accessible from the centre of Hook enhancing its rural atmosphere of quiet tranquility.”

The built up area of Hook lies on a low ridge over-looking the River Whitewater and the route of the M3 Motorway. The landscape is varied, mixed farmland, heath land and ancient woodland forming an ever-varying patchwork of interest throughout the Parish. There are many public rights of way in and around the Parish, which can be used to create attractive circular walks.

To the east runs the River Whitewater, an unspoiled chalk stream and tributary of the Loddon and eventually the River Thames. The River Whitewater is part of the beautiful, and valued, chalk stream system of Hampshire and is classified under European Union Directives as salmonidic of very high quality. It is a site of importance for nature conservation (SINC). Past cattle foraging on the riverbanks has damaged the water vole’s habitat and feral minks have threatened their survival. The signal crayfish have driven out the native white variety. In the future care should be taken to leave the banks of the River Whitewater, and its ancient floodplain, as natural as possible. The floodplain of the Whitewater still contains evidence of ancient sluices and ditches used to control the flooding in the middle ages. This system is vulnerable to change, and the environment of the Whitewater and its associated water meadows represent an important open space that needs to be maintained.

South of Hook is the SSSI of Bartley Heath and Hook Common one of the best examples of wet grassland heath in the South of England. Currently managed by Hampshire Wildlife this area is home to a number of rare species of Butterflies and plants and through care and nurturing is slowly being returned to its true state.

To the west, the villages of Newnham and Nately Scures, once part of a combined Parish with Hook, nestle within the landscape before one reaches the large town of Basingstoke. Basingstoke is expected to expand greatly over the next 20 years, which will put further pressure on the local infrastructure, which is already creaking at the joints.

To the North between Hook and Rotherwick to the North and West the ground rises over undulating farmland containing numerous areas of ancient woodland, which have existed at least since the 16th century and have probably never been clear felled, however, all of these woodlands contain clear evidence of regular coppicing. All of these woodlands are designated as SINC’s and are interwoven with public footpaths. These footpaths, which are bounded by mature trees and hedgerows, are of very long standing and are part of the extensive network connecting yet more distant communities. The areas of woodland both large and small provide a habitat for flora and fauna of many types. Deer, kingfishers, owls, woodpeckers, kestrels, sparrow hawks and buzzards are regularly seen in the area. The contrast between the open





nature and the abundance of ancient trees in this countryside is an important distinctive feature of the landscape. The northern slopes beyond the urban development of Hook provide a screen for the parish and screen it from the vehicles approaching from Reading. The stretch of countryside to the northeast is of strategic importance in marking the extremity of Hook and maintaining the identity of the Parish. It is of ecological and landscape importance.

From the majority of vantage points on the edge of the Parish, little of the village can be seen as it is screened by mature trees (alder, ash, oak and chestnut) and ancient hedgerows which include hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, dog rose and spindle. Apart from the odd rooftop and outlying buildings, one would not know that there was a significant settlement within the surrounding countryside. In due course the Holt Park to the east of Hook will, to some extent, be screened behind a bund upon which native English trees have been planted. From points within the parish, the surrounding countryside, with its open farmland and wooded areas, presents a rural and tranquil view. Presently, from any point in Hook one can walk into countryside within ten minutes, in any direction.



Pilgrims



Old and New Photographs of the A30

There are several points of interest and places to look out for within Hook itself; adjacent to the public car park is a plough, a reminder of Hook's agricultural heritage; the War Memorial in Newnham Road commemorates local people who died during two world wars; Hook Mill is the only surviving mill on the River Whitewater and along the A30 there are a number of milestones recalling the days when the A30 was a major toll road from London to the south-west.

In 2005 the European Parliament established the Special Protection Area Measures to protect aspects of nature from redevelopment and the damage caused by local residents using designated natural areas of special interest. The Thames Basin Heath land areas were one of the areas given the designation of a SPA. As a result of the designation any development within 5 kilometers of a SPA is subject to additional restrictions. Apart from a small area at the western edge, all of the Parish of Hook lies within 5Kms of Hazeley Heath, part of the designated Thames Valley Heath lands.



Landscape Recommendations for the Future

- 1** As a non-urban Parish no further green field sites should be considered for development. The development boundary should not be expanded.
- 2** None of the existing ancient hedgerows should be removed as they provide safe routes for smaller animals to move across the parish, thereby ensuring they do not become isolated and die out.
- 3** Existing footpaths should be maintained, and the water meadows and other open spaces within the Parish of Hook should be managed and preserved. The mature trees and public footpaths should be protected from incursion and maintained to allow easy access.
- 4** A specific Policy, with respect to waste disposal and water extraction, is required within the LDF to protect the River Whitewater.
- 5** Grass verges and immature trees require protection from the ravages of gang mowers driven for profit rather than ecology.
- 6** A specific Policy is required to protect all of the ancient woodland areas (SINC's) and pastureland that form the open spaces which should be conserved in order to protect the habitats for the diverse flora and fauna; the current harmonious balance between nature and people should be maintained.
- 7** The setting of the parish should be protected. The development boundary of Hook should be retained in its current position. This will retain the current countryside gaps, between Hook, Newnham and Rotherwick, in order that it remains a physical and visible gap protecting the separate identities of the settlements.
- 8** The distinctive character of the River Whitewater (SINC) and the opportunities it affords for recreation and nature conservation should be maintained. In the unlikely event of further Greenfield development along the River Whitewater a hundred metre strip, either side of the River, should be protected from development of any kind and passed to the Parish to provide recreation space and to enable protection of the River.



- 9** Hook Common (SSSI) and Bartley Heath (SSSI) require continued protection. The Woodland and Whitewater SINC's require continued positive protection. The area of Hook Airfield should be protected as a potential SINC.
- 10** Present countrywide schemes to bury existing overhead cables should be encouraged, and further schemes to extend this initiative to any new developments would further enhance the views.
- 11** Existing mature trees of landscape value should be preserved and strictly maintained by professional tree surgeons. Planting of new native English varieties is to be encouraged, and existing trees should be replaced if felled.
- 12** To maintain existing recreational facilities in the Parish any new development, regardless of size, should provide the sum of £2,500 per house for Community and Leisure facilities within the Parish.
- 13** In the unlikely event that a Greenfield site is developed, at least 30% of land should be given to the Parish Council for recreational use within the Parish, as the Parish has no other way of obtaining recreational land.
- 14** In due course interpretation notices (or an interpretation centre) should be established to enable residents and travelers (on foot or otherwise) to understand the ecological value and landscape character of Hook Parish.



Deer feeding young





Aerial view of Hook, from the south-east, showing Hook in the centre with fields and surrounds in the background, Copyright Imagery Getmapping Partnership 2006





A bridge building team

The People

At the 2001 census, the parish comprised 7000 people, living in 2500 households. The number of children and teenagers was estimated at around 600. Most of the community has lived in the parish for over ten years. Only a small proportion of residents are employed in the parish (2%) although evidence suggests that an increasing number now work either partly or entirely from home. Since the census, a mere 5 years ago, Hook has grown to approximately 8500 residents and nearly 3000 households. In 2006 there are over 1300 school age Children in Hook.



Bartleys Court

The Economic Environment

"The South East is a Region of economic opportunity and enterprise with an especially varied and attractive countryside" **SEERA submission to the ODPM**

At the end of 2004 Hook was, according to the Halifax Building Society records, the seventeenth most expensive place in England to live with average house prices in excess of £350,000. Unemployment is very low, most households own at least two cars and the average household income is above average.

Development within the Parish

"In order to reduce distance traveled and other resource requirements, development will be focused on the urban areas of the region. The urban areas are defined as settlements with a population of 10,000 or more where an effective range of services can be grouped together." **SEERA Submission to the ODPM**



The Old Foundry

Residential Development

Most buildings in Hook are private dwellings. There is a mixture of linear development along older roads but modern housing is clustered in cul-de-sacs and closes. Trees and ample space between these groups stop them from having the appearance of urban housing. The majority of residential housing built in the Parish during the 80's and the 90's was well designed and well built. Houses were comfortably separated but not to the extent of wasting space, houses of, 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms, of varied designs being carefully mixed to provide a pleasant living environment. Terracing beyond three houses has been avoided. In all cases sufficient car parking was provided to match the number of bedrooms. Recent designs have been of gated communities of small dwellings often on three levels that can look out of place within their surroundings.





Car Parking within developments built since 2000 have been built in accordance with Government car parking regulations i.e. a maximum of 1.5 spaces per house regardless of number of bedrooms. For a commuter area where both members of the family are working, and where public transport is restricted, this is totally unrealistic. Especially in a centre such as Hook, where the design was set in concrete in the 1960's, and additional parking space around the centre is not available. In the new Holt Lane development of 300+ houses it has been, and continues to be, a major source of discontent.



Forge Foundry Cottage

The Houses

"New housing needs to be sympathetically sited and built in a style and use materials which blend with the rest of the parish." **Rural White Paper**

Hook's houses display a very wide variety of building styles and materials. This should surprise no one, given that the parish has been developing for centuries. Its long and gradual growth, until the 1960s when its growth curve began to move steeply upward, has guaranteed a mixed heritage of houses, reflecting changing fashions and requirements in architectural detail and building materials. What is clear is that Hook is characterised by the variety of its buildings, rather than by uniformity. Some are large some are modest.

Though Hook has semi-detached and some terraced properties, the majority of its houses are detached. Their alignments are informal: some houses lie close the roadside; others are set back. Some face the highway; others do not. Some groups of houses are relatively dense, others are more spacious. The effect is to produce constantly changing focal points and vistas, which lend variety and interest to the eye

Within this catholicity there is some orthodoxy, however. And this last section will attempt to draw out some of the more fundamental points of style and use of materials that have put their stamp on the nature of Hook's buildings.

Affordable houses, both part owned and rented, are needed throughout the Parish and the South East of England, however, developers will do all they can to avoid building them as profits are reduced. They have no such problem with packing three storied houses with no garages onto small sites. If Parishes are to be sustainable the need for affordable housing has to be recognised and enforced with vigour throughout the district.



A Staggered Roofline

Roofs

The majority of the houses in Hook have tiled roofs, with less than one in every thousand buildings in Hook have slate roofs and very few having thatched roofs. Hipped roofs (quarter, half, or fully hipped) are reasonably common particularly where house extensions have been added. These broken roof-lines add variety and visual interest. Nearly 15 per cent of Hook's roofs have some degree of hipping. Hipped Roofs provide interest





Walls

Hook has few old houses remaining within the Parish; most were demolished to make room for the estates of the 1980's. Older houses that remain can be celebrations in brickwork. The use of Flemish bonding to build the walls provided bricklayers with ample opportunities for decoration. A common feature is the pattern made by alternating vitreous bricks with normally fired bricks. Another is the use of bricks of one colour for the corners of buildings and to frame windows, and bricks of another colour for the main body of the walls. Yet another is to set a row of slightly protruding bricks, on end, just below the eaves.

There is no doubt that such exuberance added colour and interesting detail to otherwise featureless brickwork. Modern building methods have largely done away with double-course brick walls, substituting the inner course of bricks with a cavity and an inner lining of insulating block work. As a result, many modern walls are laid with English bonds, and the bricks are almost invariably of one colour throughout. Although some patterns do occur.

Not all Hook's buildings, whether old or new, are clad in uncovered brick. About one in seven display full, or some lesser degree, of rendering, and about 15 per cent are dressed to a greater or lesser extent with hanging tiles. Painted brickwork is by no means uncommon either. But, taken together, these variations make up a little over a forty percent of all the buildings in the parish, and untreated brickwork is the rule.

Windows

A survey of all window types in the settlement area was undertaken in January 2006. It shows that although Hook's windows show a variety of styles and materials, certain patterns are clearly discernible. The results are as follows.

Three-quarters of the casements are white. Wood is used in just under half the windows investigated, and UPVC in just over half. Alignments are normally vertical (50 per cent), while just under a quarter are horizontally aligned. Dormer windows were found in approximately 5% of those houses looked at. Casements with slightly curved tops feature in 10% of all houses, although their predominance is probably due to their repeated use in some recent housing developments.

In terms of their panes, just over half were judged to be of medium size (up to a metre along their longer axis) while nearly a third were judged to be large (more than a metre along their longer axis). And in the matter of window design changes are apparent every day as wood is replaced by UPVC and the windowpanes become a standard size. True leaded windows are virtually non-existent, however, many now represent the double glazers' art of attaching lead strips to delivered UPVC windows. These attachments do add to the visual attraction and variation in design to the often stereo typed 1980's houses.





No Parking Spaces they park on the road

Enclosures

The layouts and enclosures of residential properties have been determined by Hook's historical development, by its topography and by its style of houses. Many of its houses have some degree of privacy. Even in the oldest parts of the parish, few houses front directly onto the pavement. Enclosures consist predominantly of combinations of low brick walls (some with flint dressing), metal railings and hedging. This combination offers security and privacy and yet maintains a reasonably open aspect, giving a feeling of spaciousness, even in the heart of the parish. Most of the few solid wood fences are not immediately visible from main carriageways, and high brick wall boundaries are restricted mainly to larger, long-established, dwellings.

In general, there is variation in types of enclosures and this, in conjunction with the prevalence of natural hedging, softens the overall appearance of developed areas. Many trees have been retained at, or within, house boundaries, and these also contribute to the rural feel of the parish.

Away from the main thoroughfares regulation wooden slatted fencing has been installed by the developers as it is both quick and cheap to install. Front gardens are normally unfenced giving the impression of open space and less density of houses. A recent tendency to put inappropriate picket fences around front gardens, apart from being contrary to the deeds of most buildings, greatly reduces the apparent space and outlook and should be resisted.

Garages

Hook's garages vary in style from separate flat-roofed garage blocks, to garages integrated with the house, to detached garages almost always with pitched roofs. It should be said, however, that not all properties in Hook have garages. This is particularly the case with many of the smaller new developments, where tragically number of houses is more important than facilities.

Integrated garages can facilitate the building of house extensions. While this can increase the value of a property, such extensions may lift potentially affordable houses beyond the reach of those who may wish to live in the parish they work in. Detached garages break up the mass of a building and encourage use for their primary purpose.

Government guidelines as to the space for vehicle parking per house are causing many problems within the village. The most recent development of 330 houses, still in build in 2007, has continued problems as cars, with no garages or forecourt in front of the houses, are parked haphazardly wherever space can be found. The problem was recognised before building started but the need of the developer to maximise the number of houses per Hectare prevailed over experience and commonsense.





Large Scale Commercial Buildings



The White Hart



The Crooked Billet



The Raven Hotel

Energy Saving Features

In our increasingly energy-conscious age, it is important to embrace modern building ideas that incorporate measures to recycle resources and make use of natural sources of energy. Hampshire County Council and Hart District Council are both keen to see the development of energy-saving homes. These are unlikely to see the light of day until government enforcement, however, some of the techniques currently under development may well be standard features in homes of the future. Water will probably be the biggest problem for the future as levels of stored water drop and usage continues to increase. It matters not whether global warming is the cause, or whether we use too much, or waste too much. There is insufficient to support the planned housing expansion. However, this appears to have no effect on the developments of the future, which are allowed to go ahead on the grounds that "someone else" will provide. The Environment Agency can offer advice to developers on managing the disposal of surface water and on the conservation of water resources in general, but this is rarely sought and often ignored.

Commercial Development

The main line railway station, with a regular service, and the close proximity of the M3 has meant that in recent years the mix of private dwellings and commercial buildings has begun to show an imbalance. Hook, like many other parishes in the South East, has developed as a commuter dormitory rather than a cohesive "live and work" community. Employment is virtually 100% and all but a very small proportion of the residents work outside the Parish. Despite this Commercial buildings have increased adding to the traffic as labour comes to Hook to fill jobs in a Parish where the incumbents of these jobs will rarely be able to afford to live adjacent to their work.

Commercial B2B Facilities

Areas zoned for commercial B2B development in the 1990's attracted office development but have in some cases never attracted occupation and a number of previously occupied sites are now partially empty. Were they to become fully occupied the transport infrastructure within the Parish would become greatly overloaded. Currently approximately 200,000 square feet of office space has been available for a minimum of two years and is showing no sign of occupancy. There is no evidence that Hook requires any more office development and there is evidence that the conversion of some current commercial sites to residential sites would greatly benefit all concerned.

Large Scale Commercial Buildings

There are a number of commercial business organisations to the south of the railway line providing work opportunities for those commuting from Reading and up



and down the M3. These vary from makers of cash machines, to the Post Office, Leo's Children's Play Area, a Funeral Parlour and an area of warehousing. Only 1% to 2% of the employees working in B2B facilities live in Hook. It is arguable that unwise planning has resulted in wasted capital and loss of Greenfield sites.

Commercial B2C Facilities

The White Hart, The Old White Hart, The Crooked Billet, The Dorchester Arm and The Raven Hotel all provide eating and recreational facilities plus accommodation for visitors. The Hook House Hotel and several bed and breakfast establishments also provide overnight accommodation. Nearly all of the above are regularly full during the week.

Shopping facilities within the centre are limited in numbers but all provide a valuable service to the community, it is important that they are maintained in the future. The Tesco facility, adjacent to the railway station, provides the daily staples for Hook and the surrounding towns. Take away and Hook Tandoori, The Raven Hotel, Taste of little India, Poh Wah, Anok Thai and the Dragon Inn Fish and Chip shop, provide Restaurant facilities.

Grand Parade, which currently contains many of the shopping facilities, is a product of the 1950's and is visibly coming to the end of its natural life. Its design does not enhance the centre of the Parish despite a pleasant upgrade, carried out by the Parish Council, to the surrounding area in 2004. When the time comes to replace the facility it is essential that careful consideration be given to the design to ensure that the area is enhanced rather than just filled.

Affordable Housing

Rather than allow the commercial buildings to decay consideration should be given to rezoning the apparently unwanted buildings and their conversion to affordable dwellings or even a school. Affordable Housing in Hook is in short supply and when available is rapidly taken up by a mix of the Hart District Council housing list and the hidden households that are currently unable to buy close to their families in Hook. Provision of housing for these hidden households is also important to ensure family care of the elderly in the future. It is interesting to note, that with few people leaving the Parish, the average age of Hook Parish is aging at approximately 1 year for every year that passes. Forcing the hidden households away will guarantee problems with the care of the elderly in the future. With the average age approaching 50 that future is not too far away. A study of Hook would show that potential Brownfield sites and unused commercial properties are available for other uses. It is interesting to note that an urban capacity study of Hook carried out a few years ago was incomplete and suggested that the "work" for the study report had been done sitting at a desk rather than getting out and looking at the ground. Prior consultation with the Parish Council would probably have achieved a more realistic result.

Travellers Facilities

Hook is, and has been for many years, home to the Wall's traveling fair. Relationships within the Parish have always been good and continue to be so. The contribution of the Fair to many Parish activities is willingly given and very welcome. Whilst the governments views on the rights of the mobile travellers are fully understood and their medical and schooling needs could be fulfilled in Hook there is no additional land, owned by Hart or the Parish, suitable for a permanent site. A site in the Parish, for the more mobile travellers, is therefore not considered a feasible option.

The Infrastructure of the Parish

"The inadequacy of infrastructure provision to keep pace with new development is the single most critical issue The legacy of past under investment in the region not only has an adverse impact on the economic performance of the region, but increases environmental impacts and reduces quality of life." SEERA report to the ODPM

Transport

The Parish of Hook tends to be a dormitory for employees across the south east of England and 98% of the working population take a daily trek out of the area to work. Hook is, on the surface, well served by rail and road. Situated on the mainline from Southampton to London and on a series of roads including the M3, the A30 and the M4 not far to the north. The bus service is, however, extremely poor and virtually unused. As a result whether we like it or not "The Car is King."

Whilst the railway service to London is good, and the station car park excellent, carriages are very full at peak time and travellers are increasing as Basingstoke 6 miles to the west continues to expand. This will reach total overload as the planned number of houses are built around Basingstoke. At present little can be done to increase the length of trains or the frequency of service at peak times, as train numbers are regulated by the throughput of the main junction points system at Woking. Indeed the latest timetable amendments have slightly reduced train numbers in favour of punctuality. Carriage design has also reduced capacity. Basingstoke is designated as a major transport hub but this can only be true if the spokes of the hub function along their whole length.

Road Network

Regrettably the rapid housing development has not included the necessary road infrastructure, which was never put in place as the development of the Parish took place. The M3 has capacity problems at peak times and



Main Line to London



The M3 at Hook





realistically is operating very close to capacity. Regular accidents cause considerable chaos, which rapidly spreads to the A30 through Hook and it is not an unusual occurrence for much of the local area to come to a halt as the result of a motorway accident. Development in Basingstoke, Hook, Odiham and Hartley Wintney has greatly increased the traffic on the A30 leading to delays at all Hook intersections during peak times. Improvement of the A30 is essential if further development is to be a feasible option in the area. Of particular note is the lack of an east/west relief road around Hook, the A30 where it passes through the centre of Hook being most unsuitable to carry the current loading. A dedicated relief road scheme to divert traffic around Hook, from the A30 in the west at the Dorchester Arms via the roundabout, at the M3 junction 5, to join up with the south-east relief road would greatly decrease the congestion in the centre of the Parish. The north/south route through Hook is the B3349 but it is a heavily used connecting route between Junction 11 of the M4 and Junction 5 of the M3. This road is used by large numbers of HGV's to the extent that it has recently had a very expensive overhaul, but it has not been widened, or straightened in any way. All the traffic on the B3349 has to pass through Hook, at peak times merging with the A30 traffic going east/ west and the exiting personnel from offices in the Bartley Wood commercial development. All the intersections around Hook are virtually at capacity at peak times and will require a major overall as building in the area increases.



Five signs in fifty yards

Traffic Calming

Traffic calming schemes have been incepted in towns and parishes throughout the UK with the aim of reducing vehicle speeds and the number and severity of accidents, improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists, improving drivers' awareness and behaviour and, importantly from Hook's point of view, improving the general parish environment. The actual measures adopted depend on target speeds, traffic and pedestrian flows, the characteristics of the roads themselves, and on policy guidance and statutory legislation.

Street Furniture

"We are looking at new types of speed limit signage for the more rural areas, which are both effective and fit in with the rural landscape. This will respond to the concern that current speed restriction signs are often inappropriate for a rural environment." ***Rural White Paper***

Approaches to the parish are signposted from the M3 motorway, the B3349 and the A30 trunk road. All parish entry-points are marked with signs designed by a young member of the community, these highlight the individuality of Hook.

Other signage has evolved over the years and ranges from the old finger-style directional signs to newer road names. The newer traffic signs tend to be larger and reflective, which makes them safer but more intrusive. In terms



of hazard warnings, there are a few standard signs (for road narrowing and overhanging buildings, for example) but these do not predominate. There are a number of yellow-line road markings, or other parking restriction signs in place, in the centre of the built up area of Hook. There are also a few white-lines marking entrances to residential driveways.

Street furniture in the parish can suffer from vandalism and neglect. Most of the BT phone boxes have been removed as the increasing use of mobile phones and vandalism has apparently made them uneconomic. Some litter bins and benches, which vary in age and style, are located in areas of pedestrian activity. The parish has its quota of overhead cables and supporting posts, which are considered unattractive visual intrusions by residents.

Education Facilities

Schools in the Hook area are considered to be of a very high standard and as a result many of the houses that change hands in the parish do so as parents with school age children move into Hook to take advantage of the many assets that the parish has to offer including good schools from 5 to 16 years of age. Harts requirement that 40% of all developments, over a certain size, should be affordable housing also increases the pressure on Hook Schools as most occupiers of affordable housing are likely to want, or have, children.



Hook Schools

Infant and Junior Schools

Hook is very lucky to have two of the best schools in Hampshire. The three form entry Infant School and the Junior School share a site virtually in the centre of Hook and provide a very high standard of education in their age ranges. However, they are already stretched to the limit due to the continuing expansion in housing numbers within the Parish. Despite new classrooms in 2003,

the 2004 intake filled most of the available space and the continuing growth of houses will outstrip capacity for September 2006. This is despite the fact that only 150 houses, out of 330, on Holt Park have been completed. As Holt Lane comes to fruition in 2006/2007 the prospect of using buses/taxis to run infant and junior school children to schools throughout North Hampshire becomes a distinct possibility and is abhorrent. Without new buildings it is not possible to increase the Infant School to a four form entry unit. It is therefore essential that any future large development in Hook must include a new four form entry Infant School and the ability to convert the current infant school into an integral part of the present junior school. The school should be put in place at a very early stage of the development to enable early occupants of new houses to use the facility. Development of the school at the end of the





Robert Mays School

development build phases will lead to the children being placed in many other schools throughout the country to the detriment of all concerned.

Secondary Schools

Robert May's School located on the outskirts of Odiham, has an excellent reputation and is the designated school for 11 – 16 year olds from Hook, Odiham and Hartley Wintney. Built originally for 650 pupils it has expanded over the years with a number of specialist buildings being added when required. It now has over 1200 pupils and is once again up to capacity. In the past Courtmoor and Calthorpe Park Schools in Fleet have taken excess capacity during bulge years, however, the Elvetham Heath development in Fleet has

absorbed all spare capacity in both schools. With the new houses being built in Holt Park, this raises further education problems for the children of Hook, to which can be added the planned expansion of other surrounding towns and villages. Little flexibility remains and the only solution is travel to Basingstoke, however, with the very large planned expansion of Basingstoke the availability of this spare capacity must be in doubt. Basingstoke will not be a satisfactory solution for many parents who have, in an increasing number of cases, moved to Hook to ensure better schooling. A new secondary school, or further considerable expansion of Robert Mays is required. In particular the Dining Hall, Canteen and the main school hall must be expanded or replaced through conversion. Any changes must take place before any other development occurs.

Senior Schools and Colleges

Farnborough, Alton, Winchester and Basingstoke provide facilities for the 16 to 18 year olds a large proportion of whom subsequently go to university all over the UK. As the housing numbers increase over the next twenty years provision of further facilities for this age range will be required.

Medical Facilities

Hook is well served medically having an extensive general medical practice, dentists and a veterinary practice. Like the rest of the country, National Health Service Dentistry is in short supply. Hospitals in Basingstoke and Frimley are within 10 miles and provide a good service. However, realistically, both are unreachable except by car. Many elderly residents rely on volunteers to drive them to hospital for routine appointments. Taxis are beyond most pensioners and the bus service can literally take all day. As the population ages consideration must be given to the provision of suitable transport to the local hospitals, including North Hampshire Hospital in Basingstoke despite it being outside the District of Hart. It does not have to be free just affordable.





Roman Catholic Church



Evangelical Church



St John's Church



Elizabeth Hall



Community Centre



KGV Cricket Field

Religious Facilities

Hook has four well attended churches within the parish boundary. Lack of facilities of the right size means two of the churches meet in the Elizabeth Hall on Saturdays and Sundays. It is likely that the non-availability of suitable, affordable building land will see this situation continuing for the foreseeable future.

Recreational Facilities

The Elizabeth Hall and the Community Centre have recently merged to form the Hook Village Halls Community Association (HVH). These halls provide facilities for nearly 500 residents every week. Activities range from Nursery schools to Scouts and Guides, to brass bands, line dancing and regular drama productions. The Elizabeth Hall also provides church facilities on Saturdays and Sundays. The Community Centre provides badminton, keep fit and squash and is also home to The Parish Council office and, "The Base", a club for teenagers, which operates five nights a week by year group for 65 to 100 young residents nightly.

Capacity in both halls is being reached and both will be too small for the population of the Parish once the latest development is complete in Holt Park. The Elizabeth Hall is a product of the large village hall building programme in the early 1950's and requires replacement to bring it up to modern standards. Plans for this to occur in 2007 have recently been approved.

The Hartlett's Park sports field provides the location for the 11 Hook football teams, tennis and the Guy Fawkes Night celebrations whilst the Elizabeth Hall surrounds provide the venue for the annual fete. The King George the Fifth Playing Fields to the west of the Parish provide a cricket pitch, an additional football pitch and 3 more tennis courts. Two other annual fetes are held in the school and church grounds respectively. The annual fun run takes place over





Play Area



Skate Park

the roads of the parish each summer. At weekends, in season, the football and cricket pitches are fully utilised and as a result the cost of maintenance is increasing rapidly. With the completion of Holt Park there will be nine play areas, mostly for younger children, available in Hook together with a skateboard park and a fitness trail. These are all fully utilized on completion of school each day when the weather allows. The Hartlett's Park facility provides equipment suitable for the disabled. In 2007 the "Bassett's Mead" Recreational area, on the eastern side of the parish, will provide 12 hectares of meadowland, river front and woodland for walking and recreation.

Utilities

"Sustainable Development - Development which meets the social and economic needs of today in a manner which respects the environmental resource needs of future generations..... By 2016 the aim is to stabilize our resource ' footprint' and ultimately to reduce it." **SEERA to ODPM**

There are two main areas of infrastructure that are common to all areas of the country that particularly apply to Hart and must be taken into account before any further development takes place in the district, let alone Hook. They are waste and water.

Fresh Water

Hart district is in a very parlous state with respect to water supplies for the future. Rivers are low and in many cases are already suffering from over extraction, and the aquifers across Hampshire did not refill during the winter of 2005/2006. The water boards covering the South East region reduced pressures across the area at the beginning of 2005 in order to conserve water and placed a hose-pipe ban across large areas of the south-east in March 2006. There appear to be no plans as to how the water supply can be increased to meet the current demand in Hook let alone if further development takes place in Hart. This seems to show lack of foresight when cross connection of areas of short supply with areas of sufficiency would seem a wise precaution. A reservoir takes three years to build and seven years to fill: it is therefore essential that water provision is taken seriously now and not left until it is too late.

Grey Water

Much of the wastewater from our housing estates passes through sewage treatment plants and then into the local rivers. In the case of Hook, which is built on London clay, this includes the majority of the rainwater that is collected from house roofs, as soak-aways are ineffective. In the days when the River Whitewater was high and was regularly topped up in the winter this was an efficient way to dispose of treated water. However, this method of disposal requires a certain level of river water to ensure that the chemicals still left in the treated water are further diluted on entering the river. With the continuing reduction in water levels in the Whitewater there is a risk that in the near future the river will become too polluted to support the current occupants and it will cease to be one of the best ecological rivers in Hampshire. Future developments in the area whether on brown fields or green





will require all the wastewater to be piped out of the Parish. Plans for this change of approach will be required to be implemented before further development in the area. A sustainable plan is required for the re-use of grey water.

Gas and Electricity

Gas and electricity are becoming more and more expensive and UK owned Gas is beginning to run out. Consideration must be given in any new developments to making the houses more efficient in their use of energy even if it makes the houses more expensive initially

Waste

Currently nearly 60% of waste is disposed of out of county to the north due to a severe shortage of landfill sites in Hampshire. With the increase in houses in the Milton Keynes area this will no longer be a viable solution. To compound the situation most licensed disposal sites will see their licenses expire within the next ten years: a mere half of the SEERA plans proposed lifespan. A solution is therefore essential before the area commits to more houses. Whether this is incineration, more separation of recyclable materials commenced in January 2007, or less use of packaging of materials is not within Hook's gift. What is for certain is that every extra house will produce more waste that will not disappear of its own volition. Hart District Council has begun to change its approach to waste but current plans are based more upon saving Council Tax rather than the real need to dispose of waste.

Future Development

Greenfield Sites

The availability of green field sites is very restricted and those that do exist are very wet, impinge upon adjacent villages or would involve the destruction of ancient woodland or intrude gratuitously into the Whitewater Valley landscape. Hook by SEERA definition in the South East Plan, is a non-urban town as the population is under 10,000. As a non-urban town, the SEERA plan for development during the period 2006-2026 suggests that Hook should not suffer encroachment of the remaining green fields in the parish. Further degradation of these green field sites around Hook should be avoided, especially when other alternatives exist, and when failure of the infrastructure to keep pace with past expansion is fully taken into account.

Brownfield Sites

A survey of available brownfield sites was carried out some years ago and reached the conclusion that no sites existed in Hook apart from a small site



on the A30. Evidence would suggest that the survey was carried out from a map in the office and with little original thought. Imagination would have led the surveyor to a site south of the railway line, with potentially easy access to the south-east relief road and within walking distance of both the Station and Tesco's. Whilst currently commercially zoned it could be rezoned to residential where its use would more sensible meet the needs of today rather than utilizing yet more Greenfield land.



The Shack Cafe



Grand Parade

Recommendations for future Development

Future housing layout and design must meet the modern needs of a commuter parish and not pretend that cars will go away. In view of the average price of houses in Hook green field sites will always be the developers delight, however, their use must be resisted. Affordable pleasant, residential houses are required in the area and they do not need green field sites.

Hook is an expensive dormitory parish in a part of the country that is convenient to all the commercial drivers in the south of England. Property is highly unlikely to reduce in price. History and Geography cannot change but thought processes can. Hook is not anti expansion but it is very much against mindless, dogma and profit driven, development that turns a very pleasant parish into an overcrowded housing estate that lacks infrastructure and quality of life. Quality of life can be maintained by thinking through the future and commonsense within the need to meet future house requirements can be achieved by County, District , Parish and Developer working together to achieve sustainable results including a percentage of houses that must be affordable to first time buyers. The new planning process makes this possible and the opportunity to discuss, develop and build must be taken seriously. Mindless profit driven applications must be discussed at all levels and either accepted or amended without the continual resort to expensive appeals which rarely achieve results acceptable to anyone.



The New Elizabeth Hall

Future Planning Development Guidelines:

- 1** New development should take account of the scale, character, layout, landscaping and range of building styles in their surroundings.
- 2** Imaginative layouts featuring smaller dwellings, small terraces and single-storey dwellings combined with detached houses.
- 3** Development must be controlled to prevent over development and to protect the important open views and spaces throughout the parish.
- 4** Where footways can be built as part of new developments they should be seriously considered, in particular, the provision of appropriate pedestrian links to the local shops and other facilities in the parish. New footways should be constructed of materials that are in sympathy with their rural setting. Kerbing, for instance, could be constructed from natural stone such as granite, or of reconstituted stone products such as 'conservation kerb'.
- 5** The impact of street signs should be minimised where possible, without impairing safety. The need for signs should be reviewed and opportunities taken to combine them wherever possible.
- 6** Where possible, an improvement in the design and quality of street furniture should be encouraged throughout the Parish. The use of sympathetic design and appropriate (vandal-proof) materials would help to blend these items into the rural environment.
- 7** Traffic-calming measures, in sympathy with the parish's rural nature, would be welcomed. The installation at the main entry points into the parish of sensitively designed gateway features, incorporating appropriate traffic signs might be considered. So, too, might the installation of repeater speed-restriction signs, together with carriageway restrictions, and occasional widened footways that necessitate slight road-narrowing. In all cases, features should be so designed as to promote safe use by all road users.
- 8** The provision of sufficient off street parking is an absolute necessity in any re-use development within Hook. Where possible main car parks should be hidden from view.
- 9** The general presumption is that the material used for roofs of new developments will be clay tiles. Hipped roofs which cut out less light than entire roofs and form broken roof lines that lend visual interest should be encouraged. Efforts should be made to use materials which match old tiles on extensions and, where appropriate, to re-use existing tiles on re-developments.



- 10** The expectation is that walls should be of unrendered and unpainted clay brick. Dark-red and vitreous bricks are preferable. Those of a harsh red, orange or yellowish hue should be avoided. Brickwork, which incorporates the Flemish bond, is encouraged, as are features such as the use of contrasting colours of brick for dressings around openings and at the corners of buildings. Details such as cambered arches above openings, projecting bands at floor levels and corbelling at the eaves could also be considered.
- 11** The presumption is that new developments should normally have vertically orientated white windows constructed of plastic or wood. In all cases of re-development or extension, new windows should match those existing (if any still exist on the property itself), or those of adjacent properties, provided these fall within the preferred categories of design and materials. Attractively designed and sensitively located dormer windows would also be in character.
- 12** The preference is for hedges of native species, walls using traditional material such as brick and flint, and railings. In new developments it is expected that close-boarded wooden fencing would be used only in visually non-prominent locations such as in the division of back gardens. Picket fences of any sort around open spaces in front of properties should be resisted.
- 13** Where re-use sites are available, smaller, affordable houses, including terraced dwellings of limited length (3/4), are important to the sustainability of the parish. A number of affordable units (20) within the parish should be automatically made available solely to teachers, police and nurses working in Hook.
- 14** All new developments should be provided with garaging or off-street parking facilities that meet the known requirement of the area, 2 per house, rather than compliance with guidelines more suitable to a large town or city. Detached garages should have pitched, rather than flat, roofs.
- 15** The use of energy-saving features that can be sensitively incorporated and designed to enhance the character of the parish should be required on all new houses.
- 16** Infrastructure such as roads, schools, buses, trains, waste disposal and water provision must precede the building of new houses.
- 17** Existing commercial development in Hook is already under-used and no further commercial development should be planned in the next 20 years.





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