

A strategic response to potential development in Holybourne

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Development in and around Holybourne – headings used in EHDC consultation

This report has been generated by a Holybourne Village Association (HVA) team coordinating the village's response to potential development in and around Holybourne. In order to generate and validate the points made in this report, a survey was conducted in the village during summer 2023 by using the online "Survey Monkey" website. Every household in the village additionally received a paper copy enclosed in the Summer edition of the village magazine. In this way we sought to include everyone in the village and the responses received from almost 300 households in a village of just over 600 are incorporated into this document.

c.50% of Holybourne dwellings have contributed to this document. To date 281 people in Holybourne have completed either an online or paper survey. 64% were aged 18-65 and 35% over 65 (and 1% under 18). 49% were still working, 36% retired and 23% had children. Residents from 23 roads in Holybourne completed the survey.

1.1 Introduction

Holybourne is a small village at the northern end of Alton separated from the town by the green recreational space of Barley Fields and the A339 which marks the southern extreme of the village. Holybourne considers itself no more or less important than any other community including that of Alton. The wider political ward extends as far as the Health Centre on what becomes Anstey Road and half way up Anstey Lane. It has a population of about 1,600 and contains about 650 dwellings. There is a wide demographic spread and the village contains a Primary and Secondary School and Treloar College and School for children with special needs. The village is located in a rural setting and though bordered on one side by the A31, that road is not visible from most of the village. There is also a railway line that runs parallel to the A31 and the river Wey that winds through the village, being added to by the spring that rises adjacent to the church, hence "Holy bourne".

There is extensive evidence of Roman occupation which drifted across the river from the major Roman site in Neatham, known as Vindomis and the Recreation and Sports field is actually a listed ancient monument protected from any kind of development by English Heritage. Uninterrupted views from London Road up Brockham Hill towards Holybourne Down are much valued by villagers and visitors alike.

1.2 Possible Residential Housing Sites - Context

- The people of Holybourne recognise the chronic national housing need.
- We recognise that Holybourne always has made a reasonable and proportional contribution to meeting local housing need and will continue to do so.
- We recognise the right of those born or with a long-term attachment to the village to be able to continue to live in the village, either as they leave home or as their housing needs change.
- We recognise the value in terms of people and property that new development over the last forty or fifty years has brought to the village. Most development east of London Road, from Rakemakers northward, falls into this category. These developments have not caused the loss of character in the village and, similarly, numerous infills and small cluster development have only served to enhance Holybourne as a place in which to live.
- We recognise that the majority of residents to the village were not born in the village. Most of us therefore have been "incomers" at some point in our lives. For this reason we should not fail to welcome others who seek to make the same choice we did.

- The broader political ward of Holybourne has seen massive development over many years. It cannot be argued that Holybourne has not absorbed its fair share of large-scale development. Development in the village has seen the following housing projects:

Complins 1967 (44 dwellings)

Cranford Drive 1967 (29)

Bonhams 1967 (8)

Vindomis 1980 (33)

Gaskell Close 1982 (40)

Carpenters Close 1983 (9)

Malthouse Mews 1983 (5)

Thornton End 1984 (45)

Downs View 1989 (30)

Rakemakers 1993 (17)

Smithy Close 1996 (13)

Church Lane 2000 (7)

Inhams Road extension 2004

Howards Lane 2008 (2)

Pentons Close 2009 (43)

Garstons Way 2012 (104)

New Paddock Close (5)

Wisteria Mews (5)

Claines Street (2012) 63

Tulip Mews 2012 (5)

Grange Gardens 2012 (13)

Twitchens Road (2012) 10

Total 510

In addition to these, there have been many infill developments throughout the village totalling at least two dozen houses. We do believe, however, that further potential to develop sites exist, without seeking to exploit the fields and countryside around the village. For example, currently planning permission exists for two houses within the land of the Priory (Howard's Lane) and an application has been lodged for four large houses within the curtilage of Westbrook House (Howard's Lane). There are also emerging plans to develop the Manor Farm buildings on Church Lane and the barns next to Bonhams (part of the Froyle Estate). Generally the Froyle Estate is seeking to develop a number of these types of parcels of land around Holybourne and other adjacent villages such as Froyle. Such development is seen as preferable to building on greenfield sites by a majority of the village as confirmed by the survey results.

1.3 "We Love Where We Live" Survey results:

In response to the survey executed in summer of 2023, over 94% said they would like Holybourne to stay a small village in order to remain sustainable and retain its character and community spirit allowing only small infill developments. Almost 50% of villagers who responded said that there should be no further development allowed as the village could not sustain it.

96% said Holybourne is a distinct village separate from Alton.

All aspects of the village character eg. pond, church setting, small size of the village, landscapes are valued by over 90% residents and 84% felt that a significant increase in size of the village would threaten this character.

Other issues raised included: drainage, flooding, erosion, sewerage, school class size. Fuller details are held in a separate document that summarises the outcomes of the survey. It will be available online at the village website, www.Holybourne.com

1.4 Holybourne housing need - context

To provide context for this document, the following figures are taken from Hampshire Home Choice which the housing authority uses to establish the need for affordable rented housing.

Assessed housing / bedroom need:

- 1 bedroom - 8
- 2 bedroom - 9
- 3 bedroom - 6
- 4+ bedroom - 1
- Total - 24

Source David Lindsay Housing Development Officer EHDC

2. Key Considerations

This document moves on to outline and assess key considerations in 12 areas, from Transport, Traffic and Parking through to Flooding and Planning considerations.

2.1.1 Transport, Traffic and Parking

Holybourne is a small village with a population of between 1,600 and 2000 people on the edge of the market town of Alton and close to the A31. It is predominantly residential, surrounded by actively cultivated agricultural land and contains 3 schools, pub, shop, 2 churches, a village hall, small theatre and a commercial garage. The most recent traffic survey carried out in April 2022 revealed that the average daily vehicle count along London Road into Holybourne was 1125.

Summary of transport infrastructure in village

1. The village sits along the route of the London to Winchester road, now bypassed by the A31. Its main road (London Road) runs east/west and acts as a spine for the village with smaller, mainly no-through, roads running north and south off the London Road.
2. To the east London Road connects with Binsted village via a mainly single-track, non-pavemented lane. Beyond Binsted all destinations can be easily reached by other, more substantial routes such as the A31. London Road connects to Alton to the west via a two-lane, pavement road with cycling infrastructure. The absolute need for through traffic is minimal but the village is still used as a short-cut, mainly by parents of Treloar students or traffic heading for the Golden Pot crossroads, thereafter to Basingstoke or Odiham using the single track Brockham Hill.
3. Running south out of the village are Upper and Lower Neatham Mill Lanes which allow walking and cycling access, though not car access, out of the village.

4. Running in a loop north of London Road is the Howards Lane / Church Lane loop. This loop is a single-track, non-paved lane containing a conservation area and leading to Brockham Hill Lane – a single track lane out of the village.
5. The village and surrounding woods and fields are amply supplied with footpaths, and a few bridleways, linking with surrounding villages. The village lies on the St Swithun's Way, part of the Pilgrims Way from Winchester to Canterbury. Pilgrims walking this path stop off at the church on a near daily basis.

2.1.2 Transport, Traffic and Parking - major issue areas

Residents of the village are painfully aware that the limited road infrastructure is under pressure, causing problems for car users and cyclists. Particular pressure points (running east to west) include:

1. Junction between London Road and the east end of Lower Neatham Mill Lane: this meeting of two single track lanes has limitations on space and visibility including a steep hill on a sharp corner. It is also limited by the bridge over the River Wey. It regularly floods in heavy rain making it impassable by all; the resulting gravel is a constant danger for cyclists
2. London Road beside the sports field / playground: On-street parking by residents is supplemented by vehicles associated with dog walking and sports matches. The parking can be limited at times and serves to slow traffic. It can cause blockages if a large vehicle needs access and event parking can be problematic for residents.
3. London Road around the shop and pub:- On-street parking by residents is added to by parking for both the pub and the village shop at different times of the day. The increasing popularity of the pub is welcome but can cause difficulties for residents without off-street parking who are used to parking on the road. Again large vehicles can struggle to get through, particularly the agricultural machinery necessary in a rural area. There has been an incident of a fire engine struggling to get through. This route is popular with cyclists and can be hazardous when car doors are opened without care. The parking does serve to reduce traffic speed through the village
4. London Road junction with Church Lane - This junction, between a single-track lane and London Road has limited visibility, and limited manoeuvring space with brick walls on both sides. The addition of parked cars on London Road can make it impossible to navigate, forcing cars to back up Church Lane in order to turn round and try another route.
5. London Road between Church Lane and Howards Lane: - This stretch of road dips sharply to where the stream crosses under the road and up again. There is intermittent on-street parking in this area and cars, frustrated by hold-ups elsewhere, can accelerate hard causing risks to other cars, cyclists and crossing pedestrians. This stretch floods to a depth of 30cms in heavy rain.
6. London Road junction with Howards Lane:- This junction, between a single-track lane and London Road is slightly easier to navigate than the Church Lane junction but can also be easily compromised by on-street parking. Because of its proximity to Andrews' Endowed School. This is particularly likely at the beginning and end of the school day. Recently added double-yellow lines are often ignored making the junction dangerous for cars and hazardous for school children and the many walkers / runners / cyclists who enjoy Howards Lane

7. London Road outside Andrews Endowed - This stretch of road is under heavy pressure at both the beginning and end of every school day. A Lollipop man does a grand job of improving safety but the number of cars parking on London Road and surrounding roads make travelling through the area by car and bike, at times, impossible. Exiting Gaskell Close, Complins and Upper Neatham Mill Lane can be challenging. Many parents and children in the village welcome the fact that they can walk to school, and do so, making the need for pavement safety all the more important. There are already concerns about children's safety, and a wilful increase in these risks could be seen as irresponsible.
8. London Road junction with Montecchio Way - This junction is controlled by traffic lights and is complicated by a junction, almost opposite, with the Barley Fields development. Weight of traffic, especially at the beginning and end of the school day, lead to long traffic queues to the lights, which backup adds to the traffic outside Andrews' Endowed School.
9. Howards Lane / Church Lane loop:- This loop of single-track country lane is a popular leisure route for villagers. There is a constant stream of dog-walkers, runners, horse-riders and cyclists enjoying the beauty of the conservation area it surrounds. Of particular importance is the use of this route by the students at Treloars who can use their wheelchairs to experience beautiful countryside despite mobility issues. However it is also used as an access route from towns north of the village with vehicles descending Brockham Hill Lane into Howards Lane. These vehicles can travel at inappropriate speeds, unaware of the risk of meeting pedestrians etc.

2.1.3 Transport, Traffic and Parking - Risks presented by increased development

This painful list of problems describes the experience of just 1 mile of London Road as it travels through the village with current levels of vehicular movements and means that:

- Current car traffic serves to make the centre of the village a slow moving car park – which reduces the speed of vehicles but increases frustration.
- The lack of separated cycling infrastructure makes it dangerous for the many cyclists that use the road to commute etc. There have already been incidents when emergency vehicles were obstructed.
- Pavements are, thankfully, present on both sides of the road through the village enabling walking throughout. However walking in Howards and Church Lanes can be hazardous because of the behaviour of some car drivers
- Though London Road is paved for most of its length, the narrowness of the pavement going towards the centre of the village from Howards Lane means that large wheelchairs from Treloars have to travel in the road itself. This is incredibly dangerous for the students and would haunt drivers for ever if they were involved in a fatal accident.
- To an extent London Road is already “full” and any increase in traffic will make travel through the village impossible. This may serve to put off those who could use the A31 bypass or other routes.
- Additional housing in the village will inevitably lead to more car movements and increased pressure on the fragile road system. This needs to be a major consideration in any planning decisions to prevent the road system from failing completely.

2.1.4 Traffic survey

In September 2021 EHDC carried out a traffic survey on London Road in Holybourne. Over the 10 week period there were 90,643 vehicle movements (approx 870 movements / day); a significant weight of traffic for a rural village with minimal entry and exit points. The average speed, in this 30 mph area, was 28.7mph, with a maximum speed recorded of 85mph at 8.45pm one Wednesday evening. Approx 15% of vehicles

travel at over 35mph, with those averaging 40mph. These are speeds commensurate with significant danger to pedestrians.

To illustrate the hazards at the beginning of the school day we can look at the 1st day where the 8-9am period is studied - 23rd Sept. Between 8-9am there were 123 vehicle movements with an average speed of 14.2 mph. Of those 123 vehicles 55 were recorded as exceeding 35 mph with an average speed of these being 40.3 mph. This gives a clear picture of heavy, generally slow moving traffic containing a significant minority driving recklessly at a time when children of all ages are making their way to the pre-school, primary and secondary schools in the village. This represents hazards from collision and also poor air quality and serves to make active travel to school an unattractive option, thus compounding the problem.

2.1.5 Transport, Traffic and Parking - Potential mitigations of risk

There are actions which could improve the transport issues or mitigate things worsening:

- Road design that makes it less attractive to drive through the village, such as regular enforcement of highway rules, pinch points, 20mph speed limits with 10mph on Howards / Church Lane.
- Improved walking and cycling infrastructure in and on the outskirts of the village to encourage alternatives to the car – particularly safe routes to school to reduce the pressure to drop children off by car
- Any additional housing in the vicinity of Holybourne would need to be designed to reduce the need for car usage – to include ample bike storage for car replacement options such as e-bikes and cargo bikes.
- Any additional housing to be associated with sufficient off street parking areas for residents of that housing to prevent increased pressure of on-street parking on London Road.
- Clear signage to reduce risks – e.g. on Howards / Church Lane to alert car drivers to other legitimate road users
- Maintenance of on-street parking on the London Road is necessary, due to the historic nature of the housing in the village and associated lack of off-street parking, and serves to slow traffic to safer speeds.

Survey results:

- *Almost 90% were concerned about traffic on London Road and over 80% said that parking was a real problem on London Road and several people expressed safety concerns regarding the spread and volume of traffic and parking challenges especially at the beginning and end of the school day.*
- *Over 90% expressed the importance of safety for people and children walking and cycling on London Road, Howards Lane and Church Lane.*

When the A31 is closed, London Road becomes more dangerous.

Traffic conclusion: It would become absolutely obvious to anyone who tried to use London Road at peak times that any sizable development would produce increased traffic that would completely block London Road. If a development approaching that in size of Barley Fields were to be constructed, egressing onto London Road, traffic would simply halt. It is at most times of the day, a single lane highway with parked cars (who have no off road parking) on both sides of the road. Traffic frequently meets other traffic head on with aggressive behaviour as a result. Many car owners who park in the centre of the village complain that losing wing mirrors is a regular occurrence. We

would find it incredibly irresponsible if any more traffic were to be allowed to egress on to London Road.

This raises an additional point of safety. Should London Road be blocked, as it regularly is when large vehicles meet each other head on, then there would be no emergency access to a new development at all. Both Howards Lane and Church Lane have seriously tight turns on to London Road and the only available route for emergency vehicles therefore would be to use the A31 north to Bentley, go across country to Blacknest, then down a winding single track road to Binsted before following the same type of road through to Holybourne. Should they meet a tractor en route, then access is completely blocked.

2.2 Health Services Considerations

There are no medical surgeries in Holybourne nor any Dental practices. Some residents in the village offer Homoeopathic treatments which are advertised on social media and in the village magazine. The closest doctors' surgery is the Health Centre on Anstey Road about a half mile from the village and that houses the closest pharmacy too. There are a number of dental practices on the other side of the road from the Health Centre. An additional medical practice exists at the other end of Alton on the Community Hospital site. The Chawton Park Surgery split from Anstey Road some years ago when numbers became too great for that site. Indeed the fact that we are considering the types of facilities that accompany an urban / larger settlement, highlights the fact that we are considering the urbanisation of what is a mid-sized Hampshire village. How many villages are considering whether health and dental services can support a significant increase in size of a village? This highlights the fact that we should be careful when considering significant urbanisation of a village of 1600+ residents.

- We would remind planners that additional basic services such as primary healthcare will need to be provided within the Alton area in line with the expansion of population.

Survey Results:

"...the current infrastructure would not cope with extra development and even small development".

2.3 Well-being Considerations

- We recognise that Holybourne is a safe community where all residents must be able to feel secure when walking or moving around the village. We believe this must be preserved and that this precludes large scale development.
- We believe that the character of the village, defined by both its size and separation from other communities, should be maintained.

Preservation of Community Wellbeing and Mental Health

- We are living in a time of unprecedented mental ill-health and loneliness. This is regularly reported in national news and is impacting people of all ages. Preserving the green fields and open spaces within and around our village is essential for maintaining the overall health, wellbeing and connection of our community. Overdevelopment will fundamentally threaten our community's health.
- Our survey has demonstrated that many villagers express their desire to live in a small village (rather than a town) precisely for the well-being benefits of tranquillity and a close sense of

community. That close sense of community provides a psychologically safe environment where there is a high level of trust. Increasing the size of the village by 35% will profoundly alter its very fabric and is therefore an unreasonable quantum of development and ignores the well-being impact on villagers.

- Whilst we have written about the impact on the traffic and physical safety in our village of proposed development we also want to highlight the impact that the loss of green space will have.

Mental Health

- The fields around our village are vital spaces for our community's mental and physical wellbeing. The link between wellbeing and nature is well proven and this is true for both the adult and children populations in Holybourne. These green areas allow the people of Holybourne to escape the stress of daily life, connect with nature, and engage in physical activities that promote a healthier lifestyle. By walking, running, or simply spending time outdoors in the green space around Holybourne, villagers have a natural outlet to reduce and relieve stress and improve their mental health. Studies have shown that exposure to nature has a positive impact on mental health. Access to green spaces is associated with improved mental health outcomes, including reduced stress, anxiety, depression, and improved overall wellbeing. Without these spaces, individuals will find it harder to find an easily accessible retreat to recharge and restore their mental health.

Physical Health

- The open fields also offer a space for exercise and physical activities such as walking and running. Regular physical activity has numerous benefits for cardiovascular health, weight management, and overall fitness. If these fields were developed, villagers could lose a convenient and free resource for staying active, which will lead to negative impacts on their physical health.
- The proposed development will unquestionably increase the level of traffic posing safety issues for children, the elderly and the large number of disabled students in Holybourne. This will reduce the ease of access to the outdoor spaces due to greater physical risk. Reducing safe access to the roads and paths in and around the village will increase the risk to the local communities overall health.

Social Health

- The proposed development sites serve as a common ground where villagers come together, fostering social interactions and community bonding. People from different walks of life meet here, share conversations, and build connections. This sense of community is invaluable for combating feelings of isolation and loneliness, especially in a small village setting.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the proposed development threatens the very heart of our village's wellbeing. It is crucial that we prioritise the long-term health and happiness of our community members over short-term gains from development. By protecting these spaces, we ensure that the villagers have a sanctuary for relaxation, exercise, social interaction, and mental rejuvenation, all of which are integral to maintaining a thriving and resilient community.

- We believe the scale of development proposed contradicts every single aspect of the government's policy to protect and enhance "a sense of place", which is itself related to the well-being benefits of truly loving the place you live.

Survey results:

- *Over 90% stated that living in a small village contributes to their sense of community and well-being and they feel safe walking around the village at night. And 78% believe that if the village grew it would affect their wellbeing and safety.*

2.4. Community Facilities

- The Village Hall is a popular and well administered community resource. It is managed by a Trust and the trustees are residents of the village. It is the home of the Holybourne Pre-school and is used most evenings by regular groups including the Women's Institute, the Holybourne Village Association and for Yoga. It is maintained and supported by the fees it charges and has in recent years seen a major refurbishment. It has a small (70) capacity, however, and for large public meetings the village has had to go elsewhere such as Eggar's School. It has virtually no onsite parking but disabled access has been improved since the refurbishment. The lack of parking means that those who cannot walk have to be dropped off and this can cause problems.
- The White Hart public house is central to the life of the village and is usually involved in activities taking place in the village such as the Fireworks Display and Carols around the Christmas Tree. It is under new management and the cuisine is highly respected in the village and by visitors. The pub sits on a large plot and this enables it to host outdoor events such as the annual Hartstock music festival. The commercial viability of the pub is positive at a time when many pubs are closing. The popularity of the pub with a wider population does cause problems in the village with respect to parking on London road making it impassable at times.
- Holybourne Theatre is hugely popular with youngsters from the village and wider community. It too has undergone significant refurbishment in recent times and offers a program of varied entertainment throughout the year. Again, however, despite having a reasonable car park, it generates large volumes of traffic in the village particularly at the northern end of London Road.
- The Church of the Holy Rood is far more than a place of worship to the village but it is of course, that, primarily. It is a place that offers a home to many groups and activities and hosts the popular Christian based Teddies playgroup for toddlers as well as coffee mornings and lunches for anyone who wishes to attend. There are regular church services and it is a popular venue for weddings and christenings. The church is available for hire and is used weekly for yoga and regularly for music concerts and bellringing. The Church PCC is dedicated to ensuring the upkeep and maintenance of the church allowing the church to play a full role in the broader community. It is worth noting that the setting of this important village asset would be significantly impacted by development on the fields around the church, removing the uninterrupted view of the surrounding Downs and disrupting the tranquillity of this refuge and place of sanctity.
- The Recreation and Sports Field, like the Village Hall, is managed by a Trust and once again the trustees are all residents of the village with the single aim of providing a recreational and sporting venue for the people of the village. The field is owned by RedBrown Ltd and the Trust pays an annual rent for the field. The principal client for the field is the village Cricket club who pay about £1100 pounds a year for the use of the field. Other clients are charged on a pro-rata basis with a fixed price list for events. The Village Fete is held here and also the annual Fireworks display. The field is also let occasionally to visiting caravan clubs. The Cricket club runs a bar in the pavilion and

regularly have scores of children from 6 to 15 practising and being coached on a Friday night. The children are accompanied by parents and it is a regular meeting place for many villagers.

Survey results:

Over 90% valued the local facilities – shop, pub, church and village hall.

97% valued and used the sports field, playground and country walks including the Pilgrim's Way and St Swithun's Way.

2.5. Open Spaces

We value the rural area in which Holybourne lies. Uninterrupted views across Holybourne Downs are hugely appreciated by the whole community and reinforce the rural nature of the village. This would be lost completely if development takes place in this area. It is completely inappropriate and would remove all the much-valued character of a small rural village. Ultimately this would significantly alter the countryside setting of a 1600-person Hampshire village.

2.6. Recreation

- The largest organised recreational club in the village is Holybourne Cricket Club. It currently fields two adult male teams and several Colt or younger teams. Its home ground is the Recreation and Sports field.
- A veterans football team has also existed and plays on the same field.
- There is a monthly book club which is held in the White Hart.
- A knitting group (crocheters also welcome) meets in the White Hart most Wednesday mornings 10:30-12:30
- Occasional Zumba sessions on the recreation ground
- Yoga classes are held in the church...
- Cycling men and women's groups
- Ladies and men's walking group
- Pilates (at Mint Condition)

Survey Results:

- *All aspects of the village character: pond, church setting, small size of the village, landscapes, are valued by over 90% residents, and 84% felt that a significant increase in size of the village would threaten these.*

2.7. Education

- We believe that communities that do not develop will stagnate and decline. The presence of successful Pre-school, Primary School and Secondary school within the village demonstrates the viability of the village and endorses the value we attach to a wide demographic profile in the village. The village Primary school is currently oversubscribed.

- The popularity of Andrews Endowed school contributes, however, to the traffic mayhem that arises outside the school in the morning and afternoon. Many children are brought to school by car and Complins, Gaskell Close and Cranford Drive all suffer from thoughtless parking by parents. Like many schools, parents simply ignore parking restrictions and abandon their vehicles inconsiderately when delivering children to the school. It becomes an extremely dangerous place for pedestrians and vehicles simply trying to pass the school. Further development in the village would only serve to exacerbate this.
- The largest employer in Alton is Treloar's Specialist School and College for disabled children up to the age of 19. The entrance lies on the northern end of the village and the campus is self-contained. It does generate a huge amount of traffic however and, because some employees choose to park on London Road, also contributes to traffic congestion on London Road. The College has expanded considerably since school and college were consolidated on one site and the village values the service that the organisation offers to disadvantaged young people. The expansion of the site past the Settlement Policy Boundary was widely regretted in the village, however, as it provides a precedent for other development. The development of Treloars should be considered alongside other planned developments around Holybourne. Movement throughout the day of large coaches transporting students to and from Alton College contributes to the risk of traffic movements at the northern end of the village.
- Research at Hampshire County Council reveals that though Eggars School could take additional expansion on student numbers, Amery Hill school, the only other State secondary school in the town, could not and therefore parents would have no choice in where to send secondary age children. The popularity of Andrews Endowed school already impacts on the village severely because of the number of children who are delivered and picked up by car. Any additional students would require new accommodation being built and whereas this might be funded by the Education planning gain, about a thousand pounds per dwelling, this cost falls on the developer and the sum of a quarter of a million pounds could be sought in mitigation. Whether Andrews would value increasing in size remains a question for the school governors, given the consequential loss of green playing field.

2.8. Economic Sustainability

- The largest employer in Alton is Treloar School and College and currently most employees drive into the village to attend work. A number of villagers are employed there, however, and most choose to walk to work. The College has consent to build accommodation for employees and this will improve sustainable working.
- Agriculture takes place all around the village though modern farming methods mean that it employs far fewer people than used to be the case.
- The majority of those villagers of working age tend to leave the village for work, most of those by car. There is little other employment in the village other than the Lawn Care Home and Town and Country Cars garage.
- Since the pandemic the amount of home working in the village has increased and many are self employed. The provision throughout the village of high speed broadband has enhanced the potential for home working.

Survey Results:

- *Whilst 56% of respondents said they believed a sensible balance must be struck between economic factors and preservation of the environment, 64% thought that preservation of the environment should override economic factors.*

2.9 Agriculture/Biodiversity in relation to land at Holybourne

Agricultural land

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) prepared for Alton Town Council in June 2023 confirms that a large proportion of the ANP area is urban/non-agricultural. The land identified for potential development in Holybourne is listed as Grade 2 (Very Good) agricultural land. The SEA advises that it will therefore be more important than is usually the case to protect this 'higher quality agricultural land from future development, and to promote the use of previously developed land where possible.' Currently the UK imports 46% of all food it consumes. While much of this cannot be grown in the UK, much can and productive agricultural land should be treasured, not given up irrevocably to housing that could go elsewhere. Currently the United Kingdom imports all types of grain from abroad and it would seem senseless to build on what is currently productive cereal producing land.

Similarly, the carbon emissions generated by importing food that could be grown in his country are described in respectable sources as "high". It would seem foolish in the extreme to add unnecessary emissions by building on rich food producing land.

Biodiverse and Geodiverse habitat

The land at Holybourne also lies within a Network Expansion Zone which means that it is land adjacent to a Network Enhancement Zone. These Zones are recognised areas close to recognised existing biodiverse and/or geodiverse habitats that are either suitable for habitat re-creation, new habitats or restoration in order to address habitat fragmentation

Over the past decade, policy (for example, The Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity 2020) has demonstrated a move away from the traditional approach of protecting biodiversity, to a wider landscape approach to enhancing biodiversity, as part of the overall aims to halt biodiversity loss.

The ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which highlights that opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

It seems clear that the response to the SEA objective assessment questions viz: will the option / proposal help

- To maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity habitats and networks within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
- To protect and enhance nationally and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites
- To protect and enhance priority habitats and the links between them
- To achieve a net gain in biodiversity
- To support habitat restoration or new habitat creation within the identified Network Enhancement / Expansion Zones
- To support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks and the network of open spaces

has to be, in each case, a resounding ‘NO’.

Hampshire Downs National Character Area (NCA)

The land at Holybourne also falls within Hampshire Downs National Character Area. Again, the response to the SEA objection assessment questions in relation to NCA/landscape would appear to be clearly ‘no’ viz:

Will the option / proposal help?

- To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape, including green infrastructure corridors
- To protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place
- To protect the setting of the South Downs National Park (SDNP)
- To conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character
- To identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place
- To protect and extend/ enhance green infrastructure corridors
- To protect visual amenity
- To retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?

2.10 Current Government Strategy

The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has identified ½ million homes with planning permission still waiting to be built (i.e. held in land banks by developers) and a growing demand for social and affordable housing which is not being met. In July 2023, the Prime Minister and the Housing Secretary reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to building 1m new homes by the end of 2024 ‘without concreting over the countryside’ and stated that ‘homes built in rural areas should meet genuine needs’ (ie affordable housing) and ‘any development should be community-led’.

Whilst Holybourne is included in the ANP, it is in practice a village with its own sense of community and only a loose attachment to Alton. It is, perhaps, an accident of history that it does not have its own Parish Council and is therefore treated as part of Alton in the ANP whilst in fact being quite distinct from it. The agricultural land surrounding the village is an important part of its history and present-day sense of community and well-being and any development would be in direct contravention of the Government’s above-mentioned strategy as well as the clearly- expressed wish of the Holybourne community (in a poll undertaken in June 2023, 95.5% of Holybourne residents stated that they wanted Holybourne to remain a small village, to remain sustainable, and to retain its character and community spirit allowing only small infill developments).

- “Unrivalled for its high quality of life, the district is renowned for its beautiful countryside and heath lands. The area successfully combines a rich natural heritage with prosperous market towns and villages, thus offering a unique blend to residents, businesses and visitors alike.” Quotation from the East Hampshire District Council Website. There is potential to significantly impact the surroundings of Holybourne and indeed Alton.
- From an ecological perspective, the impact of significant urbanisation of the countryside surrounding Holybourne must be very carefully assessed. Whilst Holybourne is not within the

South Downs National Park (by a couple of miles), this Down land is very similar in nature and importantly is an important natural asset for the residents of Holybourne. It would spoil and pollute this beautiful area of North East Hampshire. We should protect the beauty and heritage of this area and not allow it to be built on unnecessarily.

2.11 Flooding

- According to *Know Your Flood Risk*, 1 in 6 homes in the UK at present are at risk of flooding. The UK has seen a rise in flooding issues in recent history, with climate change and land management practices driving an increase in events. One factor that has contributed to the rise in flooding, is the increase of impermeable surfaces, with rapid urbanisation. Higher impermeable cover leads to increased surface runoff, a driver of flooding. More and more houses being built will only increase the percentage of impermeable cover, which will continue to exacerbate the issue. The land can no longer absorb rainfall if it is built over, instead, water runs off impermeable surfaces, into drains which can become overwhelmed, and into rivers, increasing the flood risk in multiple areas. It is unlikely that old drainage systems will be able to cope with the increased burden, and thus sewer and surface water flooding will be more prevalent.
- Holybourne already faces sewerage and wastewater challenges with frequent floods along London Road. Whilst it is assumed that significant proposed developments would not “dock into” this infrastructure the environmental impacts of a large scale development should not be underestimated. The village has not commissioned an assessment as plans are not yet outlined, but the likely environmental impact will be significant. Anecdotally, water runs off the fields and onto London road near the children’s play area.
- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment: EHDC (2018) – extraction relating to Holybourne only.**
<https://cdn.easthants.gov.uk/public/documents/SFRA%20Interim%20Supplement%20Document%202018.pdf>

Policy Reference &/or Site Name	Flood Zone & other sources of flooding	Whole or part of site affected	Proposed use	Vulnerability of use	Sequential Test	Exception Test
SA20 – Treloar College, Holybourne	Zone 1; 1 in 1000 surface water flood risk; Potential risk from groundwater flooding at surface	Small parts of the site at risk from 1 in 1000 surface water flooding and whole site shown at potential risk from groundwater flooding at surface	Educational infrastructure	More vulnerable use	Yes (see Appendix 1) – detailed FRA required.	No

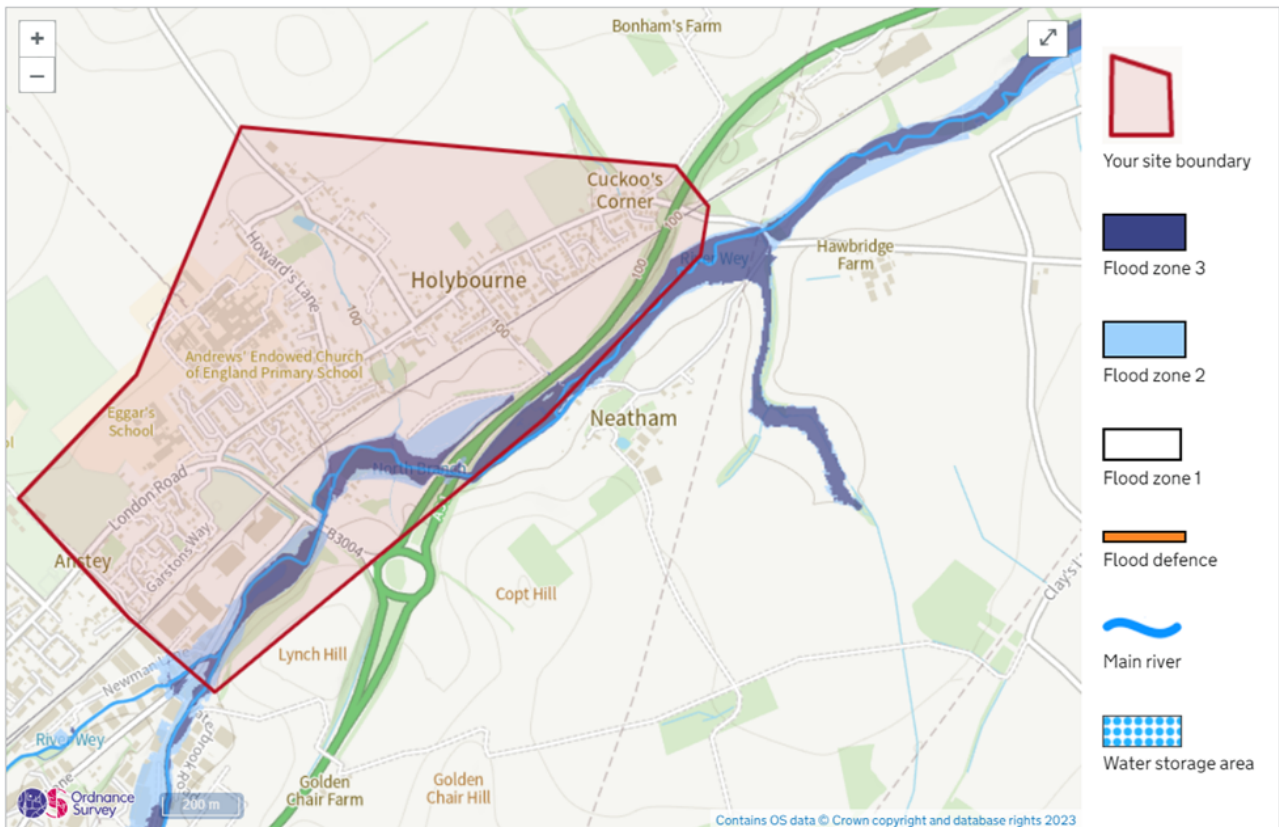
Overall score	Policy Reference and/or LAA Site Reference	Site Name	Flood Zone	Flood Zone Risk Score	Surface Water	Surface Water Risk Score	Groundwater	Groundwater Risk Score	Allocated sites which may trigger a Level 2 SFRA?
5	LAA/AL-001	208-212 London Road, Holybourne	FZ1	0	1 in 1000 L*	2	Surface	3	
4	LAA/AL-007	Large site - Howards Lane, Holybourne	FZ1	0	1 in 1000 S*	1	Surface	3	
4	LAA/AL-008	Small Site - Howards Lane, Holybourne	FZ1	0	1 in 1000 S*	1	Surface	3	
4	LAA/AL-012	Site 1 - Land at London Road, Holybourne	FZ1	0	1 in 1000 S*	1	Surface	3	
4	SA20 - LAA/AL-025	Treloar College, Holybourne	FZ1	0	1 in 1000 S*	1	Surface	3	No – Small risk from surface water flooding and groundwater flooding a surface. A more detailed FRA would be required to mitigate against any risk.
3	LAA/AL-009	Land at London Road, Holybourne	FZ1	0	1 in 1000 S*	1	Surface L*	2	
3	LAA/AL-010	Site 3 - Land at London Road, Holybourne	FZ1	0	None	0	Surface	3	
3	LAA/AL-011	Site 2 - Land at London Road, Holybourne	FZ1	0	None	0	Surface	3	

The Land Availability Assessment (LAA) identifies land available for all types of development. Flood risk has been considered as part of the assessment of available LAA sites using the Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). Those sites that entirely lie within Flood Zones 2 and 3 although considered unsuitable for residential development have been considered for alternative less vulnerable uses. Some sites where only a part of the area is within Flood Zones 2 or 3 have been considered to offer some potential for development subject to further assessment.

With the exception of a small number of sites the Council has been able to allocate the vast majority of development in Flood Zone 1 or in areas free from a designated Flood Zone but may still be prone to either surface water or potential groundwater flooding which can be mitigated through design.

Each risk score from each hazard was added together which resulted in an overall score which listed the sites from highest to lowest risk. The 1 in 1000 extent was used for the surface water flooding because it allows for an estimation of climate change and gives a conservative worst-case estimate of the impact of surface water flooding on the site. Only the groundwater flooding at the surface was used in the ranking. This is because at the surface groundwater flooding is deemed to be the risk that is much more constraining on the development than below ground flooding. Below ground flooding can be managed through mitigation such as avoiding basements and using non-return valves and lining foul sewers.

The highest overall scores were 10 – all in Holybourne were between 3 and 5, so the risk of flooding is considered medium to low in Holybourne. The only area which is high risk (flood risk 3) is the area around the river as shown on the following map (<https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/location>)



The most regularly flooded area in Holybourne however is on Howards Lane adjacent to the church. Run off from the sloping field above the church floods the road to a depth approaching 300mm. This also results in the pond on the far side of the church filling with sediment washed down from the field. Similarly, in heavy rain, Brockham Hill becomes a torrent of water because of the failure of the local authority to keep the run offs clear. London Road will also flood near the junction with Upper Neatham Mill Lane but this does tend to clear quickly once the rain stops.

Flood zone 1 - Locations in flood zone 1 have a low probability of flooding. This means in any year land has a less than 0.1% chance of flooding from rivers or the sea. Some flood zone 1 developments need a flood risk assessment as part of their planning application.

Flood zone 2 - Locations in flood zone 2 have a medium probability of flooding. This means in any year land has between a 1% and 0.1% chance of flooding from rivers and between a 0.5% and 0.1% chance of flooding from the sea. Flood zone 2 developments need a flood risk assessment as part of their planning application.

Flood zone 3 - Locations in flood zone 3 have a high probability of flooding. This means in any year land has a 1% or more chance of flooding from rivers, or a 0.5% or more chance of flooding from the sea. Flood zone 3 developments need to submit a flood risk assessment as part of their planning application.

2.12 Planning policy and considerations

This document summarises a range of planning policy considerations that it feels would not be satisfied by significant greenfield development:

- CP1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development - The scale, nature, design and operating hours of the development are out of keeping with the village of Holybourne

- CP19 - Development in the Countryside - The proposals do not "protect & enhance" rural character.
- CP21 - Biodiversity - Any building on a greenfield site upsets biodiversity by removing and reducing trees, hedging and grass areas.
- CP24 - Sustainable Construction - It is difficult to see how the proposal will adapt to climate change. It appears to be of a standard design and construction.
- CP30 - Historic Environment - Holybourne is an old village with a number of listed buildings and narrow lanes. Alton is a small Georgian market town. The proposal is, in scale, design, nature & operating hours, out of keeping and a further threat to the character of both settlements.
- CP31 - Transport - The development will be almost exclusively accessed by car. Indeed it is designed for the car and motorist. It will add to the existing congestion in this area

3. Alternatives to large scale development in Holybourne

We know that Holybourne has been identified as one of three possible sites for local development. One, at Chawton Park Farm, attracted major opposition despite the fact it has relatively little impact on existing dwellings. The area benefits dog walkers and ramblers but makes no housing contribution to existing communities. The second, at Neatham Down seems to us to offer the best and least intrusive site for development, should development have to take place. Again it would have no impact at all on other local dwellings, has attracted little opposition from Binsted Parish Council in whose parish it sits and would have unsurpassed access to the A31. It is however agricultural land and would be separated from the wider community by the A31. It would require substantial infrastructure as planning gain but does not threaten existing communities with the destruction of anything that is of core value to the community.

An additional alternative that we feel merits serious consideration is offered by the model adopted in Chesham, where the planning authority has taken a far-sighted and innovative approach to generating housing sites. Rather than building on green-field sites they have embarked on a program of gentle densification of existing urban spaces. At a time when pollution from motor vehicles is very much in the public eye and as online shopping is resulting in many town centre properties lying vacant, is it too much to ask the Planning Authority to look hard at this model and perhaps evaluate the social value of large car parks such as the Bank car park, Turk Street Car park and even smaller ones such as Vicarage Hill and the Manor car park and ask the question whether a greater social value would be derived if housing was built on these sites? Car drivers would be discouraged from driving into the town centre making it a cleaner place environmentally and the additional housing population, located right in the centre of the town would generate a rich source of income for commercial enterprises in the town. The use of Neighbourhood Development Orders could facilitate this and coincidentally create large numbers of dwellings while removing the need to despoil the beautiful landscape that surrounds Alton and Holybourne in particular.

4. Summary

Holybourne is a distinct village with its own identity, character and charm. It is a community where people feel safe, value their place in the village and value the village environs. There is a broad demographic spread in the village, sufficient to maintain a Primary and Secondary school but rich with informal groups that provide companionship and engagement for mature residents. It has a separate identity to the town of Alton though falling, **willingly**, within the jurisdiction of Alton Town Council. It is represented by the Alton Town County Councillor, an East Hampshire District Councillor and two Town Councillors. All are aware of our opposition to large scale development in the village.

The village is totally in support of this position taken on their behalf by the Holybourne Village Association. How do we know this? A survey was delivered to every single house in the village and was accessible online and in the village magazine. Results have guided the comments in this report. We have been reassured to know that the village is entirely in support of what has been argued and that 95% of respondents would not welcome any large scale development. We regret massively the attempt by the new landowner of Froyle estate to destroy what has taken hundreds of years to build up and would urge the District Council in its Local Plan to consider the points made in this document. There are alternatives and we regret very much that the Alton Neighbourhood Plan steering group seem obsessed by topographical features and the desire to keep any development longitudinally in the Alton valley when hugely less offensive options are available along the A31. While recognising that the option provided by Neatham Down is outside the ANP area we would support development on this site as being inoffensive having virtually no local residents at all. This compares to around sixteen hundred residents of Holybourne who would see the village they chose to live in, destroyed by disproportionate development.

It is perhaps worth repeating the Government's position on development in the countryside as stated earlier this year. In July 2023, the Prime Minister and the Housing Secretary reaffirmed the Government's commitment to building 1m new homes by the end of 2024 'without concreting over the countryside' and stated that 'homes built in rural areas should meet genuine needs' (ie affordable housing) and 'any development should be community-led'.

Clearly if this to mean anything, then the results of the public consultation in the village must be taken into account which demonstrates unequivocally that the community of Holybourne are very much opposed to any large scale development. The village is tightly ringed by the Settlement Policy Boundary which was last reviewed in 2018. We believe that the current boundary should be retained in its entirety and in its current position and that would be our position in any review of the boundary. This would remove the threat of amenity damaging development and give peace of mind to villagers. Attempts to include areas up Brockham Hill in the past have always been dismissed because of the saturated traffic situation on London Road. Nothing has changed.

The village lies at the base of Brockham Hill and this allows wonderful uninterrupted views up towards Holybourne Down on the top of the hill. It is very much the wish of everyone in the village that this continues. In 2009 a sub-group of the Holybourne Village Association produced the results of a village survey which they titled, "SHIFT" Steering Holybourne into the future together. The top three priorities identified in that survey of almost fifteen years ago were:

- 1) To reduce speed along and make London Road safer
- 2) To protect village assets, the pub, shop and church
- 3) To protect the village from excessive development.

This work, sponsored in part by EHDC remains entirely in line with the results of our own survey and we would be extremely grateful if the Planning Authority could take heed of it.

Jerry Janes - Chairman Holybourne Village Association
September 2023