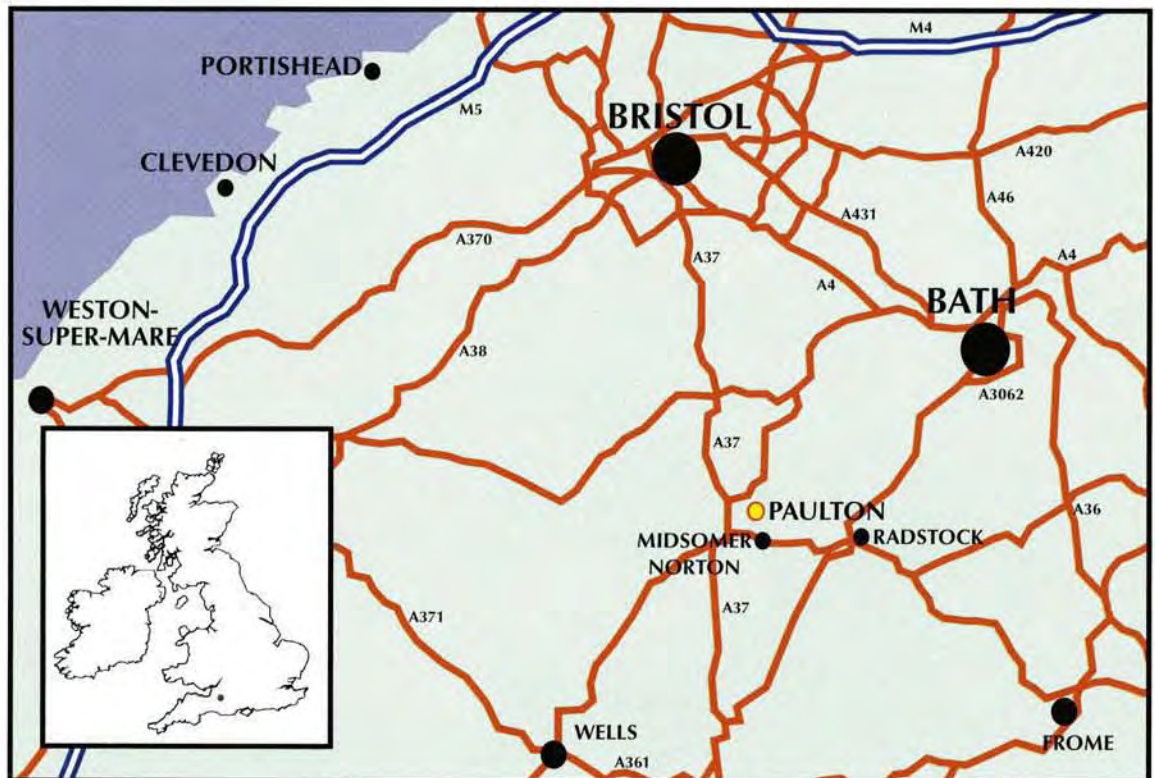


PAULTON

Village Design Statement



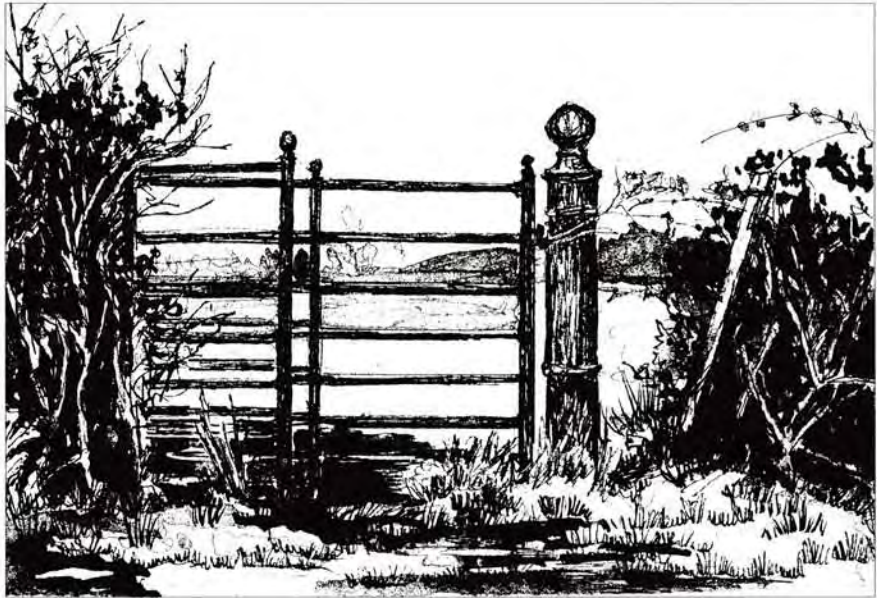
Approved by Bath and North East Somerset Council as
Supplementary Planning Guidance on 29th March 2001

■ Introduction

Paulton is a rural parish with a population of approximately 5000. The community is steadily growing and it is a place where many people come to work, shop and use services. However the village is changing and the distinctive local character is being threatened.

The Government is very concerned that many parts of England are starting to look the same. Local building materials and traditional skills are no longer being used as standardised designs and products are utilised for new building all over the country. Many towns and villages are losing their local distinctiveness and this is having an impact on both the environment and the quality of our lives.

In 1994 the Countryside Commission produced a document called "Village Design: making local distinctiveness count". This encouraged local communities to look at their own areas and think about what makes them special, how these features might be protected and how their village might be improved in the future whether new building takes place or not. As a result, in 1997, Paulton Parish Council set up a Village Design Group. The function of the group was to prepare a Village Design Statement (VDS).



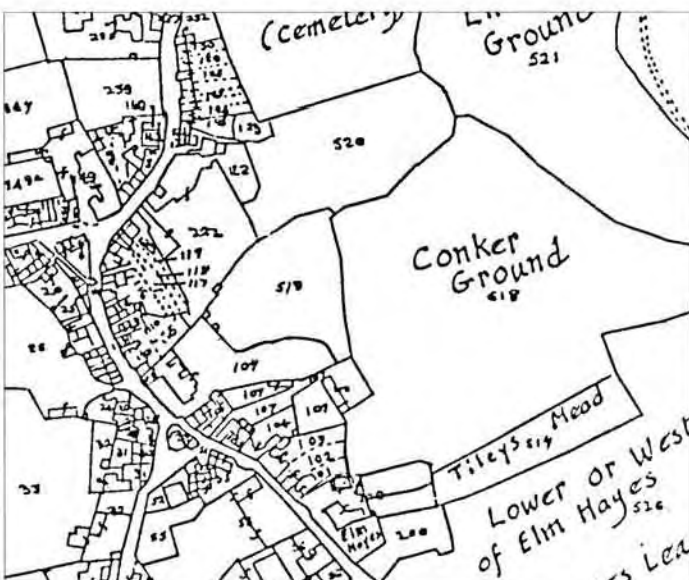
What is a Village Design Statement?

This VDS describes the village and its surrounding countryside at the turn of the millennium and attempts to point out those features of local character that are worth safeguarding for future generations. It also sets out the criteria which should govern any future development in the village.

Public consultation sessions were held in the village in June 1999 and October 2000 when parishioners were asked to express their concerns and aspirations for Paulton and to comment on ideas put forward by the VDS group. These sessions were important because it was essential that a wide cross-section of opinion was sought so that people's views and local knowledge could be brought together for the benefit of the whole village.

The VDS group has now drawn up a set of guidelines about building in the village and the relationship to the open spaces and surrounding countryside. These guidelines will be used in future decision making about the development of Paulton. The VDS has been approved by Bath & North East Somerset Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Plan and will be used in the formal planning process when decisions about developments in the village are being made.

Paulton Village Design Group
March 2001





■ The history of Paulton

The earliest sign of people living in the place now known as Paulton is a Bronze Age round barrow dating from about 2000 BC. The site was probably chosen because it was fertile, sheltered and had a supply of clean water nearby in the Cam.

The village as we know it today probably grew up around a Roman villa the remains of which were found on the north side of the village. The Fosseway was only three miles away, and this route would have been used for travelling more widely.

Paulton's name is believed to come from the old English word "peall", meaning a raised place and "ton" settlement, which together mean a "village on a hill". This can still be clearly seen in the aerial photograph in the centre of this report.

The village grew in the Middle Ages and a permanent church was built in the 14th and 15th Centuries, incorporating a Saxon font. This is probably the only surviving relic of an earlier foundation.

The village flourished, helped by good soil. Field names such as Winterfield, Bloomfield, Springfield and Summer Hayes are indicators of the open field system of farming used until the 16th Century. It was a typical agricultural community until the coal mining industry started to develop in the 17th Century.

Coal mining then dominated the character of the village in the 19th and early 20th Centuries.

Records show that between 1700 and 1850 there were 24 pits within a two-mile radius of Paulton. The deepest reached 1373 feet at Old Tynning. The widest shaft was 9 feet at Paulton Engine, but several others were only 4'-6' wide. There were no cages then and men would have been lowered by steam power in pairs clinging to a cross bar on a rope. The industry was so productive and profitable that a coal canal was dug from Bath to Paulton to collect the "black gold". The canal was completed in April 1805 and operated until November 1898 when it was superceded by the railway and stations were built at Hallatrow and Goosard.

The village prospered because of this industry. Houses were built, usually in the form of terraces and local services were provided including the Memorial Hospital. The first hospital was built at Ham to treat miners' injuries.

■ Village character

Paulton, until recently, was the largest village in Bath and North East Somerset with half the population of the city of Wells and 3000 less than the market town of Shepton Mallet.

In the early 1600s, the village probably had a population of several hundred with most people working on the land or digging coal by hand in small scale operations known as bell pits. There would have been the usual tradesmen such as blacksmiths, saddlers, bakers and shopkeepers.

The coming of the industrial revolution, the advent of steam driven machinery and the availability of local fuel, saw Paulton flourish along with the neighbouring towns of Midsomer Norton and Radstock. Iron founding was very important and even today the remains of products made at the old Evans foundry in the form of stiles, bollards and railings can be seen in the local landscape.

In the 19th Century, the village had thirteen public houses, a parish church and three chapels. The religious fervour of the hard working Paultonians could have been intensified by the visit of John Wesley, the Methodist preacher, in 1776.

Paulton was then and still is a working village which grew rapidly in the 19th and 20th Centuries and is continuing to develop in the 21st. This stage of growth shows today in the character of the village.

The Early Core

The map on the right depicts Paulton in the 1880's and shows a concentration of cottages, shops and public houses around the High Street. There was a regular if notoriously rough market which took place at the Inn Square and a thatched inn originally stood where the Red Lion now stands.

Industrial Expansion

With the development of the coal mining industry there was a demand for more cheap houses and these were usually built in terraces using local stone. Many had slate roofs as the slate could be easily transported on the canals and railways.

Some of these terraces have date stones, for example Hope Place 1898, which commemorate their construction.

The three chapels were built at roughly the same time.

It is these types of development that many claim gives Paulton its distinctiveness and may help towards the granting of "Conservation Area" designation for the centre of the village in the near future.





Purnells in 1938



The 20th Century

The 20th Century saw mining give way to manufacturing in Paulton. Paulton became a primary printing centre with the growth of Purnells which employed over 2000 people at its peak in the 1970s. The stone built factory buildings with corrugated iron roofs have now been replaced with more modern buildings but fewer workers are now employed as technology has steadily advanced .

However people still need houses and Paulton has provided many in the last 100 years. The first major expansion was in the form of council housing, and this created the first opportunity for many families to secure tenure with decent accommodation and large gardens. These houses were built with certain minimal criteria known as Parker-Morris standards, named after the two architects who designed the first 3 bed semis with decent kitchens and indoor toilets. This was one of the first examples of the standardisation of British housing that so many people feel has eroded local distinctiveness across the country.

No doubt ideally all modern housing should be built to these generous space standards, but this is no longer possible as land values escalate in this crowded little island of ours.

The 1960s saw an explosion in private house building. Following Harold Macmillan's statement in 1957 that "you've never had it so good", people found that they had enough cash or could get enough credit to afford their own home. This started the private estate boom, which affected Paulton as much as many other communities. Once again standardisation and building to a formula was common practice. Open plan estates based on more generous North American prototypes became common and English garden city ideals were fashionable in the 1970s. Estates like those at Valley View and Brookside in Paulton provide perfectly acceptable homes and are much sought after, but their layout and materials owe nothing to building traditions in Paulton.

It is naive to suggest that all new housing in Paulton should be built in terraces of white lias stone. However more recognition of the character and quality of the local architecture could be offered, by adapting the layout of new developments, materials and architectural features so that any new building looks as if it "belongs" to Paulton.

■ Countryside and wildlife

Paulton is surrounded by fields mainly used for dairy farming and the importance of the relationship of the countryside to the built up area was stressed by villagers who came to the exhibitions in 1999 and 2000.

Villagers value the opportunity to access the countryside along the excellent network of footpaths that exist around the village and enjoy the variety of the habitats they walk through. In a recent survey by the Cam Valley Wildlife Group 268 plant species were identified in the parish.

National planning policy is attempting to restrain the amount of development which takes place on green field sites and that is to be welcomed. However this policy is a double edged sword. It is likely that in order to protect the countryside more sites within the village must be developed possibly at densities that exceed recent proposals.

Whether development occurs on "brown field" or green field sites, there must always be safeguards for wildlife and the environment.

What do we value and wish to protect?

The Cam Valley

This is a very valuable habitat with important links to the industrial archaeology of the area. Many villagers have memories from their childhood of the river and the waterside meadows. The tranquil character of this area must be retained.

Trees and Hedgerows

Copses and mature trees are valuable, both scenically and as habitats for animals and plants. Encouragement should be given to retain and improve the population of tree cover in the parish. Where trees are affected by development proposals that are subject to planning control, every effort must be made to retain or replace them. Certain hedgerows do now have some protection under the law. There are several important groups of trees within the village for example in the Memorial Park, at Boxbury Hill and at Elm Hayes field. Mature trees such as these should not be threatened by new development. They should be sensitively incorporated into proposals so as not to generate calls by new residents to fell or lop trees which are "inconvenient".





Coal Spoil Heaps

Coal tips or batches such as found at Old Mills, Paulton Engine and Simon's Hill are important for wildlife because they have acidic soils not usually found in the area. These sites should be safeguarded from development because of their wildlife interest and value for industrial archaeology.

Old Industrial Sites

These are often a refuge for wildlife, particularly where there are derelict buildings as they offer access for bats and roosting birds such as swallows and owls. In 1999 Paulton lost its only known site for the dainty Fern-grass and the Oxford Ragwort when the former Ashman's boot factory site was cleared. These species are both locally uncommon and are characteristically found on waste ground. Other rarer species could be lost in future. Assessments of sites must be undertaken before future developments in order to avoid any further reduction to the biodiversity of Paulton.



Access into the Countryside

Easy and safe access into the countryside for all must be considered when new developments are proposed.

Directions for the Future?

Homes, domestic gardens and the landscaping around new housing developments are very important habitats for wildlife. Links should be maintained between Paulton and the open countryside to allow wildlife to move freely from place to place.

Wherever possible, boundaries should be created using native hedgerows and trees rather than harder edges, especially where the site meets the countryside. The loss of hedging reduces habitats and wildlife interest and also erodes the rural character of the village where those hedges are replaced by larch lap fencing and low walls of concrete blocks.

As the spaces in and around Paulton are used for development, builders should be required by planning conditions to retain something of value to the village such as improved habitats, replacement planting and play and social spaces for residents.



■ Paulton in the landscape

Paulton sits on a limestone ridge about 140 metres above sea level. On its north side it falls to the largely undeveloped and rural Cam Valley, while on its southern edge the village hugs the 150 metre contour line where the land falls to the built up valley of Wellow Brook as it flows through Midsomer Norton.

In geological terms Paulton falls within the Carboniferous deposits which make up the coal field. Coal is interspersed with the white Liassic limestone known locally as "white lias". The white lias and the harder Pennant sandstone of which there are outcrops on Highbury Wood and Cloud Hill north of the village have been used to build many of the houses and older factories in the village. Lias was quarried as recently as the 1930s from small pits in Farrington Road, Newtown and Bowlditch. The geological structure which underlies Paulton means that springs frequently occur on the hillsides and the most easily identified is the one that feeds the drinking trough on Paulto Hill.

The relatively high position of Paulton allows for splendid views all around, towards Ammerdown, Pen Hill and the Mendips to the south and Oozles to the north. The ridge position effectively means that the village is surrounded by countryside which adds to its distinctive character.

The countryside that surrounds Paulton is very rich and diverse with many small copses, hedgerows and habitats such as streams and meadows that are of significant wildlife interest. Paulton is lucky to have the very active Cam Valley wildlife group working in its area.

Man has made an impact on the landscape however and particularly evident is the legacy from the mining era. The Old Mills Colliery site is very distinctive but there are many remains of spoil heaps and old collieries more subtly hidden in the landscape which are still of great historic significance to the village.

The village has an intimate relationship with the surrounding countryside and it is easy to access from a well marked network of footpaths. Any new developments should facilitate such routes in a safe, convenient and well planned way. The parish of Paulton has important landscape elements. Paulto Hill, Cam Valley and the ridge which runs to Farrington all contribute to the character of the village and should be treated with respect.



Paulton from Clapton Lane



■ School project

The usefulness of the VDS will be judged by succeeding generations so the group asked the children of Paulton Junior school if they would help with the project.

Below is a collage of "Our Homes" as drawn by year 6 of 1999/2000.

Our thanks to the children and teacher Mrs Janet Furzland.



Your Opinions

These are some of the opinions expressed after the exhibition in 1999

"No more building between Paulton and Midsomer Norton and Hallatrow"

"Need inexpensive housing for local people"

"New housing estates need more tree planting and landscaping"

"Redevelop rundown village centre sites to regenerate areas that are slowly dying"

"Reuse old materials" "We need a skateboard park"

"Families with children are essential to the life of the village"

"Put pressure on owners of derelict land to tidy up and replace with housing"

"Need small business units on the Purnells site"

"Big lorries visit the Polestar site, and as a result the VDS is a farce"

"Please, please improve the Gateway precinct"

These and all the other observations are summarised in a report available from the parish council office.



■ Transport

British life has been transformed by the motor car. There are over 20 million cars on British roads, a number which is forecast to grow by 60% by 2021.

According to the 1991 census 82% of households had at least one car and it is expected that the 2001 survey will show a growth in this figure and also in second and third car ownership.

How much should we plan for vehicles?

Should we allocate more land for vehicular use? This is a subject that troubles many countries in the world with seemingly few solutions.

Current national planning policy is not trying to pander to the car. In many locations planning approvals without the need for parking spaces are being granted in urban areas in an attempt to encourage people to use public transport. This is not so easily accomplished in rural areas and villages like Paulton.

Although there are regular bus services through the village they may not provide the flexibility or frequency to encourage people to abandon their cars. In the foreseeable future this report does not envisage any serious changes in car ownership and usage in Paulton. Rather the intention of this VDS is to welcome initiatives to improve safety and to provide for the safe passage of all users through the village.



■ Pedestrians

A lasting heritage from Paulton's coal mining days is the network of village footpaths. Local miners walked to the many pits from their homes, sometimes several miles, and helped to establish footpaths as rights of way. These have been continually used and are now well maintained and enjoyed by villagers.

We are fortunate that paths have been retained through new developments and form a series of safe ways both to the village centre and also outwards into the countryside.

With the nationwide campaign to promote safe, environmentally friendly alternatives to car travel, we must ensure that the need for safe pedestrian ways is fulfilled in any future developments.





Local distinctiveness

Paulton is a large village and shows development from every decade over the last 300 years. What is distinct about the place? What are the familiar sights that give it its character?

The Terrace

Stone built ranks of houses were put up in the 19th and early 20th Centuries to provide cheap and simple accommodation for the people employed in the mining and manufacturing industries. The names of Jubilee Terrace, Hope Place. etc. show the historical association with events and the religious respect of the time.

These terraces are typically made from squared and coursed local white lias limestone dug from pits nearby and bonded with lime and ash mortars. It was rare for cement to be used as this came to prominence during the period of the 2nd World War. These houses usually face onto the road, often with a small front garden and larger plot behind.

The roofs were usually covered in slate brought from Wales by railway or the canal. They had brick or stone chimney stacks. The gables and eaves of the roof were usually finished off with timber fascias and barge boards, a few of which were decorated and to which were fixed cast iron, half round gutters and round down pipes. Colours would typically have been muted dark greens and maroons but dominated by black which pervaded decoration in the Victorian era.

Windows were normally double hung sashes, set in a natural stone frame and lias walls making the buildings look neat. The window surrounds, comprising lintels, sills and jambs were made from "Bath" stone quarried near Bath and Bradford on Avon.

The doors were timber, some decorated, some plain depending on the cost of the house. Occasionally there was some ornamentation in the form of decorated window frames, bay windows and stained glass.

Unfortunately the passing of time has seen much change to these buildings, the most common alterations being to roofs and windows.

The slate roof is long lasting and many still survive in Paulton but as replacements are needed, often at the insistence of mortgage providers, cheaper artificial alternatives have been used. The most common is the double roman tile in clay or more recently concrete, often in varying shades of terracotta and browns. The piecemeal replacement of roofs of terraces does have an impact on the visual

appearance of the village, but in most cases it is totally beyond any planning controls and is entirely legal.

Windows have been replaced in over 80% of older housing in the village, initially with aluminium double glazed units and now more recently with UPVC. These have been installed for reasons of energy conservation, sound insulation and low maintenance, but in many cases have had a damaging visual effect on the building. Although plastic window technology is improving all the time, it is still not capable of creating the slim, subtle curves of the glazing bar offered by properly constructed sash windows.

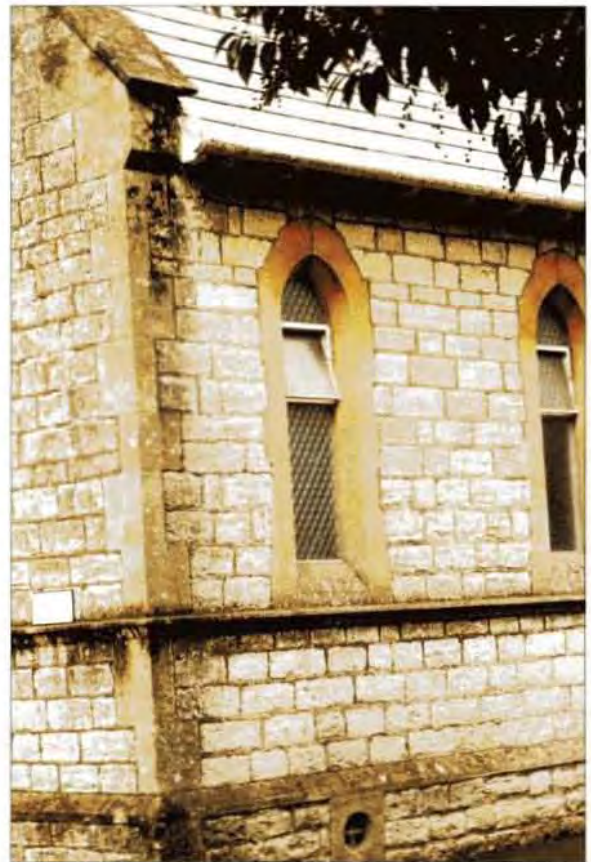
Recent research by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has shown that the most valuable properties are usually those maintained with their original detail. Improvements such as plastic windows often erode a building's character and rarely show a return on the financial investment.

Replacement of roofs and windows rarely requires planning permission unless they are in a listed building, but creating an access into a garden from a classified road always requires consent. In one particular terrace, the use of front gardens for car parking spaces has eroded the quality of the buildings. The need to do this is quite understandable if there is nowhere to park. Fortunately it is not common in the village where small front gardens and stone boundary walls have been retained to the benefit of the appearance of the village.

Modern Estates

There are a great variety of estate layouts in Paulton, most of them owing their design to the latest planning fashion or to dictates of national and regional development companies. It is not possible to draw on these for any themes of local distinctiveness. Buildings now are usually built with a shallower roof pitch, artificial stone of a different colour and texture than local materials and have brown stains on timber works instead of white and pastel paints. The modern varied approach to architectural detailing creates a confused visual picture.

It is the varied form of this post war development which has radically opened up the street pattern of Paulton and altered its character in the process.





What should we strive for in the future?

Form

In this small island of ours we can no longer afford to build in such loose densities, so it seems that the terrace house could be returning. Many national house builders are building in this form and it is to be encouraged in Paulton.

Materials

No one expects to build on a large scale with white lias limestone but some general rules on the use of materials should be adhered to. The dominant colour of Paulton is white/grey, not yellow and this should be considered in planning decisions. Secondly, the character buildings of Paulton are essentially very simple with subtle use of stone for window surrounds and decoration. Fussy use of bricks, particularly soldier courses supported on metal lintels are not typical of Paulton and have only been possible in the last 30 years with the "Catnic".

Roofs should typically be slate, slate substitutes or tiles that resemble clay or faded clay. The colour associated with aged clay is dull and dark orange, not brown and careful thought about these materials should be given at the planning stage. Salvaging material is very important. Scarce supplies of lias stone should not be lost to the village as happened during the recent redevelopment of the Ashman's site in Plummer's Hill. Conditions should be applied to planning permissions so that local stone is retained on site and incorporated into any new developments, including boundary walls and front elevations.

Retaining the best of the past should be important to a community and there are several wonderful buildings within the village that have been lovingly cared for and have a formal status, recognising their worth. Gerardene, Hill House etc. are listed buildings and are protected by law from demolition or unsympathetic alteration, but there are many artefacts from Paulton's past which do not have this protection. Stone stiles, mileposts, metal work such as gates, stiles and railings made by Evans Foundry at Paulton Engine are extremely important but they have no protection. This statement recognises their value and recommends that these local treasures are identified, catalogued, protected wherever possible and retained as part of the planning and development process.



Locally made gates at the Park

■ Landscape and open space

Paulton is set in a marvellous rural landscape which many take for granted, but which people see as being under threat.

At the consultation sessions, many villagers stated that the retention of Paulton as a single entity is very important. They consider the village's separation from other settlements to be particularly threatened on the south side of the village. The visual and environmental value of the land to the north of Old Mills is extremely significant as aerial photographs in this report show, as well as the photograph taken from Clapton Lane (page 8). This VDS confirms that this gap should be retained.

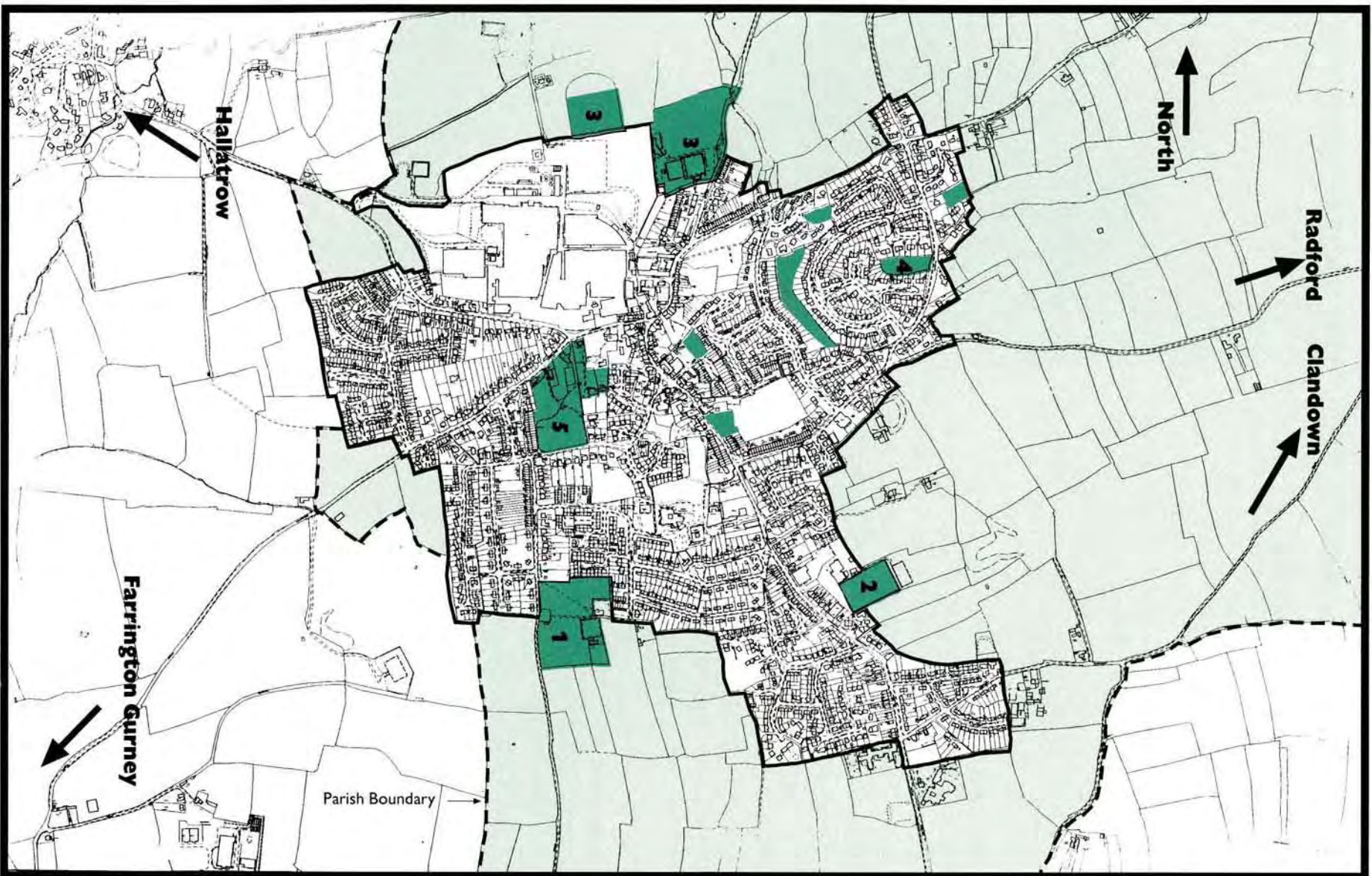
Within the village there are many important spaces, some green some built up. The map shows the importance of green spaces within the village together with valuable trees. Viewed from Paulto Hill or the footpath behind Valley View Road, Paulton appears a leafy place and this pattern should be retained and improved in certain parts of the village.

Some housing estates have matured well. Laurel Drive for example is extremely leafy, but several are very devoid of tree planting which helps to soften the urban landscape. With the agreement of local people and to a programme, perhaps led by the parish council, additional tree planting should be considered in the public areas of the 20th Century estates.

At the moment only five groups of trees are formally protected within the village. These are around the Old Vicarage and in front of the former Purnell offices, on the slopes below Valley View Road, Elm Hayes and Ham Field. Individual trees are also protected at the hospital and on Phillis Hill.

Hedgerows are important habitats and corridors for wildlife. There is now more control over the removal of hedgerows than there used to be and hopefully many will now be retained. It is vital that the continuity of habitat afforded by hedgerows and other linear planting be considered when deciding new developments. Planting within developments and along their boundaries (particularly with countryside) should be built into planning approvals. This will not only help wildlife survive, but will provide soft landscaping edges to the village and reduce the impact of new buildings on the countryside.





Areas making a contribution to the rural setting of Paulton

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1. Miners Welfare Recreation Ground 2. Paulton Rovers F.C. 3. Greyfield Leisure Complex 4. Wallenge Open Space 5. Memorial Park

■ Design Statement recommendations

1. Paulton as a Separate Entity

The spread of the village should be contained largely within its existing boundaries (as identified on the map on page 17), in order to preserve its separate identity and to maintain open countryside all around its margins. This is particularly important in relation to Midsomer Norton on the southern edge and Hallatrow on the north west.



2. Buildings

The village supports the idea of building on previously developed sites known as "brown field" in preference to using green fields. However whenever building occurs there should be a greater recognition of local character and local materials in the design of new developments. Any natural local materials should be retained for re-use on the site, or within the village. The terrace is an important architectural component of Paulton's character and is the most suitable means of providing new houses within the village as can be seen in the recent development at Plummer's Hill.



3. Details

Attention should be paid to local traditions and architectural styles in the design of new developments rather than adopting anonymous concepts which are the same all over England. It is important that local materials are used when available. When using reconstructed stone, the tones of white lias should be used, emphasising a coursed grey/white structure. So that houses can be built at greater densities, dwellings should be built close to the roadline thereby creating a tighter urban form.

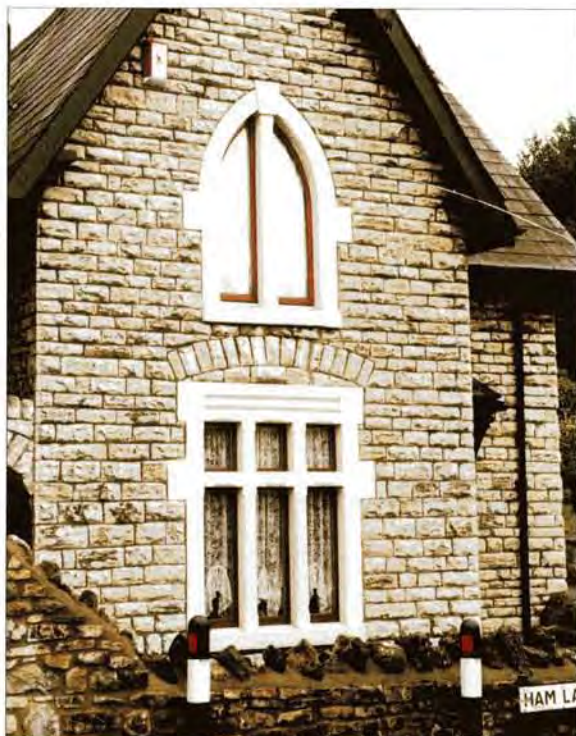


Finally, the roofscape is important with the eaves following the frontage line and hips being used sparingly. Tile colours should be sympathetic to local tradition as should the design and colour of window frames and doors. Roofscapes lose interest when chimneys are eliminated as in the above photograph and this should be resisted.



4. Open Spaces

Certain open spaces are important for the village. They offer opportunities for play and relaxation and also enable a transition between the built up area and the countryside. The three main sporting venues - Paulton Rovers, Winterfield Road, the Miners Welfare Recreation Ground,



Tennis Court Road and Greyfield Sports, Bristol Road are important in this respect and make a valuable contribution to the character of the village. The statement concludes that the sporting venues and the open spaces shown on the map on page 17 are so valuable that they should remain open and not be developed for either housing or employment purposes.

5. **Employment**

Paulton should continue to be a working village, providing employment opportunities for future generations. Small businesses, manufacturing and retailing from the same site already exist in the centre of the village and at Old Mills. New, small scale combined manufacturing and retail outlets should be encouraged along with new businesses and the retention of the existing businesses and industries. To that extent new building and the adaptation of existing sites for this purpose within the village are welcomed. However this should be achieved with regard for good design and the provision of effective landscaping appropriate to the village and its rural setting. Opportunities clearly exist for the improvement and potential redevelopment of sites in High Street and Church Street.

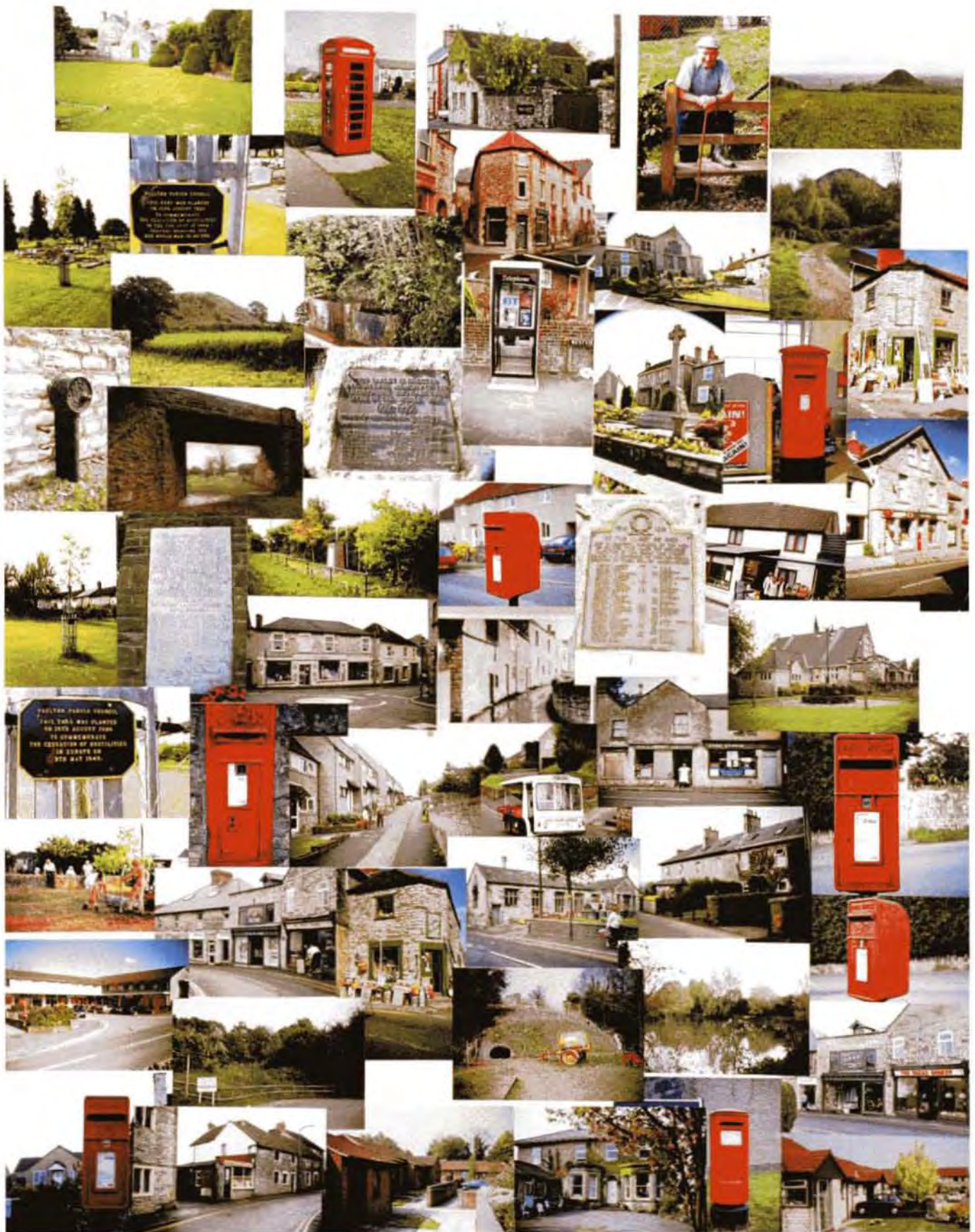
6. **Wildlife**

The parish is rich in wildlife, with several locations providing very significant flora and fauna species. This statement recommends that all development proposals respect the needs of wildlife and wherever possible enhance the quality of habitats.

7. **Traffic and Movement**

It seems unlikely that funding for radical solutions to Paulton's through traffic problems will be available in the foreseeable future. A 20mph speed limit should therefore be implemented on the B3355 from the Memorial Hospital to the junction with Downsway and along the Farrington Road to the junction with Downsway. Other traffic calming measures are welcomed, subject to suitable monitoring and adjustments to their operation, so that everyone can benefit.

Pedestrian safety is extremely important and safe routes around the village are to be encouraged. Where these do not exist they should be accommodated in new developments and where they do exist, every opportunity should be taken to make them safer and convenient to use.



The Village Design Group wishes to thank the following for their help.

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Michael Green
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