



# *Compton*

*A Village Design Statement*

# ***Compton Village Design Statement***

***October 2005***

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## 1. Introduction

The Village Design Statement (VDS) is intended to supplement policies in the Development Plan (currently the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006) as it relates to the Parish of Compton. As a 'material consideration' the guidance contained in this statement provides an explanation of West Berkshire Council's policy position and while it is not a statutory document it has been subject to public consultation. The VDS was adopted by West Berkshire Council at the Downlands Area Forum on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2005 as non statutory local authority approved guidance which is a 'material consideration' in terms of determining planning applications.

The VDS aims to provide a context for new development, based on local character and sense of place. Its purpose is to manage change, whether that is major new development or small scale alterations and additions (some of which may not even require planning permission). It is therefore designed to be used by

- ◆ West Berkshire Council
- ◆ Compton Parish Council
- ◆ Statutory agencies and undertakers
- ◆ Planners, developers, builders, architects, designers
- ◆ Local community groups and businesses
- ◆ House and land owners and occupiers

This statement concentrates on the design elements of buildings, spaces and the natural environment of the village of Compton together with the rural area surrounding the village. To put the built design in context we have taken a broad overview of the Parish of Compton's landscape setting and then focussed in on the buildings, their shape, and the density of dwellings, their pattern of development (residential, commercial, recreational, and agricultural), the roads and pathways, the spaces and the views, both from and into the village of Compton. We have concentrated on the nature of the buildings themselves, their sizes, the material used, and their various styles. We have presented our analysis of the Parish's design mainly in a photo format with some explanation regarding detail. If you wish to know more about the history of Compton we recommend you read, 'A History of Compton' by Linnet McMahon and published by Compton Parish Council.

## 2. Consultation

In 2003 Compton Parish Council formed a sub-committee to investigate the creation of a Parish Plan. This was successful and the following actions were taken:

- ◆ An exhibition of old photographs of Compton was held in the village hall at which the Parish Plan was advertised.
- ◆ A steering group was formed from interested parishioners.
- ◆ A working party was formed to deal with a section of the Plan called 'Parish Design'.
- ◆ One item in the Action Plan arising from the Parish Design section of the Parish Plan was to create a Village Design Statement.
- ◆ The working party met on a number of occasions to discuss the results of its study of the village design.
- ◆ The core team put together a draft statement and consulted with the Parish Council and the public at drop-in sessions at the Village Hall.

In addition, more formal consultation on the draft VDS was undertaken for four weeks from 16<sup>th</sup> August to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2005. West Berkshire Council consulted with a number of statutory agencies, national interest groups, relevant parish/town councils, local interest groups and local developers (or their agents). Copies of the draft document were also available for inspection at the Council Offices in Market Street, Newbury, all public libraries in the District and on the Council's website. Comments were received from six organisations that were taken on board as appropriate.



### 3. Compton as it is and its visual character



The Parish of Compton lies in a hollow in chalk downland at the junction of the upper branches of the winterbourne stream called the Pang. It is in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The underlying rock is chalk with flints. The area is completely rural and relatively free from traffic noise. The Parish boundaries extend from the Ridgeway long distance path in the north to Floods Cross, one and a half miles to the south of the village.

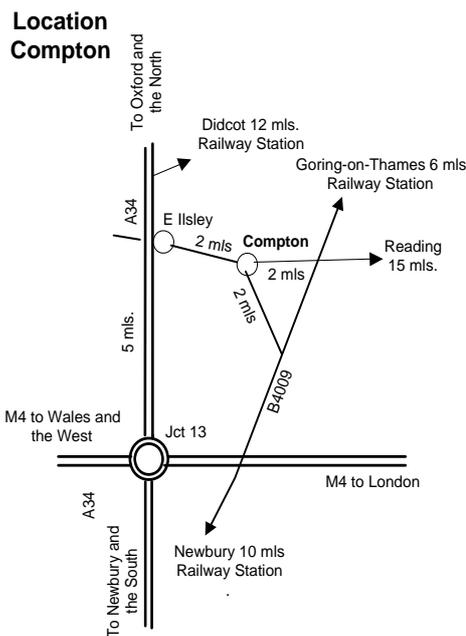
The western boundary is well marked by the Newbury Road where rolling downland begins and there are beautiful views.

The northern boundary borders Stocks Meadow (see map on Page 4). A potentially interesting, possibly Roman site. It is a beautiful, unspoilt and undisturbed meadow with a winterbourne stream. The field between the old goods yard and the houses of Yew Tree Close, a fairly new estate, is a hillside pasture with fine views over the village.



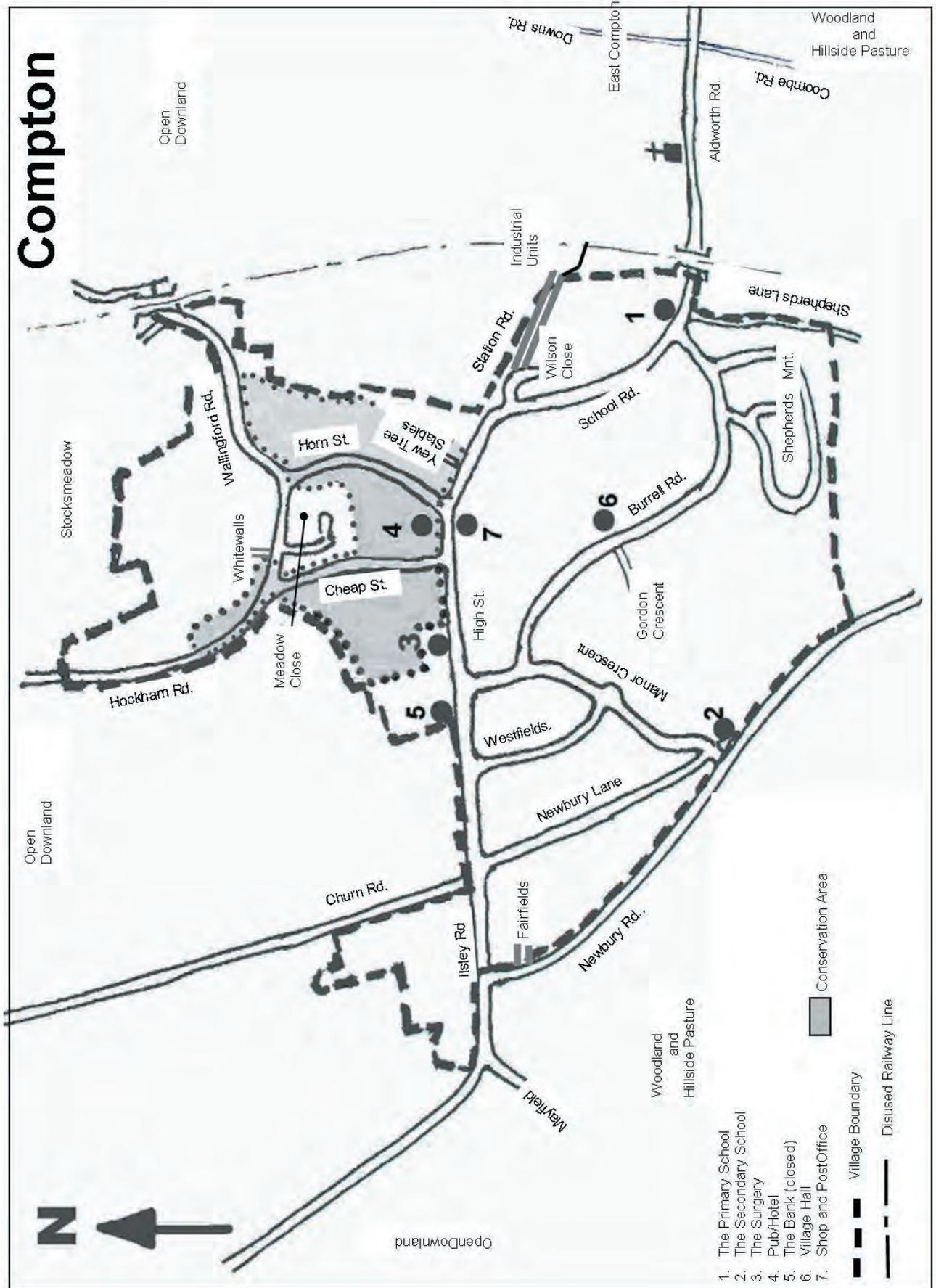
East Compton is a cluster of sporadic, residential houses and cottages outside the village boundary. It was originally sited around and opposite the church, although in more recent times there has been development northwards, on the Downs Road from the Old Red Lion public house, now a private dwelling and close to the junction of Downs Road with the Aldworth Road, to Greyladies House.

The buildings in the landscape outside the village are mainly farms and barns; New Farm, Woodrows Farm, Cheseridge, with Church Farm and Stocks Meadow Farm and Barn closer to the village. Most of these remain as working farms although some of the buildings are now used for other purposes.





# Compton



1. The Primary School
2. The Secondary School
3. The Surgery
4. Pub/Hotel
5. The Bank (closed)
6. Village Hall
7. Shop and Post-Office

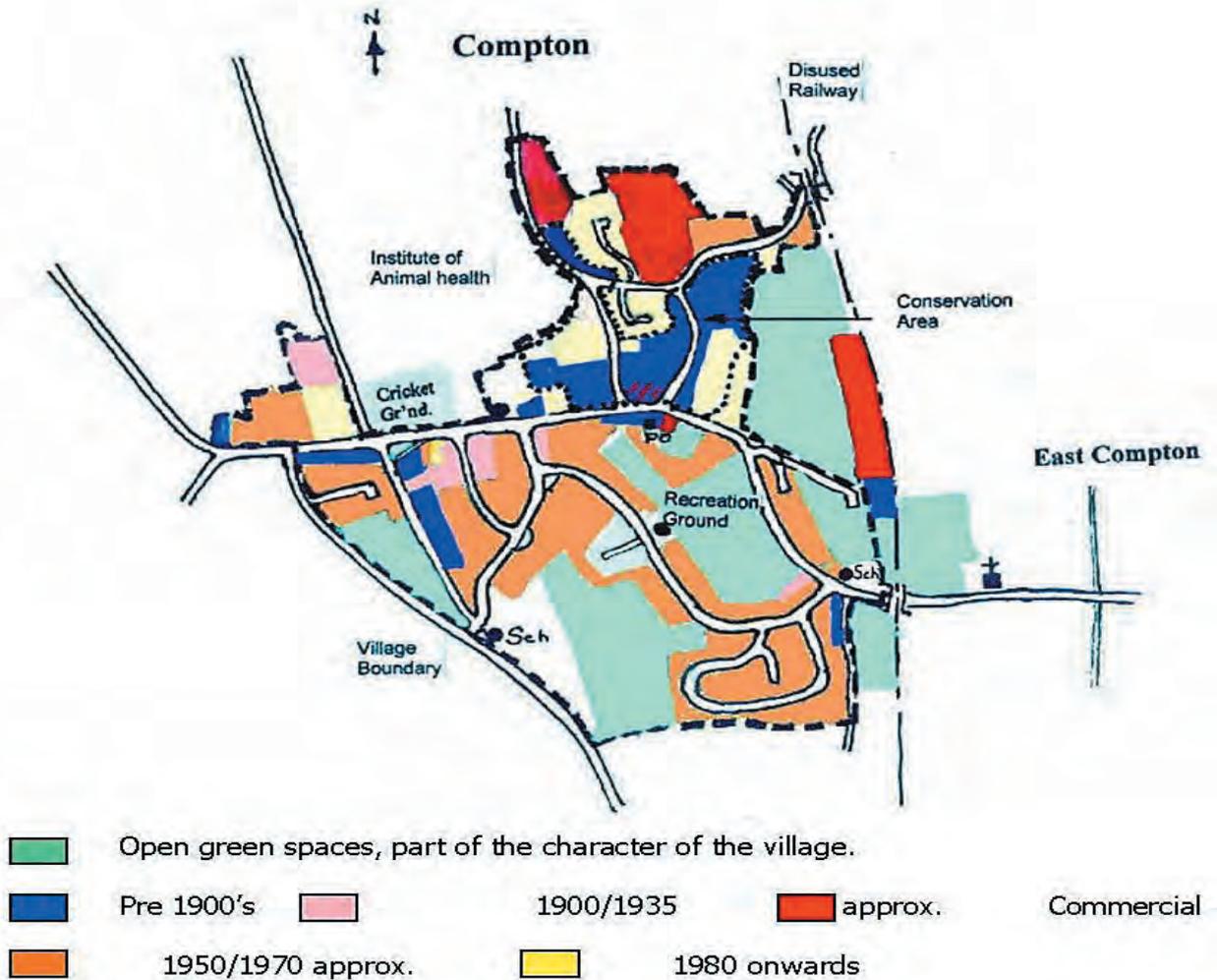
-  Conservation Area
-  Village Boundary
-  Disused Railway Line



Open Downland

## 4. Pattern of the Village

Compton is made up of several distinct zones.



The central area of the village radiates from the village shop and public house/hotel, which sit opposite each other on the High Street. Immediately to the north is a concentration of older residential properties interspersed with a few residential developments (Whitewalls Close, Meadow Close, Yew Tree Stables and Mews) Part of this area makes up the existing Conservation Area.

The open green spaces edged with a high mature hedge of various native species between Meadow Close and Hockham Road are considered by the local community as good examples of the appropriate use and availability of open spaces within the village boundary.

To the south of the High Street is an area with several large open plan estates.

The area to the east of the High Street and north of the Village Hall is a large open area with two football pitches, a football pavilion and a children's play area, all surrounded by mature native hedges and trees.

Residents feel this area could benefit from the addition of some large native species of trees, in particular at the junction areas. In this area is situated the Village Hall.



Gordon Crescent

Trees in a residential road emphasise that Compton is a rural village



**Open green spaces at Manor Crescent**



**The Recreation Ground from School Road**

Further along to the east (Shepherds Mount) is an estate of relatively modern residential properties of varying designs. The use of trees and shrubs in this estate is seen as making a positive contribution to the character of the village.



**Trees in Shepherds Mount**

To the west of the village shop along the High Street are a number of residential properties of varying ages including the old Manor House and the Doctors' Surgery. To the west of this point on the north side of the road is the Institute of

Animal Health (IAH). The IAH incorporates a fenced in cricket pitch that is also used as a village facility. It is a valued green open space and is very much part of the rural character of the village.



**The Cricket Pitch**

To the north east of the Recreation Ground over School Road, is a small modern estate of terraced houses, Wilson Close, leading to one of two village allotment areas. This area leads into a small modern industrial estate situated on the site of the old railway station sidings and is clearly visible on the skyline.



**Industrial units on skyline**

Adjacent to the industrial site is an area of open space made up of several paddocks with some mature specimen trees and a well used footpath.



**Looking towards Roden House from Station Road**

Further eastwards, School Road leads to the village primary school and through the old railway bridge is a field adjacent to the church, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The area around the church and beyond used to be known as East Compton and is visually and physically distanced from the remainder of the village by the old railway line and in particular the old bridge.

South of the High Street is a small area of older residential properties in Newbury Lane with a small area of green space currently marked by the brick bus-stop shelter.

To the south of the High Street and alongside Newbury Lane is the second of the two allotment

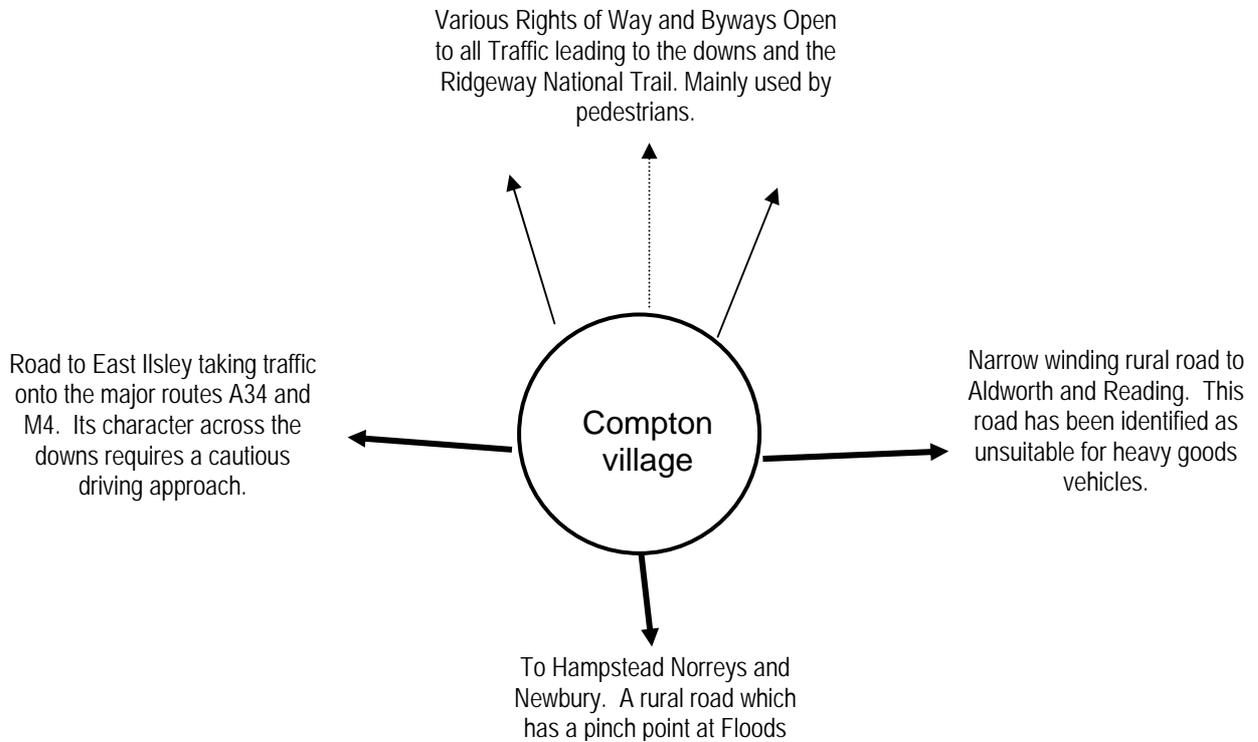
areas and further to the south the Downs Secondary School.

To the west is a cluster of residential properties, the Scout Hall and a new Dairy Farm, Mayfield, belonging to the Institute of Animal Health.



Mayfield

### 5. Highways and Traffic



Compton has a main thoroughfare which is its High Street. This takes traffic through the village and also has many junctions. Onto the smaller 'backwaters' of the older parts of the village – Horn Street and Cheap Street are single width and winding in nature. Housing estate development from Westfields, Burrell and Manor Roads are standard width urban roads with pavements on either side. Compton is mainly safe for pedestrians with numerous footways, however the speed of traffic can sometimes be intimidating. Cyclists and horseriders also frequent the village.

Compton is one of a few downland villages which has street lights. Care has been taken with new development for the street lighting to be of a traditional character – see Yew Trees Stables. Municipal street lighting, common on the larger housing estates, is a somewhat detracting feature.

The Conservation Area and parts of the High Street have benefited from stone setts edging the pavements which ensure that the character remains rural. These are quality materials which are attractive and are preferred to the concrete edging which is common in surrounding streets and roads.

## 6. Buildings

The 'pattern of the village' section identified several distinct zones. The oldest part of which largely corresponds with the historic Conservation Area having a distinct quality and character. The remainder of the parish being mainly downland, is interspersed with individual dwellings and farmsteads. Although not compact, it tends to follow the detailing found in the Conservation Area to a great extent – this may well reflect the age of the buildings involved. Detailing includes blue-brick details, string courses and shallow arched lintels above windows. There are also good examples of dentil and cornice details. Cast iron window-cills could be unique to Compton as they could have been cast at an iron foundry that was once operating in Compton. Some buildings have historical importance, like Pilgrims Cottage that was once a school and closed in the middle of the 19th century.

Compton has a variety of house styles and this variety adds interest. Mono-style estates add little to the street scene and mistakes of the past, for example, single tile type/colour used throughout the whole estate (on roofs) should not be repeated.

Detailed features of note include:

- ◆ Mainly two storey elements
- ◆ Separate garage buildings
- ◆ A small percentage of bungalows
- ◆ Front gardens with identifiable boundaries
- ◆ A mixture of roof styles including hipped and dormer

The character is epitomised by the use of local building materials. red brick is a particular feature (as seen in the older dwellings in Horn Street)

As a downland village, there are many examples of flint being used alongside brick. The chalk uplands are known for the production of flint. Natural flint infill, with the flint being knapped, rather than pre-cast panels, can make an enduring quality finish which would be pleasing and in keeping with the village character.



**Decorative brickwork**



**Old Flint walling**



**Use of red brick**

### *i) Roofs*

There is a variety of roof shapes, mostly gabled with some hips, with the vast majority being clay tile. Although there are a few examples of slate roofs, these are not common. Older dwellings have lower ceiling heights than is the norm for today's construction standards. In order to reduce overall roof height, and to ensure that new development does not overshadow, or is out of scale with older properties, dormer roof lines may be a suitable solution. Dormer windows enable roof pitches to be kept low and roof lines not to intrude excessively on the street scene. Dormers with some hipping of rooflines would be in keeping with this tradition.

Chimneys also make a valuable contribution to the roofscape and as the photographs show, external chimneys on gable ends are not unusual.



### *ii) Windows*

Within the Conservation Area wooden window frames are a particular feature. There are a few examples of a very local window style, the "Lady Wantage" in Compton and in a few other surrounding downland villages.



**"Lady Wantage" style Dormer**

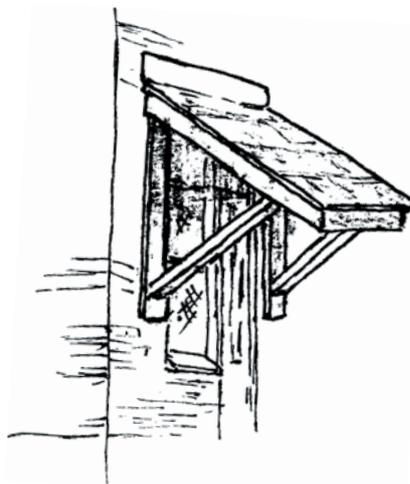


### *iii) Porches*

Examples of porches that are part of the character of the village.

Porches 'frame' the front of most houses; welcoming the visitor.

They can relieve the 'flatness' of the front of a house or a terrace of houses.





Spaces should be functional, pleasant to view and make a positive contribution to the buildings adjoining them. The frontage to the village hall was for a long time just grassed but local people came forward to make a feature of this space. It is now landscaped as a garden and has seating.

It makes a welcoming feature to the village hall frontage. Local people have taken over the maintenance of the garden.

The purpose of spaces should ensure that they can:

- offer 'softening' features to the landscaping of the development. Trees, hedgerows and shrubs do this well.
- have 'hard' landscaping appropriate to, and in keeping with, the rural area e.g. mainly bound gravelled drives.
- be of a size and shape to ensure their maintenance is easy. For instance small areas in shadow may be better paved or gravelled rather than planted up.



### *i) Boundary finishes*

Within the village there is evidence that iron railings have been used on the public boundary of some properties - for example, the primary school, the public house and Compton Cottage. Black wrought iron palings would fit in with this street scene.

## **7. Public and private spaces**

Design and interpretation of space depends to a large extent on the buildings, but also on their relationship to each other and the intervening spaces. Gordon Crescent is a good example of how the design of the buildings has been specifically linked to a crescent shaped open space. Spaces should not be viewed as areas left over after building, but should be an integral part of the overall design.

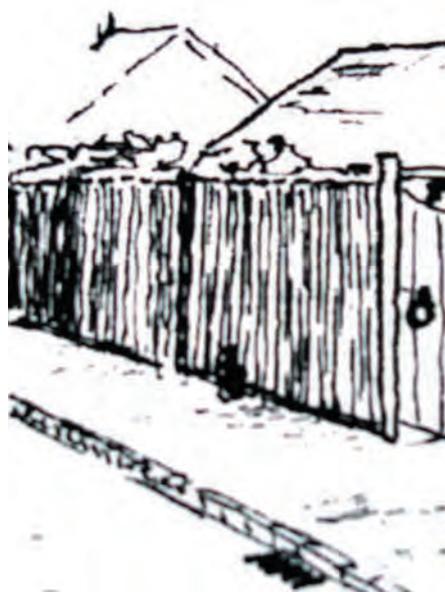


**Modern railing, a boundary finish in keeping with the character of the village.**

The very utilitarian safety railing, for example alongside the Pang offers no continuity or harmony with the rural character of the village.



It is important to residents that boundary walls are not so high as to restrict public views into front gardens or visibility splays for car drivers pulling out across pavements (it is accepted that private, mainly rear gardens would need to be suitably screened) High close-boarded fencing within front gardens is considered by residents to be an unwelcome feature as they feel such fencing does not blend in with the village character. High boundary treatments (walls or fencing) can create barriers to the positive enhancement that private spaces make to the public realm. High and solid boundary barriers can also restrict neighbourliness and community spirit.



## ii) Gates

How we choose to enclose our property and the means of access are also important features. Most houses, especially outside of the village have gates for either pedestrian or vehicular access. The open, farm-style five-bar variety allows the public to glimpse into front gardens and the public realm is again enhanced by trees, shrubs and flowers which are part of the enjoyment of a village and country walk. Another open style of gate is the metal "Wrought Iron" type, giving the feel of openness to the front of a property.

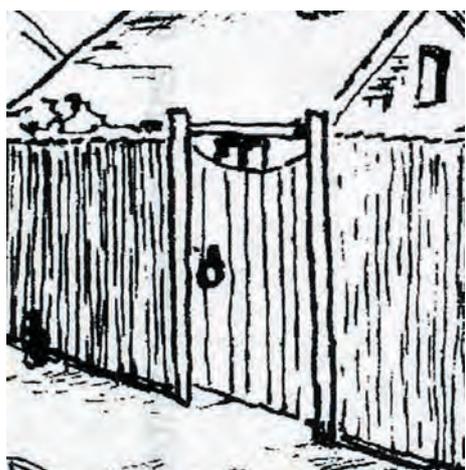


**A farm-style five-bar gate adds to the rustic character of the area.**

A scaled down version of the farm gate, a wooden picket style gate has the same valuable contribution to make in the village.



As a contrast to open style gates, solid gates can make an aggressive distinction between public and private limits and there is therefore no interaction between the spaces. Consequently such enclosed private spaces tend not to make a valuable contribution to the street or rural scene.



## *Design Guidelines*

These are the key issues which should be considered by developers in order to maintain and/or enhance the character of Compton. The guidelines are intended for use for all types of development - whether it is new build or extensions or alterations to existing properties.

1. Compton sits on a chalk aquifer and the Pang is a winter-bourne that runs occasionally. Where appropriate new development should have due regard for any rise in the water table.
2. New developments should retain the historic mix and the interesting character of the village.
3. Views out to the countryside from the village should be conserved.
4. The development of commercial units should ensure their design blends in with their surroundings. Roof and wall colour will be particularly important.
5. The provision of safe links to village facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable users should be considered as part of the design of new development.
6. Open green spaces, whether private or public, are important elements in the conservation of the rural character of Compton and should make a positive contribution to the public realm.
7. The pleasant visual character of the street scene should be maintained by new development by avoiding overbearing extensions and inappropriate in-filling which can have a terracing effect.
8. Corner plots are particularly sensitive. Initial designs should be carefully considered to ensure that the public face of the development makes a positive contribution to the street scene.
9. New developments, however small, should respect neighbouring properties in scale, siting, style and the use of materials.
10. The development of properties, both within and adjoining the Conservation Area, should be sympathetic in scale and design to that area.
11. The selection of local materials (or their modern equivalent), such as soft 'brindle' or 'heather' brick and wooden doors and window frames, is also important.
12. On listed buildings second hand bricks may be a suitable solution. Mortar mixes and joint detailing should also be considered by the developer at the same stage as brick purchase.
13. The use of distinctive features such as, colour and style of brickwork, brick & flint detail, dormer windows of the 'Lady Wantage' type, simple porches with pitched and tiled roofs and the gabled and semi-hipped type roof shape is encouraged.
14. Landscaping should be considered to be an integral part of the design of new development. Mature trees should be retained wherever possible.
15. The visual impact of ancillary buildings, such as garages and garden buildings, on the immediate area should be carefully considered by developers.
16. Boundaries between properties and the highway are an important part of the street scene. The use of 'wrought' iron railings, low hedgerows, brick walls, and 'post and rail' fencing as a means of enclosure is encouraged.
17. Although parking provision will vary with the type of new development proposed, for development which is set back from the footway, the provision of parking areas in front gardens would be welcomed.
18. Vehicular and pedestrian access to properties should reflect the rural character of the village with the use of granite setts, or reconstituted stone products such as 'conservation kerbs', rather than standard concrete kerbstones.
19. Lighting could have an urbanising effect in this rural area. Where street lighting is found to be necessary in a new development the use of the lantern type light fitting, similar to those used in the Yew Tree Stables development, would be welcomed. Where private security lighting is installed it should also similarly be sensitively designed and sited.



**VDS Core team**

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**For further information:**

West Berkshire District Council

[www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

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