

1980-PRESENT DAY

SPACES: gaps between built elements – streets, gardens, etc.

The sites developed since 1980 are very varied in size (ranging from 4 units to 160 units) and location (including infill, brownfield & greenfield sites).

Plot sizes ranged from townhouse format to large detached 5 bedroomed houses and gardens affecting layout and in their impact on village character. Where pedestrians are given priority in the layout, it resulted in better designed schemes (e.g. Orchard Close), in contrast to those which are car-oriented (e.g. Abbey Green).

Several recent developments at the edge of the village asserted that they are in keeping with the local vernacular of the conservation area, but this is not reflected in the standard suburban layouts used (e.g. Abbey Green).



Imaginative layout also helps integrate what are traditional house forms, for example: Star Close which has sought to reflect the character of the older parts of the village (e.g. Acre End Street); Bartholomew Close has a diversity of building form and therefore roofline and frontage, although being traditional suburban housing style; and in the Fruitlands the layout and streetscape help create a sense of neighbourhood.

In the case of St Leonard's House, the form has been determined by the existing properties on the site.

BUILDINGS: Those developments that involved existing buildings especially within the Conservation area had sought to retain the village character e.g. the value of existing buildings (e.g. St Leonard's House), or house detailing (e.g. Orchard Close window detailing and frontage variation)



Elsewhere, building types in the main are detached and semi-detached family houses. These were 'standard house designs i.e. with a lack of detailing and features that would reflect the village setting (e.g. with very plain house frontages, fenestration and roof lines and pitches).

Although mostly private developments, they include a high proportion of affordable houses in line with policy. In some cases, these are well integrated in design terms (e.g. Hazeldene Close) in contrast to others. For example, Thornbury Green is a traditional suburban layout dominated by the contrasting styled 3-storey flat roofed blocks.

VIEWS: Views are not an issue on infill schemes but are now increasingly important in the western sites (e.g. Fruitlands, Merton Close and Thornbury Green).

GREENERY & LANDSCAPE FEATURES: Except for Star Close which has a very hard landscape environment, most schemes are more suburban form with street landscaping, or open plan or walled front gardens, in contrast to just having grass verges. The quality varies greatly in the extent to which these various approaches enhance the street scene. Good examples of each include: the use of existing mature trees in Orchard Close; and winding road layout to create character, tarmac broken by cobbling to define road hierarchy in Fruitlands; and enclosed front gardens in Hazeldene.



Non-linear layouts of streets and use of structural landscaping contribute to sites being well designed. For example, the significant open spaces in Hazeldene along the drainage channel and floodable area, and the open space to the south of Thornbury adjacent to the Chilbridge. Similarly, in Fruitlands the mature tree and hedge and other landscaping are integral to the layout and not just peripheral and create character and offsets the flat facades and roof lines and brick choice – softening the lines and contrasting colours.

'Fluid' street layouts which give priority to the pedestrian, reducing speed and creating communal places and visual interest are noted, for example, in Fruitlands and Orchard Close.

Some developments have no structural landscaping except along their boundaries (e.g. Abbey Green). Nor do they have any public realm such as in the northern part of Thornbury. This also reinforces the

impact of house design on the streetscape, for example, the roofscape.

LIGHT/DARK: shading, time of day / night: Not a significant issue generally. It may become an issue on schemes which have developed tight to boundary Treelines (e.g. Abbey and Cobbetts Closes).

NOISE & SMELL - man made or natural: Low level constant noise from A40 traffic and Brize Norton aircraft, especially during the summer months.



Few post-1980s developments front main roads in the village such as Witney Road, Oxford Road or Hanborough Road/ Mill Street allowing easier neighbourhood interaction.

SPIRIT OF PLACE: There is varying success in creating or retaining a sense of place, for example:

- **Orchard Close's** linkage to its historic orchard.
- **Hazeldene** by its use of diversity in housing types and styles.
- **Dovehouse Close** in the street layout.
- **Blankstone Farm** through the integration of existing and new properties

HISTORICAL VALUE: The peripheral sites have little relationship to the Village, especially where they serve out onto peripheral roads (e.g. Abbey Green), except where they have established pedestrian links to the village to the established network (e.g. Dovehouse Close to Newlands, Hazeldene to the Bitterell & Thornbury to Chilbridge Road)

The approach to design of developments since 1980 has not treated the village as a single unit. For example, the quality of design that has been accepted for developments outside the conservation area tends to be poorer. Back-land infill site designs have missed opportunities to add to the village character (e.g. Woodlands Place).

COMMUNAL VALUE: Linkage to community facilities and services is important in developments. This is easier for the developments at the core of the village (e.g. St Leonard's House and Orchard Close). It has however been integral to the success of several peripheral schemes, For example, Dovehouse Close. This is well linked to the primary school and children's play area.



Community value is also enhanced where schemes reflected the wider community goals, for example in giving priority to the local pedestrian over traffic or to the integration of the community. Schemes such as Orchard Close and Star Close use shared pedestrian-vehicular spaces which are seen as reinforcing the need for traffic management of the village, now being prioritised by the parish council through its 20 mph policy.

Integrating affordable with market housing is an important principle in planning new developments.

Although the developments since 1980 are mainly private, they include a high proportion of affordable houses in line with policy. In some cases, these are well integrated in design terms (e.g. Hazeldene Close) in contrast to others (e.g. Thornbury Green).

The level of community involvement in design of schemes has varied enormously and invariably affects the quality, for example, in Hazeldene and Cobbett's Close. As a corollary, some of the poorest schemes are where the Parish Council's views have not been accepted.

It is also relevant that the character of a new development and its acceptance by the community is higher in those that were in accord with the local plan in contrast to those that were given approval before the new Local Plan was adopted or were departures from the plan (e.g. Abbey Green).

OTHER REMARKS: Apply existing policies and guidance to new developments. They are too often not followed by developers or enforced by District Council planners. This means discussing plans with developers at an early stage. An example of the Parish Council's views that were not accepted include the para below:

*"The parish council has already assessed this development as follows 'The Design and Access Statement at 5.1.3 proposes up to three storey development on the middle to high ground of the Site (see also Indicative building height zones drawing). This, and a density of 35 dph **would have an adverse visual impact upon the soft western edge of the village that would stand out as a hard,***

incongruous urban extension contrary to BE2, BE4, H2 and H7 of LP 2011 and OS2 and EW2 of draft LP 2031”.

Why was this advice based on published official guidance ignored?
