



## INTRODUCTION

Most people who know Downley - whether residents or not - would agree that it is special. Indeed, no visitor approaching Downley for the first time from the south east can fail to be struck by the abrupt change of landscape at the top of the hill as continuous urban development gives way to open countryside, agricultural grazing land and long open views to a skyline fringed with beech and mature oak trees. Its distinctiveness lies in a number of features, of setting and the open space around buildings, all of which can be affected in the future not just by major planning decisions, but also by day to day changes.

The original Village Design Statement was produced in 2000 and was adopted as a supplementary planning document by Wycombe District Council and influenced some of the subsequent developments. The boundaries of Downley were increased in October 2004 taking in the dwellings of Downs Park /Southfield Road to the east, Sunnycroft to the west and down to the A40, West Wycombe Road, to the south, thus bringing a number of residents into Downley who always considered themselves part of the village and had made important contributions to activities in Downley, including the original Village Design

Such is the influence of the original village that it attracts the loyalty of many who live in the adjoining suburban areas.

Interestingly, when the first meeting about this project was called, about 50% attending were from *outside* the village!

**Recommendation**

It is important that when planning decisions are made, the distinct village character of Downley is taken into account and protected.

Statement. The revised boundaries and other changes in Downley have led to this revised version of the Village Design Statement.

**The Aims of the Village Design Statement**

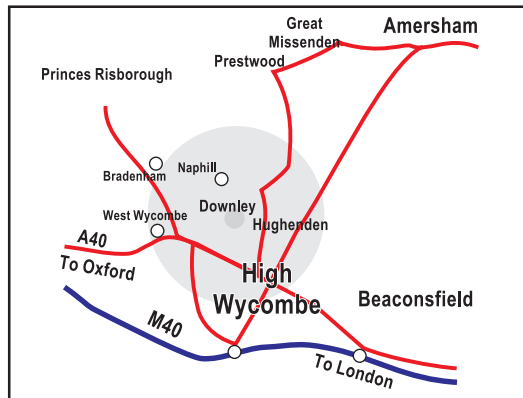
The Downley Village Design Statement (VDS) aims to describe - in words and pictures- what it is about Downley (that is, the area within the civil parish boundary and St James’ Church) which makes it distinctive, and so raise awareness of that which is special about our village. At the same time the VDS aims to make constructive comments within the context of planning policy in order to try to ensure that we preserve the best of what we have whilst embracing change over time.

We hope that it will help all of us

- local and county authorities (Wycombe District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council)
- planners, developers, builders and architects
- local community groups
- residents

to preserve, protect and develop Downley in the future in an appropriate way. Adoption of this statement as supplementary planning guidance by our local planning authority has been sought from the outset in order to help us achieve this objective, so that our recommendations will be taken into

Downley Parish also has the special distinction of being ‘sandwiched’ between important properties owned by the National Trust. To the east, Hughenden Manor (home of Disraeli) with its extensive woodlands, farmland and the Disraeli Monument. To the west, West Wycombe village, hill (with mausoleum and church) and park encompassing the 18th century Palladian Mansion known as West Wycombe House. To the north west, Bradenham Village (NT) and Bradenham Manor House (privately owned).



account when planning applications are considered. The VDS also supplements the Policy Framework of the Wycombe District Local Plan which sets the basis for decision making on land use change.

The VDS has been based on the opinions of the people of Downley, originally drawn together by a Village Design Group working over a period of ten months. The Group had the benefit of both technical and financial support from Downley Parish Council, Wycombe District Council (WDC) and the Countryside Commission, and as a result was put forward as an “exemplar” or model to other communities and groups in the South East embarking on similar projects.

## GEOGRAPHY

Downley, located on the top of a high promontory north west of the town of High Wycombe, is a typical hilltop settlement sitting on the chalk and clay of the Chilterns and within its parish boundary comprised some 2037 houses and 3708 residents, at the boundary change, and a substantial village common. It is visually dominant from the surrounding hills and valleys. Downley does not lie on any recognised through traffic route, although it is well connected by footpaths to neighbouring villages. In contrast to the rural setting described above, however, the village today is linked to the town of High Wycombe some two miles to the south east by continuous standard residential development. The effect of this is mitigated by several important open spaces within the village itself, and open spaces within the development.

## LOCAL AREA PLANNING

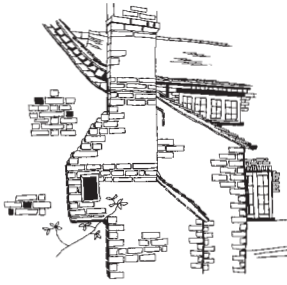
### The wider context

Downley is located at the extreme edge of the Wycombe urban area. It is enclosed on three sides by Green Belt. The northern edge of the village is

Evidence of the original hamlets that formed Downley, the village settlement, exists in the small clusters of houses, built as separate groups where individual fields have been developed. Examples are the Sunnysbank area, Littleworth, Plomer Green and the strip along Commonsidge. Victorian examples can be seen around Plomer Green.

### Some Landmarks

- 1930s** Rapid development starts to take place - metalled roads are laid, village has 3 shops
- 1932** Piped water is connected.
- 1933** Electricity first supplied
- 1970s** Population expansion in nearby High Wycombe caused a major clearing and development period leading to the village becoming part of its urban area.
- 1999** The last furniture factory relocates outside the parish.



in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Ten percent of the Parish is designated as Conservation Area which protects the historic core of the village and the Common. A Special Character Zone applies to the houses on the west side of the Common, the High Street, Chapel Street and Commonsides.

## *THE COMMUNITY OF DOWNLEY*

### History

Downley - meaning a “lea” or clearing on the ‘downs’ - has seen continuous human settlement since the 13th century when population pressure in its original “mother” village West Wycombe, caused the villagers to clear the little-used downs for use as summer pasture. Although later the local landowners permitted enclosure of the land by individual tenants in return for rents, with the consequent loss of common and woodland rights by the peasant population, some land has been dedicated to community use for over 50 years.

As well as farming, early industry in the village included the extraction of clay for brick and tile manufacture- the resulting dells are still evident on the Common- and making furniture. At one time there were three chair factories in the village.

### Downley’s Community Today

Whilst most members of the working population commute to other destinations, Downley is still a working village. Both arable and animal farming are still actively pursued on the surrounding land even though the last farm buildings within the village have now been converted into housing. Downley nevertheless still possesses a small textile warehouse, two garages and a number of shops at three locations.

### **Societies and Organisations**

- Downley Common Preservation Society
- Downley Village Afternoon Womens’ Institute
- Sunnybank Chapel
- Downley Cricket Club
- Downley Albion Football Club
- Downley Dynamos Football Club
- Downley Old School Community Association
- Downley Horticultural Society
- Downley Wine & Beer Circle
- Guides and Scouts
- St James Church
- Summer Playscheme
- Woodlands Pre-School
- Moor Lane Playgroup
- Sunshine Montessori School
- High Wycombe Philatelic Society



The annual tug-of-war

The main area of economic and communal activity centres near the High Street with its shops, pub, the Memorial Hall which has served the community for more than fifty years, and the Downley Old School Community Association. Although the Post Office closed in 2005, this area in particular gives a sense of centre to a community which is spread over a number of locations. A variety of shops are also located in Littleworth Road and at Cross Court. The Cross Court development, owned by a private landlord, has been allowed to deteriorate in recent years.

Other important community buildings are the shared Anglican and Catholic church on Plomer Hill, the Scout and Guide headquarters at the top of Coates Lane, and the Methodist Chapel on the Common. On and to the north of the Common were located a dairy, which closed in 2006, and the engineering factory, which closed in 2004. A car repair workshop remains.

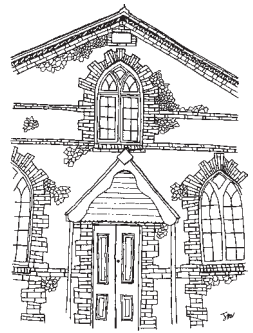
There are a number of thriving societies in Downley. Downley Village W.I, one of the oldest in the country, has been active since 1924. The village also supports both local football and cricket teams with their pitch and pavilion on the



Memorial Hall, High Street

**Recommendation**

If the opportunity arises, redevelopment to enhance the appearance and amenities of the Cross Court site would be welcomed.



**Recommendation**

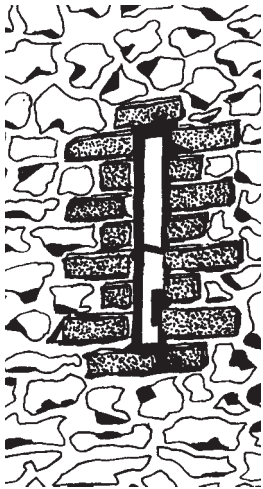
The conservation of the surviving early buildings is important to maintaining the traditional character of the village. It is also important that new developments adjacent do not detract from the listed buildings.



### A typical listed building Downley Farm Cottage



House. Late C17 - early C18, altered and extended to rear later C18 and C19. White-washed brick to front with dentilled first floor band course, and rendered plinth; brick gables, the left part pebbledashed, the right part weatherboarded; brick and flint rear extensions. Old tile roofs, central brick chimney. 2 storeys, 2 bays. 3-light barred wooden casements, those to ground floor with segmental arches ..... Rear bays are of different C19 builds, the left hipped with dentil eaves and some flint, the right gabled. Interior has traces of timber framing”



Early window frame detail showing how brick is used to edge a flint wall

Common. The pavilion desperately needs to have updated facilities and it is hoped that funds will be made available to complete this work. Downley also maintains a number of traditions which involve the whole community, for example Downley Day in June, the annual Village Walk, and Bonfire Night celebrations on the Common.

## BUILDINGS

The attraction of Downley is its variety but complete lack of pretentiousness. Its character has developed from the way in which it has grown, different areas having their own individual characteristics deriving from the period in which they were built.

### Earliest housing

Originally Downley consisted of just grassed fields and hedges, amid which were located isolated farm houses and cottages, (most now listed Grade II), the earliest being around 1600. These properties are generally built of brick and flint walls, with the odd isolated timber framing, traditional clay plain tiles (in some cases they were originally thatched), which play an important role in maintaining the traditional side of village character.

### 19th Century expansion

The first expansion was in late Victorian/early Edwardian times with new houses being built in various locations but mainly facing the Common or along the existing lanes of Littleworth Road and Plomer Green Lane.

### 1920s buildings

The development of housing at the top of the Common substantially altered the northern Common skyline when viewed from Commonside.

### 1930s buildings

Further expansion took place in the early 1930s, when electrical and water services were provided,

and Downley was used to provide housing for Wycombe people. Houses with mainly tiled roofs, both clay and concrete, (although a lesser proportion are slated), with brick facings, were constructed along the same lanes and Jubilee Road. Originally hedged country lanes, Littleworth Road and Plomer Green Lane were widened and straightened to accommodate traffic, in the process the hedging was removed from one side, thus retaining the character of being largely tree lined and hedged to the west with brick walls to the east.

### 1950s buildings

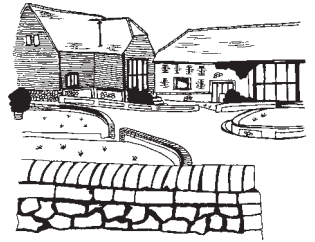
The Council Houses in Plomer Green Avenue were built around 1950, and still maintain low density development, around a grassed area of open space, producing a nice living environment that should be the aim of subsequent developments. Private development also started around this time beside the Common itself, along Moor Lane, and in Plomer Green Lane, opposite Downley Farm.

### 1960s buildings

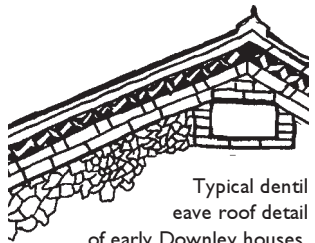
In the 1960s pressure for more local housing brought typical 1960s two storey and a few three storey developments. For the first time, 'drawing board architecture' by a developer (Comben and Wakelin) arrived. The houses, built of concrete pantiles, brick and tiled facades with open plan front gardens, could be considered typical of their period. Care was taken, however, to ensure not only a relatively low density, but the retention of important mature trees and hedges combined with grassed open spaces. Vistas remained open and gave interest. The development as a whole incorporated the good points of the existing landscape, trees, and ponds etc., as positive features of the new development. Descending down Pheasant Drive one encounters well spaced housing and sweeping views.



Town houses in Grays Lane



The converted barns at Downley Farm



Typical dentil eave roof detail of early Downley houses.



### 1970s

The early 1970s saw the development of housing in Selwood Way, Ford Way and Narrow Lane built on land previously used for allotments. [Narrow Lane was widened and straightened over most of its length to accommodate this development.] Most of the houses are detached with either white shiplapped boarding or tiled facades, have open fronted gardens with planting of now- mature trees and reasonable off street parking.

### 1980s onwards

The last major phase was the growth of housing development during the 1980s - early 90s. Once again this took the form of open plan development of mainly two-storey houses, with concrete pantiles, and a range of wall finishes, timber, brick, render and tile hanging. As infill sites, they are often hidden from general view - being sited in the area of Narrow Lane and Selwood Way - in Turners Field, and Gosling Grove. These developments had less off street parking with narrow garages, that are rarely used.

The development in Falcon Rise is a high density build where on street parking limits access to large vehicles. In addition, the last remaining furniture factory (“Mines & West”) was closed and high density development of 29 dwellings was completed in 2000.

### Characteristics of Downley buildings

Downley’s residential built environment of mainly two storey houses and cottages has always been relaxed, somewhat naïve in character, and very varied. This is the case even within the former council estates, where the houses are now mainly privately owned, and owners are personalising their own properties. Most properties have private garages or drives, but a few have garage fore-courts, and some no vehicular parking facility at all.

#### Recommendations

Developers should recognise that Downley buildings in the main should be simple and uncomplicated in character, and should generally be two-storey.

Whilst there is no cohesive style, there is a distinct character in the village of ‘understatement’.

Materials used may vary, but most commonly a tiled or slated roof with brick facings, and frequently brick and flint walls.

Good design does not mean the introduction of numerous changes of colour and finish, or the incorporation of a number of “design features” within one scheme. These tend to be too intrusive and detrimental to the character of the village.

External changes to properties should be in sympathy with surrounding properties.



Unfortunately, this latter situation arises mainly in the picturesque, older areas of the village with resultant on-street parking, often in narrow roads.

A walk around Downley village outside the Conservation Area reveals some surprises. Of special importance are a group of two historic brick and flint buildings supported by two later ones in the same materials (one built in the 1980s), in Littleworth Road. Built at an angle to the road, and fronted with fine birch trees, the composition is strong enough to withstand the intrusion of the rear of the housing in Ford Way. At the northern end of Littleworth Road is an interesting vista, with a varied range of cottage style housing to the west and 1930-1940 private detached houses to the east unified by a wonderful range of Scots Pines planted by Disraeli in the 19th century, with remnants of traditional hedging below. The trees and brick and flint walling each side of the entrance from Commonside to Narrow Lane also provide strong visual interest.

Jubilee Road is quite striking for its simple, peaceful and unified character, largely deriving from the lack of change to the houses, the common use of the privet hedge, and the dominant mature trees bounding a winding road. Amongst the newer housing developments, there is a pleasant vista down Gosling Grove to the pond with its ducks and trees.

Most of the characteristics of Downley buildings have been captured in the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and associated Technical Notes, which give guidance for planning applications.

### Density

Downley village has a variety of building types but to some degree still retains a character of openness or proximity to openness. New development infilling or adjoining terraced cottages should reflect



### Recommendation

Mixed density development is appropriate to the village. However, where densities are higher they are traditionally “softened” by adjacent open space.

### Recommendation

The guidance in the Chilterns Conservation Board “Chilterns Building Design Guide”, and associated, Technical Notes, should be considered for all planning applications.

### Recommendation

Where possible, new dwellings should have enclosed front gardens. Where walls are built or hedges planted, the materials selected should complement, rather than conflict with, the prevailing style in the locality. The table below shows the type of enclosure street by street.

**Recommendation**

Where space allows, the introduction of beech and oak trees is to be welcomed and suitable spots for planting additional trees in the village should be identified.

Any such scheme or future built development should take care to incorporate trees of suitable species and size. Trees should be grouped so as to frame views within the village and retain the predominance of the natural landscape over the built environment.

a similar character. Elsewhere semi- or detached houses are more appropriate. It is the variety that characterises Downley which should be allowed to prevail. High density development could ruin the character of Downley.

**Hedges, walls and fences**

Most of the village houses have small enclosed front gardens. The frontages onto pavements or roads mainly consist of brick or brick and flint walls or hedges. The majority of the hedges consist of plants which are native to the area e.g. holly, hawthorn and beech. Holly planting is a particular tradition along the edge of the Common.

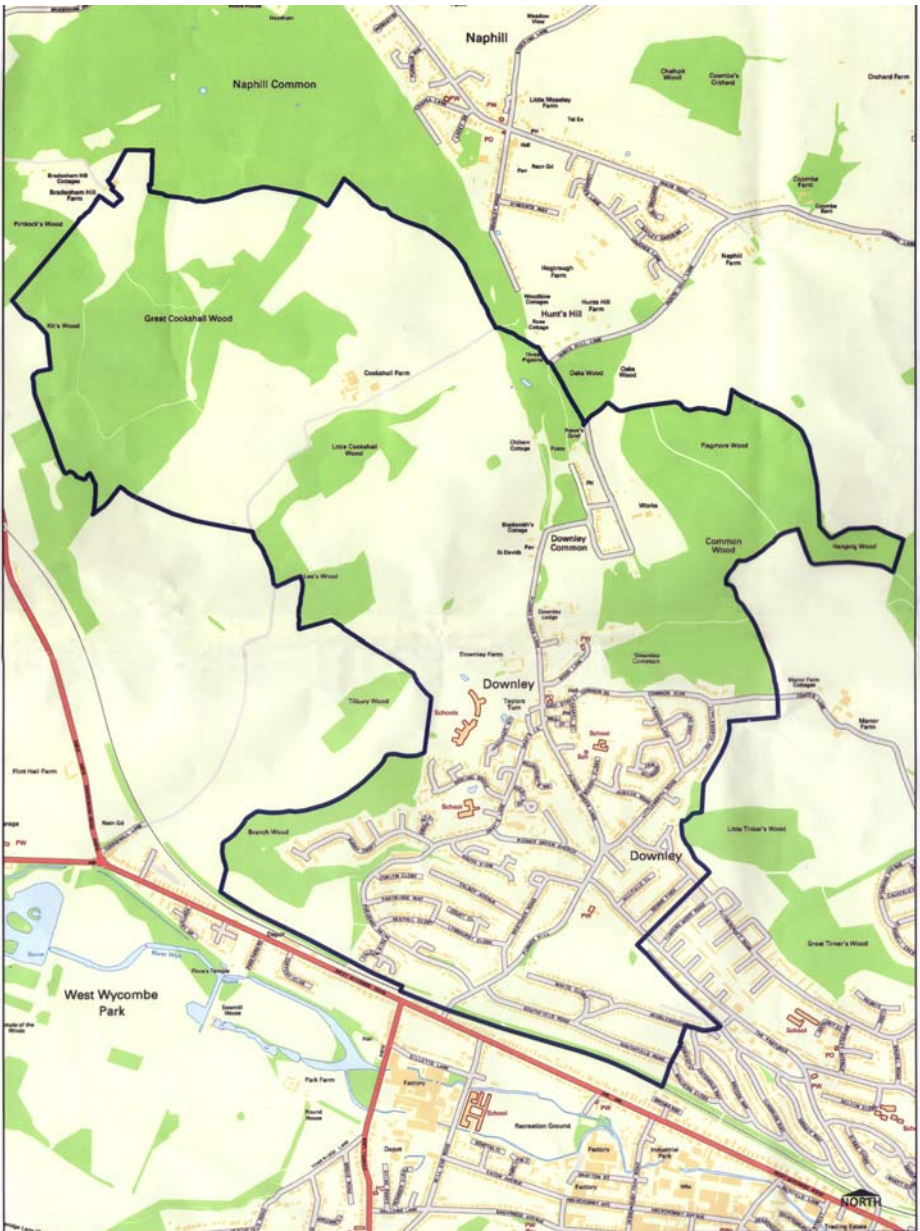
**Trees**

Trees are an important characteristic of Downley. Not only is the village itself interwoven into the local landscape of fields and beech or oak woodland,

**Survey of front gardens by location**

Location	Walls	Fences	Gates	Hedges
Jubilee Road		privet	wood	
Littleworth Road	brick, brick and flint	wood	wood	privet, holly
Coates Lane			wood	elderberry
Plover Green		wooden paling	iron, wood	hawthorn, holly, small box
School Close	brick		iron, wood	privet / small box
Grays Lane				privet, leylandii <sup>1</sup> , oak hawthorn
The Heights			wood	laurel
Avery Avenue				leylandii
Bowler Lea				leylandii
High Street	brick	wooden paling	wrought iron	
Chapel Street	open / brick		iron railing	
Commonside	brick, stone brick and flint iron railings		wood	holly, privet small box
Moor Lane	brick	wooden paling	wrought iron wood	privet / small box hawthorn
The Common			wood	laurel, privet, holly
Plover Green Lane	brick and flint		wood	small box, beech hawthorn

**N B The use of Leylandii is now regarded as antisocial and is no longer advised. An exotic species, it is out of keeping with the native plants, and does not support wildlife.**



The boundary of the parish of Downley was enlarged in 2004. As a result the population and number of households increased to 3708 and 2037 respectively.

but numerous mature oaks (formerly part of the extensive field system of the original hedged grassland area) remain within the village affording a sense of age and grandeur by their dominant size and scale to the built environment.

The predominance of oaks and beech is an indication of how ancient and undisturbed the locality has been up until relatively recent times. Alongside these two main varieties are the traditional hawthorn, holly and hazel with here and there the isolated plantation of silver birches indicative of heathland.

As many of the oak and beech trees in the village are now quite ancient it is agreed that additional planting should be carried out as a necessary investment to maintain a continuity of character for the enjoyment of future generations.

#### **Recommendation**

The balance of open spaces within the development sites should be retained.

#### **Development pressures**

The former Wycombe West School (previously known as Brenchwood) was developed as the Downley and Maplewood Schools. This released two former school sites for major new development in Downley.

#### **Redevelopment of the School sites**

Downley's schools have always provided a focus for the community and both an essential opportunity for parents to meet, and facilities for other activities including sport and recreation.

**Downley Heights School** – Plans are being prepared to build a care home and housing for elderly people. Hopefully a surgery for the use of Downley residents can also be provided.

**The Middle School** - The Middle School site lies in the heart of the village close to Turners Field. Consideration of the Middle School and Turners

Field sites together would allow the creation of a much more flexible and comprehensive scheme which would be to the benefit of the village.

The opportunity arises to provide a children's playground (none exist in Downley at present), and to secure essential refurbishment of the Downley Old School Community Association building. Adequate parking spaces for this building are essential. This site is effectively the centre of Downley and there is an opportunity to produce a low density very worthwhile development, which harmonises with the surrounding environment.

On sites that are subject to development proposals residents would also like to see:

- Areas set aside for nature conservation, ecology (eg. nesting boxes)
- Additional planting to create copses
- Some landscaping to enhance attractiveness and to define the areas in question.

## OPEN SPACES

One of the most attractive and distinctive features of Downley is the juxtaposition of varying types of property, set within open space, at an angle to a road, with hedged or open front gardens, framed by mature forest trees with possible underplanting. Many vistas as you look along the road have a conclusion - for example, Gosling Grove (to pond), Littleworth Road (to the north), Gray's Lane (to the south), Plomer Green Lane (Mountjoys Retreat), Commonsides (Downley Farm buildings). Furthermore, one is likely to find nearby a hedged footpath leading to some other part of Downley or the surrounding countryside with similar rhythms of open space and buildings.

### Recommendation

The style and density of future development should be appropriate to its immediate context.

The development of the Middle School, which is centrally located, should be in sympathy with adjacent properties. This suggests that there should be a low density build, with a mix of affordable housing. Provision of adequate parking spaces for the Old School Community Centre is required.

The local plan policies for these sites require that when provided, community facilities should be retained.

### Recommendation

WDC should seek to secure an enclosed and equipped children's play area with a picnic area and seating closeby and a community centre through imposing a planning obligation in respect of the Middle School site. Wide footpaths running east west and open grassed areas for children should also be included.

### Recommendation

Any new development (if built at one time) needs to display a variety that is in sympathy with the mixed nature of the existing village buildings.



Whilst strictly a part of the West Wycombe Estate, the Common is regarded as a resource available to the whole village. Although in previous centuries housing has encroached on it, its current status as common land within the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty prevents further development. It is also within the Conservation Area.

The building around the Common demonstrates that an attractive neighbourhood can be created by permitting gradual development over a long period.



### Recommendation

While most of Downley has seen great change, it is generally agreed that the area around the Common should not be developed.

The present management approach is to maintain the current variety of environments such as open grassland and woodland.

### The significance of Downley Common

The presence of Downley Common influences the character of the village in a number of important ways. Its existence can be traced back to the early seventeenth century, and certainly existed well before that. Maintained today by an active volunteer group in partnership with the Parish Council, it physically separates the inhabited area into two parts, the main village being to the south. Wonderful views are obtained from the Common in all directions including that to the south framing the long line of mainly Victorian cottages known as Commonsides.

Key visual characteristics are its informal quality, with housing of all styles bounding its edge and facing the clearing with beech woodland behind, plus the lack of any fencing with occasional pockets of woodland or scrubland where the land is unused. It has little or no street lighting, a lack of kerbstones, or markings on the road, (and an attitude among the residents which would tend to resist such innovations!). Although the area no longer derives much income from farming, the continued presence of local farms and smallholdings, the grazing of horses, and even the sympathetic conversion of old farm buildings such as Downley Farm, are an important part of the visual character of the area and have an important influence on the rest of the village.

The presence particularly of the non-wooded areas makes the Common accessible to local people for recreation. Equally, there are parts of the Common that are remote from the rest of the village which remain relatively undisturbed where wildlife can flourish, thus providing the basis of the Common's diversity. The joint Parish Council/ Downley Common Preservation Society Ten Year Management Plan (1998-2007) currently directs the environmental future of the Common.





Over the years, the Common has been used for various purposes, including a golf course and a practice area for tanks. Today, the Common hosts two of the village's principal events of the year, namely Downley Day and the Bonfire and Torchlight Procession, as well as weekly football and cricket games. The area around the Common is also visited by many from outside the Parish, such as walkers and cyclists, and it will be the Common that forms their impression of Downley.

The architecture around the Common is not "picture postcard", but represents the variety of building styles that develop over a long period.

#### Other open spaces - the old school sites

Apart from the Common, there are a number of other open spaces which contribute to the quality of the village. Any redevelopment of the two former village schools (Middle and Heights Schools) should provide an opportunity to protect and extend the use of at least some of the current open space for community use. There is a shortage of formal open space for recreational activities in Downley.

#### Downley and Maplewood School playing fields

The playing fields are contained in the designated Green Belt and are therefore protected at present from development by the green belt policies in Wycombe District Local Plan.

A Working Party produces a tree planting schedule.

#### Recommendation

Existing open spaces should be retained and any future developments should incorporate a similar style of communal space and planting.



Commside



**Recommendation**

In any reviews of the Local Plan, the Green Belt designation of these fields should be retained as a vital part of Downley's character and they should be kept as large open fields.

**Mannings Field**

Mannings Field is a 6 acre field on a 35 year lease from West Wycombe Estates, and managed by Downley Parish Council for community use. It contains a full-sized and junior football pitch, cricket practice nets and the recently established community orchard.

**Allotments**

There are 26 allotments located in Mannings Field adjacent to Downley Common. These add considerably to the rural aspect of this part of the Common, and all are in regular use. Management control passed to the West Wycombe Estate in 1999 from Downley Parish Council.

**Recommendation**

In any reviews of the Local Plan, the Green Belt designation of these fields should be retained as a vital part of Downley's character.

**Fields adjoining former Downley Farm**

These fields, still used for agricultural purposes, are a vital part of the rural landscape of the village and provide the setting and backdrop for some of the oldest and most attractive buildings in the village, including a number of the listed buildings.

The field to the south of the recently converted former farm buildings, which is adjacent to the Wycombe West site, has been the subject of many unsuccessful planning applications in the past. This field has the additional quality of providing one of the most distinctive Downley views from the centre of the village at the junction of the High Street and Plomer Green Lane. This is in part recognised by the inclusion of Downley Farm within the Conservation Area.

There are a number of small open spaces within the more modern housing developments in the village which contribute to its rural aspect and provide settings for the buildings. These include the green in Gosling Grove, which also contains an attractive pond surrounded by mature trees, Ford Way, Selwood Way, Faulkner Way and Plomer Green Avenue.



## HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC

### Access

There are now a number of roads leading to the village, although until the 1960s there were just two. The first of these, Plomer Hill (or Downley Pitch), leads to the village from the A40 on the south side. It is slightly hazardous as it twists over the railway bridge, but presents a particularly attractive rural entry into the village. The second, Coates Lane, was formerly a typical country lane and leads to Hughenden Road. It traverses a beautiful landscape with a glimpse of Hughenden Manor (listed grade I), and actually passes through the grounds of Manor Farm (listed II\*). The speed limit on Coates Lane should be reduced to improve road safety.

The two other roads that lead to High Wycombe town itself are Hithercroft Road and The Pastures. They are straight, wide, typical urban style highways. All roads climb the 200ft from High Wycombe to the Downley plateau.

Whilst the main roads of Downley are tarmacadamed with granite setts or no kerbs, most of the side roads have been built with the more urban concrete kerb, and in Old Farm Road we have an example of a concrete road.

### Recommendation

The village would support the introduction of sympathetically designed village gates to assist in traffic calming. A group has been formed to study this proposal and to look at other traffic calming needs within the village

It has been noted that an increasing number of motorists, frustrated with traffic delays in High Wycombe, use the principal roads leading to Downley as a means of by-passing the centre of Wycombe and survey showed that at peak times cars pass roughly every three seconds!

This is major influence on the character of the village.



### The High Street

The High Street has been enhanced by a grant which has allowed the introduction of Tegula paving along the northern side. Overall it can be characterized by its narrow width, the absence of road markings, gaps between the buildings which let the countryside through on the north side and the absence of signage.

#### Recommendation

A blanket 20 mph speed limit within the parish boundary signs at Hithercroft Road, Coates Lane and Grays Lane would be welcomed, possibly accompanied by rumble strips and repeater signs on street lighting columns.

#### Recommendation

For new dwellings the minimum width of garages is reviewed to allow for current vehicle design.

A minimum of two off-street parking spaces per household should be provided.

### Parking

There are no public car parks in Downley, nor are there any parking restrictions. Vehicles are regularly parked on pavements, often causing obstructions. There are a number of possible causes for this:

- The increased number of cars in last decade with two or more cars per household the norm
- Some areas, such as White Close, were built without suitable provision for off street parking
- Cars have become wider and no longer fit into garages
- Roads are not wide enough for modern cars
- Drivers do not park their cars in or near lock garages that are not adjacent to their houses
- Sufficient off street parking areas have not been provided

### Public transport

The village is well served with a frequent bus service into High Wycombe.

### Traffic

There are no traffic calming measures in the village, and speeding vehicles have become a contentious issue. However, plans are being made to provide such measures.

### Kerbs and edges

Kerbs and road edges vary according to the age and setting of the road in question and have a major visual impact on the particular locality.

### Street Furniture

Two main styles of street lighting are apparent, the first in the 1930s development where electricity is still routed to properties via overhead cables, as is also the telephone system. Street lights have been sensibly mounted on the electrical poles. Elsewhere a green painted lamp column with a lantern mounted on top has been used. The Jubilee Green provides a superb example of what can be achieved, a restful area on the approach to the centre of Downley. Consideration should be given to proving similar sites elsewhere in Downley and the old Middle School site would be ideal.

### Footpaths

Downley boasts a number of well-maintained footpaths and bridle ways which represent an important dimension of the character of the village, threading between buildings and gardens on the newer south side, through the beech trees to the north and east of the Common and across open land to the west and downhill to the Hughenden Valley.

Blacksmith's Lane still exhibits the characteristics of an unmade country lane with well developed

#### Recommendation

Downley street furniture will continually need to be rationalised and renewed.



“Ransomes’ Green”, a traditional Downley colour, should be used.

#### Recommendation

new lighting should be consistent with that already used within Downley

A number of methods are in use to prevent traffic damage to verges including both careful planting of bushes and trees and lines of wooden posts .

#### Recommendation

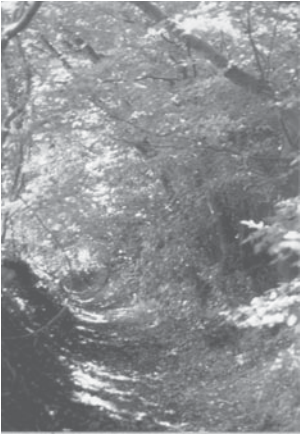
Highway materials should be sympathetic to the predominant theme in the locality e.g. granite kerbs should be used.

#### Recommendation

Any further ‘upgrading’ of traditional routes and footpaths should be avoided, as this detracts from the rural feel of the village.

**Recommendation**

It is important that any future development avoids the curtailment or restriction of public rights of way, rather it should ensure that their character is maintained i.e. by preserving the hedgerow style if a hedge has to be replanted.



hedgerows. During 1998, a partnership between landowners including the National Trust, Buckinghamshire County Council, other organisations and Downley Parish Council has led to the welcome upgrading of a number of permissive footpaths and bridleways to definitive rights of way in Common, Flagmore and Hanging Woods. Ditches have been filled in, kissing gates and stiles have been established. The addition of signposts and waymarkers makes the whole area more user friendly for walkers and all members of the public.

Throughout the residential areas, even the newer ones, the linking footpaths have been retained and are generally well maintained. They are constructed of tarmac or in some cases of natural earth, mainly hedged with holly, hawthorn, and hazel or beech. These provide for pleasant pedestrian movement throughout the built up areas, away from roads. Because they are generally located against back gardens or open space, bricks and mortar do not intrude, and it is like walking in unbuilt countryside. They are much loved by those who are aware of their existence, and form an important feature of Downley infrastructure.

**Recommendation**

Wherever possible where publicly owned grass verges about footpaths the footpath should be sited at a distance from the road. This would be more aesthetically pleasing, improve safety and if wide enough could also permit planting as separation.

**Recommendation**

Where any new signs are required for footpaths these should conform to the standard signage introduced by Buckinghamshire County Council in mid 1999.



A path through Little Cookshall Wood

# Local Distinctiveness

This checklist summarises what we, the residents, think makes Downley special. The Village Design Statement expands on these points in more detail.

- ✓ Downley's rural setting and views over surrounding countryside are a major feature.
- ✓ The Common is central to the rural life of Downley village life and the management of it is important.
- ✓ The space around Downley Farm is important, providing a vital part of the rural landscape of the village, and a setting for many of the listed buildings in the village.
- ✓ An extensive network of footpaths provides links between open spaces and to surrounding villages and adds an important dimension to Downley for residents and visitors alike.
- ✓ Historically the building design is unfussy, simply massed and understated, exhibiting plain, well-proportioned and practical features, and based on traditional clay bricks and tiles with some use of local flint and the occasional use of slate. Pre 1700 properties are of timber frame with brick or plastered in-fill.
- ✓ The variation in style and density of building in different parts of the village is important to the village structure. Where building is dense this is accompanied by open space which is fundamental to the visual distinctiveness of the village.
- ✓ Downley still retains a traditional village character - with a broad social mix, local schools and churches, some cottage industry and a number of local societies. The continuous community activity of its residents engenders a strong sense of local identity.

## Acknowledgement

This document is dedicated to the people of Downley.

Villagers, both young and old, have their part to play to ensure that the very best of our village way of life is maintained for the benefit of all, both today and in the future. For as long as we choose to live here we share the collective responsibility to maintain our village, to protect our buildings, our amenities, the environment and the well-being of our community.

Local residents gave up much private time over a twelve months period, to undertake the wide variety of activities that were needed to produce the initial design statement: photographing local sites, researching local history, surveying village buildings, hedgerows, footpaths and the like. Local awareness rose at every stage as we chose to involve as many villagers as possible from the inception of the project through to our open-to-the-public presentation on 'Downley Day'.

The following made particular contributions to the original project:

David Audcent, Brian Gilbert, Chris Hamilton, Eric Hardy, Sarah Holmes, Lisa Jackson, Peter & Deane Ketteringham, Mike Lambert, Roger Lawson, Martin & Cynthia Lunn, Julie Moore, Helen Ritchie, Owen Rush, Janet Vale, John & Judy Vince, Pat Weedon, John Willson, David & Anthea Worsdall.

The study team also enjoyed both technical support and financial sponsorship from Downley Parish Council, Wycombe District Council and the Countryside Agency.

The revision, finalised in 2007, incorporates the boundary changes in 2007 and other adjustments to life in Downley.

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If you would like any further information or advice on any village matter, in the first instance please contact the Clerk to the Parish Council.