

ST JOHN'S CONSERVATION AREA

CHARACTER APPRAISAL 2008

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SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT: - DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE ST JOHN'S CONSERVATION AREA

1. This is an **Executive Summary** of the key elements (of significance) that define the essential character and qualities of the St John's Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1985 and reviewed in June 1994 – “the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. It aims to provide a succinct picture of the conservation area as it is today - defining its special qualities and heritage assets particularly in terms of the area's local distinctiveness and special interest. These qualities should be safeguarded and where possible, enhanced.
2. St John's Conservation Area is located on the west side of the Borough of Havant, two miles south of the local centre of Waterlooville, centred around the early 19th century Parish Church of St John the Baptist and its immediate setting on London Road, Purbrook. The Conservation Area is small and compact with a short frontage onto London Road, with an area of backland containing the former Edwardian Vicarage, which is now part of a small, modern residential development. An area of historic woodland forms the southern boundary. The area is of archaeological importance and the Roman route from Chichester to Wickham runs to the south of the Conservation Area.
3. Purbrook is a recent settlement in historical terms. It was not until the 1830s that a small community had developed astride the London to Portsmouth road, surrounded by small copses and woodlands. Within a few years by the mid-19th century, it was large enough to support a church and school.
4. Today the area is an active, mixed commercial and residential neighbourhood centred upon the London Road, which is likely to increase in economic activity due to the commencement of the first phase of the Waterlooville Major Development Area on land to the west.
5. Within the Conservation Area there are **three character sub-areas** which may be identified - London Road, Marrelswood Gardens and the southern area of woodland;
 - i) **London Road:** - The short frontage of the Conservation Area to London Road with the Church of St John the Baptist and its church yard, together with the Victorian School on the south side and the former Methodist Chapel to the north - together form the core of the Conservation Area. The church yard is typical of a 19th century Hampshire example with its yew trees, flint boundary walls and a later Lych Gate (1919). All three buildings are prominent in the streetscene, but the bell tower is a particularly noticeable feature on the Victorian school building. The church was built in 1843 in Early English style in flint and stone dressings, with a square tower on the south west corner by J P Harrison. The later

school is also built in flint, but in a typical mid-Victorian Neo-Gothick style. By contrast the former Methodist Chapel reflects a simpler, latter part of the 19th century hall style constructed in red brick and Welsh slate roof. Together these three buildings and their setting form a group.

- ii) **Edwardian Villa and Marrelswood Gardens:** – The original landscape setting surrounding the former Vicarage was significantly altered due to the devastation caused by the 1987 storm. Some of the original specimens still survive on the south and west boundaries and have been safeguarded following redevelopment of the back land for residential use. The Edwardian Villa (now No 5 Marrelswood Gardens) has still retained its individual character despite the changes to its setting, now enclosed by the residential development of Marrelswood Gardens. The new housing is of good quality and the area still has the protection of the woodland - Marrelsmoor Coppice, on its west boundary.
- iii) **Woodland:** – The entrance to the back land is via a small access road at the southern end which winds through a small area of woodland. This forms an enclosed and almost ‘secret’ approach, as part of the larger area of woodland to the west and north. It provides an attractive natural setting at the southern end of the Conservation Area.

6. **Statutory Listed Buildings (and Landmarks)**

- Parish Church of St John the Baptist and church yard, London Road
- Purbrook First School, London Road

7. **Other Buildings of Local Interest**

- Methodist Chapel (now a Parish hall), London Road (mid 19th century)
- Edwardian Villa (former Vicarage), No 5 Marrelswood Gardens

8. **Landscape Features/Trees**

Besides some individual trees within the church yard, there are a few substantial trees on the southern and western boundaries of Marrelswood Gardens and within the southern area of woodland, which defines the entrance to the backland of the Conservation Area from the south.

9. In conclusion, St John’s is only a small part of the remaining historic village of Purbrook, which straddles the north-south route of the London Road. The Parish Church and its setting fronting the London Road is the key part. The landscape surroundings to backland and the former Edwardian Vicarage have been compromised by the recent residential development. The strengths of the area are its robust, mainly mid-19th century ecclesiastical and educational character with its landmark buildings fronting London Road, together with the historic woodland at the southern part of the area. Threats to this character could be changes to traditional setting of the key buildings, or further erosion of the woodland on the south or the west boundaries. There are opportunities for

improvements to the street scene in London Road and the setting of the Conservation Area, with the sensitive re-development of the former petrol station site. These, together with some other small scale environmental enhancements to the car park behind the church yard could benefit the area and which will be set out in a Management Plan for the area.

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 St John's is a small conservation area, centred upon the historic setting of the Parish Church of St John the Baptist in Purbrook. The Church and the adjacent school were built during the middle of the 19th century to serve the growing population of Purbrook to the west of Havant. St John's was designated as a Conservation Area by Havant Borough Council in 1985 and reviewed in June 1994, as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities, to consider from time to time, whether parts of their area should be designated Conservation Areas due to their special character and to review their situation by carrying out a character appraisal.
- 1.2 Designation recognises that the area, as opposed to just buildings, is special and warrants additional safeguards and attention. This does not mean that change cannot take place, but that any new development must take into account the area's special qualities and the Council has additional powers of control. Local Planning Authorities also have a legal duty to consider, formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in their district.
- 1.3 Since 1992, Havant Borough Council has designated fourteen conservation areas throughout the Borough. In accordance with national guidance, the Borough Council has undertaken this Character Appraisal of St John's as part of a systematic review programme of all conservation areas in the borough, in order to define the special qualities that contribute to its character. It will also provide guidance for future improvement and management plans.

Location and setting

- 1.4 St John's Conservation area is located on the west side of the London Road in the village of Purbrook, in the western part of the Borough. It consists of a short frontage to the main road around the Church, together with a small area of woodland at the southern end. Behind this frontage is a 'backland' area containing the former Edwardian Vicarage, which is now part of a modern residential development. Appendix 1 shows the Location Plan.

Historic Context

- 1.5 The Roman Road between Chichester and Wickham runs to the south of the Conservation Area, but Purbrook itself is a recent settlement in historical terms. It is not identified on Speed's Map of 1611 - although by 1838 when the Tithe

Map was produced, a small community had developed astride the London to Portsmouth road. The village takes its name from a small river called the Purr, a tributary of the Wallington River, which runs just to the south of the Conservation Area. Situated in an area which once formed part of the Forest of Bere, the village was still surrounded by small copses and woods at the beginning of the 19th century, notably Marrelsmoor Coppice to the west. By the 1840s, the village was large enough to support a church and school. These were constructed over the next few years and form the core of the Conservation Area.

- 1.6 Some of this former natural landscape still remains at the southern end of the area. The former Vicarage, an Edwardian villa (which is now a private residence), was originally set within extensive landscaped grounds with a large number of substantial trees. Unfortunately, many of these trees were blown down during the 1987 storm. However, the better specimens of those which remained were made the subject of a Tree Preservation Order in 1990 and are situated on western and southern boundaries, with Marrelsmoor Coppice to the north-west. Since the Conservation Area was last reviewed in 1994, a new housing development (Marrelsmoor Gardens) has been built around the villa and an access road constructed through the southern part of the woodland. This crosses a public footpath which runs through the woodland, alongside the southern boundary of the former Vicarage and residential area to the London Road. The whole of this southern part of the Conservation Area is identified as an area of archaeological importance.
- 1.7 Today, this part of Purbrook is a busy, mixed use neighbourhood centred on the London Road with its local shops, pubs and businesses serving the many nearby residential areas to the north, south and east. A significant part of this frontage at the southern end is now a vacant site, due to the demise of a petrol service station. A major development area (West of Waterlooville MDA) has been designated just to the northwest of the Conservation Area. With the imminent commencement of the first phase of development, this is likely to have a significant impact upon the locality in the coming years.

2. AREA DEFINITION

Entrances

- 2.1 The approaches to conservation areas are always important in defining the **boundaries** and establishing the special characteristics of the area.
- 2.2 **Entrance from the south (London Road/Ladybridge Road roundabout):** From the west side of the roundabout, this approach follows a small access road that twists through a small area of woodland. This envelops a discreet entrance leading to the backland of the conservation area, behind the frontage of London Road.

- 2.3 **Entrance from the north (London Road):** Travelling southwards along the London Road, through the village of Purbrook, it is the projecting gabled end of the former Methodist Chapel on the west side (abutting almost to the back of the pavement), that marks the beginning of the Conservation Area. The dark yews in the churchyard adjacent are apparent before the Parish Church of St John (which is set back at an angle), comes into view, with the Victorian school beyond.
- 2.4 **Entrance from the south (London Road):** Continuing up London Road northwards from the roundabout, past a wide cleared site (former petrol station) on the west side and an industrial unit, the Victorian School building with its prominent tower, identifies the start of the Conservation Area.
- 2.5 Considering the above, the **boundaries** to the Conservation Area have therefore been tightly drawn and reflect the existing key historical features and physical 'gateways'.

3. CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

- 3.1 This section describes and analyses the existing visual environment of the St John's Conservation Area. Visual quality is a scarce resource and as such must be safeguarded. Improvements can be expressed through local policies and by action on the ground where possible.
- 3.2 Defining the character of an area is critical to its preservation and its future. Character may be defined as those factors, or distinguishing marks that qualify or confer a unifying theme to a district or locality, including notable features, certain buildings, architectural styles, geographical or natural elements, colours, textures, focal points and land uses etc. To simplify matters and also to conform to national guidelines on Character Appraisals (appropriate for St John's), this spatial and character analysis will adopt the following main headings:-
- **Urban Form/Townscape**
 - **Buildings of Interest**
 - **Other Special Features**
- 3.3 In order to make an assessment of these major elements and provide a link for future actions, they will be considered against the following three aspects:-
- (1) Qualities **(Q)** – inherent factors which enhance the environment (positives requiring preservation or safeguarding).
 - (2) Issues **(N)** – neutral or negative factors that add little or acting to the detriment of the area (i.e. problems or matters needed to be addressed).
 - (3) Opportunities **(O)** – potential that may act as a basis for improvement (but require action to realise or enhance).

The above prefixes **(Q)**, **(N)** and **(O)** will be used for reference in the following sections and on the accompanying Character Appraisal Plan (Appendix 3)

Urban Form/Townscape

- 3.4 St John's owes its character (and its name) primarily to the Church of St John the Baptist and its immediate surroundings. The area is tightly contained to a relatively short frontage on the west side of London Road. The land behind these frontage properties to the west, surrounding the former vicarage, has since designation been redeveloped for housing. The main area of woodland is now therefore confined to the southern part of the Conservation Area.
- 3.5 The pattern of development for the area, thus largely follows the main north-south route of London Road and the woodland setting to the south and the west.

The area may therefore be divided into **three character sub-areas**, these are:-

- (A) London Road frontage (west side)**
- (B) Edwardian villa and residential setting (Marrelswood Gardens)**
- (C) Woodland (southern end)**

London Road (Sub-Area A)

- 3.6 Historically, the core of the Conservation Area is the London Road frontage containing three buildings – the Parish Church, the Victorian First School and the Methodist Chapel. The first two are statutorily listed buildings, but the Methodist Chapel (now serving as a church hall) although of a later date and style, contributes equally to the streetscene with its restrained front gabled elevation to London Road **(Q)**. It thus forms part of an important group, together with the other two principal buildings on this frontage to London Road.
- 3.7 South of the Victorian School (now used as a play school), the quality of the streetcene dissolves, with a utilitarian shed next door and the empty site of the former petrol station, surrounded by steel security fencing **(N)**. The boundary of the Conservation Area skirts to the west of these two sites. Hopefully, the opportunity will be taken to provide a quality development on this linear site, which will enhance the setting of the Conservation Area and this part of London Road **(O)**.
- 3.8 The Church of St John the Baptist which was designed by J P Harrison, was built in 1843 in an Early English style in flint with stone dressings and a plain clay tile roof. It has a square tower with a pyramidal tile roof set behind a parapet, located on the south-west side. The setting of the Parish Church within the church yard, with its low, enclosing flint and brick boundary walls, green grass and gravestones is also an important feature of the relationship of the three principal buildings and this part of the street. The crispness and texture of the

flint Church contrasts sharply with the dark, almost brooding nature of the yew trees - particularly when viewed from the east side. The west side of the church yard has a more open aspect displaying a pleasant green space that captures any available sunlight. A flint wall defines the west boundary between the church yard and the car park adjacent. The Lych Gate on the east boundary was erected in 1919 as a First World War memorial and marks the main pedestrian entrance to the Church from London Road **(Q)**. Its setting is slightly compromised by the location of the nearby bus shelter.

- 3.9 On the southern boundary of the church yard, the Purbrook First School was built in the middle of the 19th century. Constructed in similar materials as the Church with flint walls, stone and brick dressings and a plain tile roof - it is designed in neo-Gothick style with steeply pitched roof slopes and lancet windows. A bell tower on the east frontage is a notable architectural feature and a landmark in the local streetscene **(Q)**.
- 3.10 In contrast to the two flint buildings, the Methodist Chapel situated on the northside of the Church is altogether a humbler building, but nonetheless important in its own right both in the context of the streetscene and local history. A rectangular plan form with a gabled roof built in the second half of the 19th century in red brick under a Welsh slate roof. This building together with the Church and the school, are of group value in the setting of the Conservation Area.

Edwardian Villa and Marrelswood Gardens (Sub-Area B)

- 3.11 The land west of the Church originally formed extensive landscaped grounds, as a setting to the Vicarage, a large Edwardian Villa. The Villa (now No 5 Marrelswood Gardens) is still intact **(Q)**, but is now in private ownership and on a much reduced plot in the centre of a housing development 'Marrelswood Gardens' built in the late 1990's - thus, its setting has been compromised. The development consists of two clusters of detached houses, one forming a close around the former Vicarage and the other to the north, both served off a small access road leading through the woodland at the southern end of the Conservation Area. The houses are of a traditional form and good quality, constructed in brick with tile roofs. High mature hedges and brick walls enclose the housing from the access road and form a good boundary between it and the car parking area at the culmination of the access road, adjacent to the Church. The car park is a useful facility serving the Church, the adjacent hall and the play school and is partly landscaped on the west side, with well kept mature hedges.
- 3.12 The vehicular approach to this backland area is from the south via north-south access road. Emerging from the darkness of the enclosing woodland, the road meanders past the housing on the eastside which is defined by mature boundary hedging. The opposite side is the rear of the former petrol site, which displays a generally untidy appearance onto the access road **(N)**. The car park at the end of

the road is a better space due to some landscaping adjacent to the church yard. But the west side lacks the same quality of detail and the stunted trees along the north boundary provide a visually weaker aspect.

- 3.13 The character of this sub-area centred, upon the former Vicarage, has changed significantly since the designation of the Conservation Area in 1994. From being a landscape setting surrounding a Villa, it is now a modern residential area. There are still a number of the specimen trees remaining, particularly on the west and southern boundaries, which are subject to the original Tree Preservation Order. Marrelsmoor Coppice borders the site to the north and west and still exerts an influence upon the setting of this character sub-area. The perimeter access road and the car park area forms a 'transitional' space between it and the important historic group of buildings fronting the London Road.

Woodland (Sub-Area C)

- 3.14 The original access road to the Vicarage followed a route through the small woodland at the southern end of the Conservation Area. This has now increased in status, being the main access road serving both the new housing and the original buildings. Even with grass verges, the woodland still maintains its role as a natural setting to the southern end of the Conservation Area **(Q)**.

Buildings of Interest

- 3.15 Buildings form an important part in the character of most conservation areas by virtue of their architectural or historic interest. They contribute at different levels and can have different values e.g. statutory listed buildings, or of local interest, but each can be important in their individual way, or as a group for townscape value. The following buildings as set out below are considered to contribute positively **(Q)** to the character of the conservation area:-
- 3.16 The following **Statutory Listed Buildings** are those already recognised nationally as being of architectural or historic interest: -

The Church of St John the Baptist (Grade II)

Designed by J P Harrison and built in 1843, in an Early English Neo-Gothick style with a square tower on the south west side. It is constructed in flint with stone dressings and a plain clay tile roof. Churchyard setting, enclosed by low flint walls.

Purbrook First School (Grade II)

Dates from the mid-19th century and built in the Neo-Gothick style, with flintwork, stone and brick dressings and a plain tile roof to compliment the adjacent Church. A bell tower is a particular feature of the roof fronting London Road and is a local landmark. The building is now used by a play school group.

- 3.17 The following are **Other Buildings of Local Interest**, which contribute positively towards the character of the conservation area, either individually or as a group.

Methodist Chapel , London Road

A simple, rectangular building with its main gable end facing onto London Road. Constructed in the late 19th century, in red brick with a Welsh slate roof. The church benefits from a plaque on the front elevation. It is now used as a parish hall serving the adjacent Parish Church. (Group Value)

Edwardian Villa (Former Vicarage) No 5 Marrelswood Gardens

A substantial red brick residence, with a clay tile roof, formerly the Vicarage to St John's, now a private house. Still retains its style and character of the Edwardian building, although its former landscape setting within its own grounds has now given way to its being part of a modern residential close.

- 3.18 The overwhelming image of the main three buildings on the London Road frontage is that of the mid to late 19th century, both in building style and use of **materials**. Flint work with stone dressings predominates, together with local red stock bricks and plain clay tiles. Welsh slate was also used for the roof of the Methodist Chapel. The Edwardian Villa also uses red stocks with stone dressings and clay tiles for the roof. The recent housing development has adopted the use of red brick and plain tiles, together with some attention to detail reflecting the style of the villa. Other important historic structures which define character are traditional boundary walls, in flint and brickwork surrounding the church yard and school building. Where modern walls in brick walls have been used to enclose gardens, these also contribute to the character of the area.

Special Features

- 3.19 Besides the main elements of the main buildings, there is one other feature of special interest which contributes to the character of the area.
- 3.20 **Natural Woodland:** At the southern end, the small area of woodland forms an important entrance to the Conservation Area, both in terms of its intrinsic value and as a 'gateway'. Many trees were lost in the grounds around the villa, so this remaining natural feature is a valuable resource, together with nearby Marrelsmoor Coppice just to the northwest (**Q**).
- 3.21 **Trees:** The yew trees, together with some deciduous species impart a particular character upon the church yard. In the residential area now surrounding the Edwardian Villa, there are still a number of specimen trees and together with the small woodland at the southern end contribute to the environment and setting of the area.

4. CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 In addition to the main principles to be applied to ensure that the key characteristics of the area are safeguarded and promoted, designation does give the Local Planning Authority a more positive role when considering proposals for new development in the conservation area. **A number of special controls apply and it is advisable for anyone thinking of carrying out works to a property in the conservation area, to seek advice from the Borough Council's Development Control team at an early stage.**

Works which require permission

- 4.2 Within conservation areas there are a number of works to houses that require planning permission (which may not require permission elsewhere), for example:-
- Additions and alterations to the shape of a roof e.g. inserting dormers or raised roof lights.
 - An extension that is greater than 50 cubic metres or greater than 10% of the total size of the dwelling.
 - The application of external cladding e.g. with stone, timber, tiles or plastic.
 - Installing a satellite dish on a building or chimney which exceeds 15 metres in height or a wall or roof slope, which fronts a highway.
 - Erecting any individual 'garden' building greater than 10 cubic metres within the boundaries of a dwelling.
 - Most works to business premises require planning permission including additional controls on advertisements (the design and size).
- 4.3 Conservation Area Consent is special form of consent which is applies to unlisted buildings in conservation areas and is required for the total (or substantial) demolition of a building, or structure in excess of 115 cubic metres and also other structures such as gates, walls, etc depending upon their height, location and date of construction.

Works to Trees

- 4.4 With limited exceptions all trees (with a stem diameter of 75mm at 1.5 metres above ground level) all standing within a conservation area are legally protected. It is an offence to cut down, lop, top or wilfully damage a tree. Any one intending to do work on a tree, must give six weeks written notice to the Local Planning Authority. There is an exception where a tree can be legitimately felled if dead, dying or in a dangerous condition, but it is always advisable to inform the Council's Tree Office beforehand. Landowners have a duty to plant an agreed replacement in such cases.
- 4.5 The role of Development Control is to encourage a sympathetic approach to the alteration, extension or redevelopment of buildings, or sites, or works on trees

within the area by relevant guidance for owners e.g. design guidance leaflets, the Council's website and Officer's pre-application advice.

5. NEXT STEPS

Recommendations for Future Management

- 5.1 In order to preserve or enhance the characteristics which define the special interest of the conservation area, the following list of suggested actions and management proposals aim to assist in the recognition and protection of these special qualities and encourage their enhancement. Some are already in place, or have begun, but may require further co-ordination:-

Urban Form and Buildings

- 5.2 Alterations to the two Statutory Listed Buildings (and the former Methodist Chapel) are already controlled under the terms of the Planning Acts. However, **there is only one other unlisted historic building (the Edwardian Villa) which makes a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area and could benefit by additional controls to safeguard it.**
- 5.3 Other than the setting, the original architectural characteristics of the building (in particular original windows and roof coverings) have to-date been respected and retained – but when improvements are necessary.

The following alterations should always be avoided:-

- Replacing the original roof coverings with anything other than matching natural slates.
 - Installing plastic (PVC-U), aluminium or other non-traditional windows or doors.
 - Removal of architectural features such as chimney stacks, pots, cornices, decorative brickwork.
- 5.4 In this way the 'dilution' of the character by any inappropriate alterations in the past may be rectified and the appearance of the area enhanced. Historic Building Grants for repairs or alterations to individual properties may be available to give encouragement to owners. **The Council will give consideration to the introduction of Article 4 Directions for this identifiable locally listed building**, which would remove certain, permitted development rights in order to retain the architectural details and character of this buildings.
- 5.5 **Any alterations or extensions** should be sympathetic to the original design and materials of a building. Owners should always use the appropriate professional advice (registered architects or chartered surveyors) in order to ensure the best benefit from their building proposals.

- 5.6 **The design of any new buildings** will also need to be sensitive to the scale and character of the area. Imaginative solutions which build upon the existing urban form, details and materials will be encouraged. This should apply to any sites adjacent to the Conservation Area and thereby affect its setting.
- 5.7 **Identifying Buildings at Risk:** There are no buildings at risk in the Conservation Area at present. Where appropriate, the Council will encourage the repair and restoration of any building which becomes under threat or vulnerable, including where necessary the serving of Urgent Works and/or Repairs Notices.

Natural Features

- 5.8 The continued preservation of the setting of the natural environment will be promoted as a valuable ecological asset, including trees, planting, footpaths etc, throughout the Conservation Area and surrounding land which may be also important for the historical context and the Area's character and setting.

Opportunities for Enhancement

- 5.9 As an essential part of the principal to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, the Borough Council will draw up schemes for enhancement to reinforce the distinctive character of the area by:-
- The retention, repair and maintenance of any special features, e.g. the churchyard.
 - A co-ordinated approach to highway repairs on London Road and the southern access road, including re-surfacing, tree planning, maintenance and cleaning, improved street furniture (such as appropriately designed street lighting, street name plates, seating or pavement plaques), to underpin the area's significance.
 - A planned approach towards the design solutions for any potential development opportunities for the old petrol station site in London Road.
 - Seek a management plan for the woodland at the southern part of the area and adjoining woodland.
 - Consider an environmental improvement scheme for the car park area adjacent to the churchyard, to build upon the existing planting and visual aspects.

All of the above suggestions are subject to funding and will be developed if the funds become available.

Public Consultation

- 5.10 Publish the Character Appraisal which defines the special qualities of the area and involve the local community in the process, in order to underpin support for any proposals and the area's future.

Future Management Plan

- 5.11 Publish the Council's long term strategy in the form of a Management Plan for the area, which sets out a corporate approach to the recommendations above for protecting and enhancing the area.
- 5.12 As part of the Management Plan, regularly monitor and review the effect of change on the character of the area and establish management responsibility for taking any necessary action to deal with any problems that may arise.

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MBR/St John's Conservation Area Character Appraisal