

# CONSERVATION AREAS IN EAST DORSET

## Wimborne, St. John's (Rowlands Hill/St. John's Hill)



# Foreword

This document is based upon work carried out in 1988/89 to define the special qualities of the Conservation Area that was subsequently published as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the East Dorset Local Plan (see paragraphs 6.118 to 6.131 and accompanying policies BUCON 1 to 4 of the East Dorset Local Plan adopted 11 January 2002).

The text and illustrations of the original publication have been revised and updated to reflect any significant changes that have taken place in that time since the original survey and appraisal of the area were undertaken.

The appraisal provides guidance to those elements and characteristics that should be taken into account when considering proposed developments and other works requiring consent. The information contained in the appraisal will be treated as a material consideration by the Local Planning Authority when considering planning applications.

The revision does not extend to reviewing the boundaries of the designated area. This work will be undertaken between 2006 and 2010 in parallel with the Local Development Framework process, as currently programmed.

The maps used in the document are based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping currently available to the Council.

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## Introduction

This Victorian suburb immediately to the east of Wimborne town centre originates from the introduction of the railway to the town in 1847. Its subsequent development was in part due to the expansion of the rail network.

Within a period of forty years Wimborne Station was serving lines linking London, Dorchester, Weymouth, Salisbury and the West Country. By 1873 the western side of Avenue Road, to the junction with Leigh Road, was laid out for housing. At this time St John's Hill did not exist.

The growing population led to the creation of the new ecclesiastical parish of St John in 1876, centred on St John's Church built in the same year. St John's School, adjacent to the north, was built a year later. New housing on St John's Hill then proceeded apace.



*South front of St. Johns Church*

Rowlands Hill appears to have been formed in conjunction with the construction of spacious mid to late 19th century villas, replacing an old trackway further to the north-west which formed one of the ancient links between Wimborne and Colehill.

'The developing (red brick) suburbs of Rowlands and Colehill provided villas 'for retired officers on half pay, artists, clergymen and the professional classes generally'. (Jude James).

In 1881 Thomas Hardy and his wife moved to 'Lanherne', No.16 Avenue Road, staying for two years. There he wrote a number of poems, including 'The Levelled Churchyard' alluding to the recent leveling of the Minster churchyard.

It is likely that the avenue of trees in Avenue Road was planted soon after the street was

made. A well-developed avenue existed in 1915, which continued to the top of St John's Hill.

Retreat Road is a private access serving four houses built in succession from 1885 to 1910 by the same builder. A modern house was added at the end of the road in the 1970's.



## Scope

The conservation area, which was designated in March 1981, comprises the former Victorian suburbs of Rowlands Hill, St John's Hill and Avenue Road. The boundary is extended southwards to include part of New Borough.

A number of 1960's and 70's developments disrupt the unity of the conservation area. Developments such as Bourne Court in St John's Hill and Moorhills in Leigh Road are a result of re-development of the former villas and/or the development of their large gardens. They share none of the characteristics that make the conservation area distinctive or special, nor are they of sufficient architectural merit to justify their inclusion. These areas are therefore excluded from the conservation area.

The shops to the north and east of the junction of Leigh Road and St John's Hill, which have been much altered are also excluded.

Since the designation of the conservation area two significant Victorian houses have been lost and their sites redeveloped. Glen House has been redeveloped and the site now accommodates four large detached houses. The former Grangewood Hall School, No.24 now comprises two neo-Victorian blocks of flats. The quality of these recent schemes justify their inclusion within the conservation area.



*Recent detached houses on the site of Glen House*

One of the more beneficial changes that have occurred in the area is the replacement of the former school hall, a 'temporary' building with the current purpose-built hall and other school improvements in 2003.

Less satisfactory is the recent Abbeyfield development, 'Harleston House', sited on the former school playing field cramped at the eastern end of Harleston Villas. The scale of this building is out of keeping with the six Victorian semi-detached cottages and spoils the lane's former rustic charm.



## Setting

St Johns Hill and Rowlands Hill occupy the lower southern and western slopes of Colehill respectively, joining the flat land of the Stour valley at Leigh Road. Houses in St John's Hill with south-facing windows overlook the valley and Railway Town rooftops.

The hillside still supports many indigenous and imported trees, many of which were planted in Victorian times. The largest concentration is in

Rowlands Hill where the plot sizes are larger. The treescape is a significant feature of the area, despite the loss of trees in recent years. They provide both an important setting for the houses within the conservation area and an important eastern backdrop to Wimborne town centre.



*View of St Johns and Rowlands Hill from Oakley Hill, south of Wimborne*

Avenue Road forms part of the Railway Town, built on open fields and meadows. To the north, the street is closed by St John's Hill. The avenue of cherries that extend the full length of the street forms a distinctive feature and important setting for the houses that front it.



## Form and Character

Avenue Road is straight and flat, following a north-south orientation. It forms part of a grid-iron layout of streets built in the mid to late 19th century. Single and paired houses and the occasional group of three, follow building lines behind short front gardens and relatively long narrow gardens at the rear. This form and pattern of development continues in New

Borough. The formality of Avenue Road is reinforced by the avenue of trees and low front boundary walls.

Each house or group of houses is clearly defined and separated by garden areas, allowing glimpses between the buildings to the rear. This characteristic distinguishes the area from its contemporary developments to the east and south in Grove Road, Crescent Road, St Catherines and Ethelbert Road.



In recent years this feature has tended to be eroded with the construction of side extensions.

St John's Hill forms a straight continuation of Avenue Road up the hillside, and was once similarly planted as an avenue. This consisted of limes, but most of these have now disappeared. St John's Hill still has a formal character on account of the regular pavements, enclosed front gardens and regularly spaced detached and semi-detached Victorian house that follow common building lines. Low boundary walling adds to the formal character of the street.



Retreat Road and Harlaston Villas break from the normal pattern of development in the street, taking full advantage of the southerly aspect and, in respect to the former, views across the valley. Rydal House, higher up the hill also has a southerly aspect enjoying extensive views.



*South front of Rydal House*

Rowlands Hill has a more relaxed and informal character, reflecting the larger plot sizes, greater proliferation of trees and narrow road with a bend that forms a pinch-point and blocks views. These factors, together with the single pavement on its north side and enclosed frontages, gives Rowlands Hill an informal lane character.



Low walling, in buff bricks with distinctive string courses and cappings, line the street on both sides. Unlike St John's Hill and Station Road, most buildings are screened from the road by hedges and other garden vegetation.



The houses follow building lines but arranged less formally than the St John's Hill or Avenue Road. The Victorian houses on the south side of Rowlands Hill front onto sunny rear gardens. Some are double-fronted, but the block of houses, Numbers 12 to 18, has its principal aspect facing away from the road.

At the top of Rowlands Hill, beyond its junction with Cranfield Avenue, the highway narrows dramatically as it proceeds northwards, confined by hedges and by a steep wooded bank on the eastern side.



Retreat Road is a very narrow hedge-lined cul-de-sac without pavements or street lights. Narrow driveway entrances maintain enclosure. Long driveways extend up the slope towards the houses: some houses have garages sited close to the road.

To the south of Retreat Road runs a parallel track that serves Harleston Villas, six semi-

detached buildings built at the turn of the Century. The private road terminates at the recent Abbeyfields development. The near-identical houses follow a common building line with short sunny front gardens.



For part of its length, the long private driveway to Garth Lodge is a public footpath linking the lower part of Rowlands Hill with Cuthburga Road. This narrow driveway is flanked by hedges and trees.



## Buildings

The strong Victorian building legacy that remains in Rowlands Hill, St John's Hill and Avenue Road accounts for much of the character of the conservation area. The density, pattern of development and house types vary within the conservation area, but the buildings share important common themes:

- i) Constructed in mid-late 19th century.
- ii) Red-orange brickwork, Welsh slate roofs with deep, open eaves.
- iii) Victorian architectural details, especially box

sliding sash windows set deep in reveals with sub sills; varied window head details; dressings of render, buff brick or stone; decorative bargeboards; gallows brackets; bay windows; decorative ridge tiles and finials.



iv) Big chimney stacks with corbel detailing and tall pots.



v) Brick boundary walls, pillars and traditional timber gates.



vi) Detached garages (constructed later)

The conservation area includes a wide range of house types, ranging from very substantial villas to small cottages that are paired or arranged in groups of three.

Garth Lodge is a particularly fine, well-preserved villa remaining in single occupancy set within large secluded gardens some distance from Rowlands Hill. A coach house stands adjacent on its north side.



On the north side of Rowlands Hill, numbers 9 and 11 are a striking pair of large villas constructed in a creamy-buff brick. Because of the extensive tree and understorey planting only glimpses of these dwellings can be seen from the roadside.



Each old building in Rowlands Hill has its own individual design and character. Most are two storeys in height, but a number have attic rooms lit by small dormers.

Lullingstone, Number 28 Rowlands Hill, contrasts from the traditional Victorian style in the area. This fine-proportioned white-rendered house has a neo-classical style with a low-

pitched hipped roof, pediment and corniced portico. It also features coad-stone quoins and string courses.



In St John's Hill, Rydal House, one of the largest surviving houses, was sensitively converted to flats in the 1980's with a mews development at the rear.



Many of the houses in St John's Hill are symmetrical in design with two projecting gables that feature decorative barge boards. Nos.13 and 15 on the west side are two well-preserved examples. Two semi-detached pairs on the opposite side follow a similar plan form.



Retreat Road comprises a row of individually designed detached Victorian villas facing south. Each is located as far back as possible in the plot and overlooks a long sunny garden.



The three identical pairs of small Victorian cottages known as Harleston Villas are similar in form and character to many houses in the Railway Town. The buildings are all well preserved.



Avenue Road comprises a mix of detached and semi-detached houses, together with two adjacent blocks of three. It is the quality of these buildings, rather than other factors such as landscape setting, that account for the inclusion of this street within the conservation area. They share similar architectural features to those in St John's Hill and Rowlands Hill, but have a more urban character and the level of detail is correspondingly higher.

The detached houses are characterized by a single projecting gable, often embellished with decorative barge-boards.

Decorative barge-boards (36, 40, and 41), window heads (notably Nos. 6 & 23), decorative and brickwork detailing on many buildings

generate considerable visual interest. A row of houses from 16 to 22 have attractive front veranda's; the open veranda in front of Number 43 has decorative cast iron brackets.



The majority of houses in Avenue Road are well preserved. However, they are subject to pressures for enlargement and increased parking space resulting in a loss of space between dwellings and loss of front gardens and boundary walls respectively.

In the 1980's a number of buildings underwent 'improvements' which resulted in the replacement of the original slate roofs for large concrete tiles. Some chimney stacks were removed in the process. In some cases traditional box sliding sash windows, constructed of seasoned pine, were replaced with plastic windows, often changing their basic design and proportions.



These incremental changes resulted in a loss in character and reduction in historical and architectural interest.

The use of modern flat roof extensions and the siting of modern garages, including those made of pre-cast materials, further eroded the quality

of some buildings and in turn adversely impact on the conservation area.

There are also some modern dwellings in Avenue Road, St John's Hill and Rowlands Hill, built before the area was designated as a conservation area. Most are the result of demolition or the subdivision of the large plots of the original dwellings. Their scale and form, design and materials have paid little regard to the strong Victorian character of the older buildings. Whilst the visual impact of many of these dwellings has been ameliorated by maturing boundary planting their modern proportions and materials remain incongruous.

Despite these changes Avenue Road, St Johns Hill and Rowlands Hill retain their distinctive Victorian identity. Although some recent individual changes and developments have had an adverse effect on the character of the conservation area, other recent building changes have enhanced the conservation area. Notable examples include:

i) The new St John's School hall has replaced a sub-standard temporary building.



ii) Improvements to an earlier 1960's extension to St John's Church.

Numbers 12-14 Rowlands Hill have been successfully converted to a single dwelling in 2004, concurrently with a new single 'coach-house' development in the rear garden.

## Boundary treatments

Throughout the conservation area many original low front boundary walls remain. These match the brickwork of the dwellings and are normally well-detailed. Many feature decorative string courses, corbelling or half-round cappings, or a combination

of these elements. The walling extends the influence of the Victorian buildings to the site frontages and enhances the environmental quality of the streets.

A number of walls in St. John's Hill and Avenue Road are topped with decorative wrought or cast iron. Some comprise decorative castings, such as 12 St John's Hill and Nos.7 and 8, 16 and 17 Avenue Road. Most consist of a single, double or triple horizontal bars.



Many gateways are still marked by brick piers with stone copings. The pillars to Garth Lodge are capped with stone ball finials. Those in Avenue Road add to the well-mannered character of the street.



Front boundary walling, comprising buff bricks with decorative string courses, is a distinctive and unifying feature of Rowlands Hill. The modern house "Ravelston" has acquired a discordant topping of California screen blocks for part of its length.



Few of the original gates remain. Painted timber gates to Numbers 13 and 15 St John's Hill and iron gates to 16 Avenue Road are perhaps the best examples.



In Avenue Road a number of walls have been altered to accommodate vehicular accesses. In some cases this has resulted in the loss of gate piers and the arbitrary shortening of the boundary wall.

Hedges represent another important and defining feature of the conservation area. In many cases these supplement the low walls, adding to the enclosure of each frontage. Hedging is the dominant boundary treatment in St John's Hill, comprising mostly beech. These hedges are high, dense and well-trimmed. Hedges also occur on both sides of Retreat Road.



*Some front gardens have been paved for parking, at least this example retains the front wall and a little planting*

In Rowlands Hill the planting tends to be bigger and less formal. Indeed, some frontages appear semi-wild, which add to the informal character of the street.



Hedges and laurel under-storey vegetation also line Garth Lodge driveway from Rowlands Hill to Cuthburga Road and along the long private driveway to Number 24.

North of the St John's Hill/Rowlands Hill roundabout laurel understorey provides enclosure to this section of street. However, parts of the embankment have been denuded of ground vegetation made worse by the incremental felling of trees.

## Trees

Much of the present tree cover is likely to have been planted in conjunction with the Victorian developments of the late 1800's and now appears to be approaching maturity.

The main concentration of trees occurs in the vicinity of Rowlands Hill. An important belt of beech and oak follow the former packhorse track from the bottom of the hill to the roundabout junction. It forms a wooded backdrop to Nos. 9 and 11 Rowlands Hill and the new houses on the site of Glen House north of the junction.

Another belt encircles Garth Lodge before dividing westwards as three linear groups to Rowlands Hill. They lie within the grounds of numbers 6 to 28 Rowlands Hill and provide a backdrop to views north-eastwards from Hanham Road



A large evergreen oak part fills the frontage of No. 30 providing valuable enclosure and screening. Unfortunately it is leaning and without attention will eventually fall. There is another large evergreen oak next door in front of Number 28.

Two large beech trees overhang the street; one is sited on north side of the street within the frontage of Number 9; the other on the south side lower down the hill within Number 24.

The bend in the road is marked by a small group of cypress on the frontage of Number 22. Since the last conservation area survey, the massive oak in this front garden has been felled.



Throughout Rowlands Hill there is also a significant under-storey of both deciduous and evergreen species which contribute towards the sense of enclosure along the road.

St John's Hill is partly lined by Lime trees, set at the back edge of the kerb line, which have been pollarded in the past. They make a significant contribution to the street scene. Two street limes at the southern end of St John's Hill soften the architecture at the street corner.



The bulk of the tree cover in this area is provided by large trees in private gardens, such as the group of beech, yew and cypress on the west side of the Grangewood school site and the tall cypress trees on the opposite side of the street. These combine with a group of beech and red oak on the north side of Cranfield Road/ Rowlands Hill and the oaks on the former Glen House site to create a predominantly leafy junction. Other important street groups comprise oaks and cypress on the west side of Rydal House; and the group of lime and beech between the school playing field and No.3.

Outstanding specimen trees are sited half-way up the hill and at the top. A stately Monterey Pine stands in the garden of 40a St John's Hill, part overhanging the street. A Cedar of Lebanon adjacent to 36 Rowlands Hill is prominent when descending the hill from the north and ascending the hill from the south-west, as well as from St John's Hill.

Two Lawson cypress on the Leigh Road frontage to St John's Church are poor specimens intrinsically but perform a useful function in filling a space and softening the architecture of the Church. A recently-planted cedar should eventually make a better contribution.



Avenue Road is lined by an avenue of double-flowered wild cherries, some of which have succumbed to disease. Where possible replacement cherries have been planted by the District Council but there remain a number of gaps where new plantings are precluded because of services or other obstructions.

The street trees have a significant visual impact in this part of the conservation area as there are few large garden trees within the frontages, except near the junction with Leigh Road (Numbers 2 and 6) where several prominent evergreens have survived. The large yew in front of Number 6 is of particular importance to the street scene.

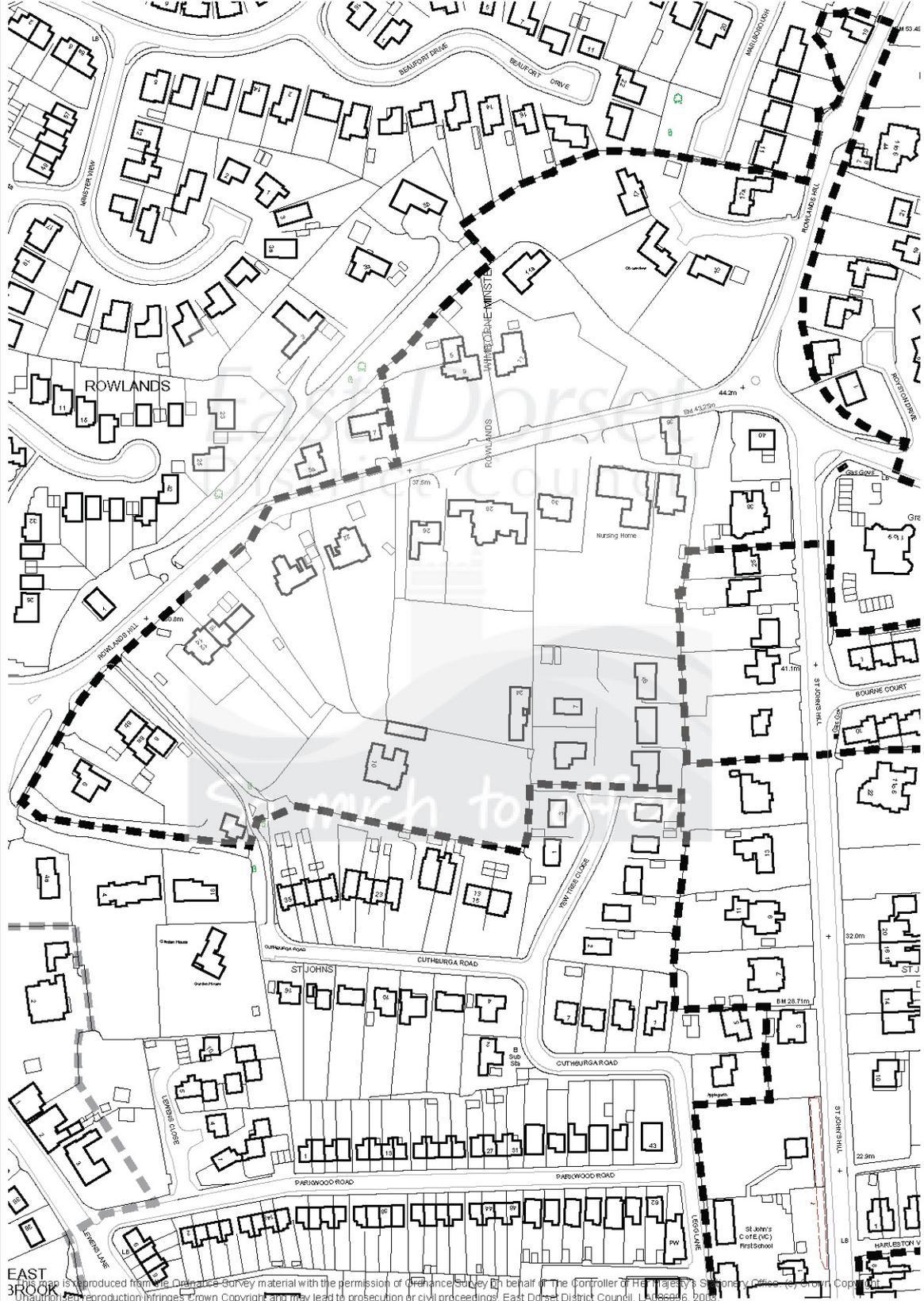
# Boundary of Wimborne, St. Johns (Rowlands Hill/St. Johns Hill) Conservation Area

Scale approximately 1:5000



# Wimborne, St. Johns (Rowlands Hill/St. Johns Hill) Conservation Area Inset Map No.1

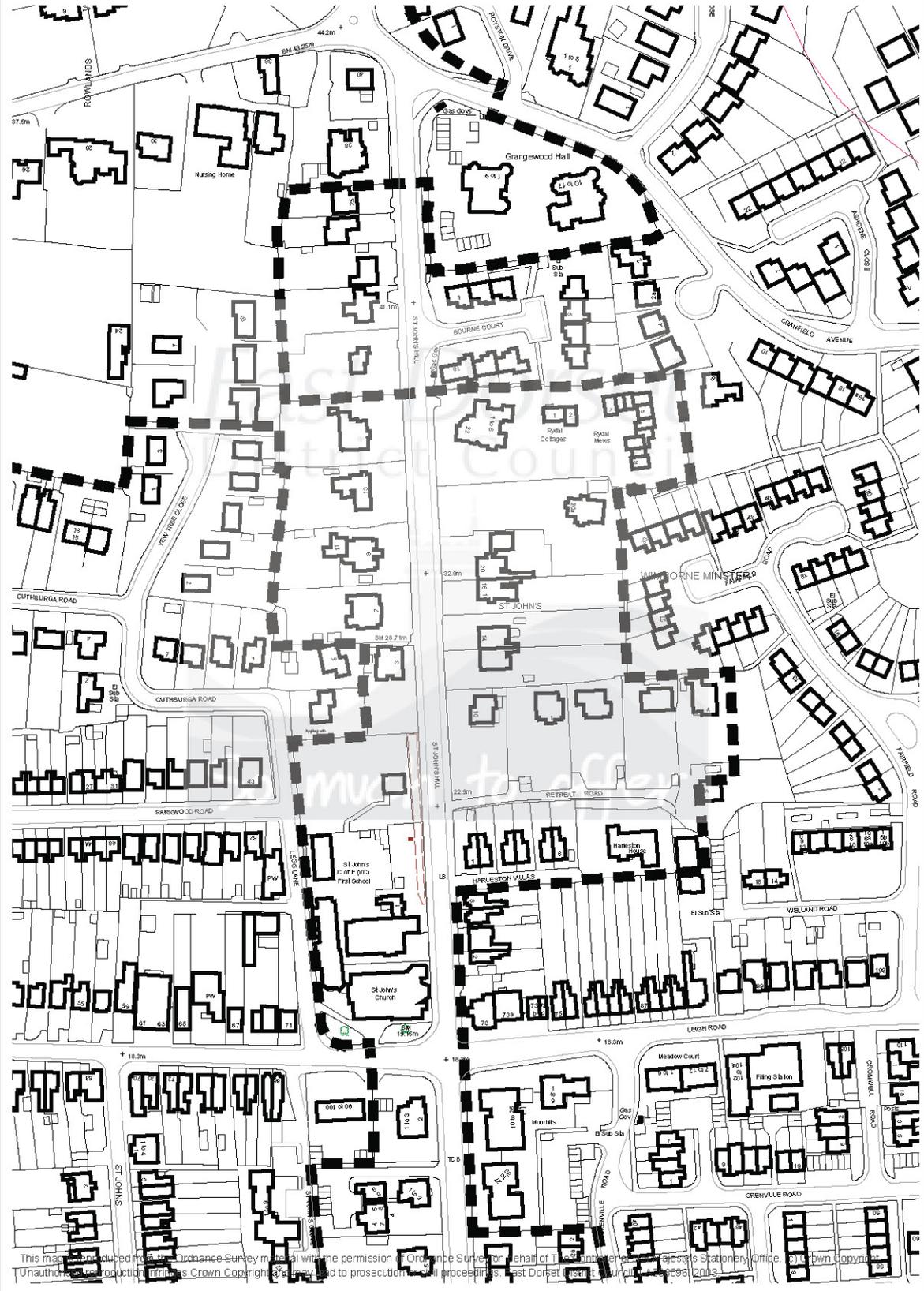
Scale approximately 1:2500



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# Wimborne, St. Johns (Rowlands Hill/St. Johns Hill) Conservation Area Inset Map No.2

Scale approximately 1:2500 



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# Planning Policy in Conservation Areas

East Dorset has many attractive villages of special architectural or historic interest.

In order to protect their character and appearance, the best of these, including the historic centre of Wimborne Minster, have been designated as Conservation Areas by the District Council under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Under this legislation additional planning controls are exercised by the Council within designated Conservation Areas in order to preserve and enhance those aspects of character and appearance that define an area's special character.

These include controls over the demolition of most unlisted buildings. An application for Conservation Area Consent is needed for the demolition of an unlisted building in a Conservation Area.

The Council encourage the retention of buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Any proposals which involve demolition of existing buildings will be carefully assessed for their impact upon the character of the area. The local planning authority will also need full details about what is proposed for the site after demolition.

**Certain types of development, which elsewhere are normally classified as permitted development (such as the insertion of dormer windows in roof slopes, the erection of satellite dishes on walls, roofs or chimneys fronting a highway) will require planning permission.**

Guidance and application forms can be obtained from the Planning and Building Control Division.

## Trees

Trees are an invaluable visual asset to the character and setting of many Conservation Areas.

Trees in Conservation Areas may already be protected by a Tree Preservation Order and the Courts can impose heavy fines for unauthorised felling or lopping.

In addition to these controls, and in recognition of the contribution that trees can make to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area special provisions apply to the lopping or felling of other trees which are not otherwise protected. Anyone wishing to fell or lop such trees needs to notify the Council in writing six weeks before carrying out any work.

Householders are also encouraged to seek advice from the Department on the management of their trees. By taking the correct action now mature trees can be made safer and their lives extended.

## New Development

When contemplating alterations to existing buildings or the construction of new buildings within a Conservation Area it is advisable to obtain the views of your local Planning Officer at an early stage. The Department is glad to help and the advice is totally impartial and free of charge.

When considering applications for new development, the Council as Local Planning Authority takes particular care to ensure that it fits in satisfactorily with the established character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Positioning, massing, design and choice of materials are of particular importance, as well as the visual impact of 'building over' an area of hitherto open land.

The special character of these areas stem not only from the age, disposition and architectural interest of the buildings, but also from the treatment of the spaces in between.

The presence of gardens, paddocks, soft verges, hedges and old boundary walls contribute greatly to the individual sense of place.

Applications for new development must demonstrate that the proposal will harmonise with the Conservation Area i.e. that it will preserve or enhance its character. Potential applicants are strongly advised to seek proper professional advice.

Therefore when considering such applications the local planning authority will pay particular attention to the following elements of the design:

1. the positioning of the building and its relationship with adjoining buildings, existing trees or other features;

2. the proposed building materials, particularly the walls and roof, and their suitability to the area and in relation to neighbouring buildings;
3. the proportions, mass and scale of the proposal and their relationship with the area in general and adjoining buildings in particular.
4. whether the proposed development might adversely affect existing trees, hedges or other natural features of the site.

In some cases it may be necessary to reproduce an historic style of architecture in order to match existing buildings. Generally, however, the Council encourages new construction to be designed in a modern idiom provided the criteria listed above are applied. Poor copies or imitations of architectural styles detract from the genuine older buildings and are normally discouraged.

Full details of any proposed development must be submitted, showing existing site conditions with the proposals clearly marked. Details of the elevational treatment, including windows and doors, will normally be required. In many instances the planning authority will expect details of hard and soft landscaping including a specification of all the proposed materials.

## Conservation Area analysis

The District Council has carried out and published detailed studies of the Conservation Areas to identify those elements which contribute towards the unique character of each area. Any proposal which has an adverse effect on these features will not be permitted. Proposals that can be seen to enhance the Conservation Area will be encouraged.

## Grants

Grants may be available from the District Council towards the alleviation of eyesores, or measures that improve the street scene, such as tree-planting, hedging or other boundary treatments. Grants or loans may also be available towards the repair of Listed Buildings, particularly where such repairs make an impact on the Conservation Area.

# Design and Conservation Services in East Dorset

Conserving the best features of our environment, our historic towns, villages and countryside, is one of the most important of our planning functions.

## Historic Buildings

Our buildings are a record of our architectural and social history. As a society, we hold them in trust for future generations to cherish and enjoy. Investment in our architectural heritage assists local and regional social and economic development

The supply of buildings of the eighteenth century and earlier is finite; once demolished they are lost forever. Others suffer almost the same fate from alterations made without regard to their original design and character.

Historic buildings require special care if their character, which relies upon traditional building materials and practices peculiar to each region, is not to be spoilt by insensitive alterations or inappropriate methods of repair.

Owners of Listed Buildings contemplating altering or extending their building are advised to obtain Guidance Notes obtainable free from the Department.

An important function of the Design and Conservation Section is to advise owners of historic buildings and assist in achieving solutions which preserves their intrinsic interest.

The Section can help seek out the right materials for the job and advise on the correct method of repair.

It can also provide advice on both the law relating to listed buildings and sources of financial assistance.

## Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas are groups of buildings, villages or areas of towns having special architectural and townscape interest, the character of which should be preserved and enhanced.

East Dorset has 17 Conservation Areas, which range in size and nature from small villages such as Almer to the historic town centre of Wimborne Minster.

The siting, design and materials of new development, or alterations to existing buildings, are scrutinised by the Department to ensure that the character of such areas are protected.

Since 1980 the Council has invested in a programme of environmental improvements within the centre of Wimborne Minster. The effect of these measures has been to create an attractive place for residents and visitors to shop and to enjoy.

## Designated Conservation Areas in East Dorset



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## Advice

For advice on any aspect of the Council's building conservation work, the availability of financial assistance or to discuss your individual building, please contact our Design and Conservation Leader Ray Bird, or his assistant Alan Turner on 01202 886201 or e-mail: [planning@eastdorset.gov.uk](mailto:planning@eastdorset.gov.uk).