

HIGH LITTLETON AND HALLATROW COMMUNITY PLACEMAKING PLAN

DOCUMENT 2 of 4

SNAPSHOT CHARACTER SUMMARY – HIGH LITTLETON

Context

B&NES Landscape type: Area 6 Farrington Gurney Farmland/ Area 12 Cam and Wellow Brook Valleys.

Designations: RA1 village. Lies within the Parish of High Littleton, which also includes the village of Hallatrow.

There is a Village Design Statement for Hallatrow and High Littleton, approved by Bath and Northeast Somerset Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Introduction

This Snapshot Character Summary responds to the requirements of B&NES Placemaking Workshop Toolkit guidance, and derives from a comprehensive community-led settlement assessment and landscape assessment which together have informed the Sites assessment for High Littleton. This Snapshot Character Summary should be read in conjunction with that of Hallatrow, which lies in the same Parish.



Character Summary

High Littleton is a hill village set in rolling Somerset countryside along a ridge running into the Cam valley. It was originally a ribbon settlement along either side of the A39 and has no *single* obvious centre. Early houses display their agricultural and coal-mining heritage. Later developments of various types have 'thickened out' the village shape to the east and west, away from the A39, to create a remarkably quiet and appealing place to live.

The village is surrounded on all sides by open countryside, and safeguarding this green space, for example between Greyfield Road and Greyfield Wood, or High Littleton and Hallatrow, and around the village, is extremely important to the retention of the individual and distinctive character of this settlement.

The village recreation ground with play area is a well-used and valuable community resource.

There are a number of small businesses, (including fish and chip shop, pub, hairdresser, post office, general stores, antique shop, motor garages and builders), which provide vital local services and limited employment. There is a Methodist chapel, a village church, a thriving primary school and a large residential home for the elderly.

Life in High Littleton is greatly influenced by the A39, a major feeder route to and from Bath, Bristol and Wells. The road is always busy, but at peak times High Littleton becomes a major traffic bottleneck. This problem is exacerbated by on-street parking on the High Street, and by parking and periodic congestion by the village School.

Many residents commute to Bath, Bristol and beyond and the traffic has considerably worsened, particularly since the recent and continuing residential growth of nearby Paulton.

As the main roads clog, so additional pressure is put on the side roads, and Timsbury Road, Bungays Hill, Rotcombe Lane, Goosard and Scumbrum are among those badly affected as rat-runs.

In summary

- High Littleton is a thriving, former mining village, within easy reach of Bath, Bristol and Wells
- The settlement follows the A39 and is greatly and detrimentally influenced by the heavy traffic it carries
- It is surrounded on all sides by farmed countryside and woodland

Landscape Description

The land is all traditionally farmed and is in a number of different ownerships and tenancies. The fields are predominately pasture, but with arable land lying to the south where crop rotation includes maize for cattle fodder. This stretch of arable land separates High Littleton from Hallatrow.

High Littleton is appropriately named, because it sits on high ground nestling into the folds of local hills, and standing adjacent to and above the convex slopes of the Cam Valley. For 180 degrees, from the woodland of Greyfield, Highbury Hill and Stephen's Hill to the south west of the village, across the A39 and south of the village round to Rotcombe Lane on the north east side - facing Hallatrow, Paulton and Timsbury respectively, - the land slopes down from the ridge on which the village is built, to the Cam valley and the Cam river.

North of the village the land continues to rise steeply towards Farmborough and the historic landscape belonging to the now demolished Kingswell Hall.

On the west side, the village is dominated by the size and proximity of Greyfield Wood. The fields between village and wood are flat on the village edge, becoming steeply and suddenly contorted between the school and Round Clump.

This is an historic settlement and local landscape which is full of name references, evidence of and remnants from the coal mining era. These include terraced housing, converted mine buildings, former spoil heaps ('batches') and infilled bellmouth pits, as well as the granite railway tracks that took the coal from Mearns to Paulton Basin.

Apart from Greyfield, the whole village landscape (in and out of the parish boundaries) is dotted with smaller woods and hedgerow trees, as well as ponds, springs and streams. This makes the area very important for bio-diversity and wildlife corridors. It is a rich wildlife environment. Mammals include dormice, bats, badgers, deer, foxes, water vole and otters. There are abundant wildflowers, particularly along the hedgerow edges that are not sprayed; and there are increasing numbers of birds attracted here – permanent and seasonal migrating species, including numerous birds of prey such as buzzards and hobby.

The large network of footpaths is a highly valued and important amenity, both to long-distance walkers and ramblers, and the large, local dog-walking fraternity.

views and Landmarks

This is a beautiful and varied piece of landscape whether looking out of or into the village. There are wonderful views on all sides, from the north looking southwards over the Cam valley, from the east looking towards Timsbury, and from the west looking south and west towards Paulton and the Mendips.

Significantly, the views from open countryside towards the village are also extensive and attractive, with the edge of the village and the open countryside extending from it being clearly defined and distinctive in the view. The village has, to the very most part, coherent and well established boundaries defining the edge of the village and its surrounding countryside. The landscape around the village is, particularly to the south and east, both physically and visually a contiguous part of the wider open landscape which includes that of the Cam valley.

Almost every house in the village has a rural view:-

- From Rotcombe and The Recreation ground, eastwards towards Timsbury
- From Greyfield Road, south-west to Greyfield Wood
- From Rosewell to Hallatrow, the Mendips
- From Butlass Close across the Cam to Paulton

There are views into the village:-

- From Paulton across the Cam valley
- From the Cam valley and environs
- From Kingswell south over the village
- From top of Scumbrum South over the village
- From Mearns to Eastover/Southover

Beech, Lime and Oak trees from the mid-19th Century line parts of the A39, and Stephen's Wood and Greyfield Wood add significantly to local views.

Local landmarks include the Church Tower, Church Farmhouse scaffolding and sheeting, Lias walling and an ancient Bath milestone on the High Street

Settlement Pattern and Character

High Littleton has grown steadily and proportionately since Victorian times, and a study of the housing stock reveals architecture and building styles of great diversity and from the eighteenth to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Village 'quality of life' is greatly influenced by the proximity of a home to the A39. New Road, High Street and Church Hill suffer greatly from congestion and road noise, but away from the main road, Greyfield and Rotcombe enjoy peace, tranquillity and superb views.

Buildings and Details

Houses mostly fall within one of the following categories:-

- Victorian/Edwardian, often white lias or Templestone, (pennant stone), clay-tiled cottages from the village's mining period. These typically, but not exclusively, follow the A39 ribbon. They do transmit a strong 'industrial legacy' feel to the through-traveller.
- Local Authority built properties – Eastover, Southover, Timsbury Road/ Goosard
- Bungalows – Butlass Close, Westwood Avenue, Scobell Rise, part Greyfield Road
- Privately built estates – Parklands, Sixpence, Greyfield Common, Gores Park, Aumery Gardens
- Infill homes – reflecting the styles in vogue at time of construction
- Homes of note, dating from an earlier period – Pembroke House, High Littleton House, Rugbourne Farmhouse, Ale Porter House

A further visual feature and interest is produced by the business premises that adjoin the A39 as it passes through the village.

- The Haynes – fish and chip restaurant
- Dandos – general stores
- The Post Office - newsagents
- Emz - hairdresser
- The Star Inn – food, drink and social evenings
- Biggs – Builders
- The two Garages - MOT and vehicle repairs
- The Willows – country antiques
- The School – Primary education
- Rosewell Nursing Home – residential care of the elderly

These businesses add diversity to the village-scape and provide essential services to villagers who cannot travel out.

They also contribute to the local economy and provide employment opportunities.

Sense of Place

High Littleton provides a country-living environment and, although struggling against and divided by 'the road', it is still able to generate a strong feeling of community, helped by its many formal and informal clubs and associations. Of particular significance is the flourishing village school, which needs to grow but has no space to do so. Many residents have lived in High Littleton for their whole lives and would like their children and grandchildren to do the same.

Positive Features

- The pleasing rural lifestyle within a commutable distance of Bath and Bristol, in beautiful Somerset countryside.
- The 'definable space' between High Littleton and its neighbouring villages which generates a feeling of 'localness' and enhances the sensation of belonging to a community.
- The surrounding landscape which forms an active but unspoilt rural setting in which the village has been able to adapt and change over the years and develop its identity.
- The 'slow and steady' evolution and growth of the village which enables community ideals to be safeguarded
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Negative Features

- The serious threat to landscape, character and community, posed by disproportionately large building developments emerging on the edges of the village.
- The hugely negative impact of the A39 which increases as traffic volumes inexorably rise.
- The impact of on-street parking, as car numbers grow and even modest new developments fail to provide adequate parking spaces. (The formulas that work in urban areas are inadequate in country areas where car use is essential, not optional)
- The visual impact of derelict buildings, for example Church Farmhouse, which for 20 years has blighted the village.

Looking Ahead

- In recent public consultations, residents have expressed a clear desire to safeguard the things they value – their community, landscape, heritage, and environment – and to resist those things that pose a threat.
- There are understandable community concerns to contain future residential development to a scale that enables it to be properly integrated within the village
- Large scale developments threaten to overwhelm small rural populations and change the character of a village irreparably.
- Very modest growth will be accepted, ideally on brownfield sites within the village, provided it is of a type and at a scale that maintains the spirit and cohesion of High Littleton's community.

- There is a clear need to maintain the green spaces and open countryside around the village, and those between High Littleton and surrounding villages such as Paulton, Hallatrow, Clutton and Timsbury.

Prepared by the High Littleton and Hallatrow Community Assessment Team

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