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## **Ramsbury and Axford Traffic Management Plan.**

Maintaining safety and village quality through integrated street design.



Ramsbury and Axford Parish Council Traffic Group.

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# **Ramsbury and Axford Traffic Plan.**

Maintaining safety and village quality through integrated street design

This report was prepared by Ramsbury and Axford Parish Council  
Transport Group with support from Hamilton-Baillie Associates Ltd.  
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For Marlborough Area Board and Wiltshire Council

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## Introduction

Ramsbury and Axford are two of several villages co-ordinating ideas and proposals to help develop a coherent and inclusive approach to street design and traffic. This initiative has been promoted and supported by the Marlborough Area Forum on behalf of the Marlborough Area Board and Wiltshire Council.

Ramsbury and Axford Traffic Group, acting on behalf of Ramsbury Parish Council, has drafted this report and recommendations to guide future investment, maintenance and local actions, and to take advantage of potential development proposals. The report is intended to address key concerns, enhance the quality of the streets and public spaces and improve conditions for the village, its parishioners and the traffic using its roads. It is also intended to assist Wiltshire Council as the local highway authority.

There is growing awareness of the vital role played by streets and spaces in modifying speeds and driver behaviour in villages, and in retaining the essential distinctiveness and qualities on which rural economies depend. Our approach aims to tackle the threat of gradual erosion from increased traffic and parking. This is part of a long term move to improve understanding and consensus on the configuration, management and maintenance of the streets and spaces constituting the public realm of the village.

This report should be the starting point, to be adapted, refined and updated as circumstances change or opportunities arise.



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## Ramsbury and Axford Villages

Both villages have Saxon origins, with seven settlements in the valley including the palace of the bishop of Salisbury. Saxon stonework is on display in the present church which dates back to the 13-14c.

Ramsbury's street plan is suggestive of two elements in its history: its position on a main road and its Saxon importance. The long High St, which bends and broadens into a small market place at its eastern end, is indicative of a thoroughfare town, a miniature Marlborough. It is likely that in the middle ages and until the 17th century there was no single 'Bath Rd' across Wiltshire, but a number of parallel tracks, any of which might be preferred by travellers according to weather, season, cargo and vehicle. By 1675 the route through Ramsbury—referred to as the Plow Way—is shown on Ogilvy's map of main roads as one of two lines. The other, the present Savernake road (A4), became established as the coachmen's preference after turnpiking in 1744. The valley road never turnpiked and Ramsbury suffered in consequence.

The prevalence of 18th and 19th century brick cottages in the centre of modern Ramsbury is the result, not only of previous widespread fires, but also of a dramatic rise and fall and subsequent rise in Ramsbury's fortunes. After the 1850's shunned by the canal and railway, with agriculture going into crisis, the village went into decline. But affluence returned in the 1960's and 70's once near universal car ownership and the new M4 motorway had dispelled its isolation.

The population has grown again, new housing estates have been built on the once outskirts and the tumbledown properties in the centre have been refurbished. Ramsbury now serves as a centre for many smaller surrounding communities, and includes two pubs, a primary school and a number of specialist shops and businesses.



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## **Brief summary**

Ramsbury has an unusual village form - both long linear east west riverside settlement pattern and looped arrangement of streets.

The crossroads and former market place at The Square is a key feature and provides a clear centre for the village.

The streets in the conservation area are too narrow to cope with modern vehicles and parking, so congestion and parking are key issues. There are good potential local resources and volunteers etc .

## **Assets**

- The Square
- Two routes through the village
- Large Recreation Centre away from village centre
- Church in village centre.
- School in centre with off street parking facilities out of school time.
- Two public houses with off street parking.
- Memorial Hall with off street parking.

## **Traffic characteristics**

- Buses-approx 6 daily
- Large agricultural vehicles
- Freight HGV's guided by Sat-Nav
- Increasing vehicle sizes
- Traffic at school times
- Growing volume of cyclists



## **Crossing points /areas of activity**

- Pedestrian traffic in Back lane
- Crossing to Church Rooms
- Crossing to school
- Activities outside shop in Oxford Street.
- Crossings and activity around the Square, The Bell etc
- The area around the Memorial Hall

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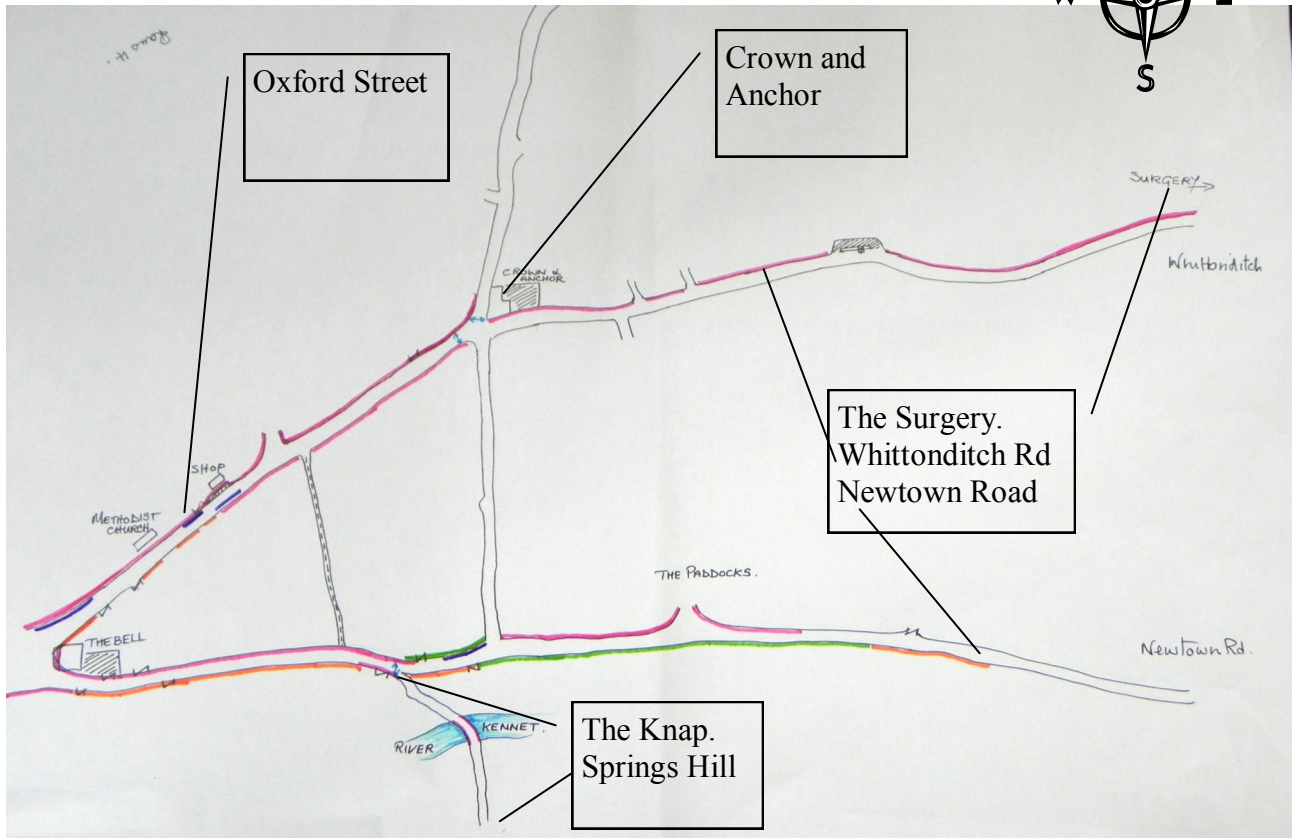
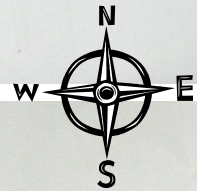
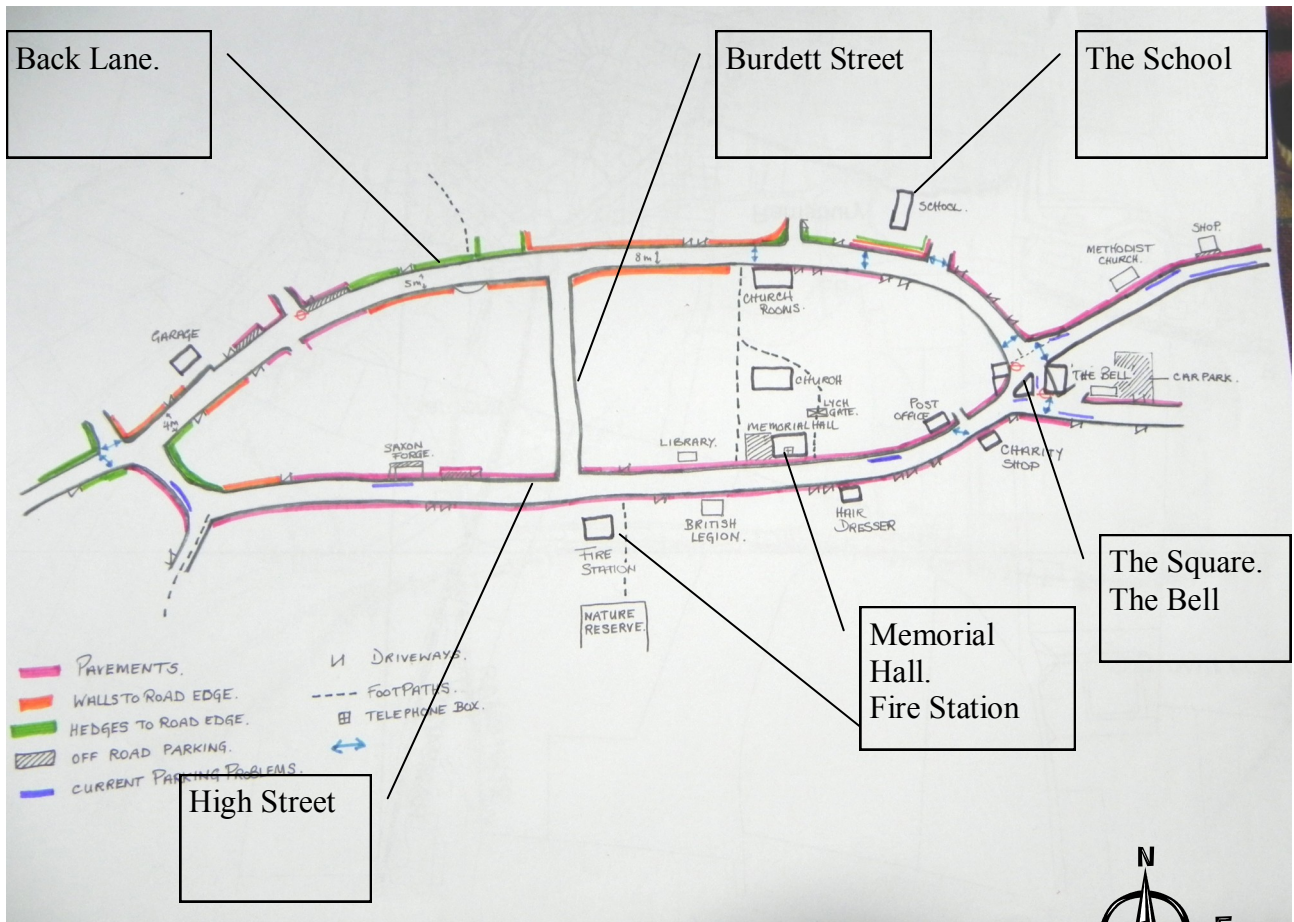
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## **Policy Content**

The Marlborough Area Forum and the various organisations with an interest in the management and maintenance of rural communities such as Ramsbury are exploring new possibilities at an opportune moment. Proposals include: reductions in public spending limit, the ability of highway authorities to regulate and control roads through conventional engineering and enforcement. The political climate encouraging communities to become more involved with the public realm is reflected in the Localism Bill.

Recent government initiatives to reduce clutter provide encouragement to avoid standardised treatments and excessive highway measures. Signing regulations are being revised and speed policy is under review. Counties such as Dorset, Hampshire and Kent are exploring fresh approaches to rural highway design, with publications such as *Traffic in villages: A Toolkit for Communities* by Dorset AONB outlining new ways to create safe low cost environments.

The design principles set out in the report are consistent with the policy, principles and approaches set out in Manual for Streets<sup>2</sup>. It also accords with advice set out in the DFT's Local Transport Note 1/08; Traffic Management and Streetscape. The recent ICE publication Highway Risk and Liability provides reassurance for the Highway Authority that the measures proposed are acceptable in terms of risk and liability.



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## Design Principles

The recommendations for Ramsbury draw on a number of basic principles developed and deployed elsewhere in the UK and in mainland Europe to closely integrate highway engineering with good urban and landscape design. These principles combine to help create a low-speed environment to promote safety, encourage pedestrian and bicycle movement, facilitate traffic flows and generate civility through maximising driver awareness of the village context.

Key to the approach is the process of place-making. Ramsbury benefits from a rich and distinctive character. We recommend exploiting these qualities to emphasize both a series of recognizable places and landmarks, as well as accentuating the qualities of the village overall.

The ability to understand the village, and to easily anticipate likely activities is another related theme. These recommendations seek ways to make the key buildings such as the school and Square more visible. Integrating and expressing the life of the village in a simple streetscape design language is central to our initial ideas and outline recommendations.

Definite entry points and places to clearly establish the edges of Ramsbury, and mark the transition from highway to public realm, are also important elements. Signs should be carefully located to align with the driver's perception of the start of the village.

We would recommend removing all centre-line markings and stop lines within the village to reduce the linearity of the streets and to reduce speeds. Highway signs should be minimised and coordinated with buildings and street furniture. One essential element of this will include the use of a secondary paving material appropriate to Ramsbury and maintainable by the community where possible, on behalf of the highway authority. A simple, low-cost palette of surface treatments would help reduce visible widths, clarify preferred parking positions, and highlight the key spaces.



## **Key Concerns**

### Parking pressures:

The Square and spaces around The Bell, despite new off-street car park



Parking creates congestion at pinch points on the High Street (especially at its west end), and on Oxford Street by the shop.



The School generates parking and congestion at peak times. Off-street car park available at weekends.



Memorial Hall has a car park but large events cause overflow problems



Businesses in the village cause day time parking problems



The church has no car park and can generate occasional pressure.

### Pedestrian safety and comfort

Back Lane – lack of footway, speeds and access to school



Excessive widths across The Square generate uncomfortable crossings



Fire Station needs 24 hour access and exit. Poor pinch point outside shop on Oxford Street and in certain areas of the High St (opposite Millstream and Saxon Forge)



Inappropriate speeds in Back Lane and at village entrances, particularly on Whittonditch, Newtown, Crowood, Hildrop, and Froxfield Roads



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## Key points for modification

1. West entrance to village.
2. Back Lane pedestrian safety and school surroundings
3. The Square, parking and traffic priority, (inc High Street)
4. Oxford Street, inappropriate parking.
5. Newtown east entrance.
6. Whittonditch Road entrance and surgery entrance.
7. Pinch points in High Street.



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The School frontage opened up to Improve visibility and awareness.



A coloured surface from Burdett St to the Church Rooms and across road to link up with the existing pavement.

Coloured road surface, eradicating the road markings to create apprehension with traffic. Textured strip delineating pedestrian crossing point on all four access roads.



Coloured road surface to give the illusion of a community area.

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## 1. WEST ENTRANCE—junction with Hilldrop Lane and Back Lane.

This entrance to the village from Marlborough starts through fields and woods. There is no urban spread leading up to this point so is a very neat start to the community.

Using a different coloured road surface here would denote the entry to the village and deleting the road markings would hopefully create an uncertainty and slow traffic. It would also create a situation where people might use Back Lane as an alternative to the congested High Street.

It would also create a crossing point for people wanting to use the Recreation Center which is accessed from Hilldrop Lane. It would be nice to extend the pavement round the corner from the High St to the Rec' Centre junction, but this is private ground and is some ones garden, so would probably not be possible.

Large tyres painted white will be put at this entrance and filled with plants to give the appearance of entering a community area.



Mill Lane junction from High St towards west end entrance/exit.



Hedge butting to road edge at the beginning of Back Lane from the junction with Hilldrop Lane and High Street west end.

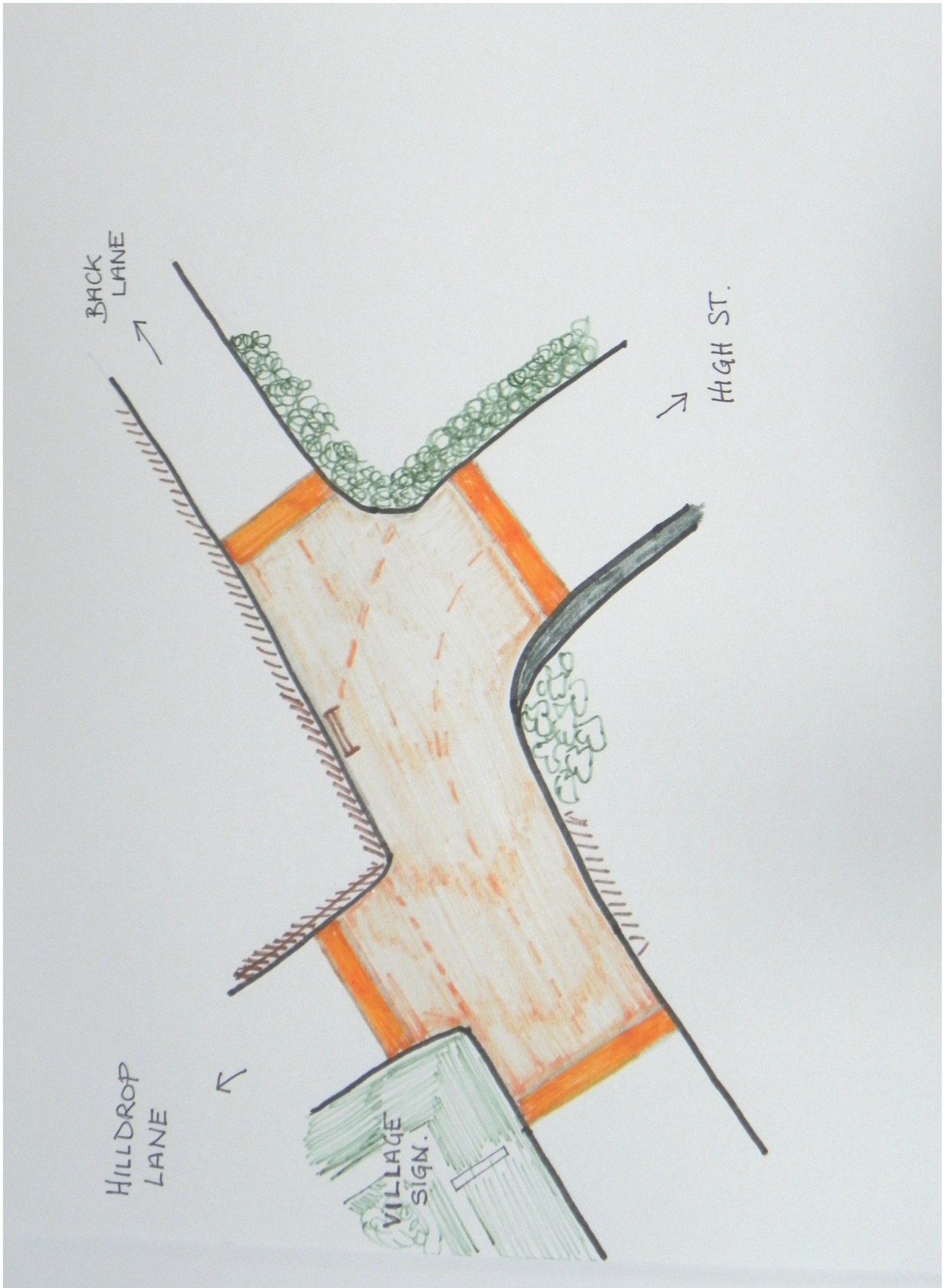
Village sign and speed limit roundel at west end.

Approach showing end of pavement



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## 2. BACK LANE PEDESTRIAN AND SCHOOL FRONTAGE.

Back Lane is extremely narrow in places and much of it is bordered both sides with walls to the road edge.

Parking along here is not as prolific as in the High Street, except at the entrance to the school at dropping off and picking up times.

The school is hidden away behind a short wall and extensive vegetation, there is no actual signage for the school coming in from the west end, and a sign on its border from the east. Much could be made opening up its frontage, by cutting out vegetation behind wall, as this is not an area that the children congregate in, so would not cause any danger to them, this would make it far more obvious to passing traffic.

At the far western end it is too narrow to make any amendments to the carriageway, but from the junction at Burdett Street it would be possible to lay a light coloured surface on the northern side to give the appearance of a pavement, run it as far as the Church Rooms then arc across the road as a crossing.

In front of the School, textured strips with a coloured surface between would again give the appearance of a crossing area and hopefully slow traffic.

To ease the problems at school times, serious thought should be given to using the footpaths available from Hilldrop/Knowledge Crescent and from Ashley Piece along Swans Bottom to the school, perhaps adopting the 'walking train' Marlborough schools use. If this was to become protocol more could be done to improve the surface and visibility of these walk ways. (see map on page 17)



Front of school behind the wall



Back Lane, west end where road too narrow to do anything.



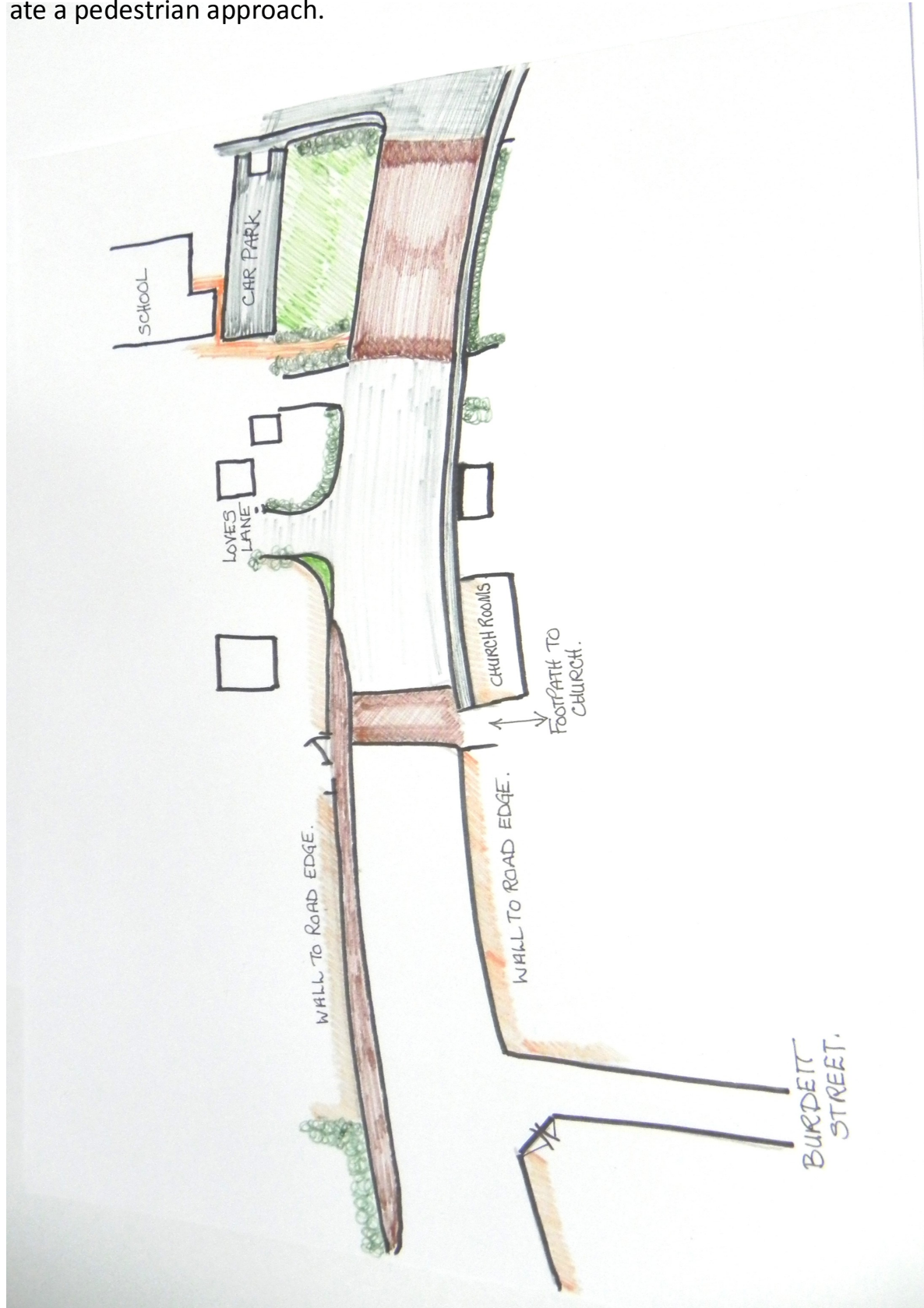
Back Lane, wall to left, area where footpath designated to go



Pavement from Church Rooms to opposite school

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Plan of proposed coloured road surfacing to delineate a visual footpath and crossings in Back Lane together with expanse of coloured surface outside school to create a pedestrian approach.



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### 3. THE SQUARE.

This is the centre of the village and at the moment has road markings that make it appear similar to a roundabout, but with two way traffic flow.

Parking at the **X** points causes traffic to travel on the wrong side of the road with blind turns.

The wide splay from Back Lane into the Square causes traffic to use a mass of travel lines with no determined route.

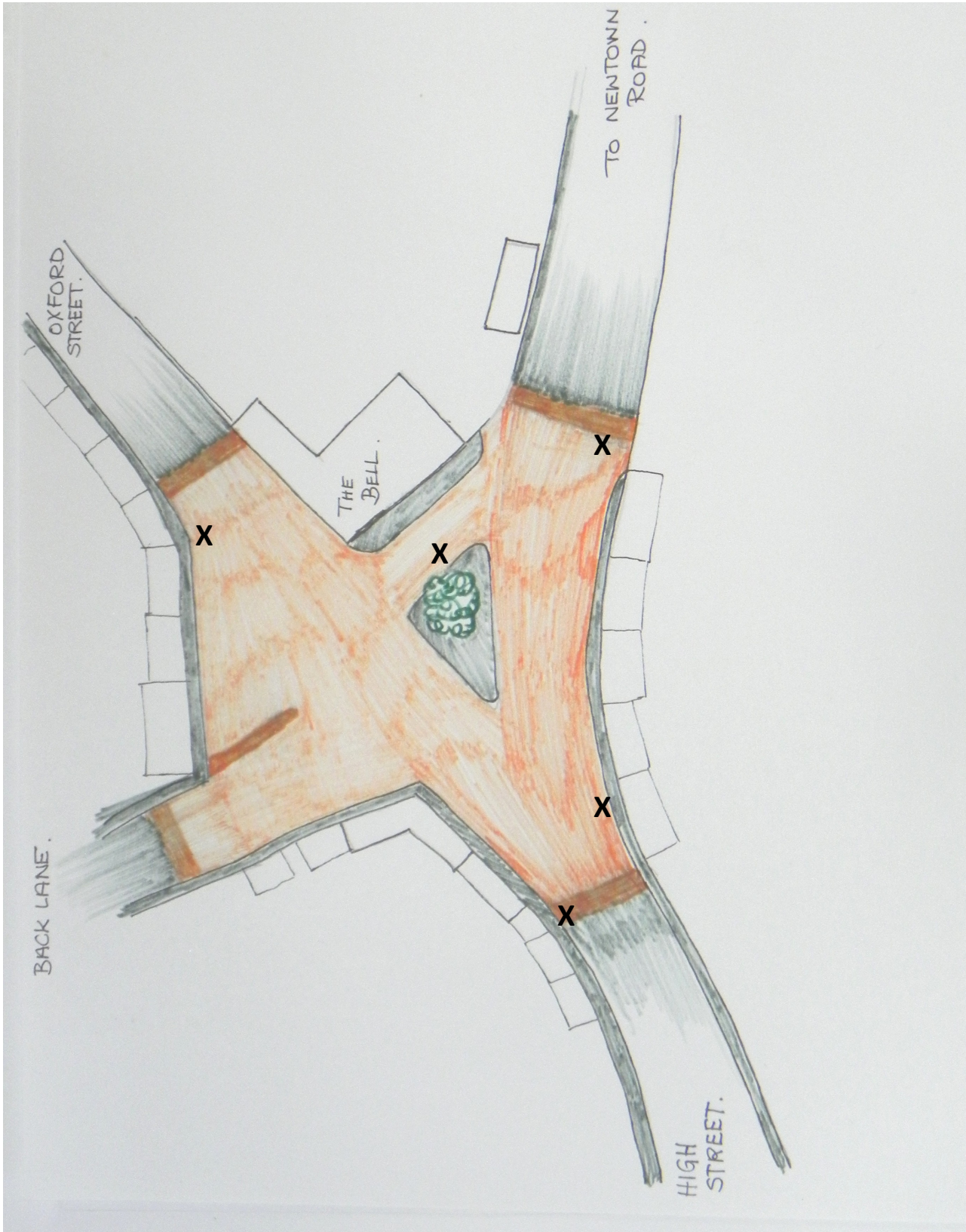
Use a textured treatment to give the appearance of crossings on all four inroads and a coloured road surface which will eradicate the road markings to give the perception of an area where traffic does not have the priority, but should be approached and treated with caution.

Extend a strip of textured surface from the corner of north pavement at the junction with Back Lane towards the centre for approx 4 mts to visibly narrow the approach from this direction.



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#### 4. OXFORD STREET –from Square to junction with Crowood Lane.

Oxford Street has the same problems as the High Street, there is little off street parking and a pinch point sometimes occurs near the shop.

There are times when inconsiderate parking prevents traffic flow and thought must be given to the passage of fire engine and buses.

It would be beneficial to mark out parking areas on the north side from the junction with the square to The Old Farmhouse (a), and then on the south side from opposite Chapel Lane to a point opposite The Limes (b).

This road is due for resurfacing in the near future and it is hoped that this could be incorporated into the schedule.

It would be beneficial if the junction marked **O** could have the same treatment as proposed for the Square and West entrance of the village . Again giving crossing points from Crowood Lane, Union St , Oxford St and Whittonditch Road, all residential areas.



An example of designated parking areas.



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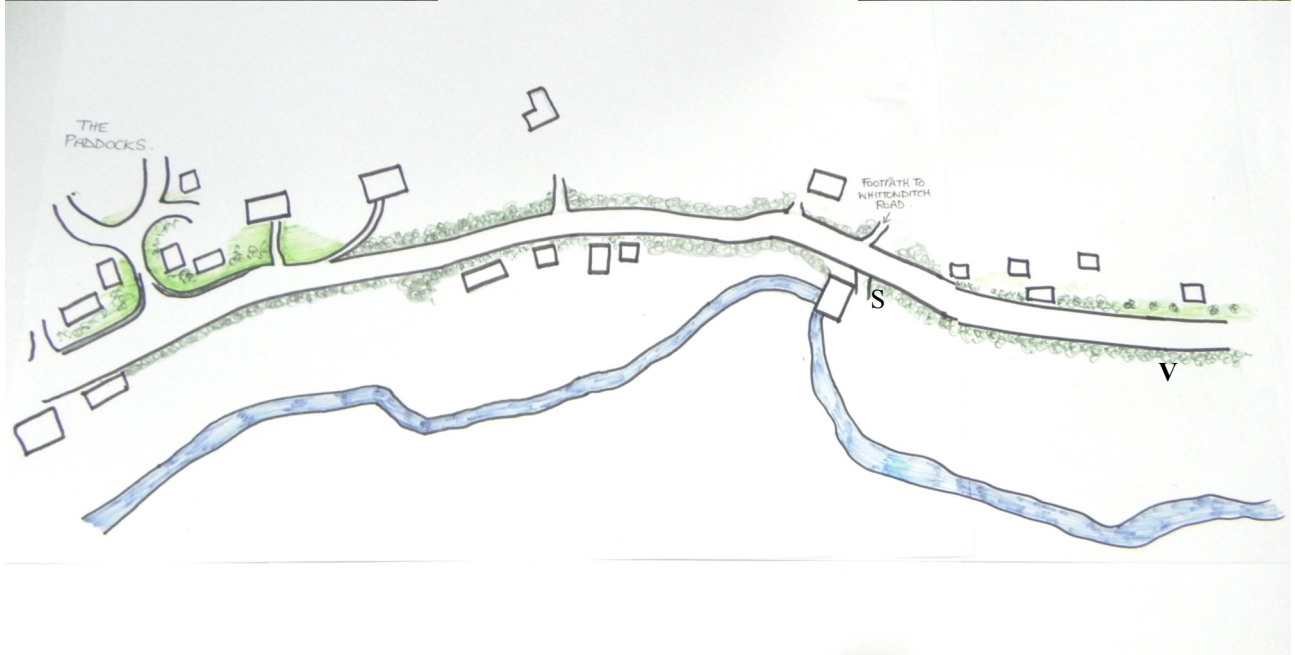
This plan shows the proposals for parking marking



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## 5. EAST ENTRANCE - Newtown Road approach.

The eastern approach to the village is a long straight road with good visibility and prone to speeding vehicles. Although the verges are trimmed the few properties along the road are well disguised and mainly back from the road so do not give the appearance of an entrance to a village. Little can be done to change this, but it is hoped that by putting large painted tyres of plants at the village sign (V) will help. The speed limit (S) doesn't start until nearer the village where habitation is more evident, so a textured strip and coloured area would create an entrance point to the community. It would be beneficial to have the speed limit and village sign to coincide



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## 6. NORTHEAST ENTRANCE– Whittonditch Road and surgery entrance.

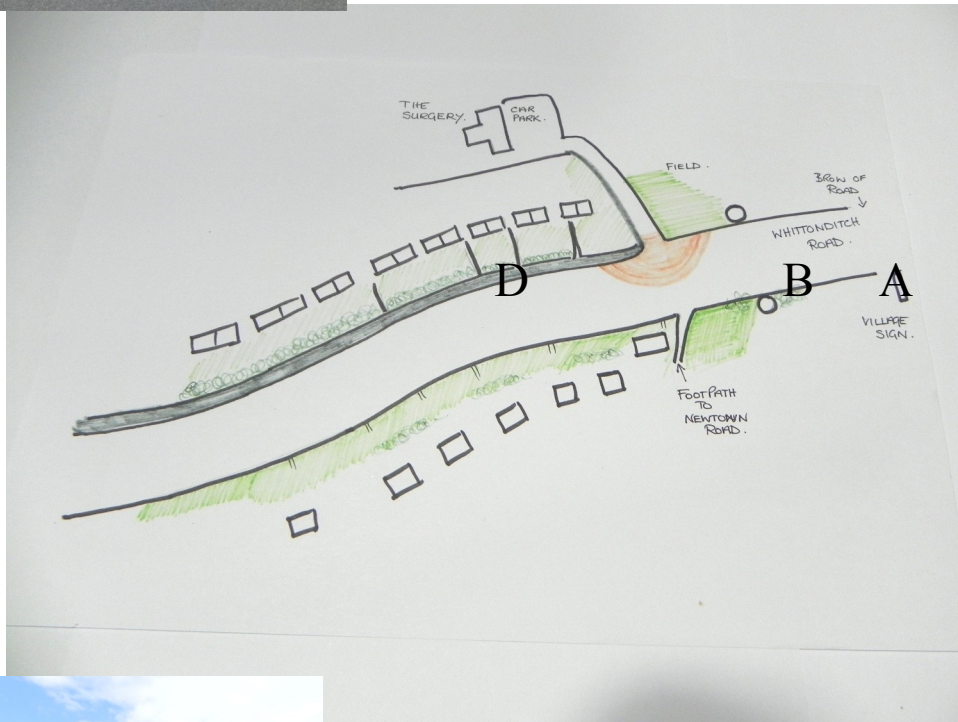
This entrance into the village comes in to a blind summit which hides the entrance road to the surgery until almost on top of it.

The addition of flower tubs near the village sign and possibly a coloured surface coming out from the surgery entrance across the road would give a sense of apprehension to traffic.



A

B



C



C

D



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## Local Actions

This brief report is intended to inform and extend local debate concerning ways in which Ramsbury might retain and enhance its unique and distinctive qualities, whilst coping with the realities of traffic. It is merely a starting point, and offers a series of related recommendations based on a clear set of design principles.

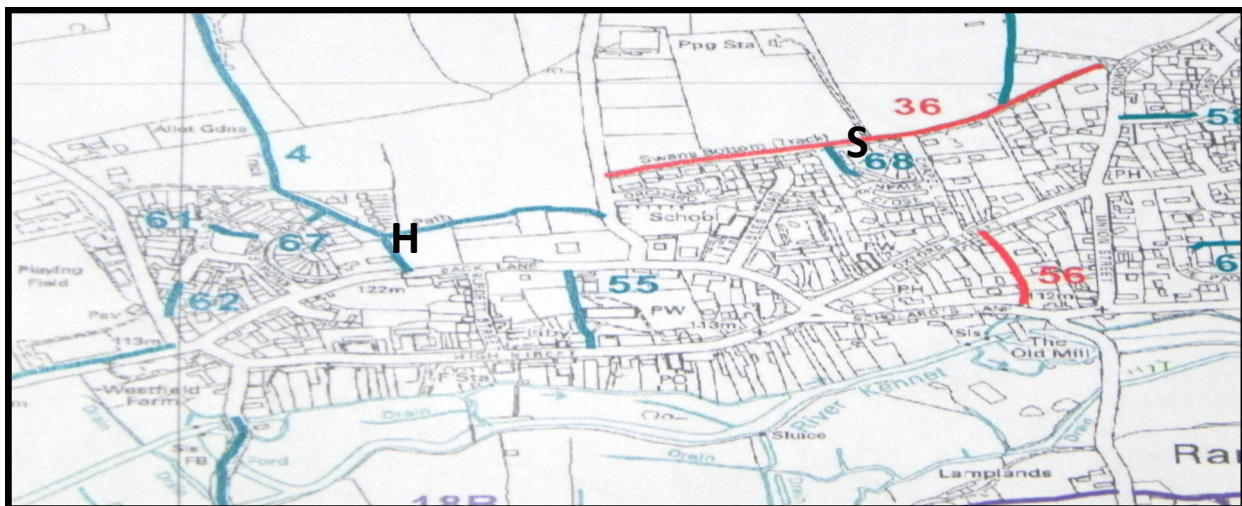
A major resurfacing in Oxford Street and Back Lane is planned in the current financial year after a new gas main has been installed. Therefore without too much additional expenditure some of these ideas could be carried out, making a serious improvement to the traffic flow and safety of the community.

Encouraging walking to school and opening up the front of the school would increase pedestrian presence and improve awareness by the community. The excess of vehicles at school times is a cause of great concern and is being addressed by the school also. The lines on the map below outline possible walking routes for children to school from two of the main housing points in the village. Finding alternatives to cars for school transport would improve the problems in Back Lane mornings and afternoons.

Parking will continue to be very limited and problematic in Ramsbury. Seeking opportunities for more off-street areas, and encouraging greater use of existing facilities will continue. The narrow streets, congestion and pinch-points highlight the need for clearly identifiable on-street spaces and local discouragement of inappropriate parking to underpin formal enforcement. The focus for attention for redefining and highlighting parking will be Oxford Street and High Street.

**(H)** marks the footpath from Knowledge Crescent/ Hilldrop Close to the school.

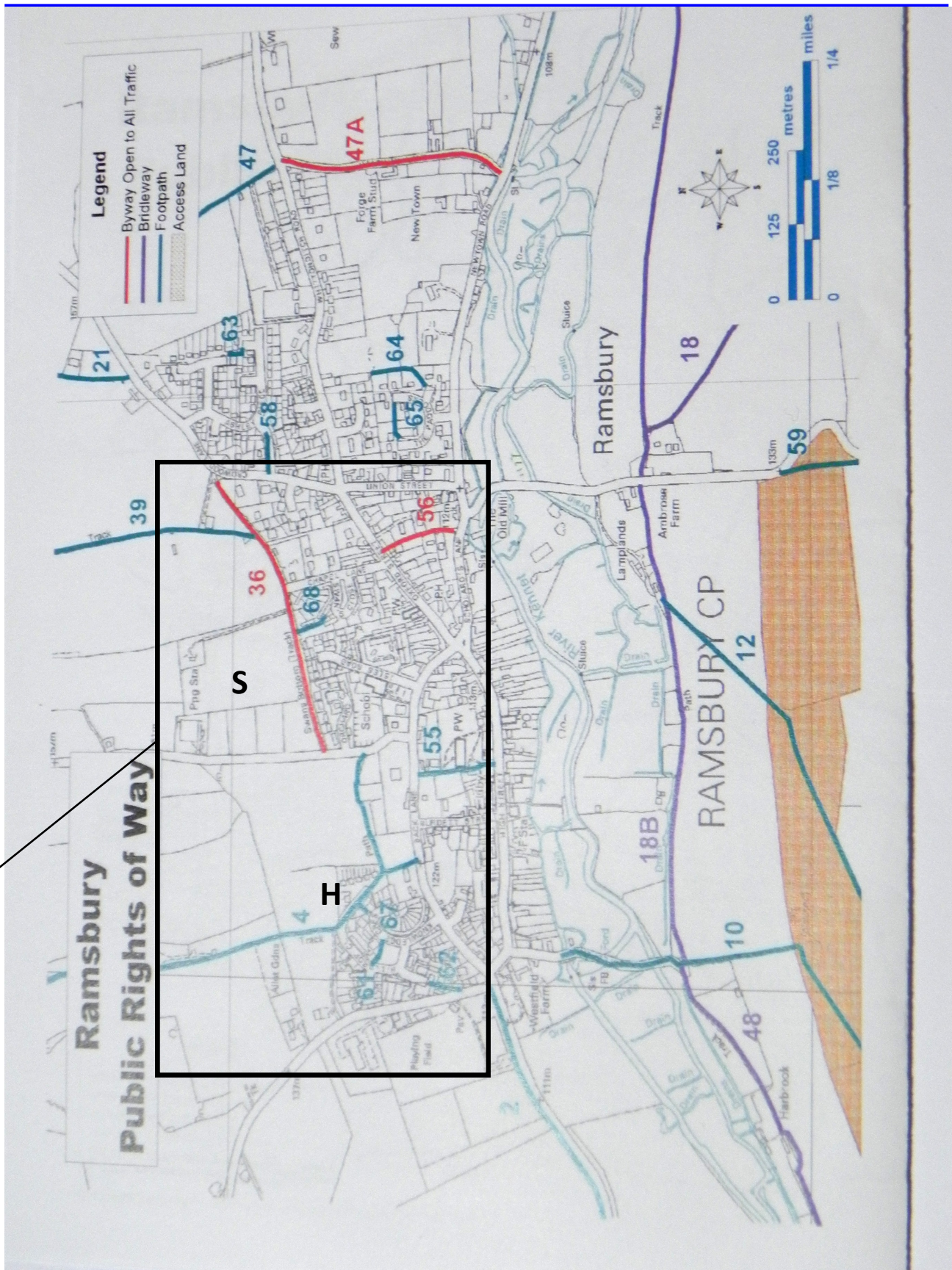
**(S)** marks the byway from Ashley Piece/ Swans Bottom to the school.



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## Axford.

Axford is a linear village with approx 50 houses spread along a single road over about a mile.

The village sign at the west end together with 4 houses is about 1/3rd of a mile before the next signs of habitation with 2 houses on the roadside and more off-road. There are then high hedges and fields which give the illusion of being on an open road—this is when traffic speeds up again. Most of the houses in the village are on banks above the road, or behind hedges, so are not really noticeable until traffic passes them.

There has been some congestion during the course of the building works in the centre of the village, but this is now finished and the car park behind the houses is now available so hopefully this should ease the problem. The new houses incorporate a new pavement, the only walkway in the village, which improves pedestrian safety.

If the verges were brought under control and the hedges cut lower and tidier, it is hoped drivers would take more notice of the village and proceed with more care. Tyres painted white and filled with plants at either end of the village should give the suggestion of entering a community. Whilst it is not in keeping with the policy of this plan, more 30mph roundels might help, as there are only 3 in the village.



Village sign from east entrance



1st sign of community from east entry.



View eastward from centre.



Village entry from west.



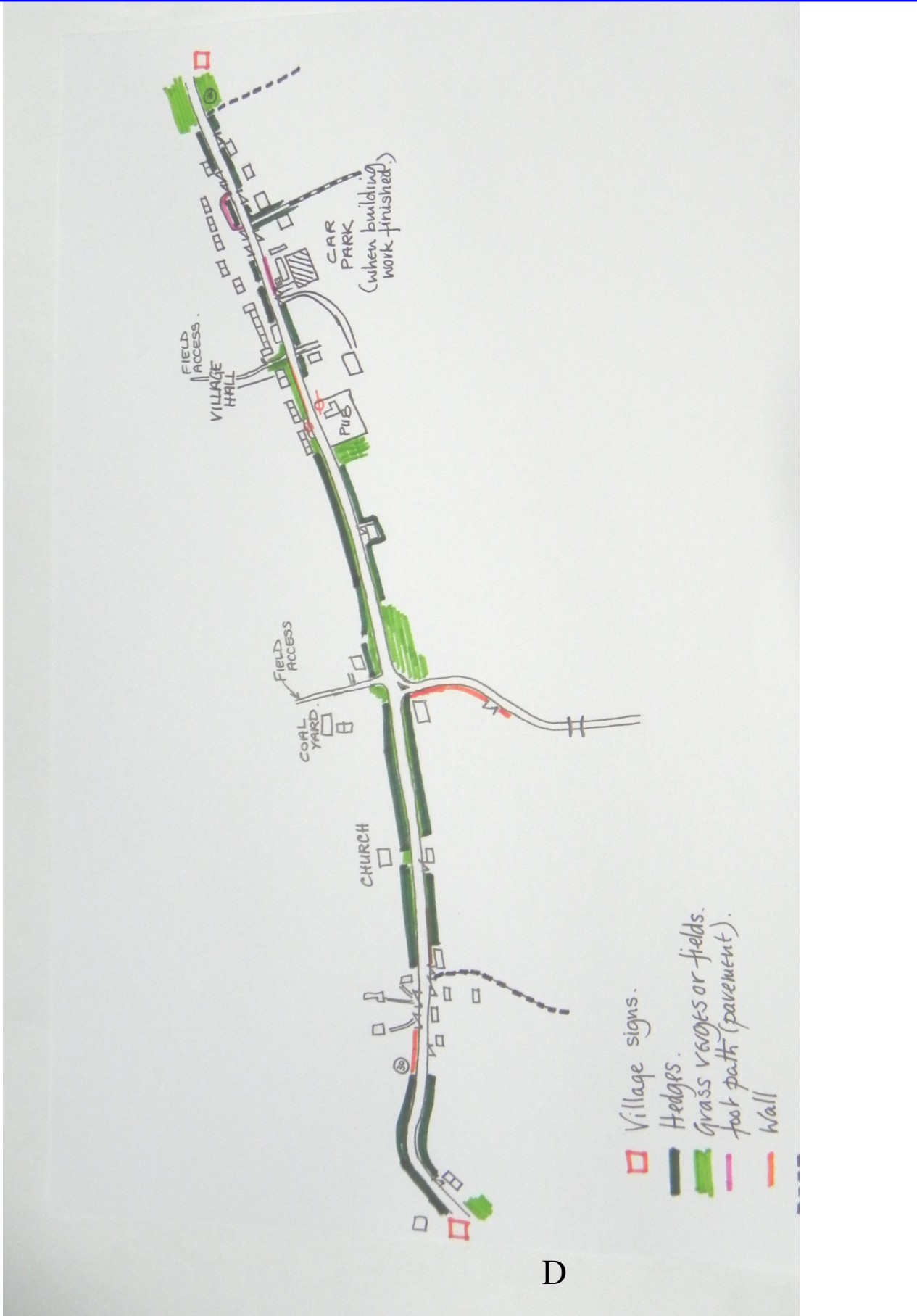
Speed restriction 1/3rd mile after village sign from west entry.



View westward from center

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D

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## **Long Term Aspirations.**

It is hoped that given time and resources the Parish Transport Group can alter the views of people using our community and that people will become more considerate of others and proud of their villages.

We are aware that we will not achieve all our solutions overnight, but by working with the various agencies and also looking for funding externally, we will be able to put these visions into reality and make the villages better and safer places to live. It is important that we educate those with off street parking to use it, ensure that any future construction has sufficient parking and turn our village roads into community spaces where people live.

### Aims-

- Better provision of public transport/community transport and better integration between various forms –e.g bus and train.
- Consider identifying possible sites for additional public parking
- Increased provision and awareness of walking and cycling routes around the village e.g.to school and other communities.
- Increase provision of awareness of local amenities (shops, businesses etc) to reduce the need for journeys outside the community.
- Increased employment opportunities within the community for residents.
- Encourage all road users to see roads within the villages as pedestrian spaces on which cars can drive with permission rather than roads on which pedestrians are tolerated at their own risk.
- Community areas round the shops, halls and public houses.

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## **Guidelines recorded in the Village Statement for Wiltshire Council 2002.**

Relevant to traffic plan)

28: directional signs remote from the village should continue to route traffic from major destinations around the village on A and B roads and not through the village.

29 : Any new dwelling should be designed with 2 off street parking spaces on site.

30: walking or cycling to school along safe routes should be facilitated.

31: Unmade tracks, byways and paths are important parts of village character and should be retained and unsurfaced.

32: Traffic calming measures compatible with the character of the area should be introduced at all entrances to the village and at strategic points within the village, (for example– by the primary school).

It would be nice in the near future to have a village sign designed to replace the 'Best Kept Village' sign displayed in the square.

(for examples see—<http://www.villagesignsociety.org.uk/>



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