

Look At Romsey

Romsey Town Design Statement

for Romsey Town and Romsey Extra



Area 8 Romsey Old Town



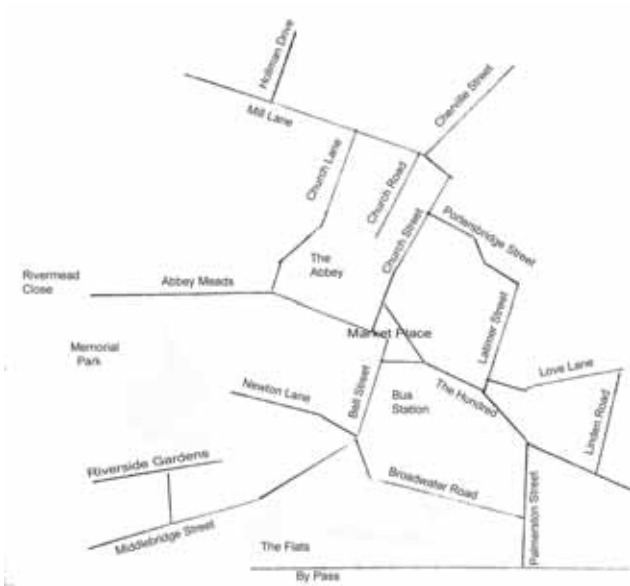
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Romsey Old Town Design Statement

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This section of the Look at Romsey project was prepared by a team of volunteers in Romsey Town Centre (Romsey Old Town) under the guidance of the Romsey and District Society. It was presented to Test Valley Borough Council in August 2006. It was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in January 2008.



Plan indicating the area of Romsey Old Town

Setting and Views

Romsey Old Town encompasses the historic core of Romsey with the Norman Abbey church at its heart. It is the area of built-up Romsey as it existed in 1840. The old town is sited on the floor of the Test valley, slightly above the level of the River Test. The A3090 Romsey By-pass forms its border on the south side with the extensive grounds of the centuries-old Broadlands estate lying beyond. The main channel of the river runs to the west, while the northern and eastern boundaries snake through the built-up area of modern Romsey. The proximity of the town to the New Forest and the Hampshire coast is an additional feature.



River Test north from Middlebridge

The main stream of the river flows from north to south and various streams and braids, or offshoots, of the River Test flow through the middle of the town. The only exception is the Tadburn Lake, a small tributary of the Test, which flows in from the east. It is visible beside the By-pass road.

In the vicinity of Romsey, the valley floor is wide and fairly level and has hills rising up to plateaux on either side. Green Hill, on the western ridge, has an interesting line of trees which form an important part of the landscape. From Green Hill there is an informal viewpoint beside the A27 from which the observer can look across the valley and experience a classic view of Romsey and its Abbey church with a surrounding pastoral vista of meadows. The main focus of the town, the Abbey church, blends well into this setting and it is easy to underestimate its height and size.

The eastern skyline is less dramatic, but of considerable importance to it is the old cemetery in Botley Road, the chapels and trees of which form part of the outline.



Turrets in the corner of the Market Place

Apart from the Abbey church there are no very tall buildings in Romsey. However the skyline is distinguished by a number of very interesting old buildings which are above the average roof level. The turrets of the United Reformed Church (URC) and the nearby Lloyds TSB Bank, both close to the Abbey church, together with the tower of the former Brewery buildings are man-made landmarks of distinction.



East end of Romsey Abbey church

Design Guidelines

- Maintain views of the town's varied skyline, including those of the Abbey church.

Settlement Pattern

A Benedictine abbey of nuns was established in the latter part of the tenth century, possibly on the site of an older religious settlement. The abbey was the focus around which the town grew. The present church was built in the twelfth century and extended in the thirteenth century.



Abbey church from Market Place

Romsey remained small and close to the Abbey church until the pressures of the later twentieth century caused significant expansion as well as much infilling of land previously assigned to agricultural use. To the east of the Abbey precinct lies the town centre, the Market Place. It has main arterial roads running from it to the north, south and east.



Church Street

Church Street and The Horsefair lead northwards into Cherville Street. The eastward road is called The Hundred whilst Bell Street and Middlebridge Street are the southward bound roads. Within this framework are several other ancient streets such as Newton Lane, Latimer Street, Portersbridge Street, Love Lane, Mill Lane and Banning Street. Much of this ancient area is within the town's conservation area.



The Hundred

In the last seventy years, several new roads have been created, the most significant of which were the By-pass (in the 1930s) and Broadwater Road (about 1970) each taking pressure off The Hundred. In addition there are several new roads which are residential cul-de-sacs, such as Hollman Drive, Millstream Rise, Riverside Gardens and Rivermead Close, as well as an extension of Newton Lane and several smaller closes.



Bell Street

The building line is fairly continuous in most of the streets, with occasional small gaps or alleyways between buildings. In the oldest streets, front gardens are rare and houses abut the pavements. However, some houses have small front gardens, often paved, as may be seen in Palmerston Street, Linden Road and Middlebridge Street.

Few houses in the older parts of the town have front gardens large enough to turn into car parking spaces, so views of the old town houses are not interrupted by cars parked on their owners' forecourts. On the south side of Middlebridge Street, a stream runs between the houses and the road.



Palmerston Street

In the newer developments such as Riverside Gardens and Rivermead Close, the terraced houses are set among lawns and, in general, vehicles cannot get near the front doors. The most recent developments, such as Bark Mill Mews, Chavy Water and Newton Lane have houses arranged around courtyards, in which provision is made for parking. There is dedicated residents' parking space for the flats in Broadwater Road.



Recent development in Newton Lane

Light industrial activity developed during the later years of the nineteenth century, largely related to agriculture and included paper making, milling, timber yards, slaughter houses and leather processing. More significant was the development of breweries, a jam factory and Berthon's boat yard. All this must have created a dirty and smelly atmosphere which has long gone. The main employment now is in the shops, offices and small businesses. Present day commercial properties are still mainly centred around the Market Place, along Bell Street and Church Street, in the vicinity of The Hundred and in Latimer Street.



Town hall and adjacent shops

Most of the public and community buildings of Romsey are to be found in the historic core, with many others close by in the 'Outer Core'. (See separate Area 9 Design Statement.)



Entrance to Crosfield Hall

Among the public buildings are the Town Hall, Crosfield Hall and the Age Concern Hall. Romsey Abbey Primary School is located in Church Lane, near the Abbey church. A doctors' surgery is nearby and there are at least four dental practices in the town centre area. Six of the town's churches are to be found in the town centre and each has its own hall.



The White Horse in the Market Place

The town has several bank and building society branches and a Post Office. There is a wide variety of shops, many of them small, but several national chains are represented. The town has a department store and two large supermarkets; these shops being spread across the town centre.

The town is well provided with a range of hotels, bed and breakfast accommodation, restaurants and public houses, many of which are in historic buildings. The Royal British Legion has a substantial new building in Love Lane.

The vibrant town centre is an attractive place in which to live. Because it is largely level, it is particularly convenient for frail people. There are several establishments that provide sheltered accommodation.



Marie Louise House nursing home, seen from the Memorial Park

These include two sets of almshouses, established in previous centuries, and several warden-assisted apartment blocks as well as nursing homes.

Pressure for housing land close to the town centre has resulted in building west of the historic urban limits, closer to braids of the river. In addition, in the 1960s, the former Romsey Borough Council demolished most of Banning Street and built a series of blocks of flats parallel to the Tadburn. They were originally referred to as 'rear of The Hundred', a name that became obsolete after Broadwater Road was created. Some long-standing Romsey families still live in the town centre but many people have moved in from farther afield.



The Abbey seen from the bus station

There are car parks in the town centre; additionally provision is made for on-street parking particularly in residential streets. The town's bus station is situated behind The Hundred. Buses run to the outskirts of Romsey and neighbouring villages as well as to Salisbury, Winchester, and Southampton. There is no bus link from the bus station to the railway station.

Open and Other Spaces



Playground in the Memorial Park, seen from the Causeway

The largest public open space is the Romsey War Memorial Park. It is owned by Test Valley Borough Council and is bordered by two braids of the River Test. Amenities include a children's playground, tennis courts, a bowling green and a bandstand. It has a Japanese gun from the Second World War which was presented to the town by Lord Mountbatten. The War Memorial commemorating the fallen in the two world wars is the focus of Romsey's annual Armistice Day ceremony.

There are open spaces, called garths, on both the north and south sides of the Abbey church, grassed over and planted with some specimen trees. Until the 1850s townspeople were buried here, but the gravestones have since been laid down to form a walkway and only a few remain standing. In addition there is a small garden off Abbey Water that was the burial ground of the Congregational Church (now the URC) in the nineteenth century and open ground at the west end of the Abbey church.

King John's Garden, adjacent to the thirteenth-century King John's House, is a beautiful and tranquil public garden in a busy part of town. It is maintained by volunteers and concentrates on historical species of plants.



Romsey By-pass in winter

There is a wide verge along much of the By-pass which culminates in an open triangle of grass at the western end. This is one of the first views of the town to traffic once it has crossed Middlebridge. At the junction with Palmerston Street, there is a wide area of grass and trees adjacent to the Tadburn Lake. It is in private hands but open to view and adds to the rural aspect of the town.

There are a number of large gardens and other green open spaces within the town centre. These include the grounds of The Daughters of Wisdom Convent (formerly La Sagesse) and those of Romsey Abbey Primary School. Some large private grounds exist adjacent to the river, some of which can be seen from nearby bridges. There are some smaller, though still substantial, private gardens attached to older houses throughout the town.

Several of the post-1960 housing developments have communal gardens for the use of residents. Among the more visible are the lawns around the flats in Broadwater Road which have been fenced in and landscaped to give a pleasant aspect and a sense of ownership for the residents.

As befits an urban area, there are some open spaces that are hard-landscaped. The triangular Market Place is the largest of these and it is dominated by a statue of Lord Palmerston, sometime Prime Minister and owner of Broadlands. The area is partially softened by tubs of flowers. Access considerations mean that the Market Place is constantly used by vehicles.



The Corn Market

Near the Market Place is the smaller Corn Market where traffic is restricted. Markets are held here three times a week. Other pedestrian spaces include Duke's Mill precinct and at Church Place, both of which have recently been landscaped. Church Place forms a welcoming approach to the Abbey church although the space is shared by pedestrians and vehicles.

Design Guidelines

- The existing green spaces enhance the area and should be retained.

Streams and Waterways

Despite the many streams that traverse the town centre, there are very few places where people can walk along the river banks. A popular riverside walk, adjacent to the town centre, is the Causeway on the River Test between Middlebridge and the Salmon Leap at Sadlers Mill. The stretch beside the river is no more than 300 yards. The path then turns east towards the War Memorial Park. The route crosses two bridges over braids of the river where water can be seen although giving no access to the banks. This is partly to protect private fishing rights as the Test is internationally renowned for dry fly fishing for trout.



View of stream and fish farm from Hollman Drive

Many braids of the river can be seen from public places such as the Memorial Park and from roads including Rivermead Close, Riverside Gardens, Little Meads, Mill Lane, Millstream Rise and Hollman Drive. In addition, there is a short footpath from the north of Hollman Drive to Priestlands that is beside water.

The Fishlake stream cannot be seen from public land until the eastern branch is in the vicinity of Portersbridge Street where it is called the Holbrook. It acts as an attractive backdrop to King John's Garden before disappearing under the old stable block of the White Horse. It can next be seen between the bus station and Bradbeers' department store. Its course can then be followed through Duke's Mill precinct and along Middlebridge Street, with one off-shoot turning south through Chavy Water.

The western branch of the Fishlake can be seen in Abbey Water, where it is enclosed by a concrete wall and industrial railings. Part of it flows down Coleman's Ditch, adjacent to The Meads, where it is largely hidden behind another concrete wall, and part of it can be seen in the new part of Newton Lane in a park-like setting.



Tadburn Lake immediately before the By-pass



Abbey Water

Tadburn Lake flows alongside much of the By-pass and its course can be followed until it flows under the road into the grounds of Broadlands, where it eventually joins the main river.

Building Form

Many of the houses in the commercial streets have three storeys. Some of these larger buildings were created with industrial uses in mind and have since been converted into domestic accommodation.

Elsewhere, the normal arrangement is two storeys, except for those buildings designed for multi-occupancy. The upper floors of the shops were originally the living space of the shop-keepers, but many are now used as business premises, although a few are still residential.



Market Place

Some of the taller buildings have parapets shielding their roofs thereby giving a greater impression of height than is truly the case. Some of the older buildings have cellars, but these are normally approached internally so their existence is not readily apparent from the outside of the building, except for occasional coal chutes as may be seen in Cherville Street.



Cellar entrance in Cherville Street

The houses in the town that were originally built as homes are mostly two-storey. Many of them are small and with small rooms and relatively low ceilings, although larger rooms are often found in the three-storey buildings.



Cherville Street

Although there are many terraces of houses they are mostly short. Many of them were built on plots of land that had once contained a single large house. Test Cottages in Middlebridge Street and the blocks of housing in Cherville Street are examples of this sort of change.



Terrace, Latimer Street

There is a terrace of houses in Latimer Street and another in Mill Lane called Industry Row, both of which are losing their overall unity of design due to alteration to windows and doors.



Industry Row in Mill Lane

The houses that face west in The Abbey are of particular importance to the town enhanced as they are with balconies and a long-established wisteria. By contrast, there are threats to the appearance of the old streets from inappropriate placement of satellite dishes.

Among the larger buildings are several blocks of flats. Most of them were built in the 1960s although more recently Test Mill was rebuilt and converted into flats, the exterior shape of the building being retained. The flats built in the 1960s and 1970s have fairly plain exteriors and flat roofs. Many of those belonging to Testway Housing have small balconies.



Balconies and wisteria in The Abbey

However although balconies are not usual in Romsey, they are a feature of Comley Court where they enhance the upper stories, although the open area underneath seems somewhat dark.



Balconies of houses in Cherville Mews

Much of the sheltered accommodation is on one or two storeys, mostly covering fair-sized plots. Edwina Mountbatten House is built around a central courtyard and reached through an entrance arch, as is Bridge Court. There are a few bungalows in the central part of Romsey, mostly in Mill Lane where they provide homes for disabled people.

The town's non-Conformist churches were built in the nineteenth century, whilst the Abbey church is medieval and St Joseph's is twentieth century. The Abbey church is one of the finest Romanesque churches in England. The URC is built in the Gothic tradition and has battlements and a turret reminiscent of a medieval castle.



Social services office once the Magistrates' Court

The public buildings in the town are individual and largely reflect the era when they were built. For example the Town Hall, built in 1864 is a typical Italianate building, whereas the Crosfield Hall reflects the 1930s when it was built and has elements of art deco about it. The Corn Exchange once looked exactly like the Town Hall, both having tall arched windows reaching up much of the front of the building. The windows in the Corn Exchange were changed in the 1930s and now the front of the building has two rows of rectangular windows. The Post Office and the Social Services building opposite it, formerly the magistrates' court, in Church Street were built around 1960.



Wykeham House, The Hundred

Within the town centre, there are a number of larger houses, often detached, that were built as homes by wealthy people in previous centuries. These houses have some of the most striking designs in the town, whether of decorative brickwork, attractive fenestration or overall pleasing proportions.



Rivermead House and adjacent terrace

Some houses have garages, often to the rear of the properties. Parking is problematical in the town centre despite the provision of numerous garage blocks. Many of these are flat-roofed. Recently new doors were fitted to the garages behind Broadwater Road which has enhanced their appearance. By contrast, the new part of Newton Lane has pitched roof car ports and garages which are much more attractive.



Garages and parking at Broadwater Road

Design Guidelines

- Satellite dishes should be sensitively placed so that they do not detract from the street scene.
- New buildings should be well-designed with interesting features and avoiding a plain block appearance.
- Fenestration should have rhythm.
- The diversity of building styles, including details, should be retained.
- The unity of the groups of terraced houses should be retained.

Materials, Fenestration, Chimney Details

Materials

The normal style of building in Romsey is redbrick, but there are exceptions to this. For example, Linden House in The Hundred and Temple Court House in Church Street are faced with yellow bricks. A variety of brick styles and patterns are found. In some of the pre-nineteenth-century houses, it is not uncommon to see burnt bricks laid to form patterns. There are no examples of grand brickwork, but many houses have small examples of decoration often at the intersection of ground floor and first floor or below the eaves.

Right across Romsey, it is common to find the first floors of houses tile hung instead of brick faced. Usually these tiles are plain rectangular, but some are scalloped. There are at least two examples of mathematical tiling in the town, with tiles shaped to look like bricks. These are the NatWest Bank building and 13 Middlebridge Street. In addition, a few houses are clad in slates, one example being in Portersbridge Street.



NatWest bank. The upper storeys are faced with mathematical tiles

A number of houses are rendered and painted as is the Baptist Church. There are two houses that have been rendered and then decorated by the skills of their erstwhile stone mason owners, one in Middlebridge Street and the other in Station Road.



Detail of Bath House, Middlebridge Street



Patterns in brick



House fronting Newton Lane car park

The net effect of this is to give a pleasing diversity of styles particularly in the Market Place and elsewhere in the older streets of the town.

The older flats beside Broadwater Road are partly faced with panels, whilst St Anne's House is faced with pinkish bricks. Modern design is represented by a tall, narrow glass and metal fronted house in Newton Lane, facing the car park.

Some of the older property in Romsey are timber-framed, although often the timbers are hidden behind later facades. For example the White Horse has a massive timber frame that can be seen within the building, but the front is rendered and gives no hint of the real antiquity of the structure.



Timber framed building, Palmerston Street

Tudor Cottage, adjacent to King John's House, has a box frame and timber frames are apparent on the old manor house in Palmerston Street and on the jettied building at numbers 19 and 21 Middlebridge Street. Similarly the timber frame of the Tudor Rose public house is evident both without and within.



King John's House from its garden, with a glimpse of the Abbey church beyond

Hampshire has no natural stone, so only high-status buildings are constructed with this material in this area. The Abbey church dominates the town's skyline. It is a unique and outstanding stone building. King John's House is the stone-built remains of a medieval house that has stood from the thirteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the old vicarage (now Folly House), the adjacent Romsey Abbey primary school and the URC all used stone in their construction.

Flint is not a building material traditionally used in Romsey, but there is one flint building in this part of town, to be found in Middlebridge Street. It was originally built in 1843 as a charity school. The flints are edged with local red brick.



Flint building in Middlebridge Street

Roofs

There are one or two thatched properties in the town centre, but fire risk caused most thatch to be replaced with clay tiles in previous centuries. The advent of the railway in the mid-nineteenth century meant that slates were economic to buy and many of the Victorian and early twentieth-century buildings had slate roofs. The Abbey church has a lead covered roof.



Roofscape in the Market Place

Lloyds TSB Bank and the URC have attractive little turrets that can be seen from many vantage points in the town and which contribute to an interesting skyline.

Apart from the flat roofs already mentioned, most of the buildings have pitched roofs, those in the Market Place having a variety of pitches and coverings. Among the twentieth century houses, pitched roofs covered with concrete tiles are normal. A few of the older houses have retained their decorative ridge tiles and the house inside the entrance to the old brewery site has a fine roof of decorative tiles.



Tiled roof in the old brewery

In The Abbey some houses have been decorated with copper flashing and there is a sundial on one of them. This copper has weathered to green and is very striking. Copper drain pipes etc have been fitted to houses in Spring Place, but too recently for the metal to have acquired a green patina.



Sundial in The Abbey

Whereas many of the older houses have retained their chimney stacks, these are primarily functional rather than decorative, although a few are topped with decorated chimney pots.



South Front adjacent to By-pass

Windows

Twentieth-century plate glass predominates in the shopping area but some shops have retained much older windows. It is particularly sad when shopowners have removed older windows and replaced them with large panes of glass that they then cover with coloured plastic, thereby destroying the historic ambience of the street scene, but without using the resulting area of glass for the display of goods.

There is a range of window styles within central Romsey. Perhaps the most-often remarked upon is that of Alliance Pharmacy with its early-nineteenth century glazing bars and glass. These glazing bars are narrow but deep. Once there were others like them, but they have been replaced with wider and shallower glazing bars. Among these is the Romsey Advertiser building where the Victorian window has been retained.



Contrasting windows in the Market Place

It is often on the upper floors that the most interesting windows survive. Many of the older houses have vertical sash windows, in the case of shops on the upper floors only. Some of these have simple divisions of the glass, with a single vertical bar in each part of the window. Others have been subdivided into multiple panes, and on some of the second storey windows, the upper window has one row of panes and the lower, two rows.



Three pane sash window



Baptist Church, Bell Street

It is not uncommon to find Yorkshire sash windows on the older houses of the town. These slide sideways and are relatively rare nationally. They are always subdivided into several panes of glass.

In the twentieth-century residential houses, windows vary between horizontally opening casement windows and fixed windows with vents above. They may have single panes or be subdivided in the Georgian style. Some of the houses built in the second half of the twentieth century have rectangular or circular bay windows at ground floor level.



Yorkshire sash window at rear of WH Smith's

Leaded lights are rarely found except in some of the churches. Coloured or etched glass is similarly rare in Romsey apart from the churches and a little coloured glass in a few Edwardian windows and occasional doors.

Within the town, there are some windows that are of key importance in defining the uniqueness of Romsey. Among these is the bow window which graces the Corn Market at the front of Bradbeers. There are ground floor bays on Berties restaurant in The Hundred and the Three Tuns public house in Middlebridge Street.

Among other individually significant windows are the Victorian arches on the Town Hall. The windows at the front of the Corn Exchange building are important as they act as a focus for the western end of The Hundred. Similarly the façade of Broadwater House acts as a focus for the eastern end of Middlebridge Street.

Doors

Despite alterations to the glazing, many of the old shops retain their window frames and adjacent doorways. Often the doors have survived for many years and some of them have appealing decorative detail, either on the woodwork, or in door knockers and letter boxes. In addition, some buildings have retained other old features, such as a previous owner's initial on the entrance step of a shop, or boot scrapers outside private houses.



Boot scrapers



Detail at entrance to shop in The Hundred

Among the large old houses of the town, some have striking entrances and often quite wide front doors. For example both Park House in Palmerston Street and Linden House in The Hundred have substantial porches.



A selection of door furniture

At the other end of the social scale, a number of houses were constructed in Cherville Street and in Middlebridge Street where two adjoining houses had front doors under one brick arch behind which there was a partition to divide one dwelling from the other. A few of these remain. A number of doorways in the older residential streets lead not to domestic areas but to alleyways that give access to the rear of the premises.



Double doorways are common in Romsey

Within the central streets of the town, there are a number of gaps between houses that provided for horse drawn vehicles to pass to the owners' stables or yards. Some of these are completely built over, for example number 21 Market Place next to the Romsey Advertiser office. Others have been built over above ground level, such as the Market Place entrance to the White Horse, while others still exist as gated entrances, such as that adjacent to Bradbeers' carpet shop in Bell Street. The oddest of these is adjacent to Oxfam, which appears to be built over above the ground level, but which only contains a wall with blind windows.

Plaques

The town is decorated with a number of plaques which were placed at different times in the years from 1900. Some provide dates of buildings whilst others contain information about the building.



Plaques: on Kent's Almshouses
and on the side of Lloyds TSB bank

Streets and Street Furniture



The sinuous nature of Portersbridge Street

The streets of central Romsey were laid out well before there were cars and lorries. In consequence they are narrow as are most of the pavements. The main streets twist and turn opening up a series of vistas in a very short distance. Some of the lesser streets are tucked away and only found by chance, such as Narrow Lane, Abbey Water, Pembroke Close or Spring Place.

Most of the streets are covered with tarmac, although cobbles and setts are found in Church Place and the Corn Market. There is some concern about the Corn Market as the surface is not easy for wheel chairs or push chairs. Some of the footways are paved in the central part of town, but further afield, tarmac is the usual surface.

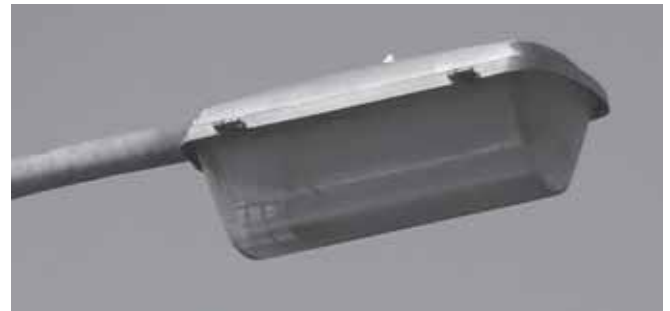


Pembroke Close

Overhead, several streets are festooned with wires and cables that do nothing to enhance them. Mill Lane and Church Lane suffer especially in this regard. By contrast the Christmas lights erected annually mostly by fire-fighters and window cleaners are much liked and with seasonal displays in shop windows make the town centre very attractive and friendly. In summer the town is enhanced by flower troughs and hanging baskets which are to be found right across the commercial area.

The antique style lamp standards and soft lighting in The Abbey area is sympathetic to the age of the houses there. There are old style lamp posts in The Hundred which are appropriate to an old street. Elsewhere concrete or modern style lamp standards fit less easily into the historic environment.

Balancing the provision of signs creates problems. On the one hand there can be too many signs, for example in the vicinity of The Hundred and Latimer Street.



Lamp standards

Conversely the various streets leading from the Market Place are not clearly indicated. Similarly, people who use the town's car parks often have difficulty finding their way to The Hundred and the Market Place, despite the presence of maps by the parking ticket machine booths.



Bracket and sign outside Conservative Club



Statue of Lord Palmerston in Market Place

The statue of Lord Palmerston is the most prominent piece of public art in the town centre and is an important symbol for Romsey. The horse inside the entry to the old brewery is a recent addition to the town's statuary. A number of buildings have old trade signs from previous uses that add to the feeling of continuity in the town centre.

The Town Hall is adorned with an ornamental gas lamp bracket that was probably made in the 1860s when the building was opened. Other decorative features include a weather vane on the turret of Lloyds TSB Bank and a clock that faces the Market Place. W H Smith and Sons has a trade sign depicting a paper boy dating from around 1930.



Nineteenth-century drinking fountain in Corn Market

The former drinking fountain outside the Corn Exchange is an attractive feature from Romsey's past. The recently-erected decorative wrought iron cycle racks and signpost display in Market Place are attractive as is the decorative archway at Stirling Walk.

Footpaths and Pavements

In several of the old streets, the pavements are narrow and pedestrians have little room. For example, in parts of Bell Street, Cherville Street and Middlebridge Street it is difficult for two people to pass without one having to step into the road.

There is little or no footway in most of Love Lane nor parts of Mill Lane. Other examples may be found in Middlebridge Street by Broadwater Road or at the northern end of Church Street. The Abbey (road) suffers from having a very narrow, sloping footway beside the URC and none at all further west.

By contrast, in part of the southern side of Broadwater Road the footway is protected from the road by a grass verge. The only other footway in this part of Romsey that is separated from the carriageway by a grass verge can be found alongside the By Pass, but it is often rather neglected, littered, overgrown and muddy.

Repeated re-surfacing work on the old streets has resulted in a significant rise in the road level, and in places this is above the level of the adjoining footways and entrances to neighbouring premises. In order to avoid raising footways above the level of door sills, pavements have been sloped down from the road. This together with pavements that slope to accommodate dropped kerbs means that across much of the town pedestrians cannot rely on horizontal pavement surfaces for their use.



Walkway between bus station and Market Place: a visually muddled link to the town centre

As is customary in old towns, there are a number of ways that enable people to filter through the central part of Romsey. Some of these are only available to those on foot, such as the path between the Corn Market and the bus station, or the walkway through the archway forming Abbey Walk, or the courtyard beside Dukes Mill. Others are open to traffic but are primarily used by walkers, such as the little road between Love Lane and The Hundred. The Meads, Church Place, Church Road and Church Lane are other examples of space shared by pedestrians and vehicles.



Church Lane, shared by cars and pedestrians

The Back Lane behind the western side of Cherville Street that leads from Mill Lane to Priestlands is primarily a footpath but the southern part is used by cars. It provides access from the town to The Romsey Community School. Amongst the purely pedestrian footpaths, there is a short walk beside one of the braids of the Test that links Hollman Drive to Priestlands.

These paths and footways add to the permeability of the town. New developments that do not allow people to filter across them change the character of an old town.

Design Guidelines

- Retain the permeability of the centre of Romsey for pedestrians.

Trees, Hedges and Other Landscape Features

Trees

The core of Romsey has many trees, in both public and private spaces. The urban landscape is both softened and enhanced by its trees, whether in groups, in rows or as single specimens. A wide variety flourish but limes, maples, sycamore and white beam predominate, with willow and horse chestnut being common. Among the smaller trees, there is plenty of holly, alder and some rowan.

The greater number of trees is to be found adjacent to the larger braids of the Test. For example the Memorial Park has a variety of trees including limes, black mulberry and London plane. The grounds of the nearby convent similarly contain a large number of trees, some of them of considerable age, such as those that abut the new part of Newton Lane. Similarly there is a wide variety of trees north of Riverside Gardens across to Mill Lane and into Millstream Rise.



Trees lining the By Pass in winter

The By Pass is renowned for its row of ornamental cherries that brighten the roadside in spring. Specimen trees are found in the two garths and on other lands near the Abbey church. Among the individual trees of importance is the large copper beech to the west of Lloyds TSB Bank and another in Church Road. Judas trees, magnolias and a blue cedar also grow in this part of town.

Design Guidelines

- **Mature trees form an important feature of the landscape and as such should be retained wherever possible.**

Hedges



Shrubs between Middlebridge Street and By-pass

There is a scattering of hedges across the town centre, some flowering. A good example of the latter is the group of cotoneasters which form a barrier screening the houses at the southern end of Middlebridge Street where it runs alongside the By-pass. Another significant hedge is that alongside the Holbrook between it and Lortemore car park.

Among the privately owned hedges are the privet hedges that line the front gardens of houses in The Meads including Bartlett's Almshouses. A privet hedge is also to be found around The Thatched Cottage in Mill Lane. In addition to these, there are a few short lengths of hedge in front gardens.



Trees providing a screen in Broadwater Road

Boundary Features

There are a number of sets of railings that enhance the town. Amongst the newer installations are railings that were placed between the bus station and the Holbrook and the railings that surround the park. Both sets have improved the look of their surroundings.

There is a variety of railings alongside the stream in Middlebridge Street, including some that are decorative, and others that are shaped so that steam engines could suck water from the stream.

There are a few railings alongside front gardens, but many have not been replaced since they were removed in the early 1940s. Old photos show what the streets looked like with these railings.



Palmerston Street in 1908 with railings

Several properties have attractive railings around them, and there are some striking brick gateways and walls.



Linden House, The Hundred

By contrast a chain link fence separates the White Horse and Lortemore car parks which does not enhance the appearance of either area.



Chain link fence between Lortemore car park and White Horse hotel car park

There is an attractive metal gate at the western entrance to King John's Garden and there are gates and railings around the Abbey church precinct. The South Garth of the Abbey church can be reached through a fine modern memorial gateway.



Southern gateway to the Abbey church

The railings over the Tadburn Lake, at Palmerston Street, are improved by having been painted recently. Many of the other bridges in the town are in need of attention. The bridges either side of the park, anciently known as the White Bridge and the Black Bridge, are composed of wooden slats which detract from the appearance of one of the most popular walks in Romsey.



Fencing on the bridge by the War Memorial Park

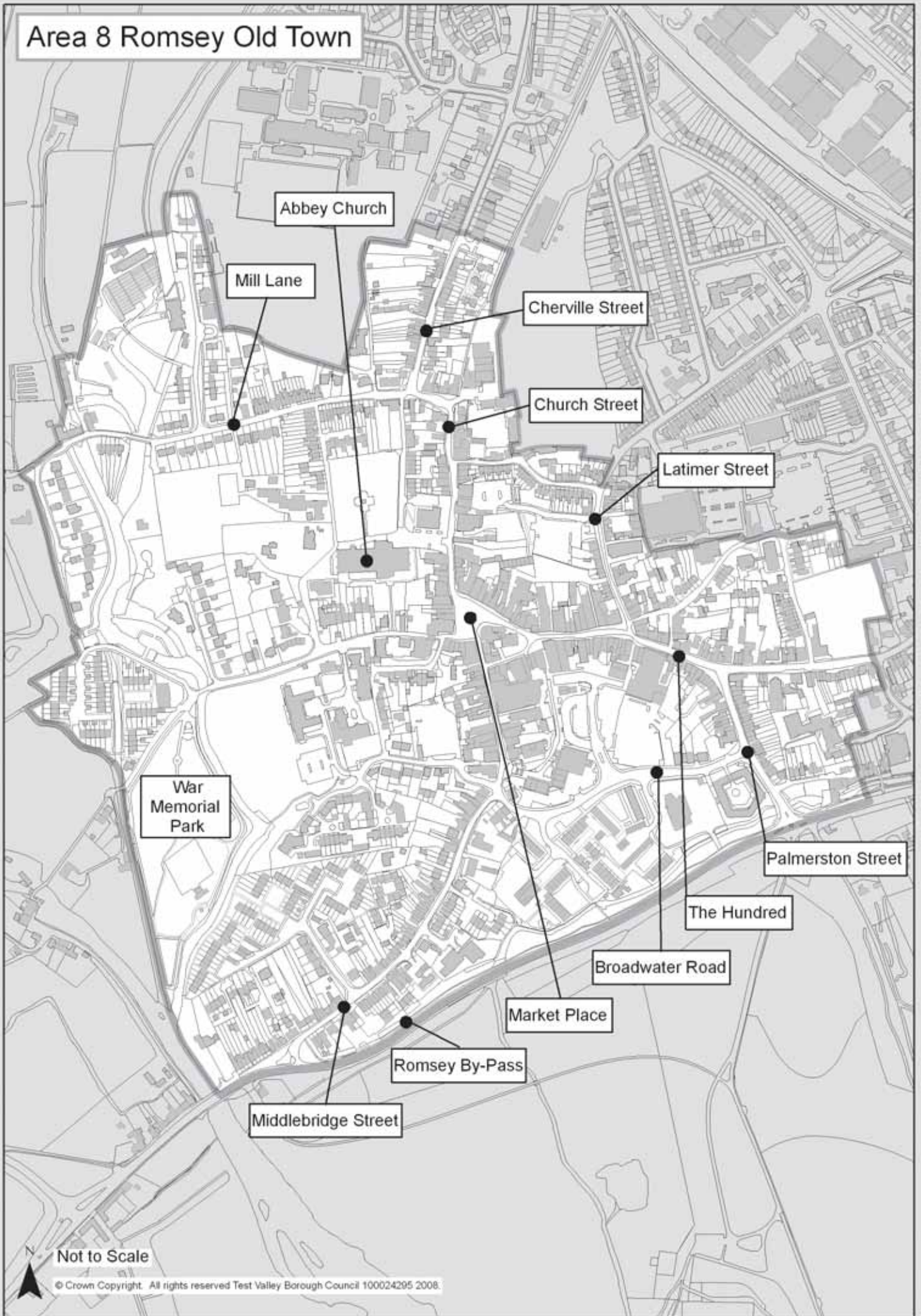
The bridge over the Holbrook that leads into King John's Garden is substantial and rustic. The solid gate beyond is not particularly ornamental but provides security.

The bridges in Mill Lane are attractive and give good views of the rivers. Other places where roads cross waterways are largely hidden from public gaze.

Design Guidelines

- The provision of ornamental railings around new developments and the replacement of railings removed in the 1940s should be encouraged.
- High walls and solid fences should be avoided where they would be intrusive on the landscape or street scene.

Area 8 Romsey Old Town



Abbey Church

Mill Lane

Cherville Street

Church Street

Latimer Street

War Memorial Park

Palmerston Street

The Hundred

Broadwater Road

Market Place

Romsey By-Pass

Middlebridge Street

Not to Scale

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Supported by:



Look At Romsey:

Overview

Area 1 Whitenap

Area 2 Halterworth

Area 3 Tadburn Valley

Area 4 Tadburn Gardens

Area 5 Great Woodley

Area 6 Upper Cupernham and Winchester Road

Area 7 Lower Cupernham and Fishlake Meadows

Area 8 Romsey Old Town

Area 9 Town Centre, Outer Core

Area 10 Harefield and Little Woodley

Area 11 Woodley and Ganger

Area 12 Crampmoor and Highwood