

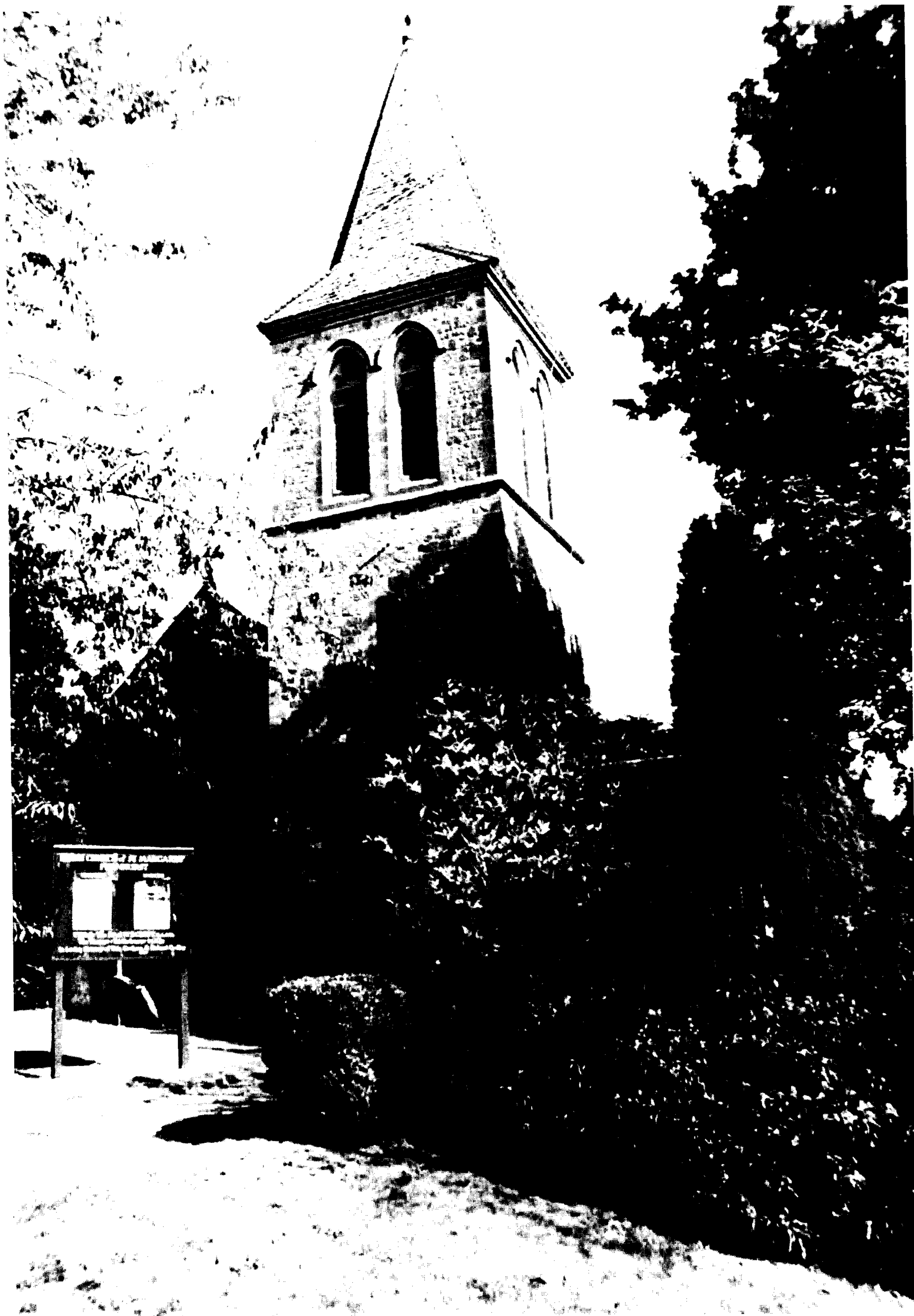
FERNHURST VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT 1999

Approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance by
Chichester District Council

"Is Fernhurst losing some of its rural charm by the erection of telephone posts and one or two lamps and other signs of advancing civilisation? If it is so, it were a grievous pity. What we have most to fear is the erection of buildings which refuse to harmonise with anything and everything."

Fernhurst Parish Magazine - February 1911





St. Margaret's Church

INTRODUCTION

What is a Village Design Statement?

The purpose of a Village Design Statement (VDS) is to represent an analysis of the character of a village as seen by local residents and village facility users and to have their opinions formally recognised by the District Planning Authority as supplementary planning guidance to the District Local Plan. This document is produced by the residents of the village.



Why does Fernhurst need a Village Design Statement?

Like so many rural areas, Fernhurst has seen accelerated development in recent years ranging from large new estates to redevelopment of existing plots and infilling. It is important, therefore, that the views and feelings of the people living and working in Fernhurst are respected before future development proposals are put to the appropriate authorities for consideration.

Fernhurst is a rural community and the residents of the village wish to retain its village characteristics.

What is the character of Fernhurst?

Fernhurst derives its name from the Anglo Saxon, meaning a fern covered wooded hill. It is bounded on all sides by woodland/agricultural land and sits on Wealden clay. It began as a small scattered settlement in Saxon times and has evolved over the centuries into the thriving village it is today. It includes many listed buildings surrounded by a richly wooded landscape. Within the village there are many examples of classic English trees, some of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Part of the village has been designated a Conservation Area, and Fernhurst as a whole lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The distinctiveness of Fernhurst lies in its setting.

The Parish of Fernhurst has a population of about 3,200 and covers an area of 2,372 hectares; Fernhurst village accounts for about two-thirds of the Parish population.



LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Description

The distinctive natural features of the village are the views framed by trees and hedges which are prominent and characterise its rural setting on the southern slopes of the West Weald hills. As the land tends to fall away on either side of the A286, the significant views depend in general terms upon which side of the main road one stands.

From west of the main road, views are towards: From east of the main road, views are towards:

- Blackdown
- Marley Ridge
- Down the vale to Hill Brow ridge
- Verdley Hill along the ridge to Older Hill

- Blackdown
- Marley Ridge
- Down the Sussex Vale
- The Church Spire
- Verdley Hill along the ridge to Bexley Hill

There are several important groups of trees, such as the oaks around the recreation ground, the trees which, apart from the immediate vicinity of crossroads, line one or other side of the main road. Other examples are the magnificent Oak on the edge of the playing field, the stately London Plane opposite the Red Lion Public House and the Yew in the churchyard. The village is surrounded by woodland with trees of many indigenous species and traditional mixed hedging. The mixture of trees and open ground give long framed views from the village and houses nestle into the landscape.

The village itself is divided by the main A286 running north to south. Church Road at the village crossroads runs to the east from the main road past St. Margaret's Church to the village green which is surrounded by a cluster of older houses in large plots, the recreation ground and the local village pub, The Red Lion.

The pavilion on the recreation ground is used by the local football and cricket clubs and also caters for other events. The west of the village is divided by Vann Road which completes the cross and leads into the more densely populated community with a variety of houses, new and old, large and small plots and several housing estates. Around the crossroads there is a variety of shops, small businesses, a surgery and the youth club. There is also a village hall, which is used regularly for a number of community functions both public and private. Recent new developments are characterised by a series of culs-de-sac giving single access to the public highway.



BLACKDOWN LOOKING N.N.E.
FROM ROPES LANE.

Importance

Trees and hedges are essential to the distinctive character of Fernhurst not only because of their attractive appearance, but also because of their function as wildlife corridors and their ability to absorb noise. The use of trees as a visual screen can help to soften the impact of development.

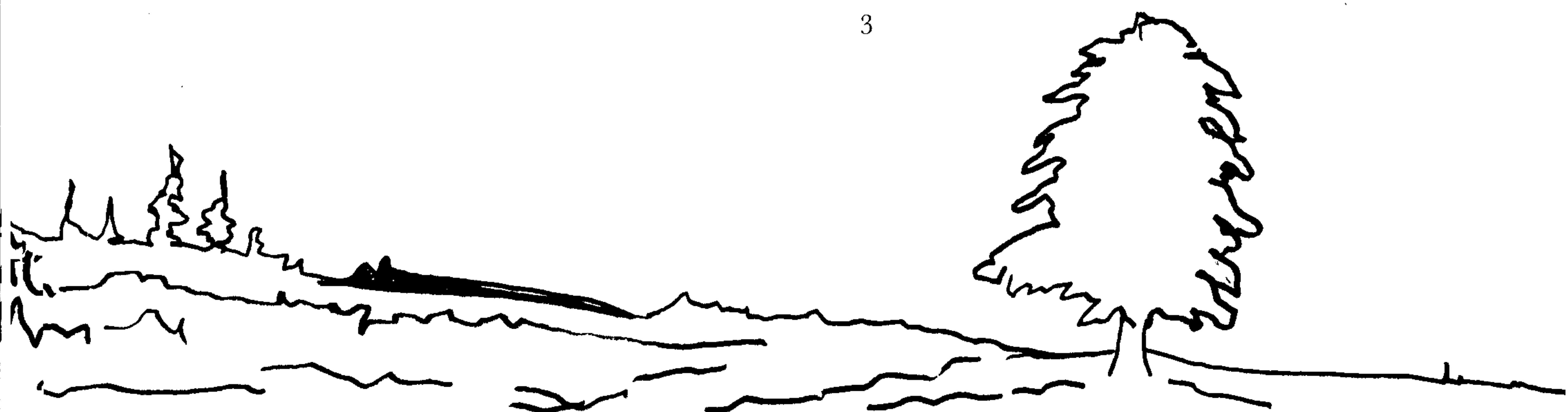
The pattern of groups of houses in culs-de-sac confers tranquillity and privacy, encouraging a community spirit within the group. The concentration of public facilities in the vicinity of the crossroads is crucial not simply for the services they provide, but more importantly, for the opportunities created for social interaction between people from different parts of the village. These features contribute in high degree to the general feeling of well being and contentment in the village population.



The views from nearly all of the village to the hills which surround the village are an important amenity giving a feeling of space. Many houses enjoy multiple views framed between trees and the ridgelines of adjacent buildings. However, the predominant views are in the direction in which the land slopes away and must be preserved.

Guidance

- Trees, hedges and views make Fernhurst distinctive and these aspects should be respected when future building is planned.
- Inventories of existing trees and hedges on proposed development plots should be prepared as part of planning applications and consideration given to their preservation as far as possible.
- Provision should be made for the management of trees on larger housing developments.
- Significant views should be preserved.
- Tree Preservation Orders should continue to be placed on single trees and groups of trees considered to be of importance and which may be threatened by development.
- The Parish Council should give thought to replacement planting of mature and vulnerable trees.
- New developments should harmonise with the character of the settlement pattern and landscape.
- Future developments should be of small scale and low density in appropriate locations and set within tree lined plots in order to preserve the village “feel” and avoid the closely packed housing associated with urban and suburban areas.

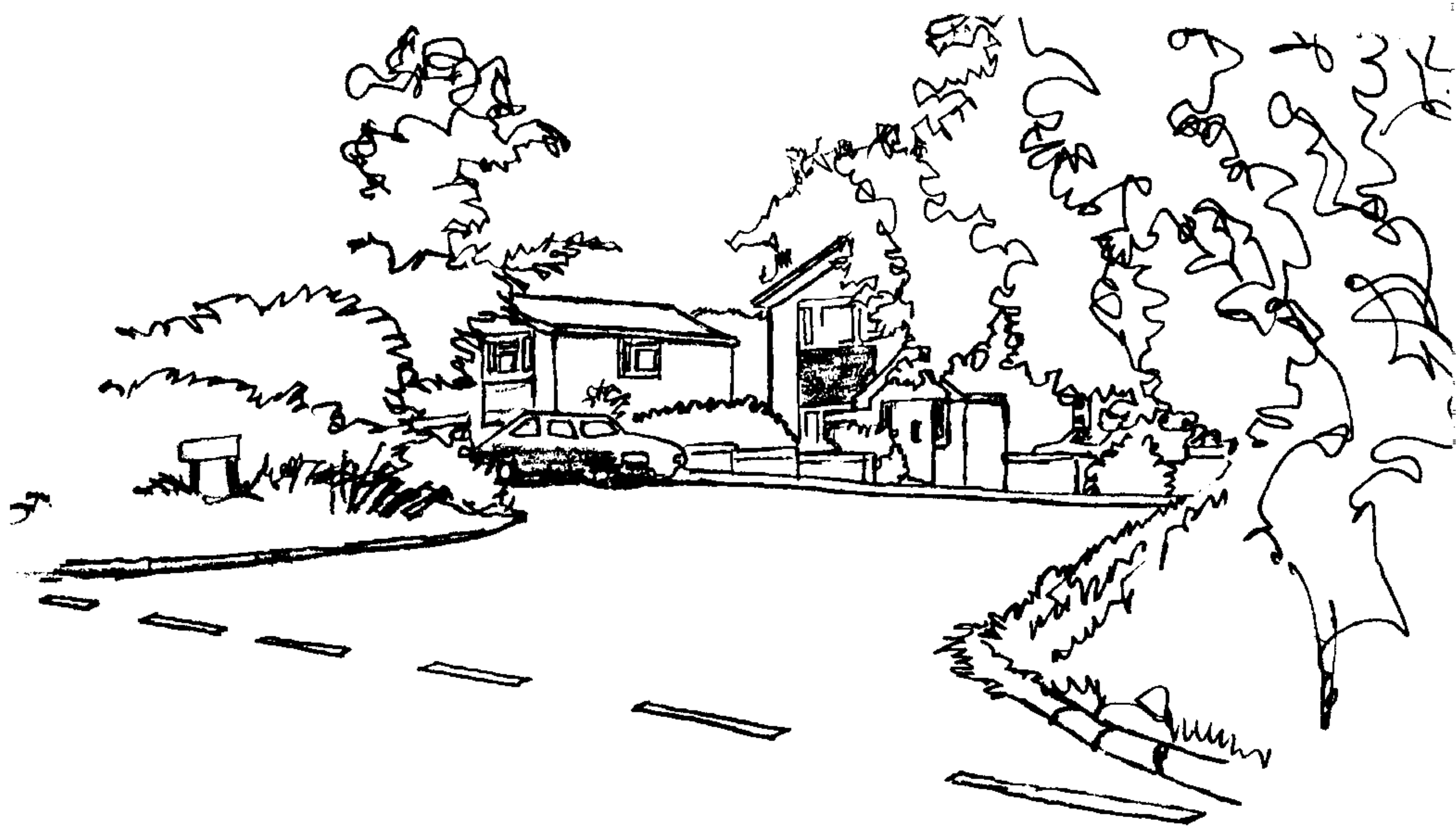


OPEN SPACES AND ENCLOSURES

Description

One of the most precious resources of Fernhurst must be the open spaces within the village. These spaces and other gaps between buildings allow views of the surrounding tree covered valley and hills. There are many broad green verges both inside and outside the Conservation area of the village. Wide verges are a feature of the clay Weald, as before the introduction of hard road surfaces it would have been necessary to vary routes through the clay.

The grass verges are also a feature of post war housing developments, particularly in West Close where the houses are set well back from the road and house owners are not permitted to fence off their front gardens (by virtue of restrictive covenants imposed on the estate).



“Hedgerow trees, in particular individual mature oaks, become visually more distinctive in the clay vale. The lanes seem more open here, with verges, ditches and glimpsed views to farmland through field gates. There is general increase in tree cover towards the edges of settlements where hedgerow trees link visually with small copses, stream side woodlands and garden trees.” (A Landscape Assessment of the Sussex Downs - Sussex Downs Conservation Board).

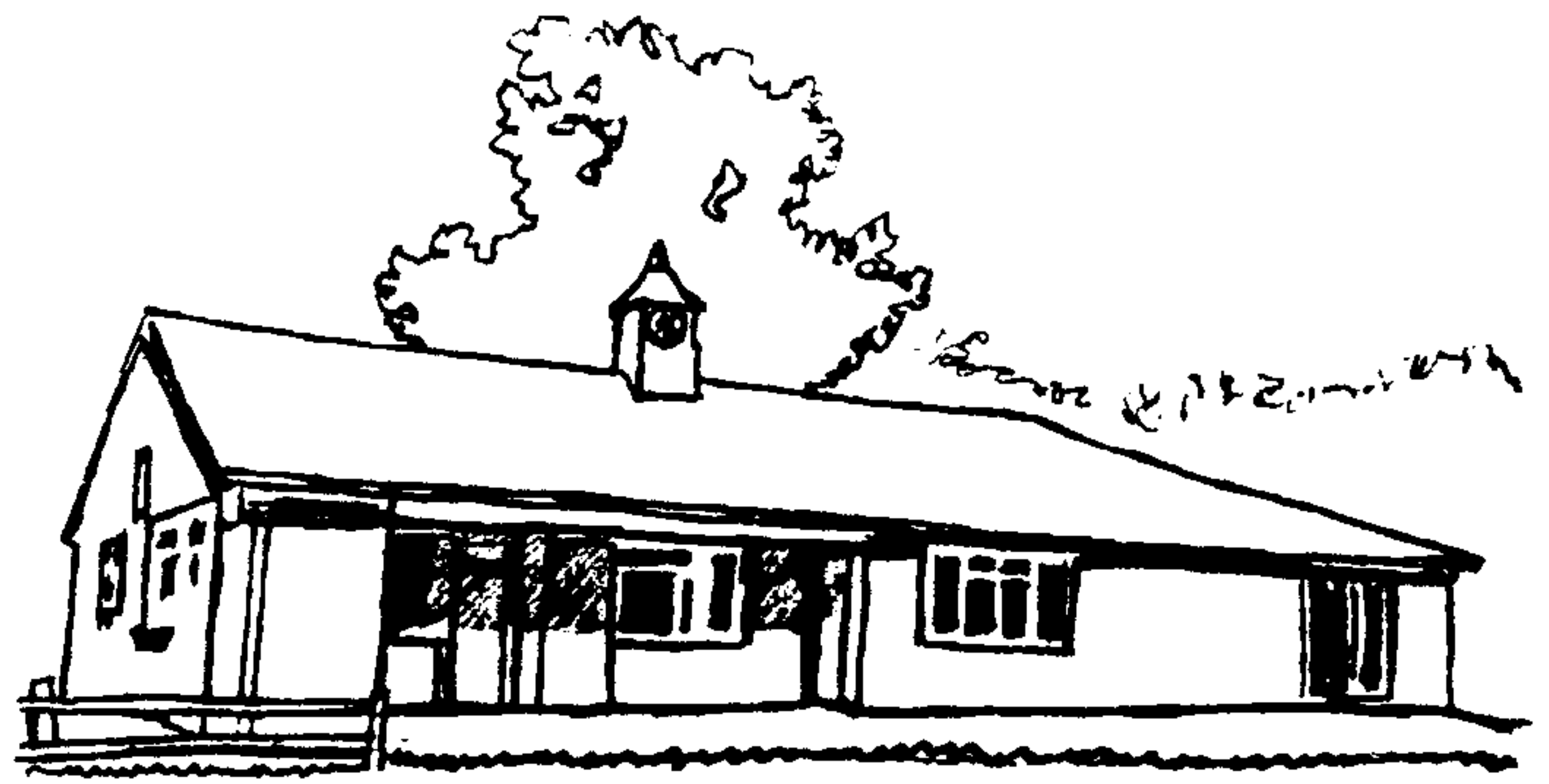
HOLLYCOMBE HANGER

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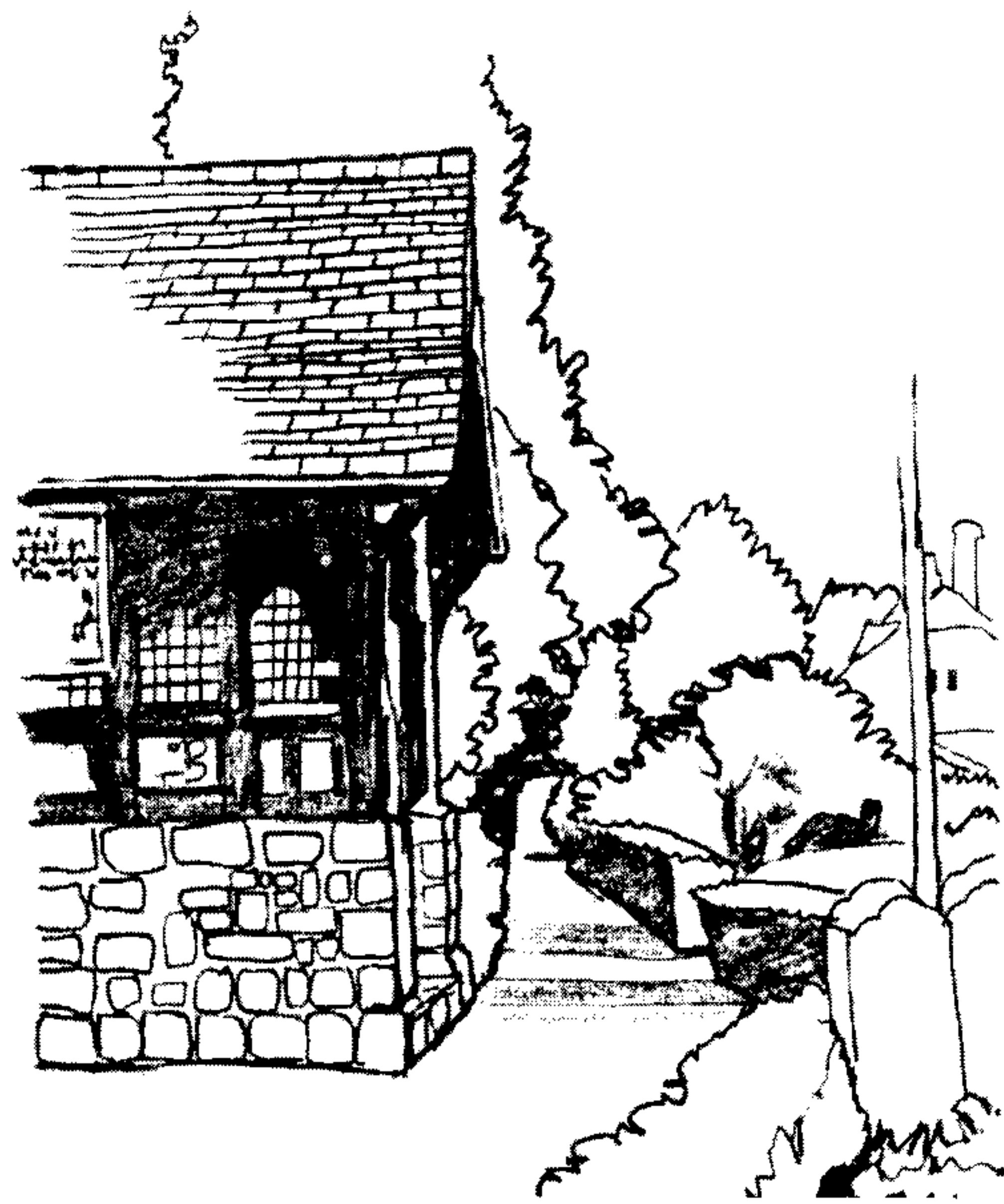
VIEWS FROM THE MIDDLE
OF THE VILLAGE.

Public spaces are scattered, mostly to the east of the village, including the village green and large recreation ground, the latter having a multi-functional use. It is the home of the local football and cricket clubs as well as being used for stoolball, the annual "Fernhurst Revels" and general recreational use. It has a fenced playground for younger children, with swings and slides.



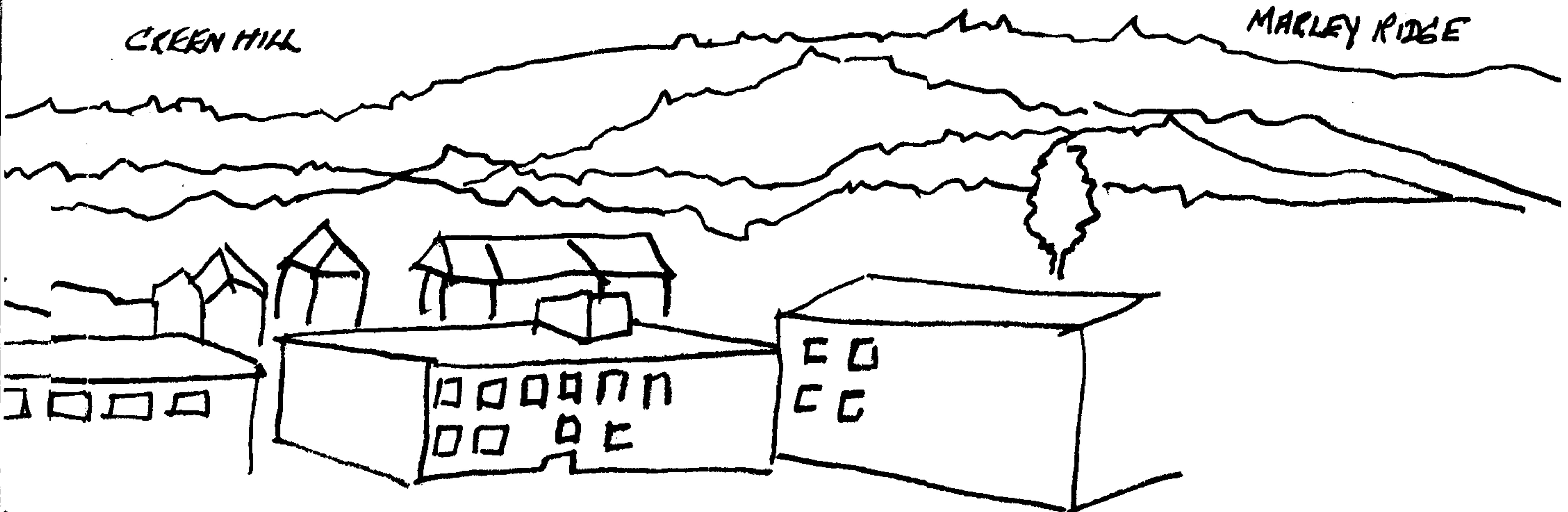
The primary school is of post-war construction and despite being set within a large plot parking is limited. Elsewhere cars are generally well provided for with an adequate free car park behind the parade of shops at Crossfield and another by the recreation ground. Some developments have retained open spaces for parking and play areas. There is a sizeable and extremely well maintained cemetery in Church Road. It abuts Church Road and its boundary with that road is defined by a stone retaining wall planted with colourful flowers in the summer.

There are many public footpaths and bridleways giving access to and winding through the surrounding countryside. A number of the houses overlooking the village green, and throughout the village, have a variety of boundary walls, many made from local materials including quarried stone.



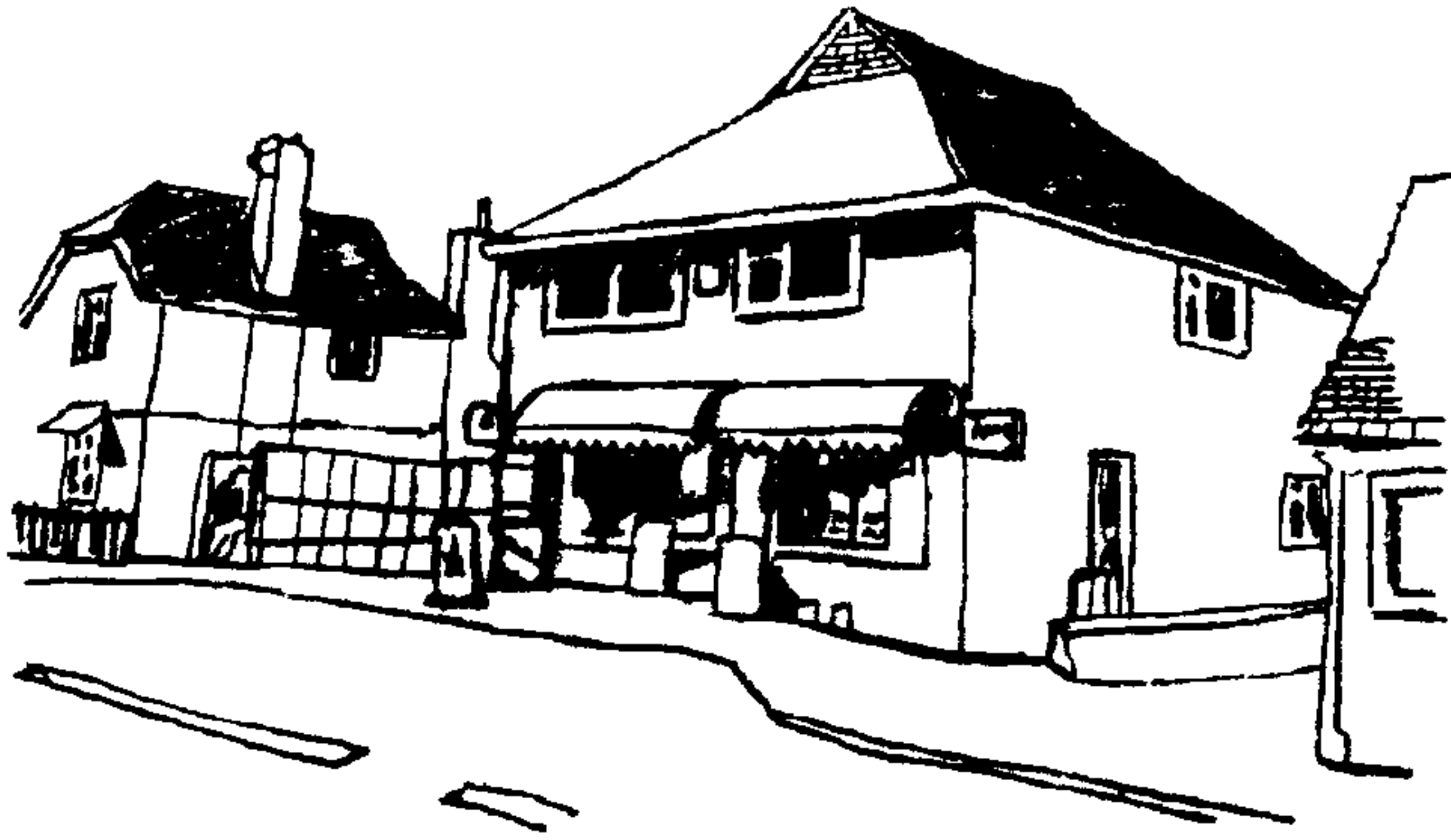
GREEN HILL

MARLEY RIDGE

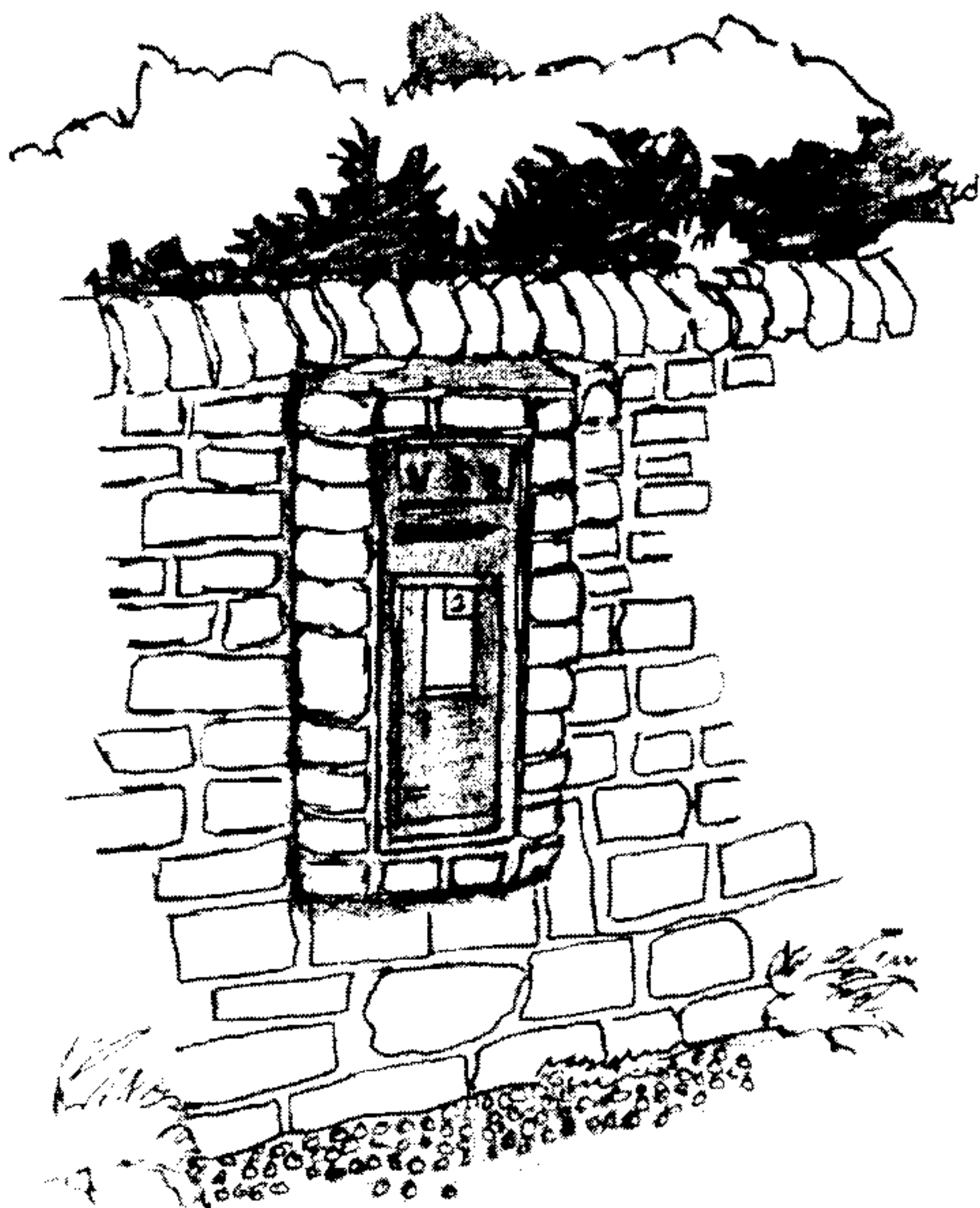


Importance

The preservation of open spaces and enclosures in Fernhurst is as important as the trees and hedges as they complement one another. They provide areas for recreation, safety for children and a general feeling of freedom for the residents of the village. They encourage visitors, including a large number of walkers, to the area who in turn help the economy of the village by using the shopping facilities.

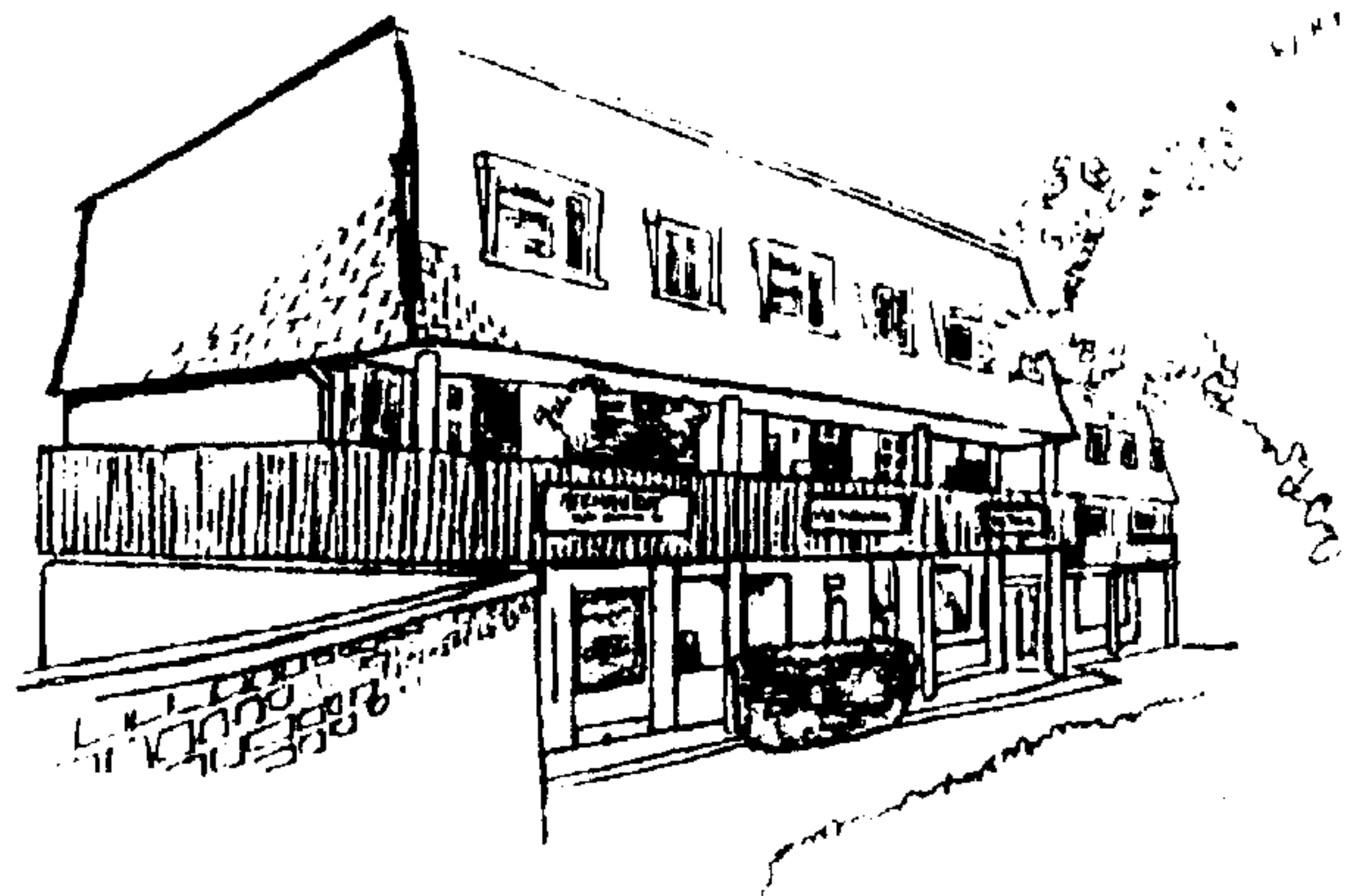


- Discourage “back land” development and developments requiring new access roads on to the A286.
- Consider the need for pedestrian/cycle access between culs-de-sac and main routes to the school and village amenities.

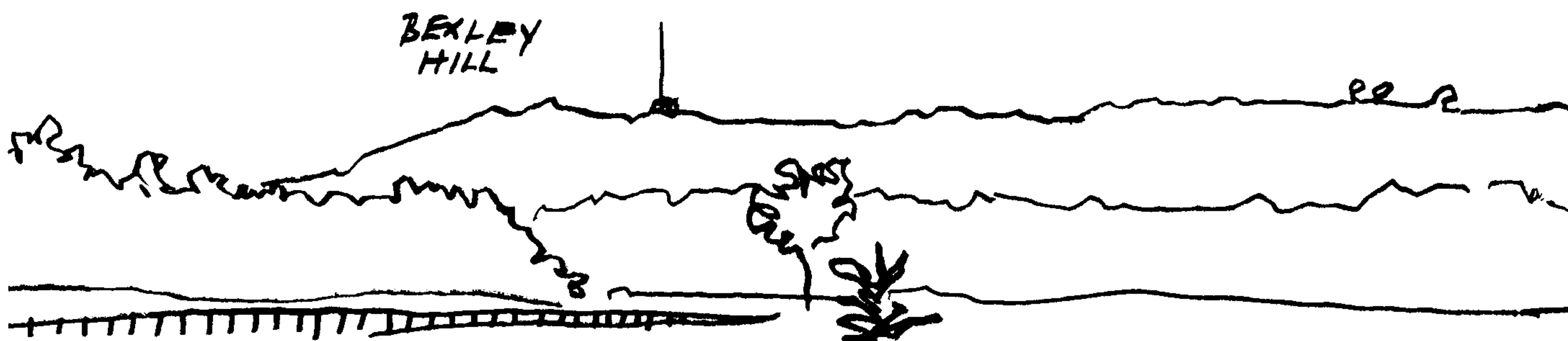


Guidance

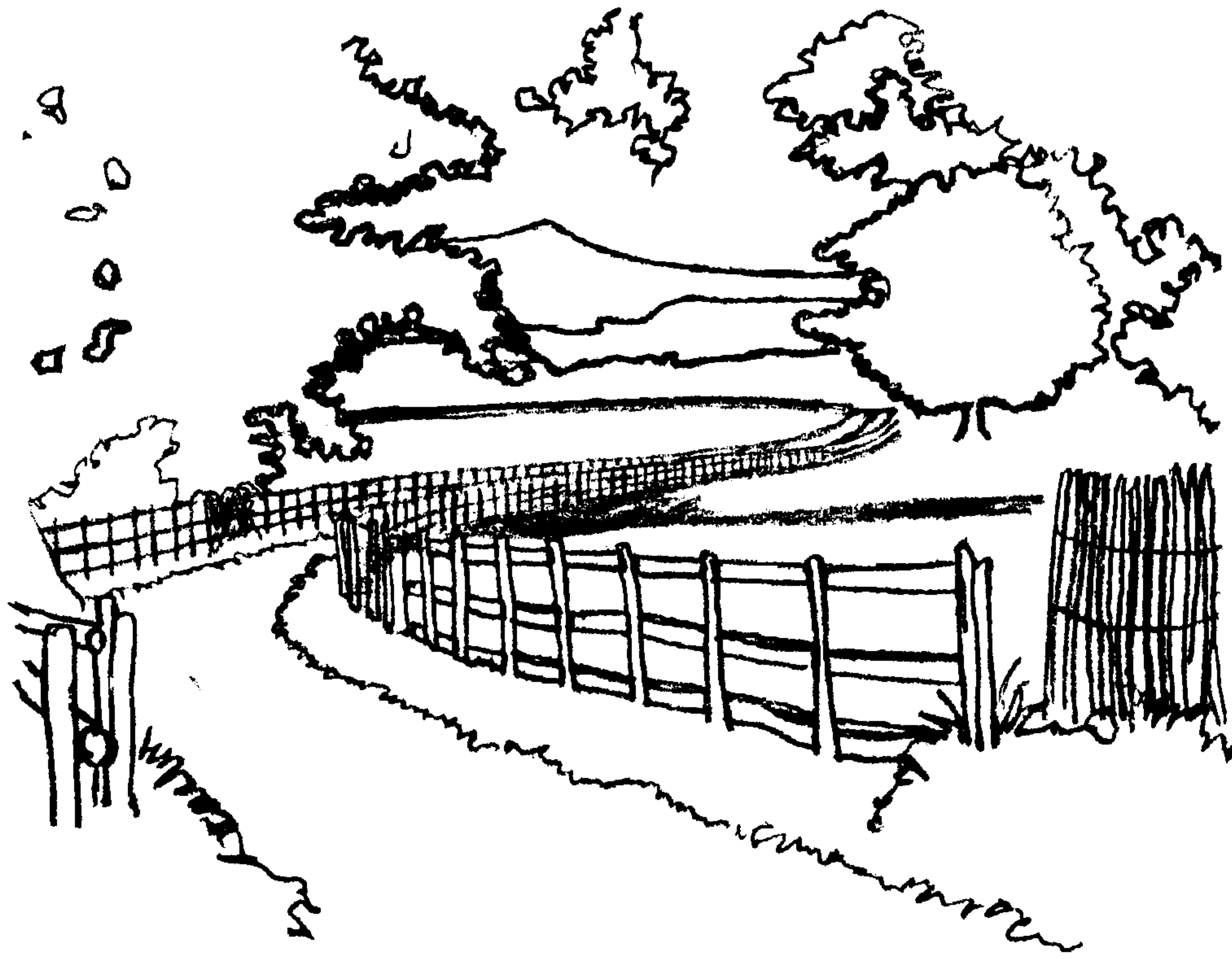
- Retain existing public spaces.
- ‘Overdevelopment’ of sites, i.e. cramming, should be avoided and adequate sized gardens, play areas for children and off road parking should be encouraged.



- Encourage the use of indigenous trees and shrubs for boundaries, or attractive brick or stone walling, rather than larch lapped/interwoven fencing. The treatment of boundaries should be high on the list of priorities and should be visually appealing not only to the particular development but also taking into the account the immediate and overall surroundings.



- Consider wide grass verges as an alternative to boundaries.
- Maintain and enhance the Conservation Area and the adjoining crossroads, shopping area and car park. The character and appearance of those parts of the village which are outside the Conservation Area are important when planning applications are being considered and when opportunities are taken to make changes to spaces and buildings.

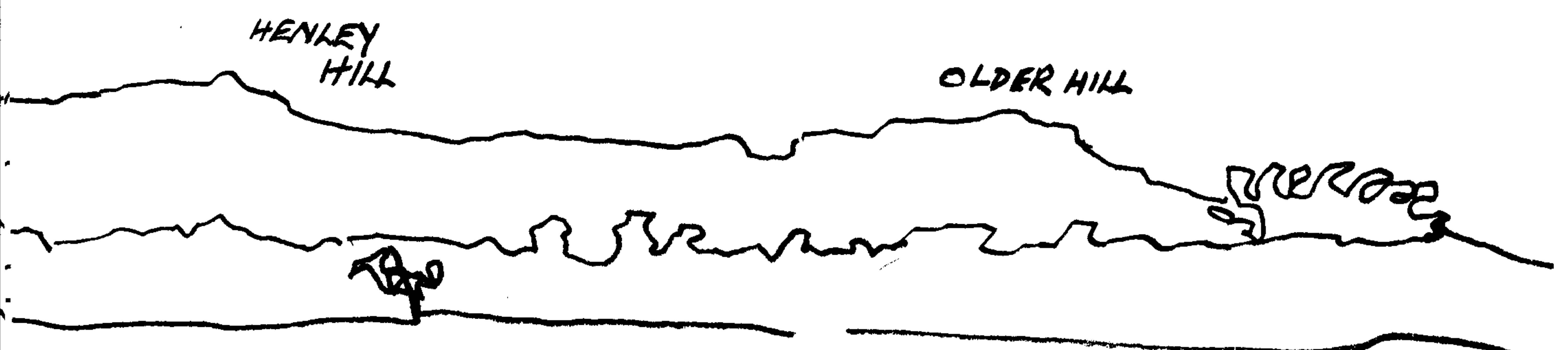


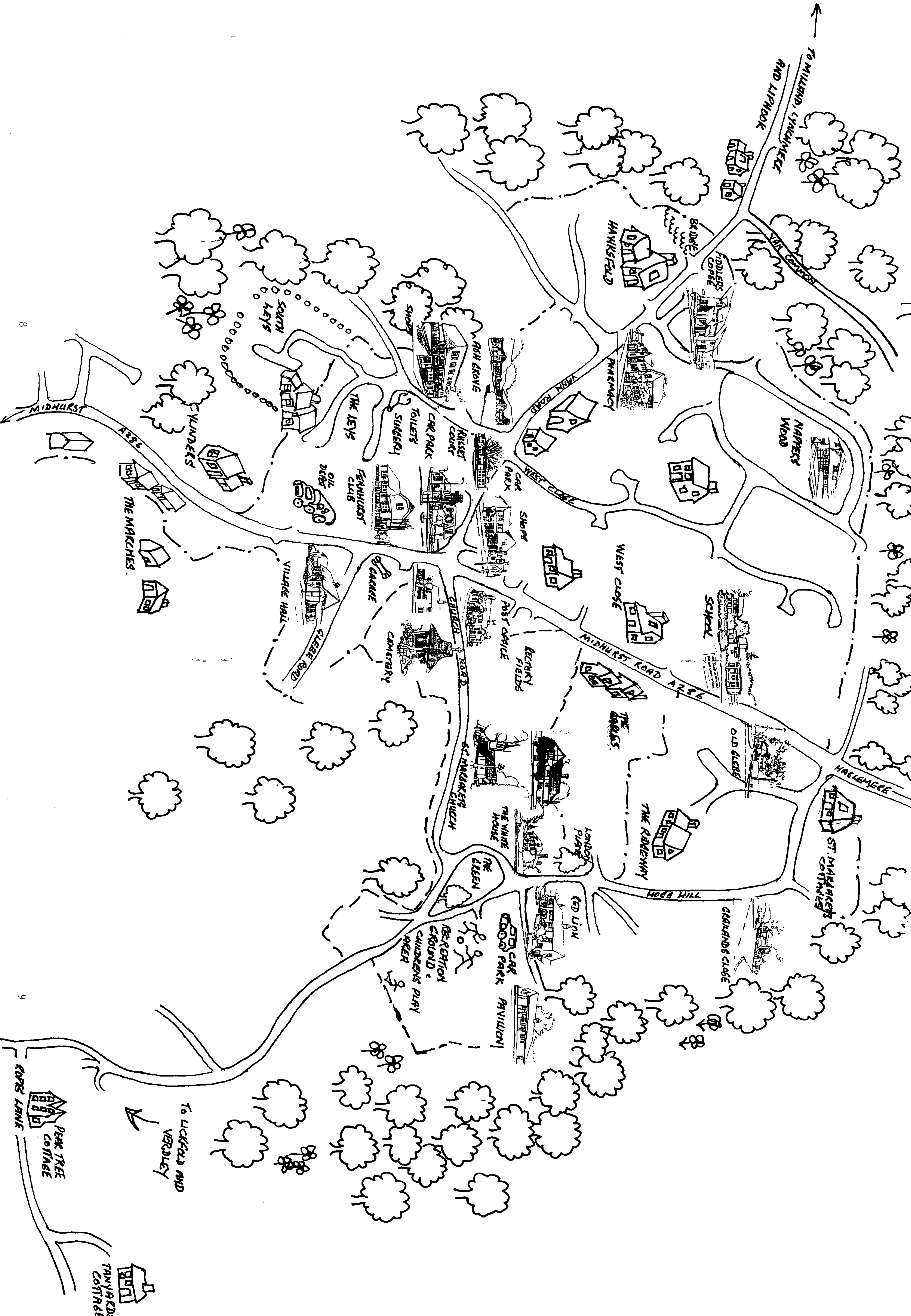
“Conserve the small-scale secretive character of roads, lanes and tracks. Control informal car parking on verges and lay-bys and farm entrances.”

“Encourage native grassland and wild flower species on verges and banks along roads, lanes and tracks.”
 (A Landscape Assessment of the Sussex Downs - Sussex Downs Conservation Board).

HENLEY
HILL

OLDER HILL





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TANNARDS
COTTAGE

PEAK TREE
COTTAGE

TO LICKFORD AND
VERDLEY

ROBES LANE

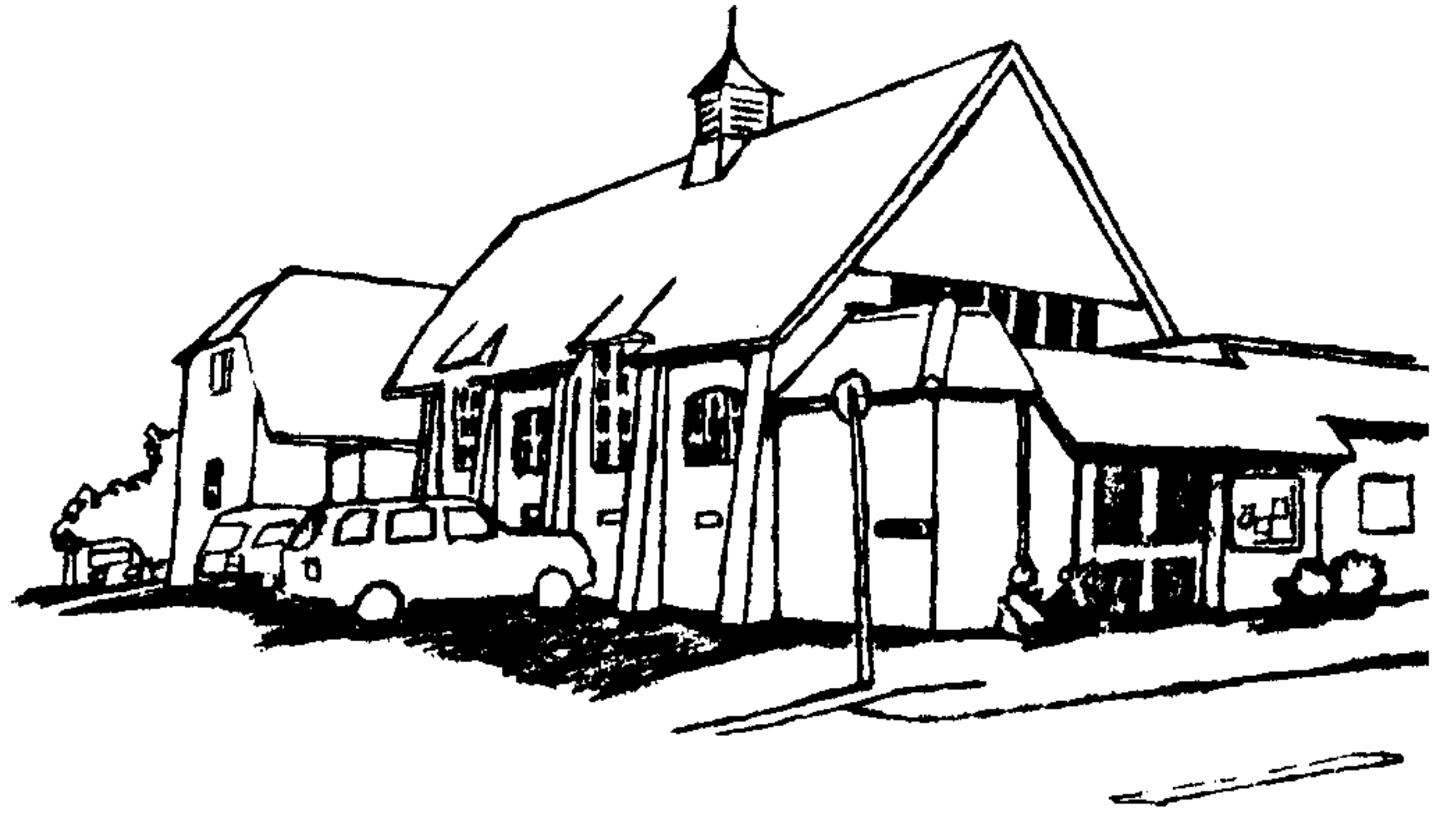
BUILDINGS AND MATERIALS

Description

Fernhurst has a variety of buildings. It is not known when the village church was first built, but it was believed to have been in the Norman style in the twelfth century.

The village hall was constructed before the First World War, and the pavilion on the recreation ground in the 1970's. There are many old buildings of which over forty are listed as being of architectural or historic importance and working farms still exist in the area. To the east of the village there is little new development, although some post war development has taken place in Hogs Hill. Further to the east lie remnants of the ICI/Zeneca estate at Verdley and Hurstfold, which over the last fifty years has provided

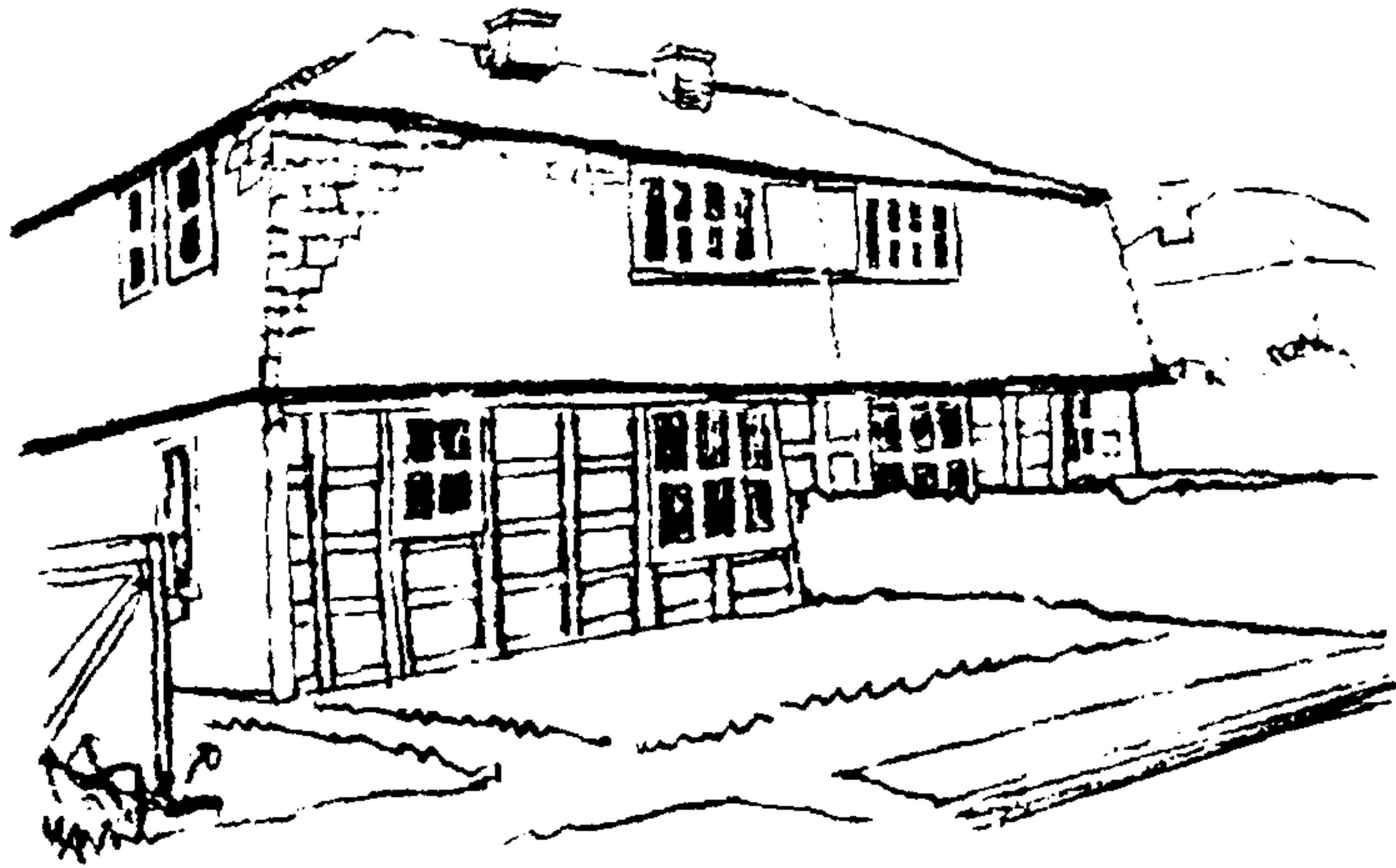
much employment and support for village institutions. In the village centre and to the west in and off Vann Road there is an assortment of buildings including a good selection of retail outlets. Over the centuries many people have contributed to the variety of buildings using local materials.



Since the Second World War the village has seen much development of increasingly diverse design, from standard local authority housing to neo-Georgian with bow windows to the front. Latterly there has been a tendency to introduce more variety on a single estate, providing the harmony and charm found in older parts of the village, and giving less of a feel of uniformity. Some have, however, attempted unsuccessfully to mimic an older style.

MARLEY RIDGE





Gardens on the later housing estates tend to be small whilst the older estates, such as Nappers Wood, have houses in larger plots. The new developments which now line a small part of the main road, just to the north of the crossroads, tend to be of a mews type, built close to the road.

Many types of building materials have been used in the area, probably whatever was available at the time, including stone from local quarries or brick baked from local clay.



Often it is the detail on a building which gives it its individual character, for example patterned wall-hung tiling over timber frames, small leaded windows and solid wooden doors.

HATCH HILL

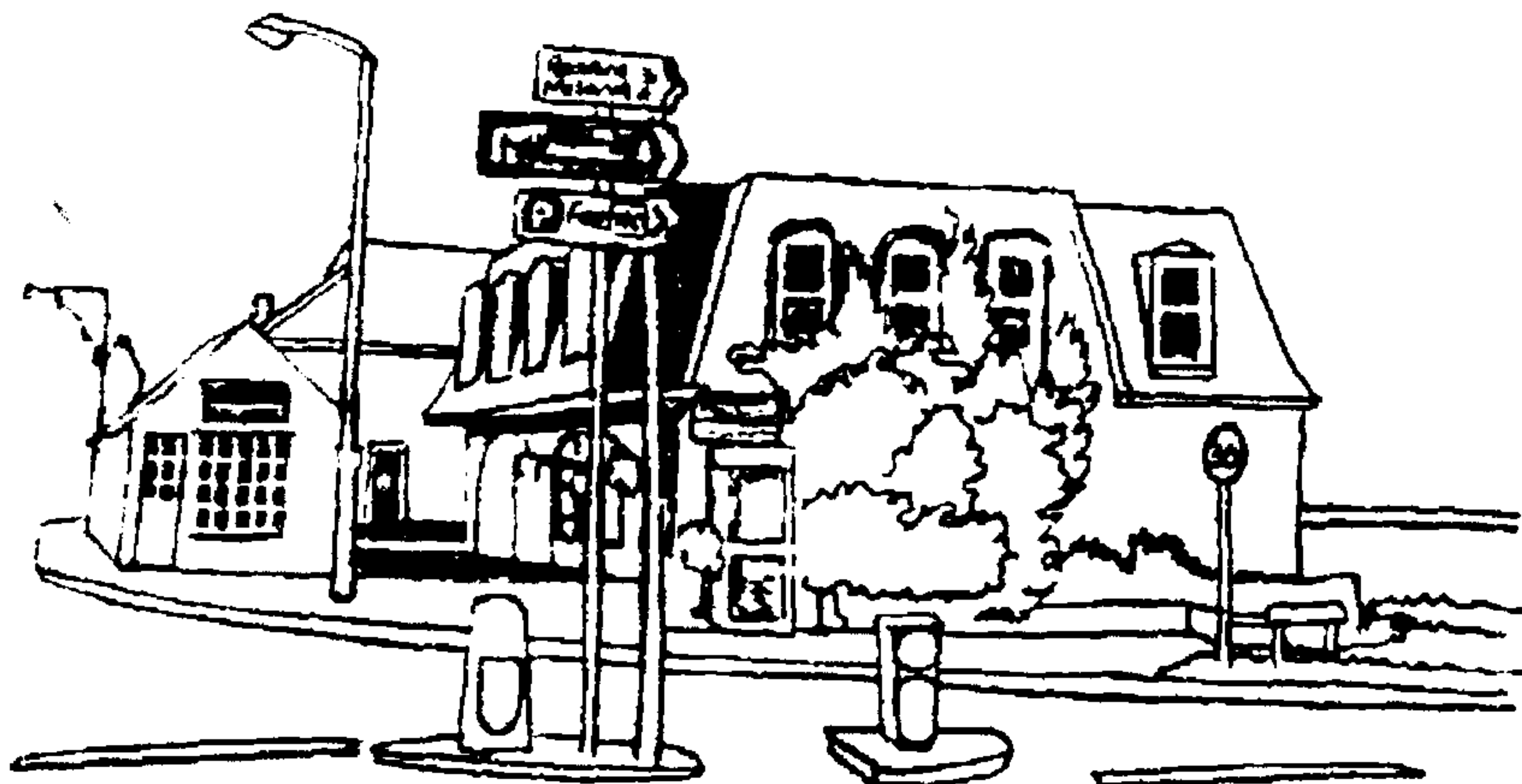


Importance

Because the dominant feature of the village is its setting within a tree lined valley, each new intrusion into the skyline erodes the woodland environment. It is, therefore, important to preserve the setting of older buildings and avoid being constantly disrupted by new developments.



It is the distinctiveness of the older buildings and their materials, including local sandstone, decorative bricks and tiles of local Wealden clay, which preserve the character of a Sussex village.



Guidance

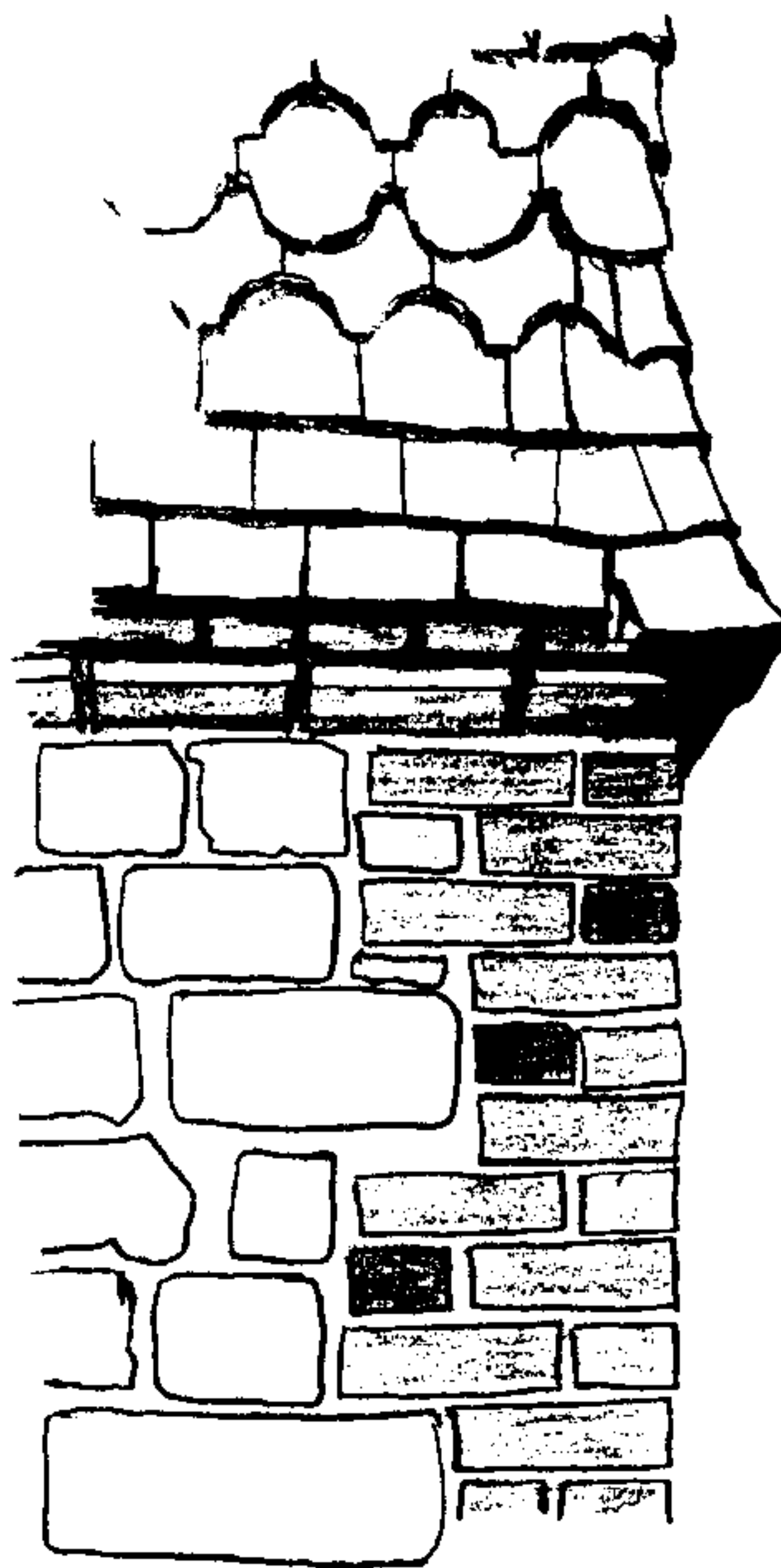
- Preserve the setting of significant older buildings but accept modern architecture where appropriate: a sense of proportion should be maintained.



- Materials and features should be judged in the context and scale of their surroundings.



- Continued use of “traditional” materials appropriate to Fernhurst should be encouraged to blend in with the landscape. Attractive variations of brickwork can add interest to buildings and help blend in new developments.
- Developers to provide perspective drawings to show how new developments will appear in relation to their existing surroundings.
- Avoid blocks of garages and car parking which obscure house fronts.
- Discourage developments, particularly those over 2 storeys, where they would disrupt an existing significant view or the visual context of the Conservation Area.
- Prominent incursions into the streetscape on existing properties should be avoided.



CIVIC AMENITY AND TRANSPORT

Description

Fernhurst village is divided by the busy A286 which gives rise to both safety and design implications. The centre of the village is the crossroads where Vann Road and Church Road meet the A286. Vann Road is particularly busy early in the morning and late afternoon when people are driving to and from work. Fernhurst has a good variety of shops, free car parking facilities, recreational areas and many other features which give the village its character. It has its own health centre and pharmacy, plus a wide variety of shops which provide most of the necessities for everyday living. There are weekly visits by the mobile library and the car park behind the Crossfield shops has a bottle bank and various other recycling facilities. A skip is placed in the car park once every fortnight to enable the residents to dispose of those unwanted items which the weekly refuse collection cannot take. Fernhurst is poorly served by way of public transport, although there is a bus service link along the A286.



Sheltered accommodation is available in the village which gives elderly people the opportunity to stay in the village when their homes become difficult to maintain. Russet Court in Vann Road is owned by Chichester District Council and is set in attractive communal gardens. Ash Grove is a well designed, small private development. Both are well maintained.



There is a significant amount of overhead wiring and the main public areas of the village have street lighting. In recent years street signs of every description have appeared most of which cause visual disruption.

Many properties do not have facilities for off-street parking which inevitably leads to on-road congestion which is not only unsightly, it is a danger to road safety. Typical examples are in Vann Road, the A286 and The Levs.



Importance

Like many villages, Fernhurst is inhabited by people of all ages and different levels of mobility. Those of limited mobility, and particularly the elderly, find the facilities the village at present enjoys are essential. If they do not have their own transport or are unable to drive, it is difficult to visit nearby towns because of insufficient public transport. The shops in Fernhurst are popular with visitors, not only because they offer good quality produce, but there is the additional advantage of free parking. This trade is welcome as it helps to keep the retail businesses viable in the face of competition from superstores in the nearby towns.

Guidance

- Developers to ensure adequate off road parking for an average number of cars per household.
- Street lighting should be designed to maximise the useful light projected downward and eliminate "polluting" light projected upwards.
- New developments to have cables buried underground with ducting and access points. Existing overhead cabling to be replaced underground.
- Existing free parking should be retained.
- Public transport facilities need to be improved and promoted.
- Any developments and environmental improvements along the main road frontages of the village, including the A286, should be the subject of consultation with the highway authority with a view to contributing measures to reduce speeds and to increase safety, including the avoidance of dangerous parking, for example, on the main road outside the local primary school.
- Seating, lighting and other street furniture should be of high quality to maintain the attractiveness of the village.
- Increase in general road traffic and car parking facilities to be an important factor when considering future development in the village.
- Retain existing public amenities.
- Reduce unnecessary signage.

Acknowledgements

The members of the Fernhurst Village Design Statement Committee wish to thank the villagers of Fernhurst and particularly following for their help in producing this document:-

Blackdown Press Ltd.
Chichester District Council
Crichton Thomas Creative Ltd.
Fernhurst Parish Council
Fernhurst Primary School
Sussex Rural Community Council
Zeneca Agrochemicals PLC



Crossways