



East Hampshire District Council

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STUDIO

Alton Study Final Report

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Note from East Hampshire District Council

The Alton Study has been produced by Urban Initiatives on behalf of East Hampshire District Council as part of the evidence base for the Joint Core Strategy. It is a snapshot of long term development scenarios that the Consultants have developed at a strategic level.

The purpose of the Alton Study is twofold; first to demonstrate that in principle the levels of development that are emerging through the Joint Core Strategy are potentially deliverable. The proposed level of new housing allocation for Alton is 700 new homes up to 2028. The Alton Study shows the 700 home target to be potentially deliverable from a variety of sites included in any of the 3 main scenarios. Each site has its own issues which would need to be addressed in detail at later stages in the planning process.

Secondly the Alton Study proposes a vision for the future of the town. This provides a framework for the local conversation about the long term future of development in the town over the next 20 - 50 years; well beyond the 2028 period of the Joint Core Strategy. The topography of the town and infrastructure constraints raise significant issues for future development, therefore discussions about the long term future need to start as soon as possible.

It must be noted that the District Council is not committed to any of the Strategic Housing Land Availability (SHLAA) sites in the various scenarios in the Alton Study; they are all potential sites that have been put forward by landowners/developers as being available. It is also likely that more sites could emerge as the process continues over the next couple of years. The detailed work on deciding which sites could make up the allocation target will be done either through a District Council led Local Plan: Allocations or a locally led Neighbourhood Plan.

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Local Stakeholder groups have also been engaged in the Alton Study. The local knowledge that these stakeholders have brought to the report has been invaluable. **However, the inclusion of a local group or individual member does not in any way convey the support of either the group or individual for any of the sites or the growth scenarios included.**

The Alton Study is a snapshot of evidence. It provides both a framework for conversations about the longer term future of the town and demonstrates at a strategic level that there is the potential to meet the 700 home allocation emerging through the Joint Core Strategy during the plan period up to 2028.

4022

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01 Introduction

Background

This study has been commissioned to establish a vision and to outline the growth potential of Alton, a thriving market town in East Hampshire. Following the Local Plan Inspector's Preliminary Report prepared for the Examination in Public on the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), further work is required to update the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to clarify an up to date housing number for the district following the revocation of the South East Plan and regional housing targets. This study provides supporting evidence for the JCS and marks the first stage of a process that will consider how Alton may develop in the future. There will be opportunities for wider consultation and community engagement as the Council moves forward either as part of a Site Allocations document or Neighbourhood Plan.

The Inspector's Preliminary Report highlighted the following issues:

- The need for an up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to assess the full housing needs of the district and to demonstrate whether the plan meets objectively assessed need;
- The initial evidence base indicates the JCS will not provide sufficient market housing nor will it meet affordable housing needs that exist in the short term; and
- The Authority's assertion that environmental constraints prevent housing need being met is not supported by analysis of the impact of higher levels of growth.

The SHMA is due to report in April 2013 and will identify the housing needs for the district presented as a series of options. The South Downs National Park covers 57% of the District and much of the remaining countryside is unspoilt and locally distinctive, limiting the development potential of the area. The JCS states that 'the majority of development will be focussed in, or adjoining the most sustainable towns and larger villages where it is consistent with maintaining and enhancing their character'. Alton is a market town at the top of the settlement hierarchy in East Hampshire and is one of a number of locations in the District where housing growth can take place. Whitehill and Bordon in particular along with Petersfield and Horndean will also accommodate growth.



A vision for Alton

The Joint Core Strategy recognises Alton as an important market town that needs to enhance its role in providing more housing, retailing and improved facilities. Whilst an important part of this study is the consideration of how much new housing Alton could accommodate and where this might be located, this growth must be set within a longer-term vision for the town.

This report starts to identify this vision, a vision that takes advantage of the town's assets, its heritage, landscape setting and amenities and looks to shape its future to protect, enhance and capitalise on them. The vision is proactive encouraging growth in the towns employment, leisure and cultural offering and considering the advantages and disadvantages of locating new high quality homes (including affordable homes), in different parts of the town.

This vision is informed by existing planning policy and by previous studies including Alton 2020 'A Plan to shape Alton's future' (2005) and Alton Town Design Statement (2008).

Housing growth

The SHMA will indicate the number of new homes that are required across East Hampshire in the plan period 2011-2028. It will also present options for how these will be allocated across the districts settlements. This report considers the potential locations for new homes in Alton through three scenarios. At this stage a decision on which scenario (or combination of scenarios) to proceed with is not required however the broad numbers to be put forward in the Joint Core Strategy must be deliverable.

The sites indicated for growth are sites promoted in the SHLAA (ie landowners are promoting them and in that context there is a prospect of them being delivered). Further work will be required, particularly to assess issues of access and transport impact and also to assess landscape and visual impact in more detail. We are aware that delivering development to the south west of the town may require improvements to the Butts Bridge junction however it is not clear whether existing road infrastructure can support new development to the north of the town. Further work will be required to test this.

Once the broad housing numbers have been agreed further consultation will be required to agree the preferred locations for new homes and these will then be identified in a Site Allocations document or Neighbourhood Plan.

The growth scenarios presented consider the potential housing over and above the housing supply at 1st April 2011. This was identified as 982 dwellings and included a number of significant sites including:

- Land at rear of Chandos Lodge (planning permission for 172 homes);
- The Malt House, Lower Turk Street (planning permission for 52 homes);
- The former Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital site on Chawton Park Road (a baseline site with potential for 150 homes); and
- The Coors Sports Ground on Anstey Road (with potential for 96 homes).

Stakeholder involvement

The Alton Study report has benefited from the input of a group of local stakeholders. This included local County and District Councillors along with representatives of Alton Town Council, the Alton Society, Alton Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Anstey Residents Association, Holybourne Village Association as well as officers from Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council.

The local knowledge that these stakeholders have brought to the report has been invaluable. However, the inclusion of a local group or individual member does not in any way convey the support of either the group or individual for the growth scenarios included.



02 Portrait of Alton

2.1 Historic development

A brief timeline

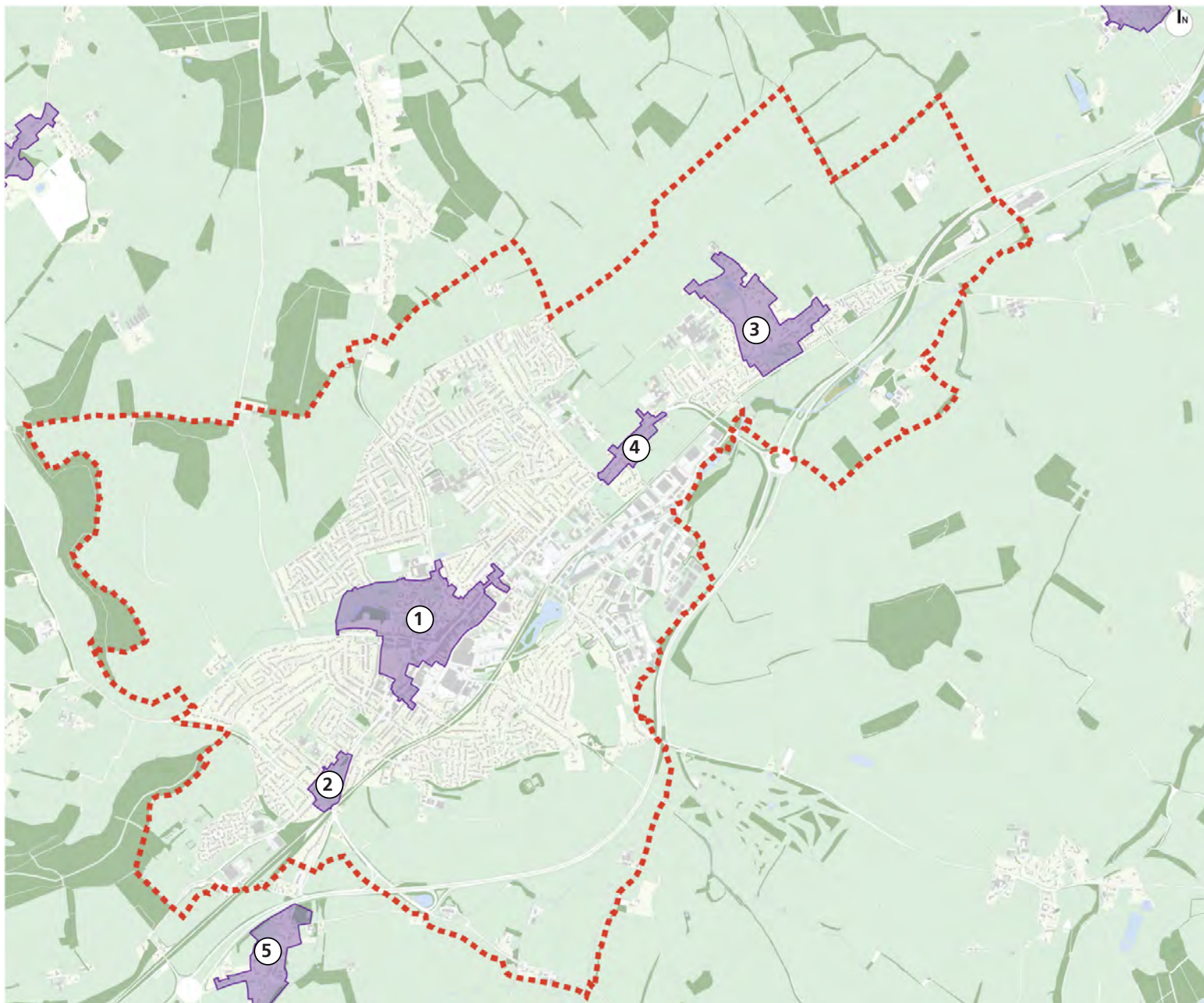
- Archaeological remains found at Holybourne and nearby Neatham dating from Roman times;
- Settlement known in Anglo-Saxon times (7th-century) as Æwielmtun or Æwielitun 'farmstead by the great spring';
- In Norman times two main manors called Alton Eastbrook and Alton Westbrook. Alton Westbrook contained the market place;
- By C16th Alton had consolidated its position as a base for marketing and manufacture (brewing an important part of the local economy). Alton already a linear settlement on the road from London to Winchester;
- 1643 The Battle of Alton was fought during the English Civil War;
- 1801, the population of Alton stood at about 2,000 and that of Holybourne and Neatham at around 360;
- 1852 railway connection to London established;
- By 1870's population had doubled;
- Late C19th town extends westwards towards 'The Butts'. Area known as 'Newtown';
- 1908 Sir William Treloar's hospital founded towards the west of the town;
- 1968 Alton by-pass constructed;
- 1970's extensive expansion northwards;
- 2001 population of just over 16,000 people.

Conservation Areas

In Alton, there are four designated Conservation Areas, which are statutorily protected by EHDC with a view to preserving their character.

- Alton (Historic Centre), designated in 1970 and extended in 1982;
- The Butts, designated in 1975;
- Holybourne, designated in 1977; and
- Anstey, designated in 1995.

Refer to the plan on the facing page.

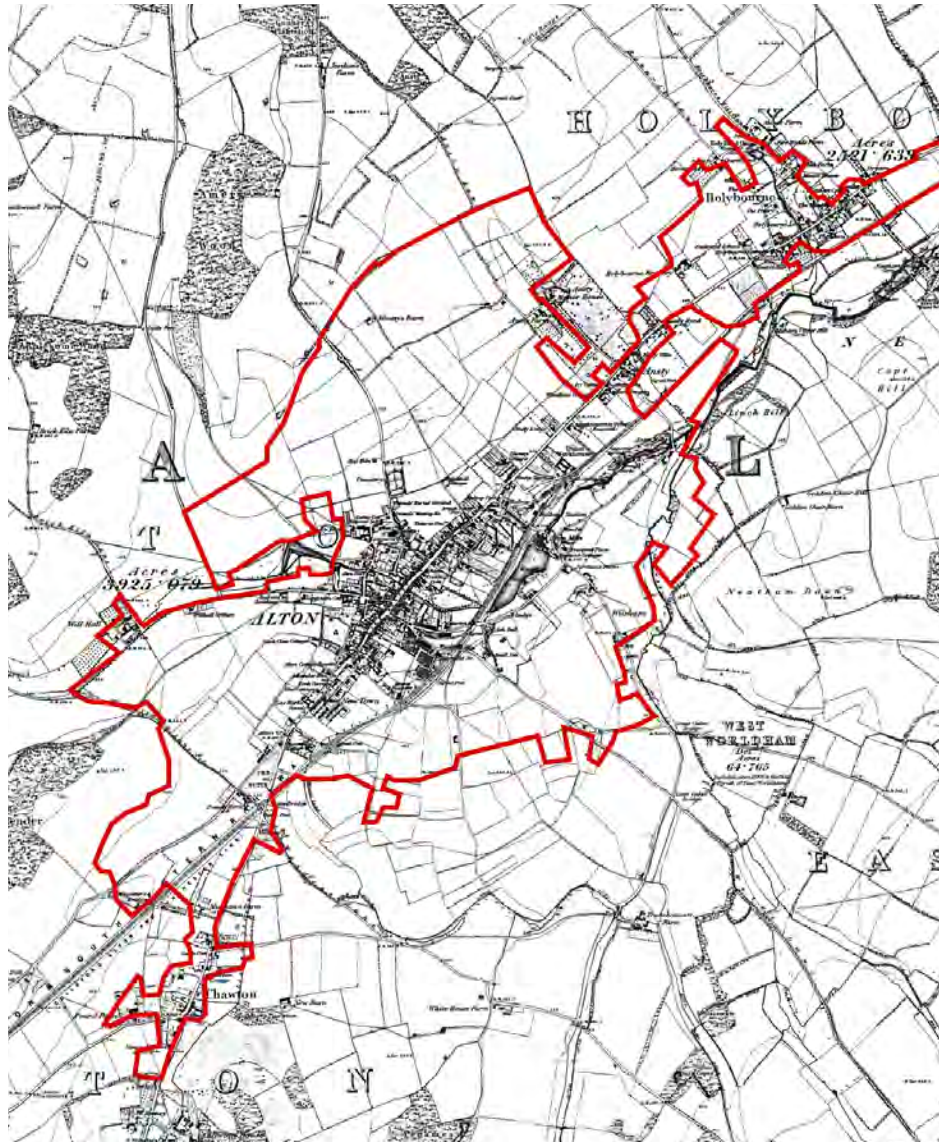


CONSERVATION AREAS

- Parish Boundary
- Conservation Areas

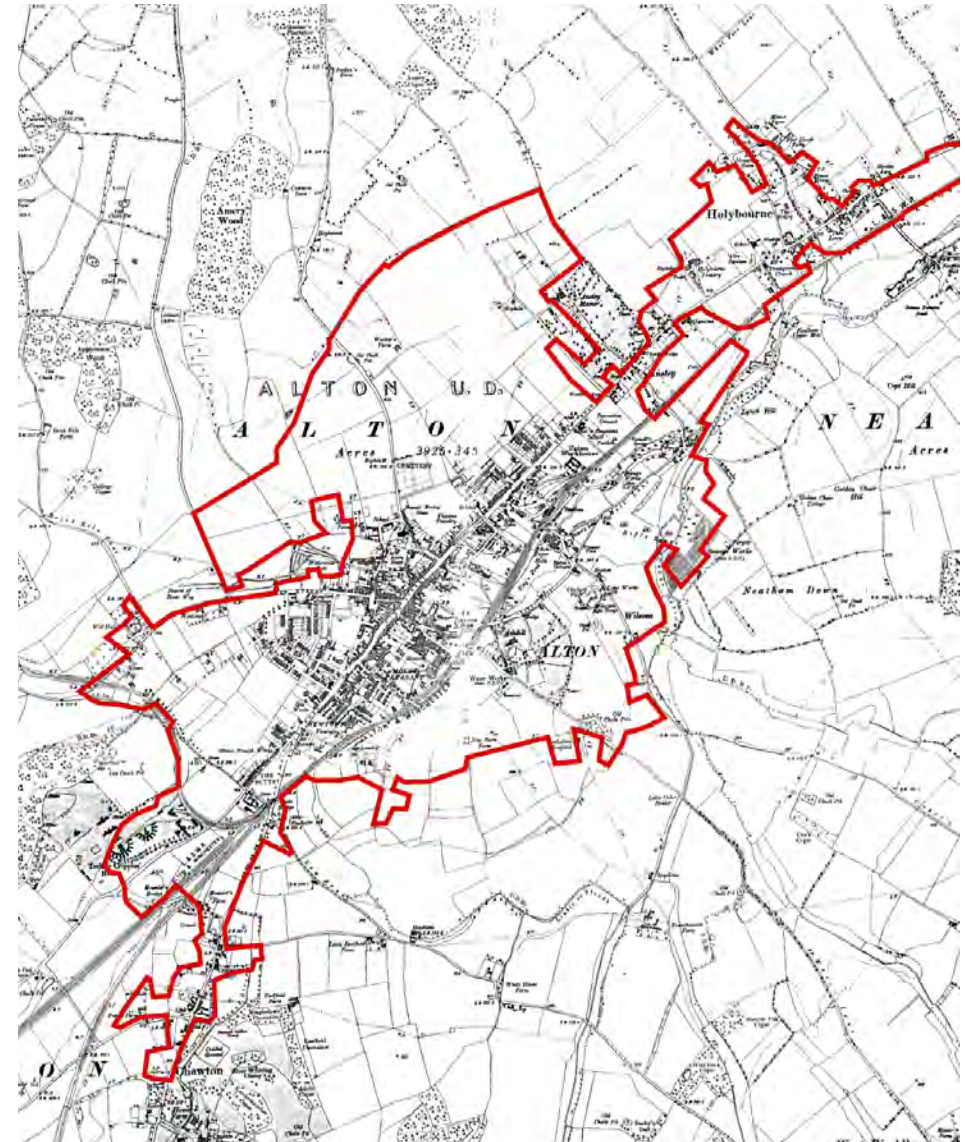
- 1 Alton (Historic Centre)
- 2 The Butts
- 3 Holybourne
- 4 Anstey
- 5 Chawton (outside of Alton Parish Boundary)





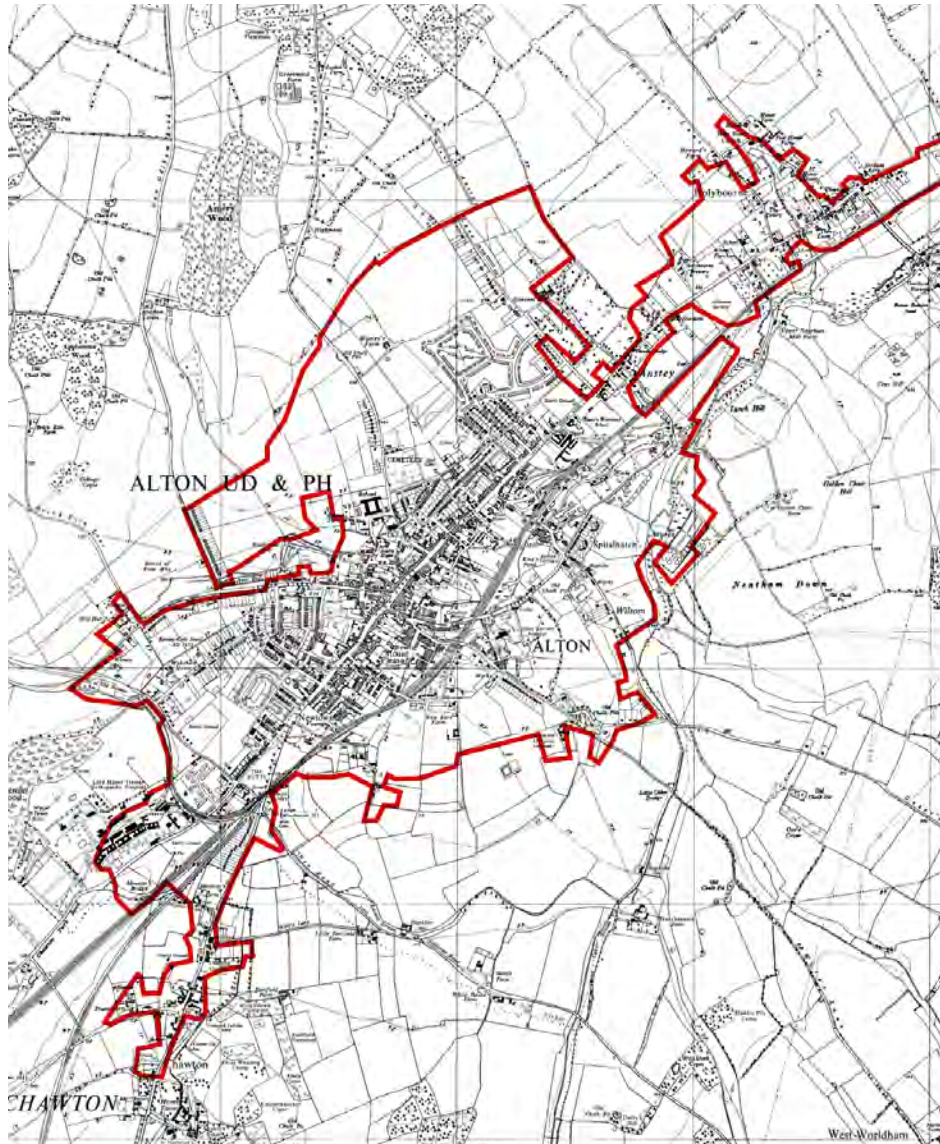
Historic Plan (1851-1855)

- Settlement strung along the London to Winchester Road
- Railway line recently completed



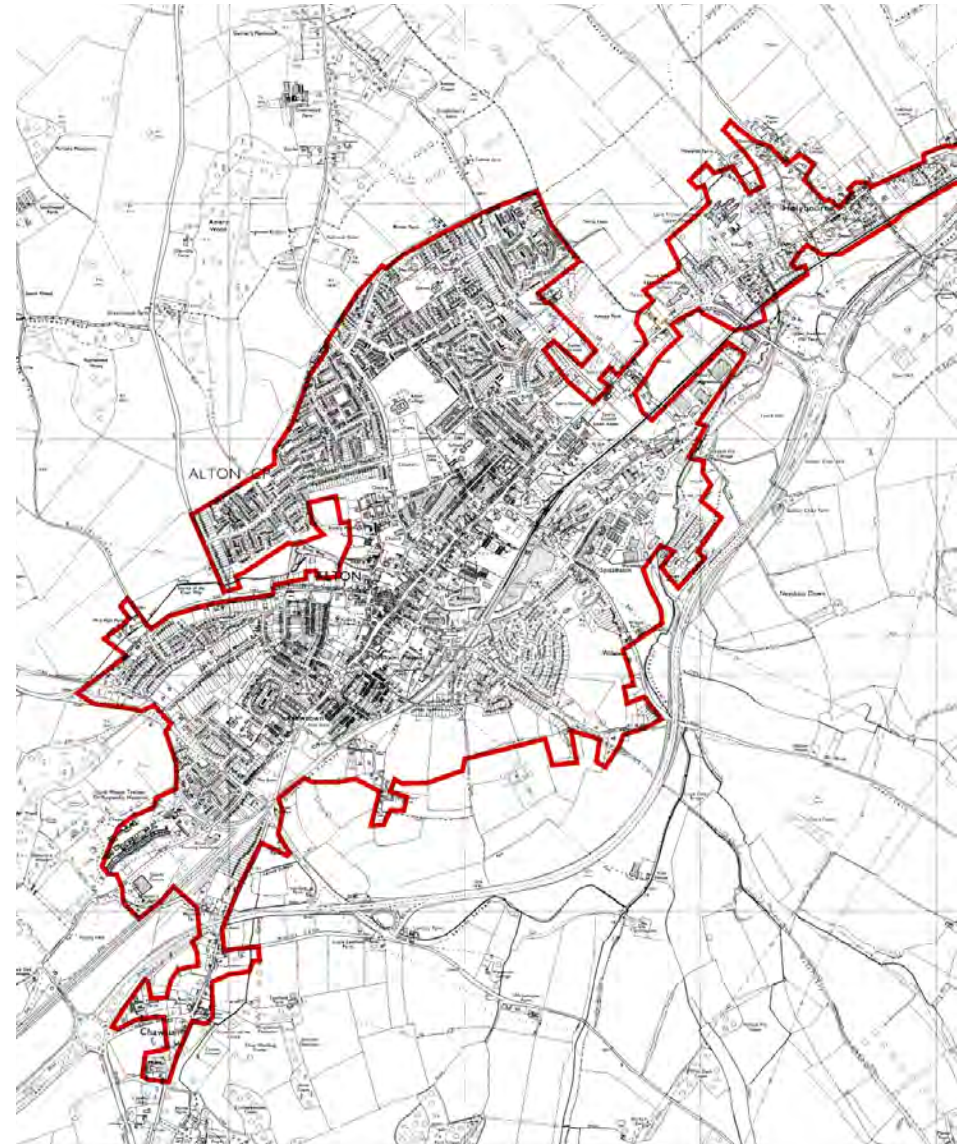
Historic Plan (1909-1916)

- Alton New town developed to the west of the historic centre
- Railway spurs now delivered to Basingstoke and Meon Valley
- Treleor Hospital developed to the west of the town



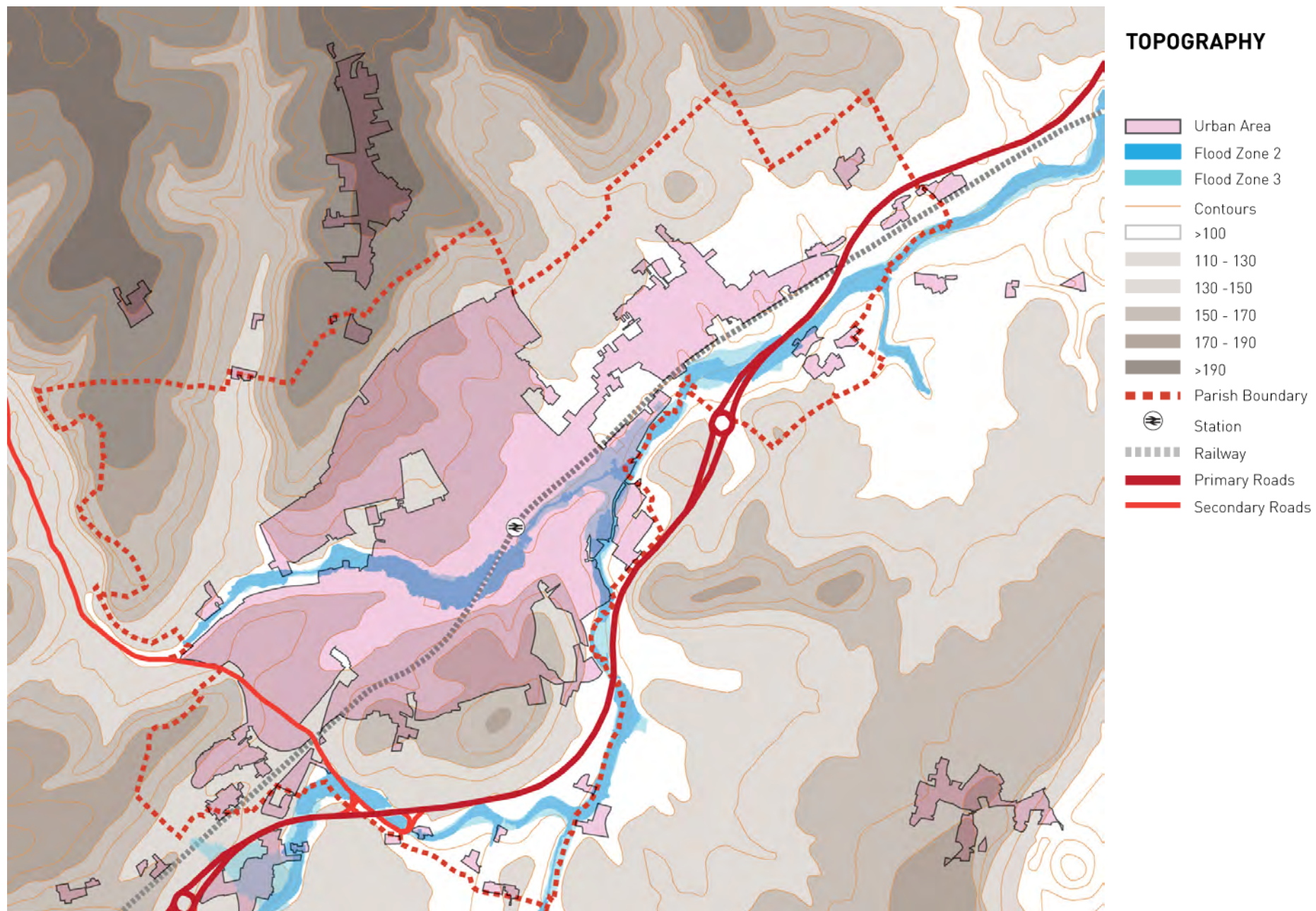
Historic Plan (1932-1939)

- Town expanding to the north and west of the High Street
- New development to the south of the railway line on Windmill Hill



Historic Plan (circa 1980)

- Town extended northwards towards Gilbert White Way
- A31 Alton By-pass constructed to the east of the town
- Railway connections to Basingstoke and Meon Valley closed



2.2 Landscape setting

The essence of Alton resides in the fact that the town is 'hidden' from the landscape whilst being an integral part of it.

Development has been constrained from breaking the green skyline formed by the neighbouring hills, which can be seen from all parts of the town.

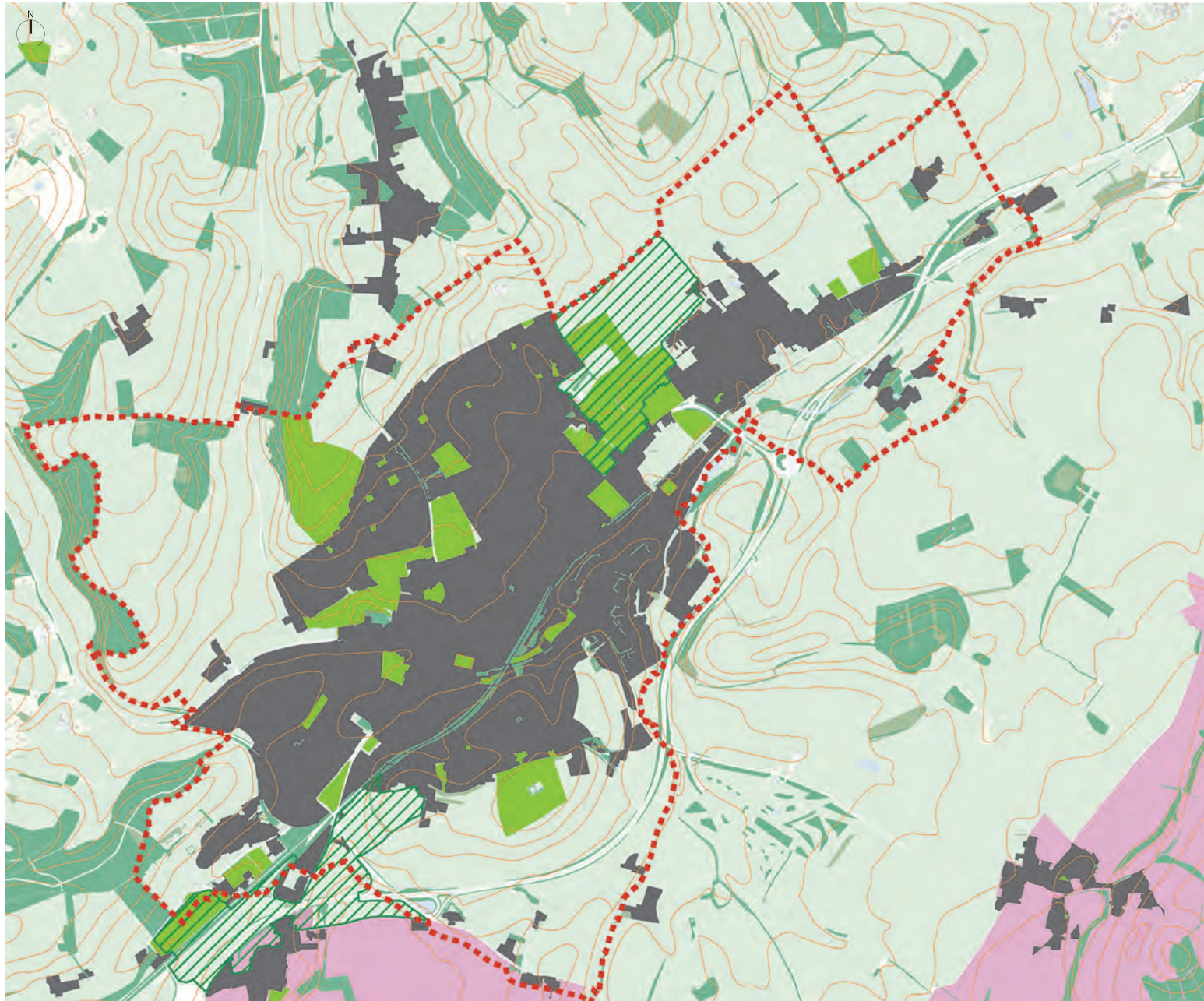
The undulating, yet open, nature of the land allows panoramic views which give a sense of space, freedom and tranquillity.

From most viewpoints surrounding Alton, the town disappears within the landscape as development has not been extended to the skyline.

The A31 which bypasses Alton to the south-east skirts the town and is at its furthest only a kilometre away, yet the town can barely be seen. The town is hidden behind Lynch Hill and Windmill Hill at the eastern entrance and behind the wooded railway embankment at the western one.

In considering the longer term growth of Alton this landscape setting and these considerations will be of considerable importance. However Alton's seclusion could be seen as a disadvantage when raising the profile of the town and attracting investment. Alton is passed quickly on the A31 with very little reference and some positive interventions to create gateways into the town could be beneficial provided that they are discrete and do not detract from the landscape setting.





LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

- Urban Area
- Woodland
- Public Open Space
- National Park
- Local Gaps
- Parish Boundary
- Contours

Landscape character assessment

Alton falls within Landscape Type 4b, 'Northern Wey Valley', the assessment highlights the following for Alton:

- A broad valley cutting through and enclosed by the Chalk, Upper Greensand and Gault Mudstone geology;
- The upper part of the valley is centred around the market town of Alton, surrounded by a mix of early and recent field enclosures;
- Main transport routes (A31 and railway) cut across the flat open valley floor, interrupting the otherwise tranquil character;
- Although not extensively wooded, there are significant areas of hanging woodland and copses on the valley sides; and
- Pockets of marshy grassland around the sewage works to the east of Alton which include an area SINC status.

As far as development considerations, the report concludes:

- Conserve the setting of villages and views to key features, such as church towers and spires; and
- Monitor incremental linear development from Alton, along A31 and seek to conserve a rural landscape along the valley between Alton and Farnham.

Policy considerations

The following Local Plan Second Review planning policies are particularly relevant to the consideration of landscape setting:

Policy C5: Local Landscape Features

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would harm local landscape features such as important trees, hedgerows, woodlands, copses, meadows, watercourses, ponds and open areas, including areas which extend into settlements.

Policy C11: Local Gap

Development will not be permitted in the open or largely undeveloped areas of land which provide gaps between settlements if it would lead to coalescence or the loss of the separate identity of settlements.

This policy will apply to the areas of open or largely undeveloped land which occur between the following settlements and which are:

- a) deemed by the County Council to be of strategic importance: Havant/Rowlands Castle Havant/Waterlooville Havant/Emsworth
- b) considered by the District Council to be of local importance: **Alton/Chawton Alton/Holybourne Bordon/Lindford Lindford/Headley Headley/Arford Headley/Headley Down Arford/Headley Down Headley Down/Grayshott Liss/Liss Forest Petersfield/Steep Petersfield/Sheet Clanfield/Old Clanfield Horndean/Catherington/Clanfield Horndean/Blendworth**

The boundaries of these gaps are shown on the relevant Inset Maps.

Policy HE1: Design of new development

HE1 New development should be of a high design standard and should make a worthwhile contribution towards maintaining or improving the quality of the environment of the District. Development will not be permitted unless it:

- a. harmonises with the townscape and general character of the town or village in which it is set, or, in the countryside, it is easily assimilated into the landscape or is well related to a group of buildings;
- b. has a layout, scale, height, mass and design which respects the pattern of development and architectural characteristics of nearby properties and the surrounding area, using materials appropriate to the locality;
- c. respects the appearance and treatment of the spaces between and around buildings that are important to the quality and character of the local environment while retaining important open space, natural and/or historic features; and, where possible, creates new landscaping and open space as an integral part of the design;
- d. retains the character of prominent ridge lines or other important topographical or landscape features;
- e. incorporates appropriate crime prevention measures; and
- f. incorporates, where appropriate, areas where containers for refuse and recyclable materials can be stored conveniently without being intrusive upon the surrounding area.

In addition, the JCS will seek to continue to recognise the importance of these considerations through Policies CP18 (Landscape), CP21 (Gaps between settlements), CP27 (Design) and CP28 (Historic Environment). Although the JCS policies have yet to be adopted they reflect the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.3 Transport and movement

Roads

Traffic on the Guildford to Winchester Road was diverted out of Alton with the construction of the Alton by-pass to the east of the town in 1968. This route, the A31, does however provide Alton with good connections southwards to Winchester and Southampton and northwards to Farnham, Guildford and London. Access to the town from the A31 is provided in three locations from north to south:

- At the junction with the B3004 via a roundabout and Montecchio Way (A339) to the north of the town and Holybourne;
- At the junction with the A339 via slip roads leading to Butts Bridge; and
- At the junction with the A32 via a roundabout that provides a minor route into the town via Northfield Lane and Chawton Park Road.

A number of other routes connect the town with its hinterland these include:

- The A339 Basingstoke Road that enters the town in the north-west and connects to the A31 via Butts Bridge (this route carries heavy vehicles);
- The B3349, New Odiham Road and Old Odiham Road both of which enter the town from the north;
- The B3004 Cakers Lane that enters the town from the east; and
- The B3006, Selborne Road that enters the town from the south-east.

A railway line passes through Alton from the south-west to the north-east. The town centre and most development is located to the north of the tracks and it represents a significant barrier to movement through the town. The line is elevated through much of the town and movement is constrained by the width of the arches in a number of locations. The most significant is at Butts Bridge at the south-west edge of the town.

Transport proposals

The following transport proposals are identified in the adopted East Hampshire Transport Statement (September 2012)

- Alton: The Butts junction: Winchester Road / A339 - Bridge widening to remove bottleneck on approaches to Alton (approx cost £8million);
- Alton: Western bypass linking A31 with A339; and
- Holybourne, Alton: roundabout junction of the A31 and B3004 - improvements (approx cost £2.5million).

At this stage no money has been allocated to these projects.

Car ownership

- 82.1% of households own at least one car or van; and
- 40.2% of households own two or more cars or vans.

Rail

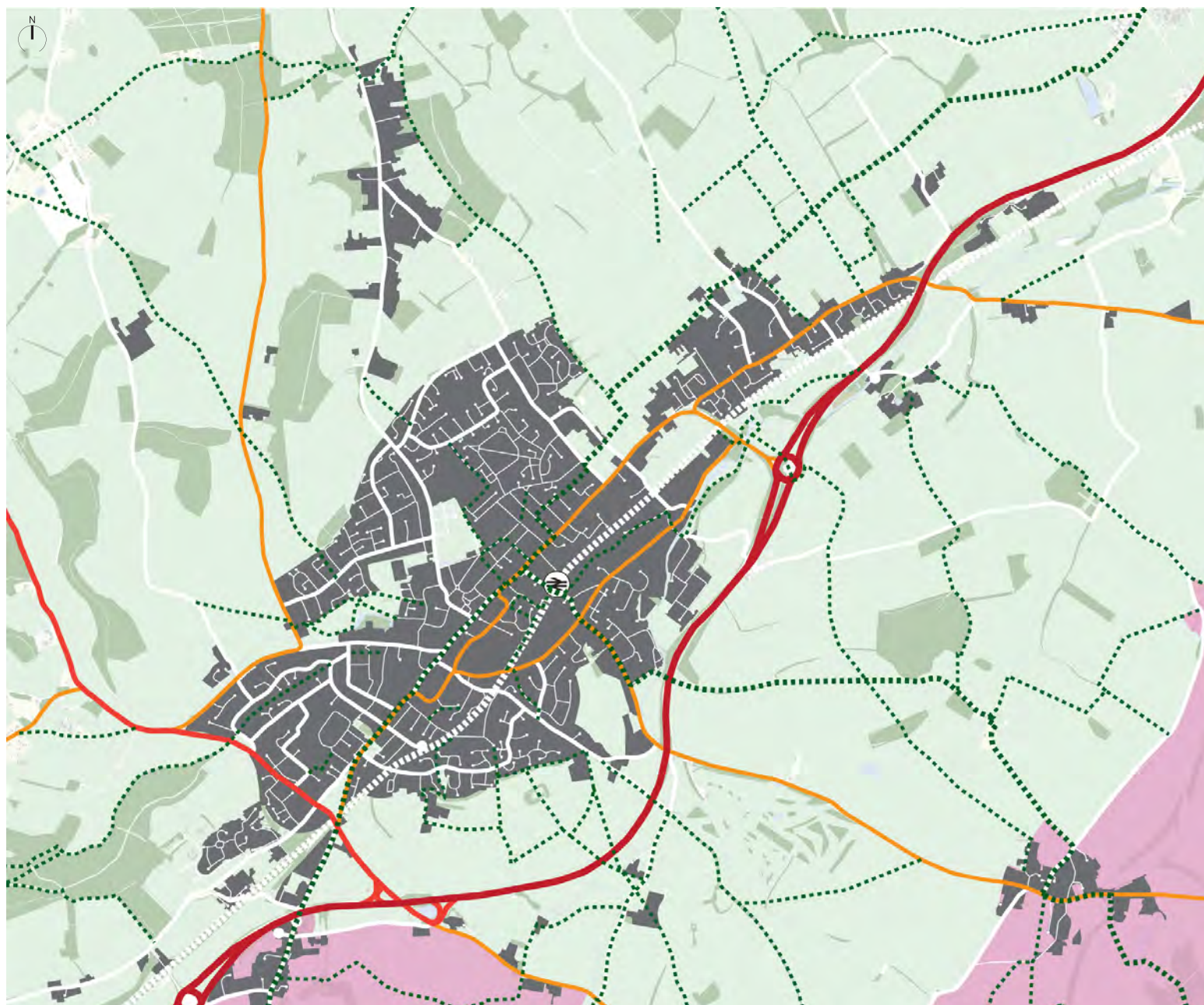
Alton railway station is located to the west of the town centre and provides a twice hourly service to London Waterloo which takes 80 minutes.

Rail use is increasing in the town with 360,000 rail journeys commencing in Alton in 2010/11 (a 57.7% increase on the 2000/1 numbers).

The environment around the station and the connection to Alton Town Centre presents a poor arrival experience and needs to be improved.

The Mid-Hants Railway / Watercress Line runs from Alton to New Alresford (10 miles) and provides regular heritage services using steam and diesel locomotives, most of which date from the 1940's to the 1960's.





NATIONAL TRAILS AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

- Urban Area
- National Park
- Parish Boundary
- National Trails
- Public Rights of Way
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Minor
- Local
- Station
- Railway

Long distance trails

- 1 St Swithun's Way (Winchester to Farnham - 34 miles)
- 2 Hangers Way (Alton to Queen Elizabeth Country Park - 21 miles)

2.4 Demographics and community

Summary

- **Alton has a growing but aging population;**
- There are relatively few young people living in the town;
- Whilst the number of owner occupied properties is fairly high (67.6% in 2011) it is decreasing as a proportion of households (was 73.2% in 2001). The national average is 63.4%;
- There was an increase in the private rented market during that period;
- There has been an **11% growth in Alton's population over the last ten years** with an additional 800 households created during that time;
- There is however a **lack of affordable housing with almost 500 households requiring accommodation** – the majority (92%) require 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation; and
- Alton's residents feel significantly more healthy than the national average with only 3.7% considering themselves to be in bad or very bad health (national average 5.4%).

Population

- 2011 – 17,816 people
- 2001 – 16,051 people
- Change – 1,765 or 11% growth over 10 year period

Households

- 2011 – 7,552 households (30.3% 1 person households);
- 2001 – 6,722 households (30.4% 1 person households);
- Change – 800 additional households or 12.3% growth over 10 year period;
- 737 new homes built between April 2001 and March 2011;
- However 486 households require affordable housing:
 - 1 bed (inc sheltered) – 284
 - 2 bed – 161
 - 3 bed – 36
 - 4 bed - 5

Retail uses

There are 134 units in Alton of which:

- 68 in A1 use (shops and hairdressers);
- 21 in A2 use (financial and professional services);
- 5 in A3 use (cafes and restaurants);
- 5 in A5 use (takeaway); and
- 17 vacant.

(Based on 2012 retail survey)

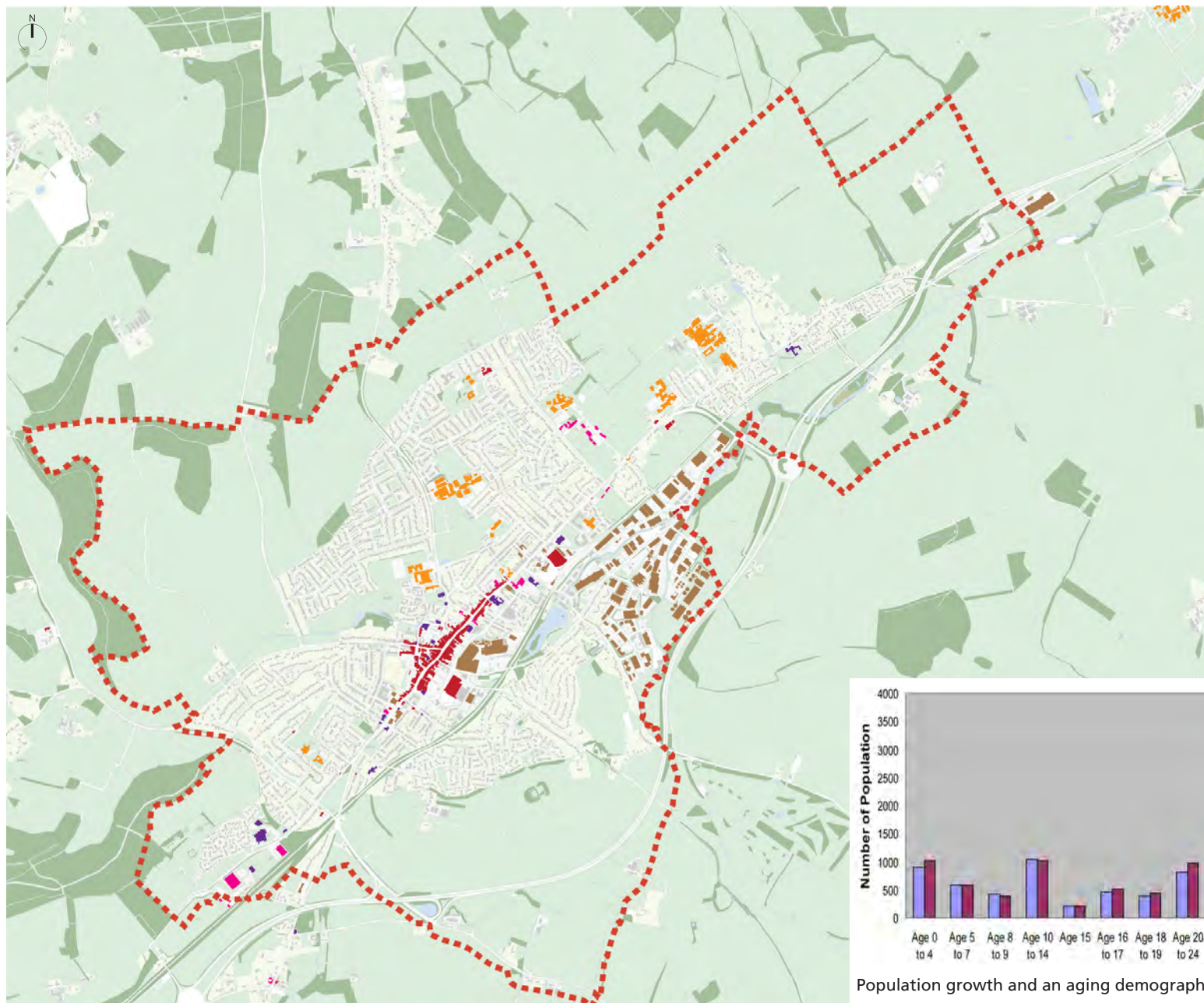
Some shops have been converted to homes in recent years.

Hotels

There is a range of modest sized visitor accommodation in Alton including:

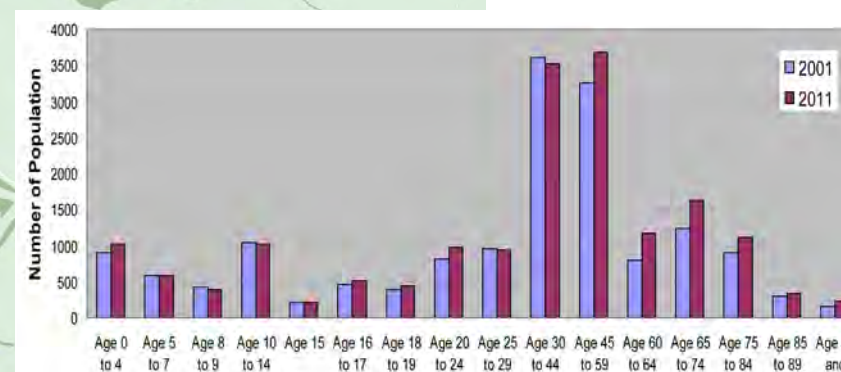
- The Alton House, Normandy Street
- The Swan, High Street (3 star);
- The Crown Hotel, High Street; and
- Market Hotel, Market Square.
- Several 3 and 4 star Bed and Breakfasts and Guest Houses in the town centre and in Holybourne village for example Upper Neatham Mill Farm Guest House (4 star).





COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Schools
- Retail
- Employment
- Leisure
- Community
- - - Parish Boundary



Population growth and an aging demographic

Health

- 83.9% consider themselves to be in good or very good health (SE average 83.6%; national average 81.4%); and
- 3.7% consider themselves to be bad or very bad health (SE average 4.4%; national average 5.4%).

Health care provision

- 3 doctors surgeries;
- 7 dentists
- 2 orthodontists; and
- 3 pharmacies.

Community facilities

- Alton Community Centre;
- Alton Sports Centre;
- Palace Cinema;
- Maltings Centre / Harvest Church;
- Alton Assembly Rooms;
- Bowling Green;
- Tennis Club;
- Library;
- Allen Gallery;
- Curtis Museum;
- Alton Public Gardens; and
- Alton College (including Berkhoff Centre and Forum).

In addition a number of churches provide performance and exhibition space.

A separate study is examining options to re-provide the existing sports centre on Chawton Park Road. A number of options are being investigated including:

- A refurbishment of the existing facility;
- A new build sports centre on the existing site; and
- A new build facility on the triangle site adjacent Butts Bridge.

Education

Alton has 11 schools:

- Early years – 1
- Infant school – 2
- Junior School – 2
- Primary school – 4
- Secondary School – 2

In addition there is Alton College, Alton Convent School and Treloar School and College.

Further work will be required to assess whether existing schools would be able to accommodate the additional demands of a growing population and how well located these are to accommodate the housing growth.





03 Vision for the future

3.1 Vision Statement

The vision statement set out below has evolved from that set out in Alton 2020 'A Plan to shape Alton's future' (2005) with inputs from stakeholders through the preparation of this study.

Alton will become the **focus for Leisure and a Cultural Hub** in East Hampshire

It will take advantage of its historic and landscape assets and build on these to attract more visitors to the town. Tourism will form an even stronger part of the local economy. Alton will offer:

- **Superb access to open countryside** and a base to visit the South Downs National Park, the New Forest and other landscape attractions
- **A wealth of history** presented through its buildings, museums, galleries, spaces and former residents including Jane Austen, and Gilbert White
- **A destination for a weekend break** in the country with top quality hotels
- Steam trains on the **Watercress Line**
- An attractive town centre with a **programme of events and activities** set within a high quality public realm
- **Specialist shops and markets** with a town centre manager providing support and helping to draw customers to the town
- **High quality sports facilities**





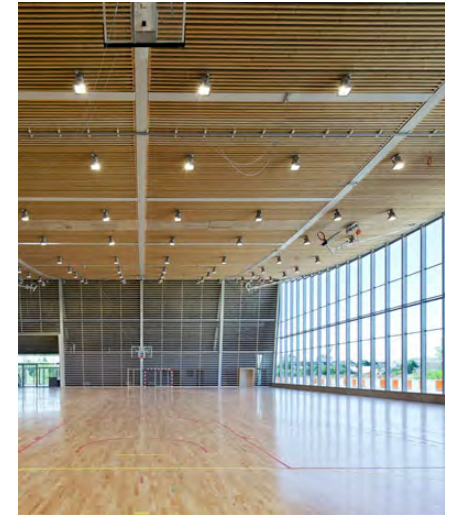
Alton will be a place that **welcomes business**

- A place with a **strong brand and identity**
- A place with a **well educated workforce**
- A place that offers a **range of workspace**
- A place with well **planned employment areas**
- A place that is **easy to access** and has **good transport connections** including regular rail services to London Waterloo
- A place with a **vibrant town centre**



Alton will provide a great place for families to live providing ...

- A **mix of homes of all tenures** set within an attractive landscape
- An environment where **walking and cycling is a pleasant and attractive option**
- Easy access to **excellent schools**
- **Excellent local amenities** including a good mix of shops, sports, health and community facilities within a welcoming neighbourhood
- Good access to **public transport**



Alton will be place that has a **proactive approach to growth**

- A place with a **long-term plan** that protects its important assets, its natural environment and history
- New **homes will be located where they can benefit from local facilities and services** including shops, schools and public transport. In turn these facilities will benefit from new customers
- New **employment areas will be located where they are easily accessible**
- The location of new housing and employment areas will **respond to the landscape setting** with homes sited where they have minimal impact on views to and from the town
- A mix of residential tenures will be provided with **affordable homes** provided to address the required need
- The location of new housing will **avoid areas that are at risk of flooding**





TOWN CENTRE CONCEPT

- Schools
- Retail
- Employment
- Leisure
- Public Realm
- Gateways (Access to Town)
- Gateways (Town center)
- Sites
- Waterbodies
- Station
- Railway
- Urban Structure
- Parish Boundary

3.2 Town centre strategy

The impression of Alton as a town is shaped by its town centre. Enhancements to the town centre can have wider benefits in attracting more visitors, employers and improving the local economy. Equally a more attractive town centre will enrich the lives of Alton's inhabitants and encourage more people to move to and invest in the town.

The following measures are promoted for Alton town centre:

Enhance the gateways into the town and improve the arrival experience

- Through public realm improvements; and
- Development of key sites.

Strengthen the historic heart of the town - the High Street and Market Square

- Through public realm improvements;
- Increasing the catchment population (residents and employees); and
- A programme of events and activities.

Improve the relationship to the wider countryside and the River Wey

- By reinforcing green corridors into the town and where new development happens close by front development onto these spaces to provide overlooking.

Increase dwell time in the town centre for visitors

- Through positive marketing of the offer;
- A more attractive public realm;
- A programme of events and activities; and
- Linking attractions through a heritage trail.

Significant development sites

The points of arrival into a town can be very important in shaping an impression for a visitor. Alton town centre is linear in form reflecting its historic origins as a town on the road connecting London with Winchester. The centre is strung along the High Street. This is an attractive historic street and presents a positive impression of the town however it is let down by a number of visually prominent sites in important locations.

These include:

- The Railway Station and the area immediately to the north extending to Anstey Road;
- The Magistrates Court site on the junction of the High Street and Orchard Lane which will be vacated within the next year or so; and
- The vacant Post Office site on the High Street together with the parcel depot and car parking areas to the rear.

Whilst these are not the only potential development sites in the centre they are prominent and new development that enhances these sites can have a significant effect in improving the arrival experience into the town. Efforts should be made to promote positive change on these sites.





DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

- - - Parish Boundary
- Housing supply
- Recently completed schemes
- Other application
- Town centre opportunity sites

3.3 Development activity and allocations

Housing supply

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment will determine the housing needs from 1st April 2011 looking forward to 2028. The current housing supply to meet this need includes those built 2011/12 (102) and those committed dwellings at 1st April 2012, which are set out below. The more significant sites are identified on the plan on the adjacent page.

Large sites with planning permission (298 homes):

- 1 Site to rear of Chandos Lodge (172 homes and public space) and to the rear of The Grange Hotel, London Road (13 homes)
- 2 The Malt House, Lower Turk Street (52 homes)
 - 32a Butts Road (14 homes)
 - Alton House Hotel, Normandy Street (12 homes)
 - Linden, 43 Anstey Lane (13 homes)
 - The Grange Hotel, London Road (23 homes)
 - Oceanic House, High Street (14 homes)
 - 74-76 Anstey Road (8 homes).

Small Sites (59 homes)

Baseline site (150 homes)

- 3 Former Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital (150 homes)

Urban potential sites (119 homes)

- 4 Coors sports Ground (96 homes)
- 5 Convent School, Anstey Lane (12 homes)
 - The Vicarage, Vicarage Hill (11 homes)

Windfalls (254 homes)

The total supply is 982 dwellings, which will be added to the quantum of new greenfield housing (up to 2028) in Alton once determined.

Other applications

Other notable applications in Alton include:

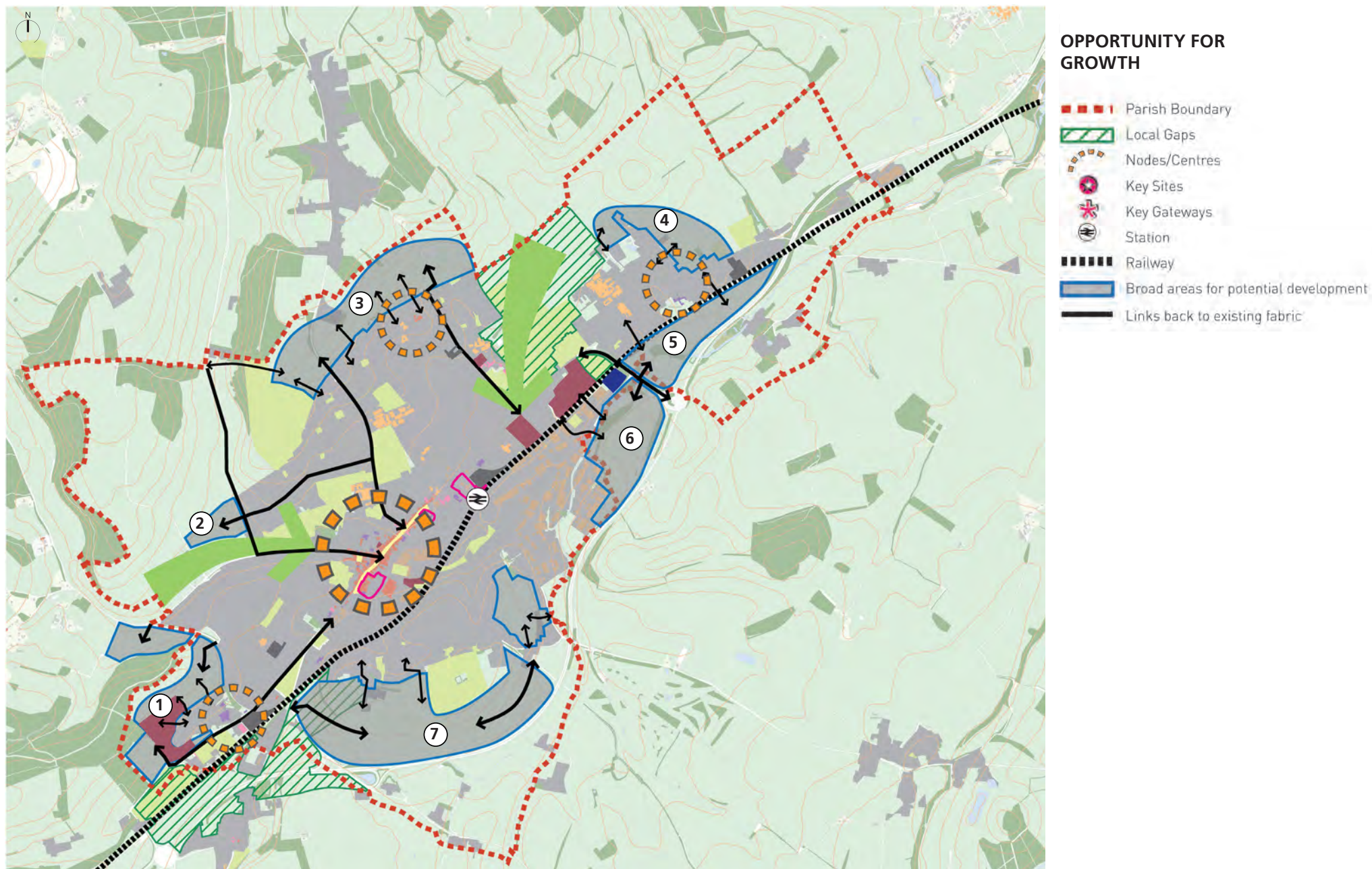
- 6 Tesco foodstore, Mill Lane (not implemented to date)

Recently completed schemes

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Review housing supply period is 2011 - 2028. The JCS as submitted dealt with the period 2006 – 2028, but all completions from 1st April 2006 – 31st March 2011 are now taken out of the housing supply calculations.

The following proposals have recently been completed in Alton:

- 7 Chawton Park Road (54 homes)
- 8 Whitedown Special School (26 homes)
- 9 Waitrose store
- 10 Anstey Lane (14 homes)
- 11 London Road, Holybourne (43 homes)



3.4 Potential growth areas

Alton has developed in response to its historic origins as a town on the London to Winchester Road and its landscape setting. Development occupies the low lying land through the valley and whilst the town has over time spread up the slopes to either side, it is still largely contained within the bowl. In places development approaches the ridgeline, notably on the northern side of Windmill Hill, but here it is set within a well treed environment and it does not 'spill over' the crest of the hill.

An expansion of the town could see growth in one of seven areas.

- Area One: The Former Treloar Hospital and adjacent areas;
- Area Two: Land at Will Hall Farm;
- Area Three: Cadnams Farm / Odiham Road;
- Area Four: Holybourne Village;
- Area Five: South of the railway, Holybourne;
- Area Six: Land at Lynch Hill; and
- Area Seven: Borovere Farm and Windmill Hill.

Each of these areas is considered on the pages that follow with an assessment made against the following criteria:

- Existing character;
- Landscape and visual impact;
- Access;
- Proximity to town centre; and
- Opportunity.



Area One: Treloar Hospital + adjacent areas

Existing character

Area contained by railway line to the south and by Ackender Wood on the higher ground to the north. Mature trees (some with TPO's around hospital).

Landscape and visual impact

Development on lower ground can be accommodated with only localised impact. At higher level will have impact on views from the south and east (and importantly from the South Downs National Park).

Access

Development accessed off Chawton Park Road and Whitedown Lane but will be dependant on improved junction at Butts Lane and or Northfield Lane.

Proximity to town centre

Level access to town centre but 1.5km away.

Opportunity

Potential for new homes where they are not visually intrusive. Development on higher land will be more sensitive.





Area Two: Land at Will Hall Farm

Existing character

Relatively level area immediately to the north of the 'origin of the River Wey'. Close to the old historic centre and flood meadows.

Landscape and visual impact

Localised visual impact only however the site is adjacent to an important green corridor into the town centre and a public right of way crosses it.

Access

Access off Odiham Road to the east and Brick Kiln Lane to the west.

Proximity to town centre

Easy walking distance to the town centre along Basingstoke Road / Lenten Street.

Opportunity

Potential for new homes but development must be sensitive to its location close to the historic centre of Alton. The relationship to the water course and spring is particularly important.





Area Three: Cadnams Farm / Odiham Road

Existing character

Open fields on elevated land to the north of the town sloping upwards towards Amery Wood.

Landscape and visual impact

Development on the eastern portion of the area would not be visible against the skyline however development on the western portion of this area will be more intrusive.

Access

Access off Odiham Road, Gilbert White Way and Anstey Lane with potential to deliver connected streets.

Proximity to town centre

Fairly close to the town centre but a steep walk back up the hill. Potential to reinforce the local centre on Wooteys Way.

Opportunity

Potential to create an urban extension in the eastern portion of the area; western portion is more sensitive.





Area Four: Holybourne Village

Existing character

Open fields on low lying land immediately to the north and east of Holybourne's historic centre.

Landscape and visual impact

Holybourne is an attractive and historic settlement with homes set within large plots and with views towards the rising land to the north.

Access

The main route through Holybourne is London Road. Two lanes lead northwards off this route but both are narrow.

Proximity to town centre

There are a few local facilities in Holybourne and the village is located approximately a mile to the east of Alton.

Opportunity

Individual sites will need to be considered on their merits. The density of development will need to reflect the low density of the existing settlement.





Area Five: South of railway, Holybourne

Existing character

Low lying land sandwiched between railway line and A31. Western portion liable to flooding.

Landscape and visual impact

Development visible from the road but minor impact on views of the wider landscape.

Access

Three points of access under the railway line from Holybourne however potential to access off Montecchio Way.

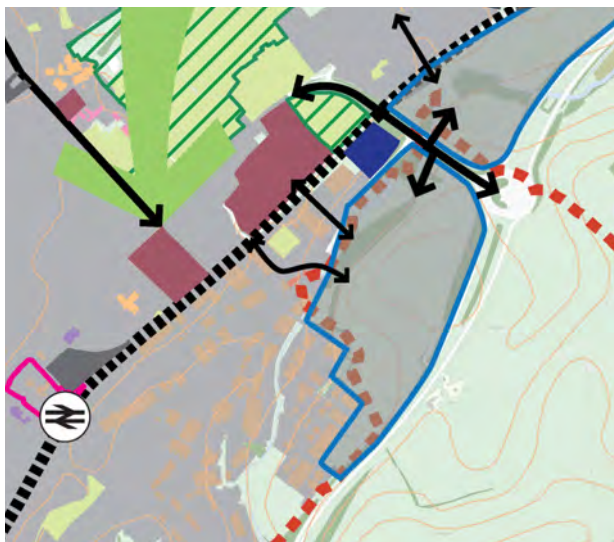
Proximity to town centre

There are a few local facilities in Holybourne and the village is located approximately a mile to the east of Alton.

Opportunity

Poor environment for housing sandwiched between road and railway and constrained access. Could be a site for employment uses.





Area Six: Land at Lynch Hill

Existing character

Open land rising above the wooded river valley towards the A31 to the south.

Landscape and visual impact

Development visible from the road and the surrounding hills. Impact on local views of the wider landscape could be ameliorated through tree planting.

Access

Off Waterbrook Road or new access off Mill Lane. Both provide quick connections to the A31.

Proximity to town centre

Isolated from town centre but only 1km to rail station.

Opportunity

Potential for lower less visually prominent part of the site to be utilised for employment uses as an extension of Alton's existing employment areas.





Area Seven: Borovere Farm and Windmill Hill

Existing character

Open agricultural land on the sloping land on the south and eastern sides of Windmill Hill. A copse of trees is located on the top of the hill within a public open space. The A31 skirts the southern edge of the area but the town itself is hidden from view.

Landscape and visual impact

Development here would have a significant impact on views towards Alton from the south and east and would change the concealed nature of the existing settlement. Part of the site is within a Local Gap.

Access

From Selborne Road in the west and Windmill Hill in the east but limited opportunities to integrate with existing development.



Proximity to town centre

Close to town centre but requires a walk over the hill or through Butts Bridge.

Opportunity

Close to town centre but development here would change the character of the town and have a significant impact on views from the south and east and from the South Downs National Park.

3.5 Housing growth scenarios

A number of sites have been promoted by land-owners as being suitable for residential development in Alton (SHLAA sites). The majority of these are located within one of the potential growth areas as set out in section 3.4 of this report. Almost all of these sites would, if developed, have a landscape and visual impact or present a challenge in respect of access. The plan in Appendix A maps the submitted sites.

The SHMA will indicate that new homes are required in East Hampshire to meet demand, however at this point in time it is not clear how many new homes will be identified as being required in Alton. This section of the report indicates three strategic approaches for growth and the provision of new homes in the town. These scenarios take different approaches to the distribution of new homes and Scenarios Two and Three have the potential to deliver a greater number of homes than Scenario One.

At this stage these scenarios are only indicative and presented for discussion. A recommendation on a preferred scenario is not presented however the strengths and weaknesses of each is briefly described. Further work will be required to assess the challenges in delivering the scenarios and at a later stage a wider consultation exercise, either as part of a Site Allocations process or Neighbourhood Plan, is anticipated.

Deliverability

In calculating the potential number of homes only sites promoted through the SHLAA, or that are in public ownership are considered (in that sense they are considered 'deliverable'). All sites are proposed on green field sites and the majority are beyond Alton's settlement boundary (the majority of sites within the boundary have already been identified for development).

Furthermore it is understood that no further homes can be delivered towards the south west of the town without improvements to Butts Bridge.

Initial understanding is that approximately 500 homes would need to be delivered in that part of the town in order to provide sufficient contributions to deliver the upgrade to highway infrastructure required (150 are already indicated for the former Treloar Hospital site so all scenarios indicating growth in this part of the town will require a further 350 homes to be delivered).

Scenarios

The three scenarios presented are:

- Scenario One: Base scenario, with homes promoted on sites where there is the least visual impact and good connectivity with the town centre;
- Scenario Two: Base scenario plus a northern extension; and
- Scenario Three: Base scenario plus a southern extension.

For each scenario the potential number of homes that could be delivered is indicated together with the strengths and weaknesses of the approach.

Scenario One: Base scenario

This scenario promotes development in a number of locations across the town on sites where homes will have the least visual impact and where there is good connectivity to the town centre.

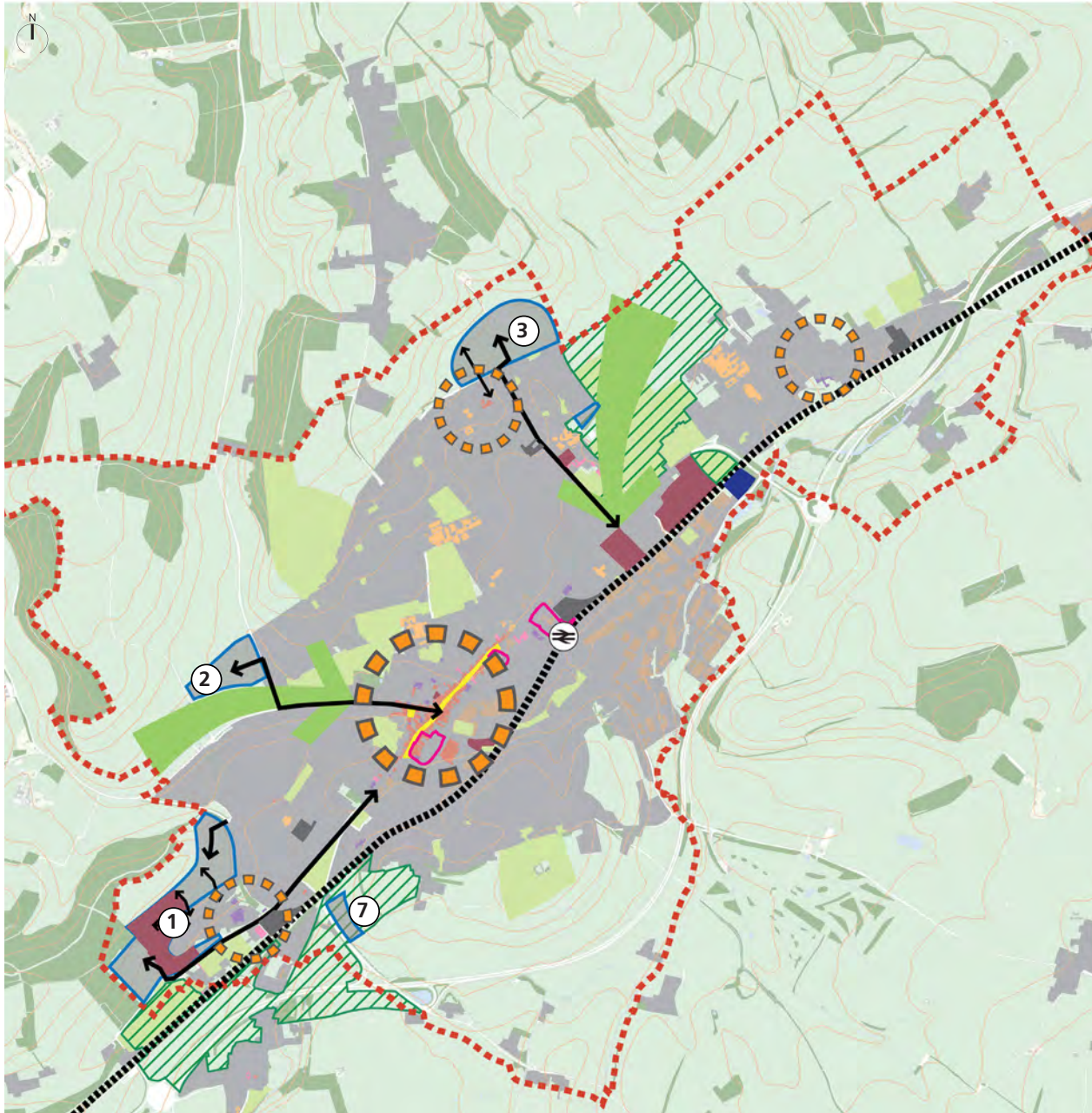
Location for new homes	Proposal	Approx. density	Potential homes
Area One: Treloar Hospital + adjacent areas	Development of sites around the former Treloar Hospital	30-35 homes/Ha	290 homes
Area Two: Land at Will Hall Farm	Sensitive development of land to the north east of the existing farm buildings to create a gateway on the western approach into the town	30 homes/Ha	170 homes
Area Three: Cadnams Farm / Odiham Road	Development on the lower lying land at Cadnams Farm only	25 homes/Ha	280 homes
Area Seven: Borovere Farm and Windmill Hill	Gateway development at the bottom of the slope at Selborne Road only	30 homes/Ha	50 homes
Other	Development of smaller sites within the settlement boundary	30-40 homes / Ha	30 homes
		Total	820 homes

Strengths

- This scenario distributes homes across the town with a concentration around the former Treloar Hospital contributing to the delivery of a highway infrastructure improvement at Butts Bridge;
- Sites for new homes are those that have least visual and landscape impact;
- Development on these sites can 'stitch back' into the existing road network ensuring good connectivity to the town centre; and
- New homes will present a positive image of the town on the gateways in from the north and south-west.

Weaknesses

- Scenario can only deliver in the region of 850 new homes which may not be sufficient to meet housing demand requirements; and
- There will be some landscape and visual impact of development on the higher ground above the former Treloar Hospital.



GROWTH SCENARIO ONE: BASE SCENARIO

- - - Parish Boundary
- Housing supply
- Recently completed schemes
- Other application
- Town centre opportunity sites
- Potential housing sites
- Links back to existing fabric

Design considerations

It is recognised for some sites the sensitive setting will require a more careful and considered design response. In particular proposals close to existing Conservation Areas (Will Hall Farm and Holybourne Village) and where development defines gateways into the town including land at Borovere Farm.

For these sites in particular a detailed design brief should be prepared providing guidance on appropriate development form, layout, orientation and detailing.

Scenario Two: Base scenario plus northern extension

This scenario promotes development on the sites indicated in the base scenario together with delivering a residential extension to the north of Gilbert White Way. This northern extension can be connected back into the existing road network and the scale of the change can be carefully planned and managed to ensure that it creates a positive 'piece of town' that contributes to the life and economy of Alton. The most significant challenge is likely to be access and traffic impact and this will need to be assessed further.

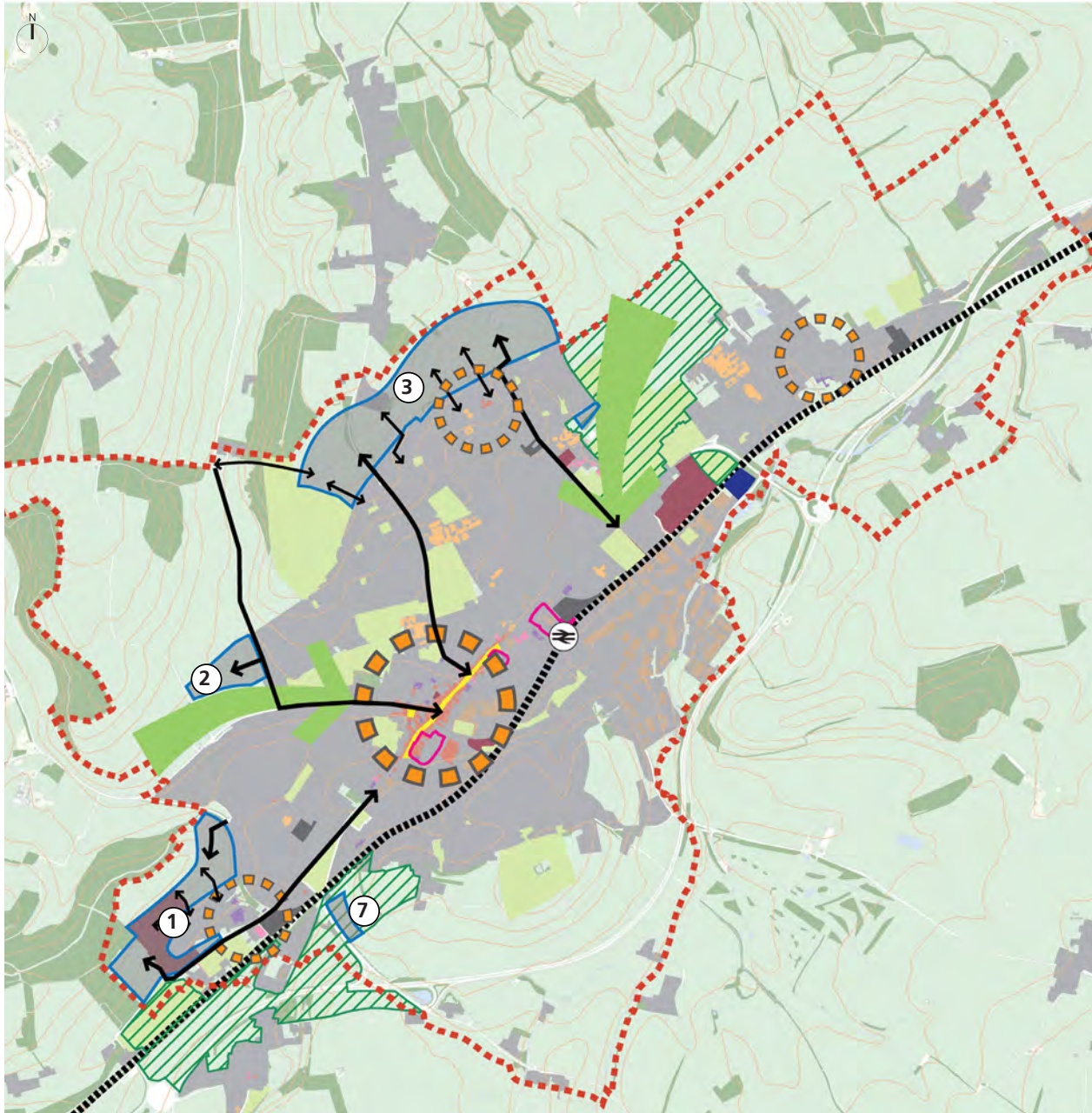
Location for new homes	Proposal	Approx. density	Potential homes
Area One: Treloar Hospital + adjacent areas	Development of sites around the former Treloar Hospital	30-35 homes/Ha	290 homes
Area Two: Land at Will Hall Farm	Sensitive development of land to the north east of the existing farm buildings to create a gateway on the western approach into the town	30 homes/Ha	170 homes
Area Three: Cadnams Farm / Odiham Road	A residential extension extending across the northern edge of the town and providing a new 'piece of town' that is well managed and planned.	20-25 homes/Ha	720 homes
Area Seven: Borovere Farm and Windmill Hill	Gateway development at the bottom of the slope at Selborne Road only	30 homes/Ha	50 homes
Other	Development of smaller sites within the settlement boundary	30-40 homes / Ha	30 homes
		Total	1,260 homes

Strengths

- As with Scenario One this scenario distributes homes across the town with a concentration around the former Treloar hospital contributing to the delivery of a highway infrastructure improvement at Butts Bridge;
- The scenario also delivers a significant number of new homes to the northern edge of the town. These are delivered well below the ridgeline and whilst there will be some landscape and visual impact this will be less than in other parts of the town;
- A northern extension can be carefully managed and planned to ensure that a new 'piece of town' that contributes to the wider settlement is delivered;
- Development on all sites can 'stitch back' into the existing road network ensuring good connectivity to the town centre; and
- New homes will present a positive image of the town on the gateways in from the north and south-west.

Weaknesses

- The settlement boundary can be extended to the north of the town but there is no physical feature that contains future growth and restricting future town expansion to the north of the town may be harder to resist;
- There will be some landscape and visual impact of development on the northern edge of the town and on the higher land above the former Treloar Hospital; and
- Further work will be required to assess the transport capacity of existing road infrastructure and in particular Anstey Lane and Old Odiham Road.



GROWTH SCENARIO TWO: BASE SCENARIO PLUS NORTHERN EXTENSION

- Parish Boundary
- Housing supply
- Recently completed schemes
- Other application
- Town centre opportunity sites
- Potential housing sites
- Links back to existing fabric

Design considerations

It is recognised for some sites the sensitive setting will require a more careful and considered design response. In particular proposals close to existing Conservation Areas (Will Hall Farm and Holybourne Village) and where development defines gateways into the town including land at Borovery Farm.

Furthermore the northern extension will need careful planning and management to both define its extent, create a distinctive identity and connect it back into the existing town.

For these sites in particular a detailed design brief should be prepared providing guidance on appropriate development form, layout, orientation and detailing.

Scenario Three: Base scenario plus southern extension

This scenario promotes development on the sites indicated in the base scenario together with delivering a residential extension to the south of the town on land at Borovere Farm. This scenario will change the perception and visibility of Alton as a settlement. Whilst this may ensure that people passing on the A31 are aware of Alton as a place, unless development is of the highest quality this may not deliver a positive impression and one that will assist Alton to meet the aspirations set out in the Vision Statement.

Location for new homes	Proposal	Approx. density	Potential homes
Area One: Treloar Hospital + adjacent areas	Development of sites around the former Treloar Hospital	30-35 homes/Ha	290 homes
Area Two: Land at Will Hall Farm	Sensitive development of land to the north east of the existing farm buildings to create a gateway on the western approach into the town	30 homes/Ha	170 homes
Area Three: Cadnams Farm / Odiham Road	Development on the lower lying land at Cadnams Farm only	25 homes/Ha	280 homes
Area Seven: Borovere Farm and Windmill Hill	Extensive development on the southern edge of the town transforming the approach and southern gateway to the town.	20-30 homes/Ha	720 homes
Other	Development of smaller sites within the settlement boundary	30-40 homes / Ha	30 homes
		Total	1,490 homes

Strengths

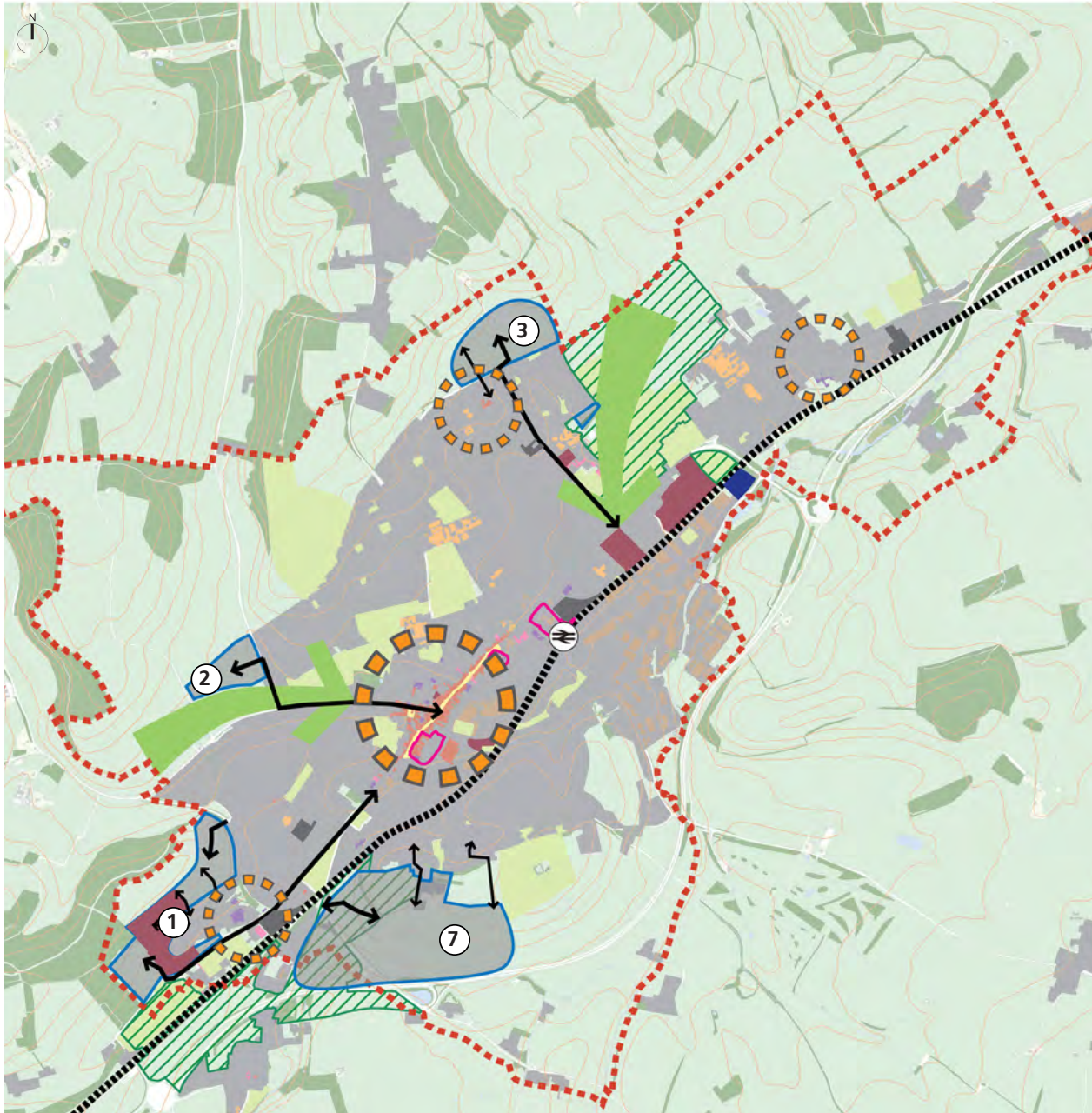
- As with Scenario One this scenario distributes homes across the town with a concentration to the south-west around the former Treloar hospital and at Borovere Farm contributing to the delivery of a highway infrastructure improvement at Butts Bridge;
- Development benefits from good access to the existing road network;
- This scenario would change the setting of Alton from a town that is hidden from view to one that is highly visible from the A31;

- A southern extension can be carefully managed and planned to ensure that a new 'piece of town' that contributes to the wider settlement is delivered; and
- Development is contained by the A31 and the future expansion of Alton can be controlled to extend no further than this route.

Weaknesses

- Development to the south of the town will have significant landscape and visual impact and will be visible both from the South Downs National Park and for passers by on the A31;

- The perception and sense of Alton as a settlement 'hidden within the landscape' will be lost;
- The proposal locates development within the Chawton Local Gap;
- Connecting a southern extension back into Alton Town Centre is difficult and access to the area is likely to be delivered off Selborne Road rather than as part of a connected network of streets; and
- New homes will be adversely affected by noise from the A31 unless a low noise road surfacing material is applied.



GROWTH SCENARIO THREE: BASE SCENARIO PLUS SOUTHERN EXTENSION

- Parish Boundary
- Housing supply
- Recently completed schemes
- Other application
- Town centre opportunity sites
- Potential housing sites
- Links back to existing fabric

Design considerations

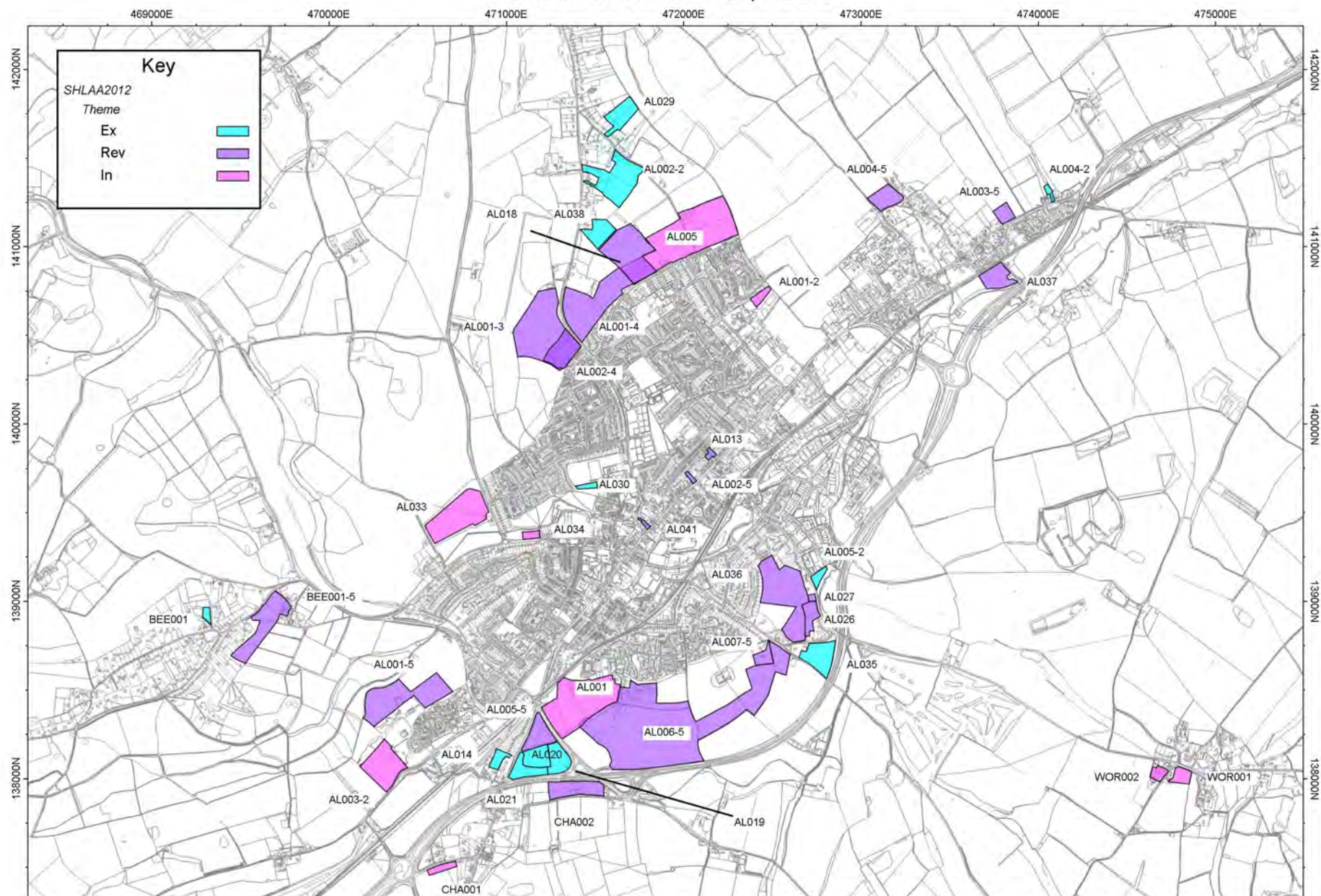
It is recognised for some sites the sensitive setting will require a more careful and considered design response. In particular proposals close to existing Conservation Areas (Will Hall Farm and Holybourne Village) and where development defines gateways into the town including land at Borovere Farm.

The southern extension will be highly visible and its design must be carefully considered to present a positive 'designed' response that will enhance Alton's image not detract from it. A well landscaped environment and a positively planned structure that views well from the south will be critical. Consideration of layout, roofscape and elevational treatments will be critical. The use of green roofs and other technologies to create an exemplar 'green' development could be considered.

For these sites in particular a detailed design brief should be prepared providing guidance on appropriate development form, layout, orientation and detailing.

APPENDIX A SHLAA AND EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW SITES

SHLAA Sites Alton - 1st April 2013



Employment Land Review Sites Alton (September 2012)

