

HONEYSTREET



Village Design Statement
March 2006

Preparation of our Design Statement

In 2005 the Parish Council agreed that a Village Design Statement was necessary to ensure that the residents had the opportunity to express their views about the future of Honeystreet and to convey those views to relevant organizations, including Kennet District Council and British Waterways.

A senior member of Kennet District Council was invited to the first public meeting to explain the purpose of a Village Design Statement and to offer advice on the different ways to approach the task. From the outset the Chairman stressed the importance of this being a statement representing the views of everyone.

Volunteers came forward to form a group totally independent of the Parish Council to undertake studies of different aspects of life, past, present and future.

Regular review meetings were held and gradually a series of draft documents was formed and widely circulated through the village for consultation.

A questionnaire was taken round to all the properties in Honeystreet, which produced a very high response rate. The results are shown within this document.

Kennet District Council were kept informed of progress throughout and their help and assistance was greatly appreciated.

The finished document has been issued to Kennet District Council, Wiltshire County Council, the Parish Council, the Countryside Commission, the Council to Protect Rural England, British Waterways, the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust and to each of the participating volunteers. Further copies are available to residents of Honeystreet.

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Acknowledgements

During the preparation of the Design Statement valuable assistance and contributions were received from:

Claudia Calam
Robert Carpenter Turner
Susan Head
Arthur Johnson
Roger Pope
Paddy Lane

Alton Parish Council
Kennet District Council
The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust

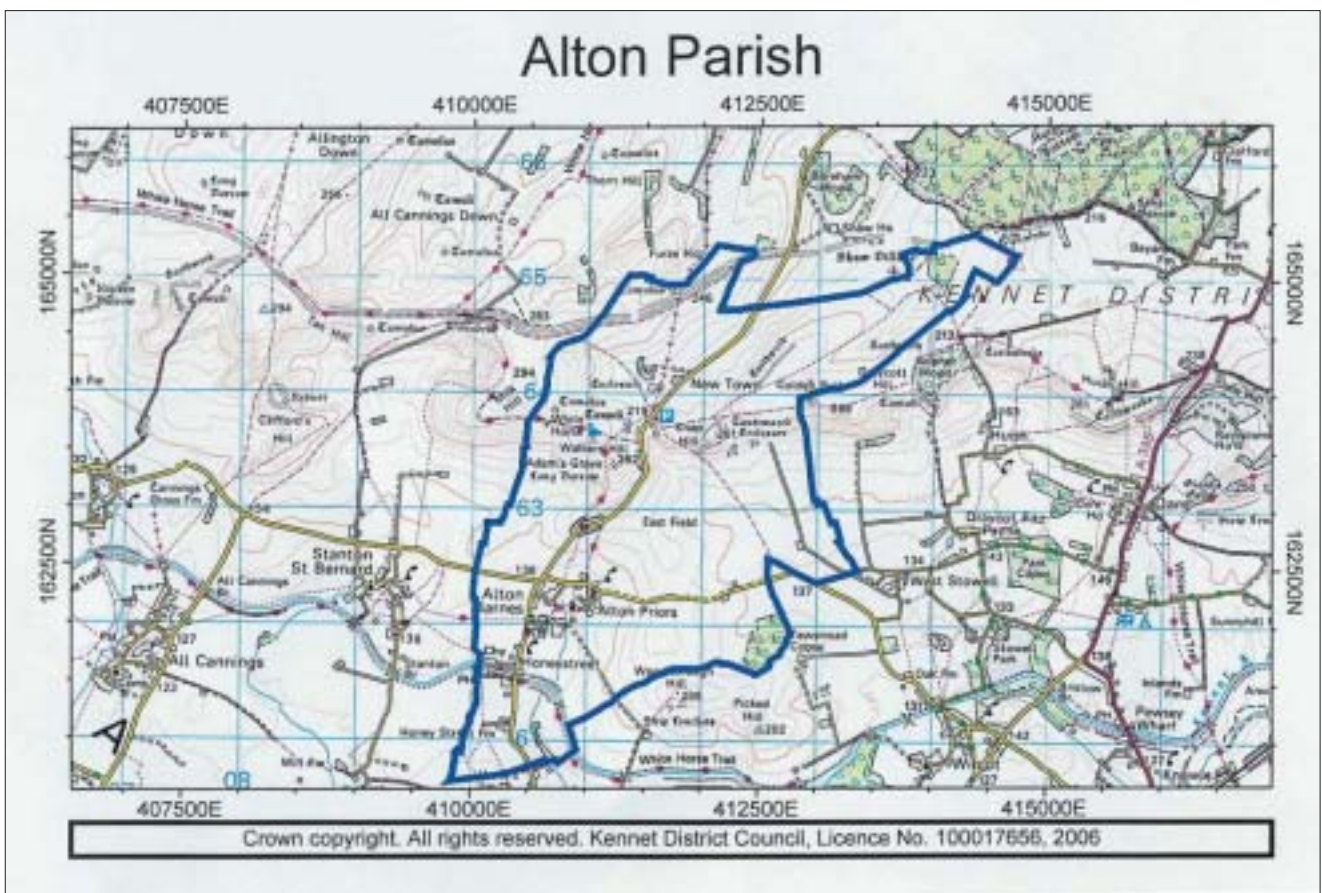


Introduction

Honestreet is a very small village of 29 houses clustered almost entirely along the banks of the Kennet & Avon Canal. It lies in the Vale of Pewsey beneath the steep southern scarp face of the Marlborough Downs where the ancient Ridgeway track descends from the high chalk down. The numerous springs in the area make much of the land wet, particularly in winter. The index of Wiltshire place names states that 'Honestreet' was the name given to the Ridgeway at this point – 'honey' referring to the fact that it was always muddy. The soil is chiefly greensand with some clay and chalk and is mainly down to pasture grazed by cattle, horses and sheep.

The village lies at the heart of the Kennet & Avon Canal corridor, where Kennet District Council's stated objective is to "restore and maintain traditional features...and retain the tranquil, unspoilt and natural qualities".¹ Historic features include Honestreet Wharf and its related buildings, once described by Pevsner as the best canalside scenery in Wiltshire; and the Barge Inn. The village, which stands within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is entirely surrounded by open fields, with exceptional and cherished views to the Alton White Horse, Woodborough Hill, and east and west along the waterway.

The Kennet Local Plan, 2004, lists Honestreet among the "villages that do not have a range of facilities where housing development will be restricted".² Villages on this list are specifically protected under the plan, which lays down stringent conditions for new building, including a requirement that any development must be "in harmony with the village in terms of its scale and character."³



1. Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy, p23
2. Kennet Local Plan, Table H.5
3. Kennet Local Plan, Policy HC24

History

Although early maps, such as Andrews and Drury (right) show a hamlet on a north-south axis below the downs, the arrival of the canal was a focal point of development of the Honeystreet community with 1810 as a seminal date. That year saw the construction of the canal, with Honeystreet Wharf built the following year. The wharf (pictured, right and below, in its heyday) was one of the few on the canal that was privately owned and not the property of the Canal Company. Over the years it became synonymous with the local company Robbins, Lane and Pinniger, established in 1811, which employed many of the local people. The company's bill-head describes them as sawing and planing mill-owners, merchants and importers of English and foreign timber and a range of other goods. They were also listed as barge builders and chemical manure manufacturers.

Use of the Canal increased rapidly until, by 1823, nearly 190,000 tons were being moved annually. The company's 1818 annual report states that over 200 boats were using the canal, seventy of these being barges capable of carrying 60 tons. The main cargoes were coal, Bath stone, iron and salt. There are also reports of cargoes from the continent using the canal between London and Bristol rather than risk the stormy route round the Lizard.

All this had a considerable effect on the development of small communities like Honeystreet that grew up along the waterway. The effect was both social and economic.

The Barge Inn, for example, the only public house in the Alton Parish, was built in 1810 to coincide with the canal-opening. The original inn had a glass look-out, or belvedere, on the top of the building to spot the barges coming down the canal and have fresh horses and a fresh crew ready. The site eventually contained a slaughter house, a coach house, a brew house, hop store, bake house, smoke house and cart shed plus stabling for four horses. Between 1871 and 1957 a number of licensees also acted as local grocers using the ground floor as a grocery and general stores.

In 1858 the original building was partly destroyed by a fire but within six months the pub was rebuilt. Later, it also provided the focal point for local sporting activities such as the Honeystreet Football team (Wiltshire Junior champions in the 1920's) which played its matches in the Barge Inn's field. In the summer the ground provided a home for the Honeystreet Cricket Club.

In recent times the inn has become a mecca for crop circle devotees. It has provided the backdrop for television programmes, most notably an episode of Inspector Morse.



The saw mills continue to this day but barge building went into a decline after the first world war. The advent of the railways and the eventual acquisition of the Kennet and Avon Canal Company by the Great Western Railway hastened its decline. By the end of the 1940's it was obvious that the canal as a viable method of commercial transportation was finished and seemed doomed to close.



The waterway was saved by a long and hard-fought campaign led by a voluntary organisation, the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust, which eventually saw the canal officially reopened by the Queen in 1990.



The Buildings

The majority of the houses in Honeystreet are built of Sarsen stone and Devizes brick. Two houses are built of limestone ashlar. Roof tiles are mainly slate with some red double pantiles on a few buildings. There is only one thatched house (Well Cottage). The majority of the windows are wood although in later years some uPVC has crept into some of the houses.

Buildings within this quiet hamlet date back to the reign of Charles II. The majority of the picturesque housing sprang up in association with the opening of the canal.

Some of the more noted buildings are the White House, the Barge Inn (pictured right), the Mill House, the chimney (a local landmark which served the old wharf), the Clock House, Foremans Cottage, The Terrace and buildings around the old timber yard such as the Blacksmiths Shop, The Shoeing Shop, and many more listed elsewhere.

The oldest property is the White House situated on the road between Honeystreet and Woodborough. The White House was built in 1680 and is a stunning example of an English black and white timber framed cottage. The Barge Inn was built in 1811 to coincide with the opening of the canal but partly rebuilt in 1858 following a fire. Fuller details are in the History section.

Honeystreet Wharf

Most of the original wharfside buildings remain intact, but some have been extended, and some are in a state of disrepair, though fortunately not beyond saving. The history of this site is very important to Wiltshire, to the Kennet and Avon Canal and to Honeystreet and needs to remain intact in some form. The hope of many of the villagers is that any future development would retain and recognise the importance of the existing buildings, Anchor Cottage, and the Clock House, the head of the original timber crane (which is still on the site) and the exteriors of some of the buildings which housed the various trades. There have also been pleas to reinstate the small clock-tower (pictured on page 4), which stood on the wharf by the canalside until the mid-nineteen sixties. The original clock is currently housed in the British Waterways pumping station at Crofton. The partnership document of 1860 between Robbins, Ebenezer Lane (his son-in-law) and Henry Pinniger (managerial employee) describes the buildings situated on the north side of the canal (the current factory site) as being used for:

- Blacksmith Shop
- Wheelwright shop
- Sawing sheds with lath and cloth shops
- Engine house
- Drying room
- Sawmill sheds with storage loft
- Fitting shop and carpenters shop
- Sawing shed and carpenters shop
- Granary, with clock tower
- Carriage house and storeroom
- Deal timber shed
- Two stables with loft
- Carriage house, harness room and nag stable with loft
- Counting house and offices





Huntleys' Yard (now Old Builders' Wharf)

Shortly after the completion of the canal, William Huntley, a builder and undertaker from Stanton St. Bernard, built a small pair of thatched cottages on the north bank immediately to the east of the bridge (pictured top left). A mixture of Devizes and other local bricks have been identified, some hand-made, no doubt using materials that were left over from other building work. The site became a busy builders' yard, with two sawpits, a wheelwright's forge, a large thatched two-storey painters' and carpenters' shop, a stable, and a 'mortuary' for the undertaking side, employing in all up to 20 men. There was also a cobbler's shack attached to one of the houses.



The thatches are long gone, and the houses enlarged and unified, but four generations of Huntleys continued the business until it closed about 1954. The property was finally sold out of the Huntley family's possession in 1986, and has been developed in a sympathetic manner into a canal-related boat services base with moorings, to coincide with the reawakening of the Kennet and Avon Canal.

The Mill House (pictured 2nd left), built of squared limestone, was constructed around 1812 by Samuel Robbins, the main owner of the Honeystreet wharf, as his home and company premises. The Mill House was extended in Victorian times and is now a private family house.



The Terrace (pictured 3rd left), on the canal north bank, was built by Ebenezer Lane in 1874 when he was Senior Partner at Robbins, Lane & Pinniger, as housing for the workforce. The sarsen stone used in the building is thought by some to be from a much older stately home in Savernake. Parts of the decorative stone carvings from the old building can still be seen (pictured below with date plaque).

When The Terrace was originally built it was of seven small houses, No. 1 being the smallest and facing side-on to the canal. In 1955, when the company was dissolved, the tenants were offered the opportunity to buy the freehold of their homes. The market price then was said to be £500. Most of the houses have been developed at the back of the properties in an attempt to retain some of the original character at the front facing onto the canal.



On the south side of the canal is more housing built by Ebenezer Lane; although these houses cannot be seen from the canal they equally contribute to the character of the hamlet. Laurel House was originally three cottages, similar in style and also built of Sarsen stone and Devizes brick. The date plaque above the house carries the initials EL and the date 1876.

Holly Cottage and Rowan Cottage (pictured 4th left) were built later than most of the other housing stock, around 1902. They were also accommodation for the boat builders and are mainly built of Devizes brick. Newer properties in the village have attempted to copy the materials and style of the older building, with some success.



Tourism and economic activity

Tourism is an important element of the village's economy. The beautiful downland landscape with open access and many archaeological features provides excellent recreational facilities for local people and attracts large numbers of visitors to the area who enjoy its peaceful, unspoilt, rural character. The White Horse Trail passes through the village and there are several public rights of way offering a range of interesting walks. The Wigglybus service actively promotes walks along the canal towpath and the network of public rights of way.

Honestreet Farm at the south end of the hamlet is a mixed arable and dairy farm with a herd of milking cows while the old airfield to the north has a small flock of sheep.

The Kennet & Avon Canal with its towpath is the central historical feature of the village attracting numerous holiday and live-aboard narrow boats and other craft. It is the setting for the Devizes to Westminster canoe race each year when the village is packed with spectators and supporters. Boaters' needs and some moorings are supplied by Gibson's Boat Services at the Old Builders' Wharf (formerly Huntley's Yard) on the north bank of the canal.

The Barge Inn on the south bank has served the needs of canal users since it was built in 1811. It now provides a pleasant stopping place for boaters as well as visitors who come by bus and car. Here visitors and locals alike can enjoy a drink and a meal in the restaurant or in the garden beside the canal. A camp site at the rear of the pub also attracts large numbers of visitors. The area is famous throughout the world as a crop circle centre and enthusiasts meet regularly in the dedicated room at the pub which has a painted ceiling depicting a crop circle formation. A number of special musical events are staged at the pub throughout the year.

Ever since the canal was opened a timber yard has been a vital part of the economy of Honeystreet and this continues today on the south bank of the canal at Honeystreet Sawmills which also has a country store selling tools, equestrian equipment and animal feeds. A warehouse and mail-order business occupies most of the old wharfside to the north of the canal bridge.

The area is popular with cyclists who are encouraged by the Quiet Lanes initiative and The Wiltshire Cycle Way passes through the village. A nearby riding school offers good opportunities for horse riding in the downs and there are several bridleways around the village. White Horse Gipsy Caravans offers tourists holidays in traditional horse-drawn caravans. Excellent Bed and Breakfast accommodation is provided at Well Cottage. Paragliding is popular on the steep scarp face of the downs.



Transport and street-furniture



The village is made up of two single-track lanes on either side of the canal. Both the north (Chimney Lane) and the south (Barge Lane) are shared by pedestrians and vehicles. They are linked by the hump-backed bridge over the waterway which carries the road northwards to Alton Barnes and south to Woodborough.

Both canal-side lanes are dead-ends. The one to the south is more heavily used, mainly by traffic to and from the Barge Inn. There is some commercial traffic to and from the saw-mill by the south side of the canal bridge and the small industrial site by the north side of the bridge.

The only public transport to and from Honeystreet is the “Wigglybus” service. This runs several services a day to Pewsey and Devizes. Seats must be booked in advance. There is no service on Sundays. The nearest rail station is Pewsey (5 miles).

The bus service, though limited, is very important for the elderly and those unable to drive. The relative lack of public transport inevitably means a high reliance on private cars.

The Kennet and Avon canal (linking the Thames at Reading and the Bristol Avon) carries recreational traffic almost entirely, though there are very occasional barges carrying cargo and/or selling eg coal. A significant number of residents voice concern over noise from generators on narrowboats (sometimes left running all night) and boats which stay moored for long periods in breach of British Waterways rules. The canal towpath is popular with walkers and cyclists.



The street furniture is dominated by the tangle of pole-mounted overhead wires (see picture) which detracts from the rural character of the village. There is a post-box but no public telephone box. The nearest is at Alton Priors, just under one mile away. The road signs at the north and south ends of the village incorrectly name it as “Honey Street” (contrary to the Ordnance Survey). There is an unofficial 10mph speed limit sign on Chimney Lane, which is an unadopted road. A formal 10mph limit is favoured by many. And many residents would like to see a footpath or pedestrian way between Honeystreet and Alton Barnes.

Street lighting of some kind is obviously welcome on safety grounds. However, the sodium lights currently in use are seen by some as too urban and excessively light-polluting. There are four street lights along Chimney Lane and two on Barge Lane. Many of the electricity poles and lamp-posts are covered with a rash of signs (including, recently, some large, very unsightly “danger” signs) which could perhaps be rationalised (see picture).



Recommendations

1. Kennet District Council's Local Plan states in relation to Honeystreet that any new development must be **"within the existing built up area of the village"** and **"in harmony with the village in terms of its scale and character."** The Council's Landscape Conservation Strategy pledges to **"restore and maintain traditional features...and retain the tranquil, unspoilt and natural qualities"** of the canal corridor.

Any future development at Honeystreet should abide by these principles.

2. Any new development should, therefore, employ local materials where possible, include generous open spaces and avoid uniformity. It is essential to retain the character and historic buildings of the wharveside area, such as the pantiled former stables on the east side of the site. Reinstatement of the clock tower would provide a historic focal point. Cherished views – specifically along the canal east and west, north to the white horse and downs, and to Woodborough Hill – should be protected.

3. Attention must be paid to the nature of any homes provided and in particular their design. There are plenty of examples of nearby developments - All Cannings Cross, Alton Priors, Woodborough garden centre etc - where ranges of old industrial buildings have been converted into attractive modern homes whilst retaining much of the architectural simplicity of the Georgian/Victorian industrial building with attractive new build blended in. Any development should contain an element of social housing to allow young local lower paid families to have the choice to live in the community in which they were brought up. What the community fears most is a nautical theme park or a Cotswold Water park development that changes the face of the community for ever. It is also aware that any redevelopment north of the canal could set a precedent for a similar development on the south side as the value of such sites continues to rise dramatically.

4. Care should be taken to avoid Honeystreet and its immediate environs taking on a "suburban" character, with a surfeit of traffic-calming, signs, "improvements" to the roads and verges and a halo of street-lighting, which is now recognized as a pollutant. Cabling should be underground wherever possible.

5. The local bus service – the "Wigglybus" – is the only public transport link to and from the village. It is important that it is maintained and, if at all possible, enhanced.

6. The greatly-increased use of the canal has brought welcome benefits. But it has also created some problems, notably noise-nuisance from generators on moored barges. This would be resolved at a stroke by relocating moorings immediately to the west of the Barge Inn, where there are no dwellings. We urge British Waterways to consider this, in line with its commitment to canalside communities.

7. The post box is a valued asset and should be retained. The telephone box at Alton Priors is the only one within reasonable walking distance of the village.



Appendix 1: Honeystreet questionnaire

An 18 point questionnaire was distributed to 24 households in Honeystreet which produced 24 responses.

Population

Most (67%) of the residents have lived in the hamlet for more than 10 years, 11% for 5 to 10 years and 22% for up to 5 years. Almost 100% of respondents said they like Honeystreet as it is and are happy here.

In response to the question "why are you here?" two said they were born in the village, one moved here as a child 69 years ago and one married into the village. Three came to be close to their work or land and others in order to return to the countryside or to "return to familiar old haunts". One had come with the prospect of working in a canal-related business.

One resident had responded to the archaeology – both the industrial history of the wood-yard and canal and the prehistory all around. Most respondents had been attracted by the peace of the village, the canal and its associations, though one commented that "it used to be peaceful" and another that 40 years ago "house prices were affordable". Several quoted "a small village with wonderful neighbours" and most referred to the beauty of the views and the surrounding landscapes. Above all people mentioned "peace and quiet".

Facilities and Safety

In all, 80% felt that some sort of **footpath or pedestrian way** between Honeystreet and Alton Barnes would be a good idea and the same number would support a **village shop**, though only 20% could offer to help in a shop. Almost 80% were in favour of more '**village activities**' and more than half of the respondents said they would offer help or sponsorship for these. Proper **grading** on the canal **towpath** was supported by 66%. And 100% supported the introduction of a **10mph speed limit** on Chimney Lane and Barge Lane.

Buildings

Half the respondents agreed that more houses should be built on "**brownfield sites**" and 60% supported more **affordable housing**. Almost all (95%) wanted to see **local materials** and **local architectural styles** incorporated in any new building.

Change and development

Asked what future change or development would be **acceptable**, four respondents wanted **no change** whatsoever and another said "no change unless accompanied by **work opportunities** for residents and incomers". Seven respondents pleaded for a "**sympathetic**", "**sensitive**", "**tasteful**", "**uncrowded**" and "**respectful**" approach to any development of the "brownfield site" at Honeystreet Mill.

Other wished-for developments included the **burying of all overhead cables**, **reduced night-time light pollution**, **fewer long-stay narrowboats** (24 hour moorings only), greater recognition of Honeystreet's **unique "sense of place"** by Kennet Council and British Waterways, and sensitive refurbishment/**restoration of the listed out-buildings at the Barge Inn**. And one long-term resident, a vegetable gardener, suggested "**fewer rooks**"

Asked what future changes they would **least like to see**, respondents mentioned "**too much new housing**", "**more development**", "**over-development**", "**urbanization**" (or "**suburbanization**"), "**over-extension of this small locality**" and "**encroachment on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**".

Traffic, both **vehicular** and **pedestrian**, proved a major concern, and respondents rejected any future increase in either along Chimney Lane, which is an unadopted road.

Some respondents said they felt threatened by the increased number of "**strangers**" using the lane. All respondents rejected any significant increase in traffic volume in and out of the Honeystreet Mill site and therefore at the junction with the main road. There was also concern that more traffic movements could lead to more **signage** on the main road, **double white lines** and even **traffic lights**, ("to sort out a hazard which does not as yet exist").

Appendix 2: Planning Framework

1. Kennet Local Plan 2011 (adopted April 2004) policies particularly relevant for Honeystreet

Policy HC24: villages with limited facilities

"Within the villages in the countryside listed under Table H.5 [includes Honeystreet] which do not have defined Limits of Development, new housing development will be restricted to infilling, the replacement of existing dwellings or the redevelopment of existing buildings provided that the development:

- a) is within the existing built up area of the village;
- b) does not consolidate an existing sporadic, loose knit area of development; *and*
- c) the development is in harmony with the village in terms of its scale and character.

All new housing proposals should conform with other policies in the Plan, including those that seek to protect local services (ED28), Amenity (PD1) and employment (ED11, ED12) and promote affordable housing (HC32)."

Policy NR8: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

"When considering applications for development within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as indicated on the Proposals Map and Inset Maps, particular regard will be paid to the national recognition of the landscape quality of the area. Priority will be given to the conservation of the character and scenic quality of the landscape, generally restricting development to that essential to the rural economy or social well-being of the rural area or desirable for the enjoyment of its amenities, subject to the provisions of Policy NR7 [re protection of the landscape]. Other proposals will not be permitted unless proven to be in the national interest and incapable of being accommodated outside the AONB, or in accordance with other policies of this Plan."

Policy TR1: development affecting the Kennet and Avon Canal

"Development which would adversely affect the amenity value, historic fabric, environmental quality or landscape setting of the Kennet and Avon Canal will not be permitted."

Policy TR2: facilities for boat users on the Kennet & Avon Canal

"With the exception of the proposals at Caen Hill Flight and Martinslade/Upper Foxhangers, proposals for facilities for boat users will be restricted to the redevelopment, improvement or modest extension of existing canalside infrastructure at Devizes Wharf, Devizes Marina, Horton Bridge, Honeystreet Wharf, Pewsey Wharf, Burbage Wharf and Great Bedwyn Wharf."

The Local Plan recognises the historic and scenic value of the canal, and its potential as a major resource for recreation and tourism. "The Council's strategy is to secure the full economic benefits of the Canal whilst protecting its historic fabric and the environment qualities that make it special" (Local Plan, para. 7.06).

2. Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy (May 2005)

This document, which has Supplementary Planning Guidance status, builds on the **Kennet District Landscape Assessment** (1998). It places Honeystreet within the Vale of Pewsey Landscape Character Area and gives advice on landscape enhancement. "Enhancement Priorities" include:

- "Encourage repair, replanting and widespread extension of hedgerow network and development of mature trees, using native species typical of this locality";
- "Restore and maintain traditional features of the Kennet & Avon Canal landscapes, e.g. bridges, locks and other structures, and retain the tranquil, unspoilt natural qualities of the canal corridor"; and
- "Improve landscape structure and land management on the fringes of settlements and along main roads, to mitigate adverse impacts on the landscape".

