

Assessment of existing housing developments in Wythall

Good design and development form in relation to achieved housing densities

When new development occurs, it is important to the local community that, as far as possible, this should complement the existing built forms and development layouts which people recognise, are familiar with, and like. The Design Guidelines and Design Codes Report supporting the Neighbourhood Plan provides clarity on how development design should be approached in Wythall Parish.

A particular challenge arises from the high densities demanded by national and local planning policies for modern housing developments, the necessity of which results from the lack of new land being allocated for housing development. It requires more from the land which is made available. The resulting development can feel alien in terms of layouts, public spaces, private space, parking and more.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group undertook work to examine the densities of existing local housing developments from different periods, to examine the densities achieved and to assess the look and feel of these places. It was hope that this provide an indication as to whether and how the national imperative for dense development can be met and yet achieve good quality environment.

A selection of most recent local developments as well as late and mid-20th century developments have been reviewed:

Identity Number	Name of road or estate	Number of homes	Area	Density per hectare	Including public green space?
1	Fieldways Close	15	5335.98 square metres / 0.5336 ha	28	N
2	Paddocks Road Area	265	98735.77 square metres / 9.8736 ha	27	Y (0.2827 ha)
3	Richmond Close	26	11557.92 square metres / 1.1558 ha	23	N
4	Lint Meadow	16	3977.52 square metres / 0.39776 ha	40	N
5	Mayhurst/Wythwood	94	34661.04 square metres / 3.4661 ha	27	Y (0.1702 ha)
6	Bovis	419	20218.02 square metres / 20.2183 ha	21	N
7	Holly Drive	11	5565.34 square metres / 0.55653 ha	20	N
8	Bleakhouse Farm	178	6.3 ha	28	Y (0.6375 ha consisting of play area and adjacent green space on Burnham Road)
9	Selsdon Close	76	3.1 ha	25	Y (0.5773 ha consisting of balancing

					pond area and play area combined)
10	Coppice Gardens	14	4287.03 square metres / 0.428703 ha	33	N

1 square metre = 0.0001 hectares

1. Fieldways Close

The Cul de sac consists of 15 two storey houses with a mixture of link-detached and detached homes. These have garages and paved or gravelled driveways with two or more car parking spaces to the front of the dwellings.

There is very little greenery or trees to the front of houses or on the street - two or three houses have lawns as well as driveways.

Because there are private open areas to the front of houses, thereby setting the houses back, there is an open feel to the road. There are some low-level walls and fences to boundaries, otherwise there are no boundary treatments. There is a generous pavement width approx. 2m depth around the whole perimeter of the road carriageway which is approx. 5.6m width.

Houses of red brick and tile with white UPVC windows, roofs are open gable with no chimneys. Porches to the front façade and garages to the side having either pitched or flat roofs. Bow window to ground floor front reception rooms.

There is no dedicated bin storage and some bins are on show in front of garages whilst others are out of sight, possibly in garages or back gardens, which can only be accessed through garages for most properties.

There is a rear access to footpath properties on the east side of the close.

Concluding Observations – The density for this development of 28 dwellings per hectare is achieved whilst providing off-street car parking for 2 cars, garage space and link detached housing in a traditional development form of two storey houses with private garden space to the front and the rear, and no apparent design deficiencies of roads or pavements. The setting for the development is open and could be improved through planting to provide greenery. There is no public space in which this could be done and so is reliant on front garden planting which would have been expected to deliver this more widely than it has to date.

2. Paddocks Road Area (incorporating Pearmans Croft, Falstaff Avenue, Chesterwood, The Willows, Burford Road, Danford Road, Oakwood Road, Beaudesert Road, Beaudesert Close and The Hurst)

All two storey houses

Pearmans Croft - The entrance to Pearmans Croft has fences on both sides of the road. Properties down the first half of the west side of this road are side-on to the street, with 6ft closed panel fencing back garden fences presented facing the street, and some low planting and verges. The road is a cul-de-sac and whilst roads appear clear of street parking, most houses on the east side have converted front gardens to hard surface car-ports (one-half of which was designed with off-road parking and access to integral garages of the properties.

The houses are mostly semi-detached houses with pitched roofs in a range of finishes, pale brick, rendered and painted white or cream and panelling or tiling to 1st floor front façade. Ground floor

front façade dominated by garage door and porch with pitched or flat roofs over. Two detached houses are located in the bottom corner, with gable end roofs where the gable end is the front façade.

As the properties are semi-detached, bins are stored at the side of houses or to the rear.

Concluding observations - Given the side-facing development on one side and the conversion of front gardens to hard surface car ports on the other side, with forward projecting porches in inconsistent finishes and with a general absence of plants, the street scene feels somewhat austere and bare and dominated by hard materials. This is design issue and the result of changes over time by householders, rather than a density consideration.

Chesterwood/Falstaff Avenue/Oakwood Road – Chesterwood is a cul de sac of link-detached style houses with pitched roofs, more boundary definition between dwellings using hedges and fences. Again, many homes have converted their front gardens to hard surfaced car ports with access to garages at the side of houses. Some homes have longer front gardens and generally these have been retained with a half and half driver and lawned garden. As a result, there is more planting in evidence in the street scene.

Given the potential for it to occur, only a small proportion of properties have built side-extensions over the garage or replacing the garage to the side. Bins are out of sight. Properties are brick-built and there is no variation in surface or roof finishes. As smaller elements of the properties which more easily changed, there is greater variation in front porch design, garage doors and front driveway patio finishes.

Chesterwood borders an area of local green space used by dog walkers, children playing and as a cut through for locals.

Falstaff Avenue and Oakwood Road contain two types of link-detached and semi-detached houses. The first design of link detached houses are front-gabled with the gable end decorated with panelling or tiling between top of first floor windows and roofline. The roof of the other link detached design matches the semi-detached houses where the roofs are side-gabled.

Semi-detached houses have tile or panelling decoration to 1st floor front façade. All houses have garages to the side. Porches and garages have either flat or pitched roofs. Open frontages or low walls up to one metre, some taller hedging. Spacious feel contributed to by the space between houses above garages. Lots of frontages contain lawns, so even though no public grass verges, there is a green feel maintained as well as on plot parking to the front of dwellings for 2 or more cars. Very few bins on show. Slight decline to road and bend to the left to link with Paddocks Road where there is another access point to the area of green space also accessed from Chesterwood. .

Concluding Observations – More uniform building finishes in traditional brick work and tile, in a regular layout, together with retention of front garden space in some properties, creates a more pleasing development.

The Willows - 6ft closed panel fencing on one side and high hedging on the other side of the entrance to this cul de sac (enclosing rear gardens of homes facing Paddocks Road). Link detached with side gabled roofs and with garages to the side, mostly flat roof garage and porch with tile or panelling décor to front façade between ground and first floor windows. Mixture of driveways and lawns/gardens to the front of dwellings, still having on plot parking for 2 or more vehicles, with an open feel as there are very few boundary treatments. Access to a footpath at rear of cul de sac. There is no dedicated bin storage; most bins are stored on driveways.

Burford Road & Danford Road - Link detached houses with side gabled roofs and garages to the side, the roads open on to a large grass verge with the busy Alcester Road being on the opposite side.

Paddocks Road – Link-detached homes with garages to side and side gabled roofs. House style changes to chalet style dormer bungalows around war memorial which is a grass area with mature trees and provides a ‘village green feel’ to this section of the road. Flat roofed garages and porches and front driveways and gardens. No bins in sight.

Beaudesert Road - Link-detached homes, similar to Oakwood and Falstaff, with some of the gable ends decorated with tiles or panelling, together with a few sets of semi-detached with garages. There is on-plot parking for 2 or more cars at the front of dwellings, with some lawn and gardens also maintained on plots. There are more boundary treatments of low walls and hedging than on other roads and grass verges outside GP surgery and on corner of Beaudesert Close. Bins could be seen on driveways. There is extensive on road parking by users of the GP surgery located on the road and, by parents and carers of children at the two schools located close by. Access to Beaudesert Nature Park for both pedestrians and vehicles is located next to the GP surgery.

The Hurst - Cul de sac with grass area at the end. Homes are semi-detached with side gabled roofs, garages to the side and porches which have mixed flat/pitched roofs. There is on plot parking for two or more cars, sporadic grass/greenery and appears more functional.

Beaudesert Close - Cul de sac with mostly semi-detached homes with side gabled roofs and side garages, with tile decoration to front façade, as well as three link-detached houses with front gabled roofs with panelled or tiled gable-end, garages and on-plot parking, with some dwellings maintaining lawn and gardens in addition. Boundaries are low walls or hedging, there is no bin storage in sight. The estate has ample pavements and roadways. On Beaudesert Close, the least populated road in the estate, the pavements measure approx. 1.78m depth and the road carriageway approx. 5.25m width.

3. Richmond Close

Larger detached two storey homes, all of a slightly different design, some mock Tudor style, with rendered and painted facades and timbering, some with timbering and some plain red brick. All with visible chimneys, most have leaded windows.

All houses have integrated garages (or have been converted) some single and some double, facing the carriageway. There are three single storey homes in the middle of the row of houses on one side. All homes have a driveway and some also have a front garden or lawn also. Driveways are to the front of the two storey houses and to the side of the one storeys.

There are generous pavements of between approx. 1.48m and 2m depth along each side of the road carriageway which is approx. 4.5m wide. There are no grass verges, but the street maintains a pleasant open feel due to most frontages being open with most boundaries unfenced. The few fences that are present are low level timber pickets or panels.

Some gardens have small trees, most have shrubbery giving a green feel. Bins are mostly stored to the side of houses. 6ft brick walls enclose rear gardens at the entrance to the cul de sac and towards the end. Quality materials have been used.

4. Lint Meadow

A cul de sac with a block paved road surface and a narrow-feeling road carriageway, despite being approx. 4.5m (similar to Richmond Close) with dropped kerbs all the way round.

At the entrance to the cul de sac, the existing bay fronted semi-detached on Truemans Heath Lane has been incorporated with access onto Lint Meadow along with a new detached house on the other side of the road, both facing the main road so the cul de sac is routed between the side walls of the two houses, giving an enclosed appearance with grass verges bordering (with signs that they are used for parking).

A mixture of dwellings and roof lines have been incorporated into the design. Along one side are three detached dwellings (2 x 2storeys and 1 x 3 storeys) with garages and narrow off road parking for 1-2 cars to the front of the properties. Along the other side is a detached garage then a row of four terraces; 2 with garages, 2 with narrow parking for 2 vehicles to the front of the dwellings and one with both, the last with shared parking to the side in front of a row of 3 garages.

Along the rear are two rows of terraces with four dwellings in each, one terrace has 3x 3storey houses with shared access to a block of 3 garages. All houses have a built-in garage or shared access to a detached garage. The houses do not have visible chimneys.

There is a grass area with a mature tree in the far-right hand corner of the cul de sac, with several bins congregated on the grass area and others on driveways.

The road has a cramped feel, due to being narrow with no greenery and dominated by vehicles. Pavements are approx. 1.6m deep and seemed to be used as extensions to driveways.

5. **Mayhurst/Wythwood (incorporating Mayhurst Road, Mayhurst Close, Wythwood Road and Wythwood Grove)**

Mayhurst Road and Wythwood Road have bungalows on one side and two-storey semi-detached houses on the other, both types of housing with side gabled roofs and garages to the side. Most semi-detached houses have tiling or panelling beneath the first floor windows and porches to the front with flat or pitched roofs, one or two have the front door on the side. The bungalows have been designed with the front door on the side of building, in front of the garage. There are generous frontages with on plot parking for two or more vehicles at the front of the dwellings, extending to the side for some of the bungalows. Mayhurst Close (cul de sac) has all bungalows of a similar design to the surrounding roads and Wythwood Grove (cul de sac) contains semi-detached houses matching those around. All the houses have chimneys, as do most of the bungalows. There are 2 or 3 detached houses of differing designs tucked into corners. Refuse bins appear to be stored at the side of houses or in front of garages.

Plots also have lawns and gardens giving a green feel even though there are no public grass verges. Screening is primarily hedging or shrubbery with very few boundary walls or fences, adding to the open and green feel. Mayhurst Close and Wythwood Grove access either side of a small piece of green open space used by dog walkers primarily. Part of the southern boundary of the site borders Hollywood Playground.

Mayhurst Road carriageway is approx. 5.59m wide with pavements of approx. 1.7m depth and the carriageway of Mayhurst Close is approx. 4.95 m wide, with pavements of approx. 1.84m depth, contributing to the open feel.

6. **Bovis Estate (incorporating Sycamore Drive, Beech Road, Oak Tree Lane, Silver Birch Drive, Alder Close, Hawthorne Drive, Wood Croft, Bramley Drive, Hazel Drive, Cherry Walk, Rowan Close, Laburnum Close and Lime Close)**

A large, late twentieth century development of tudor-style two storey homes with a combination of façade treatments with red brick, timber and render to provide interest. The majority being larger detached houses with one or two garages. The development is made up of a great deal of cul de sacs. Roads and pavements are of ample width, including cul de sacs.

Beech Road provides access from Hollywood Lane and has established trees and grass verges providing a green, pleasant and welcoming feel. Beech, Sycamore, Hawthorne (cul de sac), Wood Croft (cul de sac), Alder Close (cul de sac), Oak Tree, and Hazel Drive (cul de sac) all offer detached houses most with integrated double garages in a variety of designs in the tudor style, set back from the pavement with parking and gardens to the front. The road carriageway width is approx. 6.76m and pavement depth approx. 1.77m.

Sycamore Drive provides access to the estate from Houndsfield Lane and is the main route through the estate. It has a very spacious, open feel due to the houses being set back and the amount of greenery. The road carriageway width is approx. 6.70m and pavement depth approx. 1.72m.

Shared access driveways have been used several times and feature in Sycamore, Silver Birch (cul de sac), Cherry Walk (cul de sac), Hawthorne, Rowan Close (cul de sac), Lime Close (cul de sac) and Bramley Drive (cul de sac).

Silver Birch Drive contains characterful terraces in a variety of designs and roof typologies and there are other terraced or semi-detached houses located in Cherry Walk, Rowan Close, Laburnum Close (cul de sac), Lime Close and Bramley Drive. Silver Birch road carriageway width is approx. 5.45m and pavement depth approx. 1.80m.

Hedging is generally used as boundary marking and coupled with planting areas, give a green feel. Bins are mostly out of sight or at the side of houses, next to garden gates. There is ample parking provision. Any Affordable Housing has been well integrated into the design.

7. Holly Drive

Cul de sac, with a narrow road carriageway measuring approx. 4.2m width, with pavement on one side of the road of approx. 1.81m depth.

Large mock-tudor style two-storey detached houses with double garages, red brick with rendered and painted gable ends to give the appearance of tudor half-timbering. Most have visible chimneys. There is no space for kerb-side parking, driveways are block-paved to the front of dwellings for multiple vehicles. Most dwellings have maintained some lawn and greenery and have a few green boundaries, but most frontages are open with no boundaries. Bins are hidden behind trellis or hedging or to the side of garages, not immediately visible in most cases.

8. Bleakhouse Farm consisting of Burnham Road, Hastings Close, Wilfred Mews and Bunny Court

A newer estate assigned as a development site in the current Local Plan, adopted in 2017. A mixture of modern red brick and cream painted houses, of different designs creating interest. They are mostly two-storey with porch canopies and low-level boundary hedging giving a green feel. On plot parking is provided mostly to the side of houses. There appears to be insufficient parking provision as there are many vehicles parked on the streets. Bins are mostly stored to the side of houses/garages.

Housing is a mix of detached, double fronted dwellings, semi-detached and terraced two storey houses. There is a large green open space on one side of Burnham Road which includes children's play facilities. Housing opposite includes some three storey dwellings. One end of Burham Road consists of terraces with numbered parking at the front of the properties, and smaller semi-detached houses with drives to the side of the dwellings. Further along, some double fronted detached houses have front gardens whilst others have been built close to the pavement, feeling a

little restricted for space. There are also several shared access driveways to a number of properties giving a more cramped feel to parts of the estate.

Wilfred Mews contains a similar mixture of dwellings, with a driveway off to a terrace of Affordable Housing situated behind other dwellings. This terrace has a communal parking forecourt between it and the garden walls of the housing in front and bins are stored next to front doors. Other Affordable Housing on the estate seems to be better integrated than these. At the end of Wilfred Mews there are a couple of small bungalows opposite existing bungalows on Gorsey Lane. The development has maintained existing trees/hedging where possible particularly along Gorsey Lane and has, in the main, matched the styles of new housing with existing styles in the immediate surroundings.

Carriageways are a mixture of tarmac and block paving, Burham Road carriageway is an approx. width of 5.51m and pavement depth of approx. 1.93m. Hastings Close carriageway is approx. 4.5m wide.

Bunny Court has separate access off Station Road and appears to be terraced/semi-detached Affordable Housing, with communal parking and areas laid to lawn at the front of the properties.

9. Selsdon Close consisting of Selsdon Close, Morrey Close, Franklin Close and Butterworth Close

A newer estate assigned as a development site in the current Local Plan which was adopted in 2017, but had already been built.

Modern red brick housing, all of a similar design with side gables roofs, stone window ledges and porch canopies. There appears to be very little variety and detail in the design. Parking provision is mostly on-plot, to the front or side of dwellings, some with gardens. An open green space containing a children's play area is situated where Selsdon Close and Franklin Close (cul de sac) meet, with the road continuing around the green space and mostly terraced housing surrounding. Selsdon Road carriageway is approx. 5.48m wide with pavements of approx. 1.95m width. There is Affordable Housing at the rear of the development, situated on Selsdon and Franklin, which has not been integrated with surrounding market housing and has a repetitive, simplistic design.

Morrey Close (links to Selsdon Close at either end) consists of double fronted detached houses, with a brook and grass area on one side of the road, with pedestrian access to Lea Green Lane towards Wythall Station.

Butterworth Close (cul de sac) consists of both detached and terraced properties and provides access to a balancing pond located in a pleasant green space with pedestrian access all the way around. There are some shared access/driveways one of which has a shared bin store, bicycle store and a communal parking area. Here there are grass verges with low kerbs rather than pavements. There is a mixture of block paving and tarmac treatments to road surfaces.

Overall, the architectural design seems less-imaginative and not as characterful and welcoming as other areas of Wythall.

10. Coppice Gardens

Cul de sac with a block-paved road surface. The road carriageway is narrow (approx. 4.47m width) with dropped kerbs all the way around.

There is an enclosed appearance at the entrance to the cul de sac, due to being routed between the side walls of two houses facing the main road. In addition, the area either side of the road which may have been grass verge/pavement has been tarmaced to allow for additional parking for

residents (as advised by a resident). Parking here blocks any pedestrian access to or from the cul de sac with pedestrians having to walk in the carriageway.

Some pavements further into the cul de sac measure approx. 0.9m depth, and extend up to the first houses, after which there is grass between the houses and roadway, lined with rocks to prevent parking. The first house on either side is a detached two-storey with parking and garage to the side, with no frontage to the houses. Then, a matching pair of two-storey semi-detached one either side of the road, built to incorporate the angle of the road so they appear more like apartments.

There is a line of 4 terraced houses (3 storey with dormer windows in roof) across the rear of the cul de sac, then shared access either side to detached houses and parking /garages in the corners. (The access here appears to be tight). Bins appear to be stored in front of garages where there is one, otherwise not in sight. The road has a cramped and closed in feel due to vehicles being parked along both sides of the road at the entrance and then buildings beyond.