

# **Bishop's Waltham Design Statement**

## **The Consultation Process**

Following the Parish Council agreement on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015 to produce a Bishop's Waltham Design Statement, volunteers were called to assist. On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015 a sub-group of parish councillors established the framework for the project and on 8<sup>th</sup> February 11 members, councillors and residents, met as the Steering Group to research the subject and review Bishop's Waltham in detail. The Steering Group was fortunate to have experience and skills in planning, landscape architecture, historic buildings, local history, mapping, data management, photography, report writing, project management and local government.

The research comprised a study of adopted village and town design statements to gain ideas of content, and then a detailed study of Bishop's Waltham to ascertain the relevance to the local character and setting. A compendium of draft policies was prepared, together with supporting statements which was subjected to considerable peer review before being refined to the key policies required for Bishop's Waltham. Reports on progress were submitted monthly to the Parish Council.

In June 2015 the Parish Council Newsletter was delivered to all homes announcing the purpose of the Design Statement and giving details of public exhibitions and an on-line survey. This was backed up by an article in the Parish News, information in the Parish Council website and posters around the town. Most of the publicity contained the banner:

*"Help to secure the future of Bishop's Waltham - a town designed by its residents!"*

The exhibitions of 33 policies, each illustrated with local photographs as examples, were set up for the public during the first week of July in the High Street on 4 occasions. There was much interest, not only in the Design Statement, but also in the Development Plan which had recently been submitted to Winchester City Council as part of the Local Plan Part 2. Visitors to the exhibition were encouraged to complete a paper survey on the spot indicating the relative importance of the policies.

The survey questionnaire was on-line for the public during the whole of July, provided through a link from the Parish Council website. The on-line system was also used to input the data from the paper forms. A total of 127 residents from a spread of 58 post codes across Bishop's Waltham completed the full survey. They were asked to indicate the relative importance of each of the 33 policies and most offered a number of comments as well.

The survey showed that the top priorities for residents were about maintaining the rural feel of the town - keeping trees and hedgerows, the views and the rural approaches. The avoidance of dominant or high buildings was seen as more important than the building styles or layout. Most of the comments related to the Development Plan: road access, parking, infrastructure, alternative sites and affordable housing.

Following an analysis of the survey, the Design Statement was drafted taking account of the responses received. The policies were revised and the number reduced to 28. The Steering Group was then confident that the policies contained within the Design Statement for Bishop's Waltham sufficiently represented what the residents required. The draft Design Statement was therefore prepared for ratification by the Parish Council and submission to Winchester City Council for the formal 4-week public consultation.