

### 1969 Willaston Village Plan

In 1966, Willaston was selected for the first detailed village plan to be produced in the County Palatine of Chester. Visual and physical surveys were undertaken, along with a house-to-house survey of 454 households. The aims were:

1. To determine an ultimate population figure for Willaston at a level at which it could continue as a viable village unit.
2. To provide sufficient additional land so that the developed density could be kept at a level to suit people who seek a rural environment.
3. To give a more compact and cohesive plan by infilling and to halt the pattern of ribbon development along the major axial roads.
4. To determine ... an acceptable standard of community provisions, shops, social and utility services to suit the future needs of the village community.
5. To find an effective solution to traffic circulation in the village setting.

### **Problems of the Village**

Problems were identified as:

1. Traffic
  - Heavy traffic east-west passes through the commercial centre of Willaston.
  - Existing journey to work traffic volumes will increase markedly if industry at Ellesmere Port continues to expand.
2. Plan Form
  - The existing plan form lacks a cohesive pattern. There are three main types of design:
    - i. The nucleated central zone
    - ii. Inter-war low density ribbon development
    - iii. Post war isolated growth of estates.
  - The need to give an overall identify and character to the village.
  - Lack of enclosure, particularly in the area immediately surrounding the Green.

### 3. Building Materials

- The variety of buildings materials has contributed to the lack of character of the village.
- Materials used have been alien to the natural building materials of the area.
- Yellow bricks do not mix with the natural red sandstone, detracting from the rural setting.
- Roofs of different coloured tiles lead to lack of uniformity.

### 4. Village Green

- The village green is divided and dissected by road and does not function as the focal meeting point of the village community.
- The buildings around the green are among the oldest in Willaston but are mostly falling into disrepair.
- The area is badly in need of regeneration and conservation.

### 5. Wirescape

- Overhead electricity and GPO wires are most noticeable in the vicinity of the green and on the new housing estate situation to the north-west of the village centre.
- On this estate, there is the minimum number of poles but with twelve wires splaying out from each pole to individual houses. The effect is to accentuate the wirescape.

### 6. Industry

- There is little industry but much of what does exist is badly sited near the village green.
- The industry is not in keeping with the character and proposed environment of the village centre and generates heavy traffic.
- If it should stay, then the Green Lantern, which is presently vacant, could successfully be converted into offices with some car parking provision.
- The haulage contractors, which is at present sited relatively unobtrusively away from the main thoroughfares will be exposed when the new by-pass route is constructed. Re-siting will then be necessary.

### 7. Unused buildings

- There are a number of derelict or vacant barns and outbuildings, particularly around the village green. Redevelopment is needed to increase potential use of these sites.

- The Red Lion is a special case to be considered. It is one of the few remaining old buildings in Willaston to retain its original appearance and character. If the external structure is to be preserved the interior will have to be re-built to make it habitable. This would destroy the original atmosphere of the interior but it would be more acceptable to retain its character outside. For the Red Lion to be used commercially, car parking and servicing facilities will have to be provided at the rear.

## Proposals

### 1. Traffic

- There should be a loop road to the south of the village green, to serve as a by-pass to Neston Road, Hooton Road and the Village Green and to link up to Hadlow Road north of Ashtree Farm. Existing roads to be terminated at the entry points to the village and car parking areas provided close to these points.

### 2. Neston Road

- To retain the existing street pattern of Neston Road and introduce low-cost terrace housing as infilling as sites become available.
- Re-site the farm storage depot on the site of Church Farm and use this for terrace housing and additional car parking.
- Provide some lock-up garaging for Elm Road on this site.
- Find an alternative site for Lloyds Garage.
- Re-route vehicular access for heavy trucking for the light engineering factory onto Mill Lane.
- Develop parking for cars serving the Green Lantern Offices off Neston Road.
- Provide planting and landscaping for the Community Hall onto Neston Road – the fencing requires attention and the structure needs a facelift.
- The chemist shop has a rather unfortunate appearance when considered in relationship with the church: this could be improved by redesign of the shop front and fascia.
- The full width of the existing carriageway could be reduced if the by-pass route is adopted – giving a wider footpath that could be planted and landscaped to provide an attractive enclosure in front of the church.

### 3. Hadlow Road

- The Southern approach to the village along Hadlow Road is marred by the appearance of the disused railway. This could be landscaped and improved as part of the 'Wirral Way' footpath proposals. The disused sidings between the railway and Wallcroft could be seeded and landscaped to form a play area.
- The approach to Ashtree and Wallcroft require additional planting to restore the enclosure of the street which has been destroyed by the scale of the bungalow development.
- It is important that Ashtree Farm be retained as a visual terminal to Hadlow Lane and to the southern section of Hadlow Road. Any new development to the north of Ashtree Farm should be carefully designed ... build detached houses of a low density on this particular site.

### 4. Hooton Road

- Re-align the road to create new access through the grounds of the old vicarage.
- Further access in the form of a cul-de-sac service road is proposed to the west of the British Legion, serving the new development around the village green.
- The site occupied by Acres Farm outbuildings be developed in the form of terraced housing. Relocation of the Acres Farm unit is suggested on the grounds that the land is developed for housing.

### 5. The Village Green

- The green should become the focal meeting point of the village community.
- The area around the green be designated a Conservation Area, to ensure that existing buildings are preserved as a collective unit.
- Preserve the external features of the Red Lion. Rebuilt it internally and allow an extension at the rear, and car parking area to develop it into a restaurant or steak house.
- Develop two new housing groups on the south east side – these could be old people's dwellings.
- The appearance of the Old Hall, from the village green is marred by the unsightly group of out-buildings to the north – these should be removed and the green extended.

### 6. The Mill Group

- Buildings around the Willaston Mill have an individual character divorced from the village itself.

#### 7. New Housing Developments

- New housing development in two separate areas. On the east, housing areas are used to infill the Green Belt boundary. On the west, the Green Belt is amended to exploit the value of the by-pass road as an estate road access.
- Along the southern boundary of the by-pass road, introduce grouped patio housing.

#### 8. Industry

- Engineering works restricted to the existing site and access point for all heavy vehicles changed from Neston Road to Mill Lane.
- Remove the farm storage depot on Neston Road.
- Area of land to the west of Mill Lane has been allocated for service industries. Relocate the haulage contractor's business here.
- Barn buildings to the north side of the green should be re-roofed, preferably in slate, although even asbestos would present a more uniform appearance than the existing material.

#### 9. Commercial Development

- Two additional shop units on the south side of the green, with rear service and parking facilities.
- Service garage on Neston Road, relocated on the by-pass road.

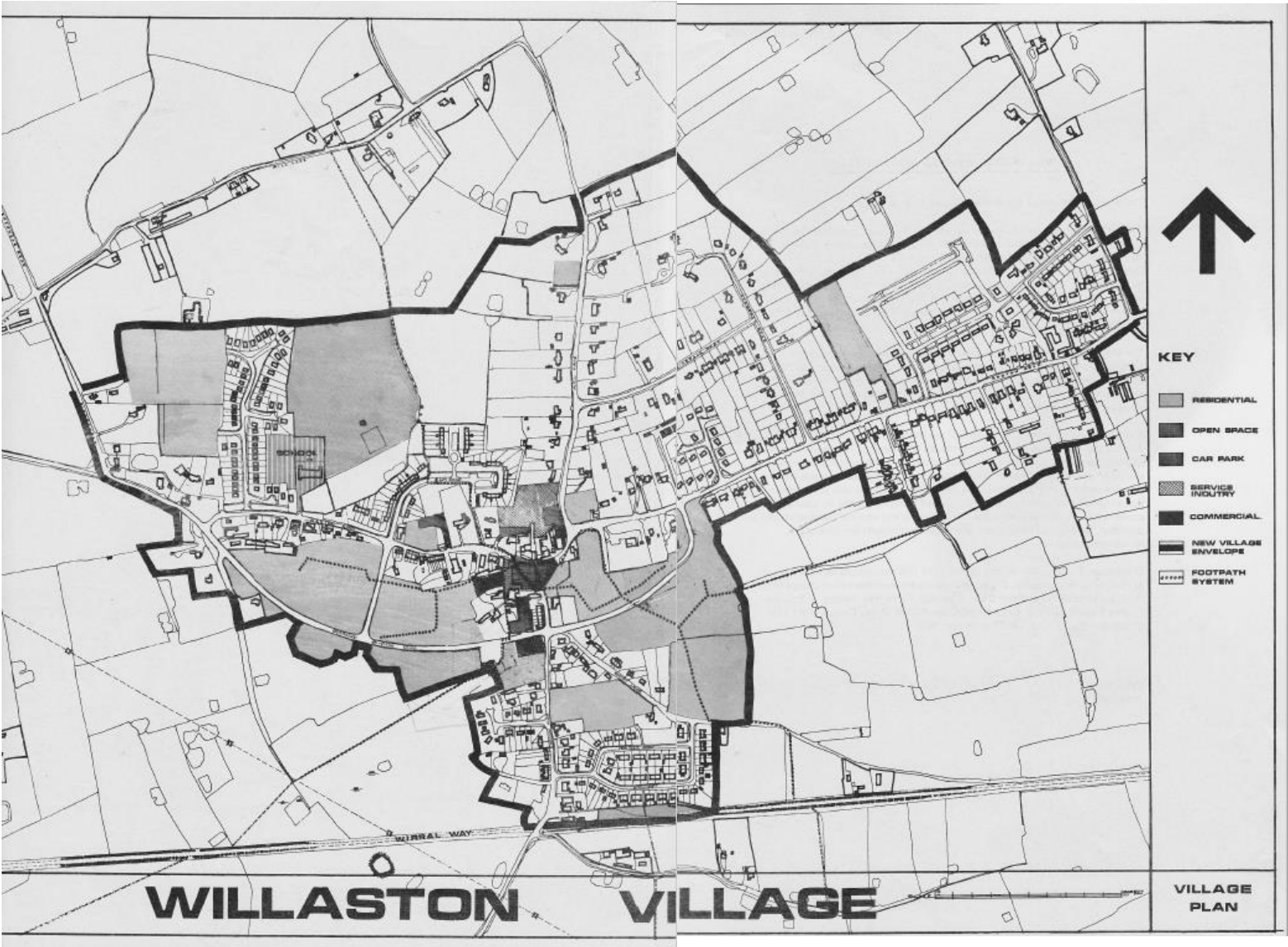
#### 10. Primary School

- Additional land will have to be acquired to bring the primary school up to standard. It would be preferable to acquire land adjacent to the school site at present used for public playing fields.

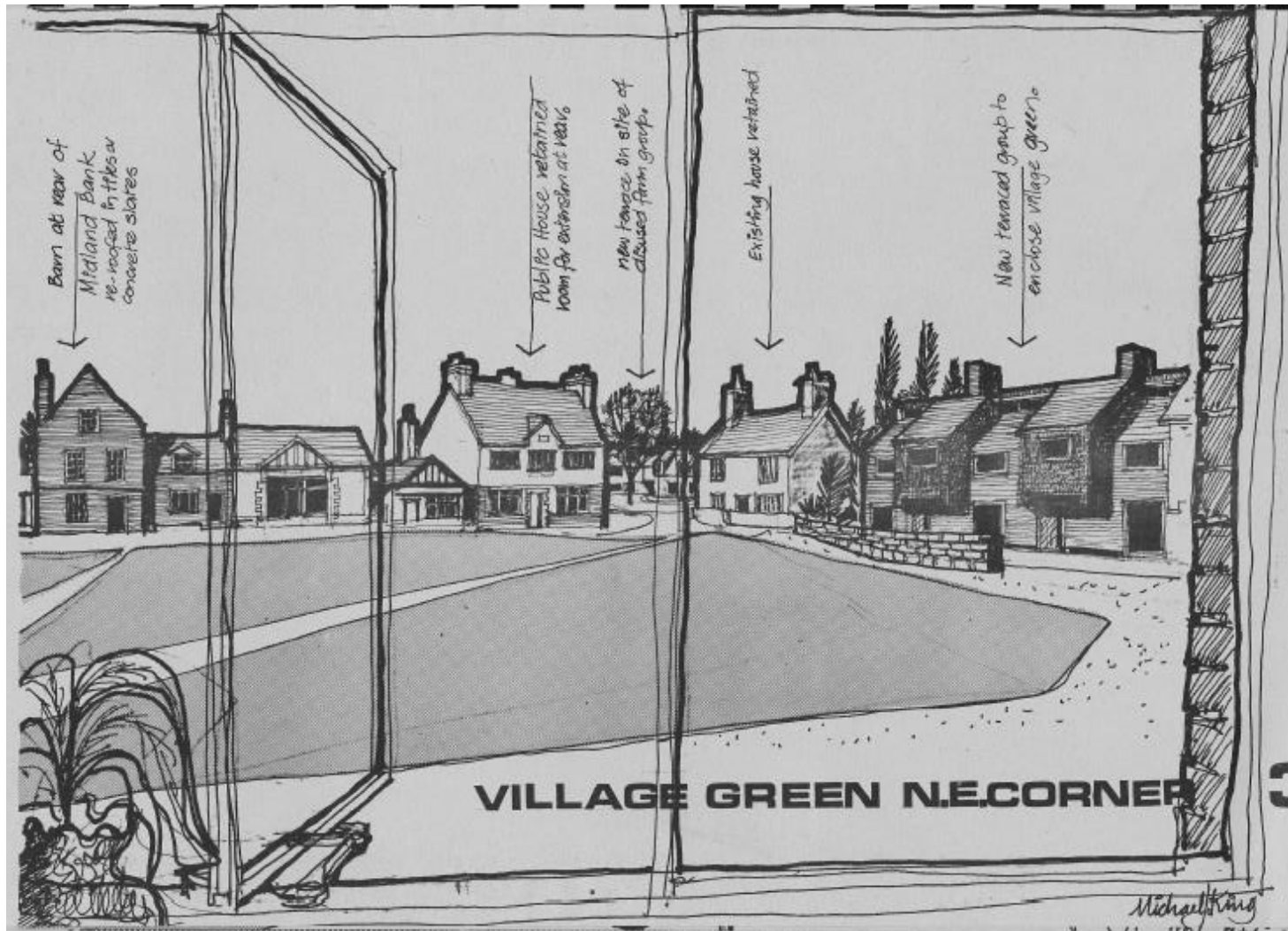




Revised Plan

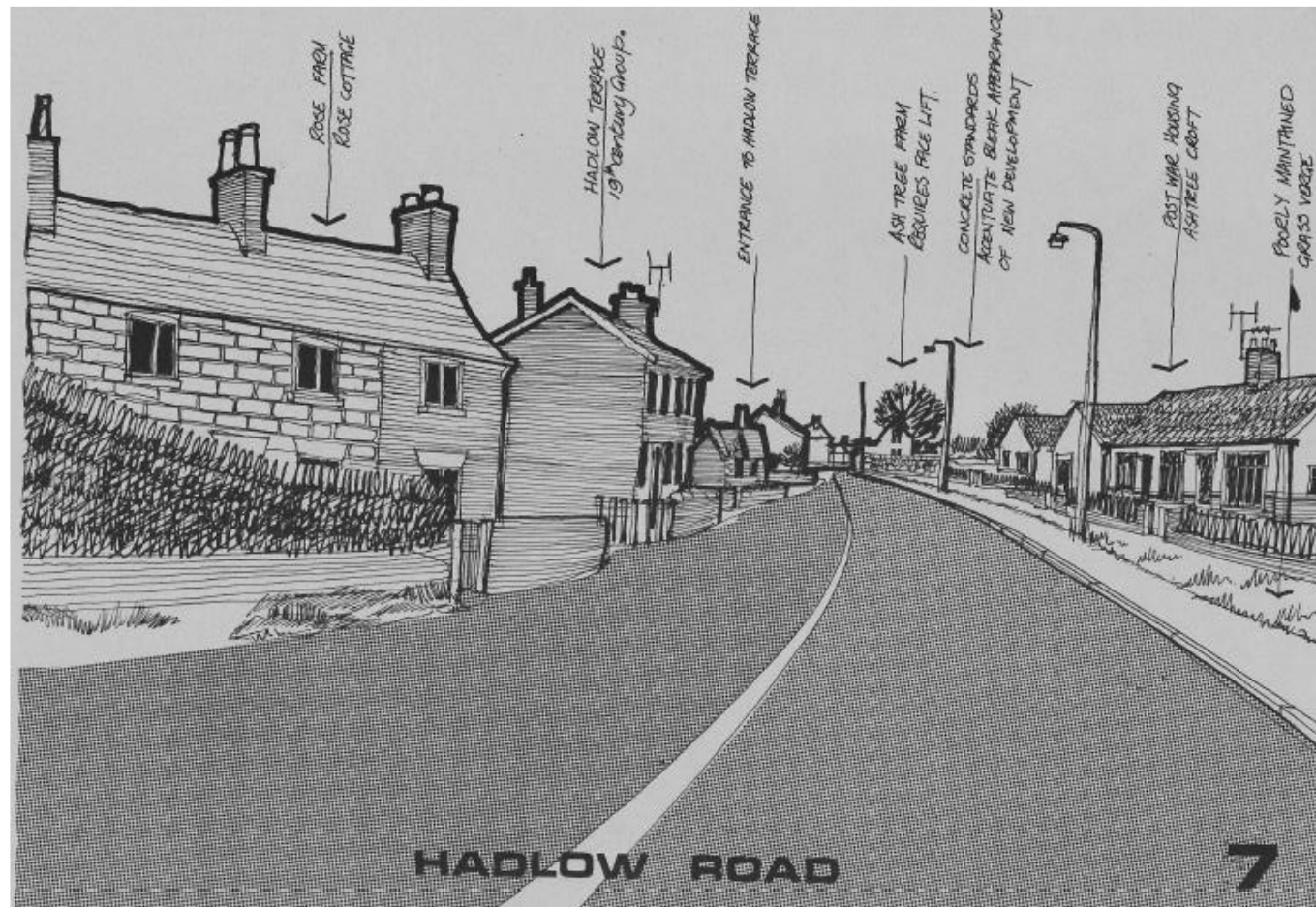


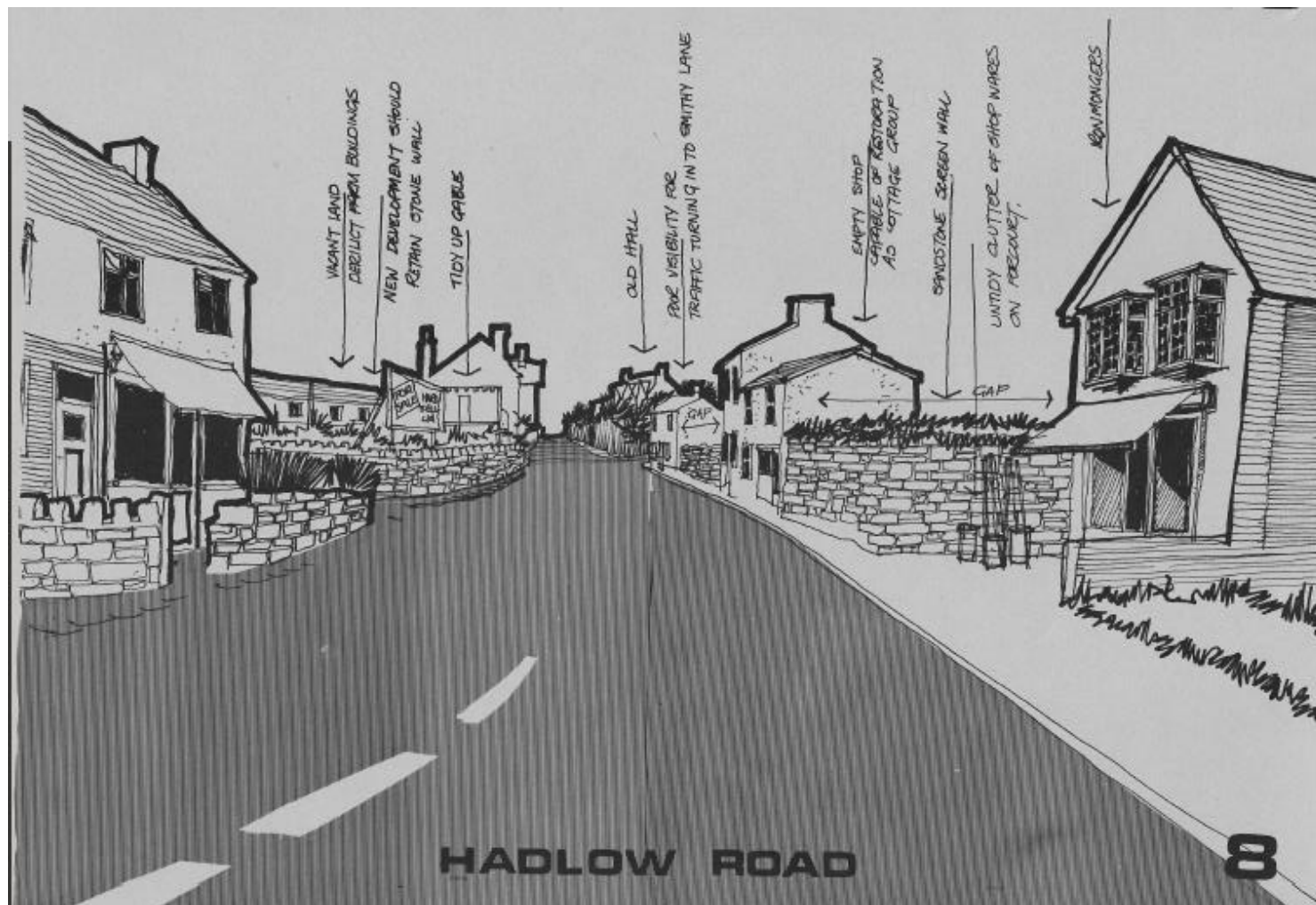




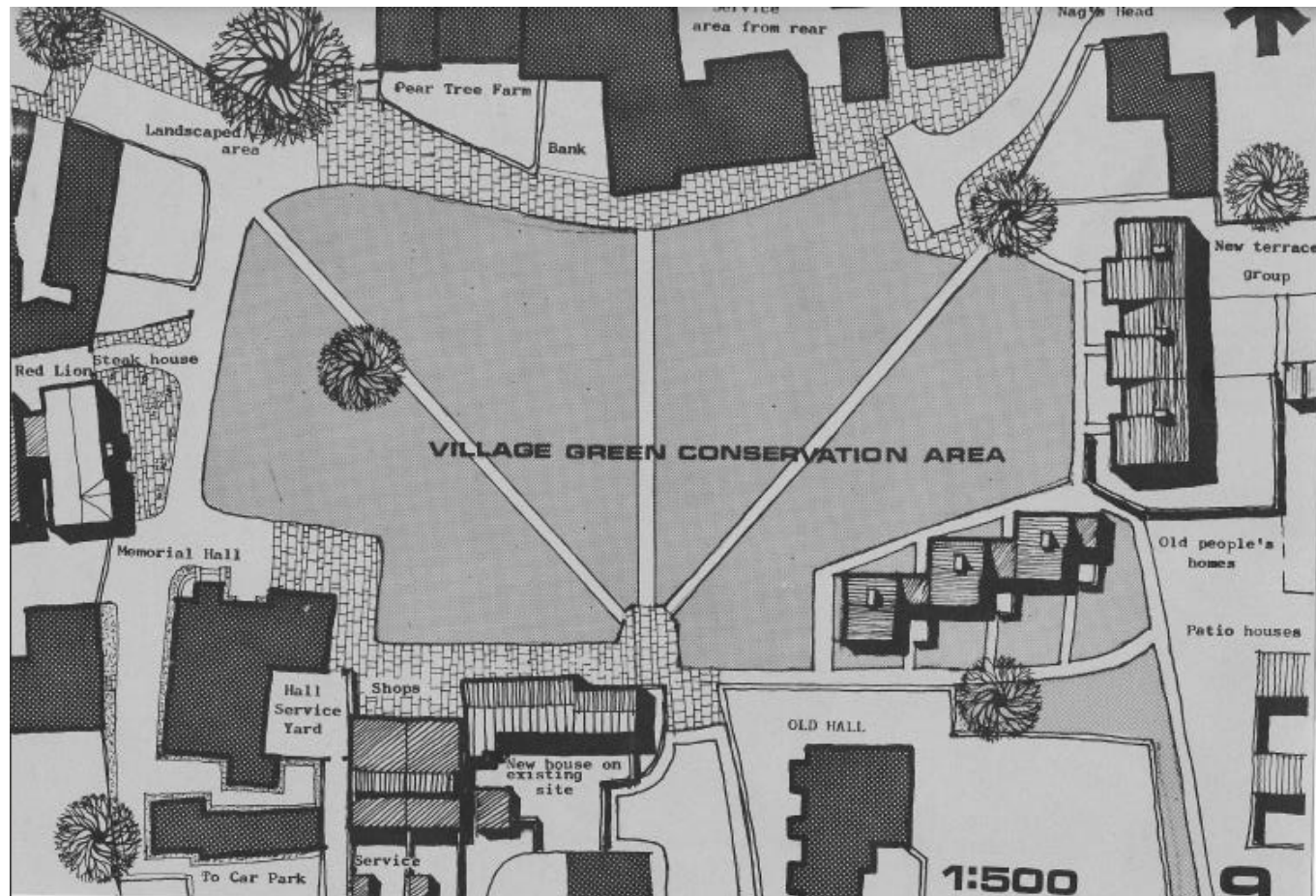












*Information reproduced from Rural Cheshire: Willaston/Neston UD Village Plan, Cheshire County Council: Planning Dept, July 1969*

In the following years, Willaston Residents and Countryside Society helped distribute questionnaires and assess local opinions and a Willaston Action Committee was formed to oppose it completely.



Members of Willaston Action Committee present a petition to the Borough Planning Officer.  
Left to Right: Joanna Leighton, Charles Kameen, Len Ward (Planning Officer) and Paul Gill  
Photo from an unknown newspaper

In September 1980, Ellesmere Port and Neston Planning Committee rejected the plan. They also decided that Willaston should continue within the Green Belt.