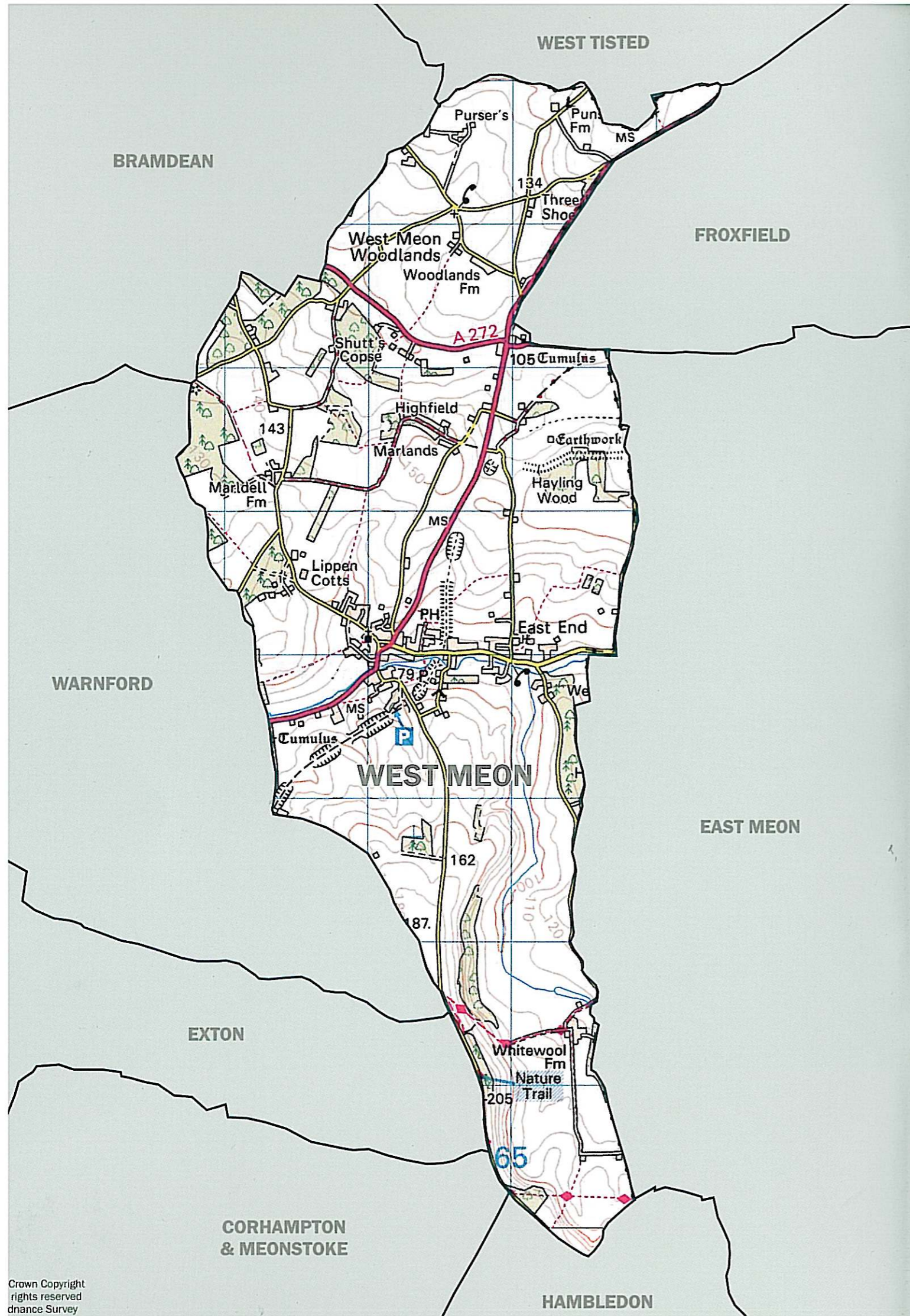


# **West Meon village design statement**

**Design guidance for the parish**





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## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the residents of West Meon who took part in meetings, attended exhibitions, completed questionnaires and contributed their expertise in a variety of ways.

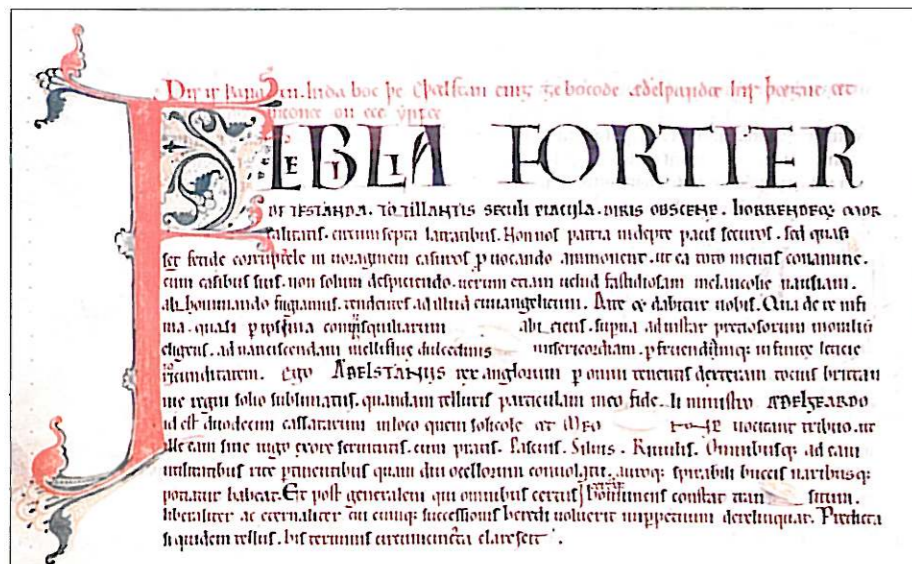
Photograph of the River Meon (front cover) by Bill Westmacott.

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# History



Document granting land to Athelgard by King Athelstan in 932 AD

The name *West Meon* is relatively new and its origin is difficult to determine. There are three possibilities: 1 The valley was named after an ancient British tribe, the Meonwara. 2 The word *Meon* was introduced by one of the tribes of Wessex, and 3 the Jutes, settling in the area around 661, gave the name to the river and several villages they inhabited. In the Domesday Book, West Meon is called *Menes*.

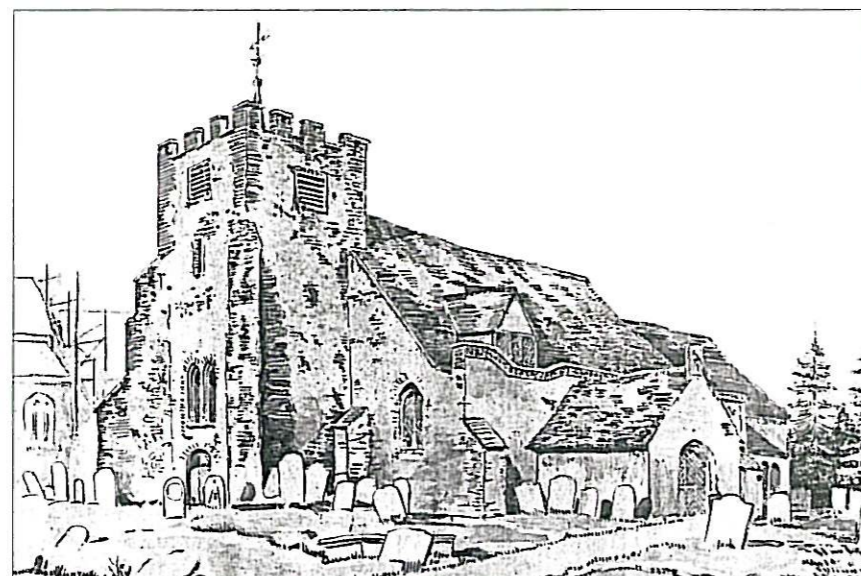
The Hampshire Ridgeway, a stretch of one of the great highways of the Stone Age, forms part of the parish boundary of West Meon. Ancient tracks and roads, established by the first inhabitants of the area, run down to crossing points on the river which flows through the village. Tools dating from the Middle Stone Age and Bronze Age to the present day have been found in the gardens and fields of West Meon, and Bronze Age leaders lie buried in barrows on the village outskirts.

The discovery in Lippen Wood of the remains of a relatively small but luxurious villa with beautiful

mosaics, suggests that life in this picturesque and verdant valley was very pleasant in the settled and prosperous middle period of the Roman occupation.

In 932, King Athelstan granted 12 hides of land in this area to his theign Athelgard, and our parish boundaries still follow those laid out in this charter.

Much as today, farming and farmers of differing degrees have played an important part in the life of the village. Originally, only the valley floor was cultivated, the flood plain providing a narrow area very suitable for farming.



Original Saxon church

For many years the property of the Bishop of Winchester, West Meon has featured on occasions in the politics and conflicts of our nation. During the Civil War, the village was held by both sides at different times; horses were stabled in the church and the original cross in the centre of the village was destroyed.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, West Meon lay on the coaching routes from London to Southampton and Gosport. The White Lion Inn, now Wolverton, was an important coaching inn, and it was here that coaches stopped to pick up a heavy (cock) horse to help them up the steep hill out of the village.

The 19th century was a period of mixed fortunes. Early on, poor harvests, combined with declining prices, caused unemployment, hardship and local unrest. The middle of the century saw the demolition of the original Saxon church and the building of its replacement. Mary Touchet, a local philanthropist, had a house built in 1827 which became the rectory in 1830 and is now West Meon House. She also had the village school and school house built in 1852, constructed from the same materials as the church. Mary Touchet also set up a charity for the benefit of the young people of the parish. Called The Touchet Trust, this is still in existence today, providing grants for educational purposes.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the construction of the railway brought considerable change and disruption. A massive embankment was built to carry the line over the river, which totally altered the land profile, including diverting the course of the river itself. The railway was built to facilitate the rapid transportation of troops to the seaports, and, when it opened in 1903, was originally intended to have two lines. However, it failed to meet its potential and was closed in 1955.



West Meon Station 1949

The latter part of the 20th century has seen further changes, particularly in agriculture, one of the results of which has been the conversion of redundant farm buildings for use as housing and for light industry.

This thriving village was supported until the middle of the 20th century by a doctor, seven grocers, a newsagent, a butcher, a saddler, a tailor, a post office and drapers, two garages, five pubs (one of which, The Red Lion, was once a rectory), a church, a school, a bank and a blacksmith. As at 2002, we have a doctors' surgery, a church, a school, a garage, a village shop, a butcher's, a post office and store, two pubs, sports and recreation fields, tennis courts, a children's play area, a village hall, a sports pavilion and a rifle range.

Number of people registered in the parish of West Meon:		
Year:	1086	1901 1991
No of people:	266*	950 800
* accounting methods having changed, allow five more as family for each person		



Mosaic floor in Roman villa in Lippen Wood