



# **ILMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL**

## **FLOODING 2012**

## **Introduction**

During November 2012 the Iminster area experienced a large amount of flooding principally based in 2 areas - Station Road and Ditton Street. Whilst the Town Council has little, if any, direct responsibility for matters relating to flooding it did feel that this was important issue for people who lived and worked in Iminster and therefore the Town Council should do its best to understand the issues. Once the Town Council had factual information it could decide what action, if any, it would be appropriate to take and the information could be shared with relevant organisations.

In order to collect factual information and enable local people to share their experiences and opinions the Deputy Mayor agreed to facilitate a meeting for Iminster residents.

Information about the meeting was hand delivered to approximately 230 properties in the areas that had been worst affected by the flooding. A media release was sent to local newspapers and radio stations giving details of the meeting and asking people to attend. Residents were also asked to bring photos of flooding to the meeting or email them to the Town Council office.

## **Residents' Meeting**

The meeting took place on the evening of 13 December 2012 at Swanmead Middle School in Iminster and was attended by at least 50 residents. The Deputy Mayor welcomed everyone and said that the purpose of the evening was not to apportion blame for any flooding incident but to share information about possible causes and solutions.

Based on the 2 areas that had been worst affected by the recent flooding attendees were asked to join either the group discussing the Station Road area or the Ditton Street area. Each group had a facilitator and note-taker and were asked to undertake 3 main tasks A) identify on a plan the affected areas B) identify potential causes of the flooding C) suggest preventative actions. In addition report forms were placed in each group area for anyone to complete.

## **Information Collected**

The discussions in the respective groups are summarised on the following pages. Following the meeting the office has continued to receive pictures and information and in addition 2 Councillors met residents and visited various locations to learn more about the flooding problem and the potential causes.

Whilst there are some shared concerns about the flooding issue for ease of reference the information collected and contained in this document is split between the Station Road area and the Ditton Street area. A further area of concern - Long Close / Heron Way - has recently been brought to the Council's attention.

## Emergent Themes

A number of themes and ideas have emerged from the information collected.

- **Clearance of ditches and watercourses**

- Proposed Action: Town Council to contact Somerset County Council to establish What drains & ditches they are responsible for
- When the said drains and ditches were last cleared
- When the said drains and ditches are due to be cleared again / cycle of cleaning & maintenance

- **Plans of Drainage Infrastructure**

Proposed Action: Town Council to contact relevant agencies to establish what plans exist of drains, the connections and where they run.

- **Need for a well publicised emergency (and evacuation) plan**

Proposed Action: Town Council to contact South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council to find out what emergency plan currently exists and how it is publicised. Town Council to work with relevant organisations to ensure plan and contact details are readily available to residents

- **Sandbags**

Proposed Action: Town Council to enquire of South Somerset District Council

- If there is a limit on how many sandbags per property
- Is it possible for a community / street to have 1 person acting as a liaison point who orders sandbags on behalf of pre – agreed area (this would help to reduce the number of phone calls being made which overloads the system)

- **Planning Permissions**

Proposed Action: Town Council Planning Committee to be reminded to bear in mind the possible flooding implications when considering plans for new buildings and developments.

- **Sluice Gates**

Proposed Action: Town Council to investigate whether or not the slice gates on the Horlicks site still exist, if they do how / when are they operated, if they don't what mechanism has replaced them

- **Underground River**

Proposed Action: Town Council to investigate possibility of underground river(s) / watercourse in the Winterhay area

**Home Farm Park and Home Farm Way, Station Road, and Holway House Park , and Green Lane area – points arising during discussion at the meeting**

- Many of the residents in this area felt that the main problem was down to lack of maintenance in the area, (Clearing drains, gully's and culvert's, dredging river, keeping banks maintained/re-built, Clearing a build-up of hedge cuttings in ditches).
- Residents in the Station Road area were very disappointed as the gullies in their area had last been jetted the previous year, and felt regular maintenance needs to be sort and felt if this happened, the gullies by the (Horlicks) Cheese factory would not have been so blocked and would have been able to support the rain/flood water appropriately.
- Some residents believed that the flooding in their area was due to the way the nearby farmers ploughed his field, tractor tracks being a different way which helped the flood water stream into roads and into residential areas.
- By the roundabout there is a concrete barrier by bridge, sluice gates were removed 20 years ago (which helped support the water from rising).
- Also at the river where there is an oxbow it had not been dredged for 30 years or more and said the dykes were level with the field.
- Sewage pumps affecting both which could also be a health and safety issue.
- Shudrick Stream was flowing very fast but did not overflow, if work at river was the same it would have helped the situation.
- Farmers and Landowners relentlessly cleared ditches in an attempt to stop water flowing into residential areas.
- Residents from one of the park homes site spoke of the water pocketing opposite the site which was made worse by inconsiderate drivers. They said that water was 3ft high it ran halfway down the park then across the river bank.
- Home Farm Way residents informed us that there are 7 gullies in their area, which could not cope as they were blocked with trees and vegetation and not cleared previously; water ran down from the top was 7-8ft high with nowhere to disperse. We were told of a gate into Home Farm Way being used as an emergency access for residents.
- Residents at Rose Cottage spoke of their home being flooded several times, it even came up through the floor.
- River dredging inadequate
- Some culverts are blocked
- Of 12 gullies 5 need cleaning
- Floods were made worse by inconsiderate drivers
- Home Farm Way – gullies (7) need cleaning
- Fields adjoining Home Farm Way are saturated
- Health issue with drains (sewage) overflowing
- Emergency measures for vulnerable people e.g. residents with mobility difficulties need to be put in place and publicised e.g. transport, central area for assembly, emergency power supply
- Need for farmers to clean ditches to help drainage
- Problem of depth of land between Home Farm Park and Holway House Park of 3'

- Drains need major clean through the area of Home Farm Park, Holway House Park, Station Road, Home Farm Way, Green Lane. Including the western tributary running past Hazelwell Lodge under the factory site to Winterbrook House
- The Powermatic Site is redundant at the moment, overgrown & with blocked drains – surplus water flowed into the western tributary which then broke its banks at the small area where it is open.
- The tiered levels of the park homes sites
- The sluice gates on the Horlicks site have been removed
- There is an underground river, possibly 2, running through the Park sites and Winterhay area

### **Comments Made on Flooding Report Forms**

"Water came down from corner of Home Farm Park to our house and then flowed down Green Lane into Rose Cottage. Water level reached ½ way up our front lawn."

"Issue for us is water coming from field opposite. If this could be stopped this would stop flooding of Station Road Horlicks River Bridge to Slape Court plus reduce risk of flooding to 132,134 Toll House plus Mobile Home Park."

### **Other Information Received**

"Mend the broken drain at the end of Home Farm Way crosses Station Road. Put in new pipe to the gully.

Check where the large drain pipe goes to down the left side of Home Farm Way find out what is blocking it at the end behind Rose Cottage (Green Lane).

Clean the ditches between here & Hart Bridge.

No more building on the fields (flood plain)

Suggest a large drain on North Side of Station Road from Holway House to the river."

(Telephone report)

"In 2009 after being flooded the gully which runs behind [properties in Home Farm Park] to the river bank, the Environment agency diverted the gully slightly to the north and built flood defences on the river bank and this stopped the flooding.

Flooded again this time (twice) and the flood defences on the river bank have eroded by at least 25%. He believes that the water flooded back up the gully.

The river flows from south to north. He believes that originally the gully was to drain the two fields behind his property. The field was flooded this time but drained away quite quickly. One of his neighbours has the sewage pump for the Berkley Homes site and there was a real problem with this."

(Telephone report)

"Property is the first house off Station road entrance. Been in touch with the highways Agency regarding the drains and the flooding. Spoke to XXXX and was told "unless houses started flooding they cannot do anything about it." Had an appointment with the Environment Agency regarding the problems but the EA cancelled at the last minute. Believe the flooding problems are due to bad

maintenance of the river and the drains. Now having trouble getting household insurance as this part of Ilminster has now been classed as a flood plain."

(Letter from resident of Green Lane)

"Flood water that comes from fields north of Home Farm Park, reaches our property after it has reached a certain level in Home Farm Way.

It comes into our drive and pours into the house and Conservatory. Water also comes up through floors in all the ground floor rooms and conservatory.

We understand that the flood occurs because a farmer will not allow the authorities access to his land to repair a damaged earth bank. Is there nothing that can be done to sort out this problem as further heavy rains could again flood our property?

You will see from photographs we left with you at the meeting on 13 December the devastation which the floods caused resulting in the property being uninhabitable for some considerable time meaning that we are again in rented accommodation.

A further problem occurs when sewage comes into the back garden through the man hole outside the back door being raised due to the torrents of water.

At the bottom of the garden is a small stream which enters our garden through the culvert under 31 Home Farm Park and continues through our garden to a much smaller culvert. This causes a build up of water and more flooding into the garden.

We realise you are not responsible for this but hope you will get this into the hands of those who can act."

(Email from a resident's relative)

"Flooding at Home Farm Way

The problem appears to be water building up and not being able to discharge into the main River Isle. The bottle-neck appears to be along Home Farm Way and the following may help alleviate the short-term flooding problem.

- 1) **Streams (a)** - slowing water down before it enters the River Isle may allow the stream from Home Farm Way to discharge efficiently. Slowing the water down in these streams could be achieved through removing some of the trees / or bring wood in and creating mini dams. If the water does build up it will flood the fields rather than Home Farm Way. it also increases the ecological value of streams
- 2) **Stream (b)** - this must be maintained free of any debris to ensure full efficiency of the stream otherwise it will back up and flood Home Farm Way
- 3) **Back Channel construction** - on the rough grassland adjacent to the River Isle a back channel could be created to function as a flood storage pound. This will need planning permission and advice from the Environment Agency. The landowner could get payment through Higher Level Stewardship.
- 4) **Develop a ditch system adjacent to Home Farm Road** - along the hedge you could dig a ditch to absorb some of the potential flood water. Removing or disturbing the hedge would have to be carried out in winter before the birds start breeding otherwise it would be illegal unless you prove there are no birds nesting.
- 5) **Stream (c)** - the other problem is the water entering this site from the ditch along Station Road. There appears to be high amounts of water running off the fields to the ditch system and then underground. Again, if some means of slowing the water down before it enters underground will help prevent Home

Farm Way from becoming flooded. You could use a similar system suggested in (1) for streams in this area.

Stream a – two stream flowing in to the River Isle from the road

Stream b – stream flowing from Home Farm Way to the River Isle

Stream C ditch and stream adjacent to Station Road and then running under the road

The majority of the work is relatively cheap. The only expensive works would be the creation of a back channel. However, this would be permanent and require little on-going maintenance.

### **Feedback from Councillors who visited one of the affected areas after the meeting**

#### **Holway Farm Park**

During the recent severely inclement weather the park flooded to the point where the water almost covered the pier walls supporting the homes thus putting the mains services at risk.

Several elements contributed to the situation:

- 1 The park is low lying when measured against the surrounding land levels thus hindering drainage
2. One half of the park is lower than the other and therefore increases the diluvium
3. Blocked gullies in the neighbourhood, those nearer the Horlicks site and on the corner of Home Farm Way, prevent the water from draining away.
4. The River Isle which receives the outflow of most of the drains and ditches in the area also presents problems. The bends are eroding and depositing sand and gravel in the main stream this slowing the flow. Several trees have been uprooted and lie across the stream, adding to the sluggishness of the flow.
5. During the recent downpours the river rose and inundated the nearby fields. This prevented the natural drainage in the ditches from the Holway Park / Rose Cottage areas to operate efficiently and so it backed up and flooded the properties.

### **Ditton Street, Shudrick Lane – points arising during discussion at the meeting**

- Flooding has happened since the road was resurfaced 2 / 3 years ago
- Has the size of the culvert by the entrance to the car park in Shudrick Lane changed?
- The grate on the culvert by the entrance to the car park in Shudrick Lane was put in 2 years ago – it collects a lot of debris and the water can't pass through it
- Water from Shudrick Valley is not draining off
- The Theaks site – now George Maher Court - used to have a tunnel for surplus water
- Water was running from Old Road down North Street
- There was so much standing water that there was nowhere for moving water to go
- The Swanmead area is a flood plain - that was how the name came into existence
- The balancing pond for Minster Heights is not working
- The speed of traffic passing through the water added to the problem
- Collecting silt and pumping ponds
- There needs to be an emergency plan for similar situations
- Possible help/hotline staffed by Town Council would be useful
- Phone systems at the District Council were overloaded
- Parking over the drains means they cannot be cleared when contractors try to do the work
- Pipes between / connecting drains may need clearing
- River Ile not cleared, therefore water can't flow into it and then it backs up
- Weed - Himalayan Balsom - is causing a problem in the river
- Horlicks site – are the locks being opened? There used to be a man on site to lift the locks.
- Water went down quickly – in approximately 2 hours – does this mean the flooding was caused by a blockage or under capacity?
- Do any of the Council's or statutory organisations have a plan showing the location of drains and where they run?
- Planning – concerns that more building in the area will cause more flooding as there will be less land for draining, more standing water and more capacity needed from the infrastructure - can the Town Council influence what and how much is built and where it is built?
- The strip drains along Ditton Street need clearing
- Level of the water table meant that sewage came up
- The force of the water flow down Shudrick Lane was considerable
- What is the number of sandbags each house may receive? – some only had 3 sandbags delivered
- Would it be possible for one person to phone on behalf of the street / group of houses – this would ease the phone line congestions
- It was difficult to obtain "Road Closed" signs so traffic continued to travel through the water, often at unsuitable speeds
- Local traders offered sandbags and use of signs from their own store
- Cutbacks mean drains are only cleared once a year not twice

- Insurance – premiums increase when a claim has been made
- Ditton Street flooded badly in the 1960s - there were memories of a boat being paddled down the road
- The area is listed as Category 1 – Low Risk Flooding
- The direction of ploughing on adjacent fields can have an impact on the water flow

### **Comments Made on Flooding Report Forms**

"No more building in Shudrick Valley"

"Much of the water came from Dillington Estate at far end of Shudrick Lane. Our garden was underwater as it has been a number of times in the last 4 years. Many pics some of which emailed plus movie footage with sound which must be viewed. Needs ditches and a reservoir area in Dillington Fields. SSDC to be open when poor weather is forecast. No new build to be allowed on Dillington Land. Dedicated team to manage the drains. Rivers Authority to address Himalayan balsam Wessex Water to address sewers overflowing."

"Wed 21<sup>st</sup> Nov (am) Water was pushed into the shop by passing traffic, this was due to the gully outside of the shop not being cleaned for over 5 years.

Sat 24 Nov (pm) Due to the heavy rain (for 12 hrs) & inadequate / blocked drains / culvert in Ditton St / Shudrick Lane our shop was flooded. We lifted the drain in the kitchen area at the back of the shop to brush the water into it, but the drain was 2" from the top full of brown water. We couldn't pour any water we were bailing out of the shop down the sink we had to empty it down the toilet. The water level dropped down to a puddle in 2hrs."

### **Other Information Received**

(Information in email (Dec 2012) accompanying photos)

- Storm drains in this section of Ditton Street were inspected by residents and were found to be reasonably clear *before* the flooding occurred however –
- The storm gullies running alongside the road at this point in Ditton Street were badly silted, most completely blocked
- After the flood had subsided, the storm drains and gullies were found to be severely silted ....."

## PICTURES OF FLOODING AT HOLWAY HOUSE PARK, and WINTERHAY AREA & accompanying email

"Following the recent meeting held at Swanmead school, regarding the flooding in Ilminster.

I have taken the opportunity to send some photos and my comments.

photo's 1 and 2 show flooding in the mobile home park, this is particularly worrying as once water gets into the park, there is no way for it to get out.

The bottom corner around 7 8 9 10 and 11 is bounded on two sides by banks about 4 ft high.

The residents are mostly pensioners and quite a few are infirm or disabled. If water gets into these park homes there is every likelihood that there would be a total loss situation because of the construction materials, unlike conventional properties. On the three occasions the fire and rescue service has attended but say they can do nothing to help.

The main flow of the water seems to come from a field ( formerly the bull field owned by Horlicks ) pictures 3 4 and 5 show that deep tyre tracks left after harvest. These very effectively direct all of the water to exactly where it is not needed, onto Station Road outside Holway House.

Because the road was not closed, traffic caused (bow waves) sending even more water into Holway house park.

Also the photo named undisturbed vegetation shows that little or no flow of water actually comes down the ditch at the boundary of Slape Ind est.

What water doesn't run from the field through the gate onto Station Road, runs down the ditch to the right of the picture not only through the pipe as it does normally but in a torrent across the top of the buried pipe.

It is possible, that the river Isle actually breached the bank to the south of this field sending water flooding over the field, but I cannot verify this.

I would also comment on the photo (gradient) This shows that the road actually runs downhill slightly from Holway House Park toward hort bridge. but possibly the drains and gullies are not able to drain the water away. As otherwise there wouldn't be a flood outside of Holway House

The last time the park flooded the culvert that runs from the top of intersection of Station rd and Home farm way was unable to cope with the flow possible due to a back up where it exits in the top of green lane behind rose cottage.

I think it only a matter of time before the other flood problem (behind Holway house park) which occurs at Home farm park and green lane, and the one on Station Rd join forces and then the residents of Holway house park will be in big trouble.

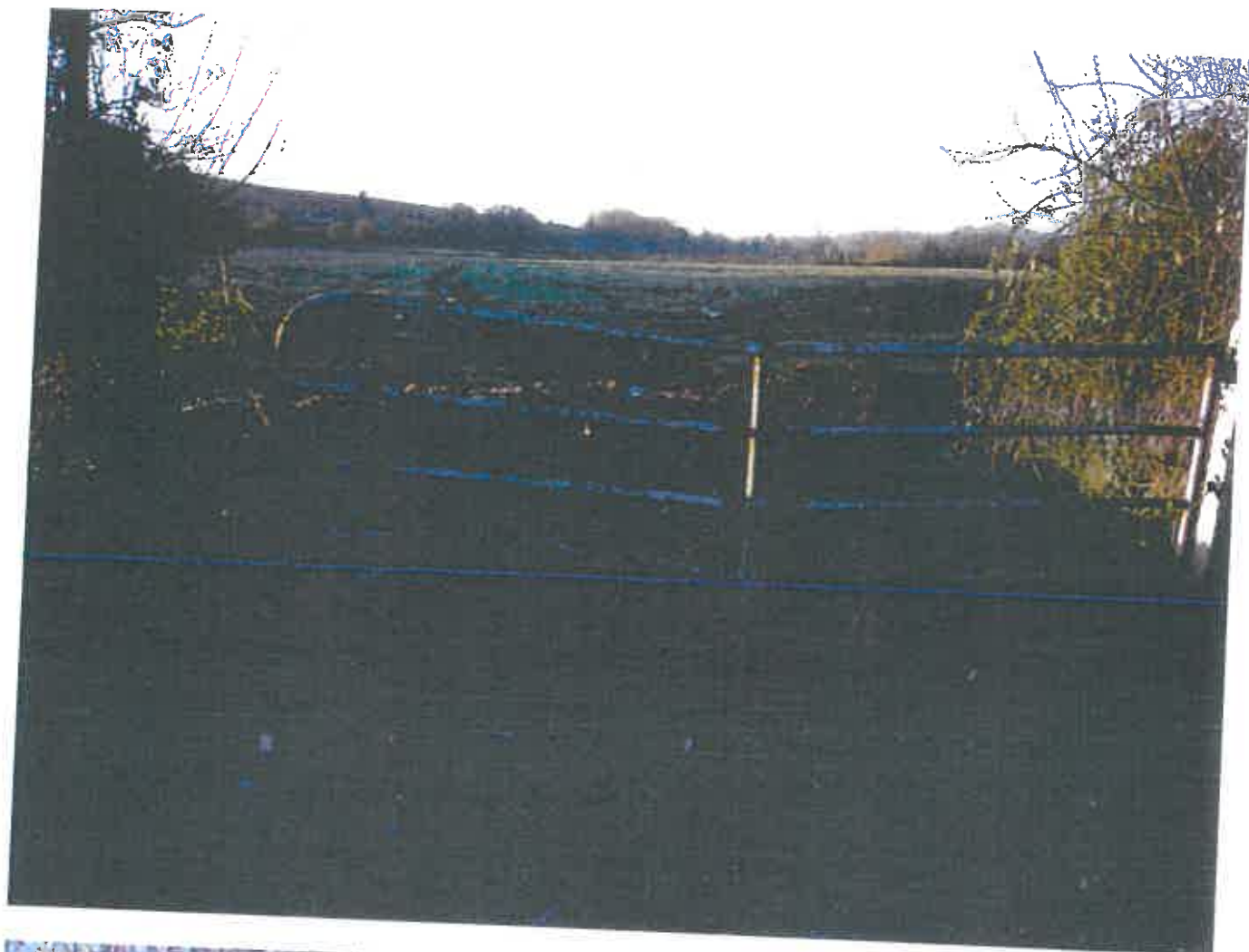
Whilst having no expert advice to offer I feel strongly that a lot of the problems could be relieved by.

1. better awareness on the part of the farmer who manages the ( bull field) with regard to ploughing post harvest and cropping parallel rather than at right angles to Station Rd.
2. That a detailed investigation into the adequacy of and regular maintenance of the ditches drains and culverts in the area. Especially in the area around Station Road, Home farm way and Green lane.
3. Adequate and regular dredging of the river Isle especially from above Donyatt to below Hort bridge
4. Early closure of Station Road in the event of flooding.

I would be most interested to receive updates on the action that the Town council proposes to take with the relevant authorities on behalf of we residents."









11.4 Mrs French Rose Cottage | Munsie



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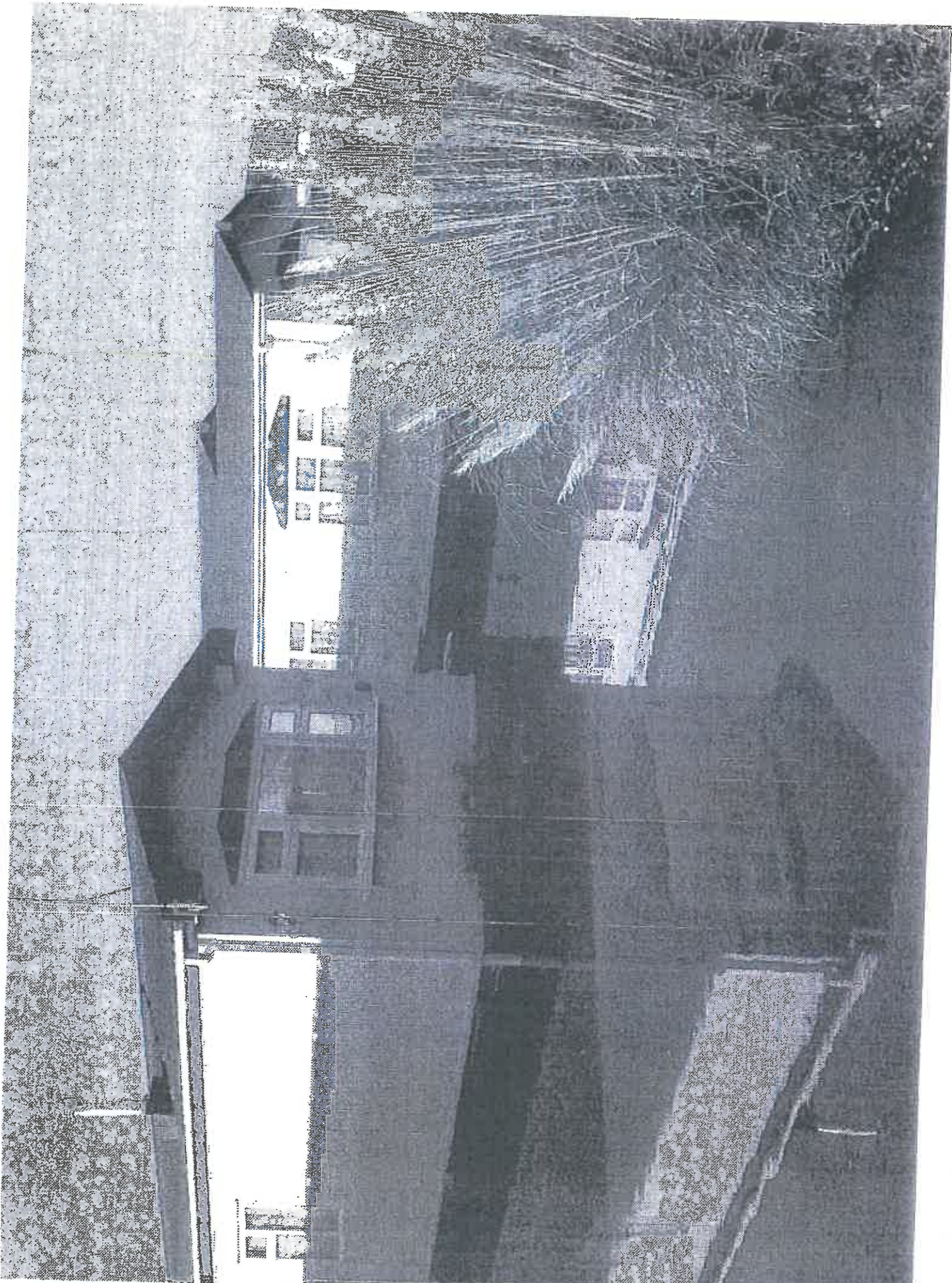
Mr & Mrs Henry



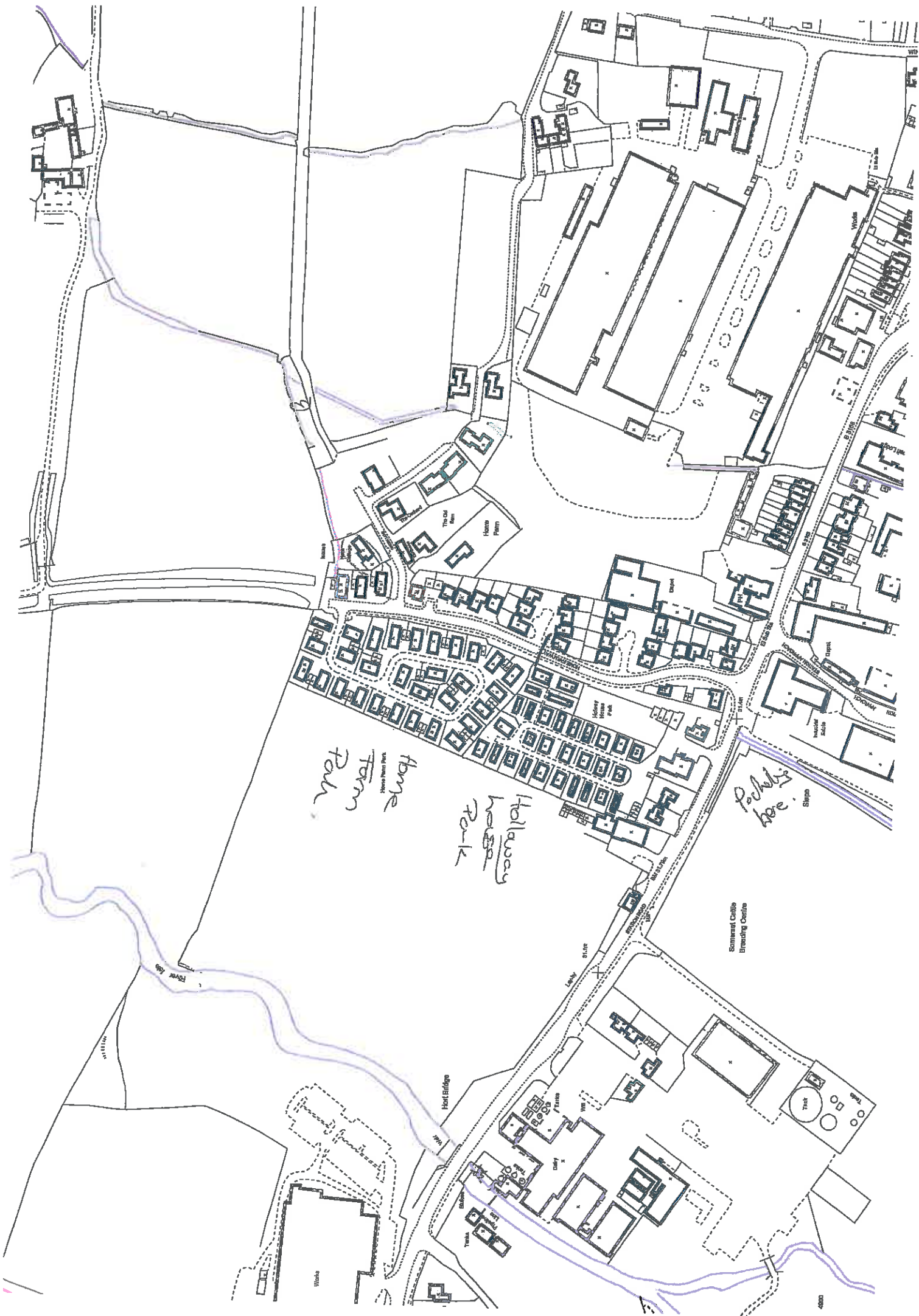
Pictures taken of  
Rose Cottage Green Lane  
13 Dec 2008 8am.  
almost identical to  
2012 ~~Dec~~ Nov 25<sup>th</sup> 3am  
01460 57496

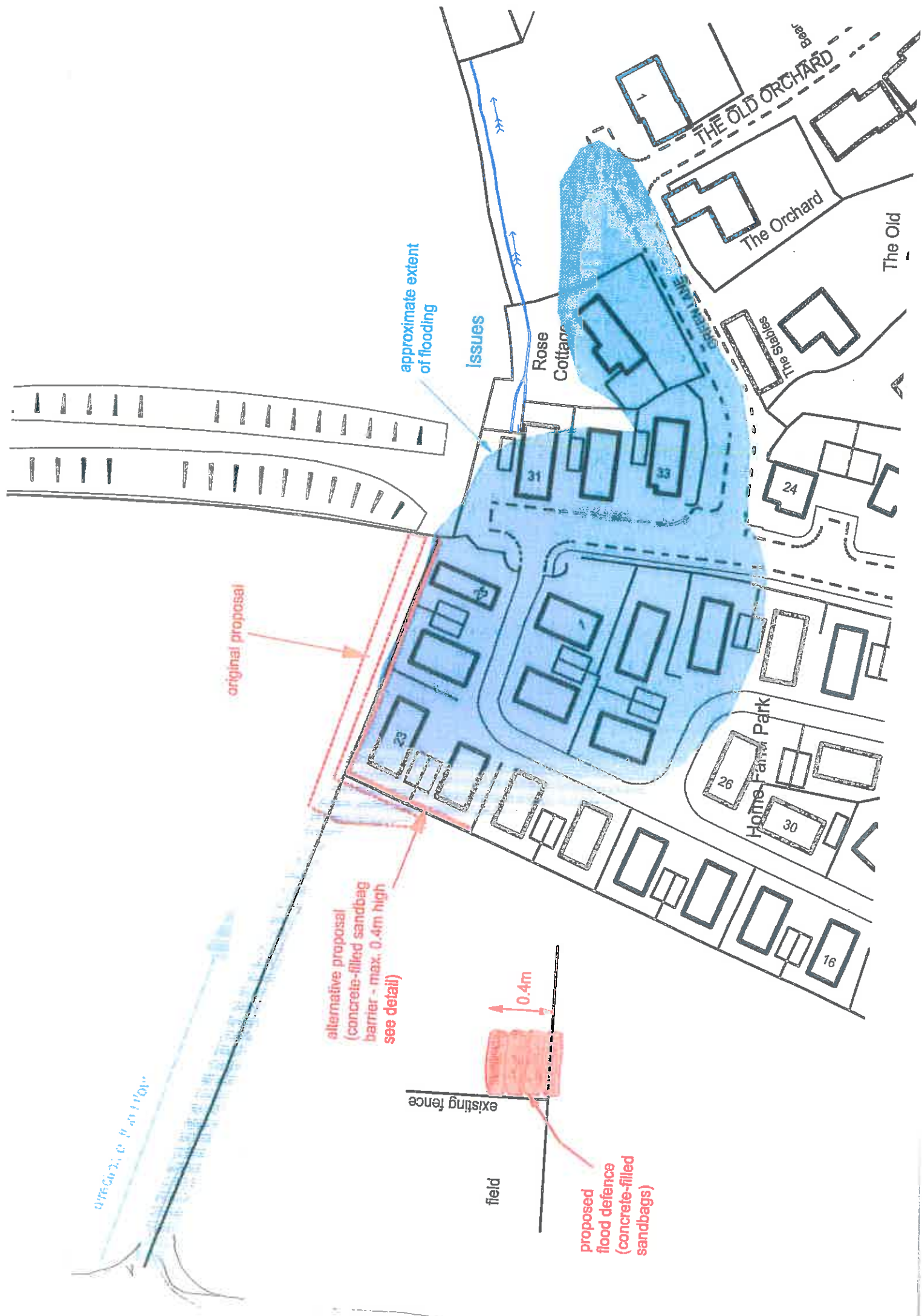














## FLOODING AT WINTERHAY

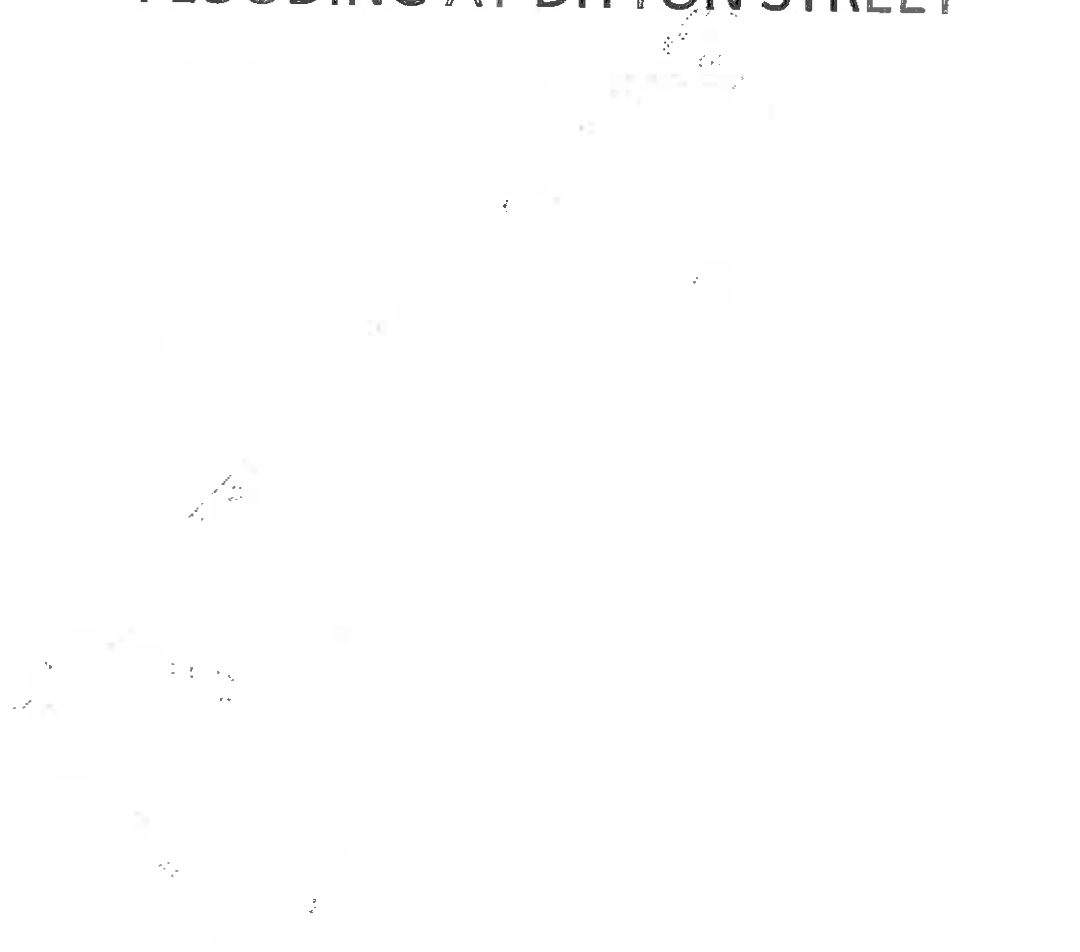








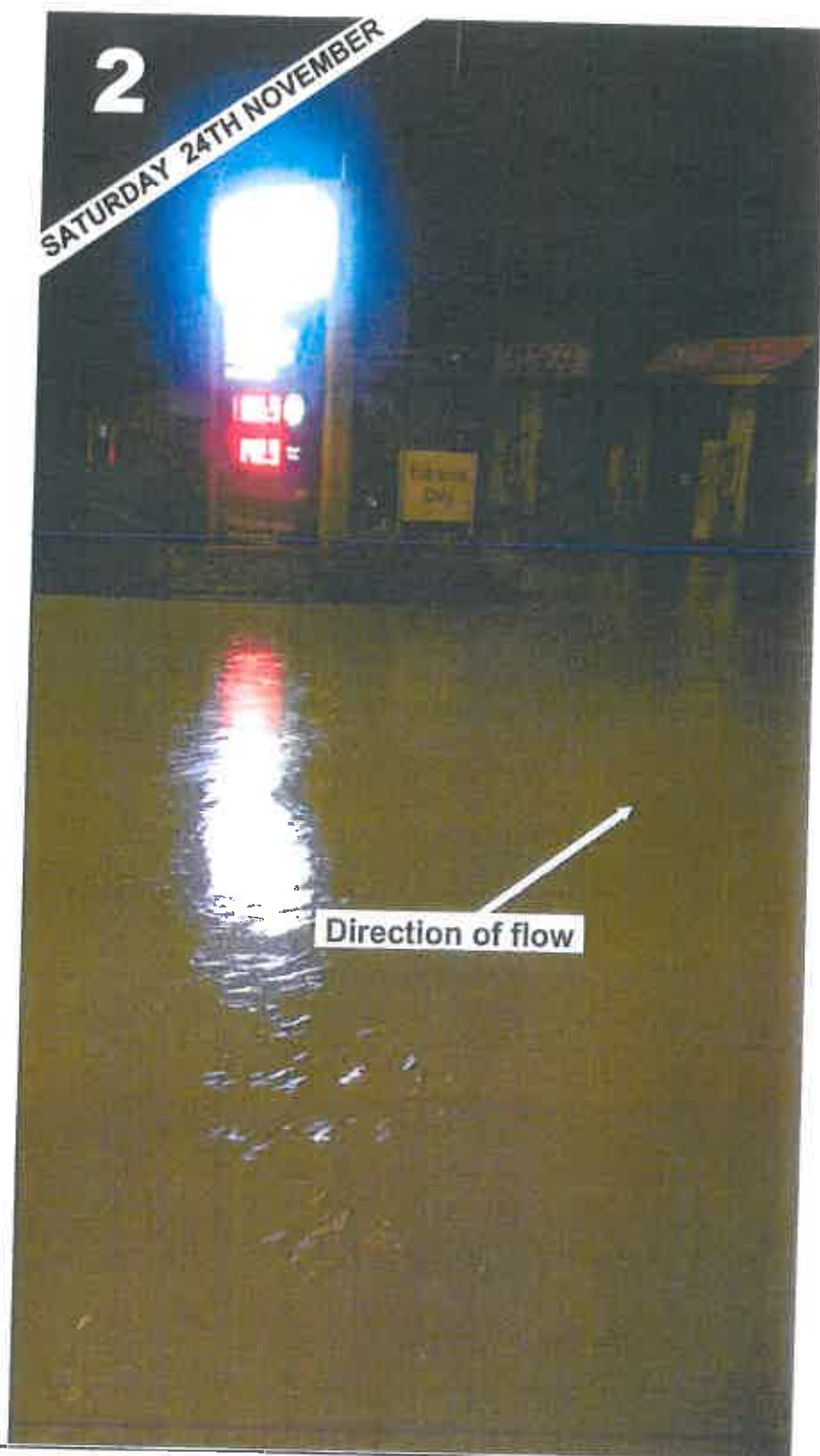
# FLOODING AT DITTON STREET





**1) 11pm. View from 30 Ditton Street (next door to the Chip Shop) looking across towards Orchard Vale and the bungalows in the background.**

Showing floodwater building up across the junction and up the entrance to Orchard Vale. The depth of water is over the curb and up to the level of the doorstep of 30 Ditton Street at this point of the flood.



**2) 11pm. View from 30 Ditton Street looking north up Ditton Street and across towards Tesco's petrol forecourt at the junction with Orchard Vale**  
Showing muddy floodwater flowing north up Ditton Street from the direction of Swanmead School. The flow was quite strong.

3  
SATURDAY 24TH NOVEMBER

Further issue for the residents was caused by the free, fast and inconsiderate passage of motor vehicles through this flooded area, early in the flooding. This created heavy bow waves which added considerably to the residents problems in preventing water ingress to their properties.

No local services were in attendance to regulate or stop this traffic at any time, save for one fleeting visit from a police van at around midnight. This after residents had made their own arrangements to curtail traffic flow.

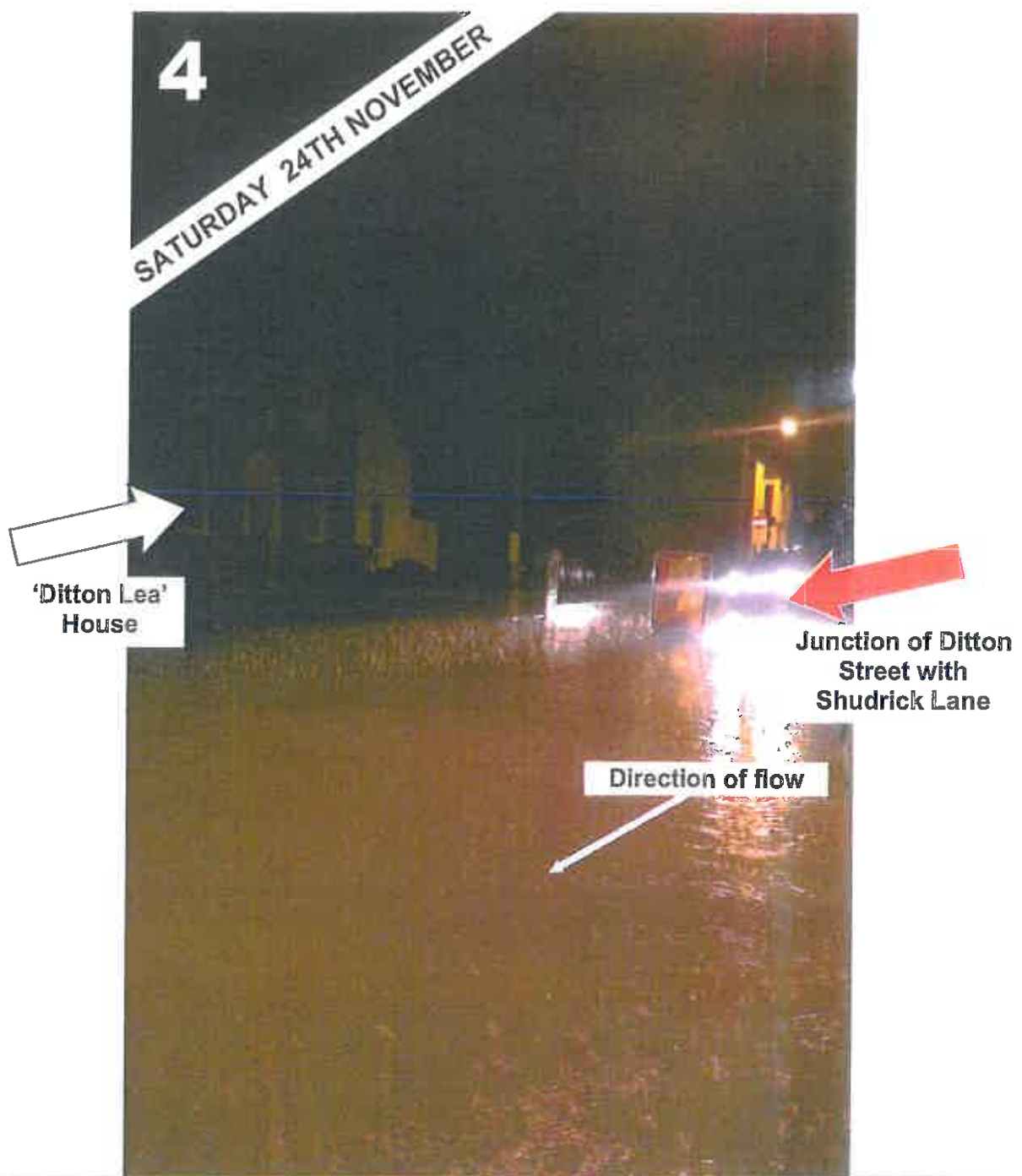
The storm drains and gullies running along this area were inspected by residents prior to the storm in anticipation. Whilst the storm drains appeared reasonably clear the gullies along the entire stretch were completely silted up.

Reported this to Highways Dept. on Monday 26th November. At 12th December they remain in the same state. Not good enough!

### 3) 11pm. Looking directly across the road from 24 Ditton Street towards Tesco filling station forecourt wall.

Situation at 11pm with the floodwater still rising. Water was flowing into this area south from the direction of Shudrick Lane and north from Swanmead School. Tesco's forecourt remained free of floodwater throughout. The level eventually reached the height of the yellow line shown on the lamp post (circled), by about midnight. This height was then around 9-10" - the same as from the curb height outside 24 & 24a Ditton Street. The water was extremely brown and clearly held a large mud content. The height to which floodwater rose was exacerbated by the silted up gullies running along this part of Ditton Street. It can be seen that Tesco's wall acts as a further barrier at this point in the road.

Heavy sandbagging plus a temporary flood barrier prevented water gaining any considerable ingress into 24 Ditton Street. Sandbags had, however, been made speedily available by the Council.



4) 11pm. Looking North from 24 Ditton Street towards Shudrick Lane junction, past 'Ditton Lea' on the left of the picture.

Clearly shows extent of flooding. Drainage at the *raised* Shudrick Lane *junction* (arrowed above) with Ditton Street appeared to be coping reasonably well, with marginal depth of floodwater. However, floodwater gathered on both the south and north side of the junction at this point very rapidly. Ditton Street to the north of the junction flooded from the bridal shop and south from the northern corner of the petrol station. It was noticed that brown floodwater was flowing down the length of Shudrick Lane, around the corner and pooling *at its deepest* in front of nos. 22, 23, 24a, 24 and 23 Ditton Street, where it reached a depth of 9-10" from the top of the curb. Tesco's petrol forecourt remained free throughout.

# FLOODING AT SHUDRICK LANE



Marck @ Silverstones, com for digital in a million



Mark@silverstones.com for digital images 01460 259124







































