

Alexandra, Vale and Crescent Road PLACECHECK

This Placecheck relates to:

- **Alexandra Road from Bournemouth Road to the Junction with Vale Road**

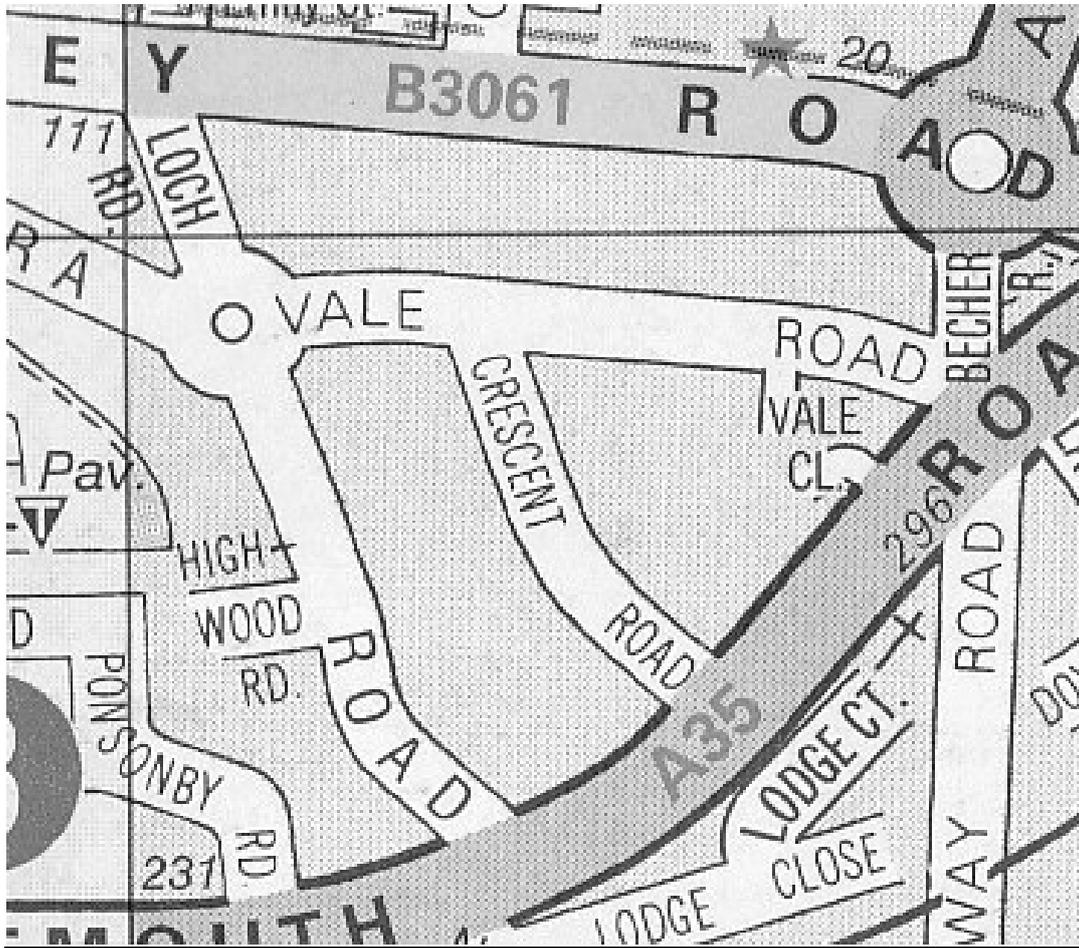


- **Vale Road from the Junction with Alexandra Road to Crescent Road**



- **Crescent Road to the Junction with Bournemouth Road**





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What is a Placecheck?

Placecheck was developed in the late 1990s by the [Urban Design Alliance \(UDAL\)](#). This successful scheme has been implemented in many places across the UK from neighbourhoods wanting to improve their local streets and open spaces to whole settlements getting involved.

The [Placecheck website](#) defines Placecheck as a method of assessing the qualities of a place, identifying what is liked and disliked, showing what improvements are needed, and focusing people on working together to achieve them. A Placecheck can start small: with half a dozen people round a kitchen table or a small group meeting on a street corner. The initiative can come from anyone, in any organisation or sector or individual resident of a street.

The [Poole Core Strategy](#) identifies that 'Local communities may have an opportunity to identify those features or characteristics they value in their street or neighbourhood. One way of doing this is through the use of Placechecks, where local residents can systematically identify the features that make up the character of their street or neighbourhood'. (PCS 6.134)

This Placecheck covers a small area and has brought representatives together in informal settings to identify area characteristics both positive and negative. In doing so it has strengthened the community by establishing connectedness between people and fostering a sense of pride.

Attempts have been made to involve everyone in the designated area through the distribution of a questionnaire in the format recommended by the Placecheck website, and ongoing informal discussion. In family households respondents were asked to reflect the views of the entire family. It was not considered appropriate to request demographic information as the area under consideration is small and reporting could breach accepted data conventions in respect of reporting low numbers that could occur in some categories; but it is clear that the area is primarily one of family homes.

National Considerations

Residents are concerned that the Communities and Local Government Department (2010) identified that the number of houses being built on gardens rose from one in ten to a quarter of new properties between 1997 and 2008 and that Poole was identified nationally as an area where this is an acute problem .

Residents therefore welcomed the revision of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) with two key changes i.e. the definition of previously developed land in annex B now excludes private residential gardens; and the national indicative minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare is deleted from paragraph 47.

The Minister Greg Clark identified that "For years the wishes of local people have been ignored as the character of neighbourhoods and gardens have been destroyed, robbing communities of vital green space."

The Importance of Green Space for Nature and Wellbeing

This Placecheck records the wide range of wildlife that flourishes in the gardens which create a green corridor between Alexandra Road and Crescent Road. Residents place a high value on the green space provided by their gardens. The stance echoes national perspectives. Simon Thornton-Wood, the Director of Science and Learning at the RHS, said: "Gardens, like parks, are the green lungs of cities, improving air quality, controlling air temperature and flood risk and providing a haven for wildlife. Beyond these very practical benefits of gardens, we know that gardening is great for physical and mental health".

According to the RSPB, "Gardens are mini nature reserves on our doorsteps and vital habitats for all sorts of wildlife. Many much-loved species rely on green spaces like gardens, such as the song thrush and house sparrow, both of which have suffered massive declines in the last few years."

The Placecheck area is close to Alexandra Park which is a valuable green resource to the area. Policies concerning parks and green space in gardens may have far reaching effects for well-being. Exposure to nature has been linked not only to higher subjective well-being, but also to better health and lower levels of stress, better work performance and concentration and reduced crime and aggression (see Bird 2007 for a review). Subjects exposed to views of nature show more positive moods than those exposed to urban views. (Rhode&Kendle 1994;Ulrich,1979).

Ross Cameron, of the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Reading, identifies: "Research has demonstrated that gardening can improve self-esteem, communication skills, attention span and even educational performance. In essence, protecting gardens is important to improve quality of life, and particularly for people in cities."

Whilst the gradients in Alexandra Park add to its character they can be restricting for the elderly and those with disabilities. One study found that seniors with access to parks and green space had higher life satisfaction. (Talbot and Kaplan 1991). There is an opportunity to provide greater access to Alexandra Park by extending it onto the existing flat vacant building plot owned by the council. This would allow access to the elderly and those with physical disabilities.

The Area

The Poole Core Strategy identifies that there are distinctive sub areas in Poole that have a strong local identity which is valued by residents and contributes positively to Poole's character. (PCS 6.132)

The area is a fine example of the early 20th century development of family homes and street design. Applying the criteria of the Poole Characterisation Study, the area is of a suburban detached character where the guidance is to maintain existing plot sizes and the medium density character of the development pattern as seen from the street. This includes avoiding the loss of space between buildings. In this context policy PCS5 is relevant 'on streets or parts of streets comprised mainly of houses proposals involving the redevelopment or subdivision of existing housing plots for flats will be resisted'.

The area was once known as St Aldhem's and part of the Parkstone Estate. House deeds indicate development of similar style houses in Crescent Road in the early 1900's. The same applies to Alexandra Road and Vale Road.

Houses In Alexandra Road, Vale Road and Crescent Road have distinct groupings of style This has a positive impact on the quality of the street scene and the overall distinctive character and appearance of the area.

Buildings are set back from the roads, with spacing between that emphasises the distinctiveness and character of each house and results in harmony. The site of a former school now contains a block of flats but these are hidden from the street scene by a curving drive and evergreen trees.

There are views through to the impressive green corridor between Alexandra Road and Crescent Road. This includes protected trees that are an amenity not only to residents but to the wider community.







The Approach

The Place Check Questionnaire

A standard Place Check questionnaire was used covering the following points:

- What do we like? (What needs protecting? Can we have more of the same?)
- What don't we like? (What needs changing now? What problems are getting worse?)
- What needs to be improved?

In addition there was a question on

- What types of wildlife have you seen in your garden?

A summary of returns from 31 households is contained in this Place Check

WHAT DO WE LIKE?

<u>1. Community</u>	<u>2. Housing</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sense of community• Neighbourliness and community spirit• Family atmosphere• Good mix of residents by age, background and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Old houses, strong character, traditional looking homes. Attractive cottage style that makes the road seem like a rural enclave in the town• Houses not identical but uniform in appearance, all built at around the turn of the 20th century• Victorian houses in Alexandra Road• Edwardian housing, many of similar design gives a period feel to the area• Aesthetic appearance of Alexandra Road• Most of the houses are still being used as they were originally intended – substantial family dwelling houses• No high rise buildings• Cared for properties and gardens



3. Space Vegetation and Tranquillity	4. Wildlife	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of space created by mainly 4/5 bed detached houses • Space between houses and in gardens create a peaceful wildlife sanctuary • Wooded nature of the area • A wide range of mature trees in many gardens ,sense of green • Gardens creating a continuous green corridor • Views of distant woodland from Alexandra Road and Crescent Road • Glimpses of the Purbecks • Quietness of the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bats – three species • Slowworms • Foxes • Frogs • Toads • Dragon flies • Newts • Flying beetles • Lizards • Squirrels • Magpies • Robins • Green and great spotted woodpecker • Garden warblers • Jay • Blue tit • Coal tit • Great tit • Thrush • Long-tailed tit • Wood pigeon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collared dove • Gold crest • Wren • Blackbird • Greenfinch, • Sparrow • Chaffinch • Nut hatch • Heron • Fire crest • Merlin • Cock chaffer • Stag beetle • Field mouse • Variety of moths • Damsel flies • May bugs • Bumble bees • Honey bees, hedgehogs • Butterflies • Ladybirds



5 Amenities

- Proximity to Alexandra Park and bus routes providing easy access to Poole and Bournemouth
- The new entrances to Alexandra Park
- Near to shops and other facilities
- Accessibility to varied types of shops
- Well lit roads

WHAT WE DO NOT LIKE

<u>1. Appearance</u>	<u>2. Traffic</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constant threat of over development at the expense of family homes• Paving or tarmac over gardens in front of homes• Move from family houses to flats• Derelict council land adjacent to Alexandra Park• Scruffy roundabout at the junction with Loch Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traffic up and down Alexandra Road - through route to Ashley Road• Cars driving too fast on the hill down to Bournemouth Road in Alexandra Road, Crescent Road and Vale Road• Use of Alexandra Road combined with a number of parked vehicles on both sides of the road makes Alexandra Road very dangerous• Parking – too many cars• Use of the road as an extension of limousine owner's business• A few of the houses are used for business purposes and others for non owner occupation; as a result there are many more vehicles, commercial or otherwise, parked in Alexandra Road than would otherwise be the case increasing dangers to children and animals





<u>3. Pollution/ Environment</u>	<u>4.Lack of Amenities</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busy roads make the area noisy • Pollution due to traffic • Dog faeces and dirty roads • Ashley Road becoming scruffy • Fast food litter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two local Post Offices closed, no independent green grocer (one has been established since the original place check) or fish shop • Lack of secondary schools that don't involve some sort of selection (Grammar, Catholic) • Lack of cycle paths • Cycle paths being used by parked cars • No local facility for getting rid of garden waste and bulky household waste for non drivers

WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED?

<u>1.Community</u>	<u>2.Character</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of involving everyone and giving opportunities to take pride in the area• Increased community Police presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn the area into a conservation area, especially Crescent Road and Alexandra Road• Preserving what is good about this area• The area should be protected to prevent houses being demolished• Need good sized family homes with gardens to be preserved• Trees and wildlife need protecting• The need for a floral display or sculpture on the roundabout; possibly developed in partnership with a sponsor and directly involving residents and disability service users who will gain benefit from being involved



<u>3.Traffic</u>	<u>4. Amenities</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent need for traffic calming • 20 mile per hour speed limit • Signs to help calm speedy traffic • Possible introduction of parking restrictions to alleviate the risk of incidents/accidents on the blind corner where Alexandra Road joins Bournemouth Road • Crossings for children on the roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with car space for disabled person • Green bins or a regular skip for those without transport • Would like electricity board to cut branches close to street lights • Patches of road surfaces need repair • Water drains need to be cleaned before winter • Notify residents when street cleaning will take place so that they can move cars/ do not undertake early morning when there are a lot of cars • Roads need cleaning more regularly • Need to remove fallen leaves from roads • Money to improve shopping in Ashley Road to make it more of a community • Local weekly market, like the one that used to be in the car park at Penn Hill • Reintroduction of Independent shops at Penn Hill

Conclusion

Residents are passionate about the distinctiveness of the area, valuing the historical character and harmonious nature of the housing, and the green corridor that supports a wide range of wild life which can be viewed through spacious gaps between houses.

There are concerns that the nature of the area could be changed by inappropriate development and intensification. The area contributes significantly to the provision of family homes and there is concern that redevelopment could reduce this resource.

There are significant concerns about the roads attracting vehicles from outside of the area due to the parking restrictions on Ashley Road, Loch Road and Bournemouth

Road. Alexandra Road is used as a parking facility by commercial organisations. Pressure also arises from visitors to Loch Road Baptist Church and the local residential nursing home, both as valuable community resources.

There are concerns about the volume of traffic that is not restricted by calming measures, which would help reduce the speed of traffic.

Whilst the area is highly regarded it is felt that there could be further improvements, including floral decoration of the roundabout at the junction of Alexandra Road, Loch Road and Vale Road. There are indications that it would be beneficial for discussion to take place with the Local Authority about cleaning arrangements for the streets.

The initial place check and this update has helped to foster a strong sense of community which provides a good base to take forward developments in the area in consultation and in partnership with a range of stakeholders.