

2. Identifying Local Distinctiveness

A) CHALK DOWNLAND

Landscape Setting



2.1 Much of the Chalk landscape is managed by a small number of large Estates. Arable farming represents the predominant land-use, characterised by large, rectangular fields. Field sizes have continued to expand in line with highly mechanised farming practices, far removed from the traditional farms associated with Hardy novels. Unimproved downland occurs in only a small number of isolated areas, usually on the steepest slopes. Fields extend down valley sides to the edges of each village. In consequence, the character and atmosphere of each village is strongly influenced by surrounding agricultural activities.

Communications.

2.2 Narrow, winding lanes that were in existence in medieval times and before connect minor settlements together. These lanes contrast with Ackling Dyke that passes in a straight trajectory over hills and valleys from Badbury Rings to Woodyates. The Roman road has similarities with the 18th Century turnpike roads (Wimborne-Cranborne turnpike, Blandford-Salisbury turnpike and Horton turnpike) which are also straight and largely clear of settlements. The Wimborne-Cranborne turnpike originally passed through the village of Wimborne St. Giles, before being diverted to the east of St Giles Park.

Settlements.

2.3 The largest settlements, still small compared with other centres in the District, are Cranborne and Sixpenny Handley. Elsewhere, the villages and hamlets are very small, and very quiet. Most villages are linear in form and concealed by the landscape. When travelling through the area on the main traffic routes, the former turnpike roads, the general impression is of a largely uninhabited landscape. A notable exception is Witchampton which is sited on rising ground overlooking the Allen valley and is prominent when viewed from the east.



Gussage All Saints lies concealed within the valley of the "Terrig" or Gussage Stream, a tributary of the River Allen.

2.4 Within the Chalk zone three groups of settlements can be identified:

i) **Chalk stream settlements.** These include Cranborne, Wimborne St. Giles, Gussage All Saints, Gussage St. Michael, Witchampton, Long Crichel.

ii) **Edge of Chalk settlements** The villages of Hinton Martell, Horton and Edmondsham occur in a line along the eastern extremity of the Chalk where it adjoins the Eocene deposits. Their landscape setting varies from the typical Chalk stream settlement.

iii) **Settlements of the Inner Chase** . A group of hamlets in the vicinity of Sixpenny Handley: Deanland and New Town, Woodcutts, Copley and Woodyates, which lie to the north of the Blandford - Salisbury Road. This area forms the heartland of the Cranborne Chase; its historic character still pervades this remote landscape.

The Chalk villages are all characteristically self-contained and separated by open countryside. Whilst they share many common characteristics,

each has its own unique identity, derived from its landscape setting, settlement pattern, building form and materials.

i) Chalk Stream Settlements

Landscape Setting.



Woods managed by the Crichel Estate enclose the south-eastern end of Long Crichel, in contrast to the rest of the village which is open in character on account of the lack of trees.

2.5 Each village is surrounded by pastoral or arable land. In some villages, the valley is open in character such as Monkton up Wimborne, Long Crichel and Mapperton with relatively few trees and with farmland that penetrates the villages. In other settlements, the valley setting is more treed, as at Witchampton, Gussage All Saints and Almer. The nucleus of Wimborne St. Giles is enclosed by the close knit treescape of St Giles' Park, whilst the majority of dwellings are sited in the open valley. Mature treescape in many villages provides enclosure and shelter, one effect of which is to heighten the contrast between the lush valleys and the open Chalk downland. Fine specimen trees are often clustered around the local church and manor house. Manswood is unique on account of its location adjacent to the extensive woods of Chetterwood. This small, seemingly isolated Estate village is strongly influenced by its woodland setting.



Former wood cutters cottages at Manswood, loosely clustered within a leafy hollow between historic Chetterwood and Oakhills coppice.

2.6 Although Chalk stream villages share many common characteristics, each relate differently to its water-course. At Cranborne, the River Crane flows as a winterbourne through the centre of the settlement. Elsewhere, dwellings tend to be sited on slightly higher ground near by, away from poorly-drained land. In Wimborne St. Giles, the Terrig (otherwise known as the Gussage Stream) flows between two parallel lanes; cottages extend along the lanes and face towards the river.



Water Street, Cranborne is one of the few instances where cottages look directly onto the watercourse.

Settlement Pattern

2.7 In these linear settlements, cottages are commonly located close-to, and orientated end-on to the village street. These are set in long, narrow plots that extend away from the road and which follow the ancient field pattern. Siting the dwelling at one end allows maximum use of the plot for husbandry. 'Small houses' may also be close to the village road, but tend to face directly onto it and frequently have front gardens bounded by low walls or hedges.



The village street in Gussage All Saints is spatially articulated by these cottages, a pattern which unfortunately is not followed by modern development elsewhere in the settlement.

Building Form and Materials

Cottages



The basic form of the vernacular cottage, such as building width and roof height, is generally consistent, but a variety of features makes each one unique, Elm Tree Cottage, Gussage All Saints, features a single gable and half hip and irregular fenestration pattern.

2.8 Most of the cottages are thatched and date from the 17th or 18th Centuries. Such buildings are quintessentially small and humble in character and it is fortunate indeed that so many remain close to their original form. The roof pitch of these cottages is typically 40 - 45 degrees, with building spans of 5 metres. Eaves heights are characteristically low, often little more than single storey, with attic rooms ventilated by a small 'eyebrow' window. Donkey sheds, wood-stores and other ancillary single-storey buildings attached to the ends of these cottages have now mostly been incorporated within the domestic accommodation as an 'outshut'. The mono-pitched outshut is also common at the rear of these cottages, used as a kitchen and/or bathroom. The main entrance door was traditionally centrally placed, although subsequent small additions have often altered this relationship. Early cottages have a central chimney stack, but those on 18th

Century cottages tend to be at one or both ends of the ridge.



The Buildings at Manswood is reputed to be the longest continuous row of thatched houses in England. Note the rear slate roofed outshut and their tall chimneys.

Small Houses.

2.9 These are mostly 18th and 19th Century, reflecting the increasing wealth and widening social range of the community. The buildings have spans of 6 metres, with a higher eaves height. These are normally constructed of brick but knapped flint bands are not uncommon. Plain tiled roofs are a particular feature of the area.



No.8 Village Street, Edmondsham fits the 'Small house' category, as defined by Brunskill. Note the alternating plain and fish-tail clay tiles on the roof and parapet gables. Identical stacks incorporated within each gable and symmetrical fenestration are common features of such buildings.

2.10 19th Century Estate houses feature in Long Crichel, Wimborne St. Giles, Witchampton and Cranborne. They are normally constructed of mellow brickwork with tiled roofs, but are particularly noticeable on account of their ornate detailing, especially those belonging to the Crichel Estate. This is expressed in the use of decorative roof and ridge tiles and finials, tall chimney stacks and pots, window head details and other embellishments,

all of which combine to create houses of great individuality and character. Despite the variety of motifs, the total effect is completely harmonious and unified, reflecting the craftsmanship and quality of materials that have been invested in these modest buildings.



Solid, substantial houses contrast with equally characterful clapboard bungalows, all built at the turn of the Century by the Crichel Estate.

2.11 A clear hierarchy of buildings is still evident in several villages, especially those which have evaded recent development pressures, such as Long Crichel. This hierarchy, focuses on the manor house or converted rectory and reinforces the rural and historical social structure.

ii) Edge of Chalk Settlements

Landscape Setting

2.12 Unlike the Chalk stream villages, these are not focused on a watercourse or water-meadows, but are compact villages surrounded by open fields that extend to the village as distinct edges. The topography of each settlement varies but each is partly enclosed by nearby woodlands which occur on the adjacent Eocene deposits.

2.13 Horton, for example, lies amongst open farmland at the head of a shallow valley, enclosed to the north and east by woods on the nearby Reading Beds. Nearby, springs source Uddens Water. Hinton Martell lies on level ground, close to springs at the foot of a steep, wooded escarpment, again on the Reading Beds. Edmondsham House and the parish church are located on Chalk, but the village itself is mostly sited to the east on a rounded hillock overlooking Edmondsham Brook, which is on

clay. Once again the settlement setting is enclosed by woodland to the north, east and south.

2.14 Each village is approached by winding lanes which descend towards the settlement. On the Eocene edges these descents tend to be steep, with deep, wooded hedge-banks.

Settlement Pattern

2.15 The linear villages of Hinton Martell and Edmondsham comprise Small Houses and Cottages which face onto the road behind hedged gardens. This pattern is repeated in Horton, another linear village, but several buildings are adjacent to the road and boundaries are walled.

Building Form and Materials

2.16 The most common building type is the two-storey house, which is typically of brick with a plain tiled roof and, occasionally with stone tile eaves courses. Welsh slate is not uncommon. The colour and texture of bricks vary from tones of orange to red. Burnt headers also occur.



Brick comprises the most common building material in Horton. In the 18th Century clay was dug from the adjacent hill and used for brickmaking.

2.17 Building spans of 5.5-6.0m, with eaves height of 4.5m are common. Roof pitches are commonly of 40 degrees, giving an overall height of 7.0m.

2.18 Cottages in the area are single storey with attics and are commonly of rendered cob under thatched roofs.



The scale and character of vernacular cottages derive from small rooms and low ceiling heights. Attic room windows are normally within 60cm. of the floor. Harkaway Cottage, Woodlands

iii) Settlements of the Inner Chase

Landscape Setting

2.19 This group of villages and hamlets are sited close to an irregular band of Clay-with-Flints, near the northern edge of the District. This represents some of the highest land in the District affording long panoramic views south and eastwards. Immediately to the north, forming a backdrop to these settlements, is a heavily-wooded ridge. This provides an important landscape edge, visually dividing the Cranborne Chase from the West Wiltshire Downs. Most of the villages are contained within dry valleys, surrounded by farmland and close to extensive beech, oak and ash woodlands.

2.20 Fields are large and of regular shape to facilitate corn production, but are surrounded by thicker hedges, often containing hedgerow trees. Similar hedges line the narrow winding lanes, which add to this area's seclusion and sense of remoteness. Villages, hamlets and farms are largely hidden from view to give the appearance of a seemingly empty landscape.

Settlement Pattern

2.21 Most settlements have a linear form focusing on the single village street. In Sixpenny Handley, this tradition was repeated after the disastrous fire of 1892. However, the Estate hamlet of Woodcutts is uncharacteristic: it is neither located in a dry valley, nor has a linear form. Instead, it stands on elevated, flat ground and is loosely based on a cruciform

configuration near the 18th Century Manor Farm-house.

2.22 In New Town, buildings are grouped informally on the steep north slopes of a dry valley. Most are single-aspect cottages facing south, with outshuts at the rear under catslide roofs.



Chase Woods form the backdrop to New Town. An informal path leads up the steep hillside, linking this close-set group of cottages.

Building Form and Materials

2.23 Flint walls and Welsh slate roofs are a characteristic feature of this area. Some walls are entirely of flint, but more often are combined with brick. Wide bands of flint alternate with one, two or three courses of brick. Flints are also used to form plinths for cob walls, which are rendered, either having a natural finish or colour-washed in pale tones. Occasionally, cottages may be thatched, these tending to be located in more sheltered sites. In Sixpenny Handley, several cottages have pantile roofs which replaced thatch following the Great Fire.

2.24 The majority of traditional dwellings are cottages. Typically, these have spans of 4.5 to 5.5 metres. Most are two storeys but have a low eaves height of 4.0-4.5m. Many cottages have shallow pitches giving an overall height to ridge of less than 6.0m. These are mostly simple two-bay buildings with small, square windows with casements and a central doorway. Stacks are commonly located at each end of the ridge, flush with the end walls.



A narrow span two storey house in Woodyates; its low pitched slate roof extending at the rear to cover a two storey outshut. The walls are of flint, with brick quoins and horizontal bands.

Other Characteristic Features of the Chalk Zone:

Farm-Buildings in the Chalk Zone

2.25 The density of farms outside villages is low within the Chalk zone compared with the other geological areas, but they are often larger in size. Farms feature in all the villages, or are closely associated with them. Some villages contain more than one farm, notably Long Cichel, which possesses four. Traditional farm buildings reinforce the rural character of the villages as well as introducing a pleasing contrast in scale and form. Mapperton Farm totally dominates the tiny settlement of Mapperton. Elsewhere, farms often occur at the edges of the settlements.



The size and position of the farmhouse often reflected the size of the farm. Middle Farm, Long Cichel.

2.26 Traditional farm-buildings are still common, built normally of brick or of timber-frame construction on a brick plinth and clad in weather-boarding. Roofs are characteristically plain tiled, though many post 1840 buildings are roofed in slate. Barns constructed in the 18th Century and earlier were originally thatched but

have since been re-roofed with slate, tiles or corrugated iron. Only one complete thatched barn remains in the District, at White Mill Farm near Sturminster Marshall, although at the time of the survey this was over-clad in corrugated iron.



White Mill Farm barn, before restoration in 1998.

2.27 The traditional arrangement of barn, cattle shed, cart-shed, stables, granary, pigsty and other minor buildings around the farm-yard is still evident on many farms, but supplemented with large, modern portal-frame structures and silos. Many of the traditional buildings are unsuitable for modern farming. They are still being maintained by farmers and landowners, but the stock of such buildings is gradually diminishing. In Witchampton and Hinton Martell, farms which once stood in the centre of their respective villages have been converted into housing.



Modern sheet metal silos surrounded by traditional farm buildings near Cobley.

Churches

2.28 Historic churches represent an important feature of each village. At Sixpenny Handley, the church is on high ground and forms a focal point from the surrounding landscape. Elsewhere, the churches tend to have limited landscape significance on account of their sheltered location and presence of trees. Most

churches contain towers, which often form the oldest part of the structure. The church at Pentridge is the exception, having a squat, broached stone spire. At Moor Crichel, the church is located in private parkland between Crichel House and the lake.

2.29 Many churches represent the oldest remaining village buildings. Their longevity is largely due to the robust materials used in their construction. Green Sandstone and flint, indigenous to the Chalk, form the characteristic materials for walls, although heathstone (brought in from the adjacent Eocene area) occurs in Cranborne and Witchampton churches. Originally, the medieval churches would have been thatched or clad in lead, but are now tiled.



All Saints Church, Gussage All Saints, parts of which date from the 14th Century

Boundaries

2.30 Old boundary walls of brick-and-flint or chalk-cob with tile-capping are common in and around Chalk villages. Notable examples of cob walls occur in Cranborne, Long Crichel and Moor Crichel. Flint walls become more common further north, especially in Sixpenny Handley. At Witchampton, the boundary wall to Abbey House forms one of the earliest examples of brickwork in the County.



Old boundary walls often display strong sculptural elements and textural qualities. Manor Farm, Woodcutts.



High chalk cob wall with Roman tile capping surrounding an old orchard in Long Crichel.



Coursed flint work with random ashlar pieces, capped with brick. Moor Crichel.

Treescape

2.31 The dominant indigenous tree species are beech, ash, oak, and field maple, with willow and alder in the valley bottoms. Douglas fir and Scots pine are also common trees on account of the forestry activities over the last 100 years. Yew is a characteristic chalk landscape tree and can be found in most churchyards. Occasionally, yews occur as roadside trees, as at Dead Man junction, south of Cranborne. It is reputed that

these wind-blown trees are in excess of 1000 years old and were planted to act as road-markers in snowy conditions.

2.32 Some of the finest trees occur where parklands meet villages, as in Cranborne, Wimborne St. Giles and Pamphill.

2.33 Hedges in the rural landscape are predominantly of blackthorn, hawthorn, elm and hazel. Hedges of yew and box feature in Witchampton, especially near the church.

B) HILLY CLAY ZONE

Landscape Setting

2.34 The eroded dip-slope margins of the Chalk are overlaid by Clays and Sands of the Reading Beds, producing a hilly landscape of farms and woodland. Farms are mixed, with grazing for dairy and beef cattle more common than on the Chalk. The number of individual farms has declined, especially in recent years. Fields are now often rented out to neighbouring farms on a year to year basis, for arable or cattle grazing or for horses.

2.35 Field sizes vary, but in many areas the landscape is characterised by relatively small fields, bounded by thick hedgerows. These hedgerows, thicker and taller than those commonly found on the Chalk, often connect woods and copses which are prevalent in the area. They also form continuous boundaries to the country lanes, often associated with hedge-banks, to create an enclosed and intimate landscape. The hilly topography affords a number of long-distance views, most notably those from Chalbury churchyard. Substantial parts of the zone are designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value in the East Dorset Local Plan (Deposit).

2.36 Although much woodland has been cleared for farming, many small oak woods and copses remain. These, and the thick hedgerows that connect them, form the most important landscape feature of the Clay villages. Because of their dispersed form, these settlements tend to filter out into the surrounding landscape. Often,

large, well-treed enclosures merge with nearby woods and copses.

Communications

2.37 The only road of significance, the Shaftesbury-Ringwood turnpike (originally a drove road), cuts briefly east-west through this narrow zone at Horton. Most characteristic are narrow, winding lanes that permeate the area. These connect a clutch of villages, hamlets and farmsteads, most of which are distributed in the southern half. Linking these lanes is a dense network of public pathways and tracks.

Settlement Pattern

2.38 Early settlements have avoided the narrow band of Reading Beds that lies between the Chalk and London Clay. The only exception is Pamphill, which contains cottages that date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

2.39 The Clay zone is drained by numerous small brooks and ditches which flow south-eastwards towards Mannington Brook and the River Crane. The availability of water from wells meant that early settlements were not dependent on water-courses. Most of the villages, hamlets and farmsteads are irregularly scattered throughout this zone.

2.40 Agriculture appeared late in this densely-wooded area and the distribution and size of settlements have historically reflected the reliance on commoners' and warreners' rights to sustain livelihoods. Throughout the area can be found common-land, sometimes no more than narrow strips alongside the country road. Holt Wood, Gaunt's Common, Broom Hill, Lower Row, Chalbury Common, Woodlands, Woodlands Common and Pamphill are shown on the 1903 O.S. maps as being centred on triangular or irregular greens.



The triangle at Gaunts Common has been gradually built over.

2.41 Within the last 50 years, many of the settlements between Woodlands Common and Holt have experienced considerable change. Many tiny cottages, considered unfit by modern standards, have fallen victim to redevelopment, partly as a result of pressure for new housing and partly through the enforcement of public health Demolition Orders. Although much development is dispersed amongst paddocks and small fields, the once separate settlements are beginning to coalesce. The enclosed, well-wooded nature of the landscape appears to help absorb development without impacting on the wider environment. However, the siting, form and materials of post-war building bears little resemblance to the traditional forms and materials of this area. At Woodlands, for example, an intricate and irregular grouping of traditional cottages and out-buildings east of the Old School has been replaced with a uniform row of post-war buildings.

2.42 East of Horton, the Shaftesbury-Ringwood road is now thickly clustered with a succession of farms and farmsteads, far removed from its sparse occupation at the turn of the century.

2.43 In contrast to these changing landscapes, to the north-east of Edmondsham, on higher land from the southern villages, are the hamlets of Cripplestyle, Crendell and Daggons; ancient place-names but seldom comprising more than a few cottages and farmsteads linked by narrow, hedge-lined lanes. Despite its proximity to the expanding settlement of Alderholt, this area has remained unaltered and maintains a strong sense of seclusion and remoteness.

2.44 The clear hierarchy of buildings manifest in the Chalk villages, is less apparent in the

Hilly Clay Zone. Large Houses are a rarity; Great Houses are absent altogether.

Building Form and Materials

2.45 Timber-framed buildings in East Dorset, of sixteenth or seventeenth century origin, are concentrated in this zone. There was an abundance of local materials: oak for the timber-frames; hazel and clay for the wattle and daub panels, whilst locally-grown straw was used on roofs, supported by pole rafters of sweet chestnut or larch.



Square panels and straight braces characterise East Dorset timber frame buildings. Vicarage Farm, Holt.

2.46 Few timber-framed buildings survive today, so their conservation is vital. Examples of wattle and daub are rare, as panels have over time been infilled with brick nogging.

2.47 Outside Pamphill, timber-framed buildings often stand as isolated structures, especially as farm houses. They vary in size and status; some are two-storey houses, whilst others are single-storey-with-attics cottages.



Hart's Farm, Horton, a single storey with attics timber frame 17th Century house, part re-faced in brickwork in the 18th Century.

2.48 More representative of the area are cob and thatched buildings, mostly but not exclusively, of the eighteenth-century and early nineteenth. They share many characteristics of

Chalk area cottages, but the walls are composed of clay-mud cob having a lower chalk content and higher fibre content, such as horse hair or heather.

2.49 Cob buildings are most commonly found as single-storey-with-attics cottages, having spans of around 5 metres and a height to ridge of approximately 6 metres. Because cob requires a critical mass to achieve structural stability, the material was seldom used in the construction of gables. Instead, thatched roofs tended to be half-hipped or hipped. Chimney stacks often occur at one end of the ridge, built in brick and incorporated within the gable. Roof pitches fall between 35 and 40 degrees; steeper pitches are less common.



Many country cottages have been lost this century as a result of demolition orders. Invariably they have been replaced with modern houses or bungalows. Beekeeper's Cottage, Manswood, is one of the few remaining that retains its original identity.

2.50 Local brickworks provided readily available materials for new cottages and houses in the nineteenth-century and for re-facing earlier cob buildings. Welsh slate was used to replace thatched roofs, perhaps following a fire. It was not unusual to use this opportunity to raise the height of the building. Victorian details, such as exposed purlins at gable-ends, may be seen superimposed on older structures.

2.51 Nineteenth-century extensions to dwellings were normally at the rear, at right-angles to the main range and built of brick and tile or slate. The pitch of the extension roof coincides with that of the main roof.

2.52 Traditional buildings within the dispersed villages are most commonly detached and set in generous plots, their orientation responding to local site conditions rather than conforming with historic boundaries.

2.53 Small clusters of Estate Houses are associated with the Gaunt's and Kingston Lacy Estates.



Owners have a responsibility to preserve the character of interesting old buildings: retaining timber windows, decorative barge boards, tiled roofs and tall stacks. Estate houses near the Grange, Furzehill.

2.54 Elsewhere houses (normally tied to particular farms) tend to be isolated and lacking in architectural ornamentation. Despite their plain appearance, these traditional houses are nevertheless well proportioned and robustly built.

Farm Buildings in the Clay Zone

2.55 Small farms are densely scattered throughout the area, more often than not located outside the villages. Many farm buildings were constructed in the 1840's, when the rural economy enjoyed a prosperous period. Consequently, the buildings are most commonly of brick construction under tile or slate roofs and grouped around the traditional farm-yard. Most are associated with an adjacent farm-house.



Brick granary with implement shed at Higher Honeybrook Farm, now used as a blacksmith's forge.

Churches

2.56 The only church of historical significance that lies within the Eocene area is at Chalbury.

Dating from the 13th Century, this tiny church (suggesting that Chalbury was never much larger than at present) is built of flint and rubble with ashlar dressings.

2.57 Small churches and chapels of the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries stand at Pamphill, Holt, Holt Wood and Woodlands.



All Saints Church, Chalbury, partly refaced in brick, is now mostly rendered. Note the plain bell-cote on the west gable, and the stone eaves courses on the chancel roof.

Boundaries

2.58 Rural hedges represent the predominant form of enclosure around building curtilages, many containing large oaks. Boundary walls are comparatively rare.

C) HEATHS, CONIFER PLANTATIONS AND OAK WOODS

Landscape Setting



Avon Heath Country Park.

2.59 Sands and gravels of the Bagshot and Bracklesham Beds cover the south-eastern half of the District, giving rise to extensive areas of heathland. The generally inhospitable

conditions and poor communications on the heathland areas meant that, apart from the occasional exercise of squatter's rights, the area remained un-populated until the nineteenth-century.

2.60 Since the First World War, the area of heath has declined as substantial conifer plantations were established by the newly formed Forestry Commission. Significant areas of heathland have also disappeared as a result of agricultural improvement and rapid urbanisation, especially since the 1960's. This area now contains the main centres of population within the District, gravitating towards the south and separated from the Bournemouth-Poole conurbation by the Stour valley.

Settlement Pattern

2.61 A few individual examples of indigenous buildings remain within the zone, mostly confined to rural areas and within the township of Verwood. However the most complete and unspoilt grouping of cob and thatch buildings within this area occurs on the north slopes of Colehill. This intimate landscape of small fields, high hedges and great oaks is accessed by an irregular network of deeply-cut lanes, tracks and footpaths. The cottages too form important features, their siting, form and materials in harmony with the landscape. A number of cob and thatch cottages are sited close to the lane edge; others are set back within large plots. Several cottages, often those which retain most of their original identity, remain part of the Kingston Lacy Estate. One of the smallest is a single storey cob and thatch cottage, complete with pole rafter roof structure, located in Merrifield.





Above, cob and thatched cottages in Merrifield, a tranquil backwater on the north slopes of Colehill.

2.62 The traditional well-proportioned Victorian or Edwardian villa, constructed of mass-produced brick and Welsh slate, forms the nucleus of the now urban settlements. One of the largest concentrations of nineteenth-century housing (outside Wimborne) is at West Moors. Along straight, residential streets off Station Road, individually-crafted villas were built on large plots, giving the occupants the opportunity to plant native and newly-introduced exotic trees and surround their gardens with high laurel hedges.

2.63 Modern development has overwhelmed earlier building to such an extent that 'local distinctiveness' in this zone, in the context of traditional building pattern and form, becomes irrelevant in all but a few areas. Within the urban areas, 'sense of place' is achieved by familiar landmark buildings (new or old), buildings of a particular style or form, well-defined urban spaces, mature trees, interesting paving materials and other townscape elements. These areas lie outside the scope of this study. (see Supplementary Planning Guidance No.15 Visual Analysis of Wimborne Conservation Area).

D) PASTORAL RIVER VALLEY

East Dorset District Council Planning Department, Supplementary Planning Guidance No.21 (August 1999)

Landscape Setting

2.64 This zone comprises the wide alluvial valley of the Stour which cuts across the Chalk, Reading Beds and Bagshot Sands at or near the southern edge of the District. The riverine landscape is quite distinct from the adjacent geological areas.

2.65 The wide meanders of the Stour lie within an irregular band of alluvium, to the north and south of which are intermittent deposits of valley gravel. The string of settlements that occupy the valley are all confined to the slightly higher, better-drained valley gravel areas.

2.66 Within the Chalk section of the river, the flat-bottomed valley is enclosed by gently rising ground, focusing on Badbury Rings to the north and Charborough Park in the south. Within the narrow Reading Beds section, the slopes are much steeper, especially at Pamphill. The steep, southern slopes of Colehill and Dudsbury form notable wooded backdrops to the river as it flows through the otherwise flat Bagshot Beds zone.



Rough grazing land on the slopes below Little Pamphill,

2.67 This is a predominantly open, flat landscape of large fields -mostly for pasture- bounded by hedges and hedgerow trees. Generally, trees fringing the river to the west of Wimborne tend to be sparsely distributed, but eastwards the river banks are more treed.

2.68 Dairying remains important on the flood-plain, with arable crops (traditionally corn) grown on the gentle slopes of the drier Chalk. To the east of Wimborne, market gardening has grown in importance in response to demands from the expanding population of Bournemouth and Poole.

2.69 To the west of Wimborne, the sense of history is all-pervasive. The settlement names are Saxon in origin and present-day farmers still refer to meadows first recorded in the fourteenth century.

2.70 The river flows through a pinch-point between the urban areas of Wimborne and Merley near Canford Bridge. The residential suburbs on the slopes on the southern side of the river at this point appear obtrusive but elsewhere the valley landscape is essentially agricultural and remains an effective buffer between the conurbation and East Dorset settlements. The attractive group of old buildings at Canford School form an important focal point to the surrounding valley and Colehill to the north. Other, more recent developments, such as the Wimborne by-pass, sewage treatment plant at Leigh, Wimborne and golf courses at Dudsbury and Sturminster Marshall, are less serene. At Longham, the landscape buffer is pierced by various recent developments that line the main Ringwood Road.

2.71 The settlements and mill sites are spaced about 2 miles apart along the valley separated by agricultural land. Those to the east of Wimborne are influenced to an extent by the proximity of Bournemouth and Ferndown suburbs. The villages of Cowgrove and Shapwick, however, are very rural and belie their proximity to larger centres. Both settlements maintain their close historic associations with the surrounding land.

2.72 The Stour meanders close to the Parish Churches of Shapwick and Sturminster Marshall: their ancient stone towers further contributing to the pastoral landscape. However, the diminutive Church of All Saints at West Parley, with its timber bell turret, makes much less impact.



St. Bartholomew's Church, Shapwick, the nave and tower are mostly 14th Century, built onto an earlier structure. The walls are of flint and rubble with ashlar dressings. A mixture of Purbeck and heathstone is used, with Purbeck stone tiles on the roof eaves.

2.73 Around Sturminster Marshall, agricultural land- mostly pasture- in large, hedge-lined fields extends to the rear boundaries of village properties. Often these boundaries are kept low by residents to preserve views of the valley. Large, (mostly) arable fields with low hedges surround and penetrate Shapwick, whilst smaller fields of arable and pasture bounded by higher hedges and hedgerow trees, are more characteristic of Cowgrove. Medieval enclosures close to the farmsteads are still in evidence. In contrast, the open valley landscape surrounding Hampreston is influenced by market gardening.

Communications

2.74 Roads follow the outer margins of the river valley on both sides of the river, including the A.31 Trunk road (former Wimborne-Dorchester Turnpike) which, since 1982, bypasses Wimborne to the south. This crosses the river near the industrial estate at Leigh. In contrast, the quiet lanes on the north side link the villages of Pamphill, Cowgrove, Sturminster Marshall and Shapwick. To the east of Wimborne, roads are more heavily trafficked, as at Longham, but Hampreston and West Parley villages remain quiet on account of their off-road location.

2.75 Other bridging points are more ancient, some dating from pre-history. The Roman roads radiating south from Badbury Rings crossed the river at two places, at Shapwick and near Pamphill, but little evidence of these remains today. The settlements within the zone coincide with the bridging points, past or present, though

Sturminster Marshall lies a kilometre to the south-west of Whitemill Bridge.

2.76 Fine road bridges, Julian's Bridge (15th Century), White Mill Bridge (16th Century), Longham Bridge (18th Century), and Canford Bridge dating from 1813 are all Listed. Apart from affording good views of the river, the bridges themselves provide focal points and enrich the valley scene.

Settlement Pattern

2.77 Historically, most settlements within this zone are small, nucleated villages. One of the smallest is West Parley. The size of its Church indicates that it was never large, but Domesday suggests that the settlement at this time was larger than at present. The Church, the former Rectory and nearby farm buildings represent the core of the settlement. The importance of the farm in the rural community is also exemplified at Hampreston village. The 18th Century Manor Farm stands importantly opposite the Church across the village green.



Brick represents the most common building material in the Stour valley, east of Wimborne. Manor Farmhouse, Hampreston.

2.78 Shapwick and Sturminster were originally compact nucleated settlements, their early development restricted by the surrounding open fields which remained unenclosed until 1813. The Church/Farm relationship is maintained in both villages, although the farm buildings at Shapwick have now disappeared. The main focal points of both villages are the Market Places. At Sturminster, this comprises two linked triangular greens; at Shapwick stands a market cross. Cottages cluster around both spaces.

2.79 Cottages remain the dominant building type in Shapwick, but many in Sturminster have been redeveloped. Development of gardens and

paddocks has also impacted on the character of the village. The siting, form, design and materials of most modern dwellings have little in common with the earlier buildings.

2.80 Single, paired or rows of cottages face directly onto the village road, normally without any front garden. 'Pinch-points' in the streets occur where individual or groups of buildings face each other. The cottages were traditionally associated with large plots, including allotments shared by rows of cottages.



The mixture of building forms and materials create variety in this village street scene. The scale and proportions of the buildings and the spaces between them, together with hedges and trees ensure harmony. Public spaces provide valuable sites for big trees. Back Lane, Sturminster Marshall.

2.81 At Sturminster, the railway halt and Cheese Factory (reputed to be the largest in the world in 1939) consolidated development to the south of the village and considerable infill development in the form of planned estates in this area has occurred since.



The design of many houses of this period followed one of a number of published pattern books. Though clearly contrasting from the earlier vernacular buildings, such houses are traditional in terms of their proportions and materials. In most instances only two or three were built in any single locality, in keeping with the area's slow organic growth. High Street, Shapwick.

2.82 Cowgrove differs from other settlements in this zone, having a linear form but with no parish church. The settlement comprises a series of farmsteads and cottages on either side of the village road, many dating from the sixteenth-century. The form of the village has changed little since medieval times, although modern portal-frame barns are becoming increasingly evident.



Farmsteads line the village road in Cowgrove.

Building Form and Materials

2.83 To the east of Wimborne, buildings of the 18th Century or earlier are scarce. Small pockets of 18th Century buildings occur at Longham and Little Canford, constructed of brick with plain tiled roofs. Even rarer, the original core of the Fox and Hounds public house at Little Canford has walls of cob under a thatched roof; the 16th Century Old Manor Farm house, nearer Wimborne at Leigh Common, represents one of the earliest examples of brickwork in the area.

2.84 Vernacular buildings are more common to the west of Wimborne. Groups of timber-framed buildings occur at Sturminster Marshall and Shapwick, with the largest concentration at Cowgrove, where supplies of oak were abundant. Cob buildings, with thatched roofs, are typical of this area. Water reed has been used on some buildings, but combed wheat is more prevalent. The traditional thatching style for East Dorset, having smooth, rounded shapes with flush wrap-over ridges, are increasingly evident. Roof pitches are typically 40 degrees, but can be steeper where layers of thatch have built up over a long period of time.



Court House, Cowgrove, an early 17th Century timber framed house, with wattle and daub panels, all treated with lime wash.

2.85 Rendered cob walls are a feature of many cottages, although some are faced in 18th or 19th Century brickwork. Plinths of stone, flint or brick are traditionally tarred or painted black, a local tradition.



Thatch was still used in East Dorset as late as the 19th Century. For example, Trafalgar Cottage, Back Lane, Sturminster Marshall, has rendered walls, which are of rubble, above a brick plinth, perhaps recycling materials from an earlier building.

2.86 The 'Small Houses' category of buildings are also well represented in the area. Some are 18th Century farm-houses, but the majority date from the 19th Century. Walls are of brick, or occasionally render, under plain tile or slate roofs. Typically, spans are 6m with ridge heights of 6.5 to 7.5m and eaves height of 5m.

2.87 Traditional buildings are simple in both form and elevation treatment. Gable ends are common, whilst half- or quarter-hips are common on thatched buildings. Mostly, small, square windows with twin opening casements are pierced symmetrically into predominantly solid walls. Dormer windows are rare.

2.88 Typically, front doors are centrally-placed, except where subsequent extensions have elongated the building. Stacks are traditionally located at one or both ends of the ridge and incorporated within the walls.

have relatively few trees, which accounts for their open character



Smooth textures of render and slate enhance strong tonal contrast between walls and roof. Priory Dairy House, Shapwick, has Georgian sliding sash windows, perhaps reflecting the status of the building. Note the tall chimney stacks which give poise to the building.

Farm-buildings

2.89 Traditional farm-buildings to the west of Wimborne reflect styles and materials as found on the adjacent Chalk, whilst to the east of Wimborne, brick and tile or slate are prevalent.

Boundaries

2.90 Hedges represent the most common boundary treatment throughout the area. They are essentially rural hedge species of hawthorn and hazel with few hedgerow trees. The roadside hedges in particular make an important contribution to the character of each settlement. The hedges link buildings within each settlement and link these with the surrounding countryside. Combined with grass verges and ditches, they provide an informal, green edging to the rural lanes. And in places where modern development impinges on the village scene, the hedges often provide an element of screening.

Trees

2.91 Trees are locally important features, especially within churchyards and close to some of the larger houses. Individual specimen trees, in particular, make a significant contribution to the character of several Conservation Areas located within this zone. Generally, however, the Stour villages of Cowgrove, Shapwick and Sturminster Marshall