

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES

Introduction

Some form of settlement has existed in Charmouth since the Iron Age. The origins of the village that we know today probably date from the late 13th century, and the 'town' created by the Cistercian monks. However, in terms of buildings, virtually all the built environment we see today has been built within the last three centuries. At the turn of the last century the village comprised houses on either side of the street, some cottages on either side of Old Lyme Hill, a few buildings adjacent to what is now Lower Sea Lane, and very little else.

Since the beginning of the last century the village has expanded to fill the open spaces. Between the wars dwellings were erected in the area bounded by Old Lyme Road, The Street, and Lower Sea Lane, evolving into the areas we know today – Westcliffe Road, Five Acres, Higher Sea Lane, and many of the houses on the western side of Lower Sea Lane. This period also saw the provision of Local Authority housing, initially two terraces in Bridge Road, and then further development in Higher Sea Lane, Nutcombe Terrace and Wesley Close.

The area bounded by Lower Sea Lane, The Street and the River Char also evolved, with developments of individual properties such as those in Meadow Way and River Way, and in the mid-twentieth century a strip of land between 'The Shack' and Charmouth School was compulsorily purchased in order to create the upper section of Wesley Close, linking Lower Sea Lane to Bridge Road. This area was extensively developed for Local Authority housing in the latter part of the 20th century, the brick-built terraces, semi-detached houses, bungalows and flats - much of this is part of Magna Housing Association's stock, although a significant proportion of the houses are now privately owned having been purchased under the 'right to buy' scheme.

The last years of the 20th century, and the time since have seen further development, mostly residential, to the point where there is very little space for new building.

Taking an overview of the village as it is today, it is true to say that there is a great deal of variety. As regards the older buildings which stand on either side of The Street, there are no two which are alike. There is some communality in terms of forms and materials, but virtually every building has an individuality which sets it apart. There are developments within the village which clearly stand as sharing a co-ordinated design strategy: The Grange, a row of detached houses between The Street and Wesley Close is one of the older examples; Hammonds Mead, with its rendered walls and slate roofs giving a singularity to the various types of dwelling; Kidmore Close has a similar feel to it; Double Common, with its formal arrangement of period style dwellings fronting on to the access road, and then

arranged around the 'square' at the upper end of the development; Barney's Close and Queen's Walk demonstrate the 'pick-&-mix' vernacular approach adopted by certain local developers, adopting a number of different house plans, but clearly discernible as having been built as a single scheme; there are a number of small developments with similar coherence in terms of style and materials such as Downside Close and Greenhayes (off Old Lyme Road), St George's (on the south side of The Street, Devonedge, and Nutcombe Close, among others.

A prime example of the randomness of how Charmouth has evolved is the disparity in building styles at a point in Lower Sea Lane just before Hammonds Mead. On the right (west) a private road of five 1930s houses set at right angles to the road, and next to it the 'new' Charmouth Primary School, unmistakably modern with its imposing projecting gables. On the other side a 1970s bungalow, then the Little Tea Gardens flats, very well designed and beautifully built in brickwork and plain tiles, but very incongruous in that particular setting; and next to that 'Sea View' an 18th century cottage occupying a wedge shaped site where River Way doubles back in the direction of Bridge Road. Five examples of buildings which could hardly be more different.

For good or for ill the village is what it is, with its mix of old and new buildings, its variety in terms of the density of development, and its spatial relationship with the undeveloped and green spaces which break up and de-urbanise the settlement, enhancing and reinforcing the fact that the village very much exists in a rural setting. These days the bypass provides a natural 'edge' to the village on the northern, inland side, making it easy to forget that less than three decades ago The Street was part of the Honiton-to-Folkstone trunk road, (and that runaway lorries have caused changes to the street scene!)

Although Charmouth is still blessed with a decent range of shops and facilities for a settlement of its size, a changing society, and in particular a more mobile society, has transformed the village from a more or less self-sufficient community to the Charmouth we see today, a largely residential settlement, with a high seasonal influx of visitors on holiday.

Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Important Local Buildings

The frontages of the main street up through the village comprise mainly period buildings, with some more modern replacements, infilling and additions. There are some three dozen Listed Buildings, most of these fronting on to The Street, and these form the core of the Charmouth Conservation Area. All the Listed Buildings are Grade II, apart from The Abbot's House (formerly the Queen's Armes Hotel) which is Grade II*.

The Charmouth Conservation Area comprises in broad terms tranches of land on either side of The Street and part of Axminster Road, including Barrs Lane, and parts of Lower Sea Lane and Old Lyme Hill. It includes the rear gardens of the properties on the north side of The

Street, many of which are defined by the stone walls which delineated the historic 'burgage' plots of the settlement in earlier times.

Going up through The Street and Axminster Road the Listed Buildings on the north side are: Toll House, Bow House, Stow House, The George, Primrose Cottage, Charmouth Lodge, 3 The Manor House, 2 The Manor House, 1 The Manor House, The White House, Hillside, Albury House, The Court, Monk's Rest, and The Stone House.

Coming back down through the village, the Listed buildings on the other (south) side comprise Grange House, Hill View, Thatched Cottage, Foxley Cottage, Badgers, Charmouth House, The Royal Oak, Littlehurst, The War Memorial, The Rectory, St Andrews Parish Church, Winton House, Beech House, Carrum House, Littlecote, The Abbot's House, the former United Reformed Church, and The Lilacs.

Other Listed Buildings in Charmouth are The Lookout near the Heritage Coast Centre, and Langmoor Manor on the Western approach to the village from Lyme Regis.

The Conservation Area Appraisal for Charmouth and Chideock lists a number of important local buildings, most of them forming part of the frontages of The Street and Axminster Road. These include Jasmine Cottages; Melbourne House; Catherston Manor Farm buildings; Mintaka; 1, 2, 3 and 4 Firlands; Bay Tree Cottage; No 1 Devonedge; Nos 1 & 2 Greensted and Nos 1 & 2 Lane End in Barrs Lane; the block from Charmouth Stores to Stanley House; The former Coach and Horses; The Elms; Langley House; Albury Cottage; Luttrell House & Perla; Shoe and Stocking; Dolphin House, Grasmere & Fountain Cottage; Portland House & Garden Cottage; Bayville Cottage, Granville House & Waterloo House; Askew House; Melville; The Rosery & The Holt; Heron and Charm Cottages; Knap and Box Cottages, Foxley House and Foxley Green; Claremont; Alpine Cottage and Hillcot Cottage on Old Lyme Hill; Candida and Grange Cottages; The Old School House, St Andrews Hall and Coastguard Cottages in Lower Sea Lane. Old Lyme Hill has several other important local buildings, Lyme Cottage, Seafields, Silver, St Gabriel's, Digory and Meadow Cottage.

For additional information regarding Charmouth's Listed Buildings and Conservation Area see the Charmouth&Chideock Conservation Area Appraisal on the Dorset For You website, which includes a map of the Conservation Area.

Shops/Retail Premises, etc

Self-evidently these are difficult times for shops and retail outlets, particularly in smaller villages. Charmouth has the advantage of a seasonal influx of visitors to bring in trade, but there is no doubt that the high level of car ownership, home deliveries by the major supermarkets, and on-line shopping are making it increasingly difficult for shops to survive.

Although shops exist primarily for the purpose of commercial trading, they form part of the fabric of community life in other ways; by providing employment, mostly drawn from village

residents; they are places where a degree of social interaction takes place, often between people who otherwise move in different circles; they form part of the 'bush telegraph' within the village; they also provide a degree of grass roots 'monitoring' in a community where the population has a significant proportion of people who are elderly or have health problems.

Charmouth has a number of shops, most of them located in the centre of the village near the junction of Lower Sea Lane and The Street. The Arcade on the north side of The Street at the junction of Barrs Lane comprises Herringbone (which occupies the former Charmouth Post Office), Fortnam Smith & Banwell Estate Agents, and Morgans newspaper, stationery and hardware shop. The end shops are currently vacant, having been occupied by a hairdressing salon and a butcher's shop, both of which have closed. Behind The Arcade is Charmouth Bakery, a bakery supplying bread, cakes etc to local outlets, with its own shop outlet accessed from Barrs Lane. Further up The Street on the north side is the remaining (35 years ago there were three) supermarket in Charmouth, the Nisa Store, (formerly Dampiers Stores), and Breeze the adjoining craft and gift shop. On the other side of the road Street Parlour in Grade II Listed Winton House still presents as a shop front in terms of the street scene, but has been closed for some time. Herringbone's former premises, situated just above the Library, is now an eco shop and coffee house, South Westerly.

On the south side of The Street, opposite The Arcade, there is Charmouth Pharmacy, which occupies the premises which were formerly Braggs Stores and then Ida's Gift Shop/Tea Rooms. Next to that is Abode a Home Furnishings and Decor shop, and then The Salon Hairdressers.

Other shops and retail outlets include Charmouth Caravans/Dorset Leisure Centre, selling caravans and related equipment which occupies the site which was formerly the Jet Filling Station and The Old Forge fossil shop selling fossils and crystals.

Next to the foreshore car park, on the ground floor under the Heritage Coast Centre there is a fossil shop, and also Sea Lily selling jewellery and gifts. The south west corner of the ground floor is occupied by a shop next to the Beach Cafe, selling beach items and clothing.

The facilities at the 3 camp sites within the village boundaries include shops; there is a general grocery store in the reception building at Seadown, and a similar shop at Wood Farm.

Halls, Meeting Rooms & Places of Assembly

Charmouth has a number of venues where events and gatherings of varying sizes can be accommodated. The largest is the St Andrews Community Hall in Lower Sea Lane (formerly Charmouth Church Hall), which has the main hall with a stage, a smaller meeting room, and a kitchen. Built in 1910, the hall has been re-roofed and extended in recent years. Uses and

activities listed include: Parties/Discos, Art, Exercises, Bingo, Meetings, Plays, Tae Kwon Do, Dinner Dances, Badminton, Short mat Bowls, Clubs/Societies and Dog Training. The Village Hall, formerly the W.I. Hall is located in Wesley Close, and next to it is the Youth Club Building. The Hollands Room is on the ground floor of one of the blocks of warden-maintained flats in Bridge Road, and is the venue for events for senior citizens. The Elms is situated in The Street, and as well as housing the offices of Charmouth Parish Council, its meeting room, The Mallory Hayter Room, is available for meetings, etc. The Pavey Room, in which historic artefacts, documents, etc are housed, is located in the building. The Elms formerly housed a Medical Practice and a Dental Practice, but this is no longer the case. The Stillwater Therapy Centre was based in the building, but has recently vacated its premises. (The former Parish Council Office, next to the Community Hall in Lower Sea Lane, has been converted into a dwelling "Hallside".) On the same side of The Street, just above The Elms is Charmouth Central, comprising Charmouth Library/Internet Cafe, which has a fairly recent extension housing a meeting room and kitchen. Since the closure of Charmouth Post Office, Post Office services are available at the Library one day a week.

Hotels, Public Houses, Restaurants, Cafes, Food Outlets, etc.

There was a time when Charmouth had several traditional hotels offering accommodation to visitors and travellers, and several public houses, but times have changed. One of the two remaining public houses The George was once The George Hotel; The Coach & Horse public house, now converted to residential units, was a hotel; The Sea Horse Hotel in Higher Sea Lane was rebuilt as apartments; Charmouth House Hotel (a Listed Building) was converted to residential units several years ago; Hammonds Mead Hotel was demolished and several dozen dwellings now occupy the site of the former hotel and its grounds; The Queen's Armes Hotel, a Grade II* Listed Building, now has two self catering accommodation units, operates as a "pop-up" restaurant on a monthly basis, and is called The Abbot's House; The Court was once a hotel, and was subsequently a residential home, and currently comprises offices and premises for small businesses. The other remaining public house in the village is the Grade II Listed Royal Oak.

There are two 'hotels' in Charmouth these days, Fernhill Hotel & Restaurant on the western approach to the village from Lyme Regis and Hensleigh House in Lower Sea Lane which operates as a B & B.

As regards places to eat, both public house provide meals. The Bank House Cafe (formerly a branch of Lloyds Bank) is situated in The Street, as is the Charmouth Fish Bar and Pizzeria to the east. The Beach Cafe occupies the seaward end of the ground floor beneath the Heritage Coast Centre. There is also a 'beach shack' type cafe on the east beach over the footbridge across the River Char. Both Wood Farm (Offshore Cafe) and Manor Farm have food outlets on site.

Educational, Cultural & Youth Facilities

Charmouth has a Primary School serving the village and local area. The school has a capacity for 174 pupils – the number of pupils attending in recent terms has varied, but has generally been of the order of 80% capacity, of which approximately 32% are children who live within Charmouth. A pre-school has recently started up at the school. The present school building has been in existence some 25 years. Before that the school was in the building on the corner of Lower Sea Lane and Wesley Close, which was converted into three dwellings when the school moved to the new building.

The Heritage Coast Centre is situated to the west of the foreshore car park, on the first floor of the old 'Cement Factory'. It houses a fossil display and a film theatre; it has an extensive education programme, runs guided fossil walks, and generally provides information about the Jurassic Coast. The Beach Attendants' office is located on the ground floor.

As referred to above, Charmouth Community Library is situated just above The Elms, and comprises the Library as well as a Internet Cafe(a meeting room with kitchen facilities). The Community Library is also an official Information Point.

The Youth Club building is situated in Wesley Close, and was built as a bespoke building and given to the village by the developers of Queen's Walk in exchange for the enabling of the implementation of their preferred layout for that part of the site. The Club has struggled to find volunteers and leaders to run the club in recent times. As at August 2018 it appeared to have closed down, although there are currently plans to restart the Youth Club.

The Scout Hut is sited in Charmouth Playing Fields, near the south boundary. The Scout troop is active in the community, and the Scout Hut has been extended fairly recently. The Hut is also home to Charmouth Beavers.

Religious Establishments

The Grade II Listed Parish Church of St Andrew is now the only church in the village, the United Reformed Church (also Listed) having been granted permission for change of use to a dwelling. The village has its own cemetery, at the north west edge of the village, which is administered by the Parish Council; there is a small chapel in the cemetery.

Medical Facilities, Therapy, Residential Care

The Charmouth Medical Practice is based in Littlehurst, a Grade II Listed building on the south side of The Street. The practice has three doctors, two nurses and a receptionist, and there are currently just over 2,300 patients (from Charmouth and the surrounding areas) registered with the practice. As stated above there is no longer a Medical or Dental Practice in The Elms. There is a Counsellor based in the village.

Bymead House, a 30 room Residential and Nursing Home is located on Axminster Road.

Sport, Recreation, Leisure, etc

The village is blessed with having a sizeable playing fields area, including a football pitch (home to Charmouth F.C.), and a bowling green (home to Charmouth Bowls Club). There is a pavilion adjacent to the bowling green. Other facilities comprise play equipment and swings for children, and some outdoor adult fitness equipment. In recent years the council has acquired the field between the original playing field and the bypass, and this has goals for 'kickabout' football and some moguls for BMX bikes.

There are no longer grass tennis courts in the Playing Field, but Charmouth Tennis Club has four all-weather courts at its site in Lower Sea Lane, with a clubhouse in the north west corner.

Wood Farm has a swimming pool which is available for use by non-residents, and Manor Farm has a swimming pool and a gym/fitness centre, also available to non-residents.

The Parish Council has nearly 60 beach huts on the west beach and to the west of the Heritage Coast Centre; many of these are available for lease to local residents on a seasonal basis, and some are available for visitors. The huts are generally moved to a more sheltered location during the height of the winter storms. The Lookout, a small octagonal building, which is Grade II Listed, used to be let as a beach hut, but is now a Coastwatch Lookout Station under the aegis of the National CoastWatch Institute. The Parish Council also has an allotment area, adjacent to the cemetery.

Fire Station

Charmouth Fire Station is situated in Bridge Road. The fire engine is manned by retained firemen from within the village.

Car Parks & Toilet Facilities

There is a WDDC public car park, with spaces for coaches, in St Andrew's Drive. There are public toilets adjacent to the entrance, and also some recycling facilities within the car park. The size of the car park was reduced when part of the site was used for the construction of Heritage Mews, a terrace of flats fronting on to Lower Sea Lane and St Andrew's Drive.

There are three car parks near the foreshore. There is a 200 space car park occupying the area between the road, the reed bed and the river. The north side abuts the footpath from Lower Sea Lane down to the footbridge over the River Char, which gives access to the east beach. The other car parks are the field car park on the western side of the road between the Heritage Coast Centre and the southern boundary of Hammonds Mead, and the Parish Council run Foreshore Car Park next to which stands the Heritage Coast Centre. The Beach

Attendants' office is situated on the ground floor of the building, next to the fossil shop. There are public toilets behind/to the west of the Heritage Coast Centre.

Sewage Pumping Station, Treatment Works & Surrounding Area

The sewage pumping station is located off the pathway that connects Lower Sea Lane and the footbridge over the River Char.

The sewage piping network in Charmouth collects sewage at this pumping station, then pumps the sewage up to the sewage treatment works (north of the field used for the Monday market). The sewage is then treated and then flows back down to the foreshore for it to discharge out to sea some 600 metres off shore.

The Sewage Treatment Works is located at Catherston Lane, DT6 6QZ (Easting: 337170.33, Northing: 93707.48). This area falls within an AONB and Heritage Coastal Area. The plant is operated by Wessex Water, and a £4.5M upgrade was carried out in 2004/2005.

Wessex Water has previously advised that any planning application close to the sewage treatment works could be subject to odours from the normal operation of their works. Odour is covered by a statutory Nuisance Control laid down in Part 111 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and enforced by Local Authorities by way of an abatement notice. They recommend that the view of the Council's Environmental Health Officer be sought when determining any planning application in this vicinity.

Miscellaneous

There are a number of other structures/features in Charmouth which do not fall readily into the above categories, but which are of importance in their own right, whether for their historic value, their contribution to the character of the village, their function, or in terms of their use by residents and visitors.

These include:

- The War Memorial, situated on the south side of The Street, just up from the Royal Oak PH. The Memorial is Grade II Listed.

- 'Tank traps' from the Second World War sited on the foreshore;

- The lime kiln and mill stones from the former Cement Factory (now the Heritage Coast Centre);

- The mediaeval sections of stone wall, mostly forming part of what was the settlement boundary, and the divisions between the 'burgage' plots;

- A section of mediaeval stone bank;

- A 'folly' mound at The Court;

The road bridge over the River Char at the lower end of The Street. The bridge was built in 1957 as a replacement for the narrower and humped original built in 1824, and a stone plaque from that bridge is built into the parapet.

The footbridge over the River Char, some 80 metres upstream from the beach. The present bridge was opened in 2011, and replaced the previous bridge constructed by John West in 1930. It provides the only pedestrian access to the east beach following the closure of the footpath along the eastern side of the river, and it was calculated a few years ago that the bridge was crossed more than 700,000 times in the course of a year.

The coastal defences protecting the sea front car park and promenade are subject to constant erosion, and the Environment Agency apparently have no plans to provide additional defences. Responsibility for maintaining the footbridge linking the promenade to the west beach has passed from West Dorset District Council to the Charmouth Parish Council. It has been predicted that rising sea levels could mean that the site of the Heritage Coast Centre could be under water by the end of the century.

There is a further broad category which should be regarded as an asset, although falling outside the scope of the 'Built Environment', In addition to the services, goods and facilities provided by 'premises' in the village, there are many small businesses, quite often sole traders working from home, including the traditional trades associated with the construction industry, as well as gardeners, music teachers, computer experts, creative artists, and many more.