

3) The Character of the Landscape Setting

- 3.1 The Parish Boundary of Child Okeford runs along the eastern slopes of Hambledon Hill, north across the Common through Gallows Corner behind Fontmell Farm to the stream directly north of the farm. It then follows the stream southeast past Manston Bridge to the River Stour. From this point it follows the course of the river south past Haywards Bridge and on to Fox Ditch Coppice where it turns northeast between Little Hanford and Chisel Dairy to Markstone. From here it turns southeast to Terrace Coppice and then northeast and north back to Hambledon Hill. Much of this area is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 3.2 The topography of the area dictates much of the Village Settlement Boundary with the natural constraints to development presented by Hambledon Hill, the River Stour and its associated water meadows which can be considered as flood plains. The remainder of the boundary is made up of working farm land.
- 3.3 These natural boundaries form the backdrop of the village and afford the key views that give the village its rural character (*Map 4, Page 9*). These views are important from the roads entering and leaving the Village (*Figs. 3 & 4*) where they set the tone of the essential character of the landscape.



Figs. 3 & 4 Views of the Setting on leaving the Village

- 3.4 Also the views within the Village, either from the Conservation Areas or from within the Settlement Boundary reinforce this rural setting. Many of the views to the open countryside from the Conservation Areas have been compromised by later development.

12. Views from Gold Hill Road

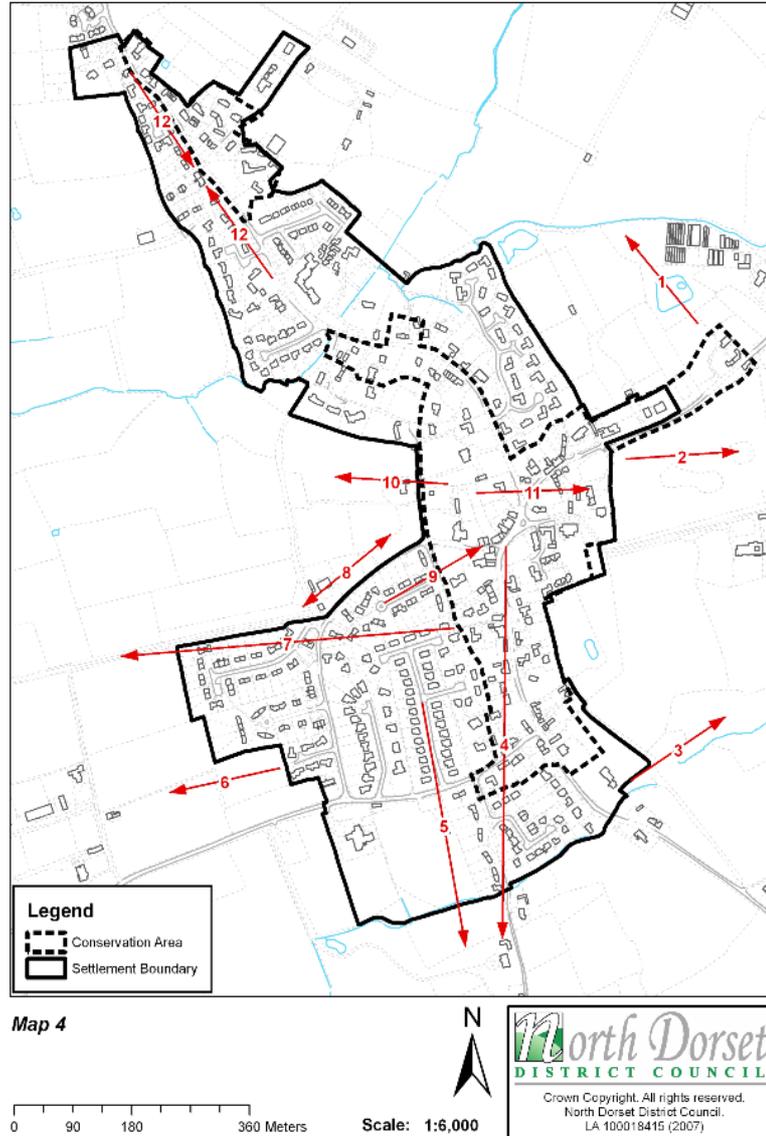
10. Views from Rectory Lane to Hinton St Mary and Castle Hill

9. View from RH Side of Jacobs Ladder to Church Tower

8. Views up and down Haywards Lane (traditional country lane)

7. View to Hinton and Castle Hill from top end of Homefield by Post Office pathway

6. View from end of Allen Close



1. Views from Shaston (Shaftesbury) Road across Vale

2. View from Manor Paddock to tip of Hambledon Hill

11. View from The Cross towards Church Yard gate.

3. Views from the Butts and Duck Street to Hambledon fortifications.

4 & 5. Views from the upper part of High Street (by Old School) and Homefield of Shillingstone Hill and Forest

Map 4. Views within and from the Village

3.5 However there are still several that allow glimpses of the Hill and surrounding fields. This is also true for many areas in the later developments where despite their more urban nature the setting is still unmistakably rural (Figs. 5 & 6).



Figs. 5 & 6 Views from within the Older and Newer Parts of the Village

- 3.6 The boundaries also form the village edges and their intimate relationship to the surrounding countryside. This relationship with the trees, hedges, walls and fences, field and road boundaries, both in the village and the immediate countryside, along with the ancient monuments, woodlands and nature reserves make up the rural and special setting of Child Okeford. A setting that should always be maintained.



Figs. 7 & 8 Village Rural Roads.

- 3.7 Within the village many of the features hold true to those found at the edges of the village. The primary routes through the village which present the public face and form an important part of its character are, apart from the village centre, essentially rural. They are grassy banked with hedges and many roadside trees (*Figs. 7 & 8*). The majority of the houses have gardens between them and the roads. Even on the secondary roads that either form the edge of the Conservation Areas (*Fig. 9*) or within the Settlement Boundary, where the rear gardens of some of the post-war estates back on to the roads, there are banks and hedges forming the boundaries (*Fig. 10*).



Fig. 9 Edge of a Conservation Area.



Fig. 10 Edge of the Settlement Boundary.

3.8 The roads are narrow, undulating and twisting without pavements, typical of a country lane. Because of the nature of the roads the ancient and long established footpath system (*Map 3, Page 6*) throughout the village is extremely important and forms a vital and safe means of communication for residents, particularly the young and elderly (*Figs. 11 & 12*).



Figs. 11 & 12 Parts of the Footpath Network.

3.9 Another important component in the make up of the setting and character of the village is the spatial relationship of the dwellings. This is more important because of the lack of open public green spaces within the Village. The only one is the recreation ground which is home to the Community Centre, the children's playground and the football and cricket clubs. Therefore the spaces between the houses and their gardens assume a vital role in creating the rural character. This is more important in the Conservation Areas as in many of the post war developments the houses are built in repetitive straight lines, nevertheless, always with front gardens or green space between them and the road.

3.10 It is in the Conservation Areas and the pre-war settlements that the difference in the spatial relationship between the houses is manifest. It

varies from small terrace houses, either very close to or set back from the road, to large detached houses standing in their own extensive grounds. They are at varying angles to and distances from the roads with no set pattern, a reflection of the different times in which they were built (*Map 5, Page 13*). The gardens and frontage to the road of these houses, the green spaces they contain and their differing presentation to the road form a vital ingredient to the Village character (*Figs. 13 & 14*).



Figs. 13 & 14 Different Presentation and Spatial Relationship of Houses in the Conservation Areas.

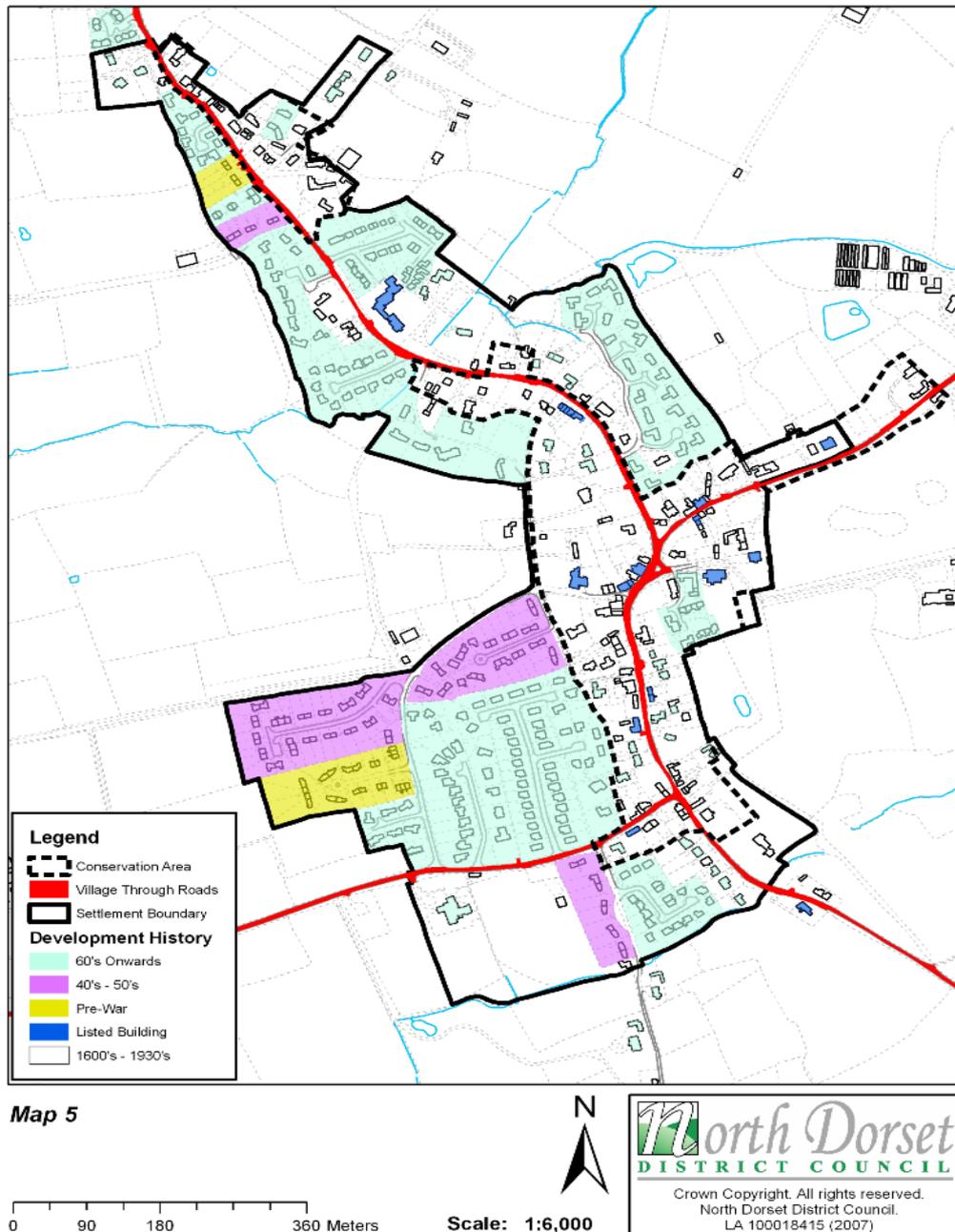
4) The Built Environment.

- 4.1 Three important boundaries define Child Okeford's built environment: the Parish Boundary, the Village Settlement Boundary and the Conservation Areas. Early development spread out along the 4 roads in and out of the village that meet at The Cross, the physical and spiritual heart of the village (Fig15).



Fig. 15 The Cross.
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4.2 Virtually all of the 70 or so pre-1900 houses were built directly on the first few hundred yards of these roads, particularly on Upper Street leading into Shaftesbury Road, around The Cross, along the High Street and down the Hollow, with a further cluster on the eastern side of Gold Hill. Not surprisingly these areas form the boundaries of the Conservation Areas. This early growth and later development has to a certain extent divided the village into two parts, the larger central Conservation Area and the remainder 'within the Village Settlement Boundary' (Map 5).



Map 5. Showing the Pattern and period of the Development of the Village

4.3 The houses within the Conservation Areas are all different reflecting the rural style of the era they were built in. They use many varied building styles and materials, with walls of brick and flint, natural stone or rendered and colour washed and with traditional roofing materials (*Figs. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 & 21*).



Figs. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 & 21 Differing Styles and Building Materials in the Conservation Areas.

- 4.4 This difference and the individual character of each house is an essential part of the character of the village. There are also similarities; the houses tend to be smaller and low with small set-back windows. They are not built with regular straight lines and many have outstanding architectural features e.g. brick detailing, hanging tiles, overhanging roofs, prominent gabling, chimney detailing and decorative roof ridging and finials. (Figs. 22 & 23 & Supplement 2, Pages 36 & 37)



Figs. 22 & 23 Examples of Architectural Features in the Conservation Areas.

- 4.5 There has been some modern development within the Conservation Areas, mostly on the site of pre-existing older houses and within the yard of the Church Farm.
- 4.6 The majority of development before 1960 was mainly on the west side of Gold Hill and to the west either side of Haywards Lane. There was very little pre-war development to the south with only a few new houses in the Common on Shaftesbury Road and some in Melway Lane.
- 4.7 The development between 1900 and 1960 was modest with the village growing from around 70 dwellings to about 230, an average of under 3 houses per year, most of which did not detract from the essential rural character of the village. However it was during this time that the first 'out of character' estates were built. Chalwell a smaller estate of 20 semi-detached 2 story houses and the larger estate of Jacobs Ladder of 18 semi-detached 2 story houses and 13 bungalows built in 1946-47. Also in Melway Lane where 8 semi-detached houses were built in 1950. These started the development of the green countryside behind the original houses in the larger central Conservation Area changing their rearward outlook. None of these estates took account of the essential rural character of the village or the existing buildings. They are largely made up of urban style brick built dwellings with concrete tiled roofs of a repetitive style that can be seen in countless urban estates across the country. However, built as they were mainly as social housing for rent, they did provide valuable and much needed accommodation for local people.

- 4.8 The vast majority of development has been in the period 1960 to 2000, when the village doubled in size (*Map 5, Page 13 & Table 1, Page 19*) with the construction of several estates of varying size that have eaten away at the rural character of the village.
- 4.9 The smaller estates include Allen Close, Knotts Close, The Butts and Olivers Mead made up of 2 storey houses. Aplans Close and Nutmead Close have detached bungalows, Melway Gardens a mixture of detached and semi-detached bungalows and houses and St Nicholas Court built on a former farmyard is a mixture of detached and two storey terraced houses.
- 4.10 Larger estates include Portman Drive of 6 houses and 17 bungalows, Greenway with semi-detached houses and bungalows, Homefield with all detached bungalows and Millbrook Close a mix of terrace, semi-detached and detached houses and bungalows (*Figs. 24 & 25*).



Figs. 24 & 25 Late 20th Century Developments.

- 4.11 Other development has been piecemeal with single houses or small developments of a few dwellings e.g. Apple Acre. All of this development has been carried out in a haphazard way on what was originally greenfield land. There has been little regard to continuity of design and building materials and maintenance of the village character. It has largely been driven by developers rather than the villager's needs and desires.
- 4.12 Many of the recent estates reflect a repetitive suburban design that does not fit into the rural character of the village, although the housing tends to be of better quality than the earlier ones. Some effort has been made in a few areas to recreate a traditional rural Dorset style. Olivers Mead is an example of this with a mixture of brick and brick and flint individually designed houses. The houses in Portman Drive are an attempt to reflect a more Dorset style with reconstituted stone construction under slate roofs and small paned casement windows (*Figs 26 & 27*).



Figs. 26 & 27 Olivers Mead & Portman Drive.

The estate itself is well laid out but unfortunately there is an earlier development at the entrance of Portman Drive where again the developer has paid scant regard to the village character by building 2 brick built houses that back on to The Hollow, which is within the a Conservation Area. This results in incongruous back garden fences facing out on to a road that, above all, reflects the rural nature of the village with hedges, grass banks and trees interspersing many of the historic older houses.

- 4.13 60 % of all dwellings have UPVC windows. It is accepted that UPVC is a modern building material excellent for double glazing, an important sustainability issue, and there is no problem with its use outside the Conservation Areas. However within the Conservation Areas replacement double glazing using hardwood frames of a suitable size and style consistent with the original windows is recommended.
- 4.14 Many of the later modern developments concentrate on large detached suburban styled 4-5 bedroom houses which show no respect for the surrounding environment and only represent maximum profit for the developer. Despite the pleas from the Parish Council for affordable housing this practice is continuing with the granting of planning permission for large detached houses at Little Stream, virtually the last substantial plot of land available for infill development. The entrance to this development has resulted in the destruction of an ancient wall replacing it with an ugly urban kerb and again a high and prominent fence facing out on to the road opposite the Conservation Area.

- 4.15 Most of this development has been within the present Village Settlement Boundary. The number of houses in the Parish outside the village boundary is small and the majority of these were support properties associated with the historic farms and the manor.
- 4.16 The figures in the House Survey (*Table , 1 Page 19*) are largely of those properties within the Village Settlement Boundary which is not only a statutory boundary but also a physical and environmental one. In order to maintain the prerequisite rural character of the community the integrity of the Village Settlement Boundary should be sacrosanct. The geographical constraints that naturally limit growth enforce this tenet.
- 4.17 To the west the River Stour provides a natural barrier and to the east Hambledon Hill similarly limits further growth. Low lying areas to the north, alongside the Manston Road, flood easily and again make further development expensive and undesirable. The few areas around the Village Settlement Boundary that may not be severely affected by the natural constraints are working farm land, one of the few employment opportunities within the village. As a consequence any growth must occur through redevelopment of existing dwellings within the constraints of the Village Settlement Boundary.
- 4.18 The saving grace of most of this later development is that it is outside the Conservation Areas and does not impinge directly on the public face and character of the village presented to the visitor as they drive along the primary through routes past the Conservation Areas. The main problem is where these new estates front onto the main road as at Homefield and Knotts Close or butt directly onto a Conservation Area as at Portman Drive and Little Stream.
- 4.19 Another problem is where in filling or replacement has taken place in the Conservation Areas where modern housing, that is not consistent with surrounding properties, is mixed in with the historic houses as in some areas of the High Street.
- 4.20 It is essential that any development fronting onto the primary through routes, both within or outside the Conservation Areas should reflect the character of the other houses in the Conservation Areas or the neighbouring properties. This is also true for the other areas within the Settlement Boundary.
- 4.21 Each of the later estates has its own character albeit a variation on the urban/suburban theme. The houses and bungalows are smaller in size and more compact. Just as modern houses are out of place in the Conservation Areas so would a large 'old style' house be as equally incongruous built in the midst of one of these estates.

TABLE 1 - CHILD OKEFORD HOUSE SURVEY

Total Number **513**

	Count	%
<u>House Type</u>		
Detached	269	52.4
Semi-detached	172	33.5
Terrace	69	13.5
Flat	3	0.6
<u>Boundary</u>		
Hedge	222	43.3
Wall	118	23
Fence	89	17.3
Open	155	30.2
Combined*	71	13.8
<u>Garage</u>		
Yes	345	67.3
Detached	223	66.5
Attached	122	35.5
<u>Off-road Parking</u>		
Yes	83	16.2
No	85	16.6
<u>Front Garden</u>		
Yes	460	89.7
<u>Number of Stories</u>		
1	171	33.3
2	324	63.2
3	18	3.5
<u>Extensions</u>		
Yes	138	26.9
Single Story	58	42
Double Height	33	23.9
Conservatory	47	34.1
No	375	73.1
<u>Age</u>		
Post 2000	24	4.7
1960-1999	258	50.3
1945-1959	87	17
1900-1939	75	14.6
1800-1899	48	9.4
Pre 1800	21	4.1

	Count	%
<u>Building Materials</u>		
<u>Walls</u>		
Brick	253	49.3
Brick and Flint	29	5.7
Painted Brick	23	4.5
Stone	44	8.5
Reconstituted Stone	29	5.6
Rendered and Colour Washed	125	24.3
Weatherboard	24	4.7
Pebbledash	22	4.3
Combination*	36	7
<u>Roof</u>		
Slate	78	15.2
Clay Tile	187	36.5
Concrete Tile	222	43.3
Thatch	14	2.7
Artificial	24	4.7
Tin		
Combination*	12	2.3
<u>Windows</u>		
Wood Frame	208	40.5
Stone Frame	14	2.7
UPVC Frame	309	60.2
Metal Frame	8	1.6
Combination*	26	5.1
<u>Window Panes</u>		
Small	196	38.2
Large	329	64.1
Not reported	10	1.9
Combination*	12	1.3

* included in figures above

4.22 The surveys highlighted the paucity of social, affordable and sheltered housing in the village. Of those that do exist they are generally of poor standard and inappropriate design. Only Bower (*Fig. 28*) has been designed with regard to the character of local and Dorset wide housing in mind.



Fig. 28 Bower.