

CONSERVATION AREAS IN EAST DORSET

SHAPWICK



Foreword

This document is based upon work carried out in 1994 to define the special qualities of the Conservation Area that was subsequently published as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the East Dorset Local Plan (see paragraphs 6.118 to 6.131 and accompanying policies BUCON 1 to 4 of the East Dorset Local Plan adopted 11 January 2002).

The text and illustrations of the original publication have been revised and updated to reflect any significant changes that have taken place in that time since the original survey and appraisal of the area were undertaken.

The appraisal provides guidance to those elements and characteristics that should be taken into account when considering proposed developments and other works requiring consent. The information contained in the appraisal will be treated as a material consideration by the Local Planning Authority when considering planning applications.

The revision does not extend to reviewing the boundaries of the designated area. This work will be undertaken between 2006 and 2010 in parallel with the Local Development Framework process, as currently programmed.

The maps used in the document are based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping currently available to the Council.

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Introduction

The village is mentioned in Domesday as Escapewihc or Scapewic. Records of human habitation in the area extend much further back, to pre-historic and Roman times. The course of the Roman Road from Old Sarum to Dorchester coincides with part of High Street (joining midway between the Park Lane and Piccadilly junctions). It continues, imperceptible today, in a south-westerly direction where it crossed the Stour as a ford. Evidence of a Roman villa has been uncovered near Queen Cottages at the north-east end of the village.

View southwards along High Street with the Old Post Office on the left



In the middle ages sheep formed the backbone of the local economy. The fields remained unenclosed until as late as 1813. The village was surrounded on three sides by Shapwick Down, comprising an area of open downland for sheep grazing crossed by a few tracks.

The name Shapwick means 'sheep farm'.

The river and its flood plain have exerted a major influence over local farming practices. Over the past two centuries the wide meadows have supported large dairies, together with arable farming on the adjoining dry chalk fields. Within the Conservation Area, Priory Farm is a large brick farm house with imposing farm buildings. Hyde Farm, in High Street, is older and smaller.

At the turn of the 20th century, High Street was lined on both sides with cottages from the Market Cross to the Park Lane junction. These were of cob and thatch dating mostly from the 17th century. However, all but a few of these have since disappeared as a result of poor maintenance or fire. The Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments itself records 14 cottages that have been demolished within the village envelope.

Since its acquisition by Sir John Bankes in 1635 Shapwick has formed part of the Kingston Lacy Estate. It was left to the National Trust in 1982, who continue to manage the Estate.

Scope

The boundaries of the Conservation Area, which were first drawn in 1978, include the historic core of the village and extend along High Street as far as its junction with Park Lane. The boundaries were drawn tightly around the settlement, often following rear gardens. Very little of the village setting has been included.

Whilst almost all the buildings within the historic core make a very positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, this is less the case in much of High Street, where the architectural and historic quality of buildings is mixed. However, the street does form an important approach to the core of the village and has strong historical ties.

Setting

Shapwick is sited on the north bank of the Stour, surrounded by meadows and arable fields, hedgerows and scattered trees. The valley rises gently in the north towards the Beech Avenue and Badbury Rings; to the south the landscape is rimmed by woods on rising ground on the south side of the valley. The valley landscape forms a distinctive setting for the village.

The ancient Church of St Bartholomew is situated within a few metres of the meandering river bank and enjoys its own secluded rural setting.



Approaches

There are few distant views of Shapwick, from the north, east or west. The lowland, valley landscape and high hedges that flank the narrow lanes give little clues of its whereabouts. Even the church is scarcely visible, on account of the trees that surround it.

The village is served by a narrow valley lane that follows the course of the river between Wimborne and Blandford. The village is connected to the main Wimborne-Blandford road that passes to the north by New Road that joins High Street. With the absence of traffic noise the tranquil sounds of the countryside pervade the village.

A permissive path, opened by the National Trust, follows the river from White Mill to Church Street.

Form

Shapwick is centred on the market cross, the steps of which are of 15th century origin. A dog-leg at the cross-roads reinforces enclosure and sense of place formed by thatched cottages, the Anchor public house, an old boundary wall and some well-placed trees.

Cob and thatched cottages continue along West Street as far as the former school-house, interspersed with gardens enclosed by walls or hedges. Enclosure is reinforced by the gentle bend in the road. Beyond the school-house the character of the street is influenced by the scale, style and materials of Bishops Farm and its surrounding grounds, together with the group of agricultural barns opposite.

West Street



St Bartholomew's Church stands in an isolated setting amidst a backcloth of trees, tucked between the village and the river. It is accessed from the end of Church Street which serves a small car park.

Cob and thatch cottages, separated by enclosed gardens face onto the road in Church Street. Number 192 on the inside of the bend forms enclosure and anticipation, and frames the view of the valley.



Those cottages on the south side of Church Street are set back from the road by enclosed private gardens and wide grass verges, protected by posts. Sited much further back, a small verdant meadow forms the setting to Crabb Cottage at the southern extremity of the Conservation Area, accessed by a track.

A farmhouse and group of barns once formed an enclosed farmyard between the Church and Crabb Cottage but have long since been demolished. The resulting open grassy meadow is now a valuable amenity that allows views of the valley landscape. The green space is also important in providing a wider setting for the Church.

Crabb Cottage, Church Street, a Grade II listed building



Most of the early buildings in High Street have been lost, apart from two thatched cottages at the southern end of the street and three isolated thatched cottages between the Park Lane junction and the northern end of the Conservation Area. The west side of the street now comprises a mixture of period and modern houses facing onto the road behind front gardens. These comprise single and semi-detached houses. Breaking this regular, sometimes rather suburban pattern, are two short rows of Edwardian cottages lower down the street, each of which is surrounded by generous gardens.

Much of the east side south of the Park Lane junction is now open farmland bounded by a low hedge, which strengthens the rural character of this road.

Buildings

The character of Shapwick is still shaped by the siting and appearance of its older buildings. The concentration of small, unspoilt thatched cottages represents the most characteristic feature of the village. Most of these are listed buildings, and their characters have been well preserved by controls imposed on them by the National Trust and their landlord predecessors. The Trust have adopted a policy of requiring all thatched roofs to adopt the traditional East Dorset thatching style that features a flush, sheared down ridge, and combed wheat reed is almost universally used. This reinforces local character and unifies the appearance of the village further.

Parish Church of St. Bartholomew, Church Street, a Grade I listed building



The Church of St Bartholomew, which is of national importance (Grade I), dates in part from the 12th Century; the nave and squat tower

being 14th Century. The building has distinctive walls of flint and rubble, with Purbeck and Heathstone ashlar dressings around the windows and quoins, and the roofs are tiled and edged with stone-slates.

The churchyard, which contains two listed table tombs, is enclosed on three sides by mature trees. Those on the south-west side of the church now screen the church from the river. The small area to the south-east of the church merges with the adjacent meadow.

One of the oldest cottages in the Conservation Area is No 198 West Street, dating from the 16th century. Its timber frame construction is unique in the area. This cottage, which is currently being repaired by the Trust, has a distinctive hump-back ridge that can be seen from near the Anchor Inn. The cottage stands on the outside of the bend behind a short front garden bounded by a clipped hedge.

School Cottage & No.198 West Street, both Grade II listed buildings



Crabb Cottage in Church Street is of similar age. It comprises a single-storey cottage with attics, with walls of stone, brick and cob under a thatched roof. The simple form of this small cottage and the textural quality of its ancient walls are of particular note. Behind, a small thatched cart-shed has been incorporated into the cottage. At the southern end of High Street, facing almost opposite, are two 17th cob and thatched cottages. Both are single storey with attics. That on the west side (202) faced in brick stands immediately onto the edge of the highway, with a small plain brick and tile extension on the north side. The cottage has a distinct thickly layered thatched roof with low eaves. No.200, standing in a small front garden enclosed by hedging, has a rendered front with a thatched porch.

The remaining thatched cottages, found in High Street, West Street and Church Street, are of 18th century origin. All but 'Cob Cottage' in Church Street and No. 226 High Street, which are single-storey with attics, are two storeys. Some are faced in brick, but most have plastered walls, often on brick plinths. Most have simple roofs with gables and flush ridges; there are also a few cottages with half hips. The pair of thatched cottages in Church Street near the Church is unusual for the village on account of its fully hipped roof.

Cobb Cottage, a Grade II listed building



Hyde Farm House in High Street is a three-bay house with a central door-case and thatched porch. The frontage was extended by a two-storey extension, which appears contemporary with the house. The walls are of brick under a thatched roof which has uncharacteristically narrow eaves.

Hyde Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building



Bishop's Court is an imposing brick and tile Victorian farmhouse that incorporates a late 17th century kitchen in the south-west wing. Symmetrical pairs of tall vertical windows surrounded by stone dressings form important elevation features of this distinctive building. Within the curtilage of Bishop's Court farmhouse stands an equally impressive stables building

with a central gable containing the main entrance and window above. This building, which is also listed, is contemporary with the farmhouse and echoes its gothic style. Both buildings are well-preserved.

Bishop's Court, a Grade II listed building



There are some notable unlisted buildings which, because of their age, style and character, make a significant contribution to the Conservation Area.

In High Street there are two groups of Estate houses, built at the turn of this century. Built of soft, orange-red bricks under tiled roofs, each triplet of dwellings feature imposing chimney stacks with rows of five tall pots, decorative ridges and finials. They have wide eaves with exposed purlins and the front elevations feature decorated window heads. The buildings face onto the road and are surrounded by generous gardens enclosed by hedges.



The Post Office nearby is of a similar period, but much less ornamental. Even so, the building possesses some decorative window heads and ridge tiles, and both features have been reproduced in a well-executed recent extension. Swallows Nest in Piccadilly Lane is another traditional 19th century two storey cottage facing

directly onto the lane. Built in brick and tiles this unspoilt period house has well proportioned windows and retains its chimneys at each end of the simple ridge. This too has been sensitively extended at the rear.

Swallows Nest, Piccadilly Lane



The Anchor Public House stands hard against the corner of High Street and West Street. The present building dates from about 1920, although an inn by the same name has remained on the site since before 1773.

On the opposite corner, standing in an attractive enclosed garden, is the former Methodist Chapel, now converted into a house. Built of brick under a slate roof, its most distinctive features are the half-round arched windows picked out in contrasting buff brick.

The junction of High Street, Church Street and West Street, Rose Cottages on the left (Grade II listed) & The Anchor on the right



The former Edwardian school-house, known today as The Old School, has also been converted to residential use and a playschool currently uses part of the building. The scale and appearance of this substantial building reflects Bishops Court. At each end of the simple tiled roof are parapeted gables with shoulders. The walls comprise an irregular patchwork of

brick and pebble-dash over a brick, flint, and ashlar base. A single large school window, divided by two vertical mullions and single transom, remains in the north elevation and there is a plaque dating the building at 1908. The west side features very tall chimney stacks and a single storey plain-tiled outshut.

The Old School



Behind 'The Old School' stands a substantial late 18th or early 19th century building subdivided into two units. Known as the 'River House' and 'Little Rams Island' the building has white rendered walls under a plain tiled roof. Its complex roof and chimney stacks represent one of the few features of this private building open to public view.

River House



A high cob wall with tile capping encloses the building to the north. This connects to a single storey rendered barn under a slate roof, almost windowless on the more public west side. This faces a similar barn across a small yard, constructed of brick under a plain tiled roof.

Between these barns and the road is a larger yard with a modern concrete block barn having a low-pitched corrugated asbestos roof, conspicuously sited on the road frontage. Although the barn reinforces the agricultural

character at this end of the village, its design and materials are poor compared with other agricultural buildings in the locality.



On the north side of West Street stands a simple, robust brick barn under a lichen-covered slate roof. This barn, which has wide eaves and traditional windows, is sited at right angles to the lane and now forms the east side of a quadrangle formed of modern agricultural buildings. Bishops Court farmhouse and its associated barns form a well-defined edge to the village.

The modern houses are sited on individual plots, mostly in High Street. In common with the older houses, they face directly onto the road, but their form and style tend to relate closer to suburban housing areas. 'Varkins', however, is a modern, cottage-style house located in a secluded spot between the Church and the old schoolhouse. It is well-detailed and constructed in materials which relate well with the Edwardian buildings in the village.

Boundary Walls



West Street contains some notable old boundary walls, which enhance the townscape qualities of the street. A high brick wall along West Street frontage adjacent to Cedar Cottage is individually listed, as too is the cob wall opposite No.197, 'School Cottage'. Another high rendered wall, similarly capped with plain clay tiles, forms the northern boundary of 'Little Rams Island'.

A high brick wall encloses the garden at the rear of the 'Old School' and a lower brick wall extends the full frontage and return around Bishops Court Farmhouse.



Other walls of significance in the Conservation Area include a short cob wall attached to 198 Church Street capped with heavy Roman tiles, and a brick wall attached to Hyde Farm house in High Street, which helps to screen the group of disparate barns behind.

Trees and hedges

The main concentrations of trees occur around the Church and Bishops Court Farm. There are also visually important trees around the curtilage of Crabb Cottage, off Church Street.

Within the churchyard there are several specimen trees, including yews, cedars and pine which contrast well against the light colours of the stone Church. A continuous line of trees along the riverside, and a small copse/orchard on the eastern side, enclose the Church with greenery, visually separating it from the village.

Some of the most important individual trees are to be found near Bishops Court Farmhouse. Cedars, beech and purple beech enhance the frontage of the house as well as provide a significant terminal feature in the street. Near the southern corner of the walled garden stands a particularly important cedar.

Adjacent to the Old School is a fine purple beech.

Orchards in the village, at Bishops Court Farm and near the village centre, within the curtilage of 188, Steward's Lane, provide additional greenery and character.

Hedges form the prevalent boundary treatment along other streets within the Conservation Area. In Stewards Lane, forming the approach to the Conservation Area, the hedges are rural in character, consisting of hawthorn; on the south side, elms are regenerating. Hawthorn forms the field boundary on the east side of High Street, but this is clipped low and is without hedgerow trees.



Open Spaces

Many buildings within the village occupy generous-sized plots. These spaces are mostly used as private gardens and orchards and account for the relaxed atmosphere of the West Street/Church Street area. The gaps in these streets also draw attention to and accent the individual cottages. They provide important settings for the listed buildings, both individually and collectively.

Between the Church, The Old School and Chapel Cottage some of these private spaces merge together, enclosed by trees and hedges.

Other open spaces, such as the meadow south of the Church and two gaps on the north side of West Street (east of Bishops Court barns and west of the Anchor Inn respectively), merge with the open countryside and reinforce the rural character of the village.

The rhythm of buildings and spaces that characterise the lower part of the village is much less evident in High Street on account of the modern development. The ribbon development has tended to fill gaps along the street frontage. The two groups of Edwardian houses retain significant plots around them. These are important in providing settings for the period houses. They are also important as a check to the suburban rhythm of development on the approach towards the village centre.

Streetscape

The historic Market Cross forms a focal point to the village. This comprises an octagonal stone base and three steps dating from the 15th century, together with a more recent stone cross erected in memory of those fallen in the two World Wars.



The soft, grassy verges throughout the village and the absence of footpaths, kerbstones and street-lighting are vitally important in reinforcing the informal character of the Conservation Area.

In Church Street the wide grass verge is closely mown and protected by a row of timber posts. A seat has been placed at the northern end. Nearby is a Stour Valley Way timber finger post and mock medieval fire-basket; at the junction is a traditional highway finger post. At the western side of the junction stands a K7 telephone kiosk. Overhead wirescape becomes more obtrusive at this junction.

In front of the Anchor Inn picnic tables under tasteful summer parasols introduce an element of vitality into the street.

Inset Map

Scale 1:2500 approximately



north
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Planning Policy in Conservation Areas

East Dorset has many attractive villages of special architectural or historic interest.

In order to protect their character and appearance, the best of these, including the historic centre of Wimborne Minster, have been designated as Conservation Areas by the District Council under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Under this legislation additional planning controls are exercised by the Council within designated Conservation Areas in order to preserve and enhance those aspects of character and appearance that define an area's special character.

These include controls over the demolition of most unlisted buildings. An application for Conservation Area Consent is needed for the demolition of an unlisted building in a Conservation Area.

The Council encourage the retention of buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Any proposals which involve demolition of existing buildings will be carefully assessed for their impact upon the character of the area. The local planning authority will also need full details about what is proposed for the site after demolition.

Certain types of development, which elsewhere are normally classified as permitted development (such as the insertion of dormer windows in roof slopes, the erection of satellite dishes on walls, roofs or chimneys fronting a highway) will require planning permission.

Guidance and application forms can be obtained from the Planning and Building Control Division.

Trees

Trees are an invaluable visual asset to the character and setting of many Conservation Areas.

Trees in Conservation Areas may already be protected by a Tree Preservation Order and the Courts can impose heavy fines for unauthorised felling or lopping.

In addition to these controls, and in recognition of the contribution that trees can make to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area special provisions apply to the lopping or felling of other trees which are not otherwise protected. Anyone wishing to fell or lop such trees needs to notify the Council in writing six weeks before carrying out any work.

Householders are also encouraged to seek advice from the Department on the management of their trees. By taking the correct action now mature trees can be made safer and their lives extended.

New Development

When contemplating alterations to existing buildings or the construction of new buildings within a Conservation Area it is advisable to obtain the views of your local Planning Officer at an early stage. The Department is glad to help and the advice is totally impartial and free of charge.

When considering applications for new development, the Council as Local Planning Authority takes particular care to ensure that it fits in satisfactorily with the established character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Positioning, massing, design and choice of materials are of particular importance, as well as the visual impact of 'building over' an area of hitherto open land.

The special character of these areas stem not only from the age, disposition and architectural interest of the buildings, but also from the treatment of the spaces in between.

The presence of gardens, paddocks, soft verges, hedges and old boundary walls contribute greatly to the individual sense of place.

Applications for new development must demonstrate that the proposal will harmonise with the Conservation Area i.e. that it will preserve or enhance its character. Potential applicants are strongly advised to seek proper professional advice.

Therefore when considering such applications the local planning authority will pay particular attention to the following elements of the design:

1. the positioning of the building and its relationship with adjoining buildings, existing trees or other features;

2. the proposed building materials, particularly the walls and roof, and their suitability to the area and in relation to neighbouring buildings;
3. the proportions, mass and scale of the proposal and their relationship with the area in general and adjoining buildings in particular.
4. whether the proposed development might adversely affect existing trees, hedges or other natural features of the site.

In some cases it may be necessary to reproduce an historic style of architecture in order to match existing buildings. Generally, however, the Council encourages new construction to be designed in a modern idiom provided the criteria listed above are applied. Poor copies or imitations of architectural styles detract from the genuine older buildings and are normally discouraged.

Full details of any proposed development must be submitted, showing existing site conditions with the proposals clearly marked. Details of the elevational treatment, including windows and doors, will normally be required. In many instances the planning authority will expect details of hard and soft landscaping including a specification of all the proposed materials.

Conservation Area analysis

The District Council has carried out and published detailed studies of the Conservation Areas to identify those elements which contribute towards the unique character of each area. Any proposal which has an adverse effect on these features will not be permitted. Proposals that can be seen to enhance the Conservation Area will be encouraged.

Grants

Grants may be available from the District Council towards the alleviation of eyesores, or measures that improve the street scene, such as tree-planting, hedging or other boundary treatments. Grants or loans may also be available towards the repair of Listed Buildings, particularly where such repairs make an impact on the Conservation Area.

Design and Conservation Services in East Dorset

Conserving the best features of our environment, our historic towns, villages and countryside, is one of the most important of our planning functions.

Historic Buildings

Our buildings are a record of our architectural and social history. As a society, we hold them in trust for future generations to cherish and enjoy. Investment in our architectural heritage assists local and regional social and economic development

The supply of buildings of the eighteenth century and earlier is finite; once demolished they are lost forever. Others suffer almost the same fate from alterations made without regard to their original design and character.

Historic buildings require special care if their character, which relies upon traditional building materials and practices peculiar to each region, is not to be spoilt by insensitive alterations or inappropriate methods of repair.

Owners of Listed Buildings contemplating altering or extending their building are advised to obtain Guidance Notes obtainable free from the Department.

An important function of the Design and Conservation Section is to advise owners of historic buildings and assist in achieving solutions which preserves their intrinsic interest.

The Section can help seek out the right materials for the job and advise on the correct method of repair.

It can also provide advice on both the law relating to listed buildings and sources of financial assistance.

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas are groups of buildings, villages or areas of towns having special architectural and townscape interest, the character of which should be preserved and enhanced.

East Dorset has 17 Conservation Areas, which range in size and nature from small villages such as Almer to the historic town centre of Wimborne Minster.

The siting, design and materials of new development, or alterations to existing buildings, are scrutinised by the Department to ensure that the character of such areas are protected.

Since 1980 the Council has invested in a programme of environmental improvements within the centre of Wimborne Minster. The effect of these measures has been to create an attractive place for residents and visitors to shop and to enjoy.

Designated Conservation Areas in East Dorset



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Advice

For advice on any aspect of the Council's building conservation work, the availability of financial assistance or to discuss your individual building, please contact our Design and Conservation Leader Ray Bird, or his assistant Alan Turner on 01202 886201 or e-mail: planning@eastdorset.gov.uk.