



East Creech Conservation Area Appraisal

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What is a conservation area?

1. Conservation areas are defined within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as:

“areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.
2. Conservation areas are designated to cover the streets and places in towns and villages which hold enough architectural and historic interest to warrant special consideration as part of the planning process. Whilst this brings some added controls over ‘permitted development’ rights the purpose of designation is not to prevent change but rather to enable effective management of its quality.
3. East Creech Conservation Area was first designated by Purbeck District Council on 10th July 1990. The boundary was modified in 20th February 2018 – see Map 1 and Appendix D.
4. Conservation areas are designated by local authorities as a duty under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72 of the same Act makes it a duty for local authorities to consider the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas in exercising planning controls. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides policy guidance on the latter. At District level, policies within the Purbeck Local Plan are also relevant, and are supported by the District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.
5. Restrictions apply to the types of work you can carry out to properties within conservation areas without planning permission. Principal amongst these is the legal requirement to gain planning permission for carrying out ‘relevant’ demolition of unlisted buildings and structures. To find out more about restrictions see guidance on the Council’s website: www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk. If you are considering undertaking work within a conservation area that requires planning permission the Council can provide you with pre-application advice. A charge is made for this service. See the Council’s website for details.
6. New development should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas. You should use this character appraisal to assist you in formulating appropriate designs for new development, and in making sensitive alterations to existing properties.

About this appraisal and how to use it

7. This appraisal has been prepared for East Creech Conservation Area. It was researched and written by Benjamin Webb, Design and Conservation Officer, during 2014-2015. It was revised prior to and following public consultation during 2017 – see below.
8. This document was formally adopted by Purbeck District Council on 20th February 2018.
9. In line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement a six week period of consultation was arranged. A formal public consultation on the draft boundary proposals and appraisal ran between 7th November and 16th December 2016. Details were sent to the Parish Council six weeks in advance, and the consultation was subsequently extended at the Parish Council's request until 21st February 2017 to allow further time for comments. Consultation materials were made available online and at Westport House. A leaflet was posted to every property affected and officers attended a Parish meeting. The consultation was advertised through local media and in Council newsletters. Consultation responses were taken into account in preparation of the final version of this document.
10. The purpose of this appraisal is to provide an in depth analysis of the architectural and historic interest, character and appearance of the conservation area in order to assist the planning process, and to promote careful management and enhancement.
11. When you are reading or using this document it is important to note that its contents are not comprehensive, and that ample scope exists for new sources of information to enrich our understanding of the significance of the conservation area and its component parts. Whilst some aspects of the appraisal may be limited to areas that are visible from publically accessible land, visibility may itself vary seasonally, and the character of an area is not wholly dependent on public visibility. You must not therefore take failure to mention a particular element or detail within this document to mean that it is of no importance, and thus of no relevance in the Council's assessment of planning applications.

Summary of special interest

88. The conservation area boundary is designated to include all listed and historic buildings within the hamlet, whilst excluding the large modern caravan park associated with East Creech Farm. Agricultural land is included insofar as this forms a closely integrated component of the settlement layout, often where it is hard to draw a clear and meaningful boundary due to openness. Whilst this is true of the southern part of the former common, northern parts of this historic feature are also included to provide integrity. The strong physical and visual relationship between the settlement and Creech Barrow Hill, and the history of past use provides a basis for its inclusion.
12. The purpose of the following paragraphs is to provide a brief (non-exhaustive) summary of the special interest and significance of the conservation area, which forms the basis for its designation. A more detailed analysis of its historic and architectural character and appearance will follow in subsequent sections.

Special historic interest

13. In terms of residential buildings at least, the hamlet of East Creech is notable for not having grown substantially since the eighteenth century. Though many buildings and their settings have undergone substantial modification, the density and distribution of development therefore retains a strong historic character lost from many other settlements.

Special architectural interest

14. The conservation area contains a number of listed buildings and structures, including, most notably, the distinctive and unusual house now known as East Creech Farm.

Context and setting of the conservation area

15. The landscape setting of the conservation area is extremely important. The attractive surrounding landscape is perceived at all points moving through the hamlet given changing ground levels both within and beyond. The hamlet itself occupies a pocket of open grassland on falling ground just to the north of the Purbeck chalk ridge. Travelling east-west the setting of the hamlet is physically and visually dominated by both the ridge and the towering presence of Creech Barrow Hill (see FIG. 15), each of which are crowned by barrows (burial mounds). Descending the hill expansive views north across heathland and marsh extend across a broad flat plain towards Poole Harbour (see FIG. 1 below). To the east and north east scrubby woodland covers former mine workings, whilst to the south woodland provides a strong edge to the conservation area.



FIG. 1: *View to the east. As the land rises, Poole Harbour, Brownsea Island and the settlements beyond dominate the view. The foreground is compromised by modern structures at East Creech Farm and Creech Barrow Cottage where sheet roofing materials are conspicuous. It is surprising that no past attempt has been made at camouflage.*

16. Agriculture remains important, though the large camping and caravan site attached to East Creech Farm has an increasingly dominant seasonal presence. Clay extraction and brick making were important historically, and though mineral extraction continues in the broader area, this is now at a greater distance from the hamlet than historically.

Historic background and influence

Ancient-Medieval

17. The name 'Creech' is of Celtic origin, meaning 'hill', and clearly references the adjacent hill which is a prominent feature in views for many miles. This demonstrates a long history of settlement in the vicinity, and the importance of the hill as a landmark. The latter is emphasised by the positioning of barrows on top, which may have acted as both a territorial marker and symbol of status.
18. The site of a Roman villa has been identified just to the north east of the hamlet, providing further evidence of a long history of settlement and agricultural activity in the immediate vicinity.
19. During the early thirteenth century a hunting lodge was constructed at the top of Creech Barrow Hill. This allowed surveillance over the Royal hunting reserve of Purbeck Forest, about which little information survives.

Seventeenth century

20. Rockley Cottage (FIG. 2 below) and the western range of East Creech Farmhouse (see cover) have been dated to the seventeenth century. A further cottage of seventeenth century origin (described by the 1970 RCHM survey) stood to the front of Wren Cottage as late as the 1960s, though had been demolished by the 1980s.



FIG. 2: *Rockley Cottage. One of the oldest cottages in the hamlet. Dramatic changes in the appearance of the roof have arisen from replacement of the historic covering as seen by comparing a modern view with one included in the RCHM survey of 1970. The block ridge is a modern feature not typical of the local tradition.*

Eighteenth century

21. The manor was briefly owned by the Thistlewaite family during the mid-eighteenth century. The survey of the property they commissioned in 1768 provides a useful

source of information. It shows that most of the houses currently present were in existence in some form at this date, though almost all were subsequently enlarged and/or remodelled.

22. The most interesting feature of the 1768 plan is the depiction of East Creech Farm, which at that time could have been considered the ‘manor house’. It is indeed labelled ‘manshun’ (sic) on the plan. This is shown as a large building arranged around a central courtyard, enclosed within a large walled garden/orchard, with a further walled orchard opposite. Fragments of the orchard wall survive on the road frontage opposite the house (see FIG. 17). The boundary of that which enclosed the house still appears distinct on post-war maps, though they appear to have been subsequently erased by modern agricultural buildings and access tracks. The house underwent significant remodelling at some point during the eighteenth century, as is clearly seen comparing the east and west ranges (see cover and FIG. 7), however it is unclear whether this was before or after 1768. Either way, reference to the 1768 map indicates that the current property occupies a different footprint and that three of the four ranges of buildings enclosing the central courtyard shown at that time were subsequently demolished.



FIG. 3: Excerpt from John Sparrow’s 1768 Map. Note the plan form and enclosed gardens of East Creech Farm. Other buildings shown include Rockley and Keeper’s Cottage. The ‘brick kiln’ is labelled in the top left hand corner on the edge of Creech Common. Courtesy of Dorset History Centre (Photocopy 16).

23. The 1768 map (see FIG. 3 above) provides evidence of early industrialisation with a brick kiln shown to the north of Keepers Cottage at the edge of what was then common land. FIG. 9 shows the brickworks as it existed in 1888.

24. The route across the common between Rockley and Keeper's Cottage is shown as no more than a track on old maps, and only appears to have been formalised during the early twentieth century. This helps to explain its lack of enclosure with hedging and the 'open' character of the setting (see FIG. 13). A second, now apparently disused route ran across the common via the brickworks. An enclosed remnant of this route survives opposite Creech Barrow Cottage. This may have fallen out of use with closure of the brickworks, though the 1926 Ordnance Survey map (see FIG. 4 below) seems to suggest it was also partially blocked by tipped mine waste. The route along the east side of the common running to Cotness continues in use.
25. At least two properties shown on the 1768 map had disappeared by 1888. These were a house to the west of Rockley, and another at Thornham (on the north side of the road east of East Creech Farm).
26. The manor was bought by the Bond family of Grange in 1773, and became absorbed into the larger estate. This would have entailed a reduction in status for the 'manor house', to that of a principal farm, and might explain its subsequent reduction in size and loss of the enclosed gardens.

Nineteenth – early twentieth centuries

27. The immediate setting of the hamlet saw major change during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Whilst the brickworks remained in operation until the early 1900s, clay mining radically altered and industrialised the landscape. 'Clay pits' were recorded at Thornhams in 1843, and by 1926 pits had also been opened immediately to the north and north-west of the hamlet. An associated tramway was laid across the common (see FIG. 4 below), this forming part of an extensive network of narrow gauge railway lines serving the mines. The spur here appears to have been used for tipping waste, and was apparently short lived given its absence from the 1936 Ordnance Survey map. The former pits, the tramway route and associated piles of tipped waste have since been colonised by scrubby woodland.

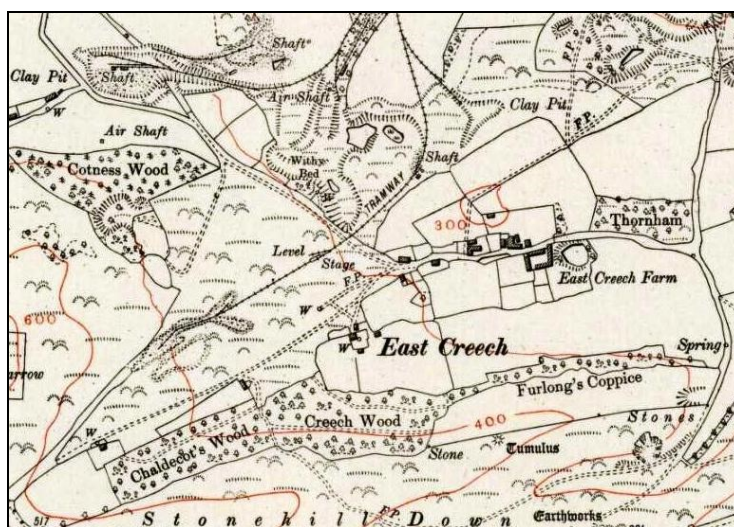


FIG. 4: 1926 Ordnance Survey map. Note the clay pits and tramway running across the common. The brickworks had ceased operation some time after 1900. Contrast with FIG. 9 showing the scene in 1888. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

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28. The nineteenth century appears to have seen remodelling of a number of the buildings in the hamlet. This typically entailed raising the roof to add a further floor to single and one and a half storey cottages (see FIG. 5), and or encasing earlier cob construction in brick. Construction by this time indeed appears to have favoured brick, employing materials produced by the adjacent brickworks.

Late twentieth – twenty-first centuries

29. As resources were exhausted, clay extraction in the immediate vicinity began to cease, leaving large tracts of wasteland. As noted above, much of this wasteland has been colonised by scrubby woodland which now forms part of both the immediate and broader landscape setting of the conservation area.
30. Many buildings underwent alteration and or extension of a considerable and sometimes unsympathetic nature during the second half of the twentieth century. The identities of Squires Farmhouse and Creech Barrow Cottage in particular are greatly obscured by modern alterations. The principal focus of change up to the present has however been at East Creech Farm. Whilst traditional agricultural buildings have become redundant and some have undergone conversion, large modern structures have been constructed to the rear and an extensive caravan site laid out. These now have a dominating presence within the hamlet particularly evident in views from Creech Barrow Hill.

Archaeological Potential

31. There is clear archaeological potential on Creech Barrow Hill given that it is the location of both prehistoric burial mounds and a medieval hunting lodge. For this reason it is protected by scheduling. The long history of settlement in the vicinity, and immediate presence of an archaeological site from the Roman period, would suggest potential for finds exists generally. Buildings themselves also provide archaeological potential given the possibility that some incorporate masonry reused from earlier structures (discussed further below).

Spatial character and built form

Layout

32. The principal historic route through the hamlet is that running from Cotness east, and along which the core of the hamlet is arranged. This route forms a junction with another running up towards Creech Barrow Hill, along which a few further dwellings are loosely placed. Most are orientated to face front, though exceptions seen at Keepers Cottage and Small Cottage might represent a response to prevailing weather conditions, or fact that these buildings were constructed prior to formalisation of the current road.

Density

33. The hamlet contains few dwellings scattered over a relatively wide area. This sparse distribution is an important aspect of historic character, and is accentuated by large gaps along the road frontage at the centre of the hamlet where land remains in agricultural use. The greatest concentration of buildings occurs at East Creech Farm, where some former agricultural structures have been remodelled to serve residential use, and several very large new agricultural structures have been added.
34. Dwellings are generally set within an enclosed garden plot, though their position relative to the road, and therefore the depth of frontage varies. The minimal set back of East Creech Farmhouse combined with its exceptional height lends the building visual prominence.

Height and massing

35. Cottages of one and a half or two storeys make up the majority of dwellings in the conservation area. These generally appear 'modest' in terms of mass.
36. The eastern range of East Creech Farmhouse consists of two full storeys with attic rooms, and is, relative to other domestic buildings in the conservation area, exceptional in terms of its height (see FIG. 7). This chiefly reflects the historic status of the building, which though slightly archaic in style, has the considerable floor to ceiling heights typical of higher class houses of the eighteenth century. Bulky modern agricultural buildings to the rear of the farm house reach the greatest size given the large area they cover, and these are clearly visible and somewhat obtrusive components of the view over a long distance (see FIG. 1).

37. Several buildings show external evidence for historic increases in height. In residential buildings this is typically associated with historic addition or enlargement of upper storeys (see FIG. 5). This is suggested by changes in construction visible on the west gable of East Creech Farmhouse, front elevations of Keeper's Cottage and Jubilee Cottage and in the western half of Fuchsia Cottage. Buildings which appear to remain at their original height include the diminutive Little Cottage, whose low one and a half storey form remains discernible despite being encircled by modern extensions, and the core of Wren Cottage (see FIGs. 10 and 16).



FIG. 5: *Increases in height. Both Keeper's Cottage (left) and the west side of East Creech Farm (right) show signs of a historic increase in height. At Keeper's Cottage the band of brickwork at first floor level is a different colour to that below, whilst brick has similarly been added above stone at the farmhouse. Each carries a slate roof though given the age of the buildings the original coverings would have been different. Keeper's Cottage may have originally been a single storey thatched dwelling.*

Building form and orientation

38. Traditional domestic buildings within the conservation area generally have a broad frontage and relatively narrow depth, typically being one room deep. Combined with evidence for changes in the height of buildings – see above – this would suggest that most cottages in the conservation area were originally very small, though perhaps not quite as small as Little Cottage.
39. With only a few exceptions, domestic buildings address the street. The exceptions occur descending Creech Barrow Hill, where little Cottage, Keeper's Cottage (see FIG. 5 above) and Jubilee cottage adopt an east facing orientation. The reason is unclear, though this may reflect greater ease in construction given the slope.

Edges and enclosure

40. The pattern and nature of historic enclosure within the conservation area varies. The boundaries of individual dwellings are commonly enclosed by hedges, low walls or fencing. Hedging extends along some adjacent field boundaries, but post and wire fencing is the most frequent means by which agricultural land is enclosed. To the south of East Creech Farm use of post and wire fencing reflects removal of hedgerows – see 1768 map (FIG. 2) – though more broadly use reflects the lack of formal historic enclosure (see FIG. 13 for example).
41. The presence of roadside ‘verges’/open green areas in front of properties is a feature characteristic of many rural settlements around the District. This reflects the lack of formal road demarcation in the past, and typically provides an attractive green edge to the street, and a spacious and informal character to the street scene. Though roadside spaces of varying width occur in East Creech, many are used as rough pulling off spaces or have been enclosed by low walls and fencing.
42. Split post and rail fencing frequent, though its current use in the west half of the settlement often appears ornamental. Where this has been introduced forward of, or on top of a pre-existing boundary treatment this introduces an element of clutter to the view.



FIG. 6: Means of enclosure. Split post and rail fencing is a feature of the west half of the hamlet. Where used in conjunction with other boundary treatments it can sometimes create clutter. The view above shows the stone retaining wall and verge at the front of Fuchsia Cottage along which reflective bollards are also positioned.

Architectural style

43. The conservation area contains a number of cottages which demonstrate traditional, pre-industrial local vernacular style (see FIG. 2, 13 and 16). These vary in the extent to which they have been altered or embellished, but are typically characterised by use of cob and thatch and lack any standardisation in the composition of details. Later cottages and contemporary remodelling of earlier buildings show greater formality in composition though again lack consistent or discernible style. A lack of formal style is again evident at East Creech Farm which is surprising for a building of its status and age. The eccentric arrangement of the eighteenth century wing in particular recalls seventeenth century and earlier designs found elsewhere in the District (see FIG. 7 below, and cover photo).



FIG. 7: *East Creech Farmhouse. The west half of the building (also see cover photo) dates to the seventeenth century and has been increased in height, whilst the east range appears to have been more substantially remodelled during the eighteenth century. The two storey porch is an interesting feature.*

Walls

Stone

44. Mixed heathstone and limestone rubble prominently occurs in a number of historic buildings and boundary walls where it forms a component of construction alongside other materials. This often apparently relates to earlier phases of construction suggesting a finite past supply which might hypothetically reflect reuse of material from other buildings. The use of limestone rubble at Creech Barrow Cottage is however atypical of development generally.



FIG. 8: Stonework. *The barn opposite East Creech Farm features a mixture of limestone and heathstone rubble. The walls have been raised or modified in brick. The building was heavily altered during the twentieth century and is compromised by the sheet roof and poorly formed entrance which was previously arched.*

Cob and Brick

45. Some of the cottages within the conservation area were originally constructed using cob. Use shows a clear differentiation in the status of construction relative to the contemporary western range of East Creech Farm, which was constructed in stone (see cover photo). The clay content of the surrounding soils combined with the ready availability of chalk is particularly favourable for cob construction. Rendered cob remains visible at Wren Cottage (see FIG. 10), where use apparently post-dates the brickworks, though at Rockley (see FIG. 2) the walls have been faced in brick.

46. A range of different clays suitable for brick making (and indeed historically used for this purpose in the broader region) are available within the immediate vicinity of the hamlet. Creech Brickworks (see FIG. 9 below) operated adjacent to the common from at least the mid-eighteenth century into the early twentieth, using clay dug on-site. This was from a localised source known as the Creech Brick Clay Member, a deposit which occurs within the Branksome Sand Formation. It is reasonable to assume that at least some of the brick within the hamlet dated to the period was produced at the works, though the variation seen would suggest that at least some came from outside. The colour of brick around the hamlet ranges between buff and pale red, with some darker reds and decorative use of 'flared' (burned) or glazed brick seen. Far greater and not always complimentary variation is shown in the colour of modern brickwork.



FIG. 9: Creech Brickworks. As shown on the 1888 Ordnance Survey map. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. Note old footpaths which appear to have been distinguished when a tramway was later built across the common, and the informal character of the roads.

47. English bond is used decoratively at Wild Rose Cottage, with courses of red stretchers alternating with courses of flared headers. Flared headers are also used decoratively in the Flemish garden wall bond of historic buff/pale red brickwork at Fuschia Cottage. In both cases brickwork in modern extensions has failed to match the colour and pattern of the old. A further decorative scheme in Flemish bond is seen at Keeper's Cottage (FIG. 5), where flared headers produce a chequered pattern within red brickwork.

Render

48. Render represents the traditional finish for cob and continues to serve this function at Wren Cottage. Prior to the nineteenth century it was also common for buildings constructed in stone to be rendered, as this lent protection to the walls. It seems likely that the western range of East Creech Farmhouse was originally fully rendered (this currently covers the first storey, partly concealing later brickwork), and remains a conspicuous and attractive finish on the eighteenth century wing.

Roofs

49. The majority of historic buildings carry pitched roofs, though these roof forms do not necessarily reflect those originally present (i.e. given many buildings were increased in height and finished in slate during the nineteenth century). The thatched roofs of Wren Cottage and Rockley each feature hips (see Fig. 2 and 10). Considerable spans are covered by the roofs of modern agricultural buildings to the rear of East Creech Farm, and these are visible across some distance.

50. Residential buildings within the conservation area feature a mixture of roofing materials, with no one material in a clear majority. Large areas of sheet roofing covering agricultural buildings are however conspicuous in views from the north.

Roofing

51. Use of thatch is characteristic of vernacular construction, and survives on a number of cottages. It is likely that the frequency of thatched buildings was greater historically, but that this was replaced as buildings were enlarged during the nineteenth century, typically by slate. Rockley and Wren Cottage carry ornamental block ridges on their roofs (see Fig. 2 and 10 below). Raised ridges are not typical of traditional thatching style in Dorset, and undermine local distinctiveness. Fortunately they can simply be eliminated during the regular cycle of maintenance. Little Cottage retains a traditional flush ridge (see FIG. 16).



FIG. 10: *Wren Cottage. The original part of the structure stands at the centre. The elaborate block ridge is not a traditional feature.*

52. East Creech Farm sees combination of plain clay tiles with an easing course of stone tiles at the eaves (see FIG. 7 and cover). This style of roofing appears to have been a popular around the District during the late eighteenth century, most typically for larger houses. The use of stone tiles at the eaves helped to shed rainwater clear of the eaves in the absence of gutters. Prior to its unsympathetic conversion, a more unusual combination of Welsh slate with stone tiles was a feature of the small agricultural building east of the barn (see FIG. 11 below). As this building is shown in the map of 1768 it seems probable that slate itself was not the original covering.
53. Welsh slate appears to have become the locally preferred roofing type during the nineteenth century, and use reflected growth of distribution by rail. Heather blue Penrhyn slate on the roof of Wild Rose Cottage (and also shown in FIG. 11) is particularly attractive. The foreign replacement roofing slate now used on the café conversion opposite East Creech Farm is conspicuous in its appearance given the colour and texture differs significantly from Welsh slate.



FIG. 11: *Welsh slate and stone eaves course. This photo captures roofing materials and details recently lost in the poorly handled conversion of the small agricultural building opposite East Creech Farm. The detail can still be viewed in combination with clay tiles on the farmhouse itself. Note the wall shown here has also been insensitively rebuilt.*

54. Importation of double Roman tiles from Bridgwater also commenced during the nineteenth century and the tiles generally found sparse local use for outbuildings. These feature on a couple of buildings adjacent to East Creech Farm, though some of the material appears to be new or reclaimed.
55. The corrugated asbestos cement roof of the large barn opposite East Creech Farm (see FIG. 8) is a modern replacement, installed when the building was altered post-war. Other functional sheet roof coverings are a feature of modern agricultural buildings constructed to the rear of East Creech Farm, and various outbuildings elsewhere in the conservation area.

Chimneys

56. Chimney stacks are an important traditional feature of dwellings within the conservation area. Where original, these are typically constructed from brick, though Wren Cottage has a historic chimney in ashlar (fine cut stone).

Windows and doors

57. Timber windows and doors are typical features of historic buildings within the hamlet and make an important contribution to the traditional character and appearance of the conservation area. Plastic and metal framed windows have however been introduced in places with consequent loss of character. These are most conspicuous in the recently converted former agricultural structure opposite East Creech Farm.
58. The windows of cottages within the conservation area are typically side hung casements. The large sash windows of the eighteenth century wing of East Creech Farm reflect the style and status of the building, whilst the remnants of stone mullioned windows of the older western wing are an earlier statement of the same.

Surfaces

59. Consistent with the rural character of the hamlet it contains no formal pavements, the tarmac road serving both pedestrians and traffic.

Street Furniture

60. The conservation area contains a red K6 telephone kiosk adjacent to which is positioned a square topped Royal Mail post box (FIG. 12 below). The telephone kiosk is a 'jubilee' model (date range 1935-52), identified by use of the Tudor crown. It appears little used, the interior filled with cobwebs. Externally the paintwork is in poor condition. The post box is post-1952 date.
61. A traditional finger post stands at the Furzebrook Road junction at the east end of the hamlet (FIG. 12 below). This retains its distinctive roundel. The finger post has clearly been refurbished, and whilst in good condition, has lost its original cast lettering.



FIG. 12: Street furniture. Left: red telephone kiosk adjacent to Rockley. Right: finger post at the east end of the hamlet.

Lighting and wiring

62. The conservation area contains no formal street lighting. This contributes to the rural character of the settlement. The antique street lantern positioned on the verge to the front of Fuchsia Cottage appears incongruous in this context.

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63. Overhead cabling is strung along the main road, crossing it at various intervals. This is very noticeable moving through the hamlet, and generally detracts from views.

Public space

64. The conservation area contains no public open space aside from the highway. Public use of private open space is however a defining characteristic of the caravan park located at East Creech Farm. Free public access is allowed to some of the open spaces and woodland in the immediate landscape setting of the conservation area.

Trees, green spaces and ecology

65. The 1768 map of the manor (see FIG. 3) shows a large orchard opposite East Creech Farmhouse and further orchards in the walled gardens enclosing it. These orchards do not appear to have survived the nineteenth century, though the semi-domestic character of the open space opposite the farmhouse seems to reflect its former presence. More recently a small orchard has been established adjacent to Rockley.
66. Agricultural land around the hamlet provides a largely open setting for the buildings within it. Openness is accentuated in places by transparent boundary treatments (e.g. post and wire or post and rail fencing). This is most noticeable travelling towards the hamlet from Creech Barrow Hill across the old common (see FIG. 13 below), and is also a feature south of the duck pond (see FIG. 14 below).



FIG. 13: *The old common. A sense of openness remains despite the fencing. The road here was only formalised during the twentieth century, and was previously a track which meandered across the common. Woodland helps to define and shape the space.*

67. Creech Barrow Hill is itself clearly an important open space, albeit some trees have become established in places.
68. Woodland plays an important role in providing a southern backdrop to the settlement and southern edge to the conservation area. Chaldecot's Wood, Creech Wood and Furlong's Coppice are each classified as 'ancient' given that they have been continuously wooded since at least 1600. The 1768 estate map (see FIG. 2) shows the boundaries of these woods have remained reasonably consistent up to the present day. Names reflect past management. Most of this woodland is now a nature reserve, reflecting the rich ecological value of ancient woodland.

69. In contrast to the ancient woodland to the south of the hamlet, much of the scrubby woodland to the north and east represents natural regeneration over former industrial sites that historically had little tree cover. Whilst much of this woodland sits within the broader landscape setting of the hamlet, that covering the former track bed of the tramway over Creech Common plays an important role in shaping the space through which the road across the common now runs (see below). Whilst areas of regenerated woodland for the time being provide less ecological value than ancient woodland, they remain a valuable ecological resource.
70. Whilst environmental conservation is not the purpose of a conservation area designation, the contribution made by wildlife and plants to the character and appearance of a conservation area should not be overlooked. Buildings, garden spaces and verges all provide nesting, roosting and feeding opportunities for birds, bats and small mammals.
71. The watercourse and ponds within the hamlet add to this diversity as well as contributing to the attractiveness and interest of the street scene (FIG. 14 below).
72. The conservation area contains a number of agricultural buildings commonly used by birds and bats. Future conversion works should aim to fully retain and enhance the value of these habitats.



FIG. 14: *Duck Pond and stream. The pond (left) forms an attractive roadside feature passing through the hamlet, though its position makes it vulnerable to pollution from vehicles. The watercourse (right) is visible adjacent to Jubilee Cottage.*

Visual qualities

73. The landscape setting of the conservation area is strongly perceived, making an important contribution to visual quality by lending great depth and character to many views. Creech Barrow Hill dominates the view travelling through the hamlet from the east, with gentle bends in the road gradually expose buildings in the foreground to view. Descending Creech Barrow Hill to enter the hamlet from the west meanwhile provides expansive views towards Poole Harbour and beyond which are both remarkable and attractive, and particularly good on a clear day (see FIGs. 1 and 15).
74. Views into the conservation area from higher ground to the north west, west and south west are not however wholly positive (see FIG. 1). These are dominated by the bulky modern agricultural buildings to the rear of East Creech Farm and flat roofed ancillary structures at Creech Barrow Cottage. These compromise rather than lend interest to the broad landscape panorama.
75. The composition of Rockley and with the adjacent telephone kiosk provides a 'classic' scene and, according to local residents, is an important point of visual reference and wayfinding for visitors to the hamlet.
76. The duck pond (see FIG. 14 above) has a picturesque quality, though views around it are currently compromised by derelict structures, signage and poor quality surfaces. All provide opportunities for both improvement and enhancement.



FIG. 15: *Creech Barrow Hill. The hill is a prominent feature travelling east through the hamlet, and takes centre view at a number of points.*

Important unlisted buildings and features of interest

77. Unlisted buildings, structures and spaces which make a 'positive' contribution to the historic or architectural character or appearance of the conservation area by virtue of their historic, and or architectural interest are detailed on Map 2. Given their significance (further understanding of which may be enriched by future work) these buildings can be considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' as defined within the NPPF. Alongside listed buildings, positive buildings should form a focus for conservation. Key examples (the list is not exhaustive) are provided below:

- *K6 telephone kiosk* (FIG. 12): a 'jubilee' model K6 telephone kiosk c.1935-1952.
- *Site of King John's hunting lodge*: located on Creech Barrow Hill.
- *East Creech finger post*: a distinctive piece of street furniture, particularly given retention of its unique roundel. The original cast lettering has been lost in refurbishment, though potential exists for reinstatement.
- *Little Cottage* (FIG. 16): despite being almost encircled by extensions, the external form and character of this tiny historic vernacular cottage remains appreciable. The historic position on the edge of the former common may suggest that it originated as an informal encroachment.
- *Agricultural buildings opposite East Creech Farm* (FIG. 8): these historic buildings are not specifically listed, though have a major presence within the conservation area. Sadly the smallest of the group has already been subject to an insensitive conversion that has caused loss of the historic fabric and details shown in FIG. 8. Scope remains for sensitive works to the barn that could include the reinstatement of lost features, particularly to the main entrance and roof, enhancing the contribution the building makes to the conservation area.



FIG. 16: *Little Cottage. The cottage is viewed with Squire's farmhouse in the background. The form remains distinct though much extended. Squire's farmhouse has clearly undergone extensive modification.*

Issues and opportunities

Negative factors

78. Alterations undertaken to traditional buildings within the conservation area has caused harm to their character. In such a small conservation area the impact this has is proportionately increased.

Evaluation of condition

79. From external view the majority of dwellings within the conservation area appear to be generally well maintained. The barn opposite East Creech Farmhouse is however in poor repair, and a number of attached structures are derelict.

Buildings at risk

80. Listed buildings and structures are termed 'at risk' where aspects of their condition, use or context threaten those features which provide special historic or architectural interest. The only listed structure of current concern is the garden wall and gate piers opposite East Creech Farmhouse (FIG. 17 below).



FIG. 17: *Garden wall opposite East Creech Farm. The brickwork is in poor condition, being damaged by ivy and leaning in places.*

Threats, pressures, challenges

81. The telephone kiosk remains under threat of removal. This was last proposed by BT towards the end of 2016, at which time the Parish Council objected. A scheme exists for Parish Councils to purchase the shells (minus the equipment).

Enhancement opportunities

82. The character and appearance of the conservation area can be preserved and enhanced by the efforts of all who have an interest in the land and property within it. Maintaining those buildings, structures and aspects of which make a 'positive' contribution to the special architectural or historic character or appearance of the conservation area (see Map 2) should be a key priority. On the other hand, buildings, structures and aspects which have marked 'negative' impact upon the character or appearance of the conservation area provide a focus for positive change. This may include but is not limited to, sensitive redevelopment. Buildings marked 'neutral' on Map 2 are a diverse and harmless group which lack importance. Whilst improvements or change here may deliver benefits, these are unlikely to be as significant as for those marked negative. Use of this appraisal to inform the design and assessment of planning proposals helps to ensure that conservation objectives are achieved through the planning process.
83. The list below provides a summary of potential areas for action, implementation of which will depend upon opportunity, priorities and funding, and may involve or be achieved by a range of different stakeholders.

Undergrounding of overhead wires

84. Visual clutter caused by wiring could be removed by placing telephone and other cables underground.

Phasing out of block ridges

85. The elimination of ornamental block ridges on thatched roofs can be achieved through the regular cycle of ridge maintenance. Reinstatement of flush ridges would help to reinforce local distinctiveness and character.

Maintenance of the telephone kiosk

86. The telephone kiosk would benefit from repainting, and better maintenance (including of the network connection) would no doubt lead to its greater use.

Improvements around the duck pond

87. Sensitive repair of the listed garden wall, improvement of surfaces and reduction of clutter would all help to enhance the contribution this visually attractive part of the hamlet makes to the conservation area.

Public awareness

88. It is important to raise awareness amongst the public of both the existence of the Conservation Area, and the crucial role property owners play in conserving and enhancing its character and appearance. Here Parish Plans, other locally produced documents and Parish websites can play an important role. Parish Plans in particular

play an important role in identifying actions that can be taken locally to better preserve and enhance conservation areas.

Appendix A – Further information and advice

Legislation, guidance and policy

- *Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.*
- *National Planning Policy Framework.* DCLG, 2012.
- *Purbeck Local Plan Part 1.* Purbeck District Council, 2012.
- *Conservation area designation appraisal and management.* Historic England, 2016.

Design

- *District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.* Purbeck District Council, 2013.

Historical development, archaeology and architecture

- *County of Dorset, Volume Two, South East, Part 1;* RCHM, 1970.
- *Dorset (Pevsner Buildings of England).* Newman and Pevsner, 1972.
- *National Heritage List.* www.historic-england.org.uk.

General

- *A Stitch in Time: Maintaining your Property Makes Good Sense.* SPAB and IHBC.

Further enquires

Enquiries regarding this appraisal should be addressed to:

Design and Conservation Officer
Purbeck District Council, Worgret Road
Wareham BH20 4PP
Tel: 01923 557388
conservation@purbeck-dc.gov.uk

Enquiries regarding archaeology and the County Historic Environment Record should be addressed to:

Environmental Services Directorate
Dorset County Council, Colliton Park
Dorchester DT1 1XJ
Tel: 01305 224921

Appendix B – Listed buildings

Listed Buildings within the conservation area are shown in the table below. For further information on these buildings see the National Heritage List (searchable online at www.historic-england.org.uk).

Please note: The table does not include ancillary structures or those within the curtilage of named buildings which are also likely to be covered by the listing where pre-dating 1948. Names of properties given below are those recorded at the time of listing and thus under which they are officially listed. It is possible that some names may have changed. This does not affect the listing itself.

Address	Grade	Historic England reference number
Wren Cottage	II	1120318
East Creech Farm House	II	1120319
Garden wall and gate piers to East Creech Farm, opposite the house	II	1323411
Rockley	II	1323410

Appendix C – Scheduled ancient monuments

A Scheduled Ancient Monument is defined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the National Heritage Act 1983 as a protected archaeological site or historic building of national importance. The scheduling of a monument means that permission is required for works affecting that monument. The Secretary of State, in consultation with Historic England, assesses each case individually to ensure that damage to protected sites is kept to a minimum.

Description	Historic England reference number
Bowl barrow on Creech Barrow Hill	1014830

Appendix D – Boundary change 2018

The boundary of the conservation area was modified in February 2018. This entailed:

removal of:

- an area of scrub woodland over former quarry workings (former Greenspecks pit);
- part of a field north of Rockley and northeast of East Creech Farm, including some modern farm structures;
- part of East Creech Farm caravan site;
- open downland to the south of Creech Wood, Chaldecot's Wood and Furlong's Coppice; and,
- part of Cotness Wood.

Addition of:

- two fields and woodland on the west side of Creech Barrow Hill, bounded to their west by the road to between Creech and East Creech.