

Countryside Design Summary

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

TEXT ONLY

Contents

Foreward

Introduction

What is a Countryside Design Summary?
The Study

1. Background

Geology & Topography
Indigenous Building Materials
Historical Background
 Early Settlement Pattern
 Royal Forest & Chase
 Importance of the Landed Estates
 Modern Farming
 Forestry
 Industry
 Urbanisation
 Building Types

2. Identifying Local Distinctiveness REFERENCE MAP

A) CHALK DOWNLAND

Landscape Setting
Communications
Settlements

- i) Chalk Stream Settlements
 Landscape Setting
 Settlement Pattern
 Building Form and Materials
 Cottages
 Small houses
- ii) Edge of Chalk Settlements
 Landscape Setting
 Settlement Pattern
 Building Form and Materials
- iii) Settlements of the Inner Chase
 Landscape Setting
 Settlement Pattern
 Building Form and Materials
- iv) Other Characteristic Features of the Chalk Zone
 Farm Buildings in the Chalk Zone
 Churches

Boundaries
Treescape

B) HILLY CLAY ZONE

Landscape Setting
Communications
Settlement Pattern
Building Form and Materials

C) HEATHS, CONIFER PLANTATIONS AND OAKWOODS)

Landscape Setting
Settlement Pattern

D) PASTORAL RIVER VALLEY

Landscape Setting
Communications
Building Form and Materials
Farm Buildings

3. Conclusions

Preserving Local Distinctiveness
Code of Practice

Appendices

- 1. Background Reference Maps:
 - Relief
 - Geology
 - Landscape Designations
- 2. Glossary
- 3. Index of Place

Foreward

The encouragement of high standards of building design was central to the 'Quality in Town and Country' initiative, introduced by John Gummer in 1994.

A year later, the White Paper: 'Rural England: A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside'* emphasised the need to safeguard local character, especially in rural areas.

These messages were embodied in PPG 1** which now form central tenets of planning policy. Achieving quality in countryside design forms the underlying aim of the Countryside Design Summary.

* Department of the Environment/MAFF 1995

** Planning Policy Guidance: General Policies and Principles – PPG1 (Revised) February 1997, Department of the Environment

Introduction

What is a Countryside Design Summary?

Introduced by the Countryside Commission, the 'Countryside Design Summary' (CDS) sets out a method which aids an understanding of local landscape and traditional building in order to influence the design of new development in rural areas. The main objective is to encourage greater regard for, and sensitivity to, the distinctiveness and character of each locality when designing new rural housing.

The East Dorset Countryside Design Summary comprises a descriptive analysis of the relationship between the landscape, settlement patterns and traditional buildings of the District. The document identifies those settlement and building characteristics that give certain areas their distinctive quality. By recognising the variety and diversity of the District's rural heritage, we are in a better position to appreciate how to protect and reinforce it. One positive way of achieving this is to use this research to guide the form and design of new development.

The Countryside Design Summary supplements design policies in the District Plan. Having completed a public consultation period, the document was finally approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Plan in August 1999.

The Study

The Countryside Design Summary comprises a descriptive analysis of:

- the landscape and the setting of buildings and villages within it;
- the form of settlements and their relationship with the surrounding landscape;
- the form, design and materials of traditional buildings.

The diagram below shows a map of the District divided into four 'landscape zones' relating to the area's main geophysical formations. (This is shown in greater detail in Chapter 2 together with the main communication routes and settlement pattern.) Field surveys were undertaken in June and July 1997 on a zone by zone basis.

This document comprises a summary of the main findings. It complements the Landscape Assessments previously published by the District Council* and the Character Appraisals in respect to the District's Conservation Areas.

*Cranborne Chase Landscape Assessment
SPG No 18

*Areas of Great Landscape Value SPG No19

1. Background

1.1 Dorset is predominantly a rural county of great beauty. Its landscape is diverse and highly distinctive, qualities which draw thousands of holidaymakers each year. The County's varied landscape of rolling downland with prominent hilltops and ridges, lush river valleys, magnificent coast-line, heathlands and attractive villages, merge into a singular, strongly unified, unmistakable image.

1.2 East Dorset forms part of this image. Whilst the southern extremities of the District are influenced by the Bournemouth-Poole conurbation, most of the District remains as unspoilt countryside. This countryside has certain characteristics which are distinctive to East Dorset. Its landscape is a reflection of the underlying geology and the results of uninterrupted human activity that has impacted on the area since prehistoric times.



Cobley Farm towards Pentridge

Geology and Topography

(see maps in Appendix pages)

1.3 The geology gives rise to two distinct landscapes. To the north and west is Chalk downland, which descends gently from the Wiltshire border in a south-easterly direction to altitudes of 150-250 feet where it is overlain by more recent Eocene deposits.

1.4 The dip-slope is drained by four parallel streams: Gussage and Crichel Brooks and the headwaters of the rivers Allen and Crane. The valley bottoms are of narrow strips of valley gravel and alluvium

until the Stour is reached. Here the broad meanders of the river have formed a wide band

of alluvium with valley gravel terraces. Upstream, there are numerous dry valleys which cut further into the dip-slope to produce a series of shallow, open valleys separated by flat-topped hills.

1.5 The south-eastern half of the District has been overlaid with Eocene sands, gravels and London Clay, which appear as successively widening bands extending south-eastwards. Adjacent to the Chalk is a narrow band of sands and gravels of the Reading Beds, followed by a wider band of London Clay. Beyond this, is a more extensive area of sands and gravels of the Bagshot Beds. This area, which tends to be lower and flatter, is drained in a south-easterly direction by numerous small tributaries of the Crane.

1.6 These formations give rise to four main landscape types:

A Chalk Downland. Extensive areas of open rolling farmland interspersed with blocks of woodland that enclose the landscape. Near the Wiltshire border the landscape has a heavily wooded character.

B Hilly Clay Zone. A transitional area of sands and gravels of the Reading Beds and London Clay, which give rise to a varied landscape characterised by relatively short, steep hills and numerous mixed woods and copses.

C Heaths, Conifer Plantations and Oakwoods. Acidic sands and gravels of the Reading Beds, which give rise to heath-land and large conifer plantations.

D Pastoral River Valley. The wide alluvial valley of the River Stour cuts through each of the formations identified above imposing its own special character.

Indigenous Building Materials

1.7 The rock formations have had a profound influence on the character of buildings within the District. Clay, sand and gravel, mixed with straw, form the main ingredients of cob, an unbaked material used extensively throughout the County since the 16th Century, although most surviving examples date from the 18th

Century. The material continued in use until the mid nineteenth-century, when it was succeeded by brick. On the downland areas, Chalk was added to the mixture, either as pure Chalk or as a Chalk aggregate. The raw materials were often dug directly from the construction site and mixed together before building up the walls in a series of layers or lifts, usually without shuttering.



Rendered cob cottage at Dean End, Sixpenny Handley.

1.8 Traditionally, cob walls were protected by a lime render, consisting of limestone which was first burnt and then slaked with water to produce a 'putty', before mixing with sand. Wall surfaces were then lime-washed, using the residue from the slaking process.

1.9 Cob was almost exclusively used in the construction of modest cottages and farm buildings, together with that other highly distinctive roofing material, thatch. High boundary walls were also built in this material, but few of these have survived. It is not uncommon for cob buildings to be later faced with brickwork. Cob buildings and boundary walls make a vitally important contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the District as a whole and to individual settlements in particular.



Cob boundary wall protected by thatch 'capping', links harmoniously with brick and flint outbuilding.

1.10 Found in association with Chalk are flints, seen today strewn over cultivated fields, and used in early cottages as a base or plinth for cob walls. In some local areas, cottage walls are constructed entirely of flints. Flints were also used in combination with local Green Sandstone, and later on, with brickwork in alternating bands. Chequer-board patterns may occasionally be found on certain prestige buildings, such as churches and manor-houses. Flints used in this manner were normally split, or knapped, and carefully butt-jointed to give a black, shiny surface. Banded flint-and-brick boundary walls are common in most settlements on the Chalk and make a vital contribution to their character, especially when they are weathered and affected by lichens and mosses. Flint-stones extracted whole from the ground and laid in a less orderly fashion are much less architectural and more rustic in appearance. These too may be used in conjunction with alternating brick layers.



Cob walls containing whole flints at Woodyates. Un-rendered walls are painted white.



Knapped flint alternating with brick in regular horizontal bands. Apple Tree Cottage, Gussage All Saints.

1.11 Strata of Greensand underlie the Chalk. The nearest small outcrop is at Bowerchalk, exposed as a result of the erosion of Chalk by the River Ebble. In East Dorset, the material is commonly associated with medieval churches, usually in the form of ashlar dressings to rubble or flint walls. There are a few secular buildings with similar architectural dressings. At Long Crichele, the former rectory has complete walls of Green Sandstone. However, unlike certain areas of the County, for instance Shaftesbury, Green Sandstone represents a less familiar building material. Hurdcott Green Sandstone is still available from Teffont Quarry, Chilmark, Wiltshire .



Green sandstone ashlar and knapped flint in chequer board pattern. Manor Farm, Woodcutts.



Lodge Farm, a 14th Century, first-floor hall house, with ironstone walls.

1.12 Heathstone, quarried from the Eocene area of the south and east, is a characteristic building material of early churches and important secular buildings, either as rubble-stone or dressed as ashlar. As with Green Sandstone, the material is not extensively seen, but concentrated on relatively few important buildings. Sometimes, Heathstone and other stones may be found in walls of modest cottages. These represent early examples of materials reclamation, often associated with the demolition of earlier priories or manor houses.



Rubble Heathstone reused in walls of 15 High Street, Sturminster Marshall.



16th Century timber-framed cottages with brick nogging. St. Margaret's Almshouses, near Wimborne Minster.

1.13 The County is not noted for its stock of timber framed buildings, but those which do exist tend to be concentrated in East Dorset. Within the District they are found in small numbers on the edges of the Eocene deposits, from Edmondsham to Pamphill, where there were plentiful supplies of oak. Groups of timber framed buildings characterise Pamphill, which is where the largest concentration occurs (16 buildings). Elsewhere, it is individual buildings which make a local impact, either in villages or in the open countryside. Brick 'nogging' has largely replaced the original wattle and daub panels between the timber frame, and today only fragments of this latter material exist, normally within internal partitions. During the restoration of Court House, Cowgrove in 1988, traditional wattle and daub panels were applied between the repaired timber frame. Both panels and timbers were then lime washed. Surviving timber frame buildings, which in East Dorset consist of square panels and straight braces, are mostly of seventeenth-century origin, although a small number from the sixteenth-century may still be seen.

1.14 The earliest example of the use of brick in the District, indeed within the County, may be seen at Abbey House, Witchampton, which dates from 1500.



Abbey House, Witchampton.

Local brickworks were numerous in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries throughout the County in those localities where there were

deposits of clay. There were 325 brickyards and tilekilns county-wide, with the main concentration occurring in eastern Dorset, extending southwards from Alderholt to Bournemouth, Poole and Wareham. Brick-making clay is a mix of sand and alumina and may contain chalk, lime, iron oxide or other materials. There are 15 or so different types of clay located in different parts of the County, giving rise to a wide variation in brick colours and textures. Different mixtures, methods of handling and firing techniques resulted in some 60 variations. Most brickworks in East Dorset occurred on London Clay (See paragraph 1.63), producing bricks that had an essentially warm, orange-red colour of soft texture.



16th Century Chapel at Woodlands Manor Farm, another example of the very early use of brick .

The subtle variations of colour and texture which stemmed from these traditional brickworks are seldom achieved in the highly standardised, quality-controlled bricks of today. The sizes of bricks have also varied from century to century. Generally, brick sizes have increased from the Tudor period to the Victorian, and have then tended to reduce in size during the 20th Century. Old walls may contain an irregular mix of brick sizes, adding further to their character. First confined to more superior secular buildings, bricks were later used more extensively as the availability of the material improved. By the second half of the 18th Century, it was cheap enough to be used on cottages, as new walls or to re-face existing cob walls. One of the oldest timber frame houses in the District, Abbey House, Horton, conceals its age by the eighteenth-century brickwork that encases its earlier structure.

1.15 Even the earliest use of brick displayed how the material could be used decoratively. Special effects were created using strongly contrasting brick, especially dark blue burnt or 'flared' brickwork, as seen on Abbey House,

Witchampton. Later, buff coloured bricks were used as dressings around windows, string courses and quoins, a characteristic feature of many Victorian buildings.



Horton Tower, built for Humphrey Sturt in 1740.

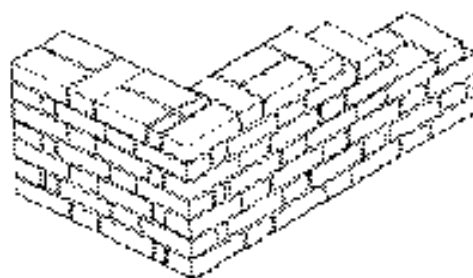
1.16 Until the common usage of Portland Cement after the Second World War, most buildings were constructed using lime mortar, which was made on site by adopting the same process as for lime render. The mortar has allowed buildings and walls to settle over time without causing structural damage and accounts for the irregularities of historic buildings which are so much admired today. The colour and texture of the mortar forms an integral part of the character of each wall. The traditional lime mortar joints can be easily recognised by their light colour and soft texture that exposes the graded aggregate within. Importantly, such mortar, being less hard than the bricks which they bond together, allows rainwater to be absorbed and given off through the joints, the effect of which is to preserve the brickwork. In order to ensure the continued longevity of good, historic brickwork it is vitally important that traditional materials and methods are used in their maintenance, especially when they are due for re-pointing.

1.17 Traditional brickwork is also characterised by variations in bonding; stretcher-bond is common in brick nogging in

timber-framed buildings where a single skin is required, but seldom seen elsewhere. Flemish bond and English Garden Wall are the most common, and Flemish Garden Wall and other variations often occur. Such patterns, as well as a range of capping and other details, give old walls immense character.



English Garden Wall Bond



Flemish Bond

1.18 Until improvements in transport in the nineteenth-century and mass-production facilities at Poole, brick was largely confined to houses, rather than cottages, and farm-houses, stables and barns. There are many notable examples of the use of brick in East Dorset, especially the grand houses, but also many other structures, such as fine stables (e.g. the Riding House at Wimborne St. Giles), gazebos, water-towers and other towers (e.g. Horton Tower), and vast boundary walls, (e.g. those around Charborough Park). Unique buildings and structures such as these make a major contribution to the special character of East Dorset District.

1.19 However, it is the vast majority of more humble traditional brick buildings and boundary walls which, when combined together in street scenes, account for the distinctive sense of place of our villages and hamlets. The ingenuity of past craftsmen can still be enjoyed in abundance, in chimney details, window heads and other decorative features.



Curiously named the Round House, this 18th Century brick gazebo situated in a field near Wimborne St. Giles has a square plan.

1.20 Although tile-hanging is not an old East Dorset tradition, there are several examples of nineteenth-century use of this practice. It was used for decorative effect, rather than as a functional requirement as evident on many half-timbered houses in Hampshire and the South-East. Early Victorian, hand-made tiles were rich in colour and texture and featured scalloped or fishtail tiles and other distinctive shapes.

1.21 Weather-boarding is commonly associated with traditional agricultural buildings. Square-edged oak or elm boards are fixed horizontally over supporting timbers, sometimes extending to ground level or more often, above a brick plinth. Weather-boarding is also associated with granaries and other little buildings, and is commonly used to clad cottage out-shuts and porches.



Weatherboarding, Firs Farm Barn and Granary, Cowgrove.

1.22 The strongest visual images of the District inevitably focus on the thatched roofs of our humble cottages. Thatching has taken place in Dorset for over 2,500 years and the tradition continues today.

1.23 Long straw thatching technique was prevalent in East Dorset until the turn of the

twentieth-century. But changing agricultural practices resulted in the near extinction of this practice and the development instead of combed wheat thatching. A device, known as a 'comber', was added to the threshing drum to ensure that the straw stalks remained undamaged, essential for its use as a thatching material.

1.24 Today, combed wheat thatching is a speciality of Devon and Dorset. Subtle variations of style around the County form part of the thatching tradition. In East Dorset, roof coverings are thick and rounded, with smooth 'wrap-over' ridges and wide eaves. 'Ligger' patterns of split hazel at the ridge, and occasionally at the eaves, represent the only decoration. (Patterned block ridges, points at the hips, and other superimposed features are imported from other parts of Britain and are not representative of the local tradition.)

1.25 Traditionally, thatched roofs are repaired by adding successive layers of material, retaining sound older layers beneath. Over a period of time the thatch increases in thickness, which adds to the billowy character of many old cottage roofs.

1.26 The use of water reed, common in East Anglia, also involves a different thatching technique. Repairs using water reed often involve the replacement of the entire roof, necessitating the loss of historic features such as wattlework and smoke-blackened thatch. Water reed possesses quite different properties from wheat, being longer, wider and stiffer. The material is applied directly onto the timber roof structure and in consequence, seldom develops any appreciable thickness. Water reed roofs tend to be angular with hard edges and often have a coarser texture. For these reasons, water reed is not considered an appropriate thatching material for East Dorset.

1.27 Thatch was not only the cheapest roofing material, compared with tiles or slate, but also the lightest, and eminently suitable where the wall structure was relatively weak, as was the case with unbaked earth walls. Thatch required but a lightweight framework of thin poles, usually of sweet chestnut or larch.

1.28 Thatch is also common on timber-framed and brick buildings where the supporting

framework comprised split hazel battens fixed to oak trusses.



Materials taken from the immediate locality give traditional buildings a strong sense of belonging.



The East Dorset thatching tradition is characterised by smooth, fine textured thatch with a flush, sheared down ridge. Old Forge, Pamphill, before restoration.



Simple geometric patterns, formed from split hazel liggers, are decorative as well as helping to secure the thatch at the eaves and ridge.

1.29 If the character and distinctiveness of East Dorset are to be preserved it is important that traditional thatching materials and practices should be encouraged. A number of local thatchers now produce their own supplies of wheat reed, using traditional binding and

threshing machinery. Growing corn locally ensures adequate supplies of materials when needed, always a problem for thatchers. It also enables the thatcher to control its quality, during the growing stages, at harvesting and subsequent storage.



A local thatcher reaping specially grown corn, using a 1910 binder. The stooks will be taken to a nearby barn for threshing before being stored. Horton Heath.

1.30 Although there are still around 200 Listed Buildings that are thatched in East Dorset, and perhaps as many again which are not Listed, this number represents but a small fraction compared with the situation a century and a half ago. Many cob and thatch cottages have been demolished on account of their poor condition, any defect in the roof would soon affect the condition of the cob walling beneath. Other thatched roofs, including their historic pole rafters, have been destroyed by fire. In the nineteenth-century, thatch was often replaced with clay tiles or Welsh slate as their availability widened and as and when these 'superior' materials could be afforded. To support the new roof, sawn timber rafters would be needed, often supported by a new external skin of brickwork that also served to conceal the cob.



Sometimes when thatch was replaced (perhaps following a fire), the opportunity was taken to increase the height of a cottage at Shapwick.

1.31 Although less common than the County as a whole, some early buildings would alternatively, have been roofed in stone tiles, quarried from the Purbeck hills, either as a complete roof, or used in conjunction with thatch. In such cases a narrow margin of stone tiles was used on the verges, overlapped by thatch. The remains of this tradition can still be seen on plain tiled roofs having several courses of stone tiles at the eaves. Some eighteenth-century buildings may have consciously been designed with this detail.



Targetts Farm, Lower Holwell, Cranborne, featuring quoins and stone gable coping, stone tiles, stone

1.32 Small, plain tiles represent the most common roofing material in the District. The earliest tiles, which were made in association with the local bricks, were known as 'peg-tiles'. These contained small holes through which oak or sweet chestnut pegs would be inserted in order to hang onto roofing laths. Increasingly, this traditional method of fixing is being replaced with galvanised nails. The external appearance of the roof, however, remains unchanged. The hand-made tiles produce a texture and richness of colour seldom found in the machine-made products that were to follow. Today, old peg-tile roofs are further enhanced by a patina of age and lichen growth, which ought to be preserved wherever possible.



Old tiles used to protect cob walls, sometimes rendered, sometimes faced in brick, add to the rich variety of textures.

1.33 Pantiles, Roman tiles and their derivations occur on isolated buildings but are not representative of the District vernacular.

1.34 Welsh slate became a popular roofing material in villages with easy access to the railways, notably Wimborne, Sturminster Marshall, West Moors, Verwood and Alderholt, but also in some remote parts of the District including a cluster of settlements near Sixpenny Handley: Deanland, New Town and Woodcutts. Many slate roofs have a lower pitch than tiled roofs, often with wider eaves. The material, in common with corrugated iron, is commonly used on mono-pitched roofs for single-storey extensions to thatched or tiled dwellings.



Many slate roofs are characterised by their low pitches and wide soffits. Newtown, Sixpenny Handley.

1.35 The aim of the Countryside Design Summary, pursued in Section 2, is to identify patterns of use of the respective materials in order to give clear guidance on what materials are appropriate to use in particular areas today.

Historical Background

Early Settlement Pattern

1.36 In order to understand how the present distribution, size and form of settlements within the District have come about, it is important to go back in time and briefly trace the evolution of the East Dorset landscape.

1.37 The landscape has been influenced by a long and continuous period of human occupation. Except for the highest parts, most of the area was once covered by extensive oak woodlands, but these were progressively cleared for agriculture, house-building and fuel. The light, acidic soils to the south and east of the District became impoverished and, unable to sustain agriculture or woodland, reverted to heath.



Unimproved Chalk grassland is rare and occurs only on the steepest slopes. (Pentridge Hill).

1.38 Since the Iron Age, most human activity occurred on the drier, more fertile Chalk, as small settlements or hill-forts. Badbury Rings represents the largest hill-fort, enclosing some 17 acres. Other settlements, such as Gussage Hill, Oakley Hill, Woodyates and King Down were also sited on hilltops or upper slopes which could be more easily defended.



Cranborne Ancient Technology Centre aims to reproduce Iron Age and other early technology and husbandry.

1.39 The Romans also favoured the Chalk to site their settlements and roads, except for three settlements along the Stour. These were located at West Parley, Dudsbury (an important military fort) and Lake Gates, west of Wimborne (a military supply base). The Roman sites of Holwell (near Cranborne), Stanbridge and East Hemsworth (near Witchampton) and Shapwick lay in or near valley bottoms.

1.40 Badbury Rings, which the Romans occupied as a fort, was the hub of the Roman road network in the area, and with Ackling Dyke, formed part of an arterial route from London to Dorchester. It is characterised by its straight alignment across the gently undulating landscape. The only village in East Dorset that falls directly on the route of the Roman Road is Shapwick, which formed a bridging point across the Stour. Few sections of the road have been incorporated into our modern road system. One exception is (the inappropriately named) New Road, that extends from Shapwick to the Blandford road. Another is the Salisbury Road at Woodyates.

1.41 In common with most other parts of Britain, the departure of the Romans in the fourth century probably led to a reversion to tribal kingdoms until the Saxon Conquest. The Saxons were responsible for extensive woodland clearance and the introduction of new agricultural techniques into the area. Wimborne Minster developed on a river terrace of the Stour at its confluence with the Allen. Elsewhere, villages, hamlets and farms were sited in sheltered river valleys, close to water supplies, some of which, such as Long Crichel, Wimborne St. Giles and Shapwick exist as villages today. The Saxons established a Priory at Cranborne in 930, and the village became one of the most important in the area. Other settlements have since diminished in size or disappeared altogether: Knowlton, Brockington and Hemsworth, for example. Other monastic centres were at Wimborne and Horton. In Wimborne, the monastery was in existence before 705 and its site today is now occupied partly by the present Minster and by Dean's Court. The village of Horton stands adjacent to the site of the tenth-century monastery.

1.42 The Chalkland villages were commonly associated with strips of cultivated land that

extended back from the streams onto the chalk, either on one side of the settlement or on both sides. Many of these boundaries are evident today as hedgerows. They could also account for the way in which the older cottages are sited within their plots end-on, close to the road.

1.43 For centuries, the landscape of East Dorset was characterised by open downland, with small arable fields or strips leading out from small settlements sited at or near the valley bottoms. The identity and character of the area, however, has been profoundly influenced by historical events.



Water meadows of the upper Crane, Holwell.

Royal Forest and Chase

1.44 As a geographical area, the Cranborne Chase has existed since pre-historic times, bounded by the New Forest in the east, Holt Forest and Dorset heaths in the south, the Forest of Blackmore to the west, and the wastes and forests of the valley of the Nadder in the north.

1.45 Since Norman times, most of this area became subjected to the special laws and management associated with the Royal hunt. Within these 'outer Bounds', the lands remained within the direct control of the first two Norman kings before passing to the Earls of Gloucester.

1.46 Contiguous with the Chase was another Royal hunting ground, centred on Holt Forest. This area, which extended from the River Allen in the west to the Moors River in the east, and from the northern edge of Wimborne to Horton, formed part of manorial lands of Kingston Lacy. It remained in the ownership of the Crown until 1107 when it was given to Robert de Beaumont, First Earl of Leicester.

1.47 Since passing from direct royal control, Cranborne Chase ceased to be the private

domain of one individual, but of several independent estates.

Importance of the Landed Estates

1.48 These estates stemmed from the dissolution of the monasteries and the rise of a small number of families. Of particular relevance to East Dorset were the Ashleys of Wimborne St Giles and the Cecils of Cranborne. The site at Wimborne St Giles belonged to the Ashleys since the early 15th Century, whilst the Cecils acquired previously monastic land from the Crown in the 1590's. These estates became the seats of the Earls of Shaftesbury and Salisbury respectively. The Pitt-Rivers Estate, which extended southwards to include Sixpenny Handley, also had its origins in Elizabethan times. The Kingston Lacy Estate was acquired by Sir John Bankes in the 1630's which began a new phase in the Estate's development. Within East Dorset, these estates were complemented by other 'noble seats' established in the 18th Century notably Crichel and Drax, and by smaller estates, at High Hall, Gaunts, Deans Court and Edmondsham (until the mid 19th Century, part of the Shaftesbury Estate). Today, these Estates still control substantial areas of the District.

1.49 Settlements which lie within these estates have for centuries been influenced by estate decisions, sometimes quite dramatically. Part of the village of Abbott Street on Pamphill was cleared away in the mid 18th. Century for extensions to Kingston Lacy Park and its residents moved to a new site, known today as Little Pamphill.

1.50 Moor (or More) Crichel comprised a cluster of hovels along the lane above Crichel House (there are still signs of their entrances in the high wall that borders the road). These dwellings were removed in the 1840's as a result of the Health and Sanitation Act and new houses built in Newtown by Henry Charles Sturt.

1.51 Cranborne, Wimborne St. Giles and Edmondsham are quintessential Estate villages and owe much of their settlement pattern and character to the proximity of their respective Great House and associated park. Each of these 'Great Houses' is a little detached from the respective village, but close to the parish church.



At Edmondsham, as in other Estate villages, parkland bounded by hedges and walls separates the 16th Century house from the village.

1.52 Importantly, the estates have safeguarded villages, hamlets and cottages within their jurisdiction and succeeded in preserving their identity and special character. In addition, purpose-built estate houses have been added, mostly in the nineteenth-century, which, by virtue of their form, materials and architectural detailing, have enhanced their respective settlements. There are outstanding examples at Moor Crichel, Long Crichel, Witchampton and Wimborne St. Giles.



Well preserved Estate houses at Long Crichel.

1.53 The estates have had a pervasive influence over the way in which much of the rural landscape has been managed. This is especially so on the Chalk, but the National Nature Reserve at Holt Heath still remains as it was when a Royal Forest. The attractive hilly landscape on the north side of Colehill still forms part of the Kingston Lacy Estate. However, the decision of the National Trust, when it acquired the Estate, to designate certain parts as 'alienable' means that Estate control over these peripheral areas is diminishing. Unprotected cottages remain vulnerable to development and many of the distinctive oaks

are becoming very old. Their loss would affect the character of the area as a whole.

1.54 The importance of historical events on the evolution of settlements is well illustrated by the neighbouring villages of Shapwick and Sturminster Marshall. Shapwick has remained very small whilst nearby Sturminster Marshall now represents one of the District's largest villages. At the beginning of King John's reign around 1200, the Manors of 'Sturminstre' and 'Cerletone' (Sturminster Marshall and Charlton Marshall) were at the centre of an ownership dispute between the de Beaumonts of Kingston Lacy and William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke. The Crown settled in favour of Marshall, whose name was then suffixed to each village. Since then, these two villages have remained independent from the Manor of Kingston.

Modern Farming

1.55 The Enclosure Act of 1794 and the disfranchisement of the Cranborne Chase in 1841 led to an increase in farming activity on the Chalk as the old order made way for new agricultural ideas and practices. Arable became increasingly important as mechanisation developed. There were copious quantities of long-stalked corn suitable for thatching and cheap labour to apply it.

1.56 From 1900, large areas of previously managed grassland on the chalk were brought into cultivation. Fields of wheat and barley still dominate the Chalk countryside but, increasingly, alternative crops such as oil-seed rape and linseed are introducing contrasting bright colours into the landscape patchwork. Field sizes have continued to expand in line with extensive farming methods and the number of individual farms have diminished. The replacement of the old fashioned binders and threshing machines with modern equipment, and the introduction of short stemmed varieties of wheat, mean that local thatchers today, who do not grow their own, need to rely on imported supplies.



1.57 The well-wooded landscape of the Chase today reflects the importance which the Estates place on timber production as a long-term source of income, as well as the continued importance of game, which is increasingly managed on a commercial basis. The great plantations of the 18th Century make a significant impact, especially the Drive Plantation at Wimborne St. Giles established by the fourth Earl of Shaftesbury. It is now managed as a commercial woodland but retains some of the original species. So too is Chetterwood and the woods of the Rushmore Estate, where several Ancient Woodlands form a direct link with early Chase history.

1.58 The poor, acidic soils of the southern and eastern part of the District remained sparsely populated until the turn of the twentieth-century. Squatters' settlements on the edges of the once-extensive heaths grew independently from the earlier hamlets and tended to be dispersed in form, each cottage having its own paddock or small-holding.

Forestry

1.59 After the First World War and the establishment of the Forestry Commission a number of major conifer plantations were established on the former heathland. These now constitute an important part of the District's landscape character. Many plantations enclose and form a backdrop to urban areas as well as providing a valuable resource for recreation.

1.60 The complex of mixed woodlands that extend from Pamphill to Alderholt, on the edge of the Eocene geological formation, is managed for a variety of purposes by many diverse interests, including the landed estates, business concerns and many individual farmers and land-

owners. Such woods make a strong impact on the setting of Pamphill, Holt Wood, Woodlands and Edmondsham.

Industry

1.61 Corn mills have, until the twentieth century, been an important part of the local agricultural scene. Some of the most important trades, millwrights, smiths and farriers, were all dependent on agricultural activity. Walford Mill, Crichel Mill, Didlington Mill, Stanbridge Mill, Witchampton Mill and the mill at Wimborne St. Giles are sited on the Allen, most occupying sites on which earlier structures have stood. Similarly on the Stour, White Mill and the Old Mill at Corfe Mullen occupy much earlier mill sites.



White Mill, Sturminster Marshall, restored in 1994/5 by the National Trust.

1.62 Historically, earthenware pottery represented the most important single industry in East Dorset. Kilns were concentrated on sites where there were easily-accessible supplies of clay for pots and timber for fuel: between Alderholt and Cranborne; and extending southwards to Horton and Holt. The industry developed gradually throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, supported by the growing local population. The number of kilns peaked in the eighteenth-century, but remained essentially cottage industries. However, they could not compete with cheaper mass-produced wares transported by the new railways from the English Potteries. From the beginning of the nineteenth-century the industry was in decline and by the 1880's all but a handful of kilns in Verwood had closed.

1.63 Brick-making was also important locally and shared many of the characteristics of the pottery industry, in terms of their size and location. Brick-making too, depended on

supplies of clay, and timber (often in the form of coppice) for fuel. Transport was also an important consideration, both in terms of transporting clay to the brickyard and the carriage of bricks to the building-site. Consequently, the materials were used locally, often confined to the immediate locality of the clay-pit. The former clay-pit on the hillside between Horton and Horton Tower, for example, can still be detected. Locally-extracted, locally-manufactured and locally-used materials help to explain why traditional buildings in villages, such as Horton, appear unified and in harmony with their landscape setting. The brickworks at Horton, in common with those near Cranborne and Corfe Mullen, were located on the Reading Beds. Most brick-making in the District, however, was confined to seams of London Clay, which included two brickyards to the east of Cranborne and six in Corfe Mullen. By the nineteenth-century, there were 28 brickyards located on the London Clay, in Alderholt (3), Holt (4), Sandleheath (6), Sturminster Marshall (1), Verwood (3), Wimborne (2) and Wimborne St Giles (1).

Urbanisation

1.64 The most dramatic changes within the District have taken place since 1960 with the growth of suburban housing in Ferndown, West Parley and West Moors, Verwood, Alderholt, Corfe Mullen and Colehill, together with the development of new industrial estates. Much of this expansion has occurred on the Bagshot Beds, leaving the Chalk landscape largely unaltered. However, planned growth, albeit on a much lesser scale, has occurred in Sturminster Marshall and Sixpenny Handley.

1.65 Even small amounts of development can make a significant impact on small villages, particularly when its siting, form and design are suburban in character. Some Chalk villages which have been taken out of Estate control, such as Gussage All Saints, have been affected in this way.



Brick and rendered walls in juxtaposition characterise most East Dorset villages. Farmhouse and cottages near St. Mary the Virgin, Sturminster Marshall.

1.66 One of the objectives of this study, pursued in Section 2, is to examine how settlements relate with the surrounding landscape; how they relate to topography, water-courses, vegetation and field systems and to describe how these factors have influenced their form.

Building Types

1.67 The size and status of buildings have traditionally been a reflection of the social order, the relative importance of community buildings and the prosperity of particular farms. Most of the District's villages still preserve this hierarchy of buildings although their social structure may be very much different. This pattern has been summarised by R.W. Brunskill ('Vernacular Architecture') as follows:

The Great House (and park), country seat of the nobility and centre of extensive landed estate.

The Large House, originally occupied by people of some importance such as the squire, a successful yeoman or farmer or a favoured parson.

The Small House, originally occupied by the ordinary farmer, school-teacher, the unfavoured parson and other figureheads of the village.

Cottages, occupied by labourers and artisans, often close to subsistence level of existence. These may be tenanted from their employers or owner-occupied.

1.68 Most cob and thatch cottages fall within the 'Cottage' category especially those of single-storey with attics. However many have since been joined together to form larger single

dwelling or extended in other ways. Other cottages may be of brick and tile. The 'Small House' category consists almost entirely of larger detached and paired dwellings, normally of two storeys and of brick and tile construction. Most of the Estate Houses fall within this category, whose designs tend to reflect the aspirations of the incumbent lord rather than to fit the status of its inhabitants.

1.69 As the most common building types are small houses and cottages, it is these which tend to give particular areas their special character and distinctiveness. This study examines patterns of distribution, form and materials relating to these building types that existed before the First World War. Buildings since this date have tended to be influenced by national styles and the mass production of materials. The effect has been to progressively dilute local distinctiveness of individual buildings and their siting has tended to be more influenced by legal constraints than physical influences.