



Walditch

*An historic Dorset village
in the 21st Century*



Design Statement & Parish Plan



VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

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Introduction

The **Village Design Statement (VDS)** and **Parish Plan (PP)** have been produced by an Action Group of volunteers drawn from the village. The group has consulted the residents by holding meetings and conducting a survey to ascertain the views of the community on how they want the village to develop over the foreseeable future.



A typical Walditch cottage

The **Village Design Statement** is a description of Walditch as it is at the moment. **The Parish Plan** is predicting the shape of the village in the next five years; the latter attempts to reflect the priorities of the residents.

There are many views and impressions of any small community. The object of the VDS is **to describe the distinctive character of Walditch**, showing it to be a product of its history in Dorset and use this, along with the interests of the residents, as the basis for planning future changes. The changes should reflect the priorities of the residents.

In the consideration of the proposals in the Parish Plan the Action Group have taken into account:

a) **the culture** of the village; this simply means the way of life, i.e., the values, beliefs and behaviour of the residents; the culture is determined by a number of influences but is the key to the quality of life; the culture reflects the level of satisfaction, the happiness of the residents; the culture of a community can be enhanced or destroyed by the quality of planning decisions; although attention often focuses on highly publicised physical developments, the less tangible but more important impact a change has on the culture of the village is often ignored;

b) **the built environment**: this includes the houses and other buildings in the village;

c) **the natural environment**: this includes a consideration of the surrounding countryside and the way it influences the perceptions of the village.

The three elements can be analytically considered separately but in reality they interact, for example, the buildings of Walditch traditionally reflected the availability of local stone but they also reflect a traditional Dorset agricultural community and the agriculture reflected the constraints of climate, soil type

Christian tradition and the centrality in a Dorset village of the church. The success of the village over centuries reflected the achievement of a harmony between man and nature. The challenge for our parish plan is to achieve a similar harmony given the rapidly changing pressures of modernity.

What is it for?

The aim of the statement is to be adopted by West Dorset District Council as part of their supplementary planning guidance to the District local plan. The recommendations in our Parish Plan will be considered when planning applications are assessed. The VDS and PP are intended to support the Local Plan design policies as they affect Walditch as well as help the work of the parish council. It is hoped that the recommendations made in this parish plan will help architects and developers to understand local opinions at the start of the design and development process. It may be useful to residents when they consider modifying their own properties.

The Compilation of the Document

A group of volunteers representing the whole of the parish was recruited to respond to a Countryside Agency's initiative to breathe greater vitality into rural areas by encouraging villages to take greater control over their own affairs. There was general support in our parish for the proposition that residents should have greater influence over the planning process: the challenge was to find ways of involving all the residents.

This was attempted in two ways: firstly, by arranging a number of meetings in the village halls at Bothenhampton and Walditch where the residents were invited to consider the following issues:

housing, future developments, roads, parking, services, leisure, the arts and the environment. Residents were invited to write on posters and express their priorities for the development of the parish. The response was encouraging, graphically illustrating that residents

were passionate about their village, the environment and the future of Dorset.

Secondly, the Action Group of volunteers designed a survey of the parish population, to ask their views on the above issues: this involved delivering a questionnaire to every household in the parish. Once more the response was most encouraging in that some 40% of the old village residents responded (many surveys get under ten percent response); the response, though, was lower in Valley View and Manor Fields. As with the meetings in the village hall the feelings of interest and pride in the village and its environment came through strongly.

The results of the survey and the responses to the meetings have been integrated to provide the basis of the Design Statement and Parish Plan.

Although Walditch is part of the parish of Bothenhampton and Walditch it was always felt in the Action Group that the villages, while having much in common, were seen as separate entities, so the decision was made to produce separate documents for each village.

An example of a thatched cottage





View across the village green with
Hyde Hill in the background

Setting

Walditch is one and a half miles to the east of Bridport in a small loop off the A35; it lies to the south of Walditch Knapp - a Hill which separates the village from Shipton Gorge - two miles to the east. It is part of the parish of Bothenhampton and Walditch; Bothenhampton lies to the south and west but is a separate village. The original village lies along Walditch Road but there have been modern developments in the village itself; also to the north at Valley View and thirdly at Manor Fields; the latter almost abuts Bothenhampton.

The surrounding area is predominantly open countryside, mostly farmland. There are also small areas of woods, furze, bracken and scrub. Most of the grassland is grazed by cattle and sheep but there is some arable land given over to cereals.

HISTORY- snapshots

These brief historical snapshots give us the cultural context - a village identity; the history illustrates the roots of the present day.

William of Daumeray holds Waldic. Aluui held it before 1066. It paid tax for 2 hides. Land for 1 plough, which is there in 1 lordship, with 1 slave. 1 villager and 8 smallholders with $\frac{1}{2}$ plough. A mill which pays 45p; meadow 4 acres. Woodland 4 furlongs long 1 furlong wide. The value was and is 40s.

This is a translation of the entry in the Domesday Book for Walditch, so we know that it was an agricultural community in 1088 but the entry also indicates that there was a thriving village before 1066 in the reign of Edward.

Our village historian suggests that there is a site on Walditch Knapp above the village which could be a Roman fort - it is marked as such on the older ordinance survey maps.

The terraces along the hillside surrounding Walditch known as lynchets are thought to be indications of the first signs of arable farming from prehistoric times. It is clear, then, that there has been a community in Walditch since prehistory.



St. Mary's, the
village church

The Domesday entry also indicates that there was a mill in Walditch; it is not known for certain where this was but there is some evidence that it was probably behind the present BP garage near the stream at the bottom of Crock Lane. Much later, in the 14th century the WILL of one

Richard Coffyn of Bridport, dated September 19th 1360 “leaves half an acre of land in a field called Walditch, with a fulling mill to my wife.” So there was a fulling mill in Walditch at this time and fulling mills were driven by water power, they were the means of removing the grease and grime from wool and this obviously needed a constant supply of water. Needless to say the stream is still there, its source being Walditch Knapp which is the dominating hill above Walditch.

The water flowing from the Knapp according to myth was perceived as healthy and good for the eyes!! A local farmer has established a commercial bottling plant for this water and it is readily available for sale.

Such a mill was not surprising because it related in many ways to the dominant economic activity of Bridport which was the treatment of flax for the rope industry, an industry which thrived from the middle ages up to the present.

In some respects Walditch can be seen as a little agricultural backwater which steadily went about its business - there are limited references to the village. This is not surprising when one looks at the historic administration - the Manorial system: Walditch was part of the manor and liberty of Lodgers which was in the Hundred of Godderthorne. Counties had been divided into Hundreds since Saxon times, these were further divided into Tythings: Walditch is sometimes listed under the manor of Lodgers but at other times under Bothenhampton and occasionally missed out altogether.

As well as the arable farming and sheep and cattle farming the records indicate that Walditch had a good acreage covered by orchards. Most of the apples were used for making cider which was the traditional drink in the area; sadly there are no surviving commercial orchards or cider making, although many of the gardens have small orchards with old apple varieties.

Economic history indicates that agricultural labourers have always been among the lowest

The Village Hall



paid usually surviving at near subsistence level. Dorset, for a number of reasons, had some of the lowest paid workers in the country: it is no coincidence that the first attempts to form trade unions occurred some twenty miles down the road at Tolpuddle. The interest today is that the agricultural cottages are now highly desirable residential properties but Dorset is still a low wage area.

Walditch had its own workhouse, which is now a residential property. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 resulted in the closure of the Walditch workhouse and the consolidation of poor law unions which subsequently meant the poor were served by Bridport.

During the Second World War a number of American troops were based in Walditch and the Real tennis court was used as an army facility.

In 1996 the Bridport and West Dorset Trust totally restored the tennis court to its present state. This Trust inherited the land and building from Joseph Gundry and a substantial grant from the National Lottery enabled them to carry out the extensive refurbishment.

Walditch was amalgamated with the parish of Bothenhampton in 1894 for local government administration. However in 2003 the village has been joined to Lodgers for local government electoral purposes but the village **still sees itself as a separate community.**

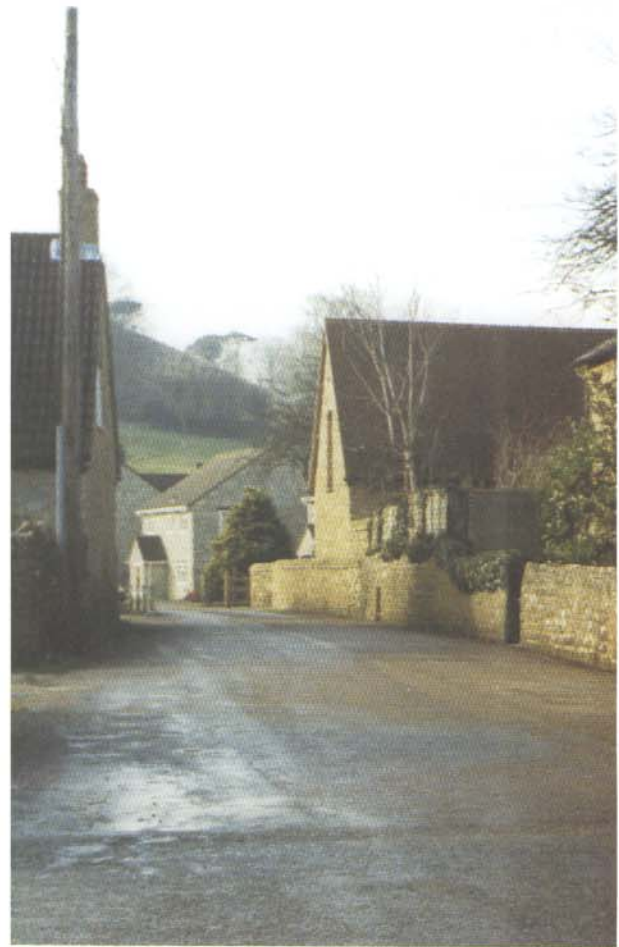
The Village Today

The village (see map) can be divided into three sections: firstly, there is the original village, where some of the housing dates back to the seventeenth century; secondly, there is Manor Fields at the lower end of Lower Walditch Lane - a ubiquitous 70s development of bungalows; thirdly, there is a high density development of utilitarian, mostly red brick, housing at Valley View, completed in 2001.

Manor Fields and Valley View are modern developments that can be seen as a response to the great pressure for additional housing.

The original village is a Conservation Area (See map). Uplands, a spur of 1920s and 1930s housing running up from Walditch road, and the 70s new build at the north of the village are excluded from the conservation zone. The 1970s stone built housing round the Green opposite and along from the church are included in the Conservation Area. The whole of the Hyde is in the Conservation Area.

Lower Walditch Lane – unsuited to increased traffic



Another picture of the village showing the narrow roads which are not able to cope with heavy vehicles. Even some residents have difficulties parking. The survey showed parking and traffic to be sources of irritation to residents.

The picture on the left illustrates some of the charm of Dorset but illustrates the problem of accommodating further development.



An example of the distinctive mullioned windows,
Typical of older Dorset housing

The significance of seeing the built environment and the surrounding countryside as an unified entity is recognised by the planning authority's decision to include the long gardens of many houses and the whole of the fields and meadows to the south west of the Hyde in the Conservation Area.

The road running up towards the Hyde with its avenue of trees and sweeping meadowland up to the Hyde plantation on the crest of the hill is provides a beautiful panorama and is a great attraction to walkers so is economically important as well as aesthetically pleasing. It is not surprising to find this is designated as Land of Local Landscape Importance.

The oldest part of the village is the group of buildings including the Broadstone Farm and Old Manor House opposite Manor Farm Court, the latter has been developed from the original farm buildings. These buildings date from the 1650s.

The heart of the original village was the three farms: Broadstone, Old Manor and Berry, all have been converted to residential homes, including the Broadstone Barn which was probably a nineteenth century building - now

tastefully adapted to residential property The stone is from a local quarry and has the distinctive colour, less golden than the Ham stone from Somerset and North Dorset yet quite different to the grey of Portland or Purbeck stone in the east of the county. The Old Manor House has the distinctive mullioned windows with the moulded hoods or labels that are a feature of romantic seventeenth century Dorset houses.

At the crossroads where Lower Walditch Lane joins Walditch Road are a group of old cottages, which are probably also part of the original village standing opposite a beautiful thatched house, formerly two cottages known as Rose Cottage, now Corner Cottage.

A few yards down the Lane is one of the oldest and one of the most interesting buildings - Berry Farm; it is considered by some as a rare surviving example of a Dorset long house, the first phase of which is 16th century or earlier; the house has cob walls and is of the open-hall type, it has been extensively renovated and altered.

Hyde Cottages and Barnhayes are interesting mainly for the type and style of the stone used, these properties were built with good quality dressed stone which was unusual for modest cottages.

The largest private house in the village is Shute Haye which is mid Victorian, the stone building has extensive grounds which blend nicely into the countryside on Walditch Knapp, illustrating the way the character of the village is a product of and in harmony with the countryside.

The most distinguished building is the mock Tudor house - The Hyde- built in 1853 of Ham stone by the Gundry family with the wealth accumulated from their successful rope-making business. It is thought the present building replaced the remains of a settlement dating back to Tudor times. The Hyde could have been a rival centre of activity to the group of farms to the north of the village.



The Hyde

Perhaps the most intriguing building is the large gaunt mill-like building backing on to Hyde farm, this building constructed with ham stone is the Real (or Royal) tennis court. The Real tennis court was built in 1885 to entertain the Prince of Wales who was apparently a Real tennis enthusiast. The building was used for tennis until the First World War then fell into disuse becoming a vehicle repair shop and an agricultural building but was renovated and restored to its original purpose in 1996.

Opposite the church is The Green, this is not a surviving old traditional village green but spare land left over after the housing development in the seventies and donated to the parish. It is now, however, an attractive feature of the village and is used for village fairs. There is a variety of newish buildings in the vicinity of the Green: the two most recent have been built in ham stone adhering to traditional design; the seventies buildings have been built using Purbeck stone which is seen as a superior building material but contrasts with the local stone of the historic village.

The centre of the village is probably now seen as The Green, opposite St. Mary's church which stands alongside the village hall - a former school, and the former school house, now rented by the Church Housing Association.

These three buildings are an harmonious grouping built in the same style with the same

stone. Although there has been a church on the site since 1260 the present church was rebuilt in 1850-60 but does contain the font from the late 12th century. The school took in pupils between 1862 and 1920 serving the village and the surrounding farming area.



The Village Green with a new building of Ham stone in the background, the house to the left is Purbeck stone

The village has no shop. The former post office, a charming thatched building is now residential accommodation. The nearby pub was also closed. Residents are dependent on Bridport for shopping and services.

All the houses have gardens; many of the gardens stretch some distance into the adjoining fields making the village part of the countryside; it is as if the village is a natural extension of the countryside, although this is not the case with the new development at Valley View which reflects the modern pressure for high intensity housing.

Countryside

Walditch enjoys a quiet location in West Dorset. The whole of this area is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The parkland lying below the Hyde is designated as Land of Local Landscape Importance; in the fields opposite this area there are fields used for grazing that have historically important strip lychetts. There are also strip lychetts above the village along Walditch Knapp and Hyde Hill (see map).

The surrounding area is rich in plant life some of which is specific to this area.

The grassland, scrubland, woodlands and hedgerows, as well as the dry stone walls provide a rich habitat for a wide range of birds and wild animals which bring pleasure to residents and visitors although some of the animals can be regarded as pests by farmers and gardeners – the deer love the new roses!

Employment

The village is no longer a farming community, although there are productive farms on the edge of the village and a small market garden at Lowerfield. There is also a cattery, a tree nursery and a small packaging company.

There is virtually no unemployment, at 1.6% it is well below the national average. The employed tend to commute to nearby towns for their work.

Tourism and the services associated with it are now the major private sector employers. The biggest employer is the public sector.

The village has a higher than average percentage of retired, many of whom have come from outside the area.

Footpaths, Roads, Lighting, Street Signs and Furniture (Refer to map)

It is thought important to keep signs and street furniture discreet and in character with the village. At the moment some of the telegraph posts are intrusive with telegraph wires trailing across significant vistas. There are no road signs and some confusion over street and road names.



The wires and telegraph poles despoil the view

Much of the village has no pavements or lighting, reflecting the rural character of the village; the residents are largely happy with this but this rural character is not easily reconciled with modern traffic and parking.

The road, Firch Lane, exiting the village north to the A35, is a typical narrow twisting Dorset lane with high sided hedges: this lane is unsuitable for heavy traffic. There is a smaller narrower lane running from Firch Lane to the east, Bonscombe Lane, which is a traditional scenic footpath to Shipton Gorge via Cherrywood Farm. Bonscombe Lane is little more than a track and not fit to accommodate heavy vehicles.

Footpaths are important for walkers and need to be well signposted



Another footpath to Shipton Gorge is via Spinners Lane, named after homeworkers who delivered spun flax from Shipton Gorge to Bridport. It must have been thirsty work because Shipton Gorge had seven alehouses at that time to cater for the homeworkers. The Lane is a narrow steep track popular with walkers.

Lower Walditch Lane is another typical narrow Dorset lane which runs down a deep cut incline past Berry Farm, Lowerfield and West View to the new developments of the village at Valley View and Manor Fields. On the left hand side is the stream and a swampy area with a little used footpath which has potential to be part of a circular footpath of the village.

Walditch Road is the main road through the village but it is hardly wide enough for more than one vehicle, the road continues past The Hyde down to a small roundabout near Manor Fields. Once more the road is narrow and not equipped to take modern traffic.

During times of heavy traffic on the A35 into Bridport, Firch Lane and Walditch Road are used as a rat-run down to Crock Lane; this through traffic is irritating to residents and increases the risk of accidents on the narrow lanes.

The lanes and footpaths are important to the tourist economy in that an increasing number

of visitors come to walk through unspoilt countryside. It seems likely that walkers are a different market to the traditional family in search of a beach holiday and therefore less dependent on the weather, providing a more buoyant source of income. Walkers follow the popular routes down from the A35, either past Valley View or the footpath parallel to Firch Lane; they walk through the village and up Bonscombe Lane or Spinners Lane up the Walditch Knapp across to Shipton Gorge or back round Sadness Copse to Hyde Hill returning to the village.

In the opinion of many visitors the view from Walditch Knapp or Hyde Hill across to the West of the village of Walditch is one of the great sights of the English countryside - explaining the attraction of Dorset to the visitor.

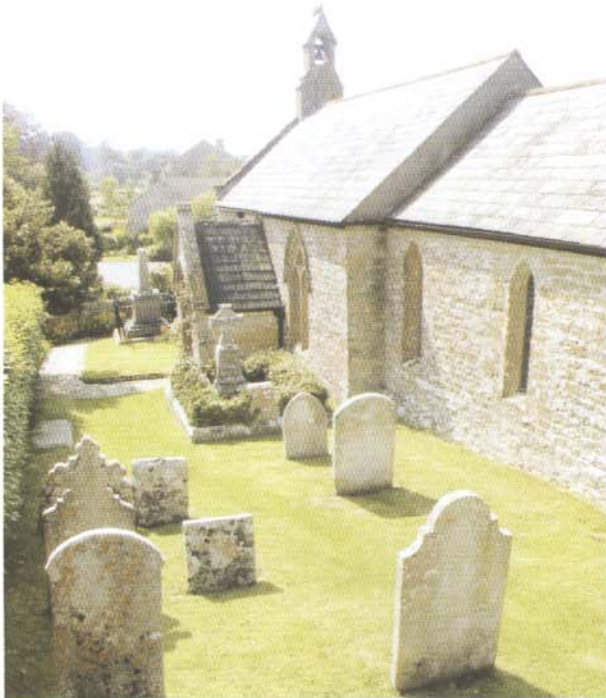
Further building development would despoil the views and undermine the tourist economy; this fact is often ignored by the advocates of further house building. West Dorset must accept that one of the opportunity costs of further housing development will be a decline in attraction to visitors, i.e. hampering the tourist economy.



Pen sketch of stone cottages in the village

Village Culture

The village is best seen as a traditional English community reflecting the values and beliefs that underpin the English lifestyle; this means there is a commitment to upholding respect for ones fellows and a commitment to tolerant civilised behaviour, including an element of altruism; however, there is an interest in development when it is clearly progress and not the pointless pursuit of symbols of modernity. This needs to be born in mind when reflecting on the community's views on future development.



A view of the village church

The values and beliefs are reflected in a wide range of activities that take place in the village.

For many people the church is central to village life; St. Mary's is a small building but the centre for an active Church of England congregation committed to the Christian ethic which makes an important contribution to the welfare of the village community.

There are a number of events throughout the year. Some are organised by the Church, e.g.

flower Festivals, others by the Village Hall Committee and yet others by the Women's Institute, often the same people are involved.

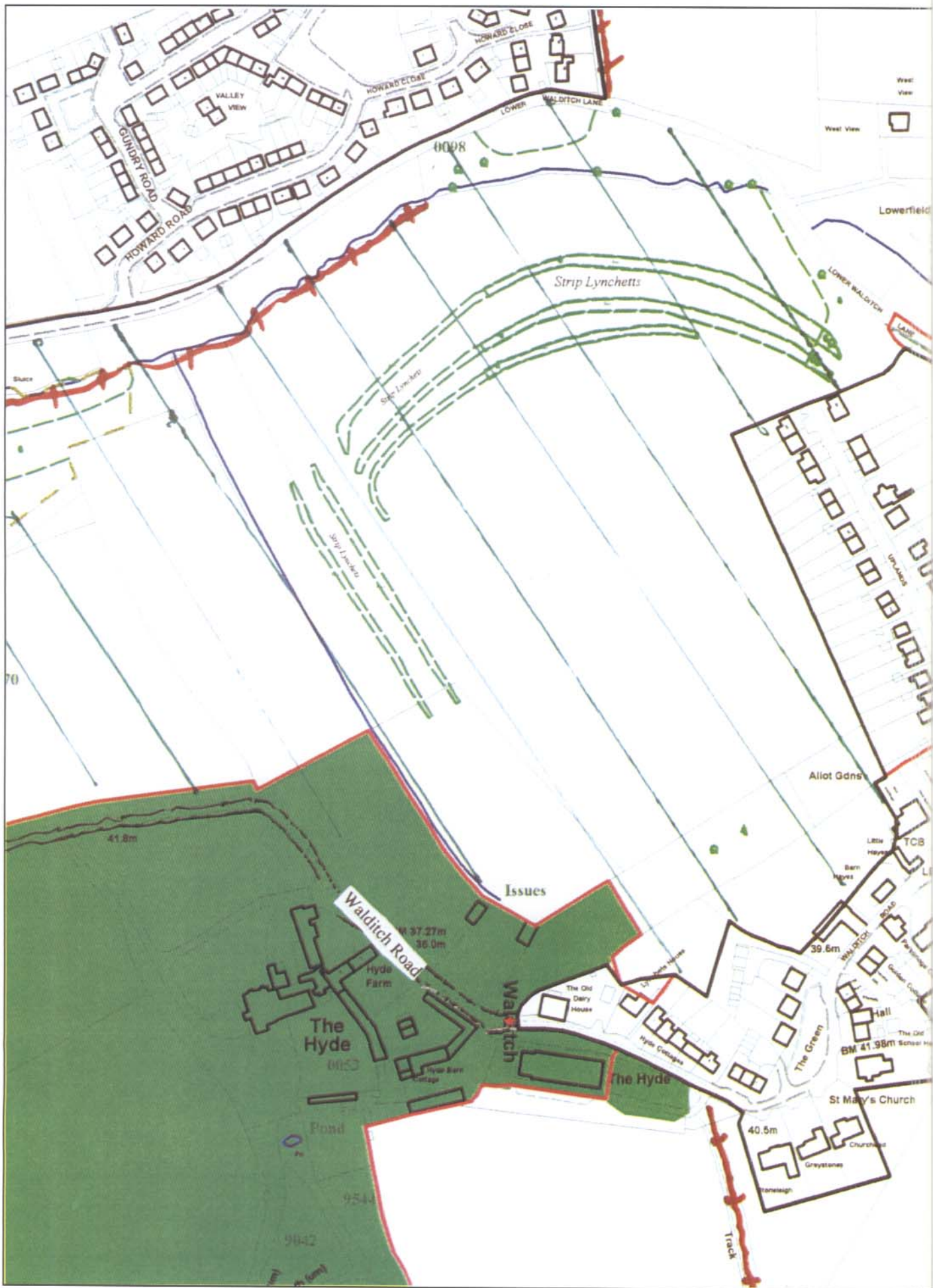
The village hall, leased from the church, is the centre for most community activities; the Village Hall Committee organise a number of events throughout the year including the village fair and have raised substantial sums of money which is used to benefit charity as well as improving the fabric of the building. One of the successes of the Village Hall Committee has been to organise a bi-annual Open Gardens Day; the open gardens concept has been eagerly embraced by the villagers as a way of displaying their pride in the village as well as showing their interest in gardening. These activities can be seen as an end in themselves but, in addition, they enhance the sense of village community life.

The hall is a centre for mother and toddler groups which are beneficial to young families. It is also used for keep-fit classes and a resident has established a table tennis club. The church members also run the Thursday club for youngsters.

The village residents have recently established a Residents Association to represent the interests of the village in the light of the external planning pressures that have increased in recent years. A sub group of the Walditch Residents Association made up of parents has volunteered to assist the parish council establish a purpose built playground for the children of the village; the land for this playground was generously donated to the parish by the Gundry family. The Residents Association has been active in monitoring changes taking place in the vicinity of the village.

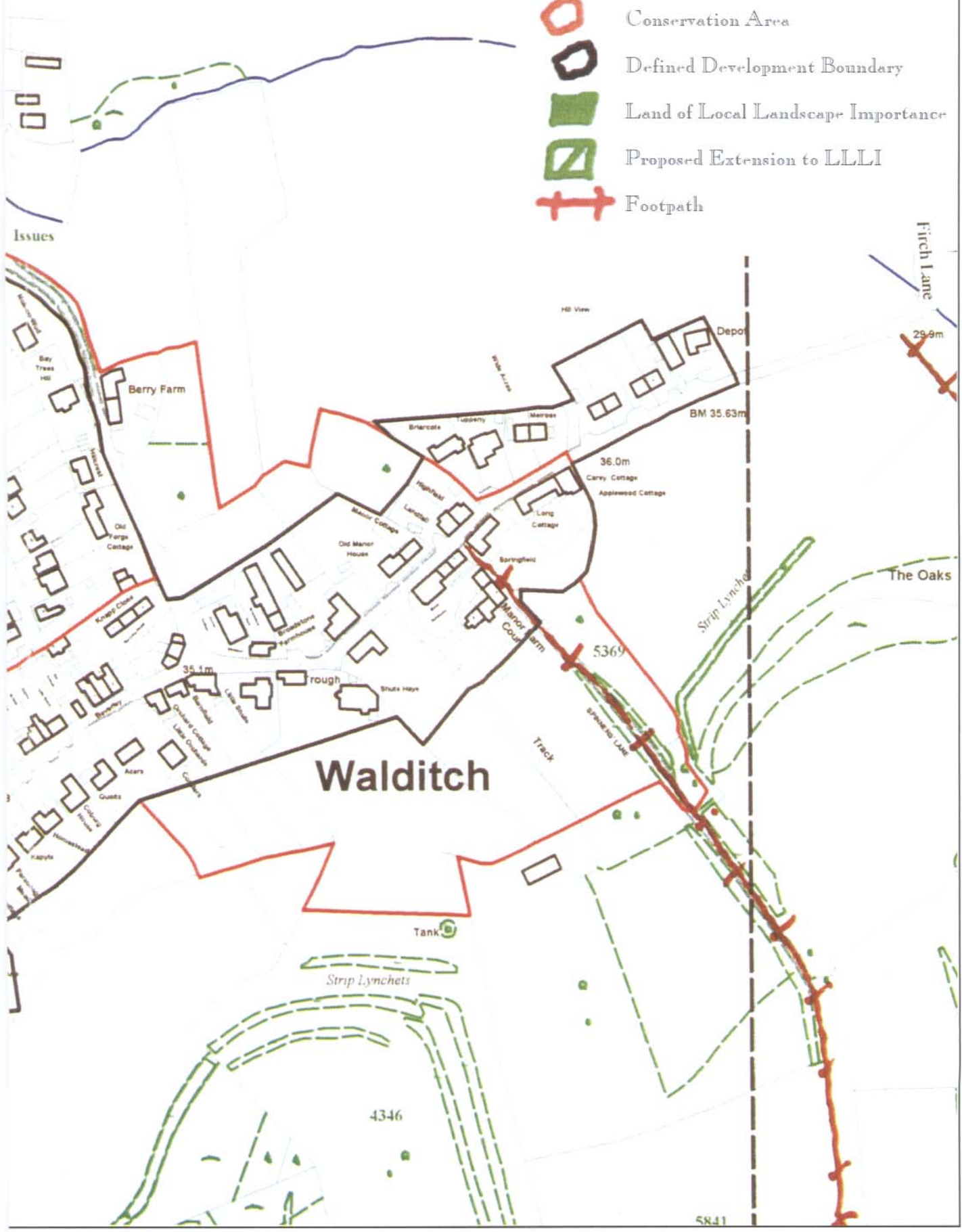
The residents of Valley View have created their own residents' association to deal with specific demands of the new development.

Walditch benefits from its proximity to Bridport in that it has access to the variety of arts and leisure groups that thrive in West Dorset.



Key

-  Conservation Area
-  Defined Development Boundary
-  Land of Local Landscape Importance
-  Proposed Extension to LLLI
-  Footpath



Issues

Fitch Lane

Walditch

Tank

Strip Lynchets

5841

PARISH PLAN

Housing & Development

This is not a detailed Parish Plan. The Action Group does not have the resources to carry out the necessary work for such a project. What we have done is provide policy parameters for a Parish Plan; the parameters consist of a broad framework of views of the residents in which detailed planning can take place.

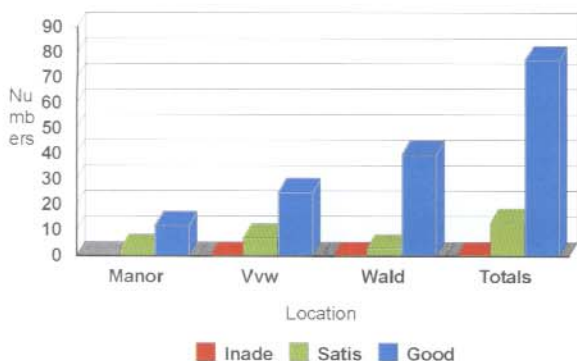
It is difficult to be prescriptive when addressing questions of housing style and building materials in Walditch because in the last thirty years there has been little or no attempt to maintain the vernacular of the area. The pressure for new housing has resulted in price and convenience being the determining factors resulting in the utilitarian developments at Valley View and Manor Fields; yet, in the consultations with the residents, the overwhelming response was for the traditional materials to be used in any development and the character of the area to be maintained and not compromised.

The Quality of the Housing Stock

The starting point of any planning process has to be the residents views of the strengths and weaknesses of the present position; in fact the residents of Walditch take pride in their village and in their housing.

Chart 1 illustrates this – not one respondent

Chart 1 How would you describe your housing?



thought their housing inadequate: the interesting finding for planners and developers is that the respondents happiest with their housing were those in the old village and in the oldest properties. The respondents from Valley View, living in new housing, had the highest numbers expressing the view that their housing was merely 'satisfactory' rather than 'good'.

This sentiment was echoed in answers to questions on the use of building materials - 100% of respondents thought there should be a rigorous application by the planning authority on building materials and architectural detail. This is an important point - even those villagers who were living in and had recently bought new red brick properties are saying we should aspire to good design but with materials in character with our heritage. Walditch residents do not want cheapness to be an excuse to ruin the character of the area!

Opportunities for Expansion

Chart 2 Do you support further house building?

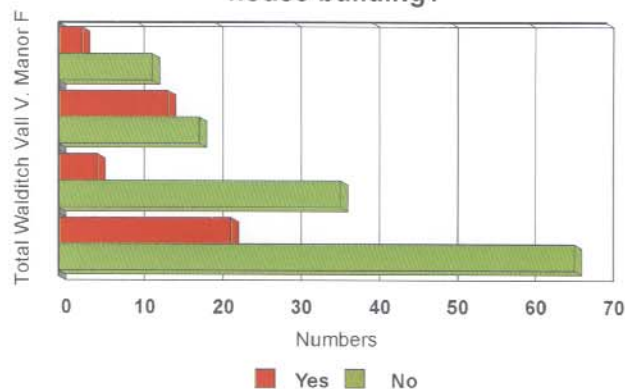


Chart 2 shows an overwhelming majority opposed to further house building. The opposition is strongest in the old village where over 90% are opposed to further building – particularly on green field sites. This is not a case of nimbyism but a commitment to maintaining the character of the village, a recognition that

there has to be harmony between countryside and the village: further development would undermine this harmony - it would merge Walditch into an urban sprawl, reducing the quality of life of residents and curtailing the attraction to visitors.

Development and housing are emotive subjects and arouse strong feelings; it is therefore, necessary to be careful in the use of language. The constant assertion by interested parties that there is a **need** for further housing implies that the need exists in a policy vacuum.

The **demand** for housing implies a balanced approach taking into account: the economic implications, family structures, the environment and short term population movements. Different groups give each of the above a different priority so it is not surprising that residents of Walditch feel an obligation to defend their environment against short term development pressures; on the other hand, residents recognise the desirability of meeting the housing aspirations of the young and low paid.

The residents of Walditch have taken a balanced view of these issues.

Chart 3 Is there space for further further Housing?

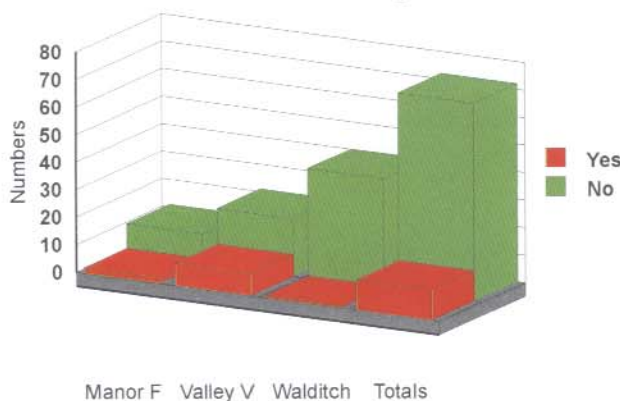
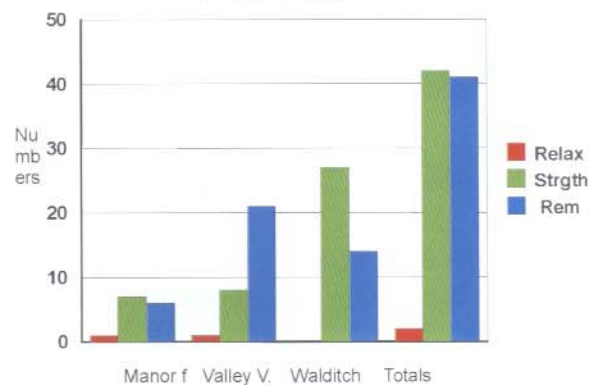


Chart 3 clearly shows the residents' view that there isn't a suitable site to carry out further housing development.

The Defined Development Boundary is West Dorset planning department's policy to contain development in approved areas, it indicates where building should and should not take place. Residents support the Defined Development Boundary (see map) as contained in the West Dorset approved plan. The Walditch consultation highlighted the residents' concerns about the dangers of a development free-for-all: Chart 4 shows that a negligible number wanted the boundaries relaxed, the overall majority wanted the boundaries strengthened although the majority in Valley View wanted things to remain the same.

Chart 4 Views of the development boundary



The Defined Development Boundary is a recognition of the dangers to the character of West Dorset of untrammelled development.

There is a legitimate demand for housing which brings constant pressure to relax the planning constraints and expand Bridport in the easiest and cheapest way - by simply building out into the countryside. Such pressures always ignore the external costs of further building; such costs include: loss of farmland, loss of scenic attraction of West Dorset, loss of visitors – hence in the longer term - jobs. A more analytical form of costing, cost benefit analysis-say, would indicate that further housing developments would bring profits to the developers but at costs to the community!

There is a strongly held view that the character of Dorset villages can only be maintained by keeping them **separate**. Villages can not exist in a continuous urban sprawl.

Designating the original village as a conservation area is a recognition of its unique and historic importance. **Such designations must be rigorously maintained, they command wide public respect** . There is little point in designating Conservation areas if they are not protected.

Social Housing

The demand in the local press is for affordable housing; it is now widely held that the house prices in Walditch and in much of West Dorset exclude lower incomes from the housing market. However, it must be realised that West Dorset has the highest percentage of owner occupiers in the country and the highest percentage in history. This percentage is much higher than in the rest of Europe. It is possible, therefore, that the focus should be to increase the percentage of rented accommodation rather than to seek to extend the percentage of home ownership.

In fact low income groups have never been part of the housing market but have been catered for by the rented sector – private landlords, voluntary associations and the local authorities.

The latter are the providers of social housing and the focus should be on these organisations to provide the affordable housing.

There may be a right to housing but not to ownership. The residents of Walditch favour the provision of affordable housing through the housing associations and think that provision should take place in Bridport where there is more space for the variety of provision needed.

The residents of Walditch recognise the need for further social housing and families, naturally, want their sons and daughters to have access to housing but even so the vast majority oppose further building.

There is always an element of social distance in questions of social housing but in Walditch the deciding factor is the availability of land. It is not possible to develop further housing without using green field sites and therefore compromising the commitment to maintaining a separate village.

The same difficulty arises when deciding whether there should be support for self build or part owned housing. Both of these initiatives are favoured by a majority but there is the dilemma over the availability of sites. The overriding issue is finding a balance between protecting the countryside and of making affordable housing available to the groups unable to get on the ownership ladder.

Chart 5 Do you favour further Social Housing?



Commercial Development

There is strong support for improving the local economy with the prospect of more and better paid jobs. There is also support for encouraging local initiatives where local people would be able to display creative and entrepreneurial skills. The reality, however, is that there is little opportunity within the village to cater for such ambitions: it is a residential village.

In the survey only a third of the respondents favoured the encouragement of any commercial development. The highest percentage was in the old village where a number of people thought some craft activities would be compatible with residential accommodation.

Of course there are successful bed and breakfast enterprises and the local farms may use their out buildings for more tourist orientated activities.

A number of villagers have seen the success of holding a local market in Bothenhampton and have suggested a similar effort in Walditch where local people could have stalls (monthly in the summer months, say). Such an exercise would provide an opportunity for people to engage on a small scale in business.

Shopping

There are no shops in Walditch so residents are dependent on Bridport and Dorchester. There are arguments in favour of having a local shop: it could enhance the village community and supplement the Bridport shops. There is also the possibility that if such a shop got off the ground it could be community run but there is the common problem of finding a suitable site and there are real questions over whether it would be economically viable, after all, previous shops in the village have closed.

The same arguments hold good for having a local pub.

In the consultation there was a mixed reaction to having a local shop. The eldest respondents were the least interested in having a shop/post office. Those most interested were the employed and those with children.

Housing and Development

In the light of the meetings and survey the villagers believe their best interests will be served by the planning process being informed by the following.

Aims and Objectives:

1. *Planning decisions must be made in the light of Walditch remaining a separate village.*
2. *There should be no developments on green field sites; farmland impinging on the village is an intrinsic part of the village.*
3. *The development boundary must be respected and not compromised to accommodate the pressures for further housing.*
4. *The planning department must ensure that the vernacular style is respected. Local and natural materials are preferred.*
5. *The District Council must insist that future housing take advantage of the best of what is new rather than just imitating existing building structures. They should consult as early as possible with the Parish Council, especially where exceptions to policy are envisaged.*
6. *Street furniture and signs should be kept discreet and in harmony with the village character.*
7. *It should be a high priority to remove telegraph and electricity poles and wires.*
8. *The designations of Conservation Area and Lands of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Local Landscape Importance must be seen as significant guiding principles in the decision making process.*

Services

It is commonly assumed that the delivery of good quality services is one of the key issues of the day. Some of these services are organised nationally (health) or at the County level (education and social services) but are still important for village life and arouse strong comment.

Health

In fact, villagers are reasonably happy with the health service. The shortcomings highlighted by respondents in the survey were:

the need to drive to the other side of Bridport to visit the health centre which has an inadequate car park; a number of people wondered who the prime beneficiaries were of concentrating all the primary care services in one health centre;

the delays in getting an appointment;

the need to travel to Poole for some treatments;

the paucity of treatments available in the new hospital at Bridport.

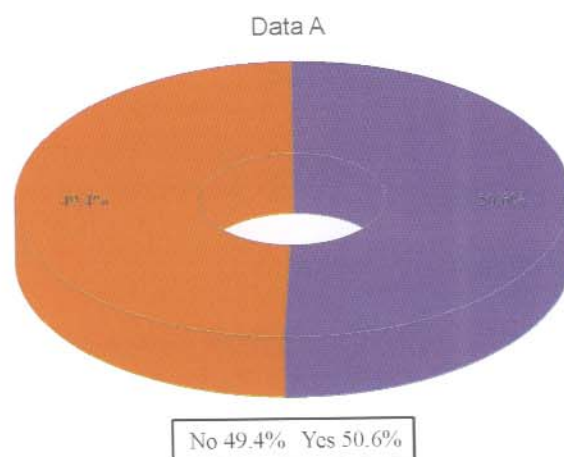
Council Services

There are mixed views over the services provided by the local authorities, i.e. Dorset County and West Dorset District. In the consultation a number of people complained that the Council Tax is high compared to other parts of the country and the quality of services are mediocre; there has been a major hyke in rates since our consultation. The major spenders, i.e. social services and education are important but were not really addressed in this review of village life so attracted little comment but there was a high level of dissatisfaction with the more mundane local services; residents are concerned at the poor road cleaning and maintenance of the

environment. Residents are committed to the village and don't see the council providing services that justify the high rates.

Chart 6 shows that Walditch reflects the increasing fashion for direct consultation; just over half the residents would like a referendum on council tax rises; the elderly were the least interested in participating in a referendum on the council tax but the employed and those with families were strongly in favour.

Chart 6 Do you want a referendum on council tax?



The key question when considering the quality of village services is whether the local authorities are value for money. The response varied according to age and employment as well as different parts of the village. The elderly were more likely to see the council as value for money; the employed and families with children were in a majority seeing the council as poor value for money.

A good number of people complained at having to provide plastic bags for rubbish, while other authorities supply wheelie bins or even the plastic bags. The question of rubbish collection arouses strong emotions and many respondents were prepared to condemn the council merely on the fact that they could not organise an efficient rubbish collection without the roads being scattered with litter.

Law and Order

Opinion polls indicate that feeling safe and secure in ones own home is rated more highly than any other factor determining an individuals quality of life. It is, therefore, a major aim of the villagers to support all those measures which make the village a secure place to live.

It is most reassuring that almost 100% of respondents in the survey feel safe out walking during daylight hours; this sense of security drops significantly during the hours of darkness when only 50% of respondents in Manor Fields felt safe out walking. The other two areas still had large majorities who felt secure at all times. Ones sense of security and peace of mind reflects a number of things and anxiety may reflect the publicity of crime rather than experiences of crime; in fact, the village is a comparatively safe place to live and the level of crime is low by any measure.

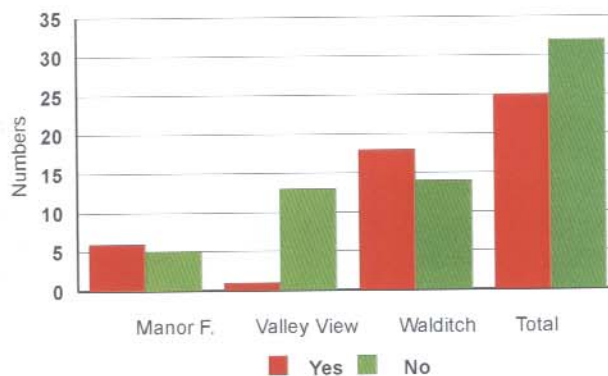
Maintaining a safe and secure environment is obviously a high priority so it is further reassuring that a high percentage are aware that the village is a Home Watch Zone and a high percentage know their coordinator.

A safe and secure environment is usually a reflection of the socio-economic structure of the community but even in the most salubrious villages there is always the danger of opportunistic crime; the evidence is that this is less likely where there is known to be effective policing: it is disappointing, therefore, to find that few residents ever see a police patrol and few in the village have any ideas of what the police priorities are! A number of villagers wondered at the logic of spending large sums on capital projects, e.g. the new police accommodation in Bridport as opposed to police on patrol, especially in the light of the chief constable asking for a record rise in the precept to provide basic policing.

It is surprising that two out of three do not know what the police priorities are but what is

more worrying for the police is a majority do not consider the police service value for money!! (See Chart 7.)

Chart 7 Are the police value for money?



The large number of respondents seeing the police as poor value for money is surprising because there is a reservoir of good will for the police as an institution but it is significant that it is the elderly who are happiest with the service and the families who are most cynical.

Services

Aims and Objectives:

1. *To work with the district council to improve the quality of services to the village.*
2. *To continue support for the Home Watch Committee and its activities.*

Environment

The people of Walditch are acutely aware of the attractiveness of their surroundings and all consultations indicate a strong desire to enhance and protect their environment. The environment in this case refers to both the countryside and the buildings.

The underpinning principle must be to maintain the rural character of the village; this follows logically from the commitment to avoid an urban sprawl and maintain the village as a separate community.

The countryside surrounding the village has to be preserved as an essential element in the character of the village. The residents' scenic views of the village incorporate the fields grasslands, hedges, scrubland and copses.

Dorset is one of the few counties with rural workers still practising old crafts such as hedge laying; Walditch enjoys many examples of this old craft which helps to create the unique countryside. Such crafts can only be maintained by a recognition of their worth and their encouragement by a partnership between the residents, local farmers and the local authorities.

An example of hedge laying



Additionally, this countryside has to be preserved because it provides a home for a wide variety of wildlife and while occasionally some wildlife can be a pest and a nuisance it is also for many, a source of interest and joy.

The villagers look to the countryside for exercise and leisure: residents and visitors go walking, bicycling, horse riding, bird watching, drawing and painting in the immediate environment of Walditch – hence the tourist industry.

We live in an increasingly health conscious society where people are more concerned with their diet and general lifestyle; with people typically having a sedentary occupation more and more people of all ages see exercise as a necessary part of their leisure. It follows that the care of the environment which in the past was a seemingly natural bi-product of farming, needs to be a conscious policy of the community.

This concern is not new as indicated by West Dorset designating the old village as a Conservation Area and the whole of this part of Dorset as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as the south west of the village as Land of Local Landscape Importance (LLI). The current residents see themselves as the custodians of the environment; they consider themselves privileged to live in such a highly regarded area but this privilege carries with it a sense of duty, an obligation to pass it on to the next generation in a comparable condition. This could be done by extending the area of Land of Local Landscape Importance to the fields on the other side of the road to the Hyde, this is the land lying south of lower Walditch Lane. Walking up to the Hyde is one of the great scenic attractions of Dorset. The landowner in the past has enhanced the view by having the foresight to plant an avenue of trees, while the avenue is included in the LLI the left hand fields are excluded. The LLI should be extended to include these fields (see map).

One example of the commitment in the village to the integration of the surrounding countryside is the way the churchyard is managed as a wildlife conservation area; it is recognised by the Dorset Wildlife Trust. This is in accordance with the principles of the nationally recognised “Living Churchyard Project”. The aim of this

organisation is that churchyards should be sanctuaries for the living as well as repositories for the dead.

Traffic and Parking

There is approaching 100% car ownership in the village but the old village has a road system reflecting the days of the horse and cart. All residents want free use of their cars but want to hang on to the old rural pattern of roads.

This brings familiar problems: parking and congestion in parts of the village where residents are without off-street parking; speeding traffic; using the road as a short-cut, especially during periods of congestion on the A35; and the dangers from speeding cars to children playing on the road. Parking, particularly, can cause ill will. There is no simple answer.

It is possible that the village would benefit from having a lower speed limit in the light of the narrow lanes and the parked vehicles. Residents would also benefit from improving the T junction with the A35; this is a fast road and the entrance to Firch Lane needs better sign posting and improved road markings.

Parts of the village are without pedestrian footpaths but there is no space for paths. The old village has no street lighting which may increase the hazards of walking but the consensus appears to be that artificial lighting would detract from the ambience of the village.

Pollution

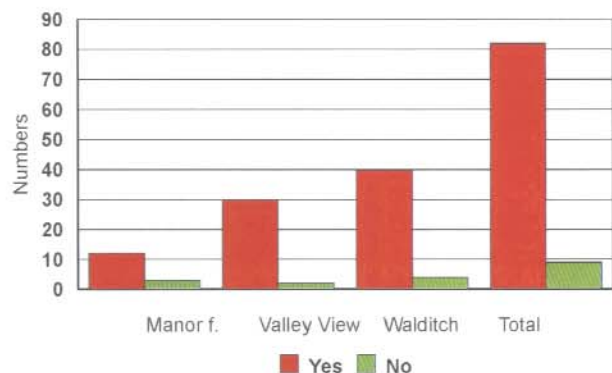
The village provides a salubrious environment and the challenge is to maintain this for future residents.

The air quality is good: it would appear that the village is free from the worst polluting agents and this must be seen as one of the attractions of the village; the extent of mosses and lichens can be used as a measure of the quality of the air and therefore as a crude measure of the

state of the environment with its capacity for maintaining the flora. The only complaint is from residents who see some gardeners as too enthusiastic in the use of bonfires. The village does not suffer from intrusive noise or noxious odours.

The principle complaint is over the litter left blowing around the roads especially after the weekly collection of household rubbish. This could be alleviated if the local authority changed the method of collection to the use of wheelie bins rather than relying on residents to put out their rubbish in plastic bags. Such a change would encourage better recycling of waste which is favoured by a high percentage of residents as shown by Chart 8.

Chart 8 Do you favour recycling of Household Waste?



The commitment to recycling is shown by an enthusiastic minority of residents who favoured a community compost heap; their problem is finding an acceptable site.

Environment

Aims and Objectives:

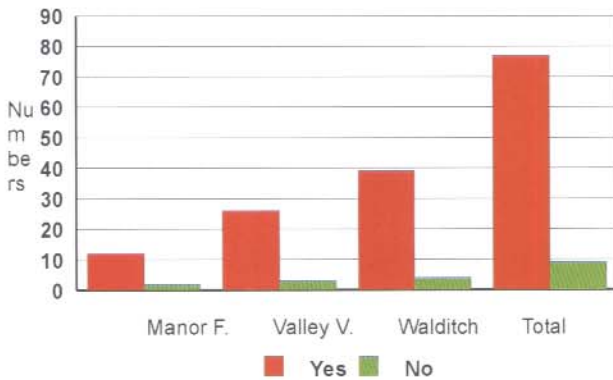
1. *Extend the designated area of Land of Local Landscape Importance to include the fields south and east of Lower Walditch Lane. (See map)*
2. *Work with West Dorset District to protect the conservation area.*
3. *Establish a 20 mph speed limit for village roads.*
4. *Establish a better marked exit from Firch Lane to the A35*
5. *To protect and extend facilities for walkers, horse riding and cyclists.*
6. *Seek through cooperation with local landowners and the local authorities to establish a footpath/cycle track circling the village.*



View over the village from Hyde Hill – note the way the village nestles into the land as if naturally part of the countryside

Leisure and the Arts

Chart 9 Does the Village Hall meet the needs of the community?



It is apparent that the residents of Walditch support many of the clubs and societies in Bridport so there is a limited demand for duplication. On the other hand there is a place for smaller village-based activities, this is illustrated by the success of the W.I., the table tennis club, keep fit groups and toddlers groups.

These depend for their continuing success on the Village Hall Committee and the various voluntary groups and the maintenance of the village hall which will continue to play an important part in the future of the village. The commitment to the village hall is illustrated by Chart 9.

It is the intention of the residents to build on these successes: there is strong support for a book club, a film society and a gardening society. This means a commitment to raising the necessary funds.

Although most sporting activities are based in Bridport the Real Tennis Club is a continuing success.

Now that the parish has ownership of the land for the children's playground it is hoped the playground will be properly fenced off and equipped in the near future to provide proper facilities for the children in the village.

Youth

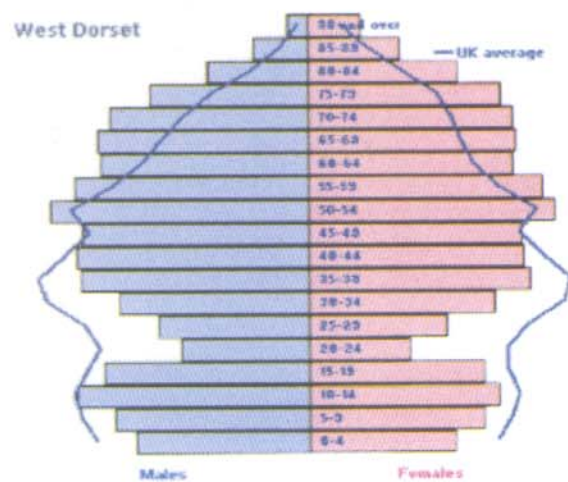
Although compared to the national demographic picture Walditch has a skewed profile (see Diagram 1), residents want the village to be an attractive place for families to bring up children. In fact, in the village consultations the young thought the parish a good place in which to grow up; most had been given the opportunity to participate in sport or join clubs and societies. It is hoped the playground will enhance the leisure of the young.

Aims and Objectives:

1. To support the continuing success of the village hall.
2. To establish a fully equipped children's playground.
3. Establish Film Society, Book Club and Gardening Club.

Diagram 1 Age & Sex Distribution

The Diagram showing age and sex distribution. It illustrates that West Dorset is under represented among age groups under 50 but over represented in the ever 50s, although the birth rate for male babies 10-14 years ago matched the national average it has fallen back in the last ten years.





Acknowledgements

The Parish Council would like to thank all those who have contributed to the creation and production of this document.

Particular mention should be made of the Action Group of volunteers who gave up a great deal of their time.