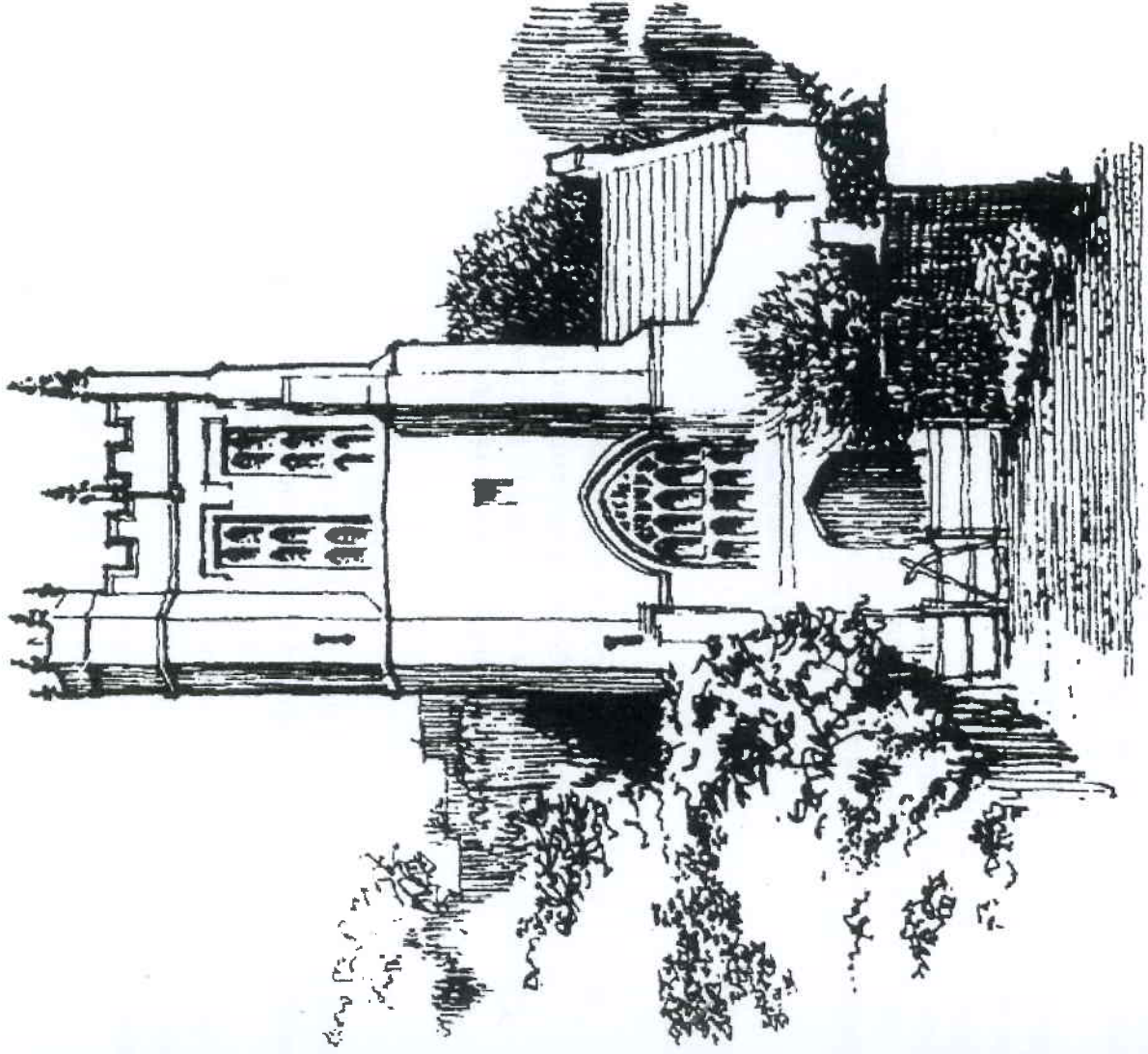


# CHARMINSTER



## Village Design Statement

# CHARMINSTER

## VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

This Statement seeks to identify the particular physical design characteristics that lie comfortably with the inhabitants of the village today and those which should be considered in any new developments or future planning proposals so that the inherent visual character of the village can be maintained.

It should be recognised that a number of areas are outside general planning control but it is hoped that this guide may still influence changes in the village.

### Charlton Down and the former Herrison Hospital Site.

Charlton Down will not be considered in this Design Statement because being geographically separated and approved as a single contractor "design and build" project, it is subject to its own ongoing Design Rules.

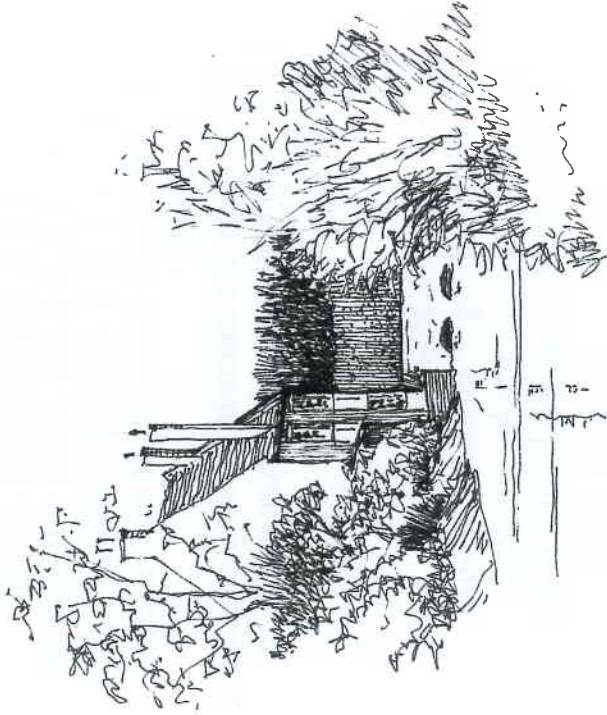
## INTRODUCTION

1. Settlements have been in evidence in Charminster for over 2000 years and some 15<sup>th</sup> century buildings still remain. The village today reflects the evolutionary process of time and fortune and the demographic necessities that have shaped the buildings, roads, paths and surrounding countryside. By any comparison, it has charm and character, with a varied and mixed population and, fortunately, still most of the amenities that are fast disappearing from rural life.

Charminster developed at the convergence of three main routes where it was possible to ford the river Cerne. The river was important as a source of power for mills and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century a system of dykes and ditches enabled the establishment of water meadows which provided earlier pasture for an increasing number of sheep. Though long since fallen into disuse, the pattern of hollows and ridges can still be seen especially during winter flooding. It was these meadows which prevented the spread of Dorchester northwards to engulf the village. Even now Charminster and Dorchester remain separate, each with their own character.

The village still retains the ancient street patterns, consisting of the north/south route (North Street) and an east/west route of East and West Hill which bridges the river. The oldest buildings are assembled around their crossing point, and are mainly contained within the Charminster Conservation Area. The most important is the Church of St Mary the Virgin. In the heart of the village the roads are narrow and twisting, small scale buildings huddled along the roadside rubbing shoulders with an occasional larger house, sometimes obscured by old boundary walls. The

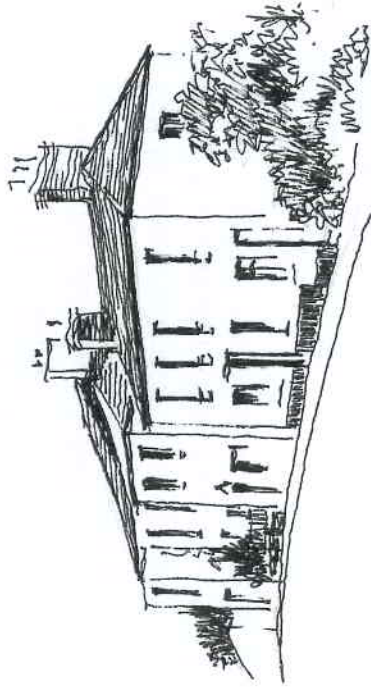
river is ever present, meandering loosely through the valley whose flood plain has prevented any further development. It divides the village, each half facing the other from opposing hillsides. The aspect is of cascading and haphazard roof lines softened by many trees. The sense of enclosure engendered by the hillsides, the human scale of the buildings, by trees and walls, is central to the character of the village.



However the shape and size of the village has not remained static. There have been periods of extensive building in the last sixty years, at Weir View and Cocklands in the post war years; Broken Cross in the late 1960s; Meadow View in the 1980s. The population has grown in that period from just over 700 to in excess of 1800 today. Nevertheless Charminster is still surrounded by open countryside and retains the character of an independent village. This independence is highly valued. The need to control further development is paramount.

## CHARMINSTER NOW

2. The village is flourishing now perhaps more than at any time in its history. It retains its own thriving primary school which is growing in numbers each year. It still has three public houses, a post office and shop, good bus communications to nearby Dorchester, and an active church with resident vicar. The Village Hall is used



almost every night for a variety of pursuits and frequent use by a wide range of societies and clubs. Community centres in the Broken Cross and Meadow View estates provide convenient meeting venues for the less mobile members of the village and the village even boasts its own Scout Hut. Its popular Summer Fête never fails to attract crowds from far afield.

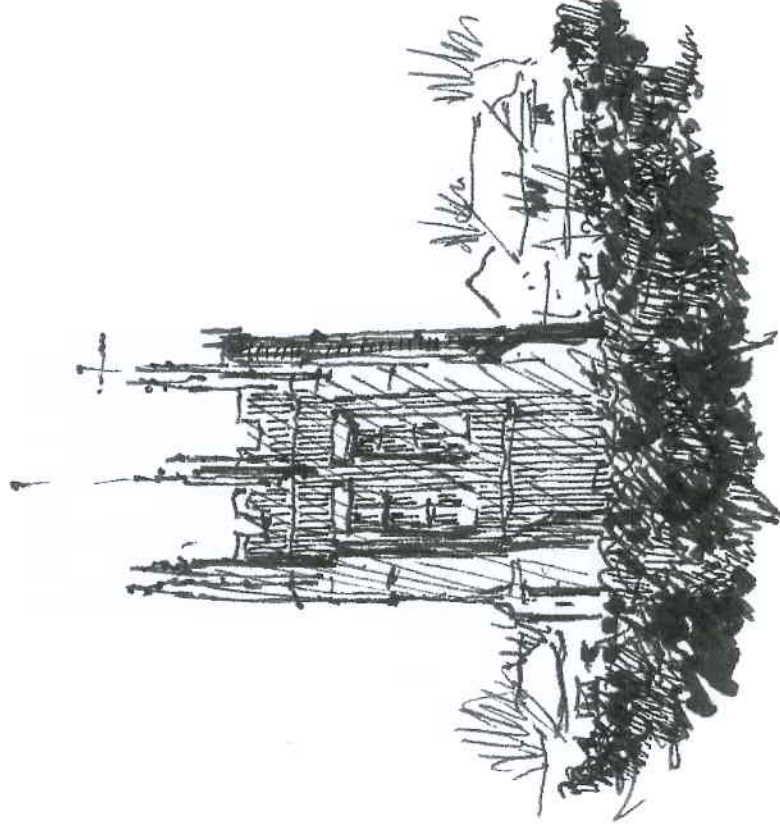
## LISTED BUILDINGS

*When we build, let us think that we build for ever.*

*John Ruskin*

Charminster's listed buildings vary from the imposing Wolfeton House, to the ruinous ice house and riding school, and from Georgian sophistication to modest cottages. There is a great variety of styles and materials and of scale. Buildings of stone adjoin those of brick or render, roofs vary in pitch and are covered with clay tiles, slate or thatch. Windows may be stone mullioned, elegant sashes or modest cottage casements.

**Charminster listings:** Little Court, The Toll House A357, Rose Cottage, Bridge Cottage, East Hill House and Magnolia House, No 11 and 12 East Hill, Charminster House and gate piers, No 19 East Hill, The Ice House, Herrison House, Herrison Chapel Block, Road Bridge East and West Hill, Forston House, Forston Bridge, The Yews Mill Lane, Haydon Farmhouse North Street, St. Marys Church, No 7 West Hill, Nos 11, 12 and 13 West Hill, Wolfeton House, The Stable Block, Gate Piers East South East of Wolfeton, The Riding School.

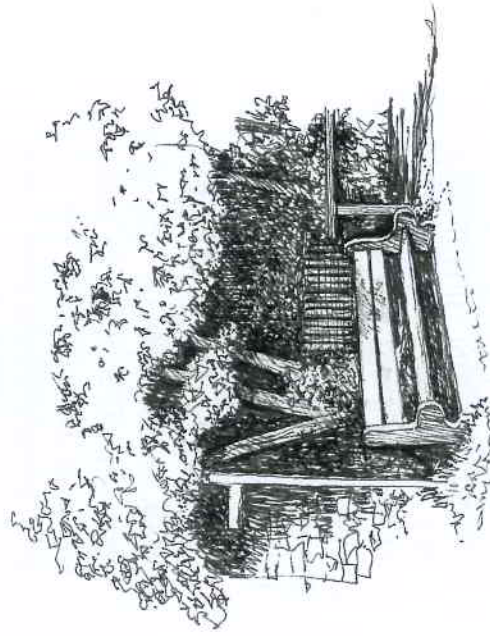


## DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES.

*"Have nothing in [on] your houses that you do not know to be useful and believe to be beautiful"*

*William Morris*

**2a. Conservation area.** Much of the old centre of Charminster is designated as a Conservation Area. A Conservation Area is a place of special architectural or historical interest that has been given added protection to ensure that people can continue to enjoy the identified character for years to come. Any proposed new construction, building or alteration should be checked with the Planning Authority before starting. Stricter control is exercised in such an Area, to ensure that proposed changes maintain or enhance its quality. Importance is placed on appropriate proportions, building materials and design. All must be chosen with regard to the building's location and surroundings. Trees, too, are protected and permission must be sought from the Planning Authority before major surgery or felling is undertaken.



### **2b. Development Boundary.**

Normally no new building is allowed outside a designated Development Boundary. Within this area, but outside the Conservation Area, changes can be carried out without the need for planning permission under 'permitted development rights' but adherence to the broad guidelines contained in the Design Statement should be encouraged. Within Conservation Areas, planning laws restrict residential *permitted development rights* which helps to safeguard the character and appearance of the area. If in any doubt when considering new construction, building or alterations it is advisable to check with the district council before starting.

**Statement.** *Any spread beyond the Development Boundary with large scale development could destroy the separation of the village from countryside and, ultimately from Dorchester. Within the Boundary this leaves only small pockets for infill, which will inevitably be in sensitive areas.*

*New buildings and alterations/additions to older buildings take time to mellow into their surroundings. If not carried out sympathetically they can remain an eyesore for many years. Any new building must therefore maintain, enhance or reinforce the existing quality and character of Charminster. Modern designs may not be out of place, but must relate to its neighbours informally. Sympathetic use of materials in both new and renovation work are of prime importance.*

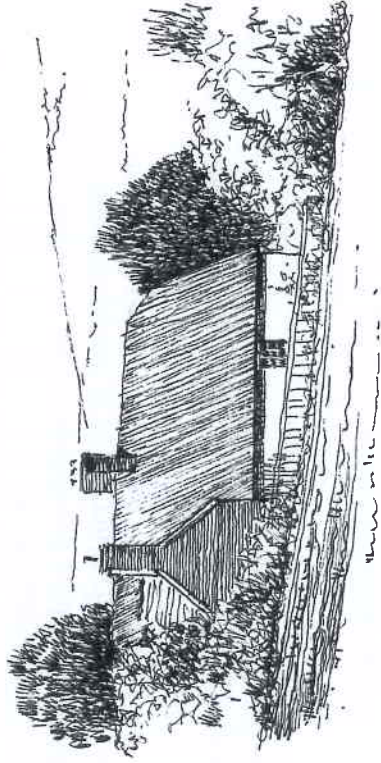
### 3. DETAIL OF DEVELOPMENT

**a. Building Materials.** A wide range of building materials are to be found in Charminster: Purbeck and Portland limestone; yellow Hamstone; brick sometimes rendered or pebbledashed; flint with brick or stone bandings; cob on a stone or brick base and finished with lime render. There are even some postwar wooden clad framed bungalows. Whatever the material, the colours are muted with no harsh contrasts between combinations.

#### Guidelines:

*The choice of material should couple suitability for purpose with quality. Mortar is as important as the choice of brick or stone, as in renovation work an inappropriate selection can destroy a once attractive feature. Traditional soft tone brick and stone facings for new buildings are to be encouraged. If extensions or additions to rendered buildings are contemplated then matching render is appropriate.*

**b. Roofs and Chimneys.** There is a variety of types of roofing materials used in the village including thatch, slate, terracotta and even plastic. Chimneys too vary in shape and size, affecting the whole character of a building. They form an important part of the village skyline.



#### Guidelines

*Roof pitch should conform*

*to the pitch of existing nearby buildings or that of the main building if on an extension. Where semi-detached properties are re-roofed, there should be uniformity in the type of material used. Flat roofs are not appropriate and should be avoided wherever possible. Clay terracotta is to be preferred to concrete; natural slate to imitation slate. Plastic tiles should not be used. New chimneys of stone or brick should always be in keeping with the character and style of the village. Stainless steel flues should not be visible from the road unless suitably muted in colour and design.*

**c. Gutters and Downpipes.** Coloured PVC has replaced most traditional materials for obvious and sensible reasons for guttering and downpipes. but careless choice of position or colour can result in an eyesore.

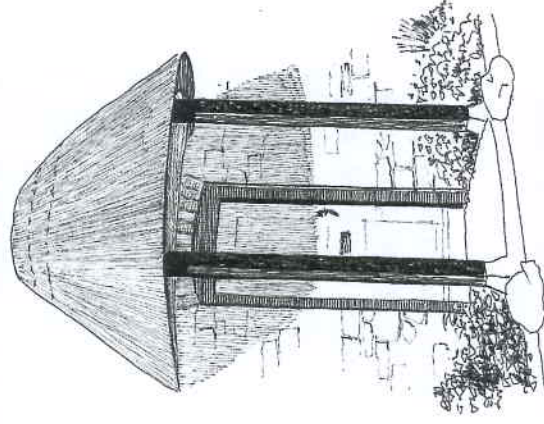
#### Guidelines

*The colour, number and siting of downpipes should be carefully considered to avoid a cluttered appearance. Listed buildings should always use cast iron when renovation is carried out and the use of cast iron should also be encouraged within the Conservation Area.*

**d. External Joinery.** A wide variety of windows, doors and porches can be found throughout the village. Windows are the 'eyes' of a building and are perhaps its most memorable aspect. Some of Charminster's older buildings retain their original doors. Porches and canopies, too, vary in design depending on the age and stature of the building.

Guidelines.

*Window manufacturers too often try to copy traditional designs but misunderstand the appropriate proportions, resulting in a caricature of the originals. Correct division by glazing bars, mullions and transoms can make or mar the final result. New and replacement windows should use balanced designs that are compatible with the size of the building and, wherever possible, the use of timber should be encouraged in older buildings. Opening and fixed lights on casement windows should be the same size and the fixed light glass should be inset in the same style as in the opening light. Sliding sash windows should have moulded glazing bars and well proportioned panes. Dormer windows should integrate with the main building, not appear as an afterthought and flat roofs to dormers should be avoided.*



*The size and style of a new or replacement door should be appropriate to the building and, where possible, reflect the integrity of the remaining old doors in the village. The use of timber should be encouraged over and above the use of uPVC. Porches, too, should reflect the style and proportion of the main building.*

**e. Extensions and outbuildings.** Many houses have had extensions added or outbuildings constructed adjacent to the house or in the garden. Some reflect the original designs and materials of the main house, but many others are less successful, with flat roofs, unsympathetic materials or the use of uPVC for conservatories.

Guidelines:

*Houses and their use will change over the years but change needs to be managed sensitively. The style and materials used should reflect those used in the existing building and the extension should be subservient to the main building. Flat roofs, particularly those covered with felt, should be avoided where possible. If it is not possible to erect anything other than an UPVC conservatory, then efforts should be made to build it out of sight of the principal view of the property. Roof pitches should merge with the pitch of the existing building.*

**f. Finishes.** Many houses in both the old parts of the village and at Broken Cross have render on exterior walls. In some cases this is smooth render, either natural coloured or painted and in some cases the render has been given a coat of pebbledash.

Guidelines:

*Hard, flat render with pebbledash is common with houses built in the post war years and reflects their character. It is usually not suitable for modern houses or for adding to older properties. Houses built before World War II and new houses that are to be rendered would benefit from using a weak cement, lime, sand mix with final surface wood float finished to give a softer appearance. Hard cement renders should be avoided.*

**g. Colours.** Some rendered or brick buildings in the village have coloured walls. Older properties are usually painted or lime-washed in traditional Dorset colours, of off white or pale cream. Colour on modern buildings helps to disguise the uniformity in rows of similar houses.

Guidelines:

*Colour can provide individuality in terraces but where, for example, houses were designed as a pair they should be painted the same colour. Traditional village colours should be used if a property is to blend with others nearby. Virulent or harsh colours should be avoided as these are not traditional colours and detract from the overall character of the village.*

**4. Gates, boundaries, fences and walls.** Boundary walls and hedges define private space and can reflect the character of the building and people behind. The very wide range of these boundaries and the accesses to them - garden and driveway gates - are a feature in the village and range from lime and mortar mix, stone, brick, iron rails, decorative wrought-iron and wooden picket fencing to natural and planted hedges. Too much individuality may fragment the overall street scene by haphazard juxtaposition of varying materials. The overall view should be considered.

Guidelines:

*Concrete paths and driveways will generally look stark and harsh and should be discouraged. Brick, gravel, cobble or pebbles are more sympathetic materials to use. Traditional boundaries should be retained wherever possible and new fences and boundary markers should maintain the use of materials of similar types and styles to others in the immediate area. Very individualistic styles of fencing, particularly those in pre-formed concrete, are seldom appropriate as they draw the eye unnecessarily and should be discouraged.*

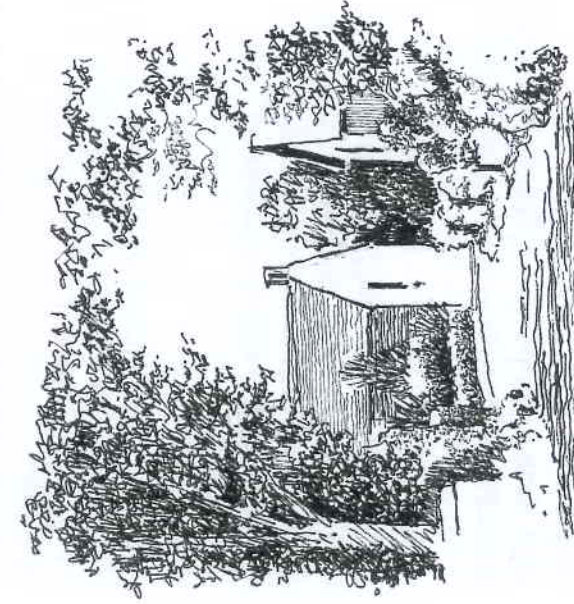
**5. Footpaths, Bridle and Cycle Ways.** Narrow footpaths and bridle ways abound throughout the village and reflect the character of the similarly narrow roads that pass through it. They are well-used by villagers, visitors, walkers and horse-riders who have the benefit of being able to enjoy views across the valley and into the open spaces in the village. Cyclists too are a frequent sight in the summer months. The roads through the village are particularly narrow with sharp bends and, as discussed, already carry a heavy weight of traffic; nothing should be done to unnecessarily increase this. Country paths, following the ancient farm workers routes to the County Town or one of three taverns, vary from unmade woodland earth paths, natural stone, brick, and cobble to cast slabs and tarmac.

Guidelines:

*Where a new development might infringe an existing ancient byway, special attention should be given to a sympathetic replacement.*



6. **Trees and hedgerows.** Charminster has an abundance of trees and hedgerows, many of which mark and line the various entrances to the village. The majority of the trees are protected either with Tree Preservation Orders, or they fall within the Conservation Area. Written consent from the WDDC must be obtained before any tree works are carried out. The wide range of mature trees adds immeasurably to the character of Charminster. Maintenance is necessary to retain healthy growth; the



loss of mature stock through disease or old age without replanting will significantly diminish the visual amenities in the village. Trees and hedges lead visitors into the village from every route and mature broadleaf trees abound in the village. Parts of Charminster are characterized by wild and natural hedgerows. Whilst necessary to keep footpaths accessible, excessive clearance should be avoided so that species can flourish and be allowed to provide both bio-diversity and visual benefits to the Community.

Guidelines:

*The preservation of mature and specimen trees, hedgerows and shrubs should always be considered when plans are being prepared for new building, extensions or outbuildings. The planting of mature trees, shrubs on any development, particularly native species, is to be actively encouraged with due regard to sensible distance from buildings.*

7. **Open spaces.** From the sides of the valley north of the church, one looks down onto open fields either side of the River Cerne. The church tower is visible from the tops of East and West Hill and on up the valley. A working farm is located near the village centre and the sight of livestock and poultry are a constant reminder of Charminster's farming heritage.

Guidelines:

*Any new development affecting open spaces should respect the setting of the village and its significant buildings and natural features. Development within the village should be sensitively landscaped using indigenous species appropriate to the location. Owners/occupiers should be aware of these open spaces and care should be exercised with the maintenance of these open spaces and their boundaries, so that the pleasant setting is not destroyed.*

8. **Views.** From the west-sloping Meadow View estate across the ancient water-meadows rises the mound on which Poundbury fort was built in Saxon times with the line of the Roman Aqueduct and the distant obelisk of the Hardy Monument. To the east the estates of Cocklands and Broken Cross, Ellerslie Close and Down End form a hard edge to the village, looking out across pastureland and fields rising to Higher Burton Farm and Charlton Down and some with views south toward the lights and shapes of Dorchester.

Guidelines:

*Distant views of countryside and natural features are spiritually uplifting and are the most sought after physical features of village communities. These views should not be spoiled by unsympathetic buildings or rooflines.*

***Though every prospect pleases, and only man is vile.***

(Bishop Reginald Heber)

**9. Roads.** The village is bounded on three sides by major traffic routes and the noise and speed of LGVs and cars is a constant irritation to most residents. The A37, which runs along the south western side of the village and links Dorchester to Yeovil, carries particularly heavy levels of traffic and has also been built with a very noisy road surface, which exacerbates the situation.

The A352 running north/south through the centre of Charminster is the route most regularly used by LGVs heading along the Cerne valley. There is no footpath in several places as the road cuts between houses but this does little to diminish the speed of many passing vehicles. Traffic calming measures are badly needed to reduce the speed of through traffic. Outside the Village Hall, which is at the crossroads of the A352 and West Hill, many young children cross this busy road to reach the village Primary School. Recently as a result of local pressure, Dorset County Council has put measures in hand to provide more secure walkways and crossing points for the village.

West and East Hill are particularly narrow lanes, which wind through the heart of the village. These routes are unsuitable for LGVs and large buses, which have great difficulty negotiating the tight bends. Many of the older houses on North Street have no garages; consequently on-street parking is a frequent occurrence. Whilst this might appear to be unsightly, it has a positive effect of reducing the passing places in the village and has its own traffic calming effects so there are some positive benefits from it. Yellow lines or No Parking notices would not be in keeping with the village setting.

The C12 currently is a minor road, expected to replace the A352 as the main access between Sherborne and Dorchester and effectively bounds the eastern side of the village.

Traffic levels have increased markedly on this road with the increase in population of Charlton Down.

Guidelines:

*Cars are now a fact of life and new developments should be built with this need in mind. Where required, provision should made for off-street parking or garaging. Adequate parking must always be considered with new residential building.*

**10. Traffic Calming.** Whilst desirable in the narrow streets of the village and much sought-after for safety consideration, some traffic calming measures can be totally inappropriate for narrow, building-lined streets. Additionally, excess amounts of coloured tarmac and illuminated or garish signs can ruin the aesthetic charm of a community for its residents and visitors.

Guidelines.

*Traffic speed can be reduced by traffic calming measures but sensitivity over the side effects of speed humps (accompanying noise in narrow confined streets) must be exercised. The use of a large number of illuminated warning signs for traffic calming, flashing lights, will spoil the rural character of the centre of the village and should be kept to a minimum within the Conservation Area. Narrowing or physical restrictions in the width of the roads and the permitted tare weights of LGVs can also be effective without being intrusive to the villagers. Consultation with the Parish Council and affected residents must ensue before any decisions of traffic calming are undertaken.*

**11. Road Signs.** Whilst it is recognised that the placing of road signs is subject to statutory regulation, where there is discretion on the part of authorities, consultation should take place so that the visual impact on the surrounding environment can be limited.

Guidelines.

*Consultation with the Parish Council should be made before installation and no discretionary signs accepted.*

**12. Street Furniture.** Charminster has a very wide range of street furniture. In Broken Cross and in Meadow View, the furniture reflects the age of the developments. In the older part of the village there are many different styles but the most aesthetic and authentic are those with a rural appearance such as the old direction posts and old post boxes. Modern concrete and glass-fronted bus shelters and large metal route direction signs look crude and out of place with the rural background of the period houses and cottages.

There is little or no street lighting in the older part of the village and most residents applaud this reduction in light pollution and wish to protect it. There are numerous private security lights but these are generally not overtly obtrusive.

Over the years telephone wires have been strung like spiders' webs in numerous places and clutter the views across the valley. Telephone posts are frequently littered with fly-posters and look unsightly.

Guidelines:

*Every effort should be made to use materials and furniture that retains the character and complements the area in question by continuing the existing styles.*

Overhead cables

*The increase of overhead cables should be resisted and they should be combined into one larger one where possible. Telephone cables would be less intrusive if they could be led from house to house rather than radiate from a central pole to each individual house. In any new development as well as alterations to existing services, cables should be laid underground where possible.*

### Street and Lighting of Houses

*Additional street lighting in the older part of the village should be resisted to avoid the urbanisation of the area. Where street lighting is installed as part of any new development, it should be of sufficiently low light and density to avoid light pollution of the area. Should a new development require street lighting it should be designed to support the objectives of the 'dark skies campaign'. External lights where necessary on houses and other properties should be so directed as to light the immediate area and not shine onto a neighbour's property or onto the adjacent road.*

### Public Notice Boards

*Additional Public Notice Boards might discourage fly-posting. They could blend with the area and become useful information points*

**13. Advertisement Hoardings.** Generally these are inappropriate in a village, particularly to support businesses that are outside the village.  
Guidelines.

*Local enterprises such as Bed & Breakfasts, public house signs, notice boards and shops facades should be permitted to advertise in the immediate area of that enterprise. However the number of signs should be limited and their design should enhance rather than detract from the character of the area.*

**14. Telecommunication Masts.** Telecommunication masts have become an increasingly important factor in business and private lives. Government policy aims to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunication systems whilst keeping environmental impact to a minimum. Due to the nature of the telecommunications network and the limitations of technology, equipment often requires location on high ground remote from interference from buildings or trees. However such areas are often extremely visible and of high landscape quality.  
Guidelines.

*Wherever possible, the design, positioning, landscape treatment and screening of masts and associated buildings should aim to minimize the visual impact of such equipment and be hidden from view from the village, masked by high ground or trees and away from footpaths and bridleways in the open countryside.*

**15. Farm Buildings.** A profitable and healthy agriculture sector is beneficial to the whole community and the associated buildings may form an historical and integral part of the village. With the demise of this sector, inevitable conversion of agricultural buildings will take place.  
Guidelines.

*Erection of new buildings and conversion of old farm buildings should be considered on a case by case basis and should adhere to other respects stated in this VDS and appropriate statutory regulations. While the long-term future of the farms can never be guaranteed, any conversion or diversification should be treated with caution. Alternative uses need to be sympathetic to the surrounding areas and buildings.*

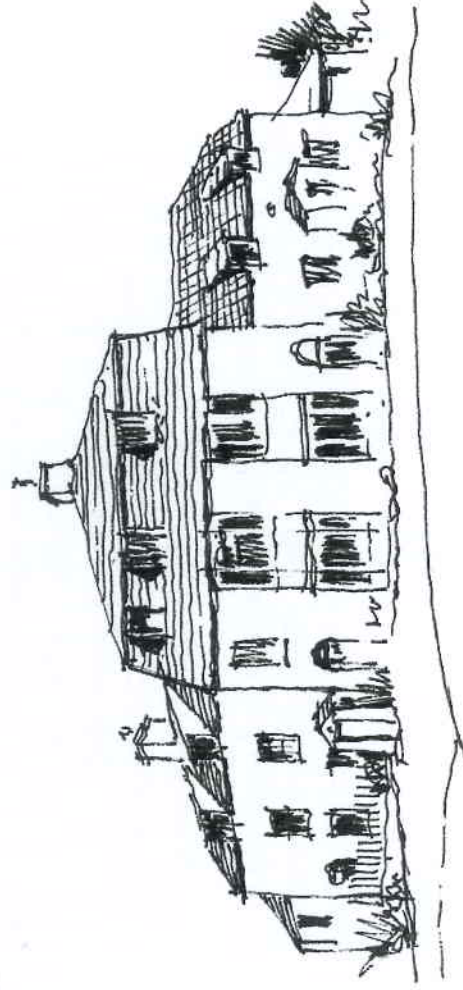
**16. Commercial Development.** The largest cluster of commercial buildings in Charminster is the Dorset County Council Depot. Any changes on this prominent site should avoid further obstruction of the skyline.

Guidelines.

*The Planning Authority and Dorset County Council are urged to consider carefully the implications of permitting heavy goods vehicles access through the village and seek appropriate limiting action. Direct access to the A37 will avoid Charminster's narrow streets as a route to other destinations.*

**17. Bio-diversity.** Charminster has a number of open spaces in the village where both flora and fauna, are encouraged for the enjoyment of all. Princes Plot and the Parish Orchard both off Mill Lane are parish-owned areas close to the centre of the village which encourage children in particular to take note of nature. The allotments and cemetery along West Hill both fulfill an essential function. Thanks to the flood plain of the River Cerne, the heart of Charminster is unlikely to suffer further building encroachment. Many established trees grow on the hillsides especially on the eastern side of the village and downstream towards Wolfeton House. The many footpaths emanating from the village give fast access to the varied floodplain, meadowland and chalk downs surrounding the village. Thus biodiversity has every chance to flourish.

Guidelines. *New buildings or developments should keep in mind these opportunities for bio-diversity within the village and wherever possible to enhance the current and encourage new areas for nature to show its beauty.*



## CONCLUSION

From inception to completion of this Design Statement, its authors have tried their best to engage village interest and participation and to remain open to suggestions. It has not been easy to get people to focus on the concept of aesthetics as opposed to practical amenities and much of the feedback from villagers has tended towards that which rightfully sits more comfortably with a Village Plan or Appraisal. However, emphasis has always been focussed on the look and feel of the village.

The authors are now confident that this Design Statement presents an accurate assessment of what the interested inhabitants of Charminster wish to see reflected in future developments and alterations or additions in this diverse and extensive community.

**It is to be hoped that whoever or whatever body oversees the control of building in this village will bear in mind the wishes of Charminster residents as set out in this Statement.**

## **THE FUTURE**

Maintaining the Village Design Statement. This document reflects the views of the representatives and residents of Charminster during the years 2002 – 2004 during its production and public consultation. If it is to remain a valid document for use by Environmental Committees of Local Government, it will need periodic review so that it continues to reflect the residents' opinion of the design guidelines in the years to come. It is recommended that the Charminster Parish Council should ensure its revision at least every 10 years.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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- Second Deposit 2004

The sketches were kindly drawn by Graham Shaw

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who gratefully thank the help and advice given by many of Charminster's residents.