

## Kilmington Village Character Assessment

This village character assessment is produced in line with recent recommendations on gathering evidence to support a Neighbourhood Plan (*Neighbourhood Planning Guidance. Gathering evidence and information*, 2016. East Devon District Council). This assessment concerns the settled area known as Kilmington village and not just the more tightly delimited “Built up area boundary” (BUAB) within the village which is defined for planning matters. It is important to see the BUAB in the context of the village as a whole, which this assessment addresses, and the Parish, which the accompanying Countryside and Green Spaces topic paper addresses.

This Neighbourhood Plan is not the first parish-wide statement of how the village sees itself and wants to develop.

A *Parish Plan* was published in 2007 which was later built on by a *Kilmington Village Design Statement* in 2011. This latter document described the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside, how the village had developed and, finally, drew up landscape and design principles for future development. It was approved by the Parish Council and formally endorsed by the East Devon District Council in October 2011. Since then it has guided the Parish council and the EDDC in reviewing building and development applications.

We have drawn heavily on the excellent *Kilmington Village Design Statement* (2011) and the Kilmington Neighbourhood Plan has updated its scope and recommendations.

### Overview of the Parish

The Parish of Kilmington occupies an area of 1,760 acres (= 307 hectares) upon which there are about 429 properties occupied by 830 parishioners. In community terms all these parishioners belong to Kilmington, but the term “Kilmington village” usually refers more narrowly to the built-up village lying almost wholly to the south of the A35, the major trunk road running east-west that bisects the parish. The built-up area occupies less than 5% of area of the parish. The area to the north of the A35 is relatively sparsely populated and is still extensively farmed. The main settlement developed on the eastern slopes of Shute Hill and Kilmington Hill below more steeply sloping ground. Most of the village lies between 100 and 300 ft above sea level, well above the flood plains of the rivers Axe and Yarty and the Corry Brook (see Countryside and Green Spaces topic paper).

The parish has a distinctly rural feel with countryside reaching right into the village. Maintenance of this rural characteristic is strongly supported by parishioners (Village survey, 2018). Most of the parish lies within the East Devon and Blackdown Hills AONBs, the remainder is in an Area of Great Landscape Value (see Countryside and Green Spaces topic paper). The village gateways, the access points to the village, have kept their rural aspects (see below). Many of the historic buildings reflect the farming legacy of the parish. Much of the land outside the built-up area is still farmed or used for forestry. The long views across the river valleys reveal a patchwork of pastures, fields, hedgerows and trees (see Countryside and Green Spaces Audit. “Map showing key views”). Green and other open spaces within the village have great recreational and character value. The principal roads and lanes do not have pavements or street lighting, with the exception of parts of the A35 corridor and many recent housing developments (post 1960).

### Kilmington Village

The historic development of the village has a significant impact on its character today. Three main foci of population grew at The Green, Silver Street and the northern end of The Hill.

The Street linked these three relatively spaced out centres. About 85 of the 94 properties listed around 1840 that have survived provide the historic core of modern Kilmington. They lie on a network of roads that has not changed over the last 200 years and is of critical importance to the visual character of the village.

Housing development, in the early to mid-1900's was along these historic roads adding to the character of the village. Local authority housing in the inter-war and post war years were either in small cul de sacs or on the periphery of the main connecting roads (The Street, off The Hill and The Orchards). In the 1960's and 70's there was considerable new house building, mainly on the sites of former small farms and orchards. These new developments, usually bungalows in cul-de-sacs, had single points of access to the historic road network ensuring that the rural character of the village was maintained. The most recent development, in 2017, of 13 mainly 'affordable housing' properties at Dare's Field, is a cul de sac off George Lane. An extensive and fascinating analysis of the growth of the village in each phase of its development is given in the Kilmington Village Design Statement (2011).

Thus, by accident, or good planning, the substantial increase in housing over the past 50 years which led to a doubling in the number of dwellings has had relatively limited impact on the visual character of the village. It is the strong opinion of the current parishioners that this design trend should continue with the rural nature of the village maintained by close attention to the frontages on the main roads and lanes.

#### Conservation area

Kilmington's only "Conservation Area" was formally designated in June 1973. It covers a relatively small area of the village along the eastern end of The Street, around St Giles church and The Green and contains nine listed buildings. The policies within the conservation area status are designed to preserve or enhance all aspects of the character that define the area's status.



Designated "Conservation area" in Kilmington (green) around the The Street and Whitford Roads

Subsequent to the formal designation regular appraisals are required, which took place in 1999 and 2008. The 1999 appraisal noted that certain elements "are tending to lead to intrusion or a loss of the essential qualities of the Conservation Area". These included a loss of rural character from excessive recent housing development leading to suburbanisation; loss of traditional features, particularly thatch, and replacement with artificial slate and corrugated iron roofs; prominent overhead power lines; and a gradual loss of original detail,

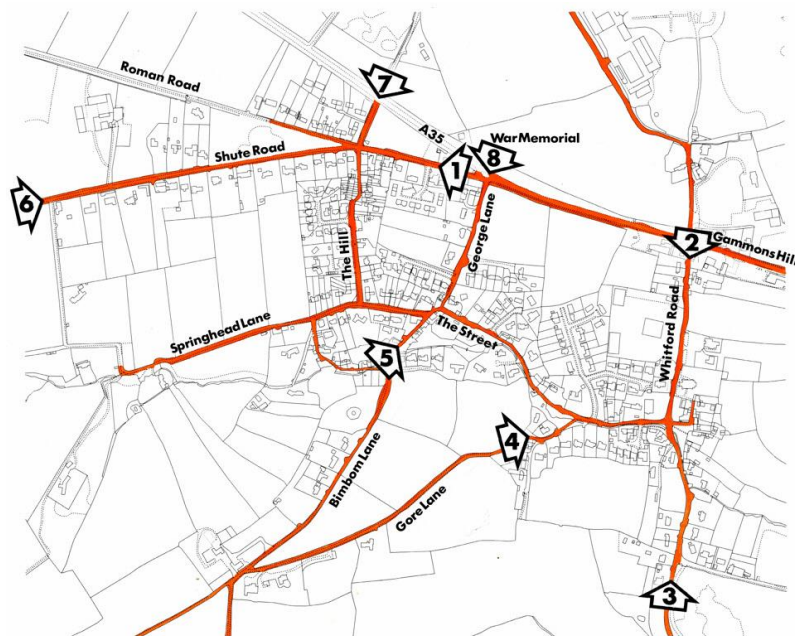
especially traditional carpentry to doors and windows, and replacement with incompatible materials and finishes, including methods of coating and repointing of stone walls. The interim review of 2008 made only minor comments.

The 1999 appraisal concluded “that other parts of the village retain sufficient residual character for consideration to be given to designation of two further small conservation areas.” These are the compact area of Silver Street along the stream from the junction with Bim Bom Lane; and part of The Hill including The New Inn, Salisbury and Balfour Terraces. There is also a strong case for the buildings running down the lower end of Shute Road, below the junction with The Hill, to be given consideration. There are in total 35 listed buildings in the Parish of Kilmington, only 9 of these are within the existing Conservation Area.

### Village Gateways

The interface between the surrounding countryside and the built-up area of the village are best characterised by a series of ‘village gateways’, these are the points at which the village houses and gardens are first seen. There are eight gateways which reflect a variety of landscapes contributing to the rural character of the village.

1. From the War Memorial looking west up Shute Road
2. From the A35 looking south at Ashes Farm along the Whitford Road
3. From Whitford Road in the south looking north at ‘Fairfax’
4. From Gore Lane looking north-east approaching Jubilee Green
5. From Bim Bom Lane looking north at Silver Street
6. From Shute Road looking east at Little Park
7. From the A35 looking south down The Hill
8. From the War Memorial looking south down George Lane



Further details of the development of the road and lane network around the parish is given in the Kilmington Village Design Statement (2011).



Village 'Gateways' – principal entrances to the village from local roads



Gateway 1. From the war memorial on the A35 up Shute Road



Gateway 2. From the A35 looking south along Whitford Road



Gateway 3. Whitford Road looking north



Gateway 4. Gore Lane towards Jubilee Green



Gateway 5. Bim Bom Lane towards Silver Street



Gateway 6. Shute Road looking east at Little Park



Gateway 7. The Street from the A35



Gateway 8. George Lane from the War memorial



### Village landscape views

There are many views in the wider landscape which are valued by parishioners and visitors alike. Similarly, there are many smaller scale views within the village that characterise the varied character of the environment which are equally valued. The principal views are:

1. St Giles Church and churchyard
2. The Village Hall
3. The Green – the views to and from the Whitford Road both to the north and south and to and from The Street both east and west
4. Former Hurford's Stores opposite the village green
5. School Lane and the Village School
6. The Playing Fields and the Monterey pine
7. Jubilee Green – both from Gore Lane at Knapp Cottages and from The Street
8. The Whitehayes cottages from The Street both east and west
9. Silver Street
10. Fields above Silver Lea and BimBom Lane
11. Old Newtons and the entrance to George Lane from The Street
12. The New Inn
13. Salisbury Terrace
14. Gowrie House and the Old Bakery from Shute Road
15. The Common
16. The War Memorial
17. The Old Inn
18. Vealhayes and Old Vealhayes
19. The entrance to Coryton Park

### Elements of the village character

Within the village, there are many smaller features that add to the character of the built and green environment.



Verges - there is a wide variety of roadside verges around the village from close mown and flower strewn to natural vegetation reflecting the surrounding countryside. Their variety contributes significantly to the village character.



Open ditches and drainage channels again contribute to the rural atmosphere of both the village and the parish more widely. The vegetation within and alongside these small watercourses slows run-off contributing to both flood alleviation and promoting biodiversity. There is an urgent need to conserve them and to resist further replacement with conduits during building development and refurbishment.

Streams - the 'village stream' runs from the top of Springhead Lane through private gardens and public spaces to the conservation area at the bottom of The Street. It needs to be carefully managed as a 'blue corridor' through the village including the stream bed, banks and marginal vegetation - see "Countryside and Green Spaces topic paper for further details. Similarly, the small stream running alongside houses in Roman Road, under the A35 to Cowley Pit Lane and into Corry Brook also needs careful management to avoid pollution and contamination.



Trees and hedgerows bring the wider countryside right into the village, especially those consisting of indigenous species. Removal of these hedges, as has happened in recent developments, undermines the rural context of the village leading to an undesirable suburbanisation of the village landscape.

Such hedges are often associated with Devon banks, though strictly a Devon bank consists of soil and close grass – often harbouring primroses in spring and many other wild-flowers throughout the summer.







Walls built of local stone (rumblestones) are very characteristic of this part of Devon. Such walls vary in scale from curtain walls, retaining walls in sunken lanes to tall walls contiguous with rumblestone buildings. Many gardens are circumscribed by these walls. The walls require considerable maintenance and need to be retained or enhanced in any development or refurbishment. New developments need to be sensitive to this vernacular style.



Springs – these are a natural feature of the parish derived from the underlying geology. Within the village several springs have been contained (dipping well or openings on to public areas such as lanes), originally as a water supply but now they simply run into small watercourses. Many are of heritage significance



## Building styles within Kilmington



Traditional chert rubblestone laid randomly, sometimes rendered or painted



Victorian rubblestone terraced houses



Edwardian brick villas



Inter-war and post war local authority houses



1960's bungalow cul de sacs



Late 20<sup>th</sup> century houses in cul de sacs



Farm conversion



The most recent development of houses in a cul de sac acknowledges traditional village style



### Building styles

The existing building stock of Kilminster is varied; this is hardly surprising given the age profile of the parish's 400 properties:

The building styles and materials of construction that have been employed as the building stock of the village has expanded have reflected the fashions and the technologies of the times. There is little evidence of traditional cob, and thatch is now a rarity in the village though formerly commonplace. The predominant early building material is chert rubblestone, normally randomly laid and often now rendered or painted over. The early quoins are of stone as are the window lintels.

- The use of chert rubblestone continued through the Victorian period and into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the designs became more sophisticated and the quoins, door surrounds and window surrounds for these properties are usually in brick. Balfour Terrace in The Hill is a plain 1880s terrace of chert rubblestone with brick dressings.
- Rubblestone gave way to brick in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, two good examples being Combe in George Lane and The Beeches on Shute Road, both Edwardian.
- Buildings remained two-storey, including the majority of the council houses, right through until the late 1950s when the first of Kilminster's bungalows appeared.
- Bungalows accounted for the majority of new builds in the years of rapid expansion from the 1960s to the 1980s. There have been more than 20 conversions of former farm buildings since 1960 and these have incorporated the traditional chert rubblestone of the originals.

Kilminster cannot be said to have a single village house style, yet the feel that chert rubblestone is the material that gives Kilminster its character is accentuated by its ubiquitous presence in walls and boundaries all around the historic village. It has been copied with varying degrees of success in the boundaries of many more modern properties. The other key element of character is the use of colour washed render in cream or off-white on many of the older properties built of rubblestone; good examples are the Whitehayes cottages and Arch Cottage on The Street and Gowrie House and the Old Bakery on Shute Road at the corner of The Hill.

### A35 corridor

The parish is bisected by the A35 trunk road which has a major impact on life in the parish but also gives it relatively easy access to distant facilities. It seriously constrains movement by foot within the parish because it is dangerous and difficult to cross. As the majority of the village is on the south side of the road, it prevents some members of the community gaining access to transport (bus and subsequently train at Axminster or Honiton) as well as accessing commercial facilities such as the extensive farm shop facilities on the north side of the road. The road is increasingly influencing the character of the parish by rising noise and pollution.

Of the 2 miles of the A35 that runs through the parish, the few village properties that front directly onto the road (14 out of 399 village properties and five of which are commercial) occupy only 1,200 metres of the road from the Old Police House in the west to Gammons Hill Farm in the east. The A35 provides the only access to the village from the east, this side of the parish being protected by the flood plains of the rivers Yarty and Axe before rising steeply from the river valley.

Several commercial activities and facilities serving a wider area, as well as the residents, are clustered on the A35 at the centre of the parish, forming a short 'commercial strip'. It includes a petrol garage, motel and restaurant, convenience store, car sales, pub, woodwork shop and much visited Millers farm shop with associated outlets (fish shop, florist, and cafe).

This 'commercial strip' and main road forms an interface between the rural nature of the parish and a semi-urban environment. Local buses stop at two points along the A35.

Some 300 yards beyond Kilmingtong Cross at the War Memorial bearing left off the A35 leads directly into Shute Road (Gateway 1). Approaching along the A35 from the west, the road is flanked to the south by the woodland running up to Kilmingtong Hill which has recently been felled along the road edge (conifers as well as many mature beech trees). To the north there are unbroken long views out across the valley of the Corry Brook to the patchwork of farmland that characterises the northern half of the parish. Through this farmland the rural Studhayes Road passes just three properties (two are farms) before joining the A35. There is little feel of development even when the A35 reaches the "Kilmingtong" sign and the busy junction with Shute Road and George Lane at the War Memorial. A sparse hedge and now only one narrow field provide an important barrier between the trunk road and the village to the south as the A35 runs down to the Old Inn and Kilmingtong Cross.

It is proposed that the A35 corridor is considered a 'planning entity' in its own right, mixing commercial, residential (impact) and environmental components to benefit those travelling through the parish as well as residents. While the road itself is the responsibility of the Highways England, how it interacts more widely with the parish can be influenced by planning considerations.

Specific areas to be enhanced within the corridor:

- Wide grass borders along the road are now part of a new Highways England project 'The A35 Verge Enhancement Management Strategy' and are increasingly being managed for wild-flowers. This initiative, together with volunteer support to enhance the hedges and trees along some sections could provide travellers a more rural experience and increase biodiversity within the parish.
- The War memorial at the junction of George Lane with the A35 is a key landmark and an assembly area for parishioners. The area behind the war memorial and its surroundings needs to be protected for tranquillity and to give appropriate respect.
- Access to the A35 at Kilmingtong Cross (Whitford Road and Stockland road) and George Lane are very busy 'difficult' junctions. Future building development will exacerbate the difficulty at these junctions by increasing traffic attempting to access the A35. The incremental effect of a series of even small developments could have a detrimental effect on these junctions.
- A tree and shrub barrier between the A35 and the main village (from the Old Police House in the west to Kilmingtong Cross) needs to be developed to protect the village (such as Dare's Field) and any future development in adjacent fields from the harmful effect of particulate pollution (2.5µ particles) from the A35. The woodland at Gapemouth, uphill from the war memorial, was particularly important in this respect before it was felled. It is now well known that trees and shrubs, especially dense hedges, mitigate the effects of pollution. It is worthy of note that the villages of Chideock and Wilmington, to the east and west of Kilmingtong on the A35, have some of the highest recorded levels of Nitrogen dioxide in England.

### Community and Social cohesion

There is a strong sense of community and social cohesion within the village. The vast majority of residents in the parish are very satisfied with living here, citing the friendliness of the people as major factor (Kilmingtong Parish Survey, 2017). It is clear that the size of the village is a key factor in maintaining this social cohesion – there is real concern among residents that a high **rate and scale** of growth in building will be detrimental to this cohesion (Kilmingtong Parish Survey, 2017 and public consultation meetings).



The built environment and layout of the village also has a significant impact on its character and the 'sense' of cohesion of the community. Many residents walk along the roads and lanes, taking their children to school, running errands, walking dogs or simply recreation. During these walks, an activity much encouraged by government and health authorities alike, individuals meet others and cement relationships. Research suggests that areas where people feel safe and comfortable to walk are conducive to positive perceptions of social cohesion and therefore maintaining the quality of the lanes and key thoroughfares in the village are critical.

The village has many facilities and activities that contribute to and reinforce the social cohesion felt by residents:

- A successful village school, many from Kilmington as well as surrounding parishes
- Two churches, St Giles (Church of England) and The Beacon (Baptist) with an entourage of voluntary help and a focus of many activities.
- A surprisingly well-used village hall with a wide range of activities and clubs (see Appendix 2 of activities/ use). The hall is run by a team of volunteers.
- Many support groups (coffee morning in St Giles, lent lunches, etc) and charity events (eg. charity walks, duck race on the stream, )
- An active youth club in The Beacon (Baptist Church)
- Good sports facilities and sports clubs (playing field with a modern pavilion, a very successful cricket club, tennis, table tennis and short mat bowls clubs)
- Annual Village Show organised and run by volunteers.
- Kilmington Gardening Club organises monthly talks, plant sales and an annual produce show.
- Annual pantomime or other show presented by members of the village, including school children. This activity has a very long history, predating the modern Village Hall built in the 1970's.
- A well-produced magazine, "Postscript" compiled and distributed free of charge by volunteers 10 months of the year, reporting on activities and matters of interest to the village.
- A Village web-site and Facebook social media site.
- Two pubs which act as a significant social resource, especially the New Inn (skittle, darts, cribbage and boules teams, monthly charity quiz nights and charity events during the year).

## **Recommendations**

The residents care strongly about their village – they appreciate that change will occur, but they want a common sense approach to maintain the environment that either kept them in or drew them to Kilmington and helps gives them the lifestyle they value.

To maintain and enhance the characteristics of the village the following recommendations are made (based on the Kilmington Village Design Statement; adopted by the EDDC 2011).

### **Preserve the rural character of the parish**

1. Protect the sight lines of the village approaches (village gateways) and their rural feel
2. Respect the parishes historic network of roads and lanes. Pavements and street lighting are not appropriate on this network
3. Protect the hedgerows, grass verges, banks and rubblestone walls that line the roads and lanes of the parish and are an essential part of the landscape setting
4. Protect the stream that runs through the village from Springhead via Silver Street, Jubilee Green to The Green. It is essential to protect the intermittent ditches that carry storm water to this stream without recourse to conduits (to minimise flooding).
5. Respect and preserve the network of by-ways, bridleways and footpaths that are an important village amenity.

### **Encourage development that respects the environment in which it is set**

6. The historic elements of the village comprising both the older village properties and the historic village road network are of critical importance to the visual impact of present day Kilmington and should be protected
7. The regulations relating to the existing conservation area should be enforced, while a modern approach to energy conservation be encouraged.

### **Protect the village and the rural environment**

8. Any changes either to land use or to existing farm buildings must be undertaken sensitively with the interests of villagers in mind.
9. New build developments should not overcrowd their plots and should provide proportionate space for gardens, for screening and for garaging and adequate off-road parking. Any new building of prominent size or position must be of high quality in terms of its design and its materials of construction.
10. Extensions to existing properties and the complete or partial rebuilding of an existing property should not adversely impact on sight lines when viewed from public areas or from neighbouring properties.
11. The visual focal points within the village should be protected. Any new developments or modifications to existing properties should not obscure these focal points or detract from their appearance or their sight lines.
12. Boundaries along roads, lanes and paths should be rural in character and well related to those of nearby dwellings and other buildings and the character of its setting. Traditional stone walls, banks and hedges are preferred, blended with trees as appropriate. Developments on land behind an existing wall, bank or hedge should limit any damage to that existing boundary and make good any newly created openings in that boundary. Urban fencing, such as wooden panelling, is out of character and should not be installed on boundaries that front onto a road or path.
13. Planting schedules for trees, banks and hedges should form part of the planning conditions for any new development and should be enforced. New plantings in banks and hedges should be of traditional species native to the local area.
14. New build developments should, wherever possible, provide for running electrical and telephone connections underground.



## **Design Considerations on the “The Built Form”**

Recommendations for the detailed design of new buildings in Kilminster are not to replace or upstage the detailed planning guidance laid out in the Devon Structure Plan, the East Devon Local Plan or building regulations. Rather it is to identify relevant local characteristics that should be reflected in proposed developments. Design considerations include scale, layout, building density, height, materials of construction, architectural style and detailing.

Given the varied nature of Kilminster’s existing housing stock and the wish of the villagers for new build and extensions to harmonise both with the existing housing stock and with their setting, it follows that the requirements for the built form will vary around the village. The design guidelines may not be appropriate in all situations.

1. **New design should demonstrate an awareness of the past while, at the same time, embracing modern technologies.**
2. **Buildings should be no more than two storeys high and should have pitched roofs. Porch and garage roofs should reflect the pitch and materials of the main roof. Flat roofs should not be permitted.**
3. **On both new and existing properties a range of roofing materials may be employed – slate, tiles, thatch – but, with the exception of thatch, a dark colour should be used.**
4. **The colour of renders and other external wall finishes should be neutral or pastel shades (not vivid colours) and should blend with the neighbouring properties.**
5. **Chimneys are an important element of design and should be encouraged. Typically, they should be of brick (possibly rendered) with terra cotta chimney pots. External flues should be dark in colour or concealed from view.**
6. **The style and detail of windows, including replacement windows, should harmonise throughout the property and any extensions.**
7. **Dormer windows should have pitched roofs and should be subordinate in scale to the main roof.**
8. **In older properties a high wall to window ratio should be retained, and prominent picture windows discouraged. Windows and doors in these properties should, when appropriate, use deep window and door reveals to retain the sense of solidity.**
9. **Guttering should be discreet and appropriate to the age and design of the building.**
10. **Detail – the use of decoration, texture and design – creates a sense of quality and craftsmanship and should be encouraged in new buildings and carefully preserved in existing buildings. The use of “faux” materials should not be permitted on those parts of a building that are visible from public areas and especially on buildings that front on to the historic road network.**
11. **All extensions and alterations (including partial rebuilding) to existing buildings should respect the character of the original. Extensions should be subordinate in scale and in height to the existing building(s).**
12. **Garages, unless integral or concealed from view, should be set back from the building line of the property.**
13. **The following household adjuncts should, where possible, be concealed from view: fuel storage tanks and refuse storage bins; television and dish aerials; and solar panels. Wind turbines may be appropriate on more remote sites but should not be permitted in the village because of possible noise pollution and visual impact.**

December 2020