



A cluster of farm buildings, cottages and church make up the village centre of Dunkeswell.

Introduction.

1.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. There currently over 9000 conservation areas in England and Wales and these designations aim to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of historic settlements. A Conservation Area Appraisal is an assessment of the character of the area and identifies the most significant aspects of its landscape, architecture and historical importance. It characterises the various components of its evolution and development, form, architecture and landscape setting. The Conservation Area Appraisal will inform a Management Plan which will outline proposals for short and long term strategies for the preservation and more particularly the enhancement of the area.

1.2 Planning Policy for Conservation Areas is contained within The Planning (Listed

Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 69-74 of the principal Act contains policies on conservation area designation and the levels of control upon various types of development. With regard to management plans, section 71 of the Act places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas.

1.3 Planning Policy Statement 5 gives a full statement of Government policies relating to conservation areas in the main Act. Policies HE2 and HE3 of this document elaborate on conservation area policies and also complements guidance contained in other Planning Policy Guidance Notes. PPS5 together with the accompanying English Heritage Practice Guide are the policy documents most often referred to and gives weight to planning decisions. As conservation areas are very often centred around the historic core of a settlement there is usually varying degrees of archaeological potential when developing a site.

1.3 Policy EN11 and EN12 of the East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011 supported by paragraphs 4.79-4.84 outlines local policy in regard to proposals for the demolition of buildings and proposals for development and advertisements in conservation areas.

1.4 The Devon Structure Plan is due to be replaced by the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006-2026. The Devon Structure Plan adopted by Devon County Council in 2004 contains similar policies for the designation, management and development control within conservation areas.

1.5 In addition to generic and local policies for conservation areas more specific guidance will be offered by development briefs prepared for individual sites in East Devon. Development briefs will also be supported by the East Devon Design Guide and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) which will form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). These documents will take Development Plan policies and guidance and apply them in a specific and transparent manner to development within East Devon.

Definition and Summary of Special Interest.

2.1 The character and special interest of any conservation area is defined by the aspects of the layout, situation, topography, spaces and buildings that make the settlement and area locally distinct and set apart.

2.2 In the case of Dunkeswell the character is defined by the dense historic village centre. This appraisal will examine the character of the area and will define those aspects which make it special and give it an individual identity.

2.3 The special interest of the historic village is partially defined by its topographical situation within a tight wooded valley surrounding by

the plateau of the Blackdown Hills. The village is quite cohesive in its vernacular architecture and forms a tight-knit urban grain. The prominence of the roofscape when viewed from the west is a particular character feature.



The prominent roofscape of Dunkeswell village is a significant aspect of its character.

Location and Setting.

3.1 Location: Dunkeswell is located in a sparsely populated area of East Devon immediately south of the Somerset border. The airfield, situated west of the village is elevated on a plateau in the Blackdown Hills while the historic village is situated on the western slopes of a valley running northwards towards Hemyok in Somerset.

- 3.2 Plan Form: The historic village is no larger than a large hamlet with a dense concentration of vernacular buildings south of the church. The setting of the village is rural with farmland on the lower valley bottom to the east. The buildings are grouped centrally around Connett's Farm with the rebuilt church set separately to the north. Properties and associated agricultural buildings are set either against or slightly set back from the narrow lanes that serve the village.
- 3.3 Landscape setting: The village is situated within a nationally important Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape. The area was designated in 1991 and forms an easily recognisable block of flat-topped plateau with a north facing scarp and spring-lined valleys running predominantly north to south. The landscape setting of Dunkeswell village encompasses the very best of this distinct landscape and presents a stark contrast in topography and landscape character.
- 3.4 The landscape setting allows views into and out of the conservation area, particularly in the case of the historic village. The southern approach to the village drops down past Percy Farm and offers views towards the historic centre with the church tower visible over the trees and roof tops. The most significant view point of the village is from the junction of the main road and the lane descending towards Connett's Farm. Views from within the conservation area are also important in defining the character of the area and its sense of place. From within the historic core of the village views to the wooded slopes of the valley give a sense of enclosure. These, together with other significant views into, out of and within the conservation area are identified on Map 2.

Historic Development and Archaeology.

- 4.1 Origins and historic development of the area: There are significant concentrations of prehistoric evidence within the Blackdown Hills area and within the heart of Dunkeswell village is a Bronze Age barrow which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (shown on Map 1). The barrow mound stands about 2 metres high with a diameter of 31 metres. There is a partly infilled trench 2 metres wide and 10 metres long on the south east side of the mound. This implies that there was probably a Bronze Age settlement in the vicinity and the sheltered valley with a spring line along the contour of the village centre may well have been the location of an earlier settlement. The origins of the existing village are probably 12th century as the rebuilt 1860's church contains a Norman font.
- 4.2 Worthy of note are the remains of Dunkeswell Abbey two miles north of the village and conservation area which was founded in 1201 by [William Briwere](#) as a [Cistercian](#) monastery. The abbey was closed in 1539 and was mostly demolished, though a section remained in domestic use until the 19th century. In 1842 a church was built over part of the site and some surviving sections of monastery include the partial end wall of the cellarer's range and parts of a gatehouse. The vast majority of the vernacular buildings in the conservation area are 17th and 18th century although Connett's Farm is late medieval. The village has developed around the church with a relatively dense core of buildings to the south and a more dispersed distribution of cottages further up the valley on the lower land in the valley bottom.
- 4.3 Later Victorian and twentieth century development is predominantly on the periphery of the village.

4.4 The historic core of the village should be considered to have archaeological potential as the origins of the human settlement clearly date back to the Bronze age. The church is a relatively modern rebuild of at least one earlier church and the immediate area surrounding the church may well be archaeologically significant. The archaeology of the conservation area is fundamental to help understand the sense of place of the area and the context from which the area evolved.



A prominent view over Connett's Farm from the main road with the wooded slopes rising to east beyond.

Character Analysis.

5.1 The quality of the buildings and their contribution to the area very much define the character and appearance of the conservation area. They are what makes the historic environment locally distinct through architectural styles, form, proportions and materials. Views of principal buildings and

other structures in the area including walls, outbuildings and street furniture contribute to the most visual aspect of the area's character. They are what makes the place special and most recognisable from other settlements and conservation areas. Dunkeswell is very distinct in its predominance of vernacular buildings within the historic village.

5.2 The conservation area has clear character zones. Dunkeswell can be considered as having two separate character zones; the historic core of the settlement around the church and the more fragmented development following the thoroughfare from the southern approach.

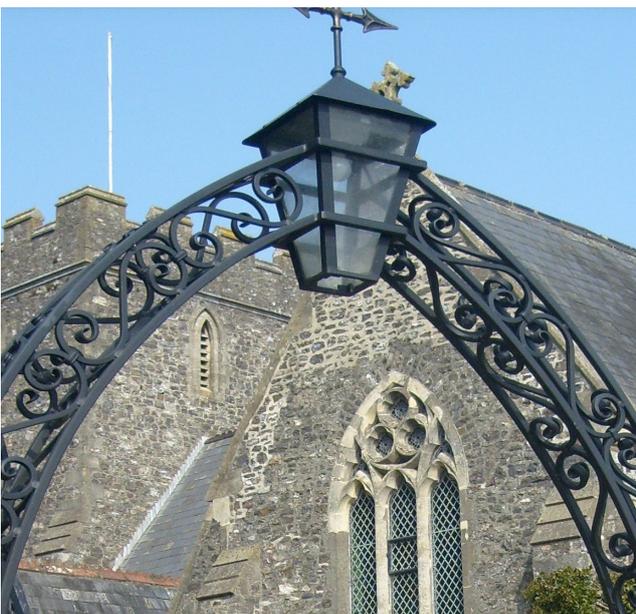
5.3 Within the historic core of the village there are fifteen individually listed buildings, all grade II apart from Connett's Farm which is grade II*. Apart from St Nicholas's Church all the properties on the statutory list are C16-C18 domestic properties of vernacular proportions and construction. They all follow a similar layout of a single room depth of about 5m and between 2-4 rooms wide. Roofs are generally thatched over steeply-pitched and fully gabled roofs. Full and half-hipped roofs are more or less absent from the conservation area apart from a couple of exceptions.

5.4 The roofscape is a particular character feature of the village and displays a mix of thatch, corrugated iron and some slate. The roofs are prominent from views above the village and are considered important in terms of their simplicity, variation in levels and vernacular detailing. While the church is a relatively new addition to the village it is clearly a landmark structure within the centre of the settlement and views from close by and further away are important in defining the character of the area and the hierarchy of building structures. The variety of roof claddings is included on map 4.

5.5 The character area of the conservation area between Corner Cottage to Autumn Cottage is less coherent in that this where the village had expanded with more modern development. The historic buildings in this area are of the same overriding character as those within the village centre and tend to be situated parallel to the highway. While The Old Forge and Autumn cottage are the only listed buildings south of the group including Corner Cottage there are other historic buildings that contribute positively to the character of the area are identified on Map 1 as being key buildings. These include The Royal Oak Inn, Carpenter's Cottage, The Old Rectory and Garden Cottage. The Springfield development of post-war semis is clearly of its time but respects the proportions and massing of more traditional properties while incorporating modern building materials and finishes. This character area is more dispersed with substantial spaces between buildings which together with more prominent tree groups and spaces to the road frontage are considered an important aspect of the character and distinctiveness of the urban grain. Proposals for infill development will likely have a significant impact upon the character of the conservation area.



The Church of St Nicholas was rebuilt in 1865-8 and the tower rebuilt again in 1953. The former church was most probably medieval although the Norman font suggests an even ancient building. The site is therefore considered to be of archaeological potential.





A mix of roadside farm buildings and thatched vernacular cottages make Dunkeswell village quite distinct.

Contribution of green spaces, trees and biodiversity value.

6.1 The conservation area and its setting is defined by its rural context and abundance of trees, hedgerows and surrounding fields. There are significant tree groups throughout the conservation area with the historic village being framed by wooded belts against the skyline. These are predominantly deciduous groups and therefore the character offered changes throughout the year depending upon the degree of tree cover. The village has smaller groups of trees with some individual specimens along the main road and in the vicinity of the church yard. There are currently three areas of trees offered statutory protection by Tree Preservation Orders, two north of the main road junction and Manley's Lane and an area of woodland to the rear of the Royal Oak Inn.



The centre of the historic village has a characterful and prominent roofscape. The church tower creates a focal landmark and is visible more or less throughout the village.



The Royal Oak Inn is a key building within the conservation area and should be considered as a non-designated heritage asset

6.2 Domestic green spaces and gardens to the front and side of properties are an important character feature within the village. What is most evident is that these are not overly manicured and are appropriately landscaped in their rural context rather than being overly suburban. One public open green space to the north of the church is important in the recreation that it offers and the views out of the conservation area. Again, trees form a significant aspect of the enclosure to the space and frame the skyline both to the east and west.

6.3 Hedges and Devon banks found within the conservation area have great ecological diversity as well as providing enclosure to the lanes that pass through the village. A greater variety of species tends to indicate a more ancient hedgerow .



An important public green space north of the church framed by individual and groups of trees.

The extent in intrusion and detracting features.

7.1 While the village has seen relatively significant recent development along the main road the overall character has not been marred or compromised.

7.2 The character of the historic village is sensitive to change and even minor unsympathetic alterations to buildings or additions to street furniture and signage can have a significant impact. The most apparent intrusion are the overhead telephone cables and telegraph poles. These blight most historic rural villages but in the case of Dunkeswell the prominent views from elevated positions are compromised by the telegraph wires.



Prominent telegraph poles and wires throughout the village.

7.3 There are some rather incongruous means of enclosure throughout the conservation area which are inconsistent with the predominance of stone walling and native hedges. Sections of close-boarded fencing are suburban in character and not appropriate in the context of a historic village. The safety railings and chain-link fencing around the park north of the church are also inconsistent with the character and appearance of the village and could be substituted with simple cast or wrought iron railings and native planting.



Poorly executed railings and means of enclosure to the entrance to the public park.

7.4 There are several satellite dishes that have been installed on prominent elevations of historic buildings. While these can be controlled in some cases by the planning system there are alternative solutions by locating them on less prominent elevations or even mounting them on poles in rear

gardens.

7.5 As the pressure to conserve energy and to invest into microgeneration will inevitably continue careful thought should be given to how technologies such as solar and voltaic panels, and domestic wind turbines are accommodated in the historic environment. While current and future government guidance will promote their use this should be considered in a well-conceived manner. The planning system will provide control in many cases, but in some circumstances the onus will be upon the home or business owner to take into account the impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area. The Management Plan will look at ways in which this can be achieved.

General condition and pressures for change.

8.1 The general condition of buildings and structures within the conservation area are good. However there are some exceptions to this and there are historically important buildings that are becoming at risk from decay. The Council has powers to ensure that vacant listed buildings considered at risk are made structurally sound and weather tight. The future management of these buildings will be outlined in the Management Plan.

8.2 Within the historic village there are a number of agricultural buildings that show signs of deterioration and there are a number of temporary roofs in corrugated iron which are not necessarily detrimental as they add to the character and variety of the roofscape. However care must be taken that any temporary roofs function well and do not allow unnecessary water penetration into important historic buildings.

8.3 In terms of pressure for change within the

The village is quite sensitive to significant changes and infill development could have a profound impact upon the loss of important spaces and views into and out of the conservation area. Great care in considering further proposals for new buildings must be taken in order to preserve the local distinctiveness that makes Dunkeswell individual and special.

8.4 Managing change in the conservation area will be one of the principle aspects of the Management Plan and will further highlight the pressures and propose ways to manage and lessen the impact of change.

Community Involvement.

9.1 A full public consultation exercise took place on the proposal to designate a conservation area in Dunkeswell. The originally proposed boundary included a far more extensive coverage including the historic WWII airfield.

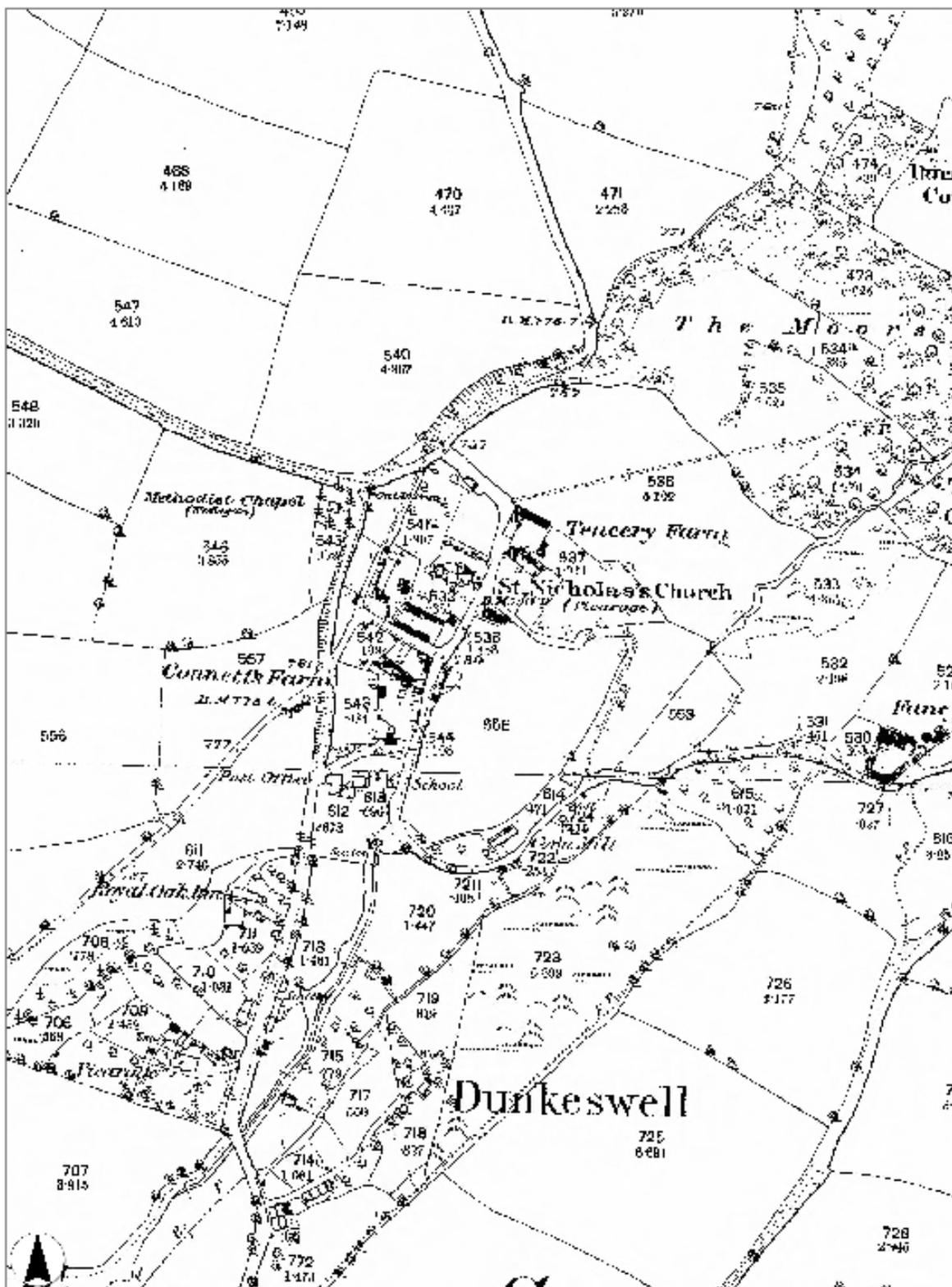
9.2 Approaches had been made by English Heritage to consider conservation area status for the airfield, as historically this airfield played a pivotal role in the Battle of Britain and many of the original associated airfield buildings remain including the operations rooms and control tower which are grade II listed. The airfield now also includes two areas of important employment use with business parks to the east and north of the airfield.

9.3 During the consultation period the consensus from those with interests in these areas was that conservation

area status would have an adverse impact upon business due to the additional controls imposed by conservation area status. This view was echoed by the Parish Council and on the basis of discussions at public meetings held at the aerodrome and village hall the boundary of the proposed conservation area was subsequently altered to omit the airfield and keep the boundary tight around the historic village.

9.4 There were no representations from those residents living within the village and therefore with the support of the Parish Council the conclusion was to designate a new conservation area around the old village.

9.5 The Management Plan does highlight areas where the character of the conservation area could be enhanced. As there are no present streams of funding allocated for such projects any feasible enhancement works will need to be explored and discussed by the local community as part of the ongoing management of the conservation area.



Dunkeswell 1890 OS map

Map Tile: ST1407NW Full Reference: ST1415 0775

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