

Sherfield English

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



Issue 3.3
16 April 2015

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Map- how the village is set in the countryside

1. The rural and historical context of the village
2. Compatibility with the settlement pattern
3. Connection between dwellings and the surrounding landscape
4. Plot size, frontage width and building spacing
5. Set-back from the highway and style of frontage
6. Architectural compatibility
7. Compatibility with neighbouring buildings
8. Important open spaces in the village

Map showing the separation of the main settlement areas by open spaces

Appendix I: Guidelines Summary

1. The habitation pattern
2. Piece-wise linear development
3. Connection with fields and woods
4. Dwelling plot details
5. Architectural character
6. Open spaces

Appendix II: The Character of Sherfield English

1. Recorded history in a nutshell
2. How the habitation pattern preserves the history, and pre-history, of the parish
3. The dispersed dwelling pattern as seen today
 - i. The two main sites
 - ii. Melchet End
 - iii. Sherfield Hatchett
 - iv. The Manor
 - v. Doctors Hill
 - vi. Newtown
 - vii. Other groups

Map showing the full extent of the parish and the location of historic buildings

Sherfield English Village Design Statement

Issue 3.3, 16 April 2015

This Village Design Statement (VDS) provides guidance for those seeking Planning Permission for new, replacement or extended buildings anywhere in the Sherfield English parish.

The VDS guidance applies equally to 'permitted development', but since there will not then be detailed scrutiny by the Borough Planning Service, the village as a community will be relying on the individual's judgement.

Appendix I provides a summary of the VDS guidelines.

Appendix II provides a more detailed description of the village, and how its present character both reveals and preserves its history.

Introduction

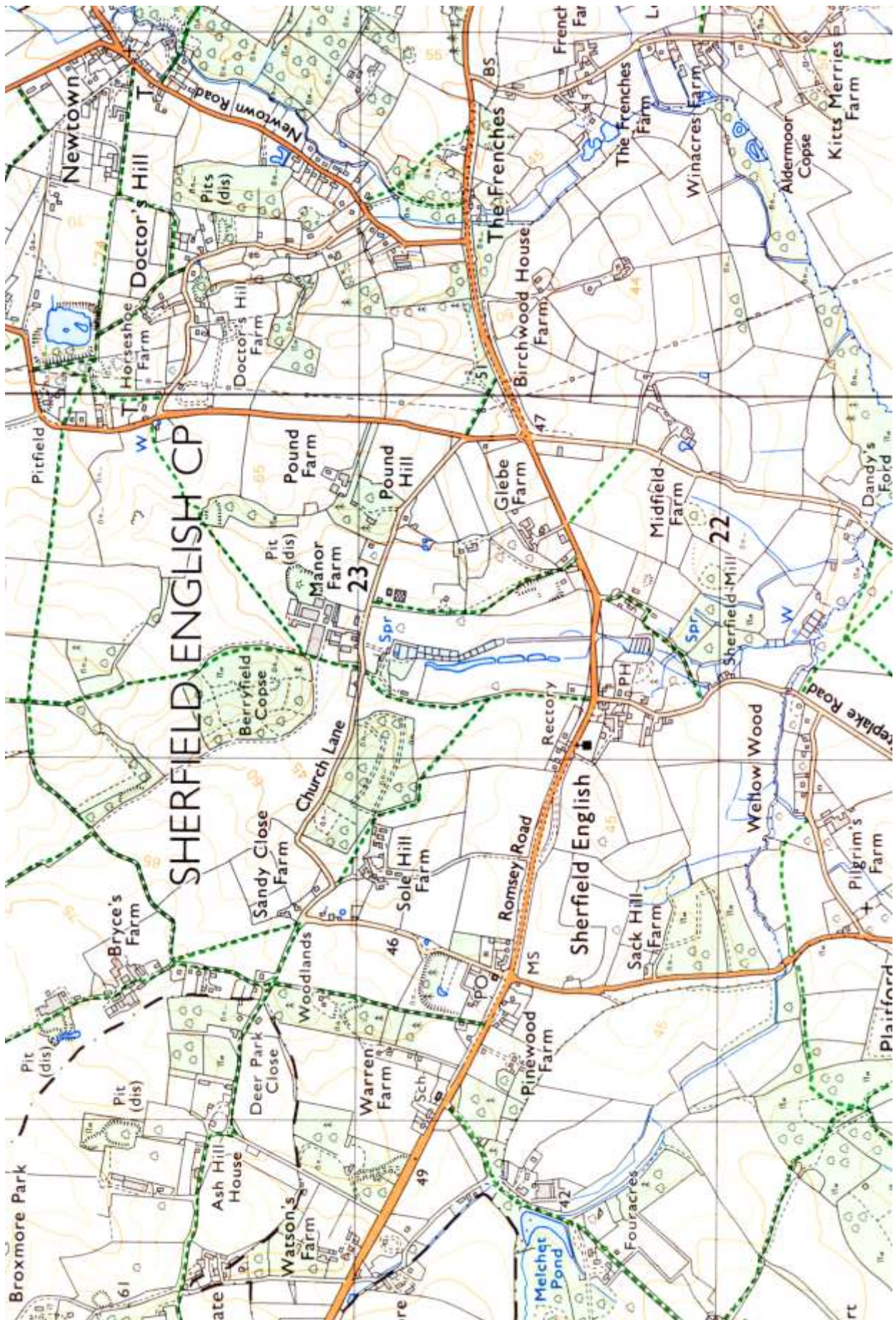
Current Borough Planning Policy characterises the entire parish of Sherfield English as 'Countryside', which has fundamental implications for most planning applications. It is inhabited countryside, of course, but that is not a contradiction. The low density of dwellings in Sherfield English, the intimate connection of every dwelling with fields and woodland, the complete absence of 'dormitory' housing estates – all these factors attest to Sherfield English having retained the true character of the countryside, and not, as many villages have become, an island of suburbia surrounded by countryside. Its history is summarised in Appendix II.

The visual character of the village is described at three levels, each of which should be separately addressed in any proposal for a new or extended dwelling:

1. The overall pattern of the village, and how the position of buildings affects it.
2. How buildings relate to their immediate surroundings.
3. The detail of materials and architectural style.



I The 18th Century Manor Farm House is at the heart of the village, and is one of 20 listed buildings. Its high hedges and the close surround of trees are strongly charactersitic for the whole parish.



II Map showing how dwellings are scattered across the whole parish, with every dwelling in direct contact with the countryside. (A more complete map of the parish showing the boundary is at the end of Appendix II, page 21.) (Map Copyright Ordnance Survey)

1 The rural and historical context of the village

Sherfield English is a village with a very rural character, still essentially a working village rather than a dormitory. It is part of an extensive rural area on the west side of the Test Valley, where each village is really a dispersed web of hamlets, with no clearly defined 'centre'. None fit the mould of the classic 'nuclear village' that represents most people's idea of what a village should be like. These villages, Sherfield English, Awbridge, Plaitford, Lockerley, and so on, are not villages that have been broken up, but are communities that have developed directly from family-based farmsteads. They represent the survival of a pre-Saxon settlement pattern which is rare in the south-east of England, but common further west.

Within the context of Test Valley Borough, this group of villages can be seen as having a distinct and consistent character; they still exhibit a historical settlement pattern which should be preserved to the extent that is compatible with the needs of modern rural communities.

Sherfield English is an almost perfect example of this pattern. By historical accident the farmland has escaped ownership by large estates, and this has helped prevent both land-use uniformity and housing development. Consequently the historic settlement pattern in the village is exceptionally well preserved, to the extent that the village of the 1840 tithe map is instantly recognisable on the ground today. A fuller description of the village is given in Appendix II.

Guidance Note 1: The character of Sherfield English is primarily defined by a settlement pattern of dispersed hamlets and scattered dwellings. Any developments or individual buildings in the parish should maintain this pattern, and should not create a concentration of dwellings, or significantly degrade the spacing between hamlets.



III Open spaces are everywhere in the village, separating small groups of dwellings, most of which are hard to see at all from the main road that crosses the parish. This is the view south from Salisbury Road in the west of the parish.

2 Compatibility with the settlement pattern

The dispersed settlement pattern in Sherfield English covers virtually every part of the parish, and defines its character throughout. This is not just a 'village in the countryside', it is a village in which every single dwelling is 'in the countryside' in its own right. The connection is intimate and universal. Nowhere is there a marked concentration of dwellings, and certainly nothing that could be described as a 'block' of development.

Looked at in more detail, the pattern is one of branching, piece-wise linear development, with wooded or open spaces both between and among small groups of dwellings. Characteristically there are no closely parallel or folding roads, so that nowhere do dwelling plots back onto other dwellings. There is in fact a complete absence of 'back-to-back' dwelling development, something that really epitomises the character of the village. Relatively few villages have managed to preserve their historical settlement pattern to this extent, and it is therefore all the more important that its value is recognised. It is at the core of guidance in this VDS.

Guidance Note 2: Any development should maintain the pattern of piece-wise linear development, with no roads closely parallel to others, or folding back on themselves. Any plots created should avoid one dwelling backing onto another (backland or tandem development).

3 Connection between dwellings and the surrounding countryside

In Section 2 it was observed that even within a group of dwellings there are undeveloped gaps. Whether large or small, pasture or woodland, or even naturalistic garden, these gaps are important to the character of each dwelling group. Their special value is that they bring the village's rural character up to public highways, even in the middle of our largest groups.

Guidance Note 3: The many existing gaps between individual dwellings are just as important in defining the character of the area as the surrounding fields and woods, and should be preserved. 'Infill' between dwellings, whether in gardens or fields, should not be seen as acceptable in the way it might be in a larger village with a settlement boundary.

Perhaps even more important than the undeveloped gaps are the fields and woods immediately behind a row of dwellings. These are present, without exception, throughout every group of dwellings in the parish, and are clearly an essential aspect of the village's character. They provide an immediate contact with the countryside for every resident.

Guidance Note 4: A field, wood or other undeveloped space immediately 'behind' existing dwellings should remain undeveloped, particularly where it is behind dwellings which have no other boundary with undeveloped land.

In many parts of the parish dwellings are found only along one side of a highway. This has a big impact on the feeling of being 'in the countryside' rather than 'in a village', both for those residents, and for users of the highway. It gives those areas a distinct character, which should be preserved.

Guidance Note 5: Where a row of dwellings forming a group is entirely on one side of highway, a specific character for that group is created, and this should be preserved. This is especially true where there is an open prospect across fields.

We can observe one further way of characterising the intimate connection between dwellings and the countryside: Nearly every individual dwelling plot in the parish has at least one boundary with a field, pasture or woodland. With the exception of corner plots, there are virtually no exceptions to this rule, and we can therefore identify it as a genuine characteristic of the village. It adds something quite specific and testable to the guidance on preserving its rural character.

Guidance Note 6: At the level of the individual plot, new dwellings should ideally have at least one boundary (notionally a quarter of the total boundary) with a field, pasture or woodland, and should preserve the same for any existing dwellings, in line with the established settlement pattern.

Guidance Notes 1 to 5 are generally supported by Borough Planning Policy for development in the Countryside, and these notes should be seen as a strengthening of that policy throughout the parish. Note 6 provide a simple but crucial test for whether any individual dwelling is compatible with the established settlement pattern, regardless of where it is situated in the parish.

It is specifically accepted that some socially desirable developments, such as an affordable housing scheme or the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings, might have intrinsic constraints which are incompatible with Guidance Note 6, but even these developments should follow the other Guidance Notes to the full extent that is possible.



IIV There are dwellings on all sides of this view, mostly hidden by the trees that surround this typical open space. The view is from above Church Lane southwards towards the present church on the main road. Sole Hill is to the right.

4 Plot size, frontage width and building spacing

Plot sizes are characteristically large in rural areas, and this is certainly true for Sherfield English. In many villages this might be seen as simply a historical legacy, but in Sherfield English, as perhaps in all truly rural areas, it is a characteristic that continues to be valued. This is evident from the findings of a comprehensive survey undertaken for the Sherfield English Parish Plan (2008), which showed that its residents universally valued having more space around them than if they lived in a suburb. Only the tranquillity of the countryside came higher in their valuation. So although we can certainly say that large plot sizes are an observable characteristic of the village, we can also say that it is a highly valued characteristic.

Guidance Note 7: The plot size for new dwellings should take account of the local norm, rather than the Borough or national one. Specifically, if permission is given for an existing plot to be divided, it should not result in any plot being markedly smaller than the average for other dwellings within the same group. In this context a 'group' is typically dwellings on the same road, but reference should be made to the groups identified in the last section of Appendix II.

A further aspect of plot size is frontage and the spacing between buildings. Like plot size, this is much greater in Sherfield English than is normal in more developed villages, to the extent that the gaps are in most areas are wider than the dwellings themselves.

Guidance Note 8: Both frontage width and the spacing between buildings are important factors in creating the character of each group of dwellings. It should be shown in any proposal that the new dwelling or extended dwelling maintains the established pattern, and that neither of these measurements is markedly less than the average for the group.

5 Set-back from the highway and style of frontage

With a few exceptions, most of which are sheds, small barns, or garages, buildings in Sherfield English are set well back from the highway, typically by more than 10 metres. The VDS does not seek to define any particular set-back distance, nor does it suggest rigid uniformity with neighbouring plots, but it remains true that a building's closeness to the highway is a big factor in its visual impact.

Guidance Note 9: Where neighbouring dwellings establish a characteristic pattern of set-back from the highway, any new building or extension should preserve this, even if there are already isolated exceptions.

The character of the frontage itself needs to be looked at in the same way. Throughout the parish the established character is of substantial hedging along the front boundary, something which is typical of rural, rather than suburban villages. In a row of hedged frontages, a frontage which is either open or fenced will significantly affect the character of the area. There are a few exceptions, for instance walled frontages to some of the older dwellings, such as The Mill.

Guidance Note 10: In groups where hedging is the characteristic frontage of its neighbours, a new or developed dwelling should maintain this character, giving precedence to this over other style considerations. Where the pattern is varied there will be more freedom, but the development should follow one of the established styles.

6 Architectural compatibility

What does, and does not, fit architecturally in the countryside is hard to define, but it is important. Sherfield English certainly has space for modern, even innovative, architecture, but it should reflect its context. It is not sufficient that a design is of 'high quality', or 'eco-friendly' or even that it accurately quotes specific local cues; it should pass the test of being complementary to its surroundings of fields and woodland.



V An example of two 'replacement' dwellings that fit very well into their surroundings. One has a plain tile roof and the other, just visible beyond it, is slate, but they are well separated. The trees and hedges play a big part in maintaining the rural character. This is the junction of Doctors Hill with Newtown Road.

For an innovative design the choice of external materials may be more important for compatibility than the form. Using local or natural materials and natural colours will help a proposal, but there is no general requirement in Sherfield English for masonry to be of a particular type, such as flint or Michelmersh bricks, no general requirement for plain tiles rather than slates, or for traditional casement windows, etc., and certainly no overall requirement for buildings to be of a traditional or 'period' design. However, any or all of these might be needed for an extension or new building that would otherwise detract from the character of an established group. This consideration is amplified in the next section.

It should be observed that some architectural styles will jar in the village whatever details or materials are incorporated. Principal among these are characteristically urban styles such as stark cubes or tall terraced houses, particularly in the close-packed 'Poundbury' style. A proposal should also avoid styles that are strongly associated with other climates and cultures, even those from other parts of the UK. If architectural or cultural references are incorporated they should be relevant to the south of Hampshire.

Guidance Note 11: Where there is no other dwelling within the same sweep of view the only architectural design constraint will be compatibility with rural surroundings. If a proposed new dwelling or extension will be clearly visible from outside its curtilage it should harmonise with a view which will be dominated inevitably by trees and fields. Provided the bulk is not excessive, even the most innovative designs should be able to achieve this by sympathetic choice of external materials.

7 Compatibility with neighbouring buildings

Having offered the guidance that a wide range of styles and materials can be compatible with the village in general, this will not be true in every location. The overriding consideration should be compatibility with any buildings that can be seen in same in sweep of view, and in particular any that are closely neighbouring. Compatibility does not mean, for Sherfield English, that the style or size should necessarily be the same, but in those instances where a distinct architectural character is prevalent this should be taken into account.

An example of this can be found on the north side of Salisbury Road in Melchet End, where several neighbouring dwellings have tile-hung cladding. This was picked up very successfully by the architect for the second Affordable Housing scheme, as shown in Figure 10 of Appendix II.

The design priority should be that a new building should not overwhelm an existing neighbour, either by size or style. For instance, a building should be comparable in height to a neighbour, particularly if within a distance comparable to the height of the new building. Or if neighbouring houses are all very traditional, this is not the place for a radical new design. For instance, the dwellings in Mill Lane have a consistently traditional style. However, that same radical design might be very welcome among highly individual dwellings, particularly if standing well apart from neighbours in a large plot. This might be true, for instance, in parts of Doctors Hill.

Guidance Note 12: A new or developed dwelling should be consistent with the general architectural ethos of any immediately adjacent neighbours, observing both apparent bulk, and external materials, but not necessarily any specific details. The objective is compatibility, not uniformity, and the degree should be proportional to the closeness of the neighbouring building, with a relaxation starting once there is a gap significantly wider than either dwelling.



VI Melchet Court Gateway is an iconic building in the village. It might with advantage be referenced in a nearby development, but there is no general requirement to copy this or any other style.

8 Important open spaces in the village

This section describes the most important open spaces in the village, those separating the settlement areas. Their location and extent is clear on the map below, Figure IX, showing the location of the main settlement areas, but the VDS is deliberately not placing formally defined boundaries around them. None of these areas needs a hard boundary to be defined; encroachment can be straightforwardly defined by visibility from highways, bridleways and public footpaths.

They are in any case all covered in one way or another by specific guidance notes which define their role in preserving the character of the village, but it is clearly useful to describe their overall contribution to the visual landscape. **Essentially they create wide vistas between the main settlement areas**, making the dispersed character of the village apparent to even the most casual observer.



VII North Common: The road runs up the right hand side and across the back of this picture, with the field on one side and well-spaced houses along the other side of the road.

The principal areas are:

- The fields between the church and the recreation field, bounded on the north by the main road, and by a pond and wooded area to the south.
- The fields below Sole Hill, bounded on the south by the main road. These are bounded to the west by the Melchet End settlement area, and to the east by the main parish stream flowing between the Manor area and the Hatchett area.
- The fields between Glebe Farm and Doctors Hill, either side of Branches Lane. These are bounded to the south by the main road, and to the north and east by the Doctors Hill settlement area.
- The fields in the south-west corner of the parish, south of the dwellings on Salisbury Road, between the western parish boundary and the Eastwood development.
- Virtually the whole south-east quarter of the parish south of the main road, from the Hatchett settlement area in the west, across to The Frenches and parts of Dunwood Manor and on the eastern boundary of the parish.
- The wide sweep of fields and woodland running across the north of the parish from Broxmore Park in the west to North Common in the centre, and then across south of Newtown to Dunwood in the east, finally reaching down to the main road.



VIII Most of the open spaces between dwellings are economically active farmland, like this one below Sole Hill Farm.

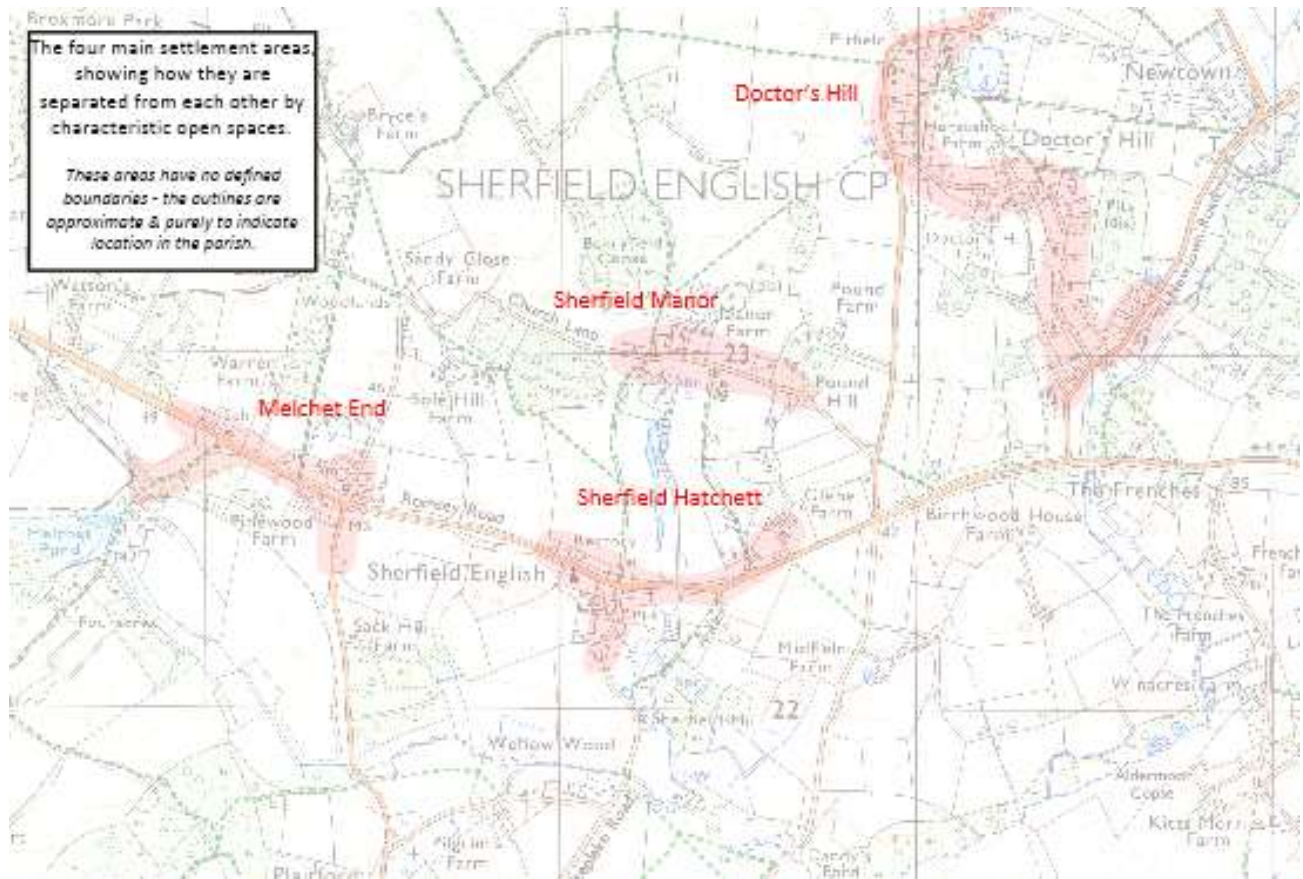
Self-evidently, **woodland** makes a major contribution to the visual character of all of these spaces. There are large patches of ancient woodland in various parts of the parish, but more recent copses and hedge-line trees are equally important to the visual character of the village. These dominate the view along every highway in the parish, just as much within the settlement areas as between them. The dominant tree everywhere is the oak.

Wooded areas with particular impact on the visual character of the parish are:

- Sack Copse
- Church Copse
- Berryfield Copse
- Doctors Copse
- New Copse
- Dunwood (the mixture of copse and ancient woodland between Newtown Road and the hill fort).

What is most important for the VDS is that no new commercial or residential developments should be sited so as to significantly erode the contribution of these open spaces and adjacent woodland to the rural character of the parish or, more specifically, detract from the visual amenity provided from highways and other points of public access.

Guidance Note 13: Any developments, whether domestic or commercial, should not significantly degrade the visual amenity of the open spaces and visible woodland across the parish, particularly those identified in Section 8.



IX Location of the main settlement areas in the parish, showing their separation from each other by open spaces

Appendix I: Guidance Summary

This appendix provides a summary of the guidance notes for any new or extended property in the parish. The full text of the VDS is integral to the guidance, not just these notes, and reference should also be made to Appendix II.

Reference should also be made to Borough Policy and, if available, the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The habitation pattern

Guidance Note 1: The visual character of Sherfield English is primarily defined by a settlement pattern of dispersed hamlets and scattered dwellings. Any developments or individual buildings in the parish should maintain this pattern, and should not create a concentration of dwellings, or significantly degrade the spacing between hamlets.

Piece-wise linear development

Guidance Note 2: Any development should maintain the pattern of piece-wise linear development, with no roads closely parallel to others, or folding back on themselves. Any plots created should avoid one dwelling backing onto another (backland or tandem development).

Connection with fields and woods

Guidance Note 3: The many existing gaps between individual dwellings are just as important in defining the character of the area as the surrounding fields and woods, and should be preserved. ‘Infill’ between dwellings, whether in gardens or fields, should not be seen as acceptable in the way it might be in a larger village with a settlement boundary.

Guidance Note 4: A field, wood or garden immediately ‘behind’ existing dwellings should remain undeveloped, particularly where it is behind dwellings which have no other boundary with undeveloped land.

Guidance Note 5: Where a row of dwellings forming a group is entirely on one side of highway, a specific character for that group is created, and this should be preserved. This is especially true where there is an open prospect across fields.

Guidance Note 6: At the level of the individual plot, new dwellings should ideally have at least one boundary (notionally a quarter of the total boundary) with a field, pasture or woodland, and should preserve the same for any existing dwellings, in line with the established settlement pattern.

Dwelling plot details

Guidance Note 7: The plot size for new dwellings should take account of the local norm, rather than the Borough or national one. Specifically, if permission is given for an existing plot to be divided, it should not result in any plot being markedly smaller than the average for other dwellings within the same group. In this context a 'group' is typically dwellings on the same road, but reference should be made to the groups identified in the last section of Appendix II.

Guidance Note 8: Both frontage width and the spacing between buildings are important factors in creating the character of each group of dwellings. It should be shown in any proposal that the new dwelling or extended dwelling maintains the established pattern, and that neither of these measurements is markedly less than the average for the group.

Guidance Note 9: Where neighbouring dwellings establish a characteristic pattern of set-back from the highway, any new building or extension should preserve this, even if there are already isolated exceptions.

Guidance Note 10: In groups where hedging is the characteristic frontage of its neighbours, a new or developed dwelling should maintain this character, giving precedence to this over other style considerations. Where the pattern is varied there will be more freedom, but the development should follow one of the established styles.

Architectural character

Guidance Note 11: Where there is no other dwelling within the same sweep of view the only architectural design constraint will be compatibility with rural surroundings. If a proposed new dwelling or extension will be clearly visible from outside its curtilage it should harmonise with a view which will be dominated inevitably by trees and fields. Provided the bulk is not excessive, even the most innovative designs should be able to achieve this by sympathetic choice of external materials.

Guidance Note 12: A new or developed dwelling should be consistent with the general architectural ethos of any immediately adjacent neighbours, observing both apparent bulk, and external materials, but not necessarily any specific details of form. The degree of compatibility should be proportional to the closeness of the neighbouring building, with a relaxation starting once there is a gap as wide as either dwelling.

Open spaces

Guidance Note 13: Any developments, whether domestic or commercial, should not significantly degrade the visual amenity of the open spaces and visible woodland across the parish, particularly those identified in Section 8.

Appendix II: The Character of Sherfield English

1. Recorded history in a nutshell

From Saxons to Normans

According to *'A History of the County of Hampshire, volume 4'*, published in 1911, the manor is first noted in the reign of Edward the Confessor, when it was held by one Edric, but after the Norman Conquest, it was given to a Norman knight, Hugh de Port. At this time the existence of a mill in the parish is recorded in the Domesday Book. His successors were called the St. Johns, and they held it until the 15th century.

Origins of the village name

At some point in this period, probably in 1254, Gilbert l'Engleys became the tenant, and this family held the tenancy for about 100 years, giving the parish the second half of its name. Before that the recorded name was some variant of 'Sherefeld', which either means 'divided field' or 'clear field'. The uncertainty arises from the fact that Old English had two almost identical words which have come down to us, with little change, as 'shear' and 'sheer'. Because there was no standardised spelling in those times we simply cannot tell with any confidence which it was, and we have to look at the context.

The first word means, essentially, to 'divide', and was the origin of the term 'Shire' for what the Normans later called Counties, the way the country was 'divided up'. The second word means 'clear', as in a 'sheer drop' or 'sheer stockings'. If it is the word meaning 'divided', it probably refers to the fact that the main stream below the original settlement site at Manor Farm (pages 15 & 19) is a straight line dividing the easily ploughed fields into two halves. If it is the word meaning 'clear' we have to ask why it could be used to identify this 'field' from any other, and the only plausible explanation is that it was so named by incoming settlers because they found the ground 'already cleared', against their usual expectations in a predominantly wooded area. This would fit in with there having been an established Celtic settlement here, which the presence of an Iron Age fort on **Dunwood Hill** would support.

Stability through Georgian and Victorian times

There were many recorded changes in the manor over the next 300 years, taking it through the upheavals of Tudor, Elizabethan and Jacobean times, but in the late 1600s things settled down. Three generations of the Sheldon family were resident owners of the Manor. Then in 1785 it was sold to the Lockhart family, who held it until it was sold to Louisa Lady Ashburton in 1903. Lady Ashburton survived barely a month longer, but in that time provided the funds for a new church, the present **St. Leonards**, in memory of her daughter Mary Florence, Marchioness of Northampton. The estate passed to her grandson, Lord Spencer Douglas Compton.

Land ownership changes in the early 20th century

Everything changed after the First World War, and especially after the stock market crash in the late 1920s, when the Manor's estate was broken up. The various tenant farms were bought by their tenants, and these families, by and large, are still the main land owners in the parish. This local ownership has been crucial in

the preservation of the village as a working rural community, preventing the kind of opportunistic housing development that often occurred before the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act.

2. How the habitation pattern preserves the history of the parish

The 1840 Tithe Map of the village

The habitation pattern in Sherfield English is little changed from that in the 1840 Tithe Map for the parish. The overall pattern of dispersed groups of buildings is instantly recognisable, with hardly any changes even to the layout of the roads. The only new group of buildings since that time is the area we refer to below as **Melchet End**, which has grown up on the main road around and to the west of Graemar Lane. Looking back before 1840, only the arrival of the Salisbury to Southampton toll road (now the A27) in the late 1750s had made any discernible difference to the pattern which would have existed in early medieval times. And there is good evidence to suggest that the pattern then, and now, reflects influences unchanged since Neolithic times.

Settlement in Iron Age times

We know there was a significant population in the area of Sherfield English at least as far back as Iron Age times because they had the resource to build the defensive work on the hill top at **Dunwood**, in the east of the parish, which is now a Scheduled Monument. This site was probably chosen, not just because it was a hill, but because it has boggy ground all around, and would have also been completely hidden within woodland. As far as we can tell from archaeological investigations, this hill fort was never permanently occupied, but would have been a place of retreat when invaders (Saxons) or marauding armies (Vikings) were feared.

We can say with some confidence that some of these people, at least, were living exactly where we can see hamlets now because the main sites so clearly reflect the geographic constraints. These would have dictated the location of farms at any time in the past several thousand years: Reliable, free-flowing springs, which here are close to light, easily tillable soils, with rich summer meadows below and relatively open, free-draining pastures immediately above – an irresistible combination.

This combination is perfectly expressed at **Manor Farm**, which would certainly have been the first and main site to be settled. Here there is a clearly defined location for the spring, with firm ground on three sides. The spring flows out into a straight-sided valley, rather than onto an ill-defined wetland, so that stock movement and general access to south is easy under all conditions. Here, either side of the valley are light sandy soils which would have been ideal for the simple post ploughs that were universal before the Saxons brought in the iron plough share. To the north, the summer pastures (over porous chalk bedrock) are literally within a few yards, and these give unrestricted access to other settlements all over the Wessex region. It is therefore no accident that we find the 'Manor' house here, along with the original church site. If anywhere is the historical heart of the village, this is it.

There are also favourable conditions at other points where the chalk ridge gives way to sand and clay deposits (technically classified as Reading Beds), with springs emerging over a layer of clay immediately under the sand. This occurs notably around **Melchet Court** (where there is now a substantial pond), just above the hamlet now called **Newtown**, and at **Doctors Hill**, where the water course is now below the surface because the clay layer has been excavated right down to the underlying porous chalk – see comments below on the toll road for an explanation of why this happened.

Changes in Saxon times

These three or four sites were probably the only significant settlements until more advanced farming techniques arrived with the Saxons, allowing heavier soil to be tilled. This is probably the earliest that the secondary sites, each about half a mile below the spring line, would have first been permanently occupied.

The most important of these, now known as **Mill Lane**, is in the centre of the parish, downstream from the Manor. In the west, downstream on Park Water, we have **Wellow Wood** and **Plaitford Green** (which are just outside the modern parish), and in the east we have the area below Doctors Hill and Newtown, now known as **Newtown Road**, perhaps extending as far south as Birchwood Farm.

Changes in Elizabethan times

The next phase of development would have come with the continuing growth of the wool trade, and hence downland sheep farming, through Elizabethan into Georgian times. The higher land to the north of the parish, bordering Lockerley parish, would have been common grazing land in earlier times (part is still called **North Common**), but eventually permanent farms grew up, notably **Bryce's Farm** and **Gambledown Farm**.

The coming of the Toll Road

In the late 1750s the Salisbury to Southampton toll road came through the centre of the parish, and this finally made a significant difference to the habitation pattern. In its day this was an important road, the main connection between the wool producing area around Salisbury and the port of Southampton, with the developing wool finishing industry in Romsey along the way.

The line of the road through Sherfield English lay well away from the existing hamlets, but where it intersected the lanes joining those hamlets it was inevitable that development would occur. The main changes were in the section now called **Melchet End**, which saw gradual development through Victorian times, continuing on a small scale to the present day. This is where the original village school was moved to, where the local shop and post office eventually appeared, and where there has been most new building in the past few decades. The ascendancy of this area was sealed when it became the site of the village's sports and recreation field.

The other area significantly affected by the Toll Road was around the top of **Mill Lane**, where the prosperity of the **Hatchet Inn** was a direct result of the toll road – it lies about half way between the staging posts of Whiteparish and Romsey. This part of the parish was also chosen as the location for the new church in the early 1900s, and a little to the east, the village garage and the village hall. The area is now, *de facto*, a second centre for services in the village.

The toll road itself was of unusually high quality. The fine 'gravel surface' of the road was remarked upon by the famous 18th century travel writer Arthur Young, writing in 1768. He thought it one of the best quality toll roads in the southern counties. The road would have needed a huge quantity of both chalk and gravel because it passed across several low-lying boggy areas. This aggregate would have been excavated from as close to the road as possible, and undoubtedly one of the main sources in Sherfield English was the valley running down **Doctors Hill**, which is within a few hundred yards of the road. This excavation was on such a large scale that the entire valley now cuts right through all the sand, gravel and clay layers to the underlying chalk, with the consequence that there is no longer any surface water flowing from the springs around its head – the water disappears immediately into the porous chalk floor of the valley.

3. The dispersed dwelling pattern as seen today

There are four main groups of dwellings in the parish, the locations of which are shown in Figure IX at the end of Section 8 above. All are essentially linear in character, that is to say they are spread along roads, and nowhere form a block or nucleus of buildings. A fifth significant area, Newtown is spread across the boundary with Awbridge, and takes its character largely from that parish. In addition we note significant groups around four farms, or former farms.

The two main sites, Melchet End and Sherfield Hatchett

The two main sites today, those having a mix of commercial, community and residential buildings, are described in Section 2 of this appendix as developing in response to the toll road coming through the parish in the 18th Century. Neither has a universally accepted name, but we could perhaps label them as **Melchet End**, and **Sherfield Hatchett**, the latter being the name and spelling attached to that hamlet in the very first (19th Century) Ordnance Survey, and also in a Victorian-era list of Post Offices. The 'Hatchet', also referred to in the village pub's name, was a sluice gate on the stream (where the main road now crosses it), not a hand axe. The phrases 'Hatchet Gate' and 'Hatch Gate' are known to have been used for a sluice-gate used to regulate water flow, and this is precisely where there would have been one for the water mill downstream from here. Hatchet Gate in fact appears several times locally as a place name, notably near Beaulieu in the New Forest, and as a farm name near Fordingbridge.

Melchet End

Melchet End, for the present purposes, does not include the main house of Melchet Court (which lies just outside the parish boundary), but it does include the striking Gate House/Lodge on Salisbury Road, and Greenvale Farm which is historically part of the estate. Melchet Pond is just outside the parish, on the lane running from the Gate House to Melchet Court house.

Along the main road Melchet End extends west as far as the Affordable Housing development known as Melchet View. Along the north side of Salisbury Road there is a fairly consistent architectural style featuring tile hung facades, while on the south side there are a few well-integrated detached houses of more modern design. The dwellings on both sides have substantial hedges along the highway frontage, and are set well back, allowing the road to retain its very rural appearance.



X Melchet view, the village's second Affordable Housing scheme, picks up architectural cues from the old school house and other dwellings nearby.

The Melchet End area includes one of the village's most important amenities, its shop and Post Office. This is on the corner of Salisbury Road and Graemar Lane, and just south of this cross roads is another important amenity, the village Recreation Field, which includes a children's play area, tennis courts and both bowls and croquet lawns, in addition to the football and cricket pitches. The southern boundary of the Recreation Field effectively define the extent of this dwelling area in that direction, with dwellings along the opposite side of Steplake Lane which include the other Affordable Housing development known as Eastwood. Sack Hill Farm, a little further south, is quite separate.

The area spreads a little way north along Graemar Lane to include a row of small detached dwellings, and vehicular access to dwellings which nominally front the main road to the east of the cross roads.

East from here there is a clear break in the settlement pattern, with open fields to both north and south of the main road. These are noted as important open spaces in Section 6 of the main part of this VDS.

Sherfield Hatchett

Further east along the main road, but still within walking distance, is the Sherfield Hatchett hamlet. This is now essentially defined by the intersection of the parish's main water course with the main road, but it is clear that the older part developed in a linear fashion following the water course south from here. It now spans the main road from a little west of St Leonard's Church to Glebe Farm in the east, taking in the 'The Hatchet' village pub, the village garage and the Village Hall. This means that Sherfield Hatchett and Melchet End together contain all but one of the village's main social amenities, the other being the farm shop in the Manor area.



XI Mill Lane looking south, showing the high hedges which characterise so much of the village.

The older part, Mill Lane, runs south as far down as Lark Cottage, with Sherfield Mill itself being distinctly separate a little further south. Most of the dwellings on Mill Lane are quite old, with several designated as Historically Significant. As in Melchet End, all the dwellings have substantial hedges fronting the highway. Those on the main road are set well back, creating a very open feel to the road, while down Mill Lane there is a noticeably closer feel, which is not solely due to the road being narrower. The small number of newer dwellings here have been sensitively integrated, typically behind high hedges, allowing the road to retain a very traditional feel.

The area includes several farms or former farms, notably Glebe Farm at the area's north east extreme, Ashlett Farm, and Dairy Farm on Mill Lane, and, on the other side of the stream, Blackwater Farm

The Manor

The most historically important hamlet is that around Manor Farm, as noted in Section 2 above. Manor Farm House is shown in Figure I of the Introduction, and on the cover.

This area stretches, very loosely, from Sherfield House (on Pound Lane) in the east to a little beyond the old churchyard, below Church Copse, in the west. There is no north/south extension beyond properties accessed from Pound Lane and Church Lane, although there are extensive agricultural buildings behind Manor Farm to the north. The farm area includes a farm shop and the village's butcher.

The dwellings are predominantly large detached houses in substantial grounds, but there are also cottages. The original manor house site was next to the old churchyard, very close to the spring which gives rise to the main water course. It is known to have been re-built several times, but had fallen derelict by 1840 and has since disappeared. This leaves Manor Farm House immediately north of that site, and the later building now called Sherfield Manor, further to the east, as the oldest buildings. The 'Old Rectory', which is historically associated with this hamlet, is in a somewhat separate location, lying appropriately about half way between the old churchyard and Glebe Farm. The Old Rectory, and several other dwellings in this area, are barely visible from the highway.

Doctors Hill

This is a long winding strip with the road of the same name at its centre, but including North Common at the top, and part of Newtown Road at the lower end. The derivation of the name is lost in history, but it was already in use by 1840. At that time there were already many dwellings spread along the line of the present road, and several very old houses, designated as Historically Significant, survive in the area today.

It seems always to have been an area of small-holdings, quite separate from the main tenancies elsewhere in the village. This pattern continued until the 1950s, mainly for fruit growing, supplying, for instance, strawberries to the Cunard liners. When that market dwindled the combination of small dwellings on large plots became an attractive proposition for the increasingly affluent professional population working as far away as Winchester and Southampton, and the area has since become characteristically one of relatively large detached dwellings.

Characteristically the whole stretch is very leafy, with substantial hedges and mature trees everywhere along the highway. In the centre there are houses on both sides, but they are very well separated, and there are substantial undeveloped gaps, now used as pasture. The linear pattern of dwellings is contiguous to the north into North Common, but here the development is entirely on one side of the highway, giving this part of the area a very open feel. This is illustrated in Figure VII, in Section 6 of the main guidance.



XII Doctors Hill, looking south. Typically for the road, there are dwellings on both sides here, but they are barely visible.

Development is also contiguous to the south into Newtown Road below Sand Hill Farm, where development is also solely on one side of the highway. A significantly different pattern is evident on the continuation of Newtown Road to the north of its junction with Doctors Hill. Here the pattern is still of detached houses, but with distinctly smaller plots. A few new dwellings here are closer together than the VDS would now endorse, the result of a planning anomaly dating from the 1990s which allowed unrestricted infill.

Newtown

We don't know exactly when Newtown was actually new, but it was certainly before 1840, when we can see it on the Tithe Map. It is a dense group of houses by the standards of the parish, and has more in common with the character of Awbridge, in which parish most of it lies. Its boundaries are well defined on the Sherfield English side, but beyond that the only relevant observation for the VDS is that the recent development of the area called 'The Prophets' is more in keeping with the parish character than the earlier development.

Other groups

There are dwellings scattered all over the parish, but those significant groups not included above are all associated with farms or former farms.

These are:

- In the north-west of the parish around **Bryces Farm**
- Along **Bunny Lane** on the western boundary
- At **Tote Hill** on the boundary with Lockerley parish
- At **Gambledown** near the northern boundary.

All conform to the characteristic village pattern of linear development with intimate connection to surrounding fields and woods.

The full extent of the parish, and the location of the principal historic buildings, is shown in Figure XIII below.

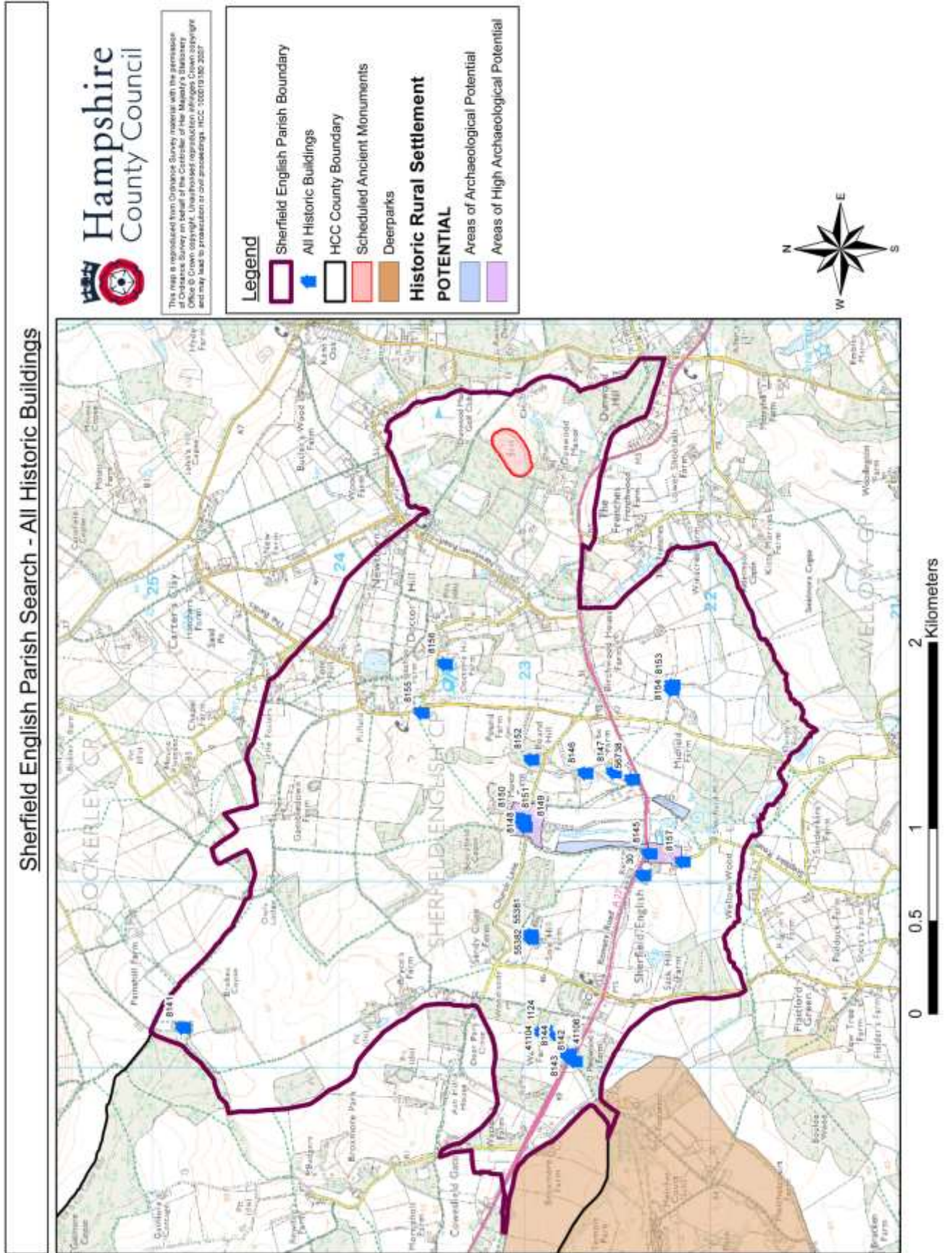


Figure XIII The full extent of Sherfield English parish, showing designated Historic Buildings and the Scheduled Ancient Monument on Dunwood Hill

