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INTRODUCTION

This village design statement describes the distinctive character of West Grimstead and its surrounds, and shows the qualities valued by the residents. It has been written by the West Grimstead Village Design Statement Group, and has been approved by the villagers following an open exhibition in the village hall, and also by the Salisbury District Council's Planning Department.

We recognise that West Grimstead is a living and developing community and we do not seek to resist all change. Our statement is to stimulate interest in, and to influence the development of the village, whilst preserving and protecting its character which has evolved over the years. We are the present guardians of this heritage.

It will be used by architects and developers in conjunction with the Planning Authority and the Parish Council. It will give guidance to residents planning alterations and extensions to their properties.

Our statement has been adopted by Salisbury District Council as a supplementary planning guide. It supports the Salisbury District Local Plan and will assist the Parish Council in maintaining the character of the village and its setting.

Our statement has been enabled by the strong community spirit of West Grimstead which is further unwritten testimony to the strong fabric of our small village. It is linked to the Salisbury District Council Design Guide and the policies contained in the local plan.
Earliest Beginnings

West Grimstead probably began as a small hamlet housing gamekeepers and forest workers on the great medieval Royal Forest of Clarendon. The Doomsday Book of 1087 gives several entries about “Grimstede” and there are earlier references indicating a pre Norman settlement. From its earliest beginnings right until the start of the 20th century, West Grimstead was part of the Manor or Estate of a wealthy nobleman, starting with the de Grimstede family. Grimstead was eventually sold to the Earl of Radnor in 1801 and remained part of his Longford estate until 1916 when the whole village was sold (mainly to sitting tenants). So for all of that time few houses were owned privately and there is little documentation from which to learn more about the village.

We know that houses were made from the materials found locally - timber, cob (a mixture of chalk bound with chaff, horsehair, and water), and after the building of the brickworks by Lord Radnor in 1850, brick. Until the arrival of modern housing in the 50’s and 60’s West Grimstead was largely a thatched village.

A Self Sufficient Village.

It remained a self sufficient and remote place until well into the 20th century. Our roads were made and maintained by the residents - from flint stones which were collected from local fields by the women and laid on chalk. The first reference to a new road surface comes in 1937 and records show that chalk was still in use right up to 1947.

It was in this spirit of self sufficiency that our village hall was built in 1912-13. The Parish Room, as it was then called, was built entirely by local people. Lord Radnor gave the land and the services of the architect. The builder (Mr. Penn) and the eight farmers who hauled the materials from local sites were all from the village and their contributions greatly reduced the cost of the project.

We also had our own school until 1992. The first mention of a school house is 1837 but the date on the building is 1850. It was designed to take about 60 children and this is how many there were at the school when it eventually closed. Originally it would have been a very cramped and noisy environment with just one room divided into two by a makeshift wall of cupboards, their backs painted for use as blackboards. During the 19th century children were often removed from classes for field work, or to perform the task of beating for the shooting parties, or in the case of the girls, to help at home.

Getting Connected

By the middle of the 20th century West Grimstead was starting to get connected! In the early part of the century the villagers had been reliant for transport on Hopkins’ Cart which went to Salisbury on Tuesdays and Saturdays (always market days) returning on the same day and it wasn’t...
until 1929 that the Wilts and Dorset buses started running through the village.

After the second world war a new mains water supply replaced the supply from the Longford Estate, and the wells and pumps of the remoter cottages. Older people in the village still affectionately remember Hollands Well which was an important gathering place and landmark at the Dean crossroads. In 1939 our jealously guarded phone box arrived in the village, and what with the arrival of electricity in 1938, and the impact that this had on lighting and cooking, life must have seemed to be getting a little easier. By 1963 Gas had arrived, and in 1973 we were put onto the main drainage system.

Two other important transport developments which have touched West Grimstead have been the arrival of, first the ill-fated canal in 1802 and then, in 1847, the railway. Both projects brought labourers from all over the country into the area. The navvies (navigators) were men of huge physical strength who needed their statutory gallon of beer and two pounds of beef a day to keep going. They caused much concern to the farmers and landowners, and indeed the women of the village for whom they had equally large appetites!

Constancy and Timelessness

Although our post office and our pub have come and gone, St John’s Church remains the enduring pillar and focal point of our community. It is an ancient structure. We do not know who built it, or the date, but local tradition asserts it was built during the reign of William Rufus during the years 1087-1100. Given that the style of the building is simple Early English, a date in the 12th century is probably more likely for the building, though an earlier structure may of course have existed. The earliest known Rector of the Parish was Ricardus Brionne - 1294. If you picture a thatched roof and an earth floor, strewn perhaps with straw, and no tower, we can visualise with fair accuracy this small place of worship at the time of the early Norman kings. The tower was added at the beginning of the 18th century and, although pleasing, has nothing in common with the fabric of the rest of the church.

An active Methodist chapel also remains in the village. John and Charles Wesley began their ministry in Bristol and it is known that they were in touch with dissenters in Wiltshire in the mid 18th century. Although there was friction between church and chapel in the latter half of the 19th century they have continued in friendship until the present day and now worship together every other month.

A history of West Grimstead, (now unfortunately out of print) was produced in 1987 by the West Grimstead history group. Copies are held by various villagers and will be happily lent if the reader would like further information.
A clearing in the woods

The enduring characteristic of West Grimstead, especially when viewed from the Downs remains to this day, that of a ‘clearing in the woods’. There are woods to the west, north and east and the Downs including Pepperbox Hill and Grimstead Beeches are to the south. The latter two have been owned by the National Trust for many years and in 1998 they purchased the Downs below the Beeches and to the east as far as West Dean Farm. Most of this downland (recently named Grimstead Down by the Trust) is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, (S.S.S.I.) and a ‘right to roam’ area.

Great oaks

Many beautiful trees have been felled over the years but the woods to the east are a rich mixture of oak, ash, hazel and birch. A recurring theme throughout this statement will be the majesty of the great oaks which line all the roads in and out of the village.

Small fields and hedgerows

Although the many small fields of the past have been transformed by the removal of hedgerows, there are still some small fields close to the village, with their hedgerows, and even out in the arable land to the east of the village there are hedgerows bordering the roads. These are important to the overall impression of West Grimstead as a small rural village and their removal (or over harsh flailing) threaten both our wild life and our distinct character.

Rich wildlife

The infant River Dun runs through the lower part of the village, creating boggy areas on either side. The small lakes created here have been developed into fishing lakes, with some tree planting to make a sheltered habitat. They attract many birds, among them herons and kingfishers. The village horsepond, which runs alongside the road, is much loved and enjoyed. In spite of heavy traffic nearby moorhens nest each year, and there is a great toad and frog migration in the early spring. There are also several privately owned ponds which attract much wildlife, including
crested newts. The surrounding area is rich in wildflowers and birds, including snipe.

At the top end of the village and behind Chapel Hill there are a number of underground springs which create problems in wet weather.

The parish has a wide variety of soil types; chalk, clay, flints, sand, gravel, and peat rich soil in the marshland areas. In this small village some people can grow lime hating plants such as rhododendron and azalea, yet only yards away these shrubs will not tolerate the lime in the soil.

Due to this variety of soils and habitats the village is rich in wildlife. Roe deer, badgers, and a few hares, are all to be seen in the woods and fields. Birdlife is very varied, and on the downs 37 different species of butterfly have been recorded since 1995. Chalk downland is generally the most species rich habitat there is for flora. At the time of the Wiltshire Flora Mapping Project, which ran from 1984 until 1992, a total of 369 species of flowers, rushes, sedges, ferns, grasses, trees, and shrubs were identified in the village. Of these, 35 came into the rare category. There are ten different species of the orchid family within the parish boundary.
West Grimstead is not a chocolate box village, many of the original thatched houses have gone and indiscriminate building and developing over the years. However it does retain its distinctive character. There are still some beautiful original buildings and some successful newer ones and it is from these that we take our cues for future development. In this design statement we seek to learn from both the successes and the mistakes of the past. In the following tour round the village we aim to identify its essential character.
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Grimstead Beeches
Pepperbox
Crockford Green
The Approach
Crockford Road
Charcoal Burners
Emmotts Farm
River Dun
Nursery Farm
North of the railway bridge
Green Drove
Drove End House
Approaching West Grimstead on the Whaddon Road

This is the primary entry and exit road from Salisbury to the north and Southampton to the south. As one enters the village by this road, one immediately encounters arable fields, a track to the old charcoal burners on the left and a chalk works to the right, both centuries old businesses which continue to thrive today. Great oak trees line the road and West Grimstead is immediately identified as a rural village. The primary and most conspicuous sign of the twentieth century is the railway track for the Salisbury to Romsey line which comes into view as one turns left into the Crockford Road.

Crockford Road

Here at the junction of Whaddon, Dean and Crockford roads there is an unnamed but much cherished grassy triangle of common land which provides a welcome resting point for dog walkers and is known by the villagers for its wonderful show of snowdrops in the early spring. Its an example of an unremarkable spot that the people of the village have come to love and it would be strongly defended if ever threatened.

The properties along this road are all modern and mainly single storey brick and tile. Some display sympathetic appropriation of the older building styles of the village and we dwell on this in more detail in the next section (Guidelines for development). Beautiful mature silver birch and oak trees preserve the rural character of the Crockford Road.

There is a beautiful footpath which runs from the end of Crockford to Windwhistle Lane, called Mack’s Lane. It is a shady walk for dog walkers with ancient hedgerows and many species of flora and fauna. Its historical status as a footpath has been questioned and there is a danger that it will be upgraded and opened to all traffic, which the village would fiercely resist.

North of the Railway Bridge

Turning left out of Crockford and under the railway bridge there is a triangle of gently sloping lanes lined mainly with mature oaks and ancient hedges which wind through pastureland and small mixed woods. Bearing to the right leads up Butterfurlong Road, then left along Long Drove and left again leads back along Green Drove to a bridge over the infant River Dun and the railway again. This is known as 'the big triangle' and is a popular walk for the villagers with wide verges and gaps in the hedges giving panoramic views onto Dean Hill.
Housing is widely spaced and includes a number of characterful houses and outbuildings. Particularly of note are:

Laburnam Cottage – a detached cottage (sideways on as in Chapel Hill) in local brick and clay tiles with the typical steep roof and a good example of a Longford porch.

Butterfurlong Cottages – these are Longford estate cottages again with very steeply pitched roofs in local materials with elegant original brick drip mouldings. Some original windows survive but the porches were lost thirty years ago.

Butterfurlong Farm - one of the older houses, partly 18th century with a handsome brick dairy. Originally in local brick but now rendered on the front and painted.

Butterfurlong Barn - a handsome barn conversion, timber clad in plain modern idiom which blends well without trying to look olde worlde.

Drove End House - a large Arts and Crafts detached house with fine brick chimneys Not at all typical but giving a pleasant variety to the scene.

Green Drove is overhung with particularly fine oaks and has no housing until the return to the starting point where Nursery Farm can be seen on the left in the typical local brick again. Hidden away up unmade tracks are several other interesting houses including Keeper’s House with both brick and cob construction, Keeper’s Cottage in the Longford vernacular style and Waldens.

Proceeding under the bridge and to the left up Chapel Hill one arrives in the most densely populated part of the village. None of the original cob and thatch cottages are left and there is now a mixture of building styles. The most characteristic and distinctive of these are:

Yew Tree Cottage – a typical 19th century Wiltshire “side to road” house with original brick work, probably from the village brickworks and a typical slate roof. Ada Cottage is also ‘side facing’ and was originally thatch and cob.

Jasmine and Rose Cottages – a pair of semi-detached 19th century local brick built cottages with an attractive chequer pattern using two colours of brick.

The Methodist Chapel – a very typical 19th century dissenting chapel.

The Crossroads

The top of Chapel Hill is now simply a crossroads but it was the centre of the village with a pub, shop and school on each corner. Turning right here and proceeding towards Salisbury on the Dean Road brings us back to our starting point at Crockford. Along this part of the Dean Road, including Windwhistle Lane are some of the most distinctive buildings in the village:

The old school - a 19th century building in local brick with slate roof; although converted it has retained some of its character.
Old Rectory/ Dales/ Coach House - all this was once the Rectory and was divided into two dwellings in the 1960’s with the coach house remaining part of Dales, which itself was extended. The Old Rectory is of brick and slates and part rendered. It was sympathetically extended about 200-2001. There is some interesting brickwork on the chimneys. Note also that the two modern bungalows next to the Old Rectory retain walls originally belonging to the Rectory gardens.

Swaynes Farmhouse - painted brick with possibly original sash windows and original door; the only one of its type in the village.

Emmots Farm - apart from the church, the oldest building in the village.

Rowdens Farm – a grade 2 listed building. It has ‘chequerboard’ brick pattern on front though the end facing the road is rendered. It retains its thatch roof and original windows with shutters. There is a fine large barn and a granary on staddles.

Broadmead Farm - the large one storey brick building at the rear of this property used to be the drying shed for the old brick works.

Hollyville - a late Victorian mansion in brick with a tile roof and largely unaltered.

Sunnydale - the last example of an unaltered part cob, thatched house in the village.

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In some ways Church street which leads from the top of Chapel Hill south towards Pepperbox, is the most significant in the village, because it leads us to the two buildings which form its heart – the village hall and the beautiful twelfth century church.

As you walk up from the crossroads you begin to receive tantalising glimpses of farmland and in the distance Pepperbox Hill, and as the road climbs gently up and flattens out, these views become more wide ranging until the buildings finish and the landscape takes over. The Church is not visible until you have walked some way up the street – this simple and beautiful old building sits well back in its churchyard setting, bordered by trees which shelter it from the wind in this exposed spot. The remains of an ancient yew tree still stand in the north east corner. As you walk up from the crossroads you pass one or two of the original cottages such as Church Cottage.
Summary

This tour reveals that we have lost many historic and attractive houses in the last fifty years. Every effort should be made to conserve the features of the remaining stock and avoid piecemeal degradation by unsympathetic restoration, repair, conversion and extension. We must also protect the character of the sinuous oak lined lanes, which everywhere soften the effect of even the most unsympathetic recent development. There is a potential to marginally increase the number of houses in the village by infilling and a balance needs to be kept between the need for more housing and suburbanisation of what is still only a small village. Attention should be paid to details such as walls, fences and drives which can have a very significant effect on the overall character, even where the building stock has suffered as it has in West Grimstead.
The majority of the population – those who are not retired – commute four miles to Salisbury to work. Those who remain are either working on the land or homeworkers. During the working week therefore the village is a quiet place. However in the evenings and at weekends there is much more going on. Amenities are few in this small village but they are well used and well cared for.

The Village Hall
This is very much the focal point of the village and used for a wide variety of activities such as Bring and Buy sales and other fund raising events, OAP’s lunch, children's Christmas party. It is also used by various activity classes during the week and village meetings of one sort or another. The hall has an on-going programme of maintenance and development.

The Church of St Johns
The church is part of a team ministry and there are services every Sunday. Being at the heart of the village, it regularly draws the community together for a variety of different occasions both religious and secular.
The Playground

The playground is situated on the site of the old school. It is well equipped and well cared for and adjacent to it is a small area of field which is used by children up to junior school age for ball games. This playground was the focal point of the village millennium party in 2000.

The Playing field

The playing field is situated behind the village hall and over the years has been used for cricket, hockey, and football as well as events associated with the village hall and church, fetes, Grimstead 700 events and parking for church and village hall functions. At present the field is privately owned but the parish council is endeavouring to purchase the field so that the activities can be pursued especially for older children and adults to practise the various ball games.

Other amenities

There is fishing in the lakes at Waldens, many opportunities for nice dog walks with the added benefit of a bench on Crockford green on which to take a breather when walking the ‘triangle.’ this is also used by the numerous cyclists who come through the village taking advantage of the winding country lanes and the beautiful landscape.

The nearest shop is in Whaddon - a mile down the road - which the children in the village can bicycle to easily although the road is narrow and twisty in places. A bicycle lane would be useful.
Building types and materials

There are a variety of housing types in the village encompassing examples of most architectural styles of the past 500 years. Brick is the most commonly used building material sourced from local brickworks and from the middle of the 19th. c. from the brickworks in Windwhistle lane which has already been mentioned. The local brick is a warm variegated red.

The houses that did not use brick were constructed from cob - a cheap and plentiful building material given the local abundance of chalk.

The brickwork in some of the older houses has been laid in a Flemish bond pattern with the header brick being a darker colour - this gives an unusual and attractive patchwork affect. It is typical of many cottages in the area. In West Grimstead this style is shown to good effect in Rowdens farm - one of the oldest and most unspoilt houses in the village. A few of the brick houses have subsequently been rendered.

There are a few examples of traditional building types left such as timber framed 16th century houses with wattle and daub infilling and cob cottages. Cob was once the prevalent style but most examples have now sadly gone.

There are examples of Georgian and Victorian houses in the village - the Old Rectory, a rendered brick Victorian gothic house was sympathetically extended in 2000.

In housing terms the second world war provides a useful watershed between the older and newer styles. In the 1950s and 60s the land was sold off and much infill building occurred resulting in for example Banksde - a row of six houses of Reema construction and later Greenfields, a cul-de-sac of approximately 39 private dwellings. There is also a plethora of brick bungalows along the south side of Dean road and the top end of Chapel hill.

Windows, doors and porches

Windows and doors are the main features on an elevation and contribute greatly to the overall character. Each architectural period had windows and doors of a distinctive style and detailing. Inappropriate replacements for old windows and doors often damage the character of a building and it is important whatever the age and style of the building that any replacement windows complement the existing design.

- Wood is the preferred material for windows and doors - painted not stained.
- Windows should be set back from the face of the building to create a reveal and a brick on edge or stone lintol should frame the window opening.
Windows should have well proportioned panes and as slender glazing bars as is possible to achieve.

Dormer windows are preferable to rooflights particularly on the front elevation. If rooflights are used at the back then conservation style ones are preferable.

Doors are traditionally raised and fielded 4 or 6 panel types. These are suitable for most building types and work better than some of the glazed and decorated doors from builders merchants.

Porches are quite a feature of the older houses and the Longford porch of rendered brickwork is very attractive. A simple lead covered rainhood with timber posts as found at Crossways can also work well.

Porches and rainhoods should be appropriate to the style of the building. Brick piers - plain or rendered or timber posts work well.

Generally the rule is the simpler the better

The older cottages would have all had timber casement windows such as can be seen on Kildare in Chapel Hill. The Georgian and Victorian houses have sash windows - Manor farmhouse has a fine example of a 16 pane sash window with slender mullions

Roofs

Most of the original thatch roofs have been replaced with slates or tiles. Of the few remaining thatched houses, Rowdens farm still has its thatched roof and original windows. The 18th and 19th century saw an increase in the amount of welsh slate used for roofing. The more recent houses have a range of roofcovering ranging from asbestos tiles to reconstituted slate.

All new buildings should be encouraged to use thatch, clay tiles or slate.

The pitch and style of the roof should be appropriate to the style of the building.

An excellent example of a new roof being inkeeping with the original is the Old Rectory where the decorative tilework of the original has been used on the new roof, the detail of the dormer and the fall of the roof are also attractive.

Extensions, alterations and outbuildings

Extensions should enhance and complement the existing property. They should respect the character of the original building particularly in terms of scale, design and materials.

Garage should be as unobtrusive as possible and should have pitched roofs of slate or tile. Garage doors should be ledged and braced and vertically planked.
New building

The height of any new building should be appropriate for the area of the village in which it is being built. The variety of the existing architecture is attractive. There is no reason why a bungalow should not be next to a two storey house, however, care should be taken with the scale and the siting of the new property so that it doesn’t dwarf its surroundings.

The building stock is on the whole modest in scale and it may be more appropriate particularly in the main streets to keep the building line fairly low. Obviously a house set apart from its neighbours has more liberty to increase its size.

There may be scope for more semi detached terraced houses or traditional mews style development.

Farm buildings

Although the majority of houses face onto the road there are some which are side on – either of these is appropriate. All the houses are set back from the road or pavement, some further than others and it is important that the building line is adhered to.

The density of the housing varies – the space between the houses is important in order to be able to take advantage of the views particularly to the South and East. With such a variety of housing types, the space between takes on an important role in allowing the eye to adjust to the different materials used.

Where it is appropriate for redundant farm buildings to be incorporated into developments, developers would be expected to retain as much as possible of the existing buildings and materials as possible.

Any new windows and door apertures should be thoughtfully placed and other case studies of
agricultural building conversions to be studied to produce a coherent and appropriate design. There are certain farm buildings which should be retained as working buildings and not converted for residential use.

Boundaries and landscaping

The majority of buildings have a garden, yard or area of hard standing between them and the road. Sections of the old brick wall which encircled the Old Vicarage are still visible along Dean Road and form an attractive boundary. The variety of boundaries is attractive ranging from old cob walls – sadly not many are left–to mature hedges. Some have lawns open to the road planted with old apple trees – a reminder of the orchards that used to proliferate in West Grimstead.

- The preferred means of forming a boundary is walls constructed out of traditional materials. Indigenous hedging or cottage style picket fencing. Fast growing conifer hedging should be avoided.
- Large expanses of tarmac are not encouraged, instead alternative materials such as hoggin, gravel or setts would be preferable.

Village landscape and street furniture

The mature trees and yew hedge that run along the south side of Dean road and the charming farmstead of Rowdens Farm opposite provide an attractive route into the village. At various road junctions around the village there are small triangles of grass. Trees have been planted on the triangle at Crockford Green.

- Chapel hill and Greenfields would benefit from more planting – trees to screen properties and soften the buildings. Possibly fruit trees with blossom.
- The green triangles could be improved either with more planting or benches.
- The trees that line all the roads into the village should be cherished and cared for.
- Street furniture should be sympathetic to its rural environment.
- Lighting - the introduction of street lighting would be generally opposed by villagers.
1. Any new developments should be small scale and harmonise with established building materials and details.

2. Monotonous repetition of house styles should be avoided.

3. Sufficient space should be allowed between properties to incorporate natural boundaries.

4. For all new developments applicants should provide sketch drawings to show how the new development will appear in relation to the street scene including details of brick type, roof finish, window and door details.

5. The density should not be such that rural views from the village are no longer available.

6. Height and size of new buildings and proportion of elevations to be appropriate to the village style.

7. Extensions and conservatory designs should be in keeping with the building character and of the immediate neighbours.

8. Care should be taken with regard to the position of any garage, shed or oil tank.

9. Security lighting should be muted. Television and satellite aerials should be sited unobtrusively.

**Desirable future developments**

- More recreational land would be an asset particularly for the older children.

- A tennis court would provide another meeting ground and would be much used.

- A bicycle track to Waddon would link us to other safe bicycling areas.

- More walking access to Pepperbox Hill and opening up of old footpaths.