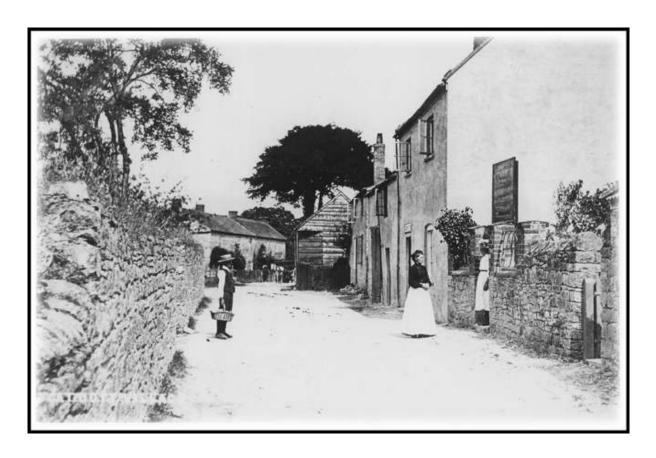
Catcott

Village Design Statement



Manor Road circa 1900

<u>Catcott Village Design Statement</u>

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Foreword

The villages of Somerset have seen great changes in recent decades. Where once families lived for generations in the same place, greater mobility and wider opportunities have led to much greater diversity. At the same time an increasing population and, even more importantly, smaller family units, have led to a pressure to build.

With this has come awareness by local people of the need to retain the special characteristics of where they live, while adapting to current circumstances.

Villages depend on so many things for their atmosphere and quality of life: the history and style of the buildings, the setting – roads and footpaths, vegetation and street furniture – as well as the residents, community activities and the services provided within the village.

In this Village Design Statement residents have come together to identify a key element, the design and layout of Catcott

In the past, the main opportunities to influence planning decisions have rested with the Parish Council. This Design Statement is the first opportunity the community as a whole has had to think about the built fabric of their community, and so have an important role in decision-making.

I have enjoyed reading Catcott's plan, and the consultation process that has led to it, and sincerely hope that the District Council will find it a useful and reliable tool.

For the future, it will be an excellent springboard for Catcott to develop a vision, not only for the built environment but for the wider needs and services in the village.

Cate Le Grice-Mack, MBE. Chairman, The Campaign to Protect Rural England, (Somerset Branch)

Introduction

The Village Design Statement identifies those features which characterise Catcott and which are most valued by residents. These provide a frame of reference for any future development that may affect the identity of the village.

By providing a view of Catcott's particular qualities as seen by villagers, the Statement seeks to ensure that, at an early stage, design decisions on both a large and small scale reflect, maintain and enhance those important and valuable features which contribute to the beauty and character of the village. This statement will seek to safeguard that character.

These guidelines are intended to influence future development in a constructive way by providing a more detailed local context, recognising that this community and its built environment will inevitably change over time.

Through adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Sedgemoor District Council, the Catcott Village Design Statement, will significantly contribute to Parish and District Council decision-making when planning applications are considered.

Description Historic and Economic Background

Though Catcott's origins are lost in prehistory, local archaeological evidence suggests that there might have been an active settlement in the area since 4000BC. There is stronger evidence for Romano-British habitation around the village, and its closeness to the strategic Roman road – the A39 – further increases this likelihood.

The core of the settlement is recognised as having high archaeological potential. This is particularly so in the vicinity of St Peter's Church. Disturbed ground to the south of the church, with apparent dwelling platforms and hollow-ways, suggests earlier constructions of significant archaeological value. Mesolithic flint finds and a stone quorn, dating from the medieval period, have been unearthed in the village.

The Domesday Book records the existence of Catcott (at that time spelt 'Caldicote' or 'Cadecote'). Throughout the medieval period the village community remained small. Comparing maps of 1782 and 1822 clearly shows how the central core of the village, situated on higher ground, had been augmented by enlargement of the settlement to the fringes of the moors to the north. This is still apparent in the village's characteristic appearance today. The historic core of this settlement with its original pattern of streets and lanes has remained unchanged certainly for over 200 years and probably for very much longer.

In more recent times, where there has been some extension of the village - mostly along its approaches - infilling and demolition of earlier structures has occurred, damaging the old fabric of this place.

It is noteworthy that although there are now more dwellings, far fewer people currently live in Catcott than at various times in the nineteenth century. Farming plays a smaller role in the life of the village than it once did. Furthermore, of today's villagers who work, the majority now find employment both outside of farming and beyond the village. In 1918 the village could boast of a school, two shops, bakeries and builders, a chapel, blacksmith, wheelwright, cobbler and 10 farms. There were also a number of cider houses, not all of which were necessarily licensed! Nevertheless, for the average villager Catcott remained "a rabbit and blackberry economy" as described by one villager, the late Edwin Durston.

Today Catcott retains only the school, 4 working farms, a builder and 2 public houses. New enterprises include a dairy, an agricultural contractor, a residential home, a car restoration workshop and a bio-technology business.

<u>Description</u>

Landscape and Geography

The village of Catcott lies on the gently sloping northern side of the Polden Hills, a lias limestone outcrop which bisects the Somerset moors into those of Sedgemoor to the south and the Brue valley to the north. Catcott (Map Ref ST 395 394) is situated roughly equidistant between Bridgwater and Street, and is less than a mile north of the A39 road from which it is largely hidden. The parish has an area of 1042 acres. Entering Catcott from the A39, via Scotts Lane, gives extensive views over the village, low-lying moors and towards the distant Mendip Hills; the Severn estuary and the Welsh mountains to the west, Glastonbury Tor to the east, Cheddar Gorge and the City of Wells can also be seen. There are significant vistas of the surrounding and distant countryside from numerous vantage points in and around the village, e.g. Weares Lane, Lippetts Way, Manor Road, Hector Road and Langlands Lane. As an example, from Lippetts Way the presence in the foreground of Catcott's ancient parish church clearly illustrates the village's relationship to the landscape and reinforces the importance of this vantage point.

The northern fringe of the village merges with the moor. This landscape is a patchwork of fields, meadows and pastures criss-crossed by rhynes. Furthermore, the ancient 'Parish Plot' and the ecologically important Catcott Lows Nature Reserve also form part of this rural scene.



Aerial view of Catcott from the east

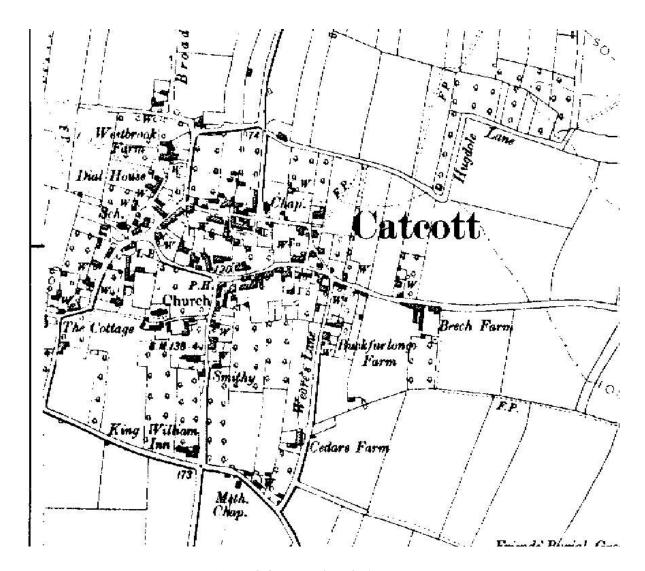
L1: Building on the Tarry field would block or significantly degrade the vista from Lippetts Way to the church and distant countryside. It is outside the Local Plan Development Boundary and development must NOT be permitted.



View from Lippetts Way

<u>Description</u> Settlement Pattern and Character

The historic settlement pattern of Catcott results directly from its agricultural heritage and is identifiable today. Available records show that the patterns of the streets and lanes have not been disturbed and the historic arrangement remains in place.



Map of Catcott dated circa 1900

The evolution of the village has not only created an interesting built environment but has intermixed the architecture with open spaces and a consciousness of the surrounding countryside.



Settlement pattern of Catcott

From the very first attempts at drainage of the Levels, settlements have been built on the higher ground, with use of the Levels being almost exclusively confined to summer grazing and peat digging, both occupations severely curtailed by annual winter flooding. Accordingly, a unique feature of the Polden Villages has been the mutually convenient grouping of separate farms, each with its respective barns, labourer's cottages and bothys, animal sheds and wagon houses. The addition of support services by saddler, blacksmith, wheelwright, carter, baker, cobbler, cider houses etc., effectively creating sustainable communities.

Catcott may justly be described as an archetype of its kind, still recognisable as having its origins firmly in agriculture though, of ten or more active at the end of the Great War, only four working farms now exist. Names of the old farmhouses remain in use however and illustrate the original disposition and character of the settlement.

Until recently, the part-13th Century Parish Church of Saint Peter, a Grade I listed building, was clearly seen from nearby highways. However, due to development only the tower remains visible from the south and east. Local Plan Policy BE7, a designation first established following the Bridgwater Area Local Plan Inspector's recommendation in 1993, has prevented development on the adjacent field at the junction of Manor Road and King William Road. Nevertheless visibility has been blocked by inappropriate planting of Cupressus Leylandii, consequently the Church can now only be seen in its entirety from Church Way. See Design Guideline S1 (page 12)

There are two long-established public houses, namely "The Crown" on the Nidon and the listed "King William Inn" on Lippetts Way, which provide focal points for village social life.

Other than the Church and the "King William", there are four more listed buildings in the village: The Manor House, The Old House and Hill House Farm in Manor Road, and Dial House, in Brook Lane. Also significant are: Tarry House, Wellfield House, Manor Farm and Barn, in Manor Road, Langlands Farm in Langlands Lane and the Old School House in Old School Lane.

<u>Description</u> Settlement Pattern and Character cont.

There are a large number of stone built cottages both detached and terraced, of low aspect and with comparatively small windows, typical of this area.

Catcott School was started in 1842. In 1971, on its present site in Manor Road, it became an Area School and continues to thrive.

There is a well-used play area in Weares Lane, for younger children, but no equivalent for those who are older. This is a major deficiency.

There are three public seating areas in the village, including the old Pound, which are maintained by the Village Association (a voluntary body) and the Parish Council.

Since the population was larger in earlier times, it is reasonable to suppose that many lowly dwellings would have either fallen derelict or been demolished, few being built of a standard to survive the centuries. Nevertheless, old maps of the village show modestly sized dwellings in locations which can be recognised today; invariably these are constructed of locally quarried lias stone.

Catcott today remains centred around Manor Road, Brook Lane and Steel Lane. The main routes into and out of the village are Scotts Lane/King William Road (from the south), Lippetts Way (east and west), and Head Drove to the north. The War Memorial, standing on the triangle at the junction of Manor Road and Brook Lane, forms a focal feature.

Except to the west along Manor Road and Lippetts Way, Catcott has retained its compact yet loose-knit, separate identity with development largely confined to the approaches from the north and south. More recently, greater infill, demolition of earlier structures and increased density of new development have been permitted, damaging the old fabric of this place. Continuation of such practices will eradicate the very characteristics that villagers have specifically identified and wish to retain. See Design Guideline S2 (page 12)

Some spaces between buildings remain however, permitting views over the northern moors. Splendid views north to the Mendips, east to Glastonbury, west to Brent Knoll and even Wales, can still be admired from Lippetts Way, Weares Lane, Langlands Lane and Hector Road.

The existence of fields and open spaces within the village maintains the relationship between built environment and rural heritage. Three such areas are:

- 1). The "Tarry Field" between Lippetts Way and the footpath from St. Peter's Church to Manor Road.
- 2). The former orchard bounded by the Churchyard, Church Way, King William Road and Manor Road. (Particularly significant and recognised as such by the Local District Plan).
- 3). The fields to the east of Weares Lane and land to the west extending towards King William Road. See Design Guideline S3 (page 12)

All three areas sustain the settlement pattern and constitute a vital characteristic of the village. This quality of openness is becoming increasingly rare and great care must be taken to ensure that Catcott does not lose entirely, one of its defining features.

Footpaths, north, east and west from the village also provide superb visual amenities much appreciated by all inhabitants.



View from Langland Lane



View to Mendips, across Catcott Lows, from Weares Lane

Design Guidelines

Settlement Pattern and Character

- S1: Development that would encroach on the immediate environs of St Peter's Church will not be permitted. (Ref: Local Plan Policy BE7. Also see Bridgwater Area Local Plan Inspector's Report 1993 paras; 3:29, 3:30)
- S2: Where infilling is permitted, Local Plan Policy H3 must be interpreted in its strictest sense, with adequate spacing between buildings being provided and/or maintained.
- S3: To safeguard essential features of the village, it is vital that the areas identified as 1), 2), and 3) above (and shown below) should be retained in perpetuity as open spaces.



1) Weares Lane fields (above left). 2) Tarry Field (top right). 3) Former orchard (foreground of church).

Sizes and Types of Buildings

The village has a variety of buildings of widely different ages and sizes, with many of the older buildings having a farming connection.



Description Buildings cont.

Whilst differing in size, they tend to share a simple form; most are of moderate proportions, with only a few that could be said to be large. See Design Guideline B1 (page 20). Many have a low elevation, and one benefit of this is that views from and within the village are not unduly blocked. See Design Guideline B2 (page 20).

Examples can be seen of two storey farmhouses and cottages, often resulting from extension of one-and-a-half storey cottages. A few short terraces exist, some with common ridges and others with varied ridge levels. Modern and older bungalows and semi-detached properties are scattered around the village. The few exceptions to this are: Wellfield House (formerly a public house), Gamma House (a large modern, mock Georgian house), Canon's Rouse and new houses on Lippetts Way.

The following are considered to be significant buildings and features:
King William Inn (Listed)
Wellfield House
The Standards
St Peter's Church (Listed)
Tarry House
Manor Farm and barns
The Manor House (Listed)
The Old House (Listed)
The Pound
War Memorial
Dial House (Listed)
The School



St. Peter's Church, viewed from the east

<u>Description</u> Buildings cont.

Density/Position in Plot

A striking feature of Catcott, and one reason why the village is so well regarded by those who live here and remarked on by visitors, is its sense of openness. See Design Guideline B3 (page 20) The layout of King William Road and Hector Road, although more recent developments, helps to maintain this loose-knit aspect of the village.



Showing density and position in plot of buildings

In general, individual buildings tend to stand in fairly large plots. The majority of dwellings are not immediately adjacent to the roadside, although some of the village's older dwellings front directly onto the road, and roadside outbuildings also give containment to the street scene in some parts of the village core. See Design Guideline B4 (page 20)

Infilling of many plots by insensitively designed new buildings has altered the fabric of the village in a major way and, in particular, caused damage to its historic core. By slowly eroding Catcott's open nature, one of its prime qualities has been damaged. This is unacceptable to the great majority of residents; also see Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary, revised edition 2003, Sedgemoor District Council (SLA&CDS 6.21). Good design alone will not compensate for this loss. See Design Guideline B5 (page 20)

Description Buildings cont.

Materials

The traditional building material is locally quarried blue lias limestone, with various characteristic natural colours. The use of blue lias contributes considerably to the village's character, identity and sense of place. Those who live here strongly endorse the view that local stone is the building material of first choice. See Design Guideline B6 (page 20) Stonework is of varied types, ranging from carefully dressed and coursed, to uncoursed with selected stone and random rubble work. Some buildings exhibit examples of more than one type, e.g. St Peter's Church.

Various other building materials have been used in more recent times. These include local Bridgwater Clay bricks (also often used for window surrounds and lintels), rendered concrete blocks, painted or rendered stone and reconstructed stone. See Design Guideline B7 (page 20)

Roadside boundaries are mostly constructed in similar styles and materials, often with "cock and hen" coping, and are a striking, valued and consistent feature of Catcott.

Roofs

Originally most roofs were probably thatched: as indicated by steep roof slopes. These have mostly disappeared as properties were altered and enlarged, and were then clad in local Bridgwater Clay pantiles or double (and triple) Roman tiles, of muted tones, which have mellowed and weathered with the passage of time. See Design Guideline B8 (page 21)

One example of thatch can still be seen. Blue Welsh slate has been used on a few houses. More recently, artificial slate and concrete tiles have been used. These can appear incongruous due to their brighter colours and resistance to weathering. See Design Guideline B9 (page 21)

Rooflines are predominantly simple and gabled. See Design Guideline B10 (page 21) Very few hipped roofs are evident, especially on older buildings. Typically, eaves are narrow with close-fitting bargeboards. See Design Guideline B11 (page 21) Dormer windows are common, particularly on older dwellings, and are predominantly gabled. See Design Guideline B12 (page 21)

















Simple roof lines

Windows

The variety of buildings in the village has given rise to various window styles. These range from traditional smaller paned windows to pseudo-Georgian white PVCu units. Many of the older stone built properties typically have brick details around windows. In older properties the original simple arrangements of windows and doors have been largely retained, with original proportions and dimensions. However, the original window materials and fittings have mainly been replaced over time with Victorian inserted frames and modern PVCu windows. See Design Guideline B13 (page 21)

Description Buildings cont.



Window styles

Porches

Many buildings, of all ages now feature a porch, and these exist in a number of forms which are mostly complementary to the style of the main building. See Design Guideline B14 (page 21).

Chimneys

Brick chimneys predominate in the village and are mostly within the main structure. Others, mainly on newer properties, are of reconstructed stone. External chimneys are incongruous and alien. See Design Guideline B15 (page 21)

Outbuildings

Although some old farmyard barns still survive (notably at Manor Farm, Langlands Farm and Barton Farm), outbuildings in the village are mainly garages, sheds and greenhouses. On the whole, these sit well in the rural environment but do have the potential to be visually intrusive if too large, neglected, or poorly sited. Most garages share the construction materials of the house. Few of the older, modest properties have garages or off-road parking. This necessitates on-street parking which causes serious congestion in the narrow roads and lanes. See Design Guideline B16 (page 21).

Description Buildings cont.

Fuel tanks

There being no piped gas in Catcott, bulk storage tanks of propane or, more commonly, oil exist on many properties. Insensitive siting of these necessarily bulky functional objects has, in some cases, created notable eyesores. See Design Guideline B17 (page 22)

Boundaries

The many old boundary walls of mature blue lias stone are a striking feature of Catcott. Visually they serve the significant function of giving a sense of cohesion and continuity to the built environment.



By their nature, they also support a variety of flora and fauna including lichens, small plants and various invertebrates. A few boundaries consist of wood fencing, evergreen planting, hedges and walls of brick, or reconstructed stone (the only example of red-brick walling was erected by Sedgemoor District Council). There are unfortunate examples of mature lias limestone walls patched with concrete blocks. See Design Guideline B18 (page 22)

Sizes and types

B1: New buildings should be relatively simple in form. Account should be taken of the existing structural forms in the village and particularly of buildings in the immediate vicinity of proposed new development.

B2: There are few, if any, places in Catcott where new buildings of large proportions would be appropriate. Lower rather than higher elevations should be encouraged. The effects of the sloping topography of the village must be considered as this can increase the disparity in heights between structures.

Only designs that complement and harmonise with buildings in the immediate vicinity of proposed development should be permitted.

Density/position in plot

B3: Care should be taken to maintain generous space around new buildings and between these and existing structures. The positioning of new buildings, and the density of these, should take account of the need to maintain village character in the street scene and to preserve Catcott's characteristic openness as far as possible. This is especially important in and around the ancient core of the village.

B4: Buildings should be set back from roads wherever possible (there are few places where close-to-the-road siting would be appropriate). When set back, it will be important that boundary treatment/landscaping makes a positive contribution to the street scene.

B5: The adverse impact of new development on adjacent buildings and the fabric of the village must be minimised.

<u>Materials</u>

B6: Whilst blue lias limestone is the preferred building material, it is recognised that other materials will often be specified. In such cases, care should be taken to use materials so that their colour, texture and nature, blend sympathetically with nearby existing buildings (unless these are particularly poor examples of material choice). Coursed or uncoursed stonework should be used to match adjacent buildings. The use of lias limestone detail is to be encouraged. (SLA&CDS 2.49, 6.46, 6.50.)

Where repairs are made or extensions built, materials and style should closely match adjacent or existing structures.

The use of reconstructed stone should be discouraged.

B7: Renders, where used, should be appropriate lime or rough varieties. Tyrolean finish is not appropriate and must be discouraged.

Design Guidelines Buildings cont.

Roofs

B8: Clay tiles and slates are the preferred roofing materials. Matching tiles or slates should always be used when renewing or repairing existing roofs. (SLA&CDS 6.46, 6.50)

B9: On new roofs, colour, style, profile and texture should match traditional clay tiles as closely as possible. Smooth surfaced tiles are resistant to weathering, and should be discouraged.

B10: Gabled roofs predominate and are the preferred design.

B11: Roof lines should be simple, with flush eaves and projecting verges.

B12: Dormers must be of traditional design, i.e. catslide or small gabled dormers, and be constructed in materials matching the rest of the roof. The use of 'false dormers' and similar ornamentation is not in keeping with the general building style in the village and must be avoided.

Windows

B13: It is recommended that windows in new buildings should be of a style, scale and proportion appropriate to the building as a whole, and to adjacent properties. 'Picture windows' should be avoided. Where extension or renovation is undertaken, new windows should match those on the original structure. Brick or stone surrounds are to be encouraged as this is a feature of many existing buildings.

<u>Porches</u>

B14: Where a porch is included in the design, its elevation should be in proportion to the rest of the building, and of the same or similar material, colour, and general style.

<u>Chimneys</u>

B15: Chimneys should be of brick or stone with traditional stone caps, brick moulding, or pots.

Replacement chimneys should match original materials.

Visible metal flues must be avoided and projecting stacks should not be permitted.

Outbuildings

B16: New housing must include provision for off-road parking. Garages should blend with the property and its surroundings and be sensitively sited. The policy on materials used for the main building should also apply to all such structures.

New non-residential structures should be appropriate and proportional to their surrounding built environment.

Conservatories should be sympathetic to the original design of the main building.

<u>Design Guidelines</u> Buildings cont.

Fuel tanks

B17: The visual impact of bulk storage tanks should be minimised within the constraints of appropriate regulations. Discrete but effective screening must be provided.

Boundaries

B18: The highest priority should be given to the retention and protection of Catcott's existing lias limestone boundary walls. (SLA&CDS 6.46, 6.50)

New openings in existing walls should be restricted to the minimum practicable.

There is a presumption that new boundary walls will be of lias limestone, matching as closely as possible, the stone used on adjacent walls.

Where new boundaries are adjacent to existing limestone walls, they should be constructed and capped in the same material and style, using non-cementatious mortar.

Appropriate materials must be used for repair of all old walls. Matching coursed or uncoursed stonework should be used as appropriate.

Replanting of hedgerows using indigenous species should be encouraged.

<u>Description</u> Highways and Services

Roads and lanes

Narrow roads with grass verges, bordered by mixed hedges, have mostly been retained and are of central importance to the rural feel of the village. Weares Lane and the Nidon are examples of these. There are few highway pavements in the village. See Design Guideline HS1 (page 24)

The size and weight of both public transport and commercial vehicles is too great for the roads. This causes erosion of the grass verges and road edges which, in turn, is detrimental to local character and compromises pedestrian safety. Roads are also under increasing pressure from private cars and their attendant parking needs. See Design Guideline HS2 (page 24)

Footpaths

An important amenity is the extensive, well-used network of footpaths, both within the parish and linking Catcott with neighbouring villages.

Public Transport

Bus services provide important links with other villages and nearby towns such as Bridgwater, Street and Wells. There is a well-maintained bus shelter in King William Road.

Electricity and telephone services

The overhead wires for these services form an intrusive, untidy and unattractive 'wirescape' that seriously detracts from the appearance of the village and interferes with views. See Design Guideline HS3 (page 24)

Lighting

There is no formal street lighting in the village and little desire for it. External lighting of individual properties is widespread. In many instances this lighting is unnecessarily strong and often poorly directed resulting in energy waste, nuisance and light pollution. See Design Guideline HS4 (page 24)

Sewerage and drainage

The village is served almost entirely by a mains sewerage system. A very small number of properties have septic tank drainage. See Design Guideline HS5 (page 24) All dwellings have a mains water supply.

In places, surface water drainage is inadequate and some recent building development has caused flooding in areas where this had not previously occurred. See Design Guideline HS6 (page 24)

<u>Design Guidelines</u> <u>Highways and Services</u>

Roads and lanes

HS1: Retention of roadside verges will be encouraged.

HS2: Provision of adequate off-road parking must be demanded for any development.

Electricity and telephone services

HS3: Overhead electricity and telephone posts and cables shall be removed wherever possible, and ALL future development should incorporate underground cabling.

Lighting

HS4: Where needed, external lights of a full cut-off design must be used. They must be sited so as not to cause light pollution, energy waste or nuisance.

Sewerage and drainage

HS5: New development should be connected to the main foul- water sewer system where this is practical within the village development envelope.

HS6: The potential impact of new development on foul and surface water drainage must be carefully assessed by the Planning Authority and any resulting required actions must be enforced.

These matters will be points of issue at the planning stage.

Involvement of the community

- 1. The Catcott Village Design Statement was initiated by the Parish Council. Villagers were invited to form a VDS group which first met in April 2001. Over the course of the project the preparation of the document was carried out by nine individuals supported by contributions from many others.
- 2. Information on the proposed VDS, together with a questionnaire, was hand delivered to every residence in the village. It outlined the nature of the project and villagers were asked for their views so that these could be reflected in the VDS.
- 3. Disposable cameras donated by J. Sainsbury, Bridgwater, were made available to villagers who were able to collect them from, and return them to, the Village Store. Boots of Bridgwater offered a reduced fee for developing the films. Over the course of about two weeks, villagers were asked to produce a 'photo essay' of Catcott. Positive and negative aspects of the village were highlighted. Over 230 (usable) pictures were returned with comments.
- 4. The results of the questionnaire and photographs were collated and displayed in July 2002 at the following Catcott Open Gardens Day and used as a basis for drafting the VDS.
- 5. A PowerPoint presentation was shown by the VDS group at Catcott Primary School in June 2003.
- 6. A VDS update was a regular item on the monthly Parish Council agenda.
- 7. The final draft of the VDS was endorsed by Catcott Parish Council in October 2006

Acknowledgements

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