

# **ODCOMBE, SOMERSET**

## **VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT**

**Originally written in August 1996 -  
updated 2015**



Odcombe is a very old established village in Somerset, and enjoys the benefit of being at one end of an elevated ridge, so that it has spectacular views over the surrounding Somerset/Dorset countryside.

It is itself visible on the skyline, particularly from the East, Odcombe Church, floodlit at night, being the most prominent landmark, visible for miles around. The location is further enhanced by the open spaces between the higher and lower parts of the village, and the many mature trees, magnificent conifers, beech, oak and chestnut in particular, which are a delightful feature. Ham Hill Country Park with its Hamstone quarries and remains of a Roman fort is situated some two miles away at the other end of the ridge.



The village has a long history, the Church dating back to at least 1245. In the past it was a farming and home gloving centre, and is still a small rural village, determined to remain so. As such it views with alarm the continued westward growth of Yeovil, which in recent years has been encroaching on the previously open farmland. Odcombe's elevated location makes such encroachment all the more intrusive. To prevent our village being swallowed up in years to come it is fervently hoped that planners will honour the existing countryside and conservation area.

The village has rightly been designated a Conservation Area, to preserve its appearance and character. An attractive characteristic of our village architecture is the subtle mingling of different roof and wall materials, construction and colour. There is a mixture of old and new, 18th and 19th century listed buildings - the thatched Mason's Arms, the Georgian Rectory and the ancient Church blend in well with the newer buildings. One delightful feature of Odcombe is the use of Hamstone in the Church, residential and farm buildings and a wide variety of walls. There are also some tastefully designed infill dwellings, extensions and conversions of both natural and reconstructed stone fitting in well with the existing buildings.



Odcombe boasts the Mason's Arms Inn, Greensleeves Nursery, a well used Village Hall and the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul. Post Office visits the village hall on a Monday and Friday morning. There are also a number of trades and services provided by specialists living in the Village. Greensleeves Garden Centre sells some grocery items and a mobile grocery service commenced in 2015.

Although there are more than 300 homes in Odcombe its geography is such that, to the casual visitor passing through, it might seem much smaller. The Village varies in elevation by 120 feet and has many vantage points from which magnificent views may be obtained of the open special landscape areas surrounding.

No less than eight different roads provide access to the Village. Odcombe is on one of the main access routes to Ham Hill and, although the roads are used as short cuts by local commuters, we would not be in favour of any road widening schemes or roundabouts. These would exacerbate the position and spoil the character of the village, for we cherish the abundant network of footpaths and old fashioned village lanes, often sunk in high and hedged banks - all part of the charm of Odcombe.



Footpaths play an important part in the life of the village. Within its boundaries the main path is Orchard Path - used originally as a bier path to carry coffins up to the Church for burial. Now it is a pleasant shady walk, probably the least strenuous way of getting to the Church from Lower Odcombe, with attractive views over the valley.

Circling Odcombe there are country paths and rights of way that enable one to walk all round the village, enjoying the magnificent views that its elevated position makes possible. Villagers feel it is important that these routes are kept open, in good condition, with kissing gates or stiles where appropriate, so they may be enjoyed by as many people as possible. The Odcombe Walkers Association regularly walk the paths and public rights of way in and around the village.

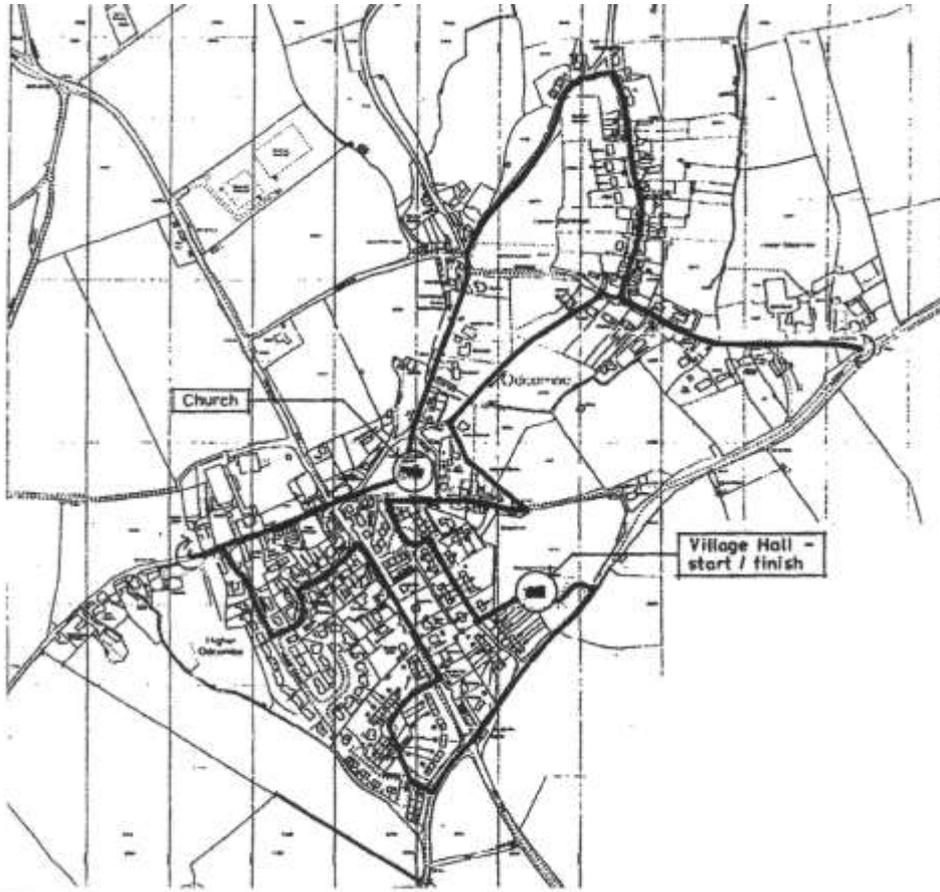


Villagers would also like to see some of the old features restored – the village pump and the caves in Ham Hill Road for example, and the village Pound is becoming unsightly and needs to be tidied up.

We welcome visitors to our village and hope you will enjoy your time with us exploring what Odcombe has to offer. We would ask you to remember that this is our home and request you treat it with love and respect as we do ourselves.

## A WALK AROUND ODCOMBE

A walk around Odcombe illustrates the diversity of all aspects of the Village.



Starting from the Village Hall car park we head up the hill, enjoying the view of rolling countryside to the left which extends to the Dorset hills. Two attractive old cottages act as sentinels at the cross roads and crossing straight over we come to Long Run, where some of our more senior residents' bungalows look out onto grazing land.

A footpath on the right leads us into Broadway from where we turn left into the main road passing through the village - Ham Hill Road. As with all Odcombe roads, except the more recent developments, there are no footpaths, and the road is generally bounded by steep banks. We turn left into Orchard Close, and at the end veer left through a short pathway into Westbury Gardens, where attractive houses and bungalows were built in the 1970s. We turn right, and as we leave Westbury Gardens, note the very attractive barn conversion on the left, with several of the old features, such as the outside stone steps still intact, while on the right over the fence one can just see what is claimed to be the oldest remaining inside water closet in Odcombe! It was built into the house, not down the garden, and had a stream - not now visible - to flush the effluent away!



On turning left into Street Lane we come immediately to the Rectory, an impressive Georgian house with extensive grounds. If we continued along Street Lane we would be out in open country. However, turning East, with Manor Farm - still a working farm - on our left, we approach the cross-roads, passing Victorian terraced cottages on both sides - yet another variation in the wide range of dwellings in the Village.

Now we come to one of the most popular views in the Village. The Parish Church with its fine tower is straight ahead, framed by magnificent Pine and Yew trees, while the old school building with its church style windows occupies the left foreground.



The Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Odcombe has been in existence since the 13th century. The present building is several hundred years old, and was extended about 170 years ago. It can accommodate up to 250 people, and is filled to capacity at Easter and Christmas. It has six bells and a regular team of bell ringers practice their craft on Friday evenings in readiness to ring on Sundays. There are some 25 stained glass windows, including ones depicting each of the Apostles. The large window behind the altar and the 'Good Shepherd' window are striking modern designs. Plaques on the West wall commemorate Thomas Coryate and his book - "Coryate's Crudities", chronicling his journeying through Europe in the early 1600s. He is credited with introducing the fork and parasol into England. If you can persuade the Churchwarden to lend you the key to the tower, your climb up the narrow circular stone steps will be rewarded with magnificent views of the Village and its surrounding countryside in every direction - as far as Pilsdon Pen near Lyme Regis, and the Mendip Mast near Wells, for example.

Leaving the Church we take the other path to the north gate, and stroll down Dray Road, which runs past the church, and has an interesting mix of hamstone cottages and post war properties. The name conjures up images of the horse drawn traffic which no doubt created the original route, and wore away the track to create the steep banks on either side. The tractors which now use it can just about squeeze through with their bulky loads. Most of the properties built on either side of the road have extensive views to the South and East, though these are completely hidden from the road itself. Dray Road links up with Donne Lane and Boundhay, both steep single track high banked

lanes with trees shading the road from both sides - very attractive in the sunlight, and a feature of the village we would not want to change.

Between these lanes are the allotment gardens and a short stroll up the track to the allotments reveals views of Yeovil, encroaching ever nearer to Odcombe, now with less than a mile of unspoilt countryside between. Continuing on down Boundhay, we turn right into Lower Odcombe, probably the most picturesque part of the Village, with its hamstone cottages and houses bordering the road - although the problems caused by lack of off street car parking are only too obvious..

Many of the homes are decorated with hanging baskets. Although the cottages opening straight on to the road might indicate cramped conditions, many have been expertly modernised inside, and often the garden at the rear represents a significant area of open space, with extensive views, some as far as Glastonbury Tor. The Mason's Arms makes an attractive contrast to the more conventional tile and slate roofs



Mature trees abound, the large conifer and huge Copper Beech at the eastern entrance to Lower Odcombe perhaps being the most notable. At this end of the village the properties are more mixed, with a few modern homes as well as some fine examples of Grade II listed country houses such as Bank Farm, Carlton House and Green Meadows. This last home looks out directly onto open farmland, with yet another footpath leading one out into the country.

From Green Meadows it is possible to turn right and return directly to the Village Hall up Old Road, but to do so would miss out two of the most interesting internal village paths. So we retrace our steps back along Lower Odcombe and start up Donne Lane, then almost immediately take the path through the kissing gate on the left. It is a pleasant shady uphill walk, the shortest way of getting to the higher part of the village, passing through the 'green belt' with attractive views over the valley. Negotiating three kissing gates in all we turn left into the path which, once past the first two properties, quickly narrows to squeeze through high hedges until it emerges into Chapel Hill.

The Recreation Ground is straight ahead, but we turn right up Chapel Hill - another of the Village's 'one car width' lanes. The houses here are built on top of the steep banks, making access quite difficult in some cases. Emerging at the top by the Church wall and turning left into Coryate Close, we see the War Memorial which was moved from the former Methodist Chapel and then come to the footpath leading to Rex Road. Half way down Rex Road we turn left into the short footpath leading to the Recreation Ground - home of the Odcombe Football team, and a children's playground which was refurbished in 2014.



And so - back to the Village Hall.

## **PLANNING OBSERVATIONS**

The villagers are united in their desire to remain a separate small village community. The South Somerset Local Plan 2006 -2028 governs any future development within the village. The National Planning Policy Framework is also of importance.

Any new housing should be designed to mature quickly and be absorbed into the character of the village.

Within the Conservation Area all new extensions and developments should use approved material in keeping with surrounding properties.

Garages or off road parking should be planned for all new dwellings, to avoid a repetition of the present parking problems in the lower part of the village. Reference should be made to the Somerset County Council Parking Strategy.

It is hoped that any development will ensure the safety of all the mature trees which are so much a feature of the village.