

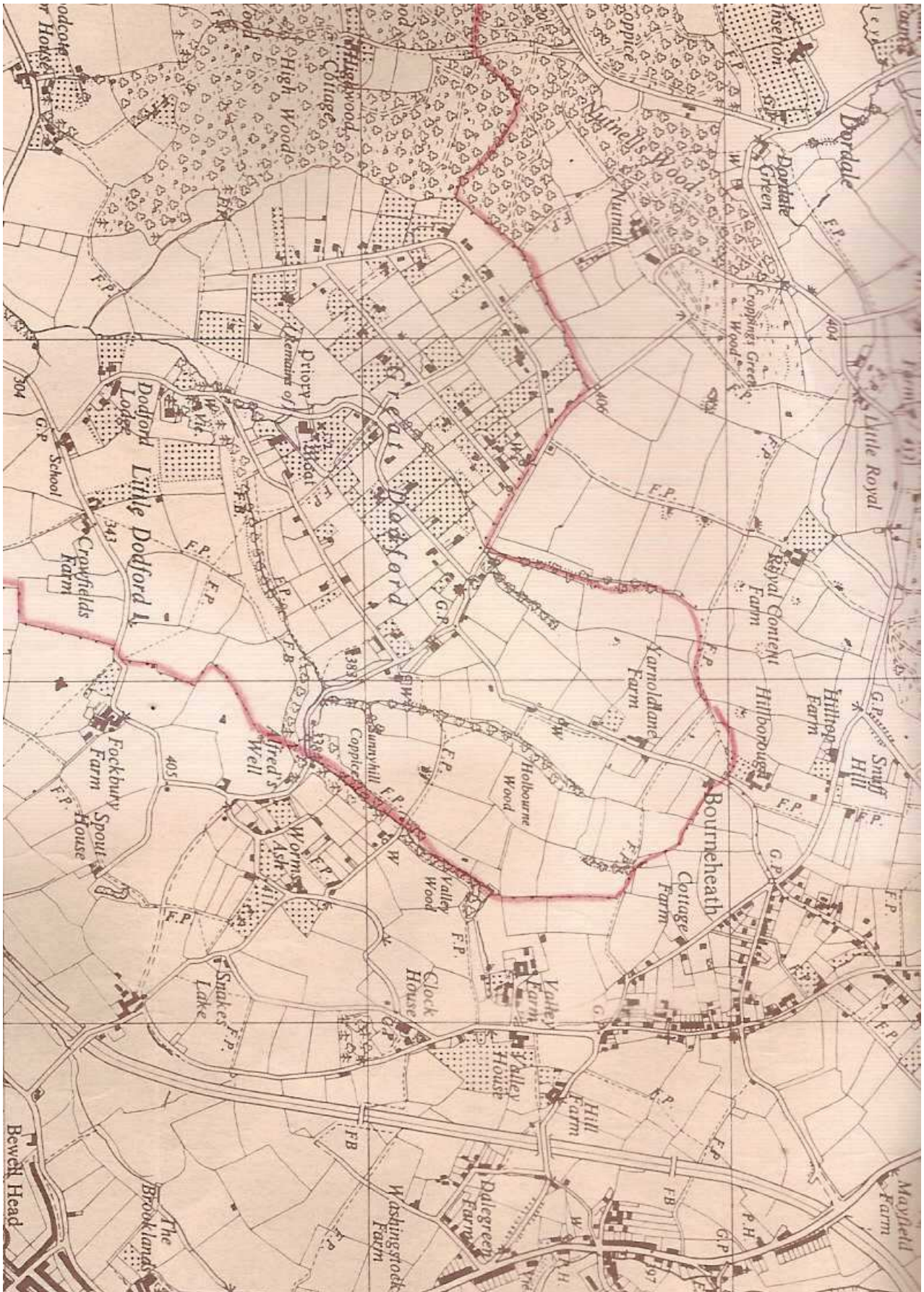
# **Dodford with Grafton**

## Village Design Statement



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## **Section 1: The Dodford with Grafton Design Statement**

### Introduction

Dodford with Grafton Parish Council published its Parish Plan in 2004 to guide the future of the parish. One of the key action points in this plan was the development of a Village Design Statement. A Design Statement sets out the design features the community wants to preserve and encourage. A working party was set up in 2005 consisting of two serving parish councillors and two volunteer residents to develop a draft design statement.

A design statement highlights the notable aspects of the area with a view to safeguarding them for the future and sets out the kinds of developments, from construction materials to species of trees to be planted, that the community would like to encourage. It is not about simply maintaining the status quo but about encouraging good change, and above all good design, in keeping with the overall context of the parish. A key aim is to ensure that any future developments will be based on a considered understanding of the parish and its environment and that any change will enhance residents' quality of life rather than erode it.

### Aims

Against this background this Design Statement's aims are:

1. To maintain the style of working and living enjoyed by the Parish but to take advantage of opportunities presented by technology.
2. To preserve the attractive, rural nature of Dodford with Grafton and the surrounding area with its open vistas and tree dominated landscape.
3. To maintain Dodford with Grafton's local distinctiveness.
4. To present policies which are balanced between being prescriptive and protective.
5. To encourage good design, whether traditional or modern, which is in keeping with the overall context of the parish.

### Who will use the design statement?

The Parish Design Statement will act as a reference document for anyone planning or considering change in the parish. It will be a valuable guide for:

- ~ Statutory Authorities
- ~ Planners, developers, builders, architects, designers and engineers.
- ~ Local groups
- ~ Householders and small businesses

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In particular it will be used by the Parish Council to inform their response to planning applications in the parish and will promote consistency in decision making. The Parish Council expects that the District Council will also include the Statement as part of the planning framework and use it in their consideration of planning applications. Residents will be able to use it to improve their homes in a way which enhances rather than detracts from the character of the area.

### Consultation

The Parish Council kept residents informed about the development of the design statement and invited their views and participation at every stage. Residents were invited onto the working group which produced the statement and three took part. The Parish Council held a consultation morning on the draft design statement which was attended by over 70 residents and representatives of local organisations. A list of those represented is appended to this document.

Residents gave their views to members of the parish council at the consultation morning and were also invited to return a detailed questionnaire. 24 questionnaires were returned. A copy of the questionnaire and summary of responses is also appended. In general the responses were fully supportive of the conclusions set out in the design statement. Detailed comments were made on particular issues and these were considered carefully by the parish council. A number of amendments were made to the document as a result.

## Section 2: Parish History

The Parish of Dodford with Grafton was created in 1933 and is situated west of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. It is entirely a green belt area. It comprises the area of Grafton, the village of Dodford with the hamlets of Alfred's Well, Worms Ash, Fockbury Mill and Woodcote.

The area has a rich history. Grafton Manor, built in the XVI century, was the former home of the Earls of Shrewsbury and is currently a Country House Hotel and restaurant. The attached Chapel, of the Perpendicular period, served both the Manor House and the hamlet and dates back to 1567 when it was rebuilt by John Talbot III. Much of the Manor House was destroyed by fire in 1710 though parts of the original remain.

Dodford Priory was founded in 1189 and dissolved by Henry VIII in 1538. The Priory has seen the Duke of Northumberland and the Fownes family of Worcester as previous owners. Unfortunately almost nothing of the original Priory survives.

Dodford is the site of a Chartist settlement founded by Feargus O'Connor in the late 1840s. One aim of the Chartist Movement was to settle working people on small plots of land where they could become self-sufficient. An area of 273 acres in the heart of Dodford was divided up into plots of 4 acres. Only a handful of Chartist cottages remain unchanged. The best example is the Grade II listed Rosedene cottage which has been restored to its original state and is owned by the National Trust. The Chartist area in the middle of Dodford has been a conservation area since 1975 because of its special historical interest. There are in total(.....)listed buildings in the parish.

The school in Dodford opened in 1877 and remains an important part of village life. The Church, which was built in 1908, is believed to house the best collection anywhere of Bromsgrove Guild work.



*Grafton Manor and the Chapel (on the left).*



*Dodford Church with its fine example of 20<sup>th</sup>. Century architecture distinguished by its bold saddleback tower.*

### Section 3: Landscape, Wildlife, and Country Pursuits



*Local farming is diverse and this is to be encouraged*

The Parish is rural in character with a varied landscape. The land to the south and west of the Parish in Grafton is generally flat farming land whereas the area to the north and east around the village of Dodford has steeper gradients and is used more as grazing land.

The whole Parish is designated green belt. There are Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the remains of the old Feckenham Forest and there are Landscape Protection Areas in Randan Woods and Nutnalls Wood. Grafton Manor and Grafton Park feature in the list of Historic Parks and Gardens and Special Wildlife sites exist in Grafton Manor Pool, Highwood, Dodford Dingle and Great Dodford Meadow.

The area is identified by pretty country lanes ideal for the recreational pursuits of walking, horse riding and cycling. There is a mixture of uncultivated copses, woodland, meadows, paddocks, orchards and streams. A network of public footpaths and bridle ways dissects the parish. These footpaths are accessible from within the village and allow walkers to discover the unspoilt countryside.



*Dodford with Grafton enjoys a wide variety of well-maintained footpaths and public rights of way and Woodland walks. Routes across agriculture land and outstanding views can all be enjoyed.*

The extensive network of public rights of way in the parish extends to more than 40 km. In general these are well maintained with accessible styles or gates. The Royal Hunters Walks footpath system, originating and terminating in Bromsgrove, runs through Dodford and is well sign posted and very well used.

The relatively quiet lanes and extensive bridleway system has resulted in Dodford (in particular) but also Grafton, being used more and more by horse riders.



It is estimated that there are over 100 horses / ponies in ownership within the parish. There is a considerable boost to the local economy in spending on equestrian related services such as feed supplies and tack equipment.

Whilst the majority of the Parish is serviced by narrow country lanes there are a number of lanes and roads which are single track width and bordered by high hedgerows, creating a unique image within the parish. The majority of the houses are set back from the road and again bordered by high hedgerows that form natural boundaries and create a beautiful rural setting.

Many of the homes in the Parish enjoy views across farmland, woodland or meadow. The area sustains a rich variety of wildlife and flora including being home to foxes, badgers and muntjack deer.



*Horses being ridden along quiet country lanes and bridleways form a common sight on most days. Within the Parish are many paddocks and fenced fields with associated stabling – some being very carefully landscaped.*



*In the late spring various woodland areas are notable for their displays of wild bluebells*

### Settlement Guidelines

To preserve and develop this local landscape and way of life we want to encourage:

- Views of open spaces, trees, hedges and hills
- Rural gates, fences and unclipped greenery
- Retention of mature trees and planting of native species of trees
- Access to and repair of public footpaths and bridle ways
- Agriculture and horticulture
- Walking/rambling, cycling and equestrian pursuits
- Small scale local industry consistent with the nature of the area

## Section 4 : Buildings

*Within the village of Dodford the origin of many buildings is the Chartist design*



Because of its Chartist origins, Dodford, in particular, has many large plots which allow cultivated areas, large trees, unclipped hedges and shrub land to co-exist. This natural blend of buildings and countryside is to be encouraged.

In Grafton the main centre is Grafton Manor, a grade 2 listed manor house and adjoining chapel. Most of the subsequent buildings are of similar style with clay tiled or slate roofs and red brickwork.

### Examples of House Design





*UPVC doors and windows are inappropriate and are discouraged. Wood is a more sustainable and environmentally friendly material*



*The use of timber as a window frame or door is sympathetic to the original Chartist cottages*

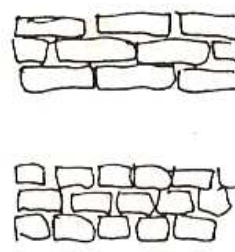
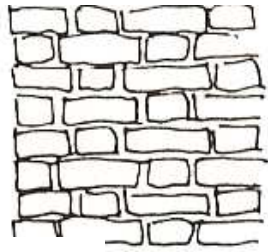
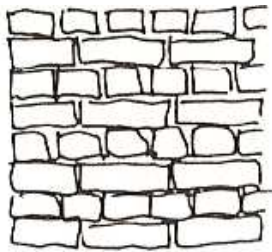
*Whilst UPVC has been used in the parish natural materials are more appropriate*

*Many farm buildings in Grafton have been carefully converted.*

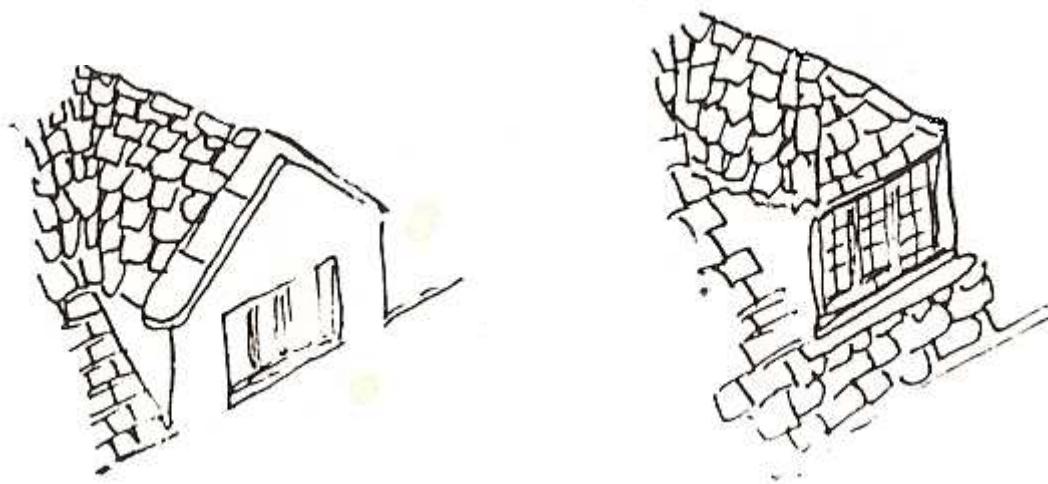


*Generally, Dodford Village has no single housing design except for the overall basic (but much altered) Chartist design. However, what is noticeable is the wide variation in brick built chimneys which, by their variety, add to the charm of the Parish. The lack of natural gas in Dodford dictates that many properties have wood burning stoves and hence most of the chimneys are active.*

#### Traditional Construction



Most Chartist properties in Dodford were built using the stretcher bond method of bricklaying (shown top right) or/and header bond (bottom right). Unfortunately, many Chartist buildings have been pebble dashed thus losing their unique appearance. Evidence of English bond (left) and Flemish bond (middle) can still be seen in Grafton.



The gable dormer with valley is common throughout the village. The hipped dormer shown to the right is also in evidence.

Buildings guidelines:-

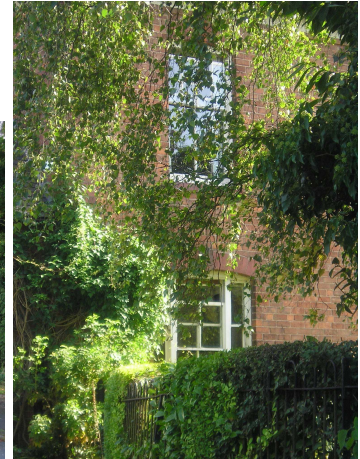
- Design of new buildings or alterations should take account of local styles and be in keeping with the local context
- Use should be made of traditional materials that are already in evidence in local buildings, for example slate or clay tiles for roofing.
- Use of redundant local buildings for barn conversions or small scale industry should be encouraged **provided local materials and styles are used for the buildings and that the scale does not encourage heavy use of local roads**
- Wooden windows and door frames are to be encouraged coupled with modern insulation techniques to preserve heat
- External original features, particularly those dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, should be maintained or replaced with similar features.

## 5. Driveways, Boundaries and Gateways



Within Dodford the traditional style of boundary to properties is low brick or stone walling, low and open railings or hedges. The erection of high fences or planting of high hedges is inappropriate in the conservation area and village of Dodford generally. High boundaries detract from the local style and can have an adverse effect on the openness of the area and local views. Similarly, the construction of large gated entrances and adjacent high walls to residential dwellings is controlled within the conservation area but is to be discouraged throughout the village of Dodford since this is out of keeping with the locality and creates an urban rather than rural feel. The use of reclaimed bricks for **low** walls and the use of native hedging plants are to be encouraged.

External lighting should also be kept to a minimum. Yellow lighting and uplighting of houses is inappropriate in the village and detracts from its rural character.



*Hedge rows and footways (where they exist) provide not only a sharply defined rural element but also a good environment for the very large variety of wild life – with many different species of birds, small mammals and the muntjack deer often being seen.*

*An excellent example of the co-existence of buildings with trees and hedgerows.*

### Design guidelines

- External boundaries should be marked by use of appropriate materials such as brick or stone walls or hedges at a reasonable height
- Large gates and high walls and hedges are inappropriate in the village
- Harsh and/or yellow lighting and backlighting of houses is inappropriate for a rural area. Security lighting should be low level and unobtrusive
- Driveways and entrances should maintain a rural 'feel'.
- New or extended driveways should minimise the loss of greenery
- Garages and parking areas should be as unobtrusive as possible and where possible screened from view.

## 6. Roads



### Flooding

Both in Dodford and Grafton drainage problems are very evident. After any substantial rainfall several roads are practically impassable due to high run off from adjacent fields. Any developments should provide adequate drainage proposals to avoid flooding and nuisance to neighbours.

### Traffic

General and heavy traffic passing through the villages has increased over recent years. This causes regular damage to signs, verges and edges. The speed of some vehicles also poses a risk to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, especially since there are few pavements. However, natural barriers to the speed and size of vehicles are generally preferred to road signs with speed or weight restrictions (which are in any case difficult to enforce). Road signage is generally to be kept to a minimum as a matter of policy since this maintains the rural environment.

### Motorways

The parish is effectively divided into two sections by the A448 Bromsgrove to Kidderminster Road which runs roughly North / South. The M5 Motorway, including the M42 Junction, runs approximately along the eastern Parish boundary. The effect of these major roads and particularly the motorway is in damage to the environment by all forms of pollution – air, noise, and light. The assault on the quality of life has become unremitting.

### Design Guidelines

- Any new building or alteration work needs to include an assessment of the impact on roads and neighbouring properties and to ensure proposals for adequate drainage (including soakaway and foul drainage).
- Roads signs to be kept to a minimum to preserve the rural environment unless a sign is essential to achieve a more important objective for the community
- Where appropriate planning proposals should include measures to reduce the impact of the motorway. For example the planting of trees to reduce its visual and noise impact.

## 7: Sustainability

Dodford's origins are in a social experiment that aimed at self-sufficiency and self-reliance. It is no less important for current and future residents of the area to think about conserving and using scarce resources carefully. Residents of Dodford with Grafton are already conscientious, for the most part, in recycling their waste including composting their garden waste. However, in future we need to do more to build sustainability into daily life. This will increasingly be built into planning requirements, but we want to encourage:

1. Adequate insulation of new buildings and extensions to conserve energy.
2. Low level security lighting.
3. Rain water harvesting and recycling wherever practical; for example any new building or extension should incorporate the re-cycling of rain water for use in flushing toilets or garden use.
4. The use of water butts in garden areas.
5. The use of sustainable energy sources, eg solar or wind power and ground source heating

### Design guidelines

- Sustainability proposals, for example the installation of solar panels or wind turbines, are to be encouraged. The necessary units should be attractive in design and sited as unobtrusively as possible.
- Security lighting should be low level.
- Recycling measures should be built into proposals wherever practicable.

## Summary of Aims and Recommendations

The Design Statement's aims are to:

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