

10.2 SETTLEMENT INSETS – BROMPTON RALPH

Policy Profile

Settlement Classification: Small Village (SP/1)
Landscape Conservation:
Landscape Character Area: The Brendon Fringe¹ (LC/3)

Location and Character

10.2.1 Brompton Ralph is a small village in a relatively isolated location on the eastern fringes of the Brendon Hills, approximately 4 miles north of high ground surrounded by gently rolling open countryside. Most of the housing is sheltered as the land on which it stands slopes eastwards to the Vale of Taunton, while St. Mary's Church dominates an area of high ground to the north. On all sides, but to the south, the agricultural land is of average Grade 3 quality.² South of Brompton Ralph the land is of poorer Grade 4 quality.³ Access is gained from the B3188 via narrow steep-sided lanes.

Settlement Policy

- 10.2.2 Although small in size, Brompton Ralph has perhaps a higher service function than several settlements in more accessible parts of the Plan area and therefore defined as a Small Village (Policy SP/1).
- 10.2.3 There are adequate facilities in the village to accommodate some additional population, but problems may arise in providing public utilities. There are no sewage treatment works serving the village and Local Authority septic tanks are currently discharged into the water course. In addition, the approach roads to the settlement, particularly from the B3188 Watchet-Wiveliscombe road, are narrow and poorly aligned, therefore, a significant increase in traffic using these roads would be unacceptable.
- 10.2.4 Because of the constraints on further development in Brompton Ralph including its location within The Brendon Fringe Landscape Character Area,⁴ the development limits have been drawn tight about the built village. Should the demand exist there may be sites within this area capable of being developed, but any development will need to respect the size, function and relative inaccessibility of the village.

¹ WS Atkins South West; West Somerset Landscape Character Assessment; West Somerset District Council; 1999

² Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales; Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food; 1988

³ *ibid.*

⁴ WS Atkins South West; West Somerset Landscape Character Assessment; *op. cit.*

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Population and Housing

- 10.2.5 In 1981 there were 160 people resident in the parish⁵ and in 2001, 218.⁶ Despite this recent rise in the population, over the last century it has significantly reduced from a peak of 360 in 1891.⁷
- 10.2.6 There has been very little new housing within the village itself. Since 1974 only two properties have been constructed; a bungalow on land adjacent to The Villa and, more recently, a two-storey detached dwelling on land adjoining The Old Forge. However, a number of applications have been approved for extensions to existing properties which were specifically for elderly dependants, and there has been limited development elsewhere in the Parish.
- 10.2.7 The style of housing in Brompton Ralph generally falls into one of two categories. Firstly, along the higher banks of the main street, there are terraced properties with painted render and slate or tiled roofs. While set lower down from these are detached properties of varying building materials. New building design should incorporate features and materials appropriate to the building's location.

Employment

- 10.2.8 Brompton Ralph is, and appears to always have been, an agricultural settlement although it is sufficiently close to the Rural Centre of Wiveliscombe (in Taunton Deane) for residents looking for alternative employment opportunities. Cridland Farm is a working farm which neighbours the Church. A poorly sited modern farm building obstructs a fine view out across open farmland from the village green. Although such buildings reflect the village's agricultural function, careful consideration needs to be given to the siting of additional buildings (see Policies A/I and BD/6).

Shops and Services

- 10.2.9 A building constructed in 1901 houses the post office/stores. This is the only shop in the village, although to the rear of St. Mary's Church is a well-used village hall and there is also a chapel in the village. Due to its proximity to Wiveliscombe, these facilities are considered adequate for a settlement the size of Brompton Ralph.

⁵ Office of Population Censuses and Surveys; Census 1981: Ward and Civil Parish Monitor: Somerset; HMSO; 1984. ISBN 0 903933 85 3

⁶ Office for National Statistics; 2001 Census: Neighbourhood Statistics – West Somerset; ONS; 2004 (data-set)

⁷ Williton Rural District Council; Census data by Parish, 1891 – 1951; Williton Rural District Council;

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Environment and Conservation

- 10.2.10 Three of the buildings within Brompton Ralph are listed for their special architectural or historic interest, the oldest of which is Odwell Cottage whose origins date back to the 1500s and possibly earlier.⁸ St. Mary's Church and Brendon Cottage were built in the fifteenth and sixteenth century's respectively.⁹ Those structures which have also merited listing include a pair of unidentified memorials in St. Mary's churchyard, the remains of the churchyard cross on the village green, and a cast iron hand pump which can be found to one side of the village street. Policies LB/1 and LB/2 set out criteria against which proposals affecting listed buildings will be judged.
- 10.2.11 St Mary's Church not only stands in a large churchyard, but fronts on to the village green. The residents have taken the initiative to create something of a 'churchyard garden' by planting individual trees and beds of flowering plants. The scheme includes those species typically found in the grounds of a Church and in the area generally, for example Rowan, Holly, Silver Birch and Beech. The village green provides an important open space within the village and its wild unkempt appearance is most appropriate in this upland area.
- 10.2.12 The main street which runs the length of the village appears to have cut into the underlying rock which is exposed in places and adds to the character of this windswept rural settlement. Its appearance would be damaged by the provision of accesses and accompanying visibility splays.
- 10.2.13 The existing trees in the village represent an important feature of the landscape which the Local Planning Authority considers should be substantially maintained (see Policy TW/1).

⁸ Department of the Environment; List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest: District of West Somerset, Exmoor National Park/Somerset (Parishes of Brompton Ralph, Brompton Regis, Brushford, Clatworthy, Dulverton, Huish Champflower, Skilgate and, Upton) (as amended); Department of the Environment; 1986.

⁹ *ibid.*

