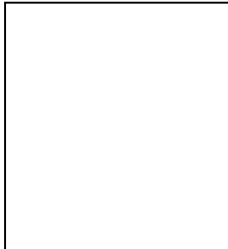


Conserving the identity of earthen settlements in South West England



LINDA WATSON, University of Plymouth,
Centre for Earthen Architecture

Abstract

Earth was an important indigenous building material in the S.W. of England. Consequently many settlements survive where earth has been used to construct most of their historic architecture. These buildings are still occupied today, many over 200 years old. Their values lie in that

- They represent an enormous financial investment with many houses being purchased through loans and mortgages.
- They provide healthy living environments with desirable characteristics
- They represent traditional craft skills and the use of locally sourced building materials.
- They are easily maintained and repaired compared to modern materials and techniques.
- They contribute considerably to the character of settlements and create the local distinctiveness sought by tourists who make an essential contribution to the regional economy.

Two issues emerge from this heritage, how to ensure it remains in good condition through appropriate conservation techniques and how new buildings can be added to these settlements without threatening their identity.

This paper will explain how these conservation techniques have been developed and disseminated to homeowners and builders. Also it will examine the nature of new architecture. Experience of projects has shown there can be a number of approaches, which can be taken; these will be explored considering the advantages and disadvantages to arrive at an appropriate solution. Consideration will be given

- the construction of copies of past buildings and how these can be upgraded to fulfil current regulations of construction.
- using indigenous earth building techniques, which in the SW of England is cob, to create contemporary architecture.
- using 'foreign' earth building techniques to create contemporary architecture.
- using non-earthen materials to appear as an indigenous earth building.