

Exmoor National Park
Historic Environment Report Series No 8

PORLOCK CONSERVATION AREA: APPRAISAL DOCUMENT



Adopted July 2022

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Summary of Significance

Porlock has a long history and from documentary evidence was clearly an important settlement by the Saxon period. In spite of this antiquity, there is little readily identifiable in the current fabric of the buildings and layout of the village to suggest these early origins: much remains to be discovered. The 2013/14 Dig Porlock project shed light on some early building fabric but likely only scratched the surface of what remains.

The settlement is essentially linear, following the winding course of the main street from where the A39 drops down the hill at Dunster Steep, to the foot of the infamous Porlock Hill. The separate settlement nucleations of Porlock, Sparkhayes and Doverhay have, since the early 20th century, been subsumed within a larger urban conurbation. Hawkcombe, nestled in the valley to the south, still retains a sense of a discrete hamlet of mainly 19th century date although it was, and is, reliant on the main settlement of Porlock. Porlock's historic port at Porlock Weir lies 2.5km to the north-west and is a separate Conservation Area.

Although earlier buildings survive, in its current guise Porlock predominantly comprises a mixture of 17th and 18th century vernacular houses, many with characteristic front projecting chimney stacks and more substantial later 19th/early 20th century houses, shops and hotels mostly in a well executed Arts and Crafts style. This later development, sometimes rebuilding or demolishing earlier structures, was decried at the time, but these later 'intrusions' can now be viewed as having historic significance in their own right and contributing equally to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

1. Introduction

1.1 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Porlock was first designated as a Conservation Area by Exmoor National Park Authority in 1984 and extended in 1987. It was last reviewed in 2013 and considerably enlarged in this review.

The statutory definition of a Conservation Area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' The object of designation is not to prohibit change but to manage it in ways that maintain or strengthen the area's special qualities. Sections 69 and 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, places a duty on local planning authorities to review Conservation Areas from time to time and publish proposals for preservation and enhancement. To comply with this duty local authorities are encouraged to undertake appraisals every five years to evaluate and record the special interest of the area and provide a framework for development control and the creation of initiatives to improve the area.

The aim of this document is to identify:

- the influences that have given Porlock its special character
- what chiefly reflects this character and is most worth conserving
- what has suffered damage or loss and may need reinstating
- what should be considered in guiding future changes
- visual features that particularly need safeguarding

1.2 DEVELOPMENT IN A CONSERVATION AREA

Conservation Areas give broader protection than listing individual buildings and all the elements within the Area are recognised as contributing in some way to its character. Anyone considering undertaking works to a property, or developing land that lies within a Conservation Area, is advised to contact the Historic Buildings Officer or the Development Control Officer, at Exmoor National Park Authority for assistance at an early stage.

This Appraisal will assist in the formulation of appropriate design strategies for proposed new development, which should be fully articulated where a Design and Access Statement is required to accompany a planning application. Specific guidance relating to Porlock is in Section 7. Appendix A contains a brief general overview of planning within Conservation Areas.

1.3 PREPARATION AND SURVEY LIMITATIONS

This Conservation Area Appraisal was researched and written during Summer 2021. It updates the appraisal carried out for Exmoor National Park by Nigel Pratt in 2013.

It is important to note that this document cannot be regarded as fully comprehensive. Some aspects of the survey information are limited to those areas which can be reasonably recorded from the highway and other publicly accessible land. Failure to mention any particular building, feature or space, should not be taken to imply that it is of no significance and irrelevant in the consideration of a planning application.

1.4 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

As no boundary changes are proposed no public consultation was undertaken. It is recommended in the Appraisal that Article 4 directions are introduced. Article 4 Directions are used to remove certain permitted development rights to help ensure characteristic features of buildings, streets, and settlements are maintained. These will require public consultation.

2. Topographic and Historic Background

2.1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

Porlock is attractively situated at the edge of the Vale of Porlock where the wooded northern slopes of Exmoor fall steeply towards the sea from the plateau of open moorland at about 350 m above sea level. It is the largest settlement between Minehead some 8 km to the east and Lynton, about 25 km to the west and acts as a service centre for the villages in the Vale of Porlock.

The village is broadly linear its curving spine following the A39 along level ground between the hills at Dunster Steep in the east and the 1 in 4 gradient Porlock Hill to the west, which still acts as a barrier to larger and towing vehicles (the privately owned toll road provides an alternative route). To the north-east, flat fields extend to the steep hill sides of Bossington Hill and directly north of the village centre the flatter land contains an extensive area of post-war housing before reaching the Bristol Channel 1 km away. The historic port serving Porlock, Porlock Weir (a separate Conservation Area) is 2.5 km to the north-west.

To the south of the village, a fast flowing stream flows down the wooded combe known as Hawkcombe that leads about 5 km up from the village up to high open moorland. A narrow lane follows the stream up the valley to a small settlement dominated by the Victorian Glen Lodge. From here it joins a higher parallel road on the other side of the valley which leads back to the village via Doverhay, which was formerly a discrete settlement but now forms part of the main village.

2.2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

2.2.1 Medieval Development

Porlock is first recorded as *Portloca* (enclosure by the harbour) in the 9th century. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records two attacks on the town: in the entry for 918 by the Vikings; and in 1052 when Harold and his brother landed from Ireland with nine ships, sacked and set fire to the town. At the time of the Conquest the manor was held by Algar, son of Leofric the Earl of Mercia, but was subsequently given to Baldwin Redvers and held by Drogo. The manor changed hands a number of times. The Roges/Fitz-Roges held it until the 14th century, in the 15th century it belonged to the Harringtons, the Pophams during the 16th and 17th

centuries, and Rogers, Winters and Blathwayts from the 17th century onwards. The manor house was at Court Place but was destroyed by fire in the early-19th century and replaced with the current building.



Fig. 1 Late 15th century tomb of Sir John and Lady Elizabeth Harrington

The franchise for a market was granted by Edward III to Sir Nigel Loring. Sources indicate that Porlock had a Market House and a Market Cross close to the church, but these appear to have been demolished in the early 19th century.

The eastern part of the present village formed part of the separate manor of Doverhay, recorded in Domesday as *Dovri*. At an uncertain date, and until 1930, this became absorbed into the parish of Luccombe, providing the latter with a tongue of land projecting northwards to the sea. There was a third manor, Sparkhayes, consisting of land between the town and beach and a few scattered houses. It appears that no date is given for its establishment. This may indicate it was formed as a result of land claimed from the sea. It too is now part of Porlock parish.

The present intricate street pattern is probably medieval in origin but while later settlement is mainly integrated within this there is no clear indication of the characteristic medieval pattern of narrow burgage plots extending back from the main frontages. However, the Tithe Map of c.1840 (Fig 3) does show several such long field boundaries both to the north and south of High Street to the west of the Parish Church.

2.2.2 Post Medieval Development

Porlock was a centre for the production of yarn of exceptional quality in the 17th and 18th century by hand spinners called 'factors' with the yarn being sent to Dunster. Other local industries have included herring fisheries. A customs report of 1682 refers to Porlock as 'a place of trade where great quantities of herrings are taken and cured which begets a great concourse of people and small craft that may be (of) dangerous consequence to the Customs unless well-guarded', which also suggests that contraband activities flourished.

Although the Porlock leather industry is thought to have had much earlier origins, the former tannery, whose buildings survive, was founded in the mid 19th century. Oak-bark tanned leather was produced in quantity until trade began to decline after the 1914-18 war.



Fig. 2 Former 19th century tannery buildings, now mainly housing.

In the late 18th century Porlock was described as a small sea port town, with 'two mean straggling streets near the church' which are 'chiefly built of rough stone, or mud walls, two stories high, and thatched, with the backs of the chimneys projecting from the fronts into the streets' (Collinson 1791). At this time the parish had six hundred inhabitants living in 110 houses. The Tithe Apportionment maps of c.1840 (Figs 3 and 4) are the earliest maps depicting the settlement layout. This map and the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of

c.1870 suggests that a number of earlier buildings were demolished in the later 19th century, for example, in what is now the churchyard, and along the north side of High Street. Shortly after the date of the Tithe Map the Toll Road (avoiding Porlock Hill) was constructed.

The Tithe Map also gives some idea of the social and commercial facilities at that time. It records the following: a Rectorial Manor, a Charity School Room, a Poor House, Market House, Malt House, a Chantry, a Chapel, the Parish Pound, and the following inns; The Ship, Rose & Crown, Castle, Three Horseshoes, and Somerset. By the time of the 1851 census the population had risen to 854.



Fig. 3 Extract from Tithe Map c.1840 for Porlock.



Fig. 4 Extract from Second Edition OS map c.1900

The second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1910 shows the basic settlement pattern similar as today with much expansion, particularly in the back of the property plots in the central areas. This change in character was noted at the time in negative terms, with a contemporary writer stating that 'the charm of Porlock is being smirched by expansion with buildings of a distinctly suburban type (intruding) into the once purely rustic street.'

With the exception of some development around the fringes there has been relatively little late 20th / early 21st century new build within the settlement core although there has been some more extensive housing outside of the Conservation Area. This seems to have coincided with an early surge in the popularity of tourist traffic, which drew the response as early as 1909 that Porlock was 'plagued almost beyond endurance by motorists.' Motoring, nevertheless, holds an important place in the history of Porlock, with Porlock Hill gaining a national reputation as a severe test for vehicles of all types stretching back to the early days of motoring.

2.3 ARCHAEOLOGY

Porlock is a long established settlement and was clearly of some significance in the early medieval period, having been the focus of attacks on at least two recorded occasions. Some sources suggest that in Saxon times Porlock had a royal palace or hunting lodge and an extensive chase, the former supposed to have been where Court Place now stands. Above ground, aside from two small fragments of an Anglo-Saxon cross shaft with interlace decoration in the west wall of the Parish Church, no trace of this period remains visible.

The 2014 dig Porlock project made some interesting pottery finds. Two medieval pottery sherds were found in the village core on Bossington Lane. One a rouletted jug from Ham Green, Bristol, the other probably a late medieval jug from North Devon.

There were a small number of sherds from the 15th to early 17th centuries found. One a fragment of Elizabethan Frechen Stoneware, the others being mainly coarsewares (South Somerset Redwares, South Somerset Earthenwares and North Devon Gravel Tempered ware).

Examples dating from the late 17th century onwards were more plentiful. North Devon Scraffito pottery being a distinctive aspect of the finds collection.

Material pre-1700 amounts to 20-30 sherds. North Devon Gravel Tempered Ware makes up the bulk of the collection and is not finely datable.

There was much more evidence from the early 18th century marked by the arrival of Bristol Delftware and Yellow Slip Ware from Bristol and Staffordshire being represented in almost every trench. Slipware continues through most of the 18th century. Delftware dies out mid 18th century when slipware drives it out of the market.

The most informative aspect of the pottery collection found in the project is the large sample of early 18th century pottery showing wares from North Devon completely dominating the market in the village. This is new information as previously there were no collections of this type from Porlock or nearby.

Despite the obvious antiquity of many of Porlock's historic buildings, few have been investigated and internal inspection could well yield interesting and informative results. A handful were examined in the Dig Porlock project which provided interesting results. Aside from the standing buildings, the National Park Historic Environment Record contains post-medieval and industrial archaeological records mainly based on map evidence. The Conservation Area therefore has considerable archaeological potential and further work will undoubtedly shed light on the development of the settlement.

Further information on the archaeology of the area can be obtained from the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record based in the Park's Headquarters at Dulverton.

2.4 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROFILE

By the early-20th century, the spinning, tanning and herring industries had disappeared, or were in terminal decline. While there is little industrial activity surviving, a firm of tea and coffee merchants do occupy some of the 19th century buildings north of the High Street. Other former industrial buildings, such as the former tannery are now housing.

The importance of tourism has gathered pace from the late 19th century with a number of old inns being replaced by larger purpose-built hotels and guest houses. Agriculture has also remained part of the local economy and in the 1930s a pocket of land owned by Court Place Farm produced some of the finest quality barley that for several years won top international awards.

The current parish population is around 1200 and, according to the 2010 survey based data from the Office of National Statistics it is the most elderly in Britain, with over 40% of the population being of pensionable age.

Although it is now more commonly referred to as a village, rather than a town, Porlock does have a good range of shopping, leisure and community facilities and acts as a service centre for the surrounding villages.



Fig. 5 Porlock Visitor Centre and library - an important local resource

3. Spatial Analysis

3.1 SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND BUILDING DENSITY

The character of Porlock derives in part from the largely continuous frontages along High Street, and its predominantly curving alignment. In places there are variations in the building line with buildings slightly advanced or recessed and occasionally set well back or angled away from the main frontages. There are a number of significant gaps, whilst elsewhere there are largely enclosed spaces which are further enhanced by the wooded landscape backdrop. A good example is at the junction of High Street, Parsons Street and The Drang.

The later development in the centre of Porlock is in two forms: firstly, are the infill buildings fronting the historic building lines, some of which exhibit a strong Arts & Crafts influence; and secondly are the groups to the rear of the main frontages. These range from the several short terrace rows to the south of High Street, to the groups of former commercial or industrial buildings, for example to the north of High Street, in Parsons Street and adjoining the Doverhay Manor House.

For the purposes of this Appraisal the Conservation Area can be sub-divided into the following four broad character zones.

3.1.1 Village centre

The main village is linear in nature. Although winding, the High Street follows an east-west course, with property plots along both sides and immediately fronting the road. Most of the buildings are attached forming an almost continuous unbroken line of buildings, with occasional spaces. The largest gap is at the parish church, about half way along on the street on the south side, where the surrounding buildings form what is in effect a square with the church as the dominant feature. To the east of the church, behind the main street is the densest concentration of housing in the Conservation Area linked by a network of narrow lanes lined with 19th century terrace rows. On the opposite side of the High Street, back of plot development is less dense with more industrial in character. At the east and west ends of the High Street the building density thins out.



Fig. 6 Mix of 17th to 19th buildings fronting the High Street



Fig. 7 The Drang - medieval narrow lane leading to 19th back-plot development

3.1.2 Doverhay

The lower part of Doverhay around the former Manor House is at the east end of the High Street (Fig.8). From here a lane leads south, initially lined with historic buildings, mainly thatched, directly fronting the highway (Fig.9). As the road climbs the settlement density thins out with later terrace rows on the west side, while on the east side the end of the settlement is marked by two historic farms, Lower (now Barn End) and Higher Doverhay, the later retaining a good collection of farm buildings.



Fig. 8 Lower part of Doverhay



Fig. 9 Narrow lane leading up from the High Street

3.1.3 West End/Porlock Hill

At the west end, the High Street splits at McCoys Corner with a small triangle of buildings that continues as a terrace on the road to Porlock Weir (Fig.10). The south road forks again at the start of the junction between the Toll Road and the bottom of Porlock Hill, which has mainly mid 20th century detached houses on both sides of the road. Further up Porlock Hill at Redway, there are two terraces of cottages on opposite sides of the road.



Fig. 10 McCoys Corner, marks the end of the main village



Fig. 11 Redway

3.1.4 Hawcombe/Parsons Street

Immediately west of the church, the straight course of the stream known as Hawcombe Water is followed by Parsons Street. Building is mainly on the west side of the street, initially between the stream and road, but further along the buildings are set further back and on the hill side of the stream with access to the road via short bridges. The east side of Parsons Street is dominated by two large open spaces: the Recreation Ground; and the Cemetery.



Fig. 12 Hawcombe Valley - settlement follows the valley bottom



Fig. 13 Glen Lodge set in the wooded valley above Hawcombe

As it approaches the small settlement at Hawcombe, the straight course of Parsons Street is lost as the road climbs and starts to wind through the woods. Buildings here are a mixture of modern detached dwellings in their own grounds and 19th century terrace rows. These are dominated by the imposing presence of the Victorian hunting lodge Glen Lodge set apart and above the cottages in the valley.

3.2 PLAN FORM, HEIGHT AND MASSING

The settlement pattern gives Porlock a strong sense of enclosure and there is much contrast in scale and architectural detail. Domestic architecture dominates the Conservation Area. Three main types can be identified:

- 16th - 18th century houses of 1½ or 2 stories with attics, some with tall lateral projecting stacks;
- Late 19th/early 20th century 2 ½ or 3 storey hotels, guest houses or shops in the prevailing Arts and Crafts style - many of which replaced earlier buildings on the site;
- Late Victorian 2-storey artisan terraced cottages - these dominate in terms of numbers and were mostly constructed off the High Street on new sites.



Fig. 14 Early buildings typically modest in scale



Fig. 15 Tall late 19th Arts and Crafts (left) dominating their neighbours opposite

In addition, there are various former industrial, commercial and service buildings, mainly located behind the High Street.



Fig. 17 Service buildings behind High Street



Fig. 16 Typical early 20th century terrace housing, Sparkhayes Lane

3.3 GREEN SPACE

Porlock is surrounded by wooded hills on three sides. The large open green spaces to the south of the main village comprising, the recreation ground, allotment gardens and cemetery are therefore key areas. Within the village, the churchyard provides a central focal point.

The settlement insert maps to the Local Plan (2011) show those areas identified as important and where development that would harm the public amenity value or character of the settlement will not be permitted.



Fig. 18 recreation ground with woodland beyond

3.4 VIEWS

Despite its coastal location, and exceptional quality of the countryside in the hinterland, the topography of Porlock does not especially lend itself to long views or sweeping vistas. Most views are linear following the streets and framed by buildings on both sides. Within the village, there are good views along all the streets framed by historic buildings and occasionally backed by the distinctive shingled spire of St Dubricius' Church or the hills beyond. The west end of the Conservation Area has views out to sea which can also be seen from further up Hawkcombe Valley.



Fig. 19 Wooded hills behind Porlock for a pleasant backdrop to the village

4. Architectural Quality and Built Form

4.1 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

There are two main types of buildings that contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.

Firstly, there are the local landmark buildings of historic, architectural or townscape importance, either prominently placed in the street scene, or contained within a well-defined setting. These include, the Doverhay Manor House, the Parish Church, the Methodist Chapel, the Old Rectory and several of the inns, for example the Ship Inn, the Castle Hotel and Lorna Doone Hotel.

Secondly, there are the principal town centre street-frontage domestic and commercial buildings which have a group value. These exhibit a wide range of frontage character and are mainly of 17th to 19th century origin and most have two-storey elevations, with a few of three-storeys or having second floor dormers. They also fall into two main categories, comprising traditional buildings with vernacular features, such as the Old Rose & Crown in High Street facing the Parish Church and, in the case of those dating from the late 19th century, they often exhibit a more eclectic mix of materials and styles, such as the row along Porlock Weir Road.

4.1.1 Village centre

Many domestic buildings, from the earliest, dating to the 16th century, to the early 20th century, have a contrasting mixture of period detail and ornament. This ranges from the traditional rendered stone rubble or cob with thatched roofs, to an eclectic mix of materials used in buildings of the late 19th to early 20th century often incorporating of tile and slate-hanging, roughcast render, mock timber framing, and a wide variety glazing patterns - some with stained glass. Whilst render and exposed local sandstone finishes predominate, brick is also used, normally as dressings to 19th century domestic or former industrial buildings (for example, the former tannery). The characteristic tall stacks, are both round and square in section, and usually shouldered at first floor level, are either of exposed stone or render. Some have alternative chimney tops, for example a square stone slab raised on corner stones or bricks, or slates forming an apex with openings at each end.

There is sometimes a stark contrast in materials, building form, scale and architectural detail. This mainly results from development that took place in the latter half of the 19th century when demolition of earlier structures and boldly conceived replacements was not considered inappropriate. The loss of antiquity was lamented at the time, and has caused a loss of visual cohesion. Nevertheless, although no particular architectural type is prevalent, the diversity seen in the frontages of the main streets can now be considered a special characteristic of the village.



Fig. 20 13th century Church of St. Dubricius

The earliest surviving building in Porlock is the **Parish Church of St. Dubricius** (Fig. 20). Much of the building, including the tower dates from the 13th-early 14th century, with a 15th century porch. There was a major restoration to the designs of J.D. Sedding in the late 19th century with stained glass by E. Buckle added. The tower is said to contain a 17th century ladder to the bell chamber, and the truncated shingled spire is generally thought to have suffered damage during the big storm of 1703, recorded by Daniel Defoe. Most notable of the church monuments is to Sir John and Lady Elizabeth Harrington (Fig.1). A historic summary of the church was carried out by Jerry Sampson as part of the Dig Porlock project. A copy of this report is in the National Parks Historic Environment Record.



Fig. 21 Medieval Chantry Cottage, one of the earliest domestic buildings in Porlock

The dwelling for the priests' serving the Harrington Chantry set up in Sir John's Will and licensed in 1474 survives as **Chantry Cottage** (Fig. 21) situated on the opposite side of the path known as the Drang, just to the east of the church. Chantry Cottage is rendered over rubble with a double-Roman tiled roof. The original plan was a two-cell building with cross-passage. The central chamfered four centre arched door-frame is undoubtedly early (probably 16th century) and there is a first floor stone lancet and cinquefoil-headed single-light window to the left. To the rear there is an added cross-wing with outshot under a pantiled roof. A survey of Chantry Cottage was completed by the SANHS Building Research Group. Late medieval features recorded include front doorway, stone window with cinquefoil head, rear doorway, beams, jointed cruck roof timbers and fireplaces.



Fig. 22 Old Rose and Crown, former inn occupying key position

Opposite the churchyard, in a prominent position in the High Street, is the **Old Rose & Crown** (Fig. 22) dating from the 17th century. The left part appears to be two-cell with cross-passage and store-room; that to the right apparently three-cell with cross-passage. Together the pair comprise a fine vernacular frontage of seven bays of rendered stone and cob with thatched roof and two prominent front lateral stacks. The frontage windows are mainly timber casement of the 19th or 20th century, but the left return has a 19th century six-pane sash window at first floor level.



Fig. 23 Rear elevation of former rectory.

South of the Parish Church is the former **Rectory** (Fig.23), built of local red sandstone with steeply pitched slate roofs. The original plan dates from the 16th century and appears to be three-cell with a two-cell addition. It was considerably extended in the early 18th century and again in the mid 19th century. The segmental arched and tri-partite sash windows with narrow glazing bars, are mainly 19th century. The listing also includes the wall enclosing the garden to the north.

West of the church and occupying a prominent position are **Overstream** and **Reines House/Burley Cottage**, almost certainly by the same architect and both probably purpose built as boarding houses c.1900. They retain some good original detail and help to close the space opened up when a terrace of cottages adjoining the churchyard was demolished in the latter half of the 19th century.



Fig. 24 Lowerbourne Terrace - part of the terrace rows off the High Street.

To the north-east of the church, and hidden behind the High Street, is the distinct enclave of five short terraces dating from the mid 19th to early 20th century. These terrace rows are constructed of a range of materials including, local sandstone and brick dressings, some render and originally with natural slate roofs, although many have since been repaired with artificial slate. Bond's Row retains some original frontage detail, enhanced by attractive front gardens. Most have segmental arched openings, and where original windows survive, they are mostly timber casements with thin glazing bars. uPVC windows are beginning to dominate, especially on Bond's Row which no longer appear to contain any original or timber windows.

The eastern part of High Street contains several significant buildings. The former **Methodist Chapel** (Fig. 25) was built in 1837 and served for 90 years. Despite being out of use since 1927, the façade, typical of chapels of the period, is still recognisable, although the later 20th century additions to building have not enhanced the building recent works to the bay window have improved its appearance since the previous appraisal. The front elevation of the adjoining **Bramdown** (Fig. 26) has a puzzling array of architectural styles to its windows and a date plaque reading '1629 as' set low on the wall and presumably salvaged from an earlier building. To the rear are a number of converted service buildings that have unfortunately lost much of their character.



Fig.25 Former Methodist Chapel of 1837



Fig.26 Bramdown - eclectic collection of architectural features

Off the High Street, Sparkhayes Lane contains another range of service buildings, including the former **Malthouse**, and 19th terraces. Externally **Sparkhayes House** (Fig. 27) looks like an early 19th century pair of cottages, but could well have origins as an earlier farmhouse.



Fig.27 Sparkhayes House, 19th century or earlier

Back on the High Street, on a curve of the road is the dominant **Lorna Doone Hotel** (Fig. 28) - three-storey with the second floor in large projecting gables and smaller central gables. The present building, mainly of brick with a slate roof dates from the early 20th century and replaced an inn known as the Three Horse Shoes. Next door, **The Royal Oak** (Fig. 28) survives, its twin rendered gables fronting the street; the left hand gable has a date plaque 'A.H 1704'.



Fig.28 Lorna Doone Hotel (left) and The Royal Oak (right)

On the opposite side of the street almost all the buildings are of interest. Most have good 19th century frontages, some of which conceal earlier buildings. Two retain something closer to their original 17th century elevations, **Westmead** (Fig 65) and **Green Dolphin Cottage** (next to Lowerbourne) (Fig. 29) have front lateral stacks, the lowered gable dormers indicating that the currently double-Roman tiled roofs would have formerly been thatched.



Fig.29 Green Dolphin Cottage - 17th house with lateral (front) chimney stack

The western part of the High Street has similarly good groups of buildings. The **Methodist Chapel** (Fig. 30) dating from 1927 is built of rock-faced squared-off red sandstone with ashlar Bath stone dressings. There are Art Nouveau touches, including concave pinnacles. The tall range of late 19th 'Arts and Crafts' shops (Fig. 15) to the east of the chapel survive remarkably intact, including four-centre arched openings, ornamental timber-framing, brown and cream ceramic tiles and a distinctive pattern of glazing, including doors.



Fig.30 Methodist Chapel, dominant building along this part of the High Street

To the rear of this part of High Street are the extensive **former Tannery buildings** (Fig. 2), originating from the mid 19th century and now in mixed commercial and residential use. They are built mainly of stone with brick segmental arch openings and some weatherboarding. Adjoining, around a courtyard, **Miles Coffee & Tea Merchants** occupy a late 19th century stone and brick-built one or two-storey group with replacement timber casement windows (Fig. 31).



Fig.31 Former industrial buildings behind the High Street

On the west side of the Methodist Chapel is **Myrtle Cottage** (Fig. 32), in 2015 the building was surveyed by the SANHS Building Research Group (Exmoor and West Somerset). The building has a three room plan with cross passage, with a stair turret to one side of the cross passage at the rear. The front elevation includes a lateral stack featuring two fire badges and an inscription (ano dm 1604). Internally, several beams have deep chamfers (one known to have scroll stops) and there is a bread oven in the main fireplace, which has burn marks on the timber bressumer across the opening. The large doorway is constructed of two planks and has other features suggesting it has a date of the 17th Century. More recent alterations and repairs have obscured any older timbers in the roofspace. The layout and features of the property suggest a house of the early 1600s. The building was subject to a fire in 1903.

The inscription on the Arts and Crafts style porch to the attached Frasier's (Fig. 33) claims that this building was constructed in 1573, but externally the porch, erected in 1903, appears the most interesting element of the building.



Fig. 32 Myrtle Cottage - 17th century or earlier



Fig. 33 Frasier's

On the south side of the High Street, the most prominent building is the **Castle Hotel** (Fig. 34) a lavish 1891 replacement of an earlier inn, with an Arts & Crafts influence of ornate timber detail and original small-pane casement windows. Adjoining is **Laurels** (Fig. 35) a broad fronted house, rendered with slate roof, probably dating from the late 18th century or earlier, with external double-shouldered stack on the end elevation. The bay windows and porch are later 19th century additions.



Fig. 34 Castle Hotel - replaced earlier inn.



Fig. 35 Laurels - 18th century and later.

The south side of this section of High Street also contains a good 17th -19th century group with largely original frontages. This includes the **Post Office** with a c.1930 enamel fronted letter box (fig.77). Nearby is a late 17th-early 18th century house known as **Chimney Cottage/Keyscott** (Fig. 36) with a square-section front lateral stack.



Fig. 36 Chimney Cottage/Keyscott - formerly a single dwelling

4.1.2 Doverhay

Doverhay contains some of the most historically and architecturally interesting buildings in Porlock.

Fronting the High Street, **Dover Court House** (Fig. 37) is a substantial dwelling, rendered and probably dating to the late 18th or early 19th century. The façade is symmetrical and notable for its large central first floor bay window covered by a small extension to the main slate roof. Adjacent, **West End Cottage** and **East Cottage**, make an important contribution to the street scene at this entry point to the village centre and are probably contemporary with Dover Court House. Higher up the hill, **Ye Olde Cottage** (Fig. 38), is a very early building much obscured by later alteration. A survey was undertaken in September 2014 by the SANHS Building Research Group (Exmoor and West Somerset). The may originally have been of one room, or with a cross passage in line with the current front door. The walls are of cob above a stone plinth. The interior features evidence for cruck and jointed cruck framing and a fireplace which includes a window to at least one side, with a lateral stack facing the road in front of the property. The remains of the original roof structure include heavy smoke blackening. It is thought the house dates to the late 15th or early 16th Century, with the chimney possibly added as late as the 17th Century. A secondary roof structure may have also been added to the property at this time.



Fig. 37 Dover Court House - large 18th/early 19th house



Fig. 38 Ye Olde Cottage - extensively modernised.

On the opposite side of the road, **The Oaks Hotel** (Fig. 39) occupies a commanding position and is set within large gardens. A smaller building is shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map (c.1905) and the present hotel, with its central projecting bay, looks predominantly 1920s Arts and Crafts style. Below the hotel, **1** and **2 The Elms** are also worthy of note, this sturdy pair of late 19th century houses, built of stone with brick dressings, largely retain their original frontage of sash windows and panelled doors.



Fig. 39 The Oaks Hotel, early 20th century Arts and Crafts

Next door is **Doverhay Manor House** (Fig. 40). This dates from the late 15th century and extended in the 17th century. A noteworthy feature is the eight-light mullioned and transomed Perpendicular window. The tracery contains small circles in the spandrels of the ogee arches. Pevsner states these 'are typical of churches in this neighbourhood.' Also notable is the three-bay arch-braced roof and moulded wall-plate; a fine ogee-headed fireplace lintel supported on shaped corbels, and a stone newel stair. There was an extensive restoration in 1883 by Edmund Buckle, at the expense of Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healy.



Fig. 40 Doverhay Manor House - key building in Porlock

Adjacent to the Manor House is a single storey former smithy, now the **Doverhay Forge** (Fig. 41), dating from the mid 19th century. The street frontage retains some of its character although the flat roofed extension to the north end strikes a discordant note.



Fig. 41 Doverhay Forge, now gallery.



Fig. 42 Little House and Laurels Cottage

Opposite the former smithy is a cottage pair, known as **Laurels Cottage** and **Little House** (Fig. 42), probably 18th century or earlier. Little House appears to have been re-orientated to front the street and is rendered with a slate roof, the tall end-stack becoming a lateral stack. The Laurels is set back from the street and overlooks the car park. It is thatched and rendered with swept dormers, timber casements and end axial stack.



Fig. 43 Gables Hotel - 17th cottage with 19th century cottage ornee makeover

The **Gables Hotel** (Fig. 43) is set back off, and gable end-on to, the road. It has its origins as a 17th century cottage, probably three-cell with cross passage, with lateral stone stack on the south front. It was enlarged and re-fronted in the mid 19th century in a picturesque gothic style with a red sandstone service wing with brick dressings added. The roofs are thatched and the timber casements have trefoil lights and leading, and there are bargeboarded gables with decorative cornices.



Fig. 44 Doverhay House - 17th century with similar treatment to The Gables.

Fronting the road, **Doverhay House** (Fig. 44), forms an L-shape plan on a corner site and was probably a 17th century pair of thatched cottages, also given a mid 19th century picturesque makeover to comprise a house with adjoining lodge. . Beyond and linked is **Doverhay Cottage**, again 17th century, and originally two-cell with cross-passage, though much altered, probably in the first half of the 20th century. There is a thatched roof with overhanging eaves supported on iron brackets and a pair of ground floor leaded-light iron casement windows, probably dating from the late 18th century, although these are obscured from the road by an abutting red sandstone wall.

On the opposite side of the road is another cottage pair **Locks Cottage** and **Stag Cottage**, the former thatched, probably of 17th century origin; the latter, early-mid 19th century with stone segmental arched openings, and small-pane casement windows.



Fig. 45 Lower Doverhay Farm



Fig. 46 Higher Doverhay Farm

Further up the lane are two farms probably dating to the 16th-17th century. **Lower Doverhay** (Fig. 45) is a 3-bay cross passage farmhouse with lateral stack, rubblestone and Roman tile roof. There are later extensions to north end and an attached barn at the south end. **Higher Doverhay** (Fig. 46) is of a similar plan-form and materials but retains many of its original features. There are three associated historic farm buildings, including the barn attached to the east of the farmhouse.

4.1.3 West end/Porlock Hill

The western edge of the conservation area also contains several key buildings. There is a notable group where the High Street splits north into Porlock Weir Road and South into Porlock Hill and the Toll Road. At the lower end of Porlock Hill, close to the junction with High Street is **The Ship Inn** (Fig. 47), a renowned building following its association with Robert Southey where he was 'by the unwelcome summer rain confined...' The inn is a typical example of the local vernacular style with thatched roof and originally dates from the 16th-17th century but was altered and enlarged in the early-mid 19th century. There is a small trefoil-headed timber window, reset but probably of 16th century origin. Now an annexe, the **former Ship Inn stables** date from the 19th century and have first floor sash windows with narrow glazing bars. The ground floor has brick segmental arched openings, one wide with timber double doors. Further up the hill, **1 and 2 Ship Cottages** (Fig. 48) are also of interest – the tall rear stack suggests possible 18th century origins..



Fig. 47 The Ship Inn and stables - 16th century and later



Fig. 48 Ships Cottages, possible 18th or early 19th century.

Just to the east of the Ship Inn, **Holmdale** (Fig. 49), rendered with Bridgwater tile roof and rear shouldered stack, is probably late 18th century or earlier. There is a four-panelled entrance door with twin lights above and a flat hood timber porch with shallow arch, probably also early 19th century. The frontage was originally symmetrical, typical of the period, but there is an added bay to the left. The ground floor windows are 19th century tri-partite sashes, the first floor casements, later.



Fig. 49 Holmdale - roof suggests it was formerly thatched

To the west and opposite The Ship, **The Village Hall** (Fig. 50), built 1925 and described by Pevsner as 'quite a plain uninteresting building', was wrongly attributed by Pevsner to CFA Voysey who was active in the area, mainly on the estate of Lord Lovelace.

The building is attributed to FW Roberts and JH Willman in the Pevsner Buildings of England series. The roof mounted solar panels are particularly harmful to the building's appearance.



Fig. 50 The village hall, is not by noted architect Voysey.

Fronting Porlock Weir Road, is an impressive group of 19th century frontages, again with some Arts & Crafts features, and possibly incorporating some 18th century buildings (Fig. 51). Elevational detail is varied with timber sash and casement windows, some four centred stone arched openings with stone mullions, and elsewhere, moulded frames with decorative glazing patterns. Opposite is the **former Primary School**, (now a library/resource centre) (Fig. 5), dating from the mid-late 19th century with a later extension (early 20th century) built of randomly coursed local sandstone with slate roof.



Fig. 51 Terrace row fronting Porlock Weir Road

Further along the road, **Splatt Barn Cottage** (Fig. 52) is notable for its large shouldered end stack. Unfortunately, the building lost much of its character and any surviving early fabric during renovation works in 2013.



Fig. 52 Splatt Barn Cottage



Fig. 53. Court Place Farmhouse - north elevation

Set in the triangle of land between the Toll Road and Porlock Weir Road, the imposing **Court Place Farmhouse** (Fig. 53) is early 19th century in date but occupies the site of an earlier, probably medieval building. The current building has a double-depth plan and is built of local sandstone with buff coloured stone dressings. To the west there is an impressive range of farm buildings which appear mainly contemporary or slightly earlier in date.

At the bottom of Porlock Hill, **Nos 2-16 Redway** (Fig. 54) is a stepped terrace comprising two blocks of four cottages built of local sandstone with brick dressings. The cottages are likely to date to the 1920s and largely retain their original fenestration including the distinctive glazing bars to the ground floor windows (also see The Poplars, Hawkcombe Fig.67). There are however a number of upvc replacements and a poorly placed solar PV panel which have degraded the appearance of the row since the last appraisal.



Fig. 54 2-16 Redway - at bottom of Porlock Hill

Between the Toll Road and bottom of the hill are a small group of large 1920s detached houses occupying a key position at the entry to the village and which contribute positively to the character of the settlement.

4.1.4 Hawkcombe/Parsons Street

Parsons Street contains several character buildings. The **former Victoria Church Rooms** (Fig. 55) commemorating the 1897 diamond jubilee, and is an interesting mixture of neo-vernacular with front projecting round stack and Arts & Crafts detail with oriel window, eaves timber ornament, diamond pane leaded-light casement windows and date plaque. casement windows and date plaque.



Fig. 55 Victoria Church Rooms - tall front stack reflects earlier buildings

Opposite the recreation ground is a good group including two thatched cottages, one end on, and both of 18th century or earlier date. Between is the **James Huish & Sons** (Fig. 56), former builder's yard, an exceptional survival of a late 19th century commercial group with original timber and glazing detail incorporating windows reclaimed from Ashley Combe House.



Fig. 56
Former
James Huish
workshops -
sensitively
restored

Attached is a short terrace of three thatched cottages, **Old Thatch**, **Little Thatch** and **Smallpiece** (Fig. 57) which are probably 18th century in date. Also noteworthy is **Japonica Cottage** (Fig. 58) a typical early 18th century thatched cottage, with 'eyebrow' dormers, painted stone rubble and shouldered front lateral stack which has recently been unsympathetically extended.



Fig. 57 Terrace row of three cottages



Fig. 58 Japonica - poorly conceived 21st century extension of unlisted 18th century cottage

As Parsons Street climbs and the valley narrows, almost all the buildings in this part of the Conservation Area are considered to have special character. Most cottage groups appear to be 19th century refurbishments of earlier properties. **Whitehall House** (Fig. 59), for example, claims to date from 1661, which would fit with the large lateral stack, and **Mill House** with an axial projecting stack, suggests an 18th century or earlier date. In a wooded setting, the two-storey **Water Mill** buildings (Fig. 60) with restored overshot wooden wheel date from the 19th to the early 20th century but may have earlier origins. Built of stone rubble throughout, the later wing has lowered dormers, and timber casement windows with narrow glazing bars.



Fig. 59 Whitehall House



Fig. 60 Water mill buildings

The Poplars (Fig. 61) is an early 20th century two-storey terrace of six houses (with two later added to west end), in an Arts and Crafts cottage style with front access by footpath only and positioned to look down the valley towards Porlock. Probably dating from c.1910 they are mainly rendered with Bridgwater tiled roofs. Windows are timber casement, and have an inset diamond light to the ground floor, and two or three-light first floor windows, with some lowered pent-roofed dormers. There are several original doors of narrow planks set in a frame. Again, uPVC windows are being brought to make inroads and are spoiling the appearance of the row.



Fig. 61 The Poplars - early 20th century terrace row with views down the valley

At the south end of Hawkcombe perched high on the east side and set apart from the terraced cottages below is the substantial 3-story late 19th century detached house **Glen Lodge** (Fig. 62). The house is stone with brick dressings and an asymmetrical steeply pitched hipped roof punctuated by large gabled dormers with a large full height dormer to take advantage of the views down the valley. Lower down are the former stables while the other side of the stream are three terrace rows of cottages and some semi-detached houses dating to the early 20th century, mostly of exposed stone with brick dressings and slate roofs, but with some (slightly later in date) rendered.



Fig. 62 Victorian Glen Lodge in wooded setting



Fig. 63 Terrace row at Hawkcombe

4.2 MATERIALS

4.2.1 Walls

Stone is the predominant building material within the Conservation Area. There are two main types: the soft-textured and orange to reddish-purple New Red Sandstone; and the more common much harder dark red, grey or greenish Devonian sandstone. Although usually laid as randomly coursed rubble, these stone types are occasionally used in squared blocks and sometimes ashlar. Both varieties have been used in the Parish Church.

Much of the building stone would have been obtained from local quarries, some of which are shown on the earlier edition Ordnance Survey maps, for example around Doverhay and Hawkcombe. In many mid 19th and early 20th century buildings the stone is combined with brick dressings probably originating from Wellington. Brick is also often used for chimney stacks.



Fig. 64 Contemporaneous buildings given different treatments

Much of the stone is left exposed, especially on outbuildings and walls, but on earlier houses this is likely to have formerly been limewashed. Render over the stone or cob is also used. A lime-mortar based render covered with lime-wash and black tar banded plinth was the original combination, and still gives the most pleasing result. By the early 20th century cement based renders begin to be used.

4.2.2 Roofs

Bridgwater double Roman tile roofs are commonplace in Porlock. Natural slate roofs are also widely found, although many have been re-roofed with artificial slate and there are also a few concrete tile replacements. Up until the 19th century, thatch would have predominated but fear of fire, the increasing availability of slate and tile and the rebuilding of earlier buildings in the late 19th-early 20th century mean that its use declined. It is, however, still a feature, with a significant group of thatched houses at the junction of Doverhay and The Drang. Originally, the thatch used would have been combed wheat reed, sourced locally, but in recent years, this has been under threat from the non-indigenous water reed, much of which is now imported from Eastern Europe.



Fig. 65 Many former thatched roofs are now tiled, High Street

4.2.3 Windows and doors

Historic windows in the conservation area are a mixture of casement and sash. Some of the former are of iron with rectangular or diamond leaded light panes, and set in timber frames. The latter are nearly all double-hung sashes and more commonly used in buildings from the mid 19th century onwards. The use of uPVC is becoming more prevalent.



Fig. 66 Early 20th century inset diamond pattern window, The Poplars



Fig. 67 uPVC windows to Redway. Piecemeal changes negatively impact these rows

Most doors are constructed in a traditional plank and ledged form, some with fixed lights, others with examples of Arts & Crafts detail. The relatively few panelled doors with fanlights above are more commonly found in houses dating from the late 18th to early 20th century. A few of the earlier openings have large oak frames, and are jointed with pegs or chamfered with stops. A good example is the door-frame of **Chantry Cottage** (Fig. 69) which is possibly of medieval origin. Many shop-fronts are traditional in style with such features as sign-written fascia with cornice, flanking pilasters, console brackets, and recessed doorways. Relatively few have suffered modern replacement.



Fig. 68 (above) Traditional style shopfronts along High Street



Fig. 69 (right) 16th doorway to Chantry Cottage

4.3 OTHER FEATURES OF INTEREST

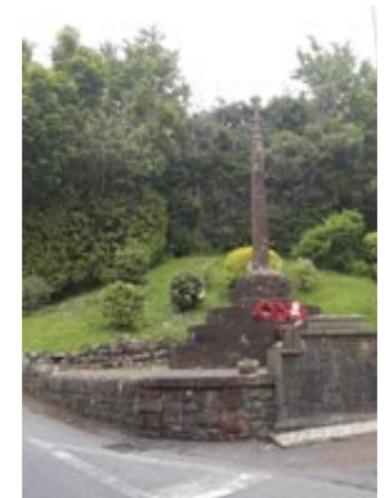
Within the churchyard is a 15th century **Cross** (Fig. 70). The original octagonal steps and shaft remain, but the upper portion was restored and surmounted by a cross around 1890. The churchyard also contains a number of mainly 18th and 19th century tombstones.

The village **war memorial** (Fig. 71) at the Dunster Steep road junction is similar in form to the churchyard cross but with a large inscription tablet listing the names of the fallen from both World Wars.



Fig. 70 (left) Churchyard cross

Fig. 71 (below) Porlock War Memorial, Dunster Steep



5. Street Scene

5.1 BOUNDARIES

There are considerable stretches of boundary walling in Porlock of local sandstone, and to a lesser extent of brick. Some of this exceeds two metres in height, with notable stretches enclosing part of The Drang and walled garden areas to the south of the Parish Church. Although mortar is normally used, some walling is of the locally distinctive dry-stone pattern known as dyking (Fig. 72). This adds a pleasing contrast to the more widespread use of random rubble or regular courses.



Fig. 72 Dyke stone walling in Hawkcombe

Walling makes a valuable contribution to the character of the conservation area, as well as providing a strong sense of enclosure or privacy in several cases. It also provides the opportunity for some special features or fine detailing especially at entry points, including gate piers. There are a number of good examples in Doverhay.

Metal railings and gates form boundary features in several locations within the Conservation Area, and are quite extensively used. Some examples are of wrought iron, although most are late 19th century cast iron, and often incorporate matching gates into the original design. There are good examples of more recent iron-work, for example, bordering the churchyard.



Fig. 73 Wrought iron railings are found throughout Porlock

5.2 GROUNDSCAPE

Porlock has several locations where surfaces are cobbled, much of which is on forecourt or private land. One of the best examples is along the frontage of the Castle Hotel where small water-worn cobbles have been used. A further example is to the side and rear of the Old Rose and Crown. Others can be found at the gatehouse entrance to the Rectory, and within the grounds of The Gables. The use of pale terracotta stable blocks is a feature of several sections of pavement in High Street (Fig. 74), in refreshing contrast to the otherwise ubiquitous asphalt. Originally dating from the late 19th century, some appear to be recent replacements. Whilst the majority of kerbstones are concrete, a few lengths of natural stone still survive.

5.3 STREET FURNITURE

There are relatively few examples of historic street furniture in Porlock. There are three K6 telephone kiosks within the Conservation Area: at Hawkcombe; the corner of Englands Road; and outside the village hall. All are at risk of removal and the phone equipment has already been removed from two. Also of interest is the George V wall mounted letterbox at Hawkcombe and the George VI example (Fig. 76) with enamel insert at the Post Office on the High Street.

Most signage is modern and unremarkable although there is a good example of a hand painted sign to Porlock Cemetery. Also of note, although of no great age, are the Somerset County Council street lamps (Fig. 76) which are not overly obtrusive.



Fig. 74 Terracotta tiles, High Street



Fig. 75 (above) red K6 box in Hawkcombe now houses a community notice board

Fig. 76 (right) George VI letterbox, High Street



5.4 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

The landscape setting of Porlock is quite dramatic, as indicated by distant views of the village against the backdrop of Exmoor. Within the conservation area itself, outward views and glimpses vary greatly. Around the centre of the village, and especially in Doverhay, proximity to the coastline is evident with some glimpses of the sea from the gentle slope towards Porlock Bay. At the same time, the village is in an enclosed hollow with a hill spur rising to around 70 m to the east, and the much steeper and higher slopes of Porlock Hill which sweep down to the shore north-west of Porlock Weir. These form an extensive wooded backdrop, which is the main characteristic of the setting. The spur of the Conservation Area towards Hawkcombe follows the gradually narrowing valley floor, which at the southern end is a typical Exmoorcombe with the sound of fast flowing water.

Mature trees are a locally important landscape feature in several locations within the Conservation Area. This is especially the case on the slopes immediately to the west of Parsons Street where there is a mix of deciduous and conifer species, and immediately to the east of Doverhay, where there is a prominent group of oaks. The garden of remembrance includes 13 trees commemorating the number of fallen from the parish in the Second World War. Other notable trees are the two yews within the churchyard (Fig. 77) that are classified as 'Ancient Trees'.



Fig. 77 Ancient yew in churchyard

As highlighted in the Local Plan, 'the Recreation Ground and adjacent open land are important elements in the landscape context of the village,' and are included in a proposal to extend the Conservation Area. The character of the Conservation Area, and outward views from within are closely related to the extensive wooded slopes to the south and east, and to the west. These mostly consist of naturalised oak, but with several significant conifer stands. Some have special landscape conservation status, for example the slopes of Hawkcombe, which are classified as part of the Exmoor & Quantock oak woods.

6. Condition Assessment

6.1 CURRENT CONDITION

The large majority of historic buildings, both listed and unlisted, are generally well-maintained and appear to be in a structurally sound condition. The greatest threat, especially to the latter, is the removal of timber doors and windows, some of which undoubtedly are or were contemporary with the original building. Their gradual loss is highly detrimental to the character of the conservation area. A detailed assessment of the window material across Porlock has recently been carried out which shows uPVC windows are becoming prevalent, especially on the east end of the High Street.

There is, nevertheless, a generally a good survival rate of timber windows, mainly sash or casement on the main frontages and normally casements in dormers. Whilst the standard of upkeep throughout is generally good, retention of original frontage detail inevitably brings problems of maintenance. It is acknowledged that repair or restoration of period joinery and other forms of detail can be costly and time consuming and may need specialist advice, but invariably repays the effort involved. Apart from the few window frames and sills in somewhat poor condition, much original joinery is still sound and is distinctive and well crafted. Some recent door replacements in particular fail to respect the local joinery tradition. There is an understandable wish to use convenient and maintenance free materials in place of traditional joinery, but these are invariably visually inferior. Unlisted buildings are especially vulnerable yet their group value is often of significant importance

in the street scene. The former Tannery buildings, for example have recently had uPVC windows installed. The rows of Arts and Crafts buildings such as Redway and Poplars are especially vulnerable to this change and uPVC is beginning to make inroads to these rows.

No instances of serious structural deterioration of street frontage elevations were noted and there does not appear to have been a significant change since the last appraisal (2013) however, it is apparent that vehicle damage may be becoming more frequent with damage to shop front and walls where roads narrow.



Fig. 78 Damage to wall presumably cause by vehicles



Fig. 79 Damage to shop front caused by vehicle

Some walls to buildings are out of vertical alignment, but this can be due either to age or use of materials (e.g. cob) and is not necessarily a sign of structural weakness. There appear to be a few localised instances of maintenance problems with gutters and down-pipes. Owners should be aware that in the case of listed buildings, cast iron rainwater goods should be fitted in any restoration work. Some recently applied coating and rendering appears impermeable, preventing walls originally built using traditional methods from ‘breathing.’ This can lead to poor bonding and ultimately, where the underlying material is cob, to a risk of structural failure. Use of lime-wash and lime render is recommended to prevent any possible adverse affects.

Some deterioration of brick or stone boundary walls is noted in a few locations within the Conservation Area, for example a retaining wall to the car park at Doverhay. This is often due to too high a proportion of cement mix in mortar, which will often accelerate erosion of less durable types of both brick and stone, especially the softer varieties of local red sandstone or liassic limestone. In the case of these materials, specialist advice should be sought before any repairs are undertaken. A renewed source of small quantities of one of the better quality local sandstones would be beneficial when carrying out repairs to stone walling.

The car park area also suffers from street clutter, and in particular an unnecessary amount of signage and overhead power and phone lines can be detracting



Fig.80. Overhead lines to Doverhay

The table below contains a more detailed condition assessment. The headings are based on English Heritage’s Conservation Areas Condition Survey (2008).

1. Designated Conservation Area name:	Porlock				
2. Locality	West Somerset				
3. Is the Conservation Area:	Predominantly urban	Predominantly suburban	Predominantly rural	Other (Please specify)	
4. Is the Conservation Area:	Predominantly residential	Predominantly industrial	Predominantly commercial	Wide mix of uses	Other (Please specify)
5. How large is the Conservation Area?	Less than 2 ha (approx 140m x140m)	2.1- 50 ha	More than 50 ha (½ sq km)	Don't know	
6. Approximately how many buildings are in the Conservation Area:	None	Up to 50	51 to 250	251+	Don't know
7. Approximately how many listed buildings are in the Conservation Area:	None	Up to 10	11 to 50	51+	Don't know
8. Approximately how many locally listed buildings are in the Conservation Area:	None				

9. Does the Conservation Area include one or more scheduled monuments?	Yes	No	Don't know		
10. Is all or part of the Conservation Area covered by another heritage designation?	None	Registered Park and Garden	World Heritage Site	Registered Battlefield	Other
11. Has an Article 4 Direction been implemented?	Yes	No			
12. Are you aware of any unauthorised works that have been carried out in the last 3 years which have harmed the special interest, significance and/or character of the Conservation Area?	Yes	No			
13. Has the Local Authority taken any enforcement action against such works in the past 3 years?	Yes	No	Don't know		
14. Does the Local Authority have a Conservation Area Advisory Panel/ Committee specific to this Conservation Area?	Yes	No			
15. Does the Conservation Area have any listed buildings or any other historic assets on either the English Heritage or a local <i>Heritage at Risk</i> Register?	Yes	No			
Please give your impression of whether the following issues affect the special interest, significance and/or character of the Conservation Area:					
16. Loss of historic detail or inappropriate change:	1. Not a problem at all	2. A minor problem	3. A noticeable problem	4. A significant problem	
● Doors and windows			X		
● Front elevation (e.g. painting, porches, rendering)	X				
● Decorative features/materials (e.g. stonework, rainwater goods)	X				
● Shopfronts	X				

	1. Not a problem at all	2. A minor problem	3. A noticeable problem	4. A significant problem
● Signs and advertisements	X			
● Roof coverings and chimneys (including rooflights)	X			
● Boundary walls/fences	X			
● Hardstandings	X			
● Satellite dishes (including CCTV and antennae)	X			
● Renewable energy devices	X			
● New extensions/alterations	X			
● Development/redevelopment (e.g. subdivision, infill)	X			
● Other (specify)				
Neglect				
17. Vacancies within buildings:	1. Not a problem at all	2. A minor problem	3. A noticeable problem	4. A significant problem
18. Severe dereliction of buildings:	1. Not a problem at all	2. A minor problem	3. A noticeable problem	4. A significant problem
19. Signs of a lack of maintenance such as poorly maintained gutters or joinery:	1. Not a problem at all	2. A minor problem	3. A noticeable problem	4. A significant problem
20. The condition of the public realm:	1. Not a problem at all	2. A minor problem	3. A noticeable problem	4. A significant problem
21. Are there any other factors that are threatening the historic character of the Conservation Area?	Traffic through the centre causing damage to buildings			
Based on your answers, the score would suggest the condition of the Conservation Area is: Very bad (1 or more questions answered 'A significant problem') Very bad (3 or more questions answered 'A noticeable problem') Poor (1 or 2 questions answered 'A noticeable problem') Fair (2 or more questions answered 'A minor problem') Optimal (One question answered 'A minor problem', or no problems selected)				

CONDITION ASSESSMENT

6.2 VULNERABILITY

Porlock has long been popular as a tourist centre. It is the main settlement close to one of the more accessible sections of coastline within the National Park and the local beauty spot of Porlock Weir. As a major destination for tourists, it is important that the several factors that are tending to cause a loss of character within the conservation area should be addressed:

- conflict between vehicles and pedestrians in the narrow main streets
- a threat to some buildings as a result of over-commercialisation.
- relatively poor condition of some road and footpath surfaces.
- the loss of authentic period detail - there are several examples of unsuitably proportioned doors and windows in non-traditional materials.
- some areas where signage could be better co-ordinated or presented.

Overhead powerlines to upper Doverhay are present and continue to be visually obtrusive.

Having regard to these issues, and the vulnerability of some aspects of the townscape character of Porlock, a conservation management plan is recommended. This approach is encouraged in Power of Place 'to develop a methodology for evaluating significance and identifying opportunities and constraints.'

The table below contains a more detailed risk assessment. The headings are based on English Heritage's Conservation Areas Condition Survey (2008).

RISK ASSESSMENT

22. Does the Conservation Area have a current, adopted Conservation Area Character Appraisal?	Yes	No
23. Does the Conservation Area have a current Management Plan (usually part of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal) or other formally adopted proposals to preserve or enhance its character?	Yes	No
24. Does the Local Authority have an adopted Local Development Framework Document that contains objectives and policies which would safeguard the historic character and appearance of Conservation Areas and their settings?	Yes	No or in part
25. Is there evidence of community support in the area, for example a residents' association or civic society?	Yes	No
26. Relative to the size of this Conservation Area, are there any major development proposals imminent which could threaten the historic interest of the area?	Yes	No

Based on the answers to question 4, 5 and 28-32, the score would suggest that the vulnerability of the Conservation Area is considered:

≥5: High
3-4: Medium
0-2: Low

INITIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Based on the answers you have provided considering the condition and vulnerability of the Conservation Area, the initial risk to the Conservation Area is assessed as:

Not at risk:

- Condition optimal and any vulnerability
- **Condition fair and any vulnerability**
- Condition poor and vulnerability medium or low

At risk:

- Condition very bad and any vulnerability
- Condition poor and vulnerability high

TRAJECTORY/TREND

27. Over the past 3 years what would you say has happened to the appearance and vitality of the Conservation Area?	Improved significantly	Seen some improvement	Not changed significantly	Seen some deterioration	Deteriorated significantly	Don't know
28. What do you think is happening to the appearance and vitality of the Conservation Area now, and what do you expect to happen over the next 3 years?	Improving significantly	Seeing some improvement	No significant change	Seeing some deterioration	Deteriorating significantly	Don't know

FINAL RISK ASSESSMENT

The final level of risk is assessed by combining your assessment of the Conservation Area's condition and vulnerability, and its expected trajectory/trend over the next three years. The final risk assessment for different combinations of condition, vulnerability and trajectory/trend is shown in bold on the right.

Initial risk assessment	Trajectory/trend	Final risk assessment
At Risk	deteriorating or deteriorating significantly	At Risk
At Risk	no significant change	At Risk
At Risk	improving	Not at Risk unless condition is very bad, then At Risk
At Risk	improving significantly	Not at Risk unless condition is very bad, then At Risk
Not at Risk	deteriorating significantly	At Risk
Not at Risk (medium)	seeing some deterioration	At Risk
Not at Risk	no significant change	Not at Risk
Not at Risk	improving or improving significantly	Not at Risk
Not at Risk (Low)	seeing some deterioration	Not at Risk (Medium)

7. Recommendations

7.1 BOUNDARY CHANGES

- There are no proposed boundary changes

7.2 MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

A surprisingly small number of the historic buildings in Porlock are statutorily listed. Despite this there has been relatively little loss of traditional features. The distinctive character of much frontage detail, although generally well-maintained, nevertheless offers considerable potential for sensitive enhancement. There are considered to be several buildings within, or adjoining the conservation area, that subject to further research and consultation, are likely to be considered suitable candidates for listing.

There appears to be a lack of historic evidence with regard to the precise layout, extent and chronology of the earlier settlement, which more detailed research might reveal. For example, the location of the Saxon settlement is not known. A fuller investigation of the archaeology, history and development of Porlock, which is closely linked with its former status as a sea port, is recommended.

It is recommended that owners and occupiers of historic buildings within the Conservation Area are encouraged to approach the National Park Authority's Historic Buildings Officer for advice on all such matters, even where formal permission is not required. The Design Guide is a useful publication intended to assist such informal consultation when changes to existing buildings or construction of new buildings or extensions are under consideration.

Exmoor National Park Local Plan contains important principles concerning the conservation of buildings and settlements. Proposals for any new development, restoration of existing buildings or features, and enhancement projects, should include consideration of these principles, which are expanded upon in the following sections.

7.2.1 Buildings in the Conservation Area

- Encourage re-pointing of stonework using suitable mortar mixes, ideally with a lime base. Cement rich mortars and raised or 'ribbon' pointing should be avoided. This is particularly the case for some the softer sandstone types.
- When repairing or renewing roof coverings use materials that match existing wherever possible. Natural slate or clay tiles, replacing like for like, should be used in the case of listed buildings. The use of concrete tiles and undisguised artificial slate substitutes should be avoided within the Conservation Area.
- The locally distinctive architectural features, including original timber, and cast and wrought iron, and combed wheat reed thatch should be retained.
- Where existing boundary walling needs restoring, and new sections creating, traditional methods should be employed, especially the local style of 'dyking' where stones are laid in a vertical alignment with little, if any, mortar used. Where the more conventional method of horizontal coursing is used, the use of lime mortar for re-pointing is preferable to cement.
- The use of salvaged or newly sourced local stone should be encouraged. Where existing historic features are concerned, (such as original doors, windows, porches, traditional shop fronts, gateways etc.), all forms of repair or replacement should attempt to match like-for-like. This particularly applies to traditional timber casement or double-hung sash windows, including glazing bars. Similarly, timber doors, especially when being replaced, should maintain and respect either the local vernacular or the more 'polite tradition' of panelled doors, moulded door cases, fanlights etc. The same principles should apply to existing period porches.
- Any additions or extensions forward of the building line should be avoided as far as possible.

7.2.2 Townscape

- Have regard to the existing form, proportions and grouping of buildings in all proposals for new development, including extensions to existing buildings. This includes roof height, pitch and any proposals involving the insertion of dormers.
- In considering proposals for new development or redevelopment involving existing buildings or structures, it should be borne in mind that stricter safeguards against any form of demolition in conservation areas are in operation (see Appendix A).
- Special care needs to be exercised to ensure the character of historic shop-fronts is maintained, and where possible traditional sign writing should be used. Historic signage should be maintained, as far as possible, in its original state. Plastic box signage, especially where internally illuminated, should be avoided, and standardised corporate logos should be kept as unobtrusive as possible.
- Existing features of quality that typify the historic built environment should be retained. Any new development within the Conservation Area is likely to be very limited but where it does occur, it should echo the existing in terms of scale, height, proportion and use of traditional methods of construction, including openings and any boundary features.
- Porlock has maintained a tradition of stone and cob building, and as far as possible this should be continued.
- Existing stone boundary and retaining walls, and existing banks, and footpath only access should be safeguarded, where possible, especially those that identify the historic street and plot layout pattern of the earlier settlement.
- Existing historic street furniture should be retained. As part of an overall enhancement scheme, use of natural stone paving, reintroduction of cast iron street name plates where necessary, and replacement street lighting that is more sympathetic to the character of the conservation area should be encouraged.

7.2.3 Features

- The conservation, and where necessary, the repair of historic railings and associated ironwork is essential. Where appropriate consider using additional ironwork that reflects the local tradition.
- Ensure retention and enhancement of historic street furniture
- Encourage retention of the character of existing entrances, including gate piers, carriage archways and associated period timber or metal gates.
- Ensure necessary protection of all natural stone paving, cobbles, kerbs and gulleys, both as part of the highway and where in private ownership. It is important to conserve the cream fire-clay incised blocks, used as a paving material, probably from the late 19th century which have become a significant street feature. These help to establish a welcoming pedestrian environment, and in some locations may need to include steps or ramps to facilitate use by pedestrian wheeled vehicles.
- Seek to retain or reinstate all existing period windows, doors, and cast iron rainwater goods. This includes a considerable number of Arts and Crafts features, and most of these are not currently afforded any statutory protection.
- Strongly consider introduction of an Article 4(2) Direction to effect control over any additional installation of UPVC windows and doors, inappropriate roof materials, external cladding, and use of exposed block-work. Such a measure would also include boundary features such as stone or brick walls, including existing openings.

7.2.4 Historic Setting and Landscape

- Before any demolition or redevelopment takes place, ensure that consideration is given to the historic importance of any existing building, including outbuildings and non-residential uses. This includes the previous history and present significance of any outbuildings located to the rear of the main street frontages, for example in High Street.
- Although existing trees within the conservation area appear to be healthy, they should have periodic health checks. Where limited further life is detected, measures may need to be taken to plant young trees of a similar or suitable alternative species. These could be gradually introduced to replace older specimens. Some fast growing garden conifers, such as Lawson's Cypress, can strike a discordant note in a historic setting and should be avoided. Additional tree planting could be considered in the central car park.

7.2.5 Use of Traditional Materials

- There is a growing awareness of the need to reintroduce sources of traditional building materials.
- Where appropriate, steps should be taken to re-discover supplies of natural materials, preferably from their historic source or equivalent, and to encourage the development of skills in their use.
- More fully research the development of the early settlement, the sources of natural materials used in building construction, and whether former sources of stone or slate or the traditional types of thatching material might become re-established.

APPENDIX A - CONSERVATION AREAS: GENERAL GUIDANCE

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AREA?

A Conservation Area is defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as: 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Exmoor National Park has 16 Conservation Areas designated to cover the most historically and architecturally important and interesting parts of the Park's towns and villages.

Various factors contribute to the special character of a Conservation Area. These include: the quality of buildings; the historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries; boundary treatments and patterns of enclosure; characteristic building and paving materials; uses and associations; the quality of the public realm and contribution made by trees and green spaces. A strong 'sense of place' is often associated with Conservation Areas. It is the function of Conservation Area Appraisals to assess and evaluate 'character' as a means of assisting the planning process.

OWNING AND DEVELOPING LAND AND PROPERTY WITHIN A CONSERVATION AREA

In order to assist in the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas various additional planning controls exist within them. These are subject to change so it is advisable to check with Exmoor National Park before carrying out any works.

The substantial demolition of unlisted buildings and structures requires permission. Proposals will not normally be looked upon favourably where affected buildings or structures are deemed to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. An approved scheme for redevelopment will normally be required before permission to demolish will be granted. Exceptions to the rule include:

- Small buildings of less than 115 cubic metres;
- Walls, fences and railings less than one metre high abutting to highway (including footpaths and bridleways) or less than two metres elsewhere;
- Agricultural and forestry buildings erected since 1914;
- Certain buildings used for industry.

Where demolition is being considered early consultation with local Planning and Conservation Officers should be sought. It is a criminal offence to carry out unauthorised works.

Within a Conservation Area permitted development rights are subject to some restriction. Planning Permission may be required for:

- insertion of a dormer window or other alteration to the roof;
- a satellite dish or antennae in certain positions;
- application of stone, artificial stone, plastic or timber cladding;
- installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil and vent pipe, on certain elevations;
- certain development on land between a wall forming a side elevation of the dwellinghouse and the boundary of its curtilage;
- rear extensions of more than one storey and side extensions.

Further restrictions may be applied by the Local Authority or Secretary of State through discretionary use of 'Article 4' designations where a good case can be made (e.g. covering aspects such as change of windows).

High standards of design are expected for new development within Conservation Areas. Sensitive proposals which pay special regard to prevailing patterns of height, massing, articulation, use of materials and enclosure will be encouraged. Early consultation with local Development Control and Conservation Officers is recommended.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Various types of advertisement, including those illuminated, will require Advertisement Consent. Advertisements must be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area.

TREES

Trees in Conservation Areas which are already protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) are subject to the normal TPO controls but the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 also makes special provision for trees in Conservation Areas which are not the subject of a TPO.

Anyone proposing to cut down or carry out work on a tree in a Conservation

Area within Exmoor National Park is required to give Exmoor National Park Authority six weeks prior notice. The purpose of this requirement is to give the LPA an opportunity to consider whether a TPO should be made in respect of the tree. Exceptions apply so if you are planning to carry out tree works contact the National Park's Tree Officer.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The 1990 Act makes it a duty for Local Authorities to:

- In exercising their planning powers, pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.
- Formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area.
- Review designations from time to time.

APPENDIX B - LISTED BUILDINGS

Below is a table of the Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area. For further details see the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the Exmoor National Park website, or the online English Heritage National Heritage List for England.

The table does not include ancillary structures or those within the curtilage of named buildings: these may also be covered by the listing and confirmation as to their status should be sought from Exmoor National Park Authority. Names of properties given below are those recorded at the time of listing under which they are officially listed and it is possible that some names may have since changed: this does not affect the listed status.

Name	Grade	Date Listed	EH Ref
Doverhay House and Doverhay Lodge	II	02/01/1986	1058043
Higher Doverhay Farmhouse	II	22/05/1969	1058044
Churchyard cross, about 10m NE of porch, Church of St Dubricius	II	02/01/1986	1058047
Porlock Rectory and walls enclosing garden on N front	II	07/10/1981	1058048
Doverhay Cottage and wall fronting road	II	02/01/1986	1173456
Church of St Dubricius	I	22/05/1969	1173524
The Ship Inn	II	22/05/1969	1296154
Old Rose and Crown and Cape's Stores adj to W	II	22/05/1969	1296181
Chantry Cottage	II	22/05/1969	1296184
Doverhay Reading Room and cottage abutting north end	II*	22/05/1969	1296210
The Gables Hotel	II	02/01/1986	1345383

APPENDIX C - LOCALLY IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

Almost all the buildings within the Conservation Area make a positive contribution to its character and appearance. The table below contains a list of notable unlisted buildings and structures within the Conservation Area which, whilst perhaps not of special interest in the national context, are nevertheless of local interest by nature of their date, design, materials, historical association, etc. This is not a statutory designation and confers no additional protection, but does highlight the importance of a building for general planning purposes.

Name	Notes
Overstream and Reines House	Purpose built boarding houses of c.1900.
Lowerbourne Terrace, Marley's Row, Bond's Row, Rawl's buildings	Late C19 terraced artisan housing.
Former Methodist Chapel	Chapel of 1837 now restaurant.
Bramdown	Probably C19 with possible earlier origins and service buildings to rear.
Sparkhayes House	Probably early C19 farmhouse with possible earlier origins.
Former malthouse, Sparkhayes Lane	Early C19 industrial building.
Lorna Doone Hotel	Prominent C20 hotel.
The Royal Oak	Early C18 public house.
Westmead	C17 house.
Green Dolphin Cottage	C17 house.
Methodist Chapel	Chapel of 1927 - still in use.
Tannery Buildings	Mid C19 tannery buildings now mainly flats.
Myrtle Cottage	Early C17 house.
Frasiers	Probably early C20 with possible earlier origins.
Castle Hotel	Hotel of c.1891 - landmark building.
Laurels	Late C18 house.
Post Office	Possibly C17.
Chimney Cottage/Keyscott	Late C17/early C18 with lateral stack.
Dover Court House	Substantial C18 house.
West End Cottage and East Cottage	C18 cottages.
Ye Olde Cottage	Probably C17 with lateral stack but much altered.

Oaks Hotel	Arts and crafts style hotel.
1 and 2 The Elms	Pair of late C19 houses with original features.
Doverhay Forge	C19 smithy now gallery.
Laurel Cottage/Little House	Cottages probably C18.
Locks Cottage/Stags Cottage	Possibly C17 in origin.
Lower Doverhay	C16 farmhouse with attached barn.
Holmdale	Possibly C18.
Village Hall	c.1925 by Voysey.
Former Primary School	Mid to late C19 and later.
Splatt Barn Cottage	Small C18 farmhouse with attached barn.
Court Place Farm	Early C19 farmhouse and farm buildings.
2-16 Redway	Good row of early C20 artisan cottages.
Victoria Church Rooms	Church rooms of c.1897.
Former James Huish builders yard	Good example of late C19 workshop buildings.
Old Thatch/Little Thatch/Smallpiece	C18 cottage row.
Japonica Cottage	Late C17/early C18 cottage.
Whitehall House	Possible early origins but much altered in 1960s.
The Mill House	Possibly C18.
Water Mill	C19 and later with probable earlier origins.
The Poplars	Early C20 row of 6 cottages.
Glen Lodge	Substantial late C19 house now hotel.

APPENDIX D - FURTHER READING

Sources Consulted

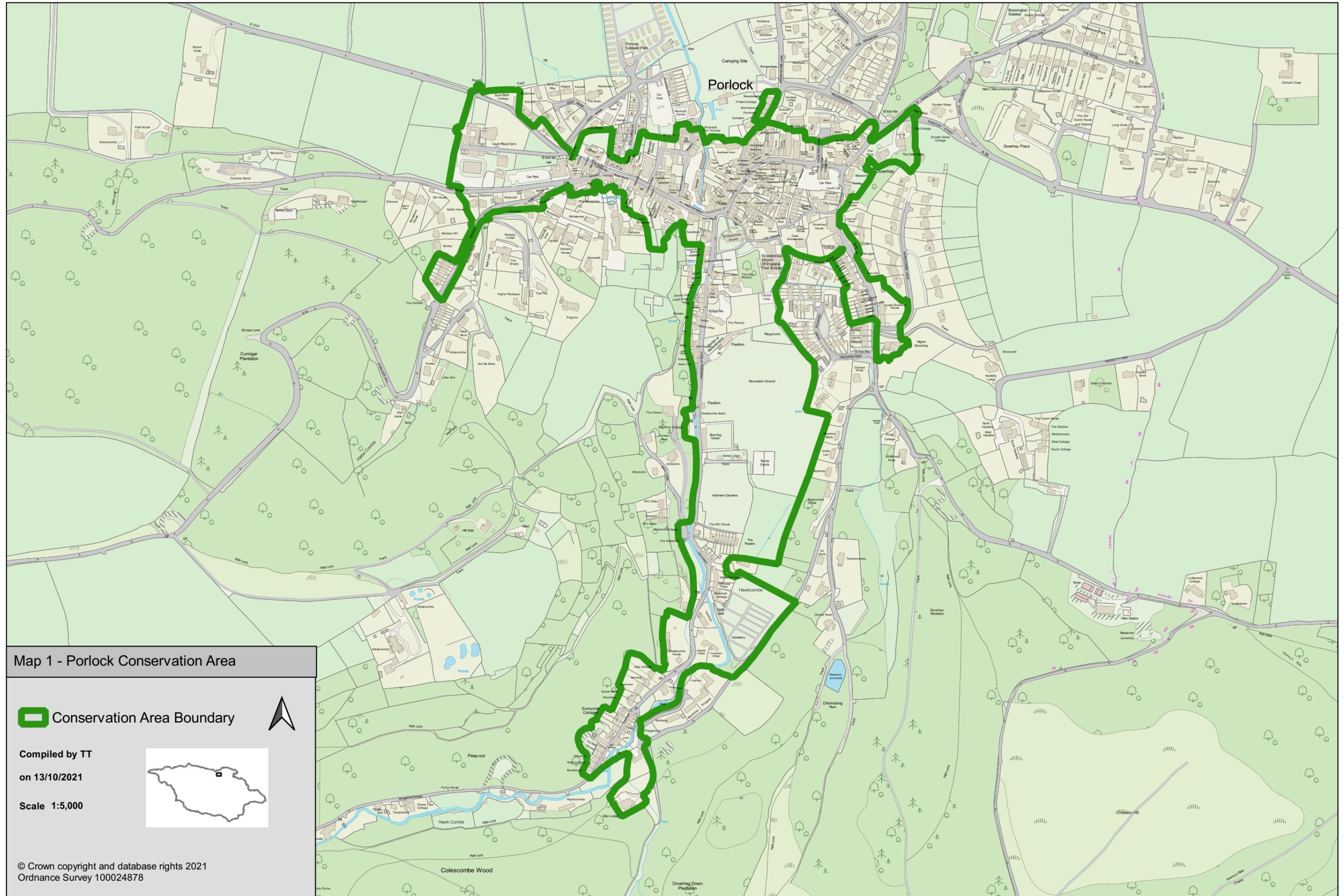
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- Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals. English Heritage 2005.
- National Planning Policy Framework. DCLG 2012.
- Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them. CABE 2006.
- By Design. Urban Design in the Planning System. Towards Better Practice. CABE/DETR 2000.
- The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has a variety of technical resources and services for the care of traditional buildings. <http://www.spab.org.uk/>.
- English Heritage have a variety of guidance documents on the conservation of the historic environment available through their website <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/>

Map 1 - Porlock Conservation Area



Map 1 - Porlock Conservation Area

 Conservation Area Boundary



Compiled by TT

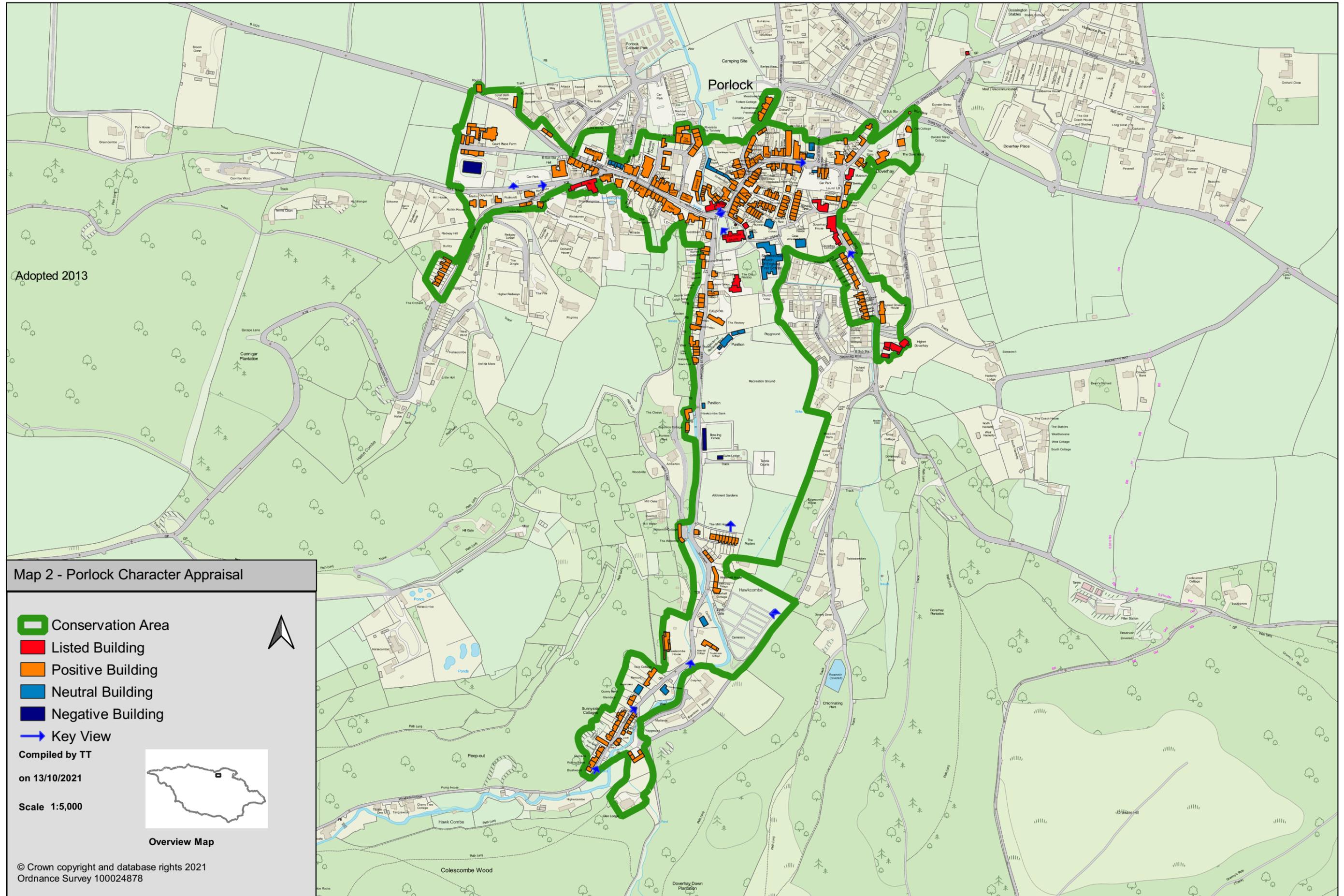
on 13/10/2021

Scale 1:5,000



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Map 2 - Porlock Character Appraisal



Adopted 2013