

Exmoor National Park  
Historic Environment Report Series No 9

# ALLERFORD CONSERVATION AREA: APPRAISAL DOCUMENT



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## Summary of Significance

Allerford and the surrounding countryside is part of the Holnicote Estate, formerly the Exmoor seat of the Acland Family and since 1944 owned by the National Trust. It is a long established settlement with early medieval origins and includes a number of farmhouses and cottages, as well as the packhorse bridge, that survive from the later medieval period. The present conservation area was designated in 1984 and encompasses the 19th century boundary of the original settlement, comprising, Allerford, Lower Allerford and Higher Allerford.

Much of the character of Allerford derives from the harmonious building materials and the informally arranged cottage groups with characteristic vernacular detail, such as the tall lateral chimney stacks. Along the main street, the intimate scale provides a strong sense of enclosure. There has been very little visually disruptive 20th century building within the Conservation Area, and the small interwar housing development just outside compliments rather than detracts from the village. The setting of Allerford and its focal point of the packhorse bridge across the shallow River Aller, and cottages beyond set against a wooded backdrop, creates a highly recognisable local landscape. Elsewhere within the village, the compact scale is enriched by the varied street alignment and building styles covering several centuries.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Allerford was first designated as a Conservation Area by Exmoor National Park Authority in 1984. 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. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for designated Conservation Areas. 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.

This document was prepared as part the programme of reassessing all 16 of the Park Authority's Conservation Areas and represents the first appraisal of Allerford Conservation Area for 8 years. Its aims are to identify:

- the influences that have given Allerford 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 within a Design and



Access Statement accompanying any planning application. Specific guidance relating to Allerford is in Section 7. Appendix A contains a brief overview on planning within Conservation Areas.

### **1.3 PREPARATION AND SURVEY LIMITATIONS**

This Conservation Area Appraisal was researched and written during August 2012 and revised following consultation in 2015. It updates the appraisal carried out for Exmoor National Park by John Fisher in 2004 and Section 4 draws on the National Trust's Vernacular Building Survey of the 1990s undertaken by Isabel Richardson.

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**

Public consultation was carried out between July and September 2015. A notice was placed in the parish newsletter and posters were put up around Allerford publicising a local consultation event, which took place in the Village Hall on 17 July and was attended by seven people. Throughout the consultation period the draft Appraisal document was available on the Exmoor National Park website. The parish council were kept informed.

## 2. Topographic and Historic Background

### 2.1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

Allerford is situated just north of the A39, between Porlock 2 km to the west, and Minehead 7 km to the east. It is one of several hamlets within the parish of Selworthy and like the neighbouring settlements of Bossington and West Lynch, it lies within the valley that extends from Horner northwards to Porlock Bay at the foot of Bossington Hill and Selworthy Beacon. The village follows the valley floor alongside the River Aller which joins Horner Water before reaching the sea some 2 km to the north west. The wooded slopes of the valley form an important backdrop, and provide shelter from the north and east.

The Conservation Area boundary encompasses the whole of the historic village, including Higher and Lower Allerford, but excludes the 1930s housing development at Hare Park. Brandish Street, a small historic hamlet some 300m to the south-east, is also not included.

### 2.2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

#### 2.2.1 MEDIEVAL DEVELOPMENT

The placename Allerford is believed to be derived from alder-tree ford. It is a long established settlement mentioned as Alrford in the Cartularium Saxonicum of 882 and as Alresford in the Domesday Book, at which time it was a detached part of the Manor of East Luccombe, held by Ralph de Limesi. The manor subsequently passed through the de Luccombe and St. John families and by the late-15th century was held by the Arundells.

Fig.1 Medieval packhorse bridge and ford crossing the Aller.



The settlement developed between two fords crossing the River Aller. The southern ford, on the road to Selworthy, is crossed by the medieval packhorse bridge (Fig. 1), which is likely to be the earliest surviving structure in the village and probably marks the historic core of the settlement. Other buildings with medieval origins, including the Post Office (formerly a farmhouse), Cross Lane House, and Cherry Trees, are all nearby. From these surviving buildings it would appear that the linear pattern of settlement, which follows the valley on the west side of the river, was fixed by the 16th century. Another house with early origins, Hillside (now two cottages), is located at Higher Allerford, further up the valley slope on the road to Selworthy. Close to the northern ford at Lower Allerford there is a small group of buildings around Stoates Farm, which could have similarly early origins.

## 2.2.2 POST MEDIEVAL DEVELOPMENT

Sir Thomas Dyke Acland acquired the Holnicote estate in 1802. Unlike at the neighbouring Selworthy, Acland does not appear to have taken a personal interest in remodelling the village to any great extent. Although there was some rebuilding of earlier cottages, and some new build, from the evidence of the surviving buildings and the c.1841 Tithe Map (Fig.2) the pattern of settlement appears fundamentally static.



The biggest change took place in the 20th century with the construction of the inter-war local authority development of some 33 homes known as Hare Park to the north-west of the historic settlement. A group of houses on this estate were formerly listed grade II, being described as ‘a good example of a well composed and detailed piece of interwar housing continuing the tradition of the Arts and Crafts.’ Regrettably, original exterior detail was replaced, which has since resulted in their subsequent delisting. While an important part of Allerford’s story, Hare Park has little visual association with the historic village and is outside of the Conservation Area.

### 2.3 ARCHAEOLOGY

Despite being located within an area of archaeological interest, Allerford Conservation Area has only one non-building entry on the Exmoor NPA Historic Environment Record: the water meadow system to the south west of Hillside (Fig. 3). As with other long established settlements, there is potential for evidence of the early phases of Allerford to come to light. In terms of standing structures, the importance of the medieval packhorse bridge is reflected in its Grade II\* listing and Scheduled Monument status. Within the houses, the National Trust’s Vernacular Building Survey has recorded features of interest and identified medieval origins in the construction and materials of many of the ostensibly later buildings.



Fig. 3 Site of former water meadow on flood plain east of the Aller.

Further information and the most up to date records and advice for the archaeology of the area can be obtained from the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record based in the Park's Headquarters at Dulverton and available online at <http://www.exmoorher.co.uk/>.

## 2.4 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROFILE

The economy of the village was, until comparatively recently, inextricably linked to the fortunes of the Holnicote estate, with the majority of the population directly employed or working on farms in the vicinity. By the time the National Trust took over the estate in 1944, the importance of agriculture as a binding economic and social force was already in decline.



Fig. 4 Former reading room (now social club), public conveniences and car park entrance

There has never been a church at Allerford but in terms of facilities, residents and visitors have a Post Office/shop (which also serves teas in the garden), a social club (former reading room), public toilets, a small car park, the rural life museum, forge/gallery and, outside of the Conservation Area, a recreation ground. Villagers must however, look to Porlock, Minehead or further afield for other employment, retail and leisure opportunities. A number of cottages appear to be holiday lets and The Pack Horse and Cross Lane Farm also offer accommodation. The picturesque qualities of the village, and its easy accessibility from the A39, make Allerford a popular stopping place for tourists who are particularly drawn to the packhorse bridge. The small car park also makes it a base for other outdoor activities in the surrounding countryside.

## 3. Spatial Analysis

### 3.1 SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND BUILDING DENSITY

Much of the character of Allerford derives from the harmonious building materials and the informally arranged cottage groups with picturesque detail. The informality of the layout typifies a long established settlement pattern, probably of medieval origin and the Tithe Map (c.1841) shows that the layout today has changed very little since that date. Although the Conservation Area is relatively small, there are three separate sub-areas, which are largely visually separate and are depicted on the early editions of the Ordnance Survey map.

#### 3.1.1 ALLERFORD

Allerford, the larger part of the settlement, consists of the main valley road, which leaves the A39 and leads north through the village towards Bossington and the coast, following the river. This is the most densely settled part of the village. At the south end, Cross Lane Farm, Allerford House and the Pack Horse are larger dwellings set in their own grounds. North of the packhorse bridge is a short cottage row on small plots.



Fig. 5 Back lane behind the main street.

From the forge, the course of the river and road diverge and there are buildings on both sides of, and directly fronting, the street. There is a short back lane serving the houses on the west side of the street which contains a number of outbuildings (Fig.5). On the opposite side, the houses between the museum and Cherry Trees are in regular plots with rear gardens leading down to the river (Fig.6).



Fig. 6 Rear garden plots extend down to river

### 3.1.2 HIGHER ALLERFORD

This part of the settlement is sparsely settled. It comprises two pairs of cottages and a small complex of farm buildings along the road leading up the hill from the packhorse bridge. There is little discernable pattern to the settlement although Hillview is deliberately set on higher ground overlooking the former water meadow and main street, while Brackenlea/Vale View are orientated to take advantage of the long views towards the moorland to the south-west.

### 3.1.3 LOWER ALLERFORD

This is a continuation of the main settlement on the road to Bossington and is east of what is now a crossroads at the entry road into Hare Park. It comprises Stoates Farm and Woodside/Hill View and their associated outbuildings along the lane that leads to the northern ford. As at Higher Allerford, the position of the buildings does not appear formally planned.



Fig. 7 Stoates Farm and lane leading to ford, Lower Allerford.

### 3.2 PLAN FORM, HEIGHT AND MASSING

Along much of the main street the intimate scale of the buildings provides a strong sense of enclosure. Although there is some uniformity in the building elements, there is no standardised plan-form within the Conservation Area and the buildings give the impression of having been built and altered at different times. Despite this, they remain a harmonious group with none of the buildings jarring or out of scale with their neighbours. Some dwellings originated as farmhouses, but were later split into cottages, occasionally reverting back to a single dwelling in more recent years. Among the early dwellings, the 2- or 3-bay cross passage plan is common. With



the exception of the grander Allerford House, they are all of 1½- or 2-storeys and modestly proportioned. Late-20th century development within the Conservation Area is quite limited and restricted to minor remodelling or extending earlier dwellings.



Fig. 8 Cottages of typically intimate scale along main street.

### 3.3 GREEN SPACE

The Conservation Area is surrounded by countryside but within its boundary open areas also make a vital contribution to its character and appearance. The most important of these spaces divide the three settlement elements: Lower Allerford-Allerford-Higher Allerford, and include the community orchard. Not all of the green spaces are within the Conservation Area but all make a vital contribution to its setting.



Fig. 9 Community orchard, divides Lower Allerford and Allerford.

Elsewhere, the gaps between the houses, usually private gardens, contribute greatly to the character of the Conservation Area and offer occasional glimpses of the countryside surrounding the village.

The settlement insert maps to the Local Plan (2005) 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.

### **3.4 VIEWS**

Allerford is a picturesque village surrounded by attractive farm and moorland, Views in and out of the Conservation Area form an essential part of its character and are one of its chief delights. In particular, the elevated ground at Higher Allerford offers excellent views west into the village and to the moorland beyond.



Fig. 10 View west across village from Higher Allerford.

Within the village, the iconic Allerford view is from Cross Lane Farm towards the packhorse bridge. There are also pleasing views in both directions along the main street and river.



Fig. 11 View to the packhorse bridge from south.

## 4. Architectural Quality and Built Form

### 4.1 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The National Trust's survey of vernacular buildings has revealed early origins for many of the houses in Allerford. The majority of cottage groups display characteristic local vernacular features, one of the most obvious being the tall front lateral stacks and adjoining rounded bread oven, as for example at Cherry Trees Cottage. Such features probably date from the early-17th century when new houses were built to this plan-form and the existing buildings had been updated by the insertion of ceilings and chimneys to replace the hall open to the roof and central open hearth. No individual feature is especially lavish in style or detail, but the overall scale and pattern of building materials is harmonious. Apart from one or two instances; for example the Museum and nos. 1-2 Hillside, Allerford lacks the typical combination of thatch with cream or honey coloured lime-wash over rendered cob or local red sandstone found in other parts of the estate. Natural slate or Bridgwater tiles now predominate, and exposed stone rubble is as widespread as render.

## 4.1.1 ALLERFORD

On entering the village from the south, fronting the A39 on the right is **Cross Lane Farm** (Fig.12). This former open hall farmhouse has roof timbers dated to 1544 and was ceiled in the late-16th century. It contains a four-bay jointed-cruick roof with evidence of smoke blackening. There are also two plank and muntin partitions to the cross-passage, and a rear fireplace with bread oven attached. There is a fine collection of farm buildings around a cobbled courtyard immediately to the east.



Fig.12 Cross Lane Hotel, former medieval farmhouse.

To the left, and with a secluded frontage, is **Allerford House** (Fig.13). This substantial house, the largest in the village, is built of roughcast over rubble with shallow-pitch slate roof and dates from the late-18th century. It is typically Georgian, with symmetrical three-storey, three bay, frontage. Some sash windows with narrow glazing bars may be original, including the semi-circular headed 24 pane stairlight but much re-fenestration took place in the mid-late-19th century, when the single-storey porch was added. To the rear is a range of is single storey outbuidlings, rendered with slate roofs and built between 1876 and 1889.



Fig.13 Allerford House, an imposing 18th century dwelling.

On the right adjoining the river, **The Pack Horse** (Fig.14) is an early-mid-20th century rebuilding of an earlier house, with a mock timber frame gable added. Early photographs indicate that this former thatched cottage was probably 17th century in date.



Fig.14 The Pack Horse, 20th century remodelling of earlier cottage, now holiday apartments.

Ahead, at the turn of the lane, and forming a photogenic ensemble with packhorse bridge and river to the fore is the pair of cottages, **Meadowside and Packhorse Cottage** (Fig.15). These date from the late-17th/early-18th century, but were substantially altered in the late-19th century when the thatch was replaced by tiles and new casement windows, enlarged at first floor level, were added. Built of local red sandstone rubble with double-Roman tiled roof, Meadowside has an axial stack with square-section shaft, and there is a slate roofed semi-circular bread oven. Packhorse Cottage has a front lateral stack with round-section shaft, and distinctive gabled porch on chamfered wooden columns with first floor room above.



Fig.15 Meadowside and Packhorse Cottage, adjacent to the river crossing point.



Beyond the sharp left turn of the main street, is a typical plain cottage row (Fig.16). These mainly date from the 17th century or earlier, with render or colourwash over stone rubble, and lowered dormers under tiled pent roofs, indicating the former presence of thatch. There is a mix of timber and metal casement windows, with plank and ledged doors some part glazed. **Brook Cottage** (Fig.16), at the end of the row has a larger former shop window on its gable end.



Fig.16 Brook (end-on), Hayes and Farthings cottages, cottage row.



Fig.17 Reading rooms built by Acland, now social club.

Immediately beyond, and slightly set back, is the former **Reading Rooms** (Fig.17) which date from the late-19th century. Although a relatively plain building, the external walls are of squared-off and coursed local sandstone with blue brick dressings, and there are vertical plank doors, large gables with part tile hanging and a catslide roof.

Opposite is the **Forge** (Fig. 18), detached and set back off the road. It dates to around 1900 and has louvred openings, wooden double-doors and tall brick stack to the rear. It still operates as a forge. Close by is an earlier small detached workshop (now gallery) (Fig.19) directly fronting the street, with a porch at the gable end, Both are of local red sandstone rubble, the forge with brick quoins to the openings, and have triple-ridge tiled roofs.



Fig.18 Allerford Forge, still operating.



Fig.19 Former workshop, now gallery serving the forge.

Next is the remarkable group of the former village school and school house, now the **West Somerset Rural Life Museum** (Fig.20). The single storey schoolrooms date to c. 1821, with tall casement windows, and front lateral stacks with tall brick shafts and a thatched roof. The attached former two-storey house dates to the latter part of the century and is rendered with a slate roof and is distinguished by partly slate-hung gables and small tiled pent roofs on timber brackets over two ground floor windows.



Fig.20 School house and school, now museum.

From this point the buildings face each other across the street. **The Post Office** (Fig.21) is prominent on the west side. It is a former farmhouse dating to the 17th century with an added early-19th century wing in picturesque style containing the shop. It is built of local red sandstone and blue lias random rubble – the latter a less commonly found local stone - with a double-Roman tiled roof, again replacing thatch. The ground floor is of special interest with shop front consisting of a large segmental arch with rusticated lintel and four ogee-headed leaded-light windows, which can be concealed behind external wooden shutters (Fig.33). There is a George VI letter box flanked by a lateral stack to the left and to the right a decorative porch with arched opening and diagonally boarded studded door.



Fig.21 Post Office and shop in former 17th century farmhouse.

Also on this side of the lane and part of a short terrace (Fig.22) are: **Fern Cottage**, smooth rendered with pantiles, dark stained timber casement windows, canted bay window with pent roof over and a 19th century West of England fire plaque; **The Three Bears**, rough-cast over rubble, tall brick axial stack, and neo-Gothic pointed arch window with leaded tracer and panelled door set in a grooved surround with divided tracery fanlight; and **Myrtle Cottage**, similar frontage features but with exposed stone rubble, large external shouldered stack with slate-roofed bread oven projection in the angle to the gable wall. The row probably dates from the 17th century but is not all of one build and has alterations from the late-18th century to the mid-20th century.



Fig.22 Cottage row with 'picturesque' features.

Opposite, and set slightly back from the street, are **Rose Cottage** and **Traveller's Joy** (Fig.23), a late-19th century mirrored pair, rendered with large central brick stack, ground floor segmental arched openings and gabled dormer windows, under a slate roof.



Fig.23. Rose Cottage and Travellers Joy

Adjoining and immediately fronting the street, **The Cottage** and **Via Enns** (formerly Pump Cottage) (Fig.24), both date from the 18th century, the former exposed stone rubble, the latter rendered, and both with a double-Roman tiled roof. Windows are mainly iron-framed casements with rectangular leaded lights, and the left hand cottage retains the village water pump within a small shelter with rustic timber supports (Fig. 38).



Fig.24. The Cottage and Via Enns.

**Cherry Trees** (Fig.25) is equidistant between Allerford and Lower Allerford. This former open hall house is late medieval in origin, but was altered in the 17th century to a two bay with cross-passage plan. Internally, it has a plank and muntin screen, a pointed arch chamfered doorway with plank door, a jointed-cruick trusses and chamfered beams. 19th century alterations include leaded casements.



Fig.25 Cherry Trees, late medieval farmhouse.



#### 4.1.2 HIGHER ALLERFORD

Set apart and on a hill overlooking the village, **1 and 2 Hillside** (Fig.26) is now a cottage pair but was formerly one farmhouse originating in the early-16th century as an open hall house. In the late-16th century a ceiling was inserted and an out-shot added. The lower end has been rebuilt and extended. It is built traditionally of roughcast render over stone rubble and cob, with thatched roof and large front lateral stack adjoining the porch. There are two iron casement windows with leaded panes and a full height hipped roof porch. The interior has a rear circular stair turret, and a plank and muntin screen, and beams with step and run-out stops.



Fig.26 Hillside, overlooking the main village.

Further up the hill is a good group of late-19th century farm buildings of stone with brick dressings, set around a yard (Fig.43). It is unclear to which farmhouse they relate – they are depicted on the 1st edition OS map next to the text ‘Cross Lane Farm’. From here the lane curves to the south to **Bracken Lea** and **Vale View** (Fig.27), an early-20th century example of a mirrored pair of local sandstone estate cottages – probably the last to be built in the village.



Fig.27 Bracken Lea and Vale View, with views to the south west.

#### 4.1.3 LOWER ALLERFORD

This part of the Conservation Area is made up of an attractive group, of buildings around **Stoates Farm** and fronting the main street. The farmhouse (Fig.28) dates from the 17th century and is built of stone rubble, finished in roughcast render with a part pantile roof and two large shouldered front lateral stacks. It is separated from the main street frontage by a walled paddock. It is especially prominent against the wooded backdrop of Bossington Hill.



Fig.28 Stoates Farmhouse, on the northern boundary of the Conservation Area.

To the north of the farm is a thatched **linhay** (Fig.42). This probably dates from the 18th century. Construction is a mix of stone-rubble and cob with weatherboard infill, and a half-hipped thatch roof. There are three bays with circular stone piers; a typical local feature. At the time of survey this building was in poor condition.

Immediately east of the farmhouse are **Hillview** and **Woodside** (Fig.29). They were enlarged into a pair in the mid-19th century from a single 17th century cottage. There is a rich mix of traditional materials, including exposed sandstone, partly rendered, brick dressings and quoins to the 19th century extensions. The once thatched roofs now have double Roman and triple ridge clay tiles, and there are two tall shouldered stacks with circular stone shafts. Such features as the 'Tudor' archhead entrance with diagonally boarded double doors, and porches, are typical of the cottage ornees of the early-mid-19th century period for which the Aclands were likely responsible. The listing details refer to the 'differing roof levels and lateral projections on the façade forming a picturesque composition.'



At the crossroads with Hare Park, is another late-19th century mirrored pair of estate cottages; **Four Ways** and **Forge Cottage** (Fig.30). These are typical of the period, again roughcast rendered under a slate roof with a central brick stack. There are timber casement windows throughout with segmental arched openings on the ground floor. Each cottage is flanked by a wing with lowered ridge, and a pent roofed porch.



Fig.28 Four Ways and Forge Cottage

## 4.2 MATERIALS

### 4.2.1 WALLS

The majority of the buildings are stone rubble, sometimes roughly squared and, in the case with farm/outbuildings, generally left exposed. The stone is of two main types. Most prominent is the soft-textured and orange to reddish-purple New Red Sandstone, but this is sometimes combined with the much harder dark red-purple or grey-green Devonian sandstone, which adds greater strength and durability to the structure. Much of this building stone was obtained from local quarries, but these have long since ceased working, although several former sites on the Holnicote estate can still be traced.

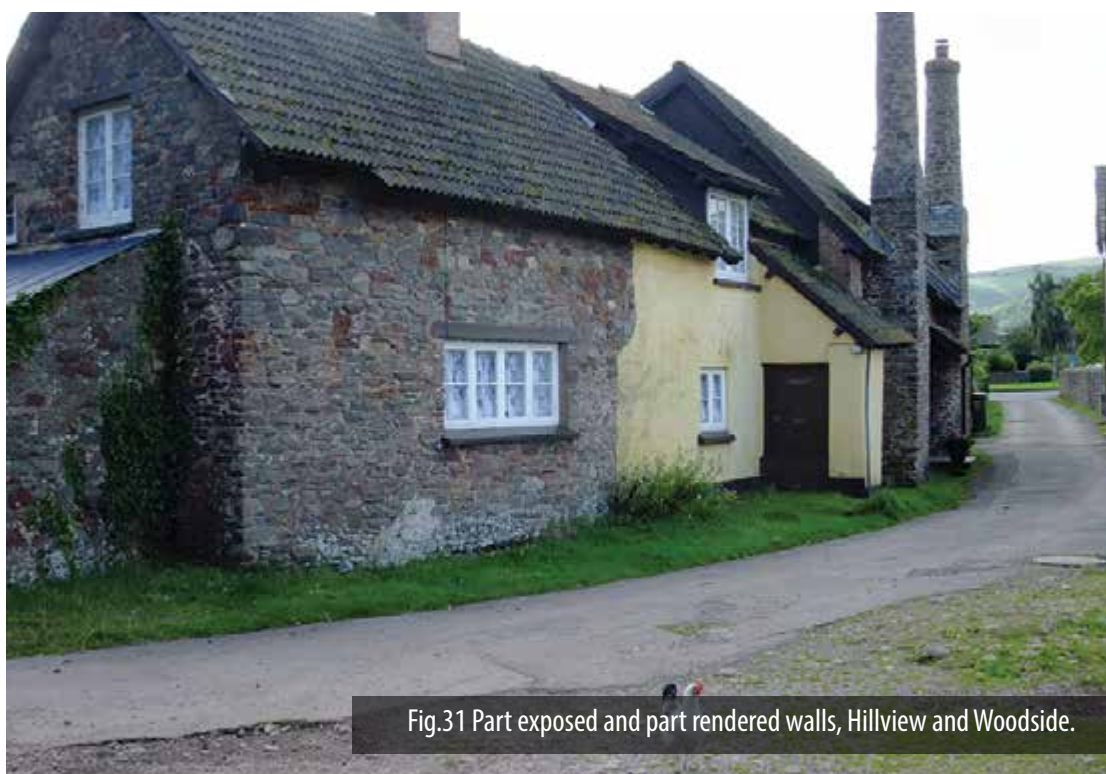


Fig.31 Part exposed and part rendered walls, Hillview and Woodside.

Many houses in Allerford are rendered. Traditionally, this is a mixture of lime-mortar and lime-wash 'over the stone or cob. The lime-wash usually combines with a black tar-banded plinth. With the exception of some chimney stacks, brick is largely absent from the Conservation Area.

#### 4.2.2 ROOFS

Bridgwater pantiles, double Roman tiles and similar variants, and to a lesser extent slate, have replaced thatch as the most common type of roofing material. This process took place during the late-19th to mid-20th century. For example an early-20th century photograph shows Packhorse Cottage as still thatched. Traditionally, thatch was wheat reed. In recent years, this tradition has been under threat from the non-indigenous water reed, much of which is now imported from Eastern Europe. On later and high status buildings, notably Allerford House, local slate would have been used from the outset.



#### 4.2.3 WINDOWS AND DOORS

Historic windows in the Conservation Area are mainly a mixture of timber and metal casement with few, if any, sash windows present, the main exception being Allerford House. Some cottage windows are of forged iron, and there is a wide range of frame shapes and of leaded light glazing patterns. These appear to mainly date from the early-mid-19th century.



Fig.33 Ogee headed casements from the early-19th century

As elsewhere on the estate, most doors are constructed in a traditional plank and ledged form, some with fixed lights, and a few have examples of what may be termed rustic Arts & Crafts detail, for example use of diagonal boarding, and others with ribs or studs. Few openings of late medieval origin survive. Their replacement is partly due to the modifications made during the 19th century when 'picturesque' features were added to many of the earlier buildings.



## 5. Street Scene

### 5.1 BOUNDARIES

Many of the stretches of boundary or retaining walls are built of local sandstone rubble, usually roughly coursed and infilled with mortar. In some cases they are provided with a coping of large beach boulders (Fig.34). An alternative, occasionally evident, especially as a support to earth banks is the locally distinctive dry-stone pattern known as “dyking”. This adds a pleasing contrast but as a retaining feature to hedgerow banks, it can be prone to deterioration as a result of root spread when not regularly maintained. Cob walls on stone plinths are also present. These local types of walling make a valuable contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, as well as providing a strong sense of enclosure or privacy in several cases.

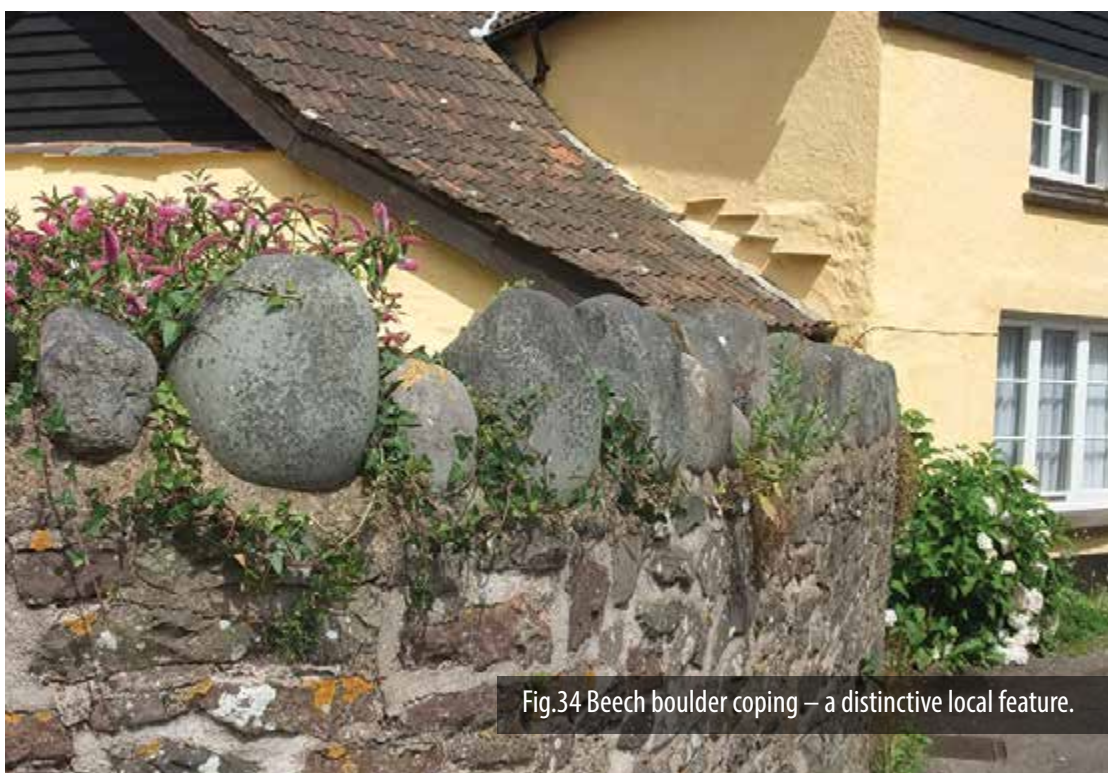


Fig.34 Beech boulder coping – a distinctive local feature.

Iron railings are rare, but gates are relatively common, although most are modern. There is a good example of an historic gate at the driveway entrance to Allerford House (Fig.35). The most prominent single boundary feature is the modern concrete post and metal pole fence along the south side of the River Aller. While not of any historic value its simplicity means that it is not an overly obtrusive feature in the street scene.



In the estate village tradition, much day-to-day maintenance is provided by the National Trust from their yard at Holnicote, where many traditional materials are produced or stored. This enables boundary features such as oak post and rail fencing and footpath stiles or bridges to be well maintained with a programme of replacement using materials from local sources where possible. A recent example is a footpath gate, replacing a stile adjoining the lane to Higher Allerford.

## 5.2 GROUNDSCAPE

A number of locations in Allerford possess stone paved or cobbled surfaces as part of the street scene. The most prominent is associated with the packhorse bridge and extending beyond the two-storey porch of Meadowside, whilst the adjoining road crossing the ford is paved with stone flags. There is also a good cobbled yard at Cross Lane Farm (Fig.36). Elsewhere, cobbles are smaller in extent as, for example, near the Post Office.



Fig.36 Yard surface at Cross Lane Farm.

## 5.3 STREET FURNITURE

While none are of any great age there are a number of street features that contribute to greatly to Allerford's character and appearance. There are two cast iron signs: a multi-finger Somerset County Council post at the A39 junction; and a single sign near the car park on a modern post. The Post Office has a good hand painted timber sign (Fig.37), while there is a splendid George VI wall mounted letterbox set partly into the main window on the front elevation. Adjacent the former reading rooms there is a Type K6 telephone kiosk.

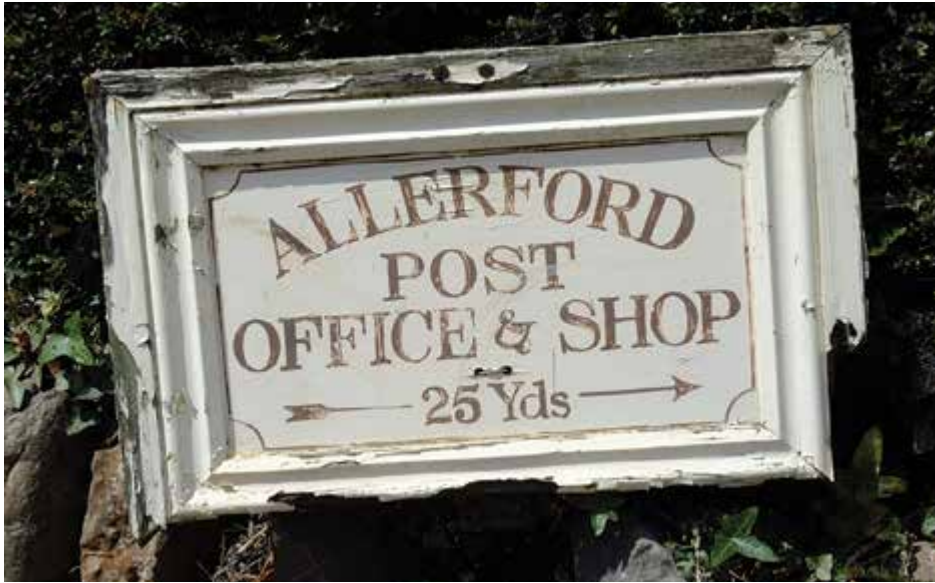


Fig.37 Sign writing, not old but contributes to the character of the village.



Fig.38 Village pump and trough at Via Enns.

Adjacent Via Enns is the former village water pump with stone trough (Fig.38) below a relatively recent small gable roofed canopy on rustic timber supports.

## 5.4 BRIDGES

The packhorse bridge (Fig.1) dates from the medieval period, and is one of several in the locality. It has a twin segmental arch span, and is built of local red sandstone rubble with flat stone coping, and cobbled pathway over. There is a central cutwater on the upstream side, and the parapet is swept back in the north-east corner. It is also notable for its stone paving, which also forms the ground surface of the adjacent ford.



Fig.39 Timber footbridge to northern ford

The northern ford at Lower Allerford has a modern timber footbridge of recent date which is typical of Holnicote estate furniture installed by the National Trust (Fig.39).

## 5.5 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

There is a strong link between the built and the natural environment. Landscape elements of significance to the character of the Conservation Area include:

- the setting against the backdrop of the wooded slopes of Bossington Hill and Selworthy Beacon.
- glimpses of Dunkery Beacon and views across the eastern edge of Porlock Vale from Higher Allerford.
- the local dominance of the mix of deciduous and evergreen trees on Bossington Hill, believed to have been planted around the mid-19th century, by Sir Thomas Dyke Acland.
- The river running through the village that forms a prominent visual and, at times, aural feature within the Conservation Area.
- the inherent quality of the built environment, including distinctive vernacular detail, extensive walled and banked boundary features, and the use of natural stone surfaces.
- an intimacy of scale with cottages and tree groups juxtaposed, especially where backing on to the river.
- the several fine specimen trees forming part of the setting of Allerford House.



Fig.40 The river running through the village - a key feature

Historically, Allerford had a number of orchard paddocks. Only one of these is partly within the Conservation Area. Some fruit trees have been planted in a paddock immediately north-west of the village centre to form a community orchard (Fig.9). The considerable mature planted woodland to the north-east, covering the slopes of Selworthy Beacon, was planted by Sir Thomas Dyke Acland in the early–mid-19th century. It is worthy of note that Sir Thomas, applied for a lease of Exmoor Forest from 1814, and acted as forester on behalf of the Crown. The woodlands, a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees, are indicated in the Local Plan as ‘Category 3 Woodland’ classified in Section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act of 1985. They have a natural beauty ‘(that) is, in the opinion of the NPA, particularly important to conserve’, and also forms an important backdrop to the Conservation Area and its broader landscape setting.



Fig. 41 Trees and woodland backdrop make a major contribution to the Conservation Area.

The strong sense of enclosure the wider landscape provides is further enhanced by extensive stone walls and hedgerow banks, which are important on the approaches to the Conservation Area, as well as within the boundary itself. There is a fine specimen oak bordering the lane immediately west of the Conservation Area.

## 6. Condition Assessment

### 6.1 CURRENT CONDITION

The majority of historic buildings within the Conservation Area, both listed and unlisted, are well maintained, and in good structural condition. There is a large proportion of timber or metal windows, mainly casements, and of entrance doors, most of which are ledged and braced. These can be difficult to date, but many frames survive in their original early-mid-19th century form, and where replacements have been made, they closely match the original pattern. National Trust ownership should continue to ensure that the historic and visual integrity of the traditional buildings will be appropriately maintained.

Such problems arise by preventing some of the natural rhythms of permeability, which The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings refers to as 'allowing the building to breathe.'



Fig.42 Linhay at Stoates Farm, Lower Allerford





There are outbuildings at Lower and Higher Allerford that appear to be redundant in terms of their original agricultural use. The thatched linnhay at Stoates Farm, Lower Allerford (Fig.42), at the time of survey, has some roof damage and a temporary tarpaulin cover. This building is regarded as being 'at risk'. The farm buildings south of Hillside, Higher Allerford (Fig.43) look underused but appear to be in fair structural condition although they are undoubtedly in need of some repair. This situation is unchanged from the 2004 Appraisal.

CONDITION ASSESSMENT					
1. Designated Conservation Area name:	<b>Allerford</b>				
2. Locality:	<b>National Trust Holnicote Estate</b>				
3. Is the Conservation Area:	Predominantly urban	Predominantly suburban	<b>Predominantly rural</b>	Other (Please specify)	
4. Is the Conservation Area:	<b>Predominantly residential</b>	Predominantly industrial	Predominantly commercial	Wide mix of uses	Other (Please specify)
5. How large is the Conservation Area:	Less than 2 ha (approx 140m x 140m)	<b>2.1 - 50 ha</b>	More than 50 ha (½ sq km)	Dont know	
6. Approximately how many buildings are in the Conservation Area:	None	Up to 50	<b>51 to 250</b>	251+	Dont know
7. Approximately how many listed buildings are in the Conservation Area:	None	Up to 10	<b>11 to 50</b>	51+	Dont know
8. Approximately how many locally listed buildings are in the Conservation Area:	<b>None</b>				
9. Does the Conservation Area include one or more scheduled monuments?	<b>Yes</b>	No	Dont know		
10. Is all or part of the Conservation Area covered by another heritage designation?	<b>None</b>	Registered Park and Garden	World heritage Site	Registered Battlefield	Other
11. Has an Article 4 Direction been implemented?	Yes	<b>No</b>			

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	Yes	No			
13. Has the Local Authority taken any enforcement action against such works in the past 3 years?	Yes	No	Dont 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	No	Yes			
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 (eg painting, porches, rendering)	x				
• Decorative features/materials (eg stonework, rainwater goods)	x				
• Shopfronts	x				
• 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 (eg subdivision, infill)	x				
• Other	x				

Neglect					
17. Vacancies within buildings:	<b>1. Not a problem at all</b>	2. A minor problem	3. A noticeable problem	4. A significant problem	
18. Severe dereliction of buildings:	<b>1. Not a problem at all</b>	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.	<b>1. Not a problem at all</b>	2. A minor problem	3. A noticeable problem	4. A significant problem	
20. The condition of the public realm:	<b>1. Not a problem at all</b>	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?					
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 more questions answered "A noticeable problem") Fair (2 or more questions answered "A minor problem") <b>Optimal (1 question answered "A minor problem", or no problem selected)</b>					

## 6.2 VULNERABILITY

Allerford is a well kept and clearly loved village. Its character is derived from its setting, the quality of its historic buildings and their position within the landscape. Its apparently unchanged appearance is one of its chief attractions but while it is undoubtedly a tourist draw, visitor pressure is not at a level that places the village under threat. The incremental erosion of character through minor alterations, poor repairs and inappropriate additions to cottages seen in many villages is almost completely absent, largely thanks to the National Trust's stewardship.



In the main part of the village, the car park (Fig.44) and its surroundings could benefit from some minor enhancement, for example signage, ground surface treatment, and improved boundary features. Elsewhere, for example at Stoates Farm, and at Higher Allerford are some outbuildings which appear to be redundant in terms of agricultural use and in need of repair (see 6.1).

## RISK ASSESSMENT

22. Does the Conservation Area have a current, adopted Conservation Area Character Appraisal?	<b>Yes</b>	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	<b>No</b>
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?	<b>Yes</b>	No or in part
25. Is there evidence of community support in the area, for example a residents' association or civic society?	Yes	<b>No</b>
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?	<b>No</b>	Yes
<p>Based on the answers to question 4, 5 and 28-32, the score would suggest that the vulnerability of the Conservation Area is considered:</p> <p>&gt;=5: High                      3-4: Medium  <b>0-2: Low</b></p>		
<p><b>INITIAL RISK ASSESSMENT</b></p> <p>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:</p> <p>Not at risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Condition optimal and any vulnerability</b></li> <li>● Condition fair and any vulnerability</li> <li>● Condition poor and vulnerability medium or low</li> </ul> <p>At risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Condition very bad and any vulnerability</li> <li>● Condition poor and vulnerability high</li> </ul>		

## 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	<b>Not changed significantly</b>	Seen some deterioration	Deteriorated significantly	Dont 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	<b>No significant change</b>	Seeing some deterioration	Deteriorating significantly	Dont know

<b>FINAL RISK ASSESSMENT</b>		
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
<b>Not at Risk</b>	<b>no significant change</b>	<b>Not at Risk</b>
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

No proposed boundary changes to the existing Conservation Area are proposed.

### 7.2 MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Almost all the 19th century and earlier buildings in the Conservation Area have retained original features and strongly represent the local vernacular style. Many are grade II listed, but a high proportion of the non-listed buildings have considerable historic and architectural quality (see Appendix C) and some may well be candidates for listing.

Allerford is unidentified as a 'village' in terms of Policy S1 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan (2005). Chapter 3 of the 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

- In considering proposals for any 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 exist. Historic signage should be maintained, as far as possible, in its original state. Any new or reinstated signs should respect the original forms, including use of cast-iron lettering or traditional sign-writing.
- Existing features of quality that typify the historic built environment should be retained. Any new development within the Conservation Area is likely to be extremely 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.
- 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.



## 7.2.2 FEATURES

- The conservation, and where necessary, the repair of walls and/or historic railings, and timber fencing is considered important. Where appropriate consider using additional timber or ironwork that reflects the local craft traditions.
- Ensure the retention and enhancement of any historic street furniture.
- Encourage retention of the character of existing entrances, including gate piers, 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. Consider where such materials might be employed in any resurfacing or enhancement schemes. Materials from local sources should be used whenever possible. Seek to retain or reinstate all existing period windows, doors, and cast iron rainwater goods. This includes the typical 19th century decorative estate features, and any examples of early-20th century Arts and Crafts tradition, for example, decorative window glazing and forged metal window and door catches.
- Although unlikely to become a problem in a village largely managed by the National Trust, it should be noted that the National Park Authority can consider introduction of an Article 4(2) Direction where boundary features, for example, stone or brick walls, and openings are under threat. This also has the potential to control the installation of PVCu windows and doors, inappropriate roof materials, external cladding, and use of exposed blockwork. None of these, however, have been identified as a problem in Allerford Conservation Area.

## 7.2.3 HISTORIC SETTING AND LANDSCAPE

- Before any change of use or alteration takes place, ensure that consideration is given to the historic importance of any existing building, including outbuildings and non-residential uses. This also includes the previous history and present significance of any small outbuildings located to the rear of the main street frontages.
- Although existing trees within the Conservation Area appear to be healthy, older specimens would benefit from 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 in an environmentally sensitive location.

- There is an important relationship between the setting of buildings in the Conservation Area and the associated topographic and landscape features, for example the 19th century plantations of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland on the slopes of Bossington Hill and Selworthy Beacon. Attention is drawn to the Local Plan Objectives for Woodland, one of which is 'to gain a deeper understanding of Exmoor's trees and woodlands through a comprehensive programme of research and survey work derived from the Exmoor Woodland Research Strategy.'

### 7.2.4 USE OF TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

- Encourage re-pointing of stonework using suitable lime mortar mixes. Cement-rich mortars and raised or 'ribbon pointing' should be avoided. This is especially the case for some of the softer types of sandstone.
- Where appropriate, steps should be taken to re-discover supplies 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 might become re-established. The initiative of the National Trust in producing wheat reed thatch from historic varieties grown locally is acknowledged.

# Appendices

## **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**

To assist in the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas restrictions on permitted development exist within them. These are subject to change so it is advisable to check with Exmoor National Park before carrying out any works.

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.

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 and materials 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.

## **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
Allerford House	II	02/01/1986	1058009
Cherry Trees	II	22/05/1969	1058010
1 and 2 Hillside	II	02/01/1986	1058011
Hillview and Woodside	II	22/05/1969	1058012
Linhay 35m NE east of Hill View and Woodside	II	02/01/1986	1345404
Meadowside and Pack Horse Cottage	II	22/05/1969	1058013
Pack Horse Bridge	II*	22/05/1969	1058014
Three Bears	II	22/05/1969	1058015
Myrtle Cottage	II	22/05/1969	1345405
Allerford Post Office and Post Box	II	22/05/1969	1345402
Cross Lane House	II	02/01/1986	1345403
Kent and Son, Agricultural Engineers, The Smithy	II	02/01/1986	1173680
K6 Telephone Kiosk	II	28/06/1989	1252292

## APPENDIX C- LOCALLY IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

Almost all the buildings within the Conservation Area make a positive contribution to its character and appearance. Below is a table of heritage assets within the Conservation Area that do not have formal individual protection through listing or scheduling. These are buildings or structures which, whilst perhaps not of national importance, are nevertheless of local significance by virtue of their age, rarity, design and historic or architectural interest and may be considered for inclusion as candidates in an Exmoor National Park local list.

Name	Notes
Stoates Farmhouse	C17 Farmhouse with twin lateral stacks
Four-ways / Forge Cottage	Pair of late-C19 estate cottages
Via Enns / The Cottage	C18 cottages
Pump at Via Enns	C19 pump and trough in later shelter
Reading Room	Late-C19 Acland building, now social club
Rose Cottage / Traveller's Joy	Pair of late-C19 estate cottages
Fern Cottage	Part of C18 row with West of England fire plaque
Rural Life Museum	Former early-C19 school and late-C19 school house
Workshop (forge gallery)	Small detached building shown on 1st ed. OS Map
Farthings / Hayes / Brook	C17 cottages
The Packhorse	C19 or earlier, much altered but in key position adj bridge
Brackenlea / Vale View	Late-C19 / early pair of estate cottages
Farm buildings S of Hillside	Late-C19 group of farm buildings

## APPENDIX D - BIBLIOGRAPHY

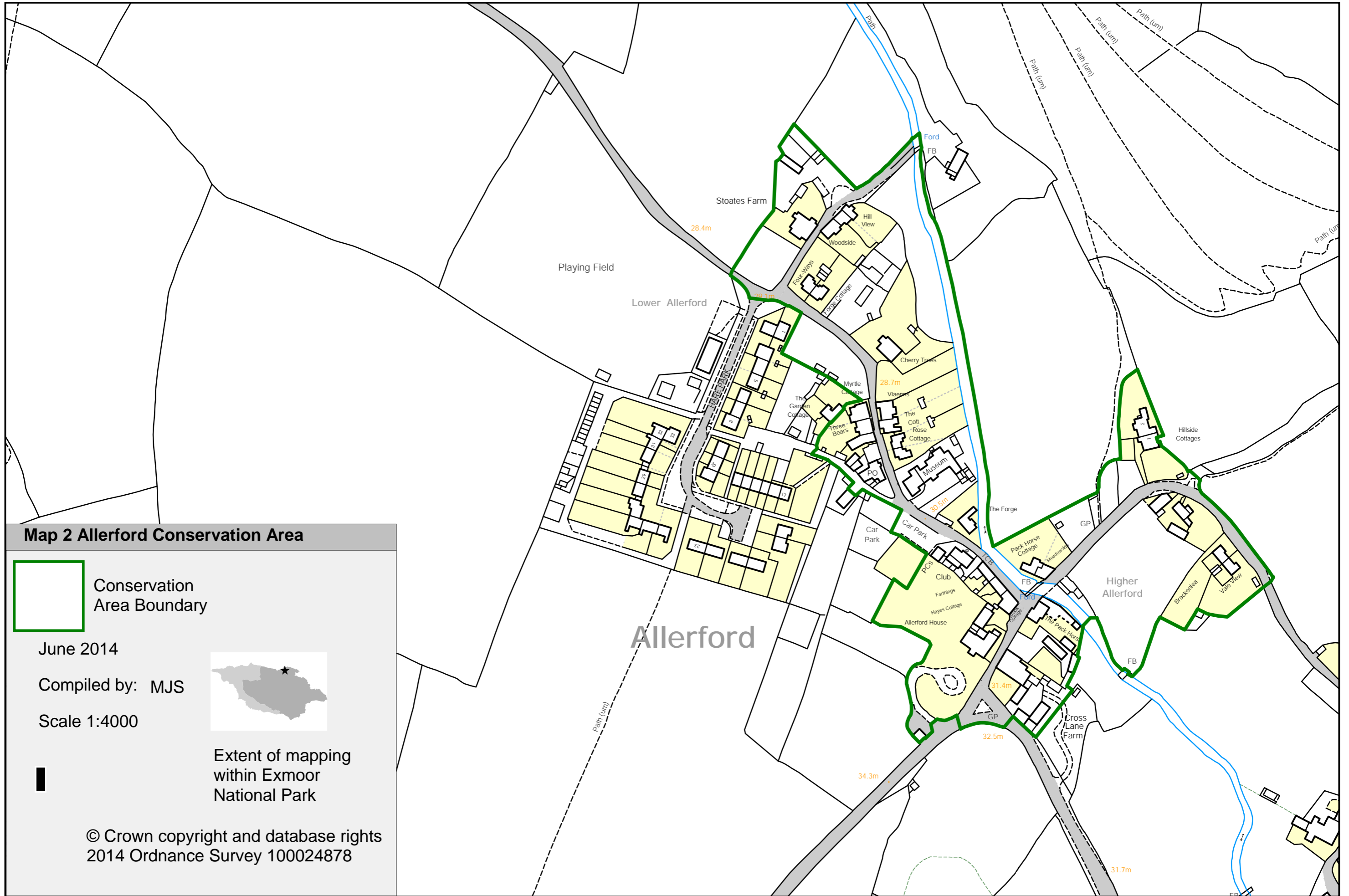
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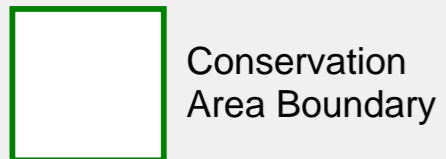
### LEGISLATION, GUIDANCE AND POLICY

- The Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015
- Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2001-2011. 2005.
- Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas. English Heritage 2005.
- Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals. English Heritage 2005.
- National Planning Policy Framework. DCLG 2012.
- Urban Design in the Planning System. Towards Better Practice. CABE/DETR 2000.
- The SPAB have a variety of technical resources and services for the care of traditional buildings. <http://www.spab.org.uk/>.

# Map 1 - ALLERFORD CONSERVATION AREA



## Map 2 Allerford Conservation Area



Conservation Area Boundary

June 2014

Compiled by: MJS

Scale 1:4000



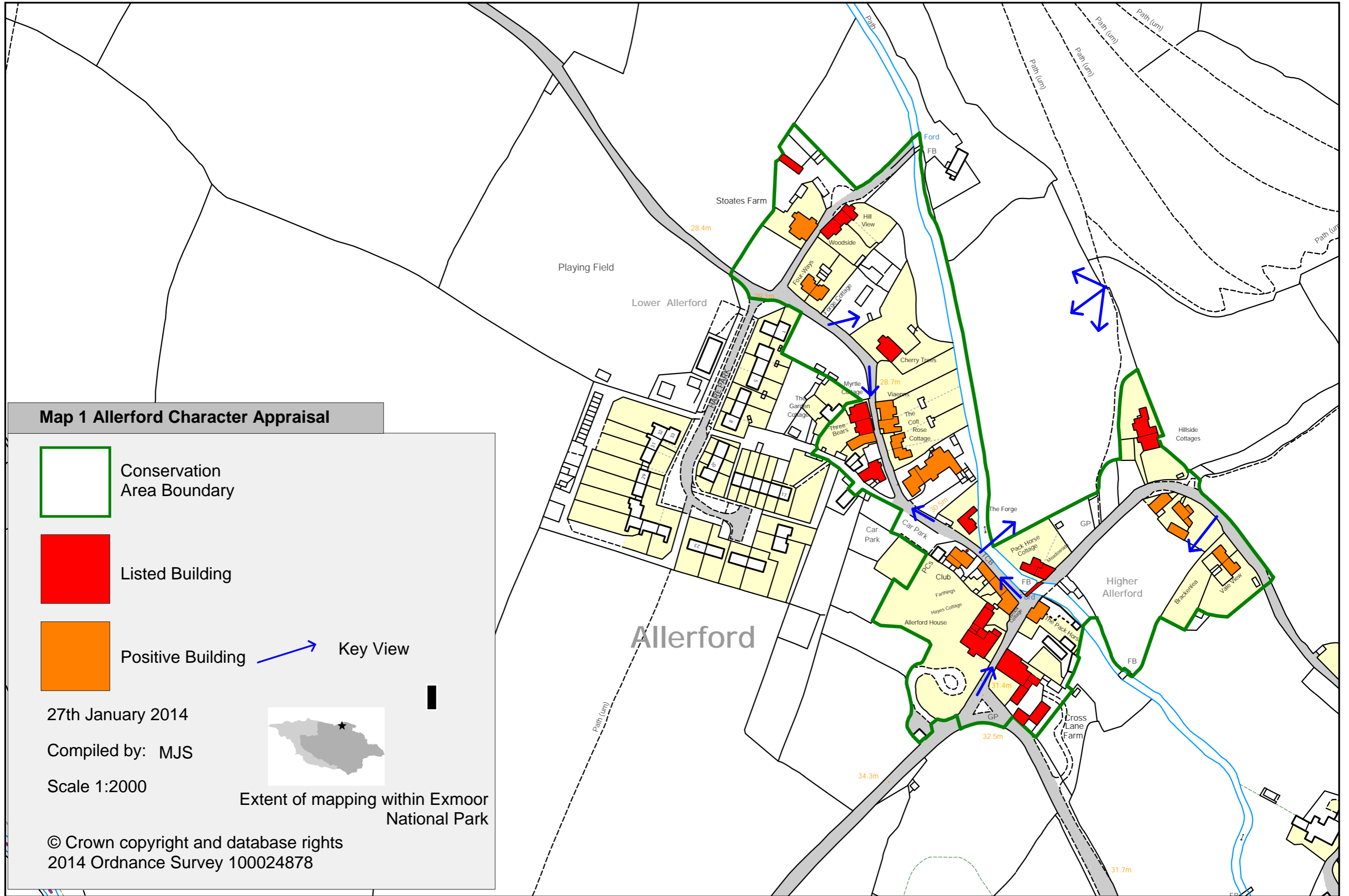
Extent of mapping within Exmoor National Park



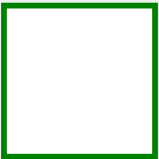
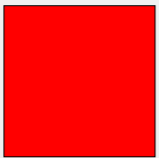
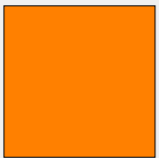

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# Map 2 - ALLERFORD CHARACTER APPRAISAL



## Map 1 Allerford Character Appraisal

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Building
-  Positive Building
-  Key View

27th January 2014  
Compiled by: MJS  
Scale 1:2000



Extent of mapping within Exmoor National Park

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