

Exmoor National Park
Historic Environment Report Series No 21

WOOTTON COURTENAY CONSERVATION AREA: APPRAISAL DOCUMENT



Adopted 2018

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Summary of Significance

The significance of Wootton Courtenay is derived from its setting, its historic buildings and their position in the landscape.

The village is situated at the foot of the short range of mainly wooded hills extending from Tivington Common in the west to Grabbist Hill in the east. It has a sheltered south-facing aspect and to the north and east views towards the high moors of Exmoor.

Wootton Courtenay is broadly 'T'-shaped. At its centre is the medieval church and the former rectory and from here it spreads east-west with a further lane leading south down to the bridge across the river. Within this pattern the settlement is diverse. The buildings are informally grouped, with no hint of formal planning but are usually built close to the carriageway. In spite of a low density, the informality, and close-knit grouping, linked by stone walls and banks, gives the village a cohesive quality and sense of enclosure. This has the effect of making the outward views to surrounding moorland from the higher parts of the village all the more striking.

Although Wootton Courtenay's cottage groups lack the 'chocolate box' aesthetic of some other Exmoor villages, its buildings display some typical local vernacular features which are of great interest. These include the front lateral chimney stack, suggesting that many originate in the 17th century. Also present are farmsteads which were built, or underwent improvement, during the 19th century. Almost all of the stone-built agricultural and other outbuildings associated with the farms date from this period.

1. Introduction

1.1 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Wootton Courtenay was first designated as a Conservation Area by Exmoor National Park Authority in 1994 and last reviewed in 2003.

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.

This document was prepared as part of review of all 16 of the Park Authority’s Conservation Areas. Its aims are to identify:

- the influences that have given Wootton Courtenay 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 Wootton Courtenay 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 October and November 2013, and revised in 2014 following consultation. It updates the appraisal carried out for Exmoor National Park by John Fisher in 2003.

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 in September 2015. A notice was placed in the parish newsletter and notices were put up in Wootton Courtenay publicising local consultation events, which took place in the Village Hall on 15th September 2015. Throughout the consultation period the draft Appraisal document was available on the Exmoor National Park website. The parish council were kept informed. Due to delay in formal adoption, letters were sent Parish Councils and to the owners of property affected by the boundary changes in April-May 2018 asking for further comment prior to adoption. No comments were received.

2. Topographic and Historic Background

2.1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

Wootton Courtenay is situated below a spur of the short range of mainly wooded hills extending from Tivington Common in the west to Grabbist Hill in the east. Several narrow lanes some 2-3km from the nearest classified roads connect the village to adjoining settlements, chief of which are Dunster 6km to the east, and Minehead 7km to the north-east.

The village is broadly 'T'-shaped, with settlement along the main east-west road and on the lane leading south downhill to the River Hanny, a tributary of the River Avill but little more than a stream as it flows through the lower village. Close to the bottom of this valley there is a crossroads with Butt's Lane leading back north-west up the hill and a lower private track following the river eastwards. The village has a sheltered south-facing aspect and views towards some of the higher moors, including Dunkery Beacon, which at 519m is the highest point of Exmoor. Low traffic volumes, which is sometimes as much equestrian as vehicular, provides a pleasing sense of tranquillity and isolation.

2.2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

2.2.1 MEDIEVAL DEVELOPMENT

The placename Wootton, which derives from the Anglo-Saxon wudu (a wood) + tun (a settlement or enclosure), is mentioned in Domesday and was held by William of Falaise. The Courtenay place-name element arrived with John de Courtenay (d.1274), who by the 13th century held the manor. Around the time the Courtenays became Earls of Devon in the early 14th century the manor passed to the Peverills and then later to Sir Walter Hungerford.

The only identifiable physical evidence of the mediaeval settlement at Wootton Courtenay is the parish church, which has its origins in the 13th century and the churchyard cross, which is some 200 years later in date.



Fig.1 Church of All Saints – the tower is the earliest surviving structure in the village.

The Tithe Map of c.1840 (Fig. 2) gives no indication of a regular field pattern of narrow strips leading back from the main street, normally indicative of burgage plots of larger medieval planned settlements. None of the domestic buildings are known to be earlier than the 16th century in date, but the possibility remains that some have medieval origins (see section 2.3).

2.2.2 POST MEDIEVAL DEVELOPMENT

Of the earliest identified buildings, the siting of the Old Rectory, Manor House, Bishop's Cottages, Bridge Cottage and High Park demonstrate that the current settlement pattern was largely fixed by the 17th century. This suggests that Wootton Courtenay developed as a loose group of farmsteads and associated cottages, some of which had disappeared by the end of the 19th century.

Later development has followed this pattern, filling in gaps between buildings along the two principal lanes. The Tithe Map shows that the density of settlement in the village was quite low and while they has been some late-19th and 20th century additions, the historic core of Wootton Courtenay is very much intact. Away from here and outside of the Conservation Area, later building has followed the east-west lane through the village, with the bulk of the ribbon development on the east side.



Fig. 2 Extract from Tithe Map of 1840.

2.3 ARCHAEOLOGY

There is evidence of significant prehistoric activity in Wootton Courtenay parish, which includes Dunkery Hill, but to date nothing tangible has surfaced to suggest any pre-Saxon settlement within the vicinity of the current village. The Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record (HER) shows water meadows on the south and east periphery of the Conservation Area, but these date to the 19th century. The mill mentioned in Domesday is possibly on the site of Mill Farm, which is 0.5 km to the east of the Conservation Area boundary.

Within the Conservation Area itself, the 13th century church and early 15th century churchyard cross are the two earliest structures surviving. It is likely that evidence of the medieval settlement, if it survives, would be in the vicinity of the church and/or lower down the hill near the stream – which broadly defines the southern extent of the current settlement.

The Conservation Area and its immediate environs therefore have some archaeological potential and further investigative work could shed valuable light on the development of the settlement. Within the standing buildings, it is possible that a detailed survey of their structures could reveal some surviving evidence of former open-hall houses, dating from the 16th century or earlier. The majority of cottage groups displaying characteristic local vernacular features, appear to mainly date from the 17th century, but could again be earlier in origin. Many farmsteads underwent improvement during the 19th century and most of the stone-built agricultural and other outbuildings in the Conservation Area date from, or were radically altered, in this period. Despite this, a fairly reliable indicator of an earlier date for houses, the front lateral stack, survives at amongst others, Manor Farm, Bishop's Cottages and Riverside Cottage, which are not listed and would be good candidates for further investigation should the opportunity allow.

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

Wootton Courtenay has always been an agricultural settlement. From the 19th century the chief crops were wheat, barley, turnips and fruit and early editions of the Ordnance Survey map, published in 1889 and 1903, show a considerable number of orchard paddocks encircling much of the village. Today farming in the locality is more pastoral, though some cereals are grown. In the immediate vicinity of Wootton Courtenay 'horsiculture' is also much in evidence.

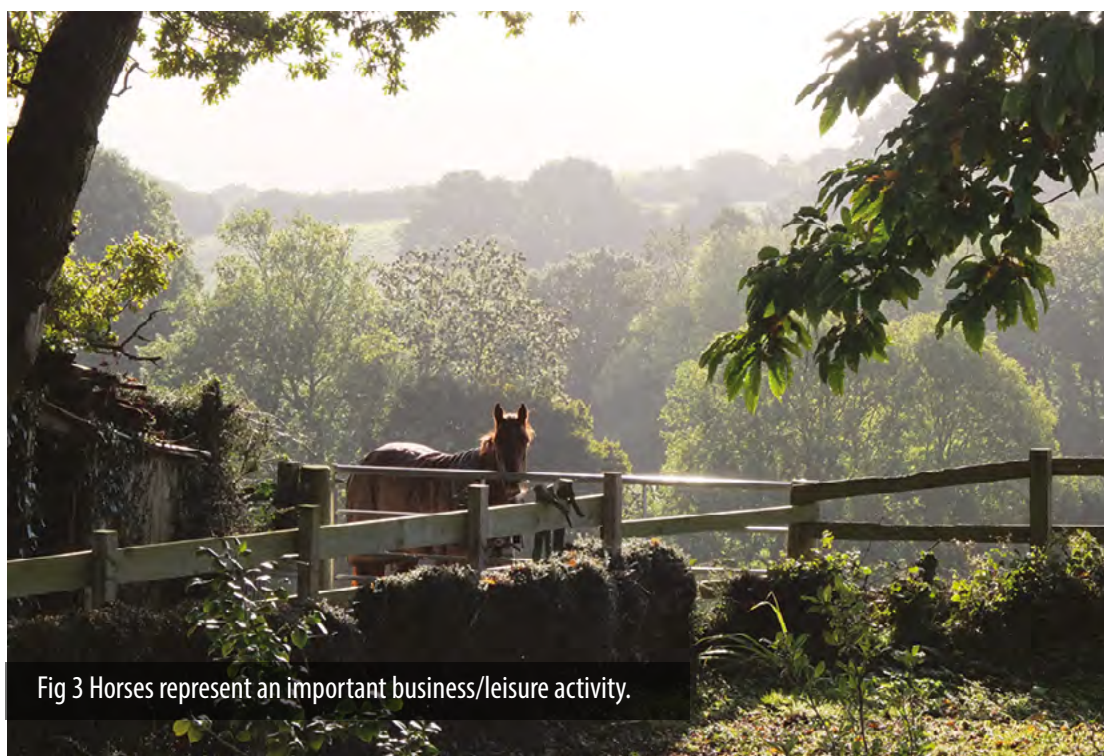


Fig 3 Horses represent an important business/leisure activity.

In the late 18th century, the antiquary Collinson noted that there were 54 houses and 250 people in the parish, in the agricultural heyday of the 19th century this had risen to around 400. The current population is back closer to 18th century levels. Although the village has lost its public house and school (although the buildings still survive in domestic use) the village shop/Post Office remain, as does the long-established village garage, although the small kiosk opposite is all that survives of the former filling station. There is also a large village hall built just outside the Conservation Area in 2001.

3. Spatial Analysis

3.1 SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND BUILDING DENSITY

The present Wootton Courtenay Conservation Area includes most of the 19th century and earlier settlement which forms a loosely scattered linear pattern linked by sandstone walls. Wootton Courtenay can be divided into two zones: the main village centre spread out along both sides the east-west lane with its centre at the T-junction opposite the church; and the lower village along both sides of the lane leading south to the shallow river valley. Historically there has always been a gap between the two, formed on the east side of the lane by the extensive grounds of the rectory. Although this gap between upper and lower settlement has been partially filled by modern the development, the nature of this and the presence of the high walls and hedges down the lane means that the illusion is maintained.



Fig 4 Boundary features maintain illusion of two separate hamlets.

The settlement pattern is diverse and buildings are informally grouped, but generally the historic buildings are quite close to the carriageway. Nowhere is there a strongly established building line: a few dwellings set at right angles to the highway, whilst others are set back. This provides a pleasing intimacy of scale that is enriched by changes of level, including flights of steps, a slightly curving street alignment, and in the lower village the river which briefly flows alongside the carriageway. This informality of layout typifies a long established settlement pattern.



Fig 5 Main village street, looking east.



Fig 6 Lower village, looking south.

In spite of a low density, the informality, and close-knit grouping, linked by stone walls and banks, nevertheless provides a strong sense of enclosure. This has the effect of making the outward views to surrounding moorland from the higher parts of the village all the more striking.

3.2 PLAN, FORM, HEIGHT AND MASSING

The historic core of the village has relatively few buildings and these display little uniformity. The most common type is the small two-storey cottage semi-detached or in a short row and most probably 19th century. Others, such as Bishops Cottages, originated as single farmhouses of the usual three bay and cross-passage plan. Farmhouses of this type which are not subdivided are also evident, some retaining associated farm buildings. Generally, later houses and bungalows tend to be larger, away from the highway and set within their own plots and do not follow the vernacular tradition of the area.

3.3 GREEN SPACE

There is no formal public green space within the Conservation Area but being a rural village Wootton Courtenay is surrounded by countryside. The largest non-privately owned green space is the churchyard, which has been extended north of the church but is still fairly small. Also of interest are the parcels of land opposite Manor Farm although these are perhaps not long established.

3.4 VIEWS

With the exception of the straight path through the churchyard to church, there are no formal or designed views or vistas with the public realm in the village. There are, however, superb views across farmland and the high moorland to the south and west from almost every part of the upper village. Lower down the views are constrained by the lane lined with walls, hedges and cottages, with the countryside beyond forming a backdrop.



Fig 7 View south towards High Park.



Fig 8 Church path gives formal approach to south door of church.

4. Architectural Quality and Built Form

4.1 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

4.1.1 UPPER VILLAGE

The **Parish Church of All Saints** (Fig. 1) at the centre of the village is built of local sandstone with Ham Hill stone dressings and slate roofs. Its tower and chancel are largely 13th century tower, with the remainder of the church mainly 15th-early 16th century. The alterations of 1886 were considered by the architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner to be an over restoration.

Adjoining the church yard is **Manor House** (Fig. 9). Built of rendered stone and cob with a slate roof, it was originally a three-room and cross-passage plan dating from the early-mid 17th century, but was remodelled and extended with a cross-wing added in the mid-18th century marked by the inscription 'M H 1763' under the eaves.



Fig 9 Manor House – 18th century remodelling of an earlier house.

Opposite the church and down the hill slightly, the **Old Rectory** (Fig. 10) is still the largest house in the village, despite having part of its east wing demolished in the 20th century. Set behind a high stone wall, outwardly it appears early-mid 19th century, but has 16th century origins, the main evidence for which is in the roof structure which has collar beam trusses with arched braces, and chamfered purlins with windbraces. The house is built of red sandstone, and part roughcast rendered with slate roofs and some slate-hung frontage detail. There are several tall stone stacks, including a prominent lateral one on the north frontage. To the east of the house are the remnants of a long range of outbuildings that formerly swept around three sides of the yard.



Fig 10 The Old Rectory – set behind a tall stone wall.

To the east and fronting the lane is the former **school and schoolhouse** (Fig. 11). Built as a National school in 1859, it was enlarged in 1867 and is now a dwelling. It is constructed of squared stone, mainly single-storey with steep low-swept gabled slate roofs, first-floor flat roofed dormer. Its gothic-revival style detailing includes the pointed triple arch windows to the right gable.



Fig 11 Former village school – now dwelling.

On the opposite side of the road is **Manor Farm** (Fig. 12). Built of exposed stone and slate, its tall squared stone front lateral stack might date it to the 17th century. The large timber casement windows are probably 19th century, as is the walled garden with crenellated gate piers and the fine collection of farm buildings to the east.



Fig 12 Manor Farmhouse.



Fig 13 Farm buildings to Manor Farm

Beyond is **Rose Cottage** (Fig. 14), rendered with a slate roof, and again a tall square-section lateral stack, but to the rear. It is possibly of 17th or 18th century origin, but has more recent embellishments, for example the gabled trellised porch, and casement windows.



Fig 14 Rose Cottage, possibly 17th or 18th century.

On the west side of the church the houses are more densely packed. **The Village Shop** (Fig. 15) retains original fascia detail with segmental arched heads to the windows above. It forms part of a group that includes a garage workshop, providing a visible focal point to the village. Attached to the rear of the shop and abutting the churchyard is **Jasmine Cottage** (Fig. 16) a tall 2 ½ storey building of exposed stone with a slate roof. Its top floor dormers are now joined by solar PVs.



Fig 15 Frontage to village shop.



Fig 16 Jasmine Cottage adjoining the churchyard.

Opposite the shop and occupying a corner site is Fernlea (Fig. 17) a substantial late-19th- early- 20th century gabled house in Arts and Crafts style with exposed stone ground floor, rendered upper floors, and mainly sash windows.



Fig 17 Fernlea – occupying prominent corner site.

Pound Cottage and **Stag Cottage** (Fig. 18) are marked on the 1st edition OS map as the 'Rose and Crown Inn'. They are slightly angled to the road, and probably date from the late 17th to 18th century. The former is rendered with steps up, the latter has exposed stone with a brick relieving arch and wrought iron railings, and there are timber casement windows to both. Opposite and set straight on to the road are a pair of attached cottages, **Pear Tree Cottage** and **Wreford** (Fig. 19) Although they occupy a site which has cottage shown on the 19th century and later OS maps and the former has a lateral stack externally they have the appearance of late-20th century houses.



Fig 18 Former Rose and Crown Inn, now cottages.



Fig 19 Pear Tree Cottage and Wreford.

Further up the lane on the north side is **Fieldfare** and **Finch Cottage** (Fig. 20), rendered with slate roofs. Formerly three rendered cottages but now two dwellings, they probably date to the 19th century or earlier.



Fig 20 Fieldfare and Finch Cottage.

4.1.2 LOWER VILLAGE

The lower village contains a number of vernacular buildings of high interest, although only two have statutory listing. On the west side of the street, **Applegarth** (Fig. 21) has a lateral stack but on the rear elevation. It is rendered with a steep pitched slate covered hipped and half-hipped roof and typical three and two-light timber casements. It probably dates to the 18th century.



Fig 21 Applegarth.

Opposite, **1-4 Bishops Cottages** (Fig. 22) may have originated as a single house in the 17th century, or possibly earlier, and been extended later. The row includes a front projecting stack with rounded shaft and small casement windows with timber lintels. The cobbled pavement and a hipped porch on timber brackets to No 3 enhance the understated vernacular detail. The upper end of the row is thatched.



Fig 22 Bishops Cottages – 17th century or earlier.

From Bishops Cottages a narrow lane follows the flow of the river east. At the corner is **Wheddon's Cottage** (Fig. 23) and **Bradlea**, a pair of estate-style cottages built of worked stone, with a central stone stack with linked triple brick flues, and ornamental barge-board. They are probably mid-late 19th century as they are absent from the Tithe Map but appear on the 1st edition OS map.



Fig 23 Wheddon's Cottage – mid-19th estate-style cottage.

Further east the lane becomes a private track. **Riverside Cottage** is a 17th-18th century cottage with shouldered lateral stack and renewed brick shaft, embedded in a largely 20th century extension, larger than the original building. It formerly extended further east partially in front of **Riverside Farmhouse**, a large rendered property with a gabled slate roof, set back off the lane and dating to the end of the 19th century. The stables and sheds to the east are mid-late-20th century.

Back on the main lane there is another short cottage row (Fig. 24). At the north end at the corner of Butt's Lane, **Vine Cottage** is a two-storey cottage, with exposed stone walls and Roman tile roofs with a door in the gable end. **Woodbine Cottage** is a part of the same building but extends into the single-storey range to the south that projects forward and is probably part of the former smithy. The other part of this single storey range belongs to **Forge Cottage**, the largest in this row, which is rendered with a slate roof. The group is mostly 18th-19th century.



Fig 24 Cottage row including single-storey former smithy.

On the east side of the river is **Crockford** (Fig. 25). It currently fronts the lane but the shouldered lateral stack on the south wall, which could have been on the front or back, indicates that it was originally orientated on a east-west axis. Although it was originally 17th or 18th century it has been greatly extended in subsequent years.



On the other side of the lane, **Bridge Cottage** (Fig. 26) is probably contemporary with Crockford but has been far less altered. It has two large rear lateral stacks and may have began life as two single-cell dwellings with an attached farm building. It is constructed of stone rubble and cob with a thatched roof.



Fig 26 Bridge Cottage undergoing remedial work (November 2013).

Just to the west of the lane are the L-shaped restored remnants of a farm building group, probably 18th century in origin but converted to domestic use in 1988 and now known as **The Old Parlour** and **Hanny Cottage** (Fig. 27).



Fig 27 Former farm buildings, now dwellings.



A short distance up the hill from the valley bottom is **Highpark** (Fig. 28), another thatched and rendered stone rubble and cob cottage. It dates from the late 17th century and was enlarged in the 18th century to two dwellings, but converted back to a single dwelling in the 20th century. An unpublished Vernacular Architecture Group report (1983) suggests this was originally a two-cell dwelling, with the rear wall of one unit demolished and a circular pier inserted to form a linyay.

4.2 MATERIALS

4.2.1 WALLS

The use of stone for building is widespread and includes all the main buildings, for example the parish church and former village school. Here the stone is usually worked, and sometimes ashlar. The farm outbuildings are of stone rubble as are most of the cottages, although these are typically covered by render, which was traditionally lime although this has been replaced in many cases by cement. Slate hanging is rarer but does occur at the Old Rectory and Fernlea.

There are two main stone types used: the soft -textured and orange to reddish-purple New Red Sandstone; and the less common harder dark red, grey or greenish Devonian sandstone. Much of the building stone would have been obtained from local quarries, which have long since closed, although some sites can still be traced.



Fig 29 – Bridge Cottage - the former cement render in process of being replaced by lime.

As might be expected in this relatively isolated village with a local supply of stone, brick is rare but is used for dressings around window and door openings in some late-19th century buildings and for chimney stacks.

4.2.2 ROOFS

Natural slate is the most common type of roofing material, although some has been replaced by artificial substitutes. Plain tiles including concrete tiles are more widely used on later buildings, and some Bridgwater pantiles and thatch are to be seen in the lower part of the village.

Originally, thatch would have been prevalent throughout the village. It does survive and the roof pitch of some non-thatched houses such as Fieldfare, Finch Cottage and Riverside Cottage, betrays its former presence.

One very noticeable change since the last appraisal is the number of buildings sporting solar photo voltaic panels on their front elevation roofs. This is not surprising given the village's south facing aspect.



Fig 30 Solar PVs - now a common sight in the roofscape.

4.2.3 WINDOWS AND DOORS

Historic windows in the conservation area are a mainly timber with relatively few sash windows. Some casements are of iron with rectangular or diamond leaded light panes, and set in timber frames. Sashes are nearly all double-hung and are more commonly used in buildings from the mid-19th century onwards.

Most doors are constructed in a traditional plank and ledged form, some with fixed lights, others with decorative Arts & Crafts detail (Fig. 31). 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. An example is the entrance at the Manor House (Fig. 32) although the original ovolo-moulded doorframe has been altered in a later restoration.



Fig 31 Arts and Crafts doorway at Fernlea.



Fig 32 Door to Manor House.

4.3 OTHER FEATURES OF INTEREST

There are a number of wells in the village shown on the early OS maps with a visible example surviving on the lane down to the lower village (Fig. 33).

Within the churchyard are the remains of a churchyard cross (Fig. 34) built of Ham Hill stone, and dating from the early 15th century but subjected to a heavy mid 19th century restoration. There is also an early 17th century headstone. Both this and the cross are listed in their own right.



Fig 33 Well head set in wall.



Fig 34 Medieval churchyard cross – the plinth is 19th century.

5. Street Scene

5.1 BOUNDARIES

There are considerable stretches of boundary walling of local sandstone. Particularly notable is the wall forming the boundary to the Old Rectory (Fig. 35) which is constructed of the typical roughly coursed stone rubble. Most boundary walls are far lower. Some stretches of walling, form a retaining feature to hedgerow banks and can be prone to deterioration when not regularly maintained. The stone 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.



Fig 35 Boundary wall to Old Rectory

Metal railings and gates also form boundary features in a few locations within the Conservation Area. They are mainly of plain wrought iron design, and date from the mid-late 19th century onwards. The ornate churchyard gates (Fig. 36) with overthrow and lantern are, for example, of no great age but do form an important role in marking the formal entry to the consecrated ground.



Fig 36 Churchyard gates.

5.2 GROUNDSCAPE

Wootton Courtenay has a significant number of surfaces that are paved, cobbled and kerbed in natural stone. The best examples are in the higher part of the village, including the churchyard where the centre of the path has been replaced by paving slabs (Fig. 37) and an exceptional 100 m intact length east of the former village school (Fig.38). Although much consists of small blocks of local hard sandstone randomly laid, there are smaller areas where slate, brick and waterworn cobbles are used.



Fig 37 Path leading to church.



Fig 38 Stretch of cobbled path leading to former school.

5.3 STREET FURNITURE

Two hydrants manufactured by Ham Baker & Co, probably in the late 19th-early 20th century, survive, one behind the K6-type telephone kiosk near the church (Fig. 39) and the other next to Pound Cottage.



Fig 39 Hydrant to rear of telephone kiosk.

There is also an 'ER II' post box set in the wall near the post office. Opposite is the village noticeboard which celebrates the Silver Jubilee of 1977 – a timber bench near the church records the Coronation of 1953. An earlier royal event is commemorated within the churchyard where there is a cast iron lamp standard erected for Queen Victoria's Diamond jubilee (Fig. 40) although this does not appear to have been its original position.



Fig 40 Lamp standard in churchyard.

5.4 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

The setting of Wootton Courtenay at the edge of Porlock Vale, with closed views towards the sheltering Grabbist Hill range to the north and east and open views towards the high moors including Dunkery Beacon to the south west, makes a major contribution to its character.



Fig 41 Yew tree in churchyard.

There is very wide variety of tree species represented, for example, oak, sycamore, silver birch, Lombardy poplar, and several lime trees border the churchyard. There are few signs of the once extensive orchards shown on the early edition Ordnance Survey maps, although a few old fruit trees survive. Conifers within the Conservation Area, are mainly confined to gardens, partly to provide shelter. Of particular note are the trees near Riverside Farm and the large churchyard yew (Fig. 41), which is presumably the one mentioned by Collinson in 1791.

6. Condition Assessment

6.1 CURRENT CONDITION

Most historic buildings, both listed and unlisted, are well maintained, and appear to be sound in terms of maintenance and 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 either survive in their original form, or where replacements have been made, closely match the traditional form for the most part. Nevertheless the PVCu replacement windows mentioned in 2003 as making inroads into the Conservation Area, are increasingly evident - these almost invariably destroy the historic integrity of traditional buildings.



Fig 42 Boundary wall to Old Rectory (November 2013)



Some localised deterioration of stonework is noted, especially the condition and structural integrity of some boundary walls. At the time of inspection, the wall to the Old Rectory was in need of repair (Fig. 42). The churchyard is generally very well kept but some individual graves are in need of maintenance (Fig. 43).

Also noted is the presence of overhead lines. These do not preserve the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

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

CONDITION ASSESSMENT					
1. Designated Conservation Area name:	Wootton Courtenay				
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 x 140m)	2.1 - 50 ha	More than 50 ha (½ sq km)	Dont know	
6. Approximately how many buildings are in the Conservation Area:	None	Up to 50	51 to 250	251+	Dont know
7. Approximately how many listed buildings are in the Conservation Area:	None	Up to 10	11 to 50	51+	Dont 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	Dont 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			

WOOTTON COURTENAY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL DOCUMENT

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:	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?					
<p>Based on your answers, the score would suggest the condition of the conservation area is:</p> <p>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") Optimal (1 question answered "A minor problem", or no problem selected)</p>					

6.2 VULNERABILITY

There is no one single factor that can be identified as detracting from the character of the Conservation Area. Its chief vulnerability lies in incremental change. The same threats identified in 2003 are still present and while their overall progress is slow, longer term there is the potential for considerable degradation of the Conservation Area’s character and appearance. The threats may be summarised as:

- the introduction of PVCu windows and doors into traditional buildings;
- the loss of natural slate roofing;
- pressure for further infilling;

- pressure to breach historic stone walls or hedgerow banks to provide additional access;
- potential for removal of minor historic features not subject to existing planning controls.

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?	No	Yes
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		
<p>INITIAL RISK ASSESSMENT</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"> ● Condition optimal and any vulnerability ● Condition fair and any vulnerability ● Condition poor and vulnerability medium or low <p>At risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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	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	No significant change	Seeing some deterioration	Deteriorating significantly	Dont 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 PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES

No changes to the existing Conservation Area boundary are proposed for Wootton Courtenay

7.2 MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Almost all the 19th century and earlier buildings in the Conservation Area have retained some original features representing the local vernacular style. Relatively few are listed and several cottages and former agricultural buildings may be candidates for statutory protection or inclusion on a local list (see Appendix C).

While most are appropriately cared for and maintained, a few have been updated in a manner that has largely ignored traditional building skills. In considering proposals for new development or redevelopment involving existing buildings or structures, stricter safeguards operate against any form of demolition in Conservation Area (see Appendix A). The guidelines set out below should be followed when considering any alterations, repair or restoration to buildings and new development within the Conservation Area.

7.2.1 BUILDINGS IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 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.
- Careful consideration should be paid 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.
- Any additions or extensions forward of the building line should be avoided as far as possible.

- 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.

7.2.2 FEATURES

- Where existing historic features are concerned, (such as original doors, windows, porches, 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.
- Ensure the retention and enhancement of any historic street furniture,
- Ensure necessary protection of all natural stone paving, cobbles, kerbs and gulleys, both as part of the highway and where in private ownership.
- Seek to retain or reinstate all existing period windows, doors, and cast iron rainwater goods.
- 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.

7.2.3 USE OF TRADITIONAL 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. The use of responsibly salvaged or newly sourced local stone should be encouraged.

- 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.
- 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 this form of pointing can greatly accelerate weathering
- 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.

7.2.4 HISTORIC SETTING AND LANDSCAPE

- Before any demolition or redevelopment takes place, consideration should be 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 rear extensions or 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 using native species, as far as possible. These could be gradually introduced to replace older specimens. Some fast growing garden species, such as Eucalyptus or Lawson's Cypress, can strike a discordant note in a historic setting and should be avoided.

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

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 within a Conservation Area 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 consent 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.

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 OF THE 1990 ACT

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
Manor House	II	10/09/2002	1031872
Church of All Saints	I	22/05/1969	1345750
Remains of churchyard cross in churchyard	II*	05/06/1985	1175433
Unidentified headstone 9m SE of Porch	II	05/06/1985	1057314
The Old Rectory	II	05/06/1985	1175451
K6 Telephone kiosk	II	14/08/1989	1175483
Bridge Cottage	II	05/06/1985	1175408
High Park	II	05/06/1985	1345751

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 virtue 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
Bishop's Cottages	Probable C17 origins with lateral stack.
Riverside Cottage	Probable C17 origins with lateral stack.
Riverside Farm	Late C19 rendered house.
Manor Farm	C19 in appearance but with front stack – possibly earlier origins, also good collection of farm buildings to east.
Rose Cottage	Possibly C18 or earlier
The Old School	Village school erected in 1859 and enlarged in 1867.
Jasmine Cottage	Tall cottage adjacent to church and attached to village store, probably C19.
The Old Parlour and Hanny Cottage	Converted farm buildings shown on Tithe Map c.1840.
Finch Cottage/Fieldfare	C19 cottages.
Stag Cottage/Pound Cottage	Possibly C18 former inn.
Grove Bank/Garage	Possibly C19.
Village Store	C19 with some original shopfront detail.
Wreford/Pear Tree Cottage	C20 or possibly earlier.
Fernlea	Early C20 Arts and Crafts house.
Applegarth	C18 with lateral stack.
Vine Cottage	C19 cottage.
Woodbine Cottage	C19 cottage incorporating former smithy.
Forge Cottage	C19 cottage associated with smithy.
Crockford	C17 or C18 with lateral stack.
Wheddons Cottage/Bradlea	Mid C19 estate style cottages.
The Old Parlour/Hanny Cottage.	Part of farm group with C18 origins

APPENDIX D - BIBLIOGRAPHY

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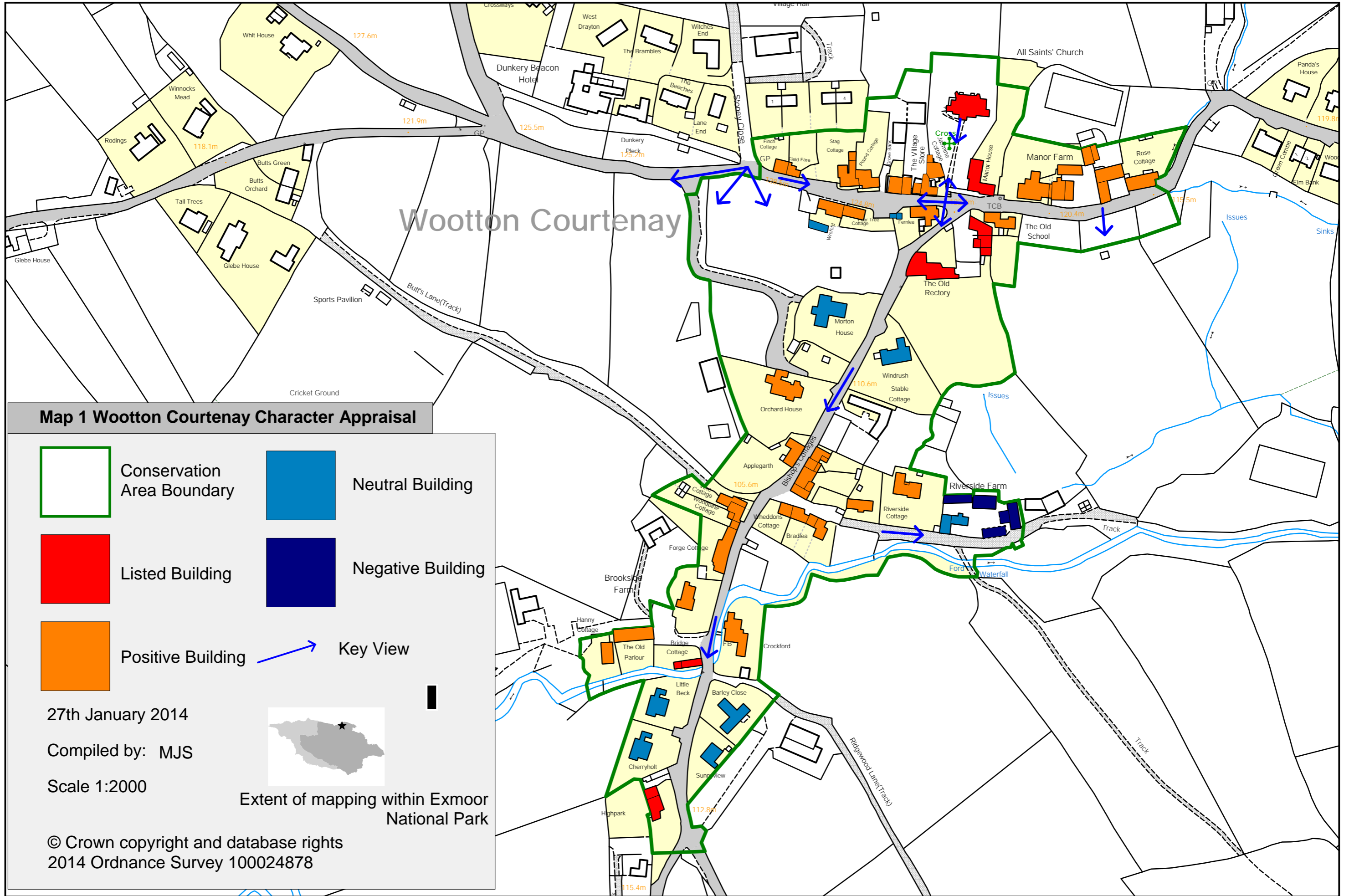
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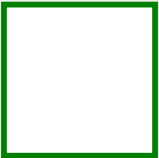
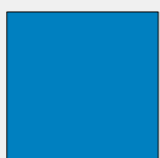
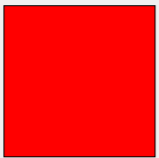
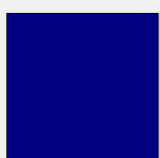
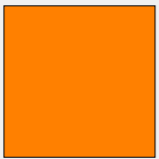

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Map 1 - WOOTTON COURTENAY CHARACTER APPRAISAL



Map 1 Wootton Courtenay Character Appraisal

	Conservation Area Boundary		Neutral Building
	Listed Building		Negative Building
	Positive Building		Key View

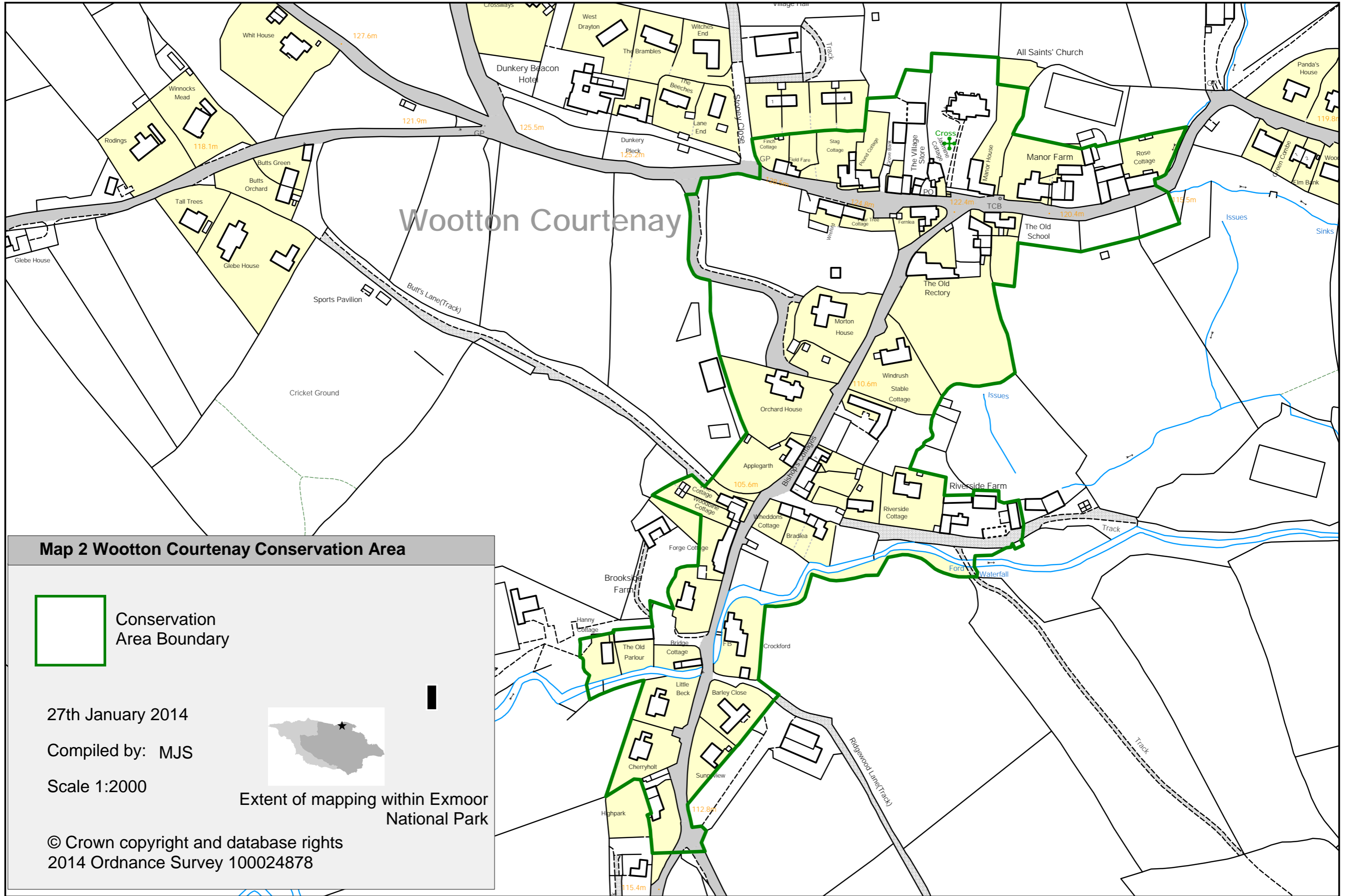
27th January 2014
 Compiled by: MJS
 Scale 1:2000




Extent of mapping within Exmoor National Park

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Map 2 - WOOTTON COURTENAY CONSERVATION AREA




Map 2 Wootton Courtenay Conservation Area

 Conservation Area Boundary

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 Extent of mapping within Exmoor National Park

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