

# mid devon

town & village character assessment

December 2012









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# 1. Introduction

## **Background**

The district of Mid Devon covers an area of 913 sq km in the heartland of Devon. Predominantly rural, the district is centrally positioned between the city of Exeter to the south, and town of Taunton to the east. Mid Devon has a wealth of towns, villages and hamlets that have been shaped by the way people have lived and worked over the centuries. The unspoilt farming countryside of the Mid Devon district, offers a sense of continuity and distinctive character to its settlements. The main town within the district is Tiverton, with three smaller market towns Cullompton, Crediton and Bampton and over sixty villages and hamlets. All have a unique character, with a variety of building styles, materials and ages. These settlements have diverse relationships with their surrounding landscape, either hidden in wooded valleys, nestled within the folds of rolling hills or sited on fairly flat elevated plateaux.

Mid Devon District Council has undertaken this assessment to ensure that objectives for the future of the area are based on a holistic understanding of its defining characteristics. Both Landscape and Historic Character Assessment are widely recognised as useful tools, in identifying the special qualities that give a sense of place. This understanding can be a powerful tool to aid the planning, design and management of future development of an area's towns and villages.







## Purpose of the assessment

The aim of the Town and Village Character Assessment (TVCA) is to provide a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the character of towns, villages and hamlets within the Mid Devon district. By describing variations in the settlement character, the TVCA will help to ensure that future development respects the distinctive qualities of both the natural and built environment of Mid Devon.

The TVCA is a descriptive evidence-base for the inherited character and local distinctiveness of different areas of Mid Devon, highlighting the historical factors and physical characteristics that help define a place's current identity. As well as underlying the policies of the Local Plan, the assessment will be material for consideration for use by those involved in the development process.

The TVCA analyses settlement character in Mid Devon, using a similar methodology to that used in Mid Devon's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) completed last year. As stated by Government (2012), where landscape character assessments are prepared, they should be integrated with an assessment of historic landscape character. The TVCA is informed by the Historic Landscape Characterisation for Devon and Conservation Area appraisals where available. It is intended that both the TVCA and LCA, will provide a holistic understanding of both landscape and settlement character in Mid Devon.

The TVCA encourages those involved in the design process to take an integrated approach through considering local context, site opportunities & constraints and key design objectives from the outset of the project by:

- raising the general awareness of the importance of landscape and settlement character in the planning process;
- helping to inform the formulation of relevant policies in the Local Plan;
- informing development management decisions about proposals for built development and other forms of land use change;
- informing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and evidence base of the Local Plan, on the impact of new development on settlement character;
- informing design guidance to promote higher quality built design; and
- providing a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape and settlement character and quality.



## Policy Context

### National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the value of local distinctiveness and supports the use of characterisation evidence-bases in managing how places change. The Town and Village Character Assessment is endorsed within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as follows:

- **Requiring good design, paragraph 58** - 'Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments: respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation'.
- **Plan making, paragraph 158** - 'Each local planning authority should ensure that the Local Plan is based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area.'
- **Plan making, paragraph 170** - 'Where appropriate, landscape character assessments should also be prepared, integrated with assessment of historic landscape character.'

### Local Plan 2012

The Mid Devon Local Plan is made up of three parts, the first two of which are adopted and in operation, the third part at the time of this publication a proposed submission document.

#### Part 1: Core Strategy (adopted 2007)

The following policies from the Core Strategy are considered to be of particular relevance: COR1 Sustainable Communities, COR2 Local Distinctiveness, COR5 Climate Change, COR6 Town Centres, COR7 Previously Developed Land, COR9 Access, COR10 Strategic Transport Networks, COR11 Flooding, COR12 Development Focus, COR13 Tiverton, COR14 Cullompton, COR15 Crediton, COR16 Bampton, COR17 Villages and COR18 Countryside.

#### Part 3: Development Management Policies

The TVCA forms part of the evidence base for Part 3 of the Local Plan, Development Management Policies. The Local Plan Part 3 (LP3), includes a wide range of newly drafted policies, many of which relate to the value of local distinctiveness and inherited character. Several consider the local character in more detail and ask for proposals to respect the character and appearance of the surrounding environment.

The development management policies contained within the LP3 that are considered relevant to this assessment are as follows: High Quality Design DM/2; Design of Housing DM/15; Retail, Business and Tourism DM/17; Fronts of shops and business premises DM/19; Rural shopping DM/20; Employment Development outside Settlement Limits DM/21; Agricultural development



DM/23; Tourism and leisure development DM/25; Community facilities DM/26; Development affecting heritage assets DM/28; Green infrastructure in major development DM/29; and Protected landscapes DM/30.

### **Quality of place**

The Government's strategy for improving quality of space, World Class Places, CLG (2009), recognises the essential role of the historic environment in providing character and a sense of identity to an area. Recognising how the design, materials and pattern of land use of the built environment provide character and definition to a locality enabling local planning authorities to better understand the appropriateness of proposed development.

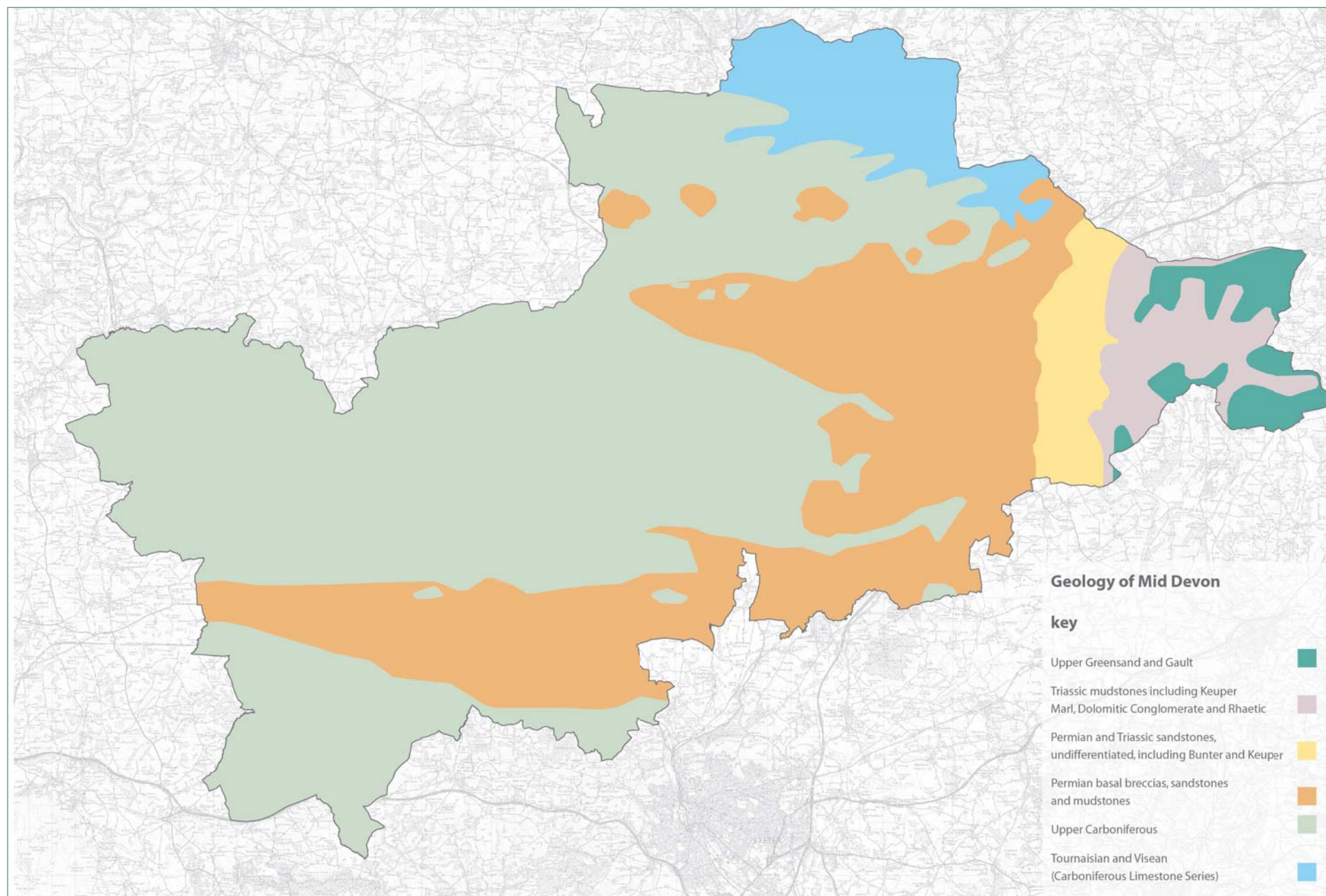
### **European Framework**

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) (which came into force in the U.K in March 2007) requires member states to manage and protect landscapes by recognising their importance in law, socio-economic and cultural policy and guidance. It confirms the legal definition of 'landscape' as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Chapter I, Article 1a). Thus it recognises that landscape (including townscape), is the product of individual perceptions of environment as well as its physical form.

### **Applying the TVCA**

It is intended that the TVCA will complement the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) to provide a cohesive strategic character assessment of the entire district, including both settlement and countryside. Promoting the TVCA as an evidence-base for local distinctiveness and inherited character in Mid Devon's Local Plan provides a 'hook' for subsequent policies and planning mechanisms. Recognition establishes confidence in applying the TVCA, and facilitates its use at decision-making stages of Development Management. It is important that the TVCA, in conjunction with other planning considerations, is recognised as a tool that encourages sustainable change, bringing about quality development in Mid Devon's local places.





## 2. Evolution

### Geological Setting

The underlying geology and the resulting landform and soils, has probably had the strongest physical influence in shaping the character of Mid Devon's built and natural landscape. Directly or indirectly the geology affects settlement, farming patterns, mining activities and even vernacular building styles through the construction of material historically available.

The most substantial part of Mid Devon lies within the Culm Measures area (light green on the map) formed mainly of carboniferous sandstones from the carboniferous period some 300 million years ago. The resultant hills of this area have a recognisable wave like form of ridges and valleys, giving broad horizons, often with a dip (shallow slope) and scarp (steep slope) formation. The soil is generally poor and badly drained, mostly used for pasture. The sandstones formed are durable, sombre brownish-grey in colour, with some hints of red. They are usually laid in rough coursing, have a rubbly texture and do not lend well to being carved. They are also prone to a covering of silver-green lichen which creates a mottled attractive appearance.

The second largest geological area is the Devon Redlands (orange on the map) formed 250 million years ago during the Permian Period. The landscape in this area has hummocky shaped hills, and the soil is well drained and fertile suitable for arable farming. It is made up of a variety of sandstones including Permian Basal Breccias and Red Sandstone with some volcanic trap. Permian stone has an unusual blending of purple-pink, pink and blue-grey and is moderately

durable. Other stones that were formed in this area are the hard igneous rocks known locally as Trap stone. This is a type of basalt, reddish brown in colour.

The third geological area is the Upper Greensand (dark green on the map), located within the Blackdown Hills to the far east of the district. This area was created some 100 million years ago in the Cretaceous period and is formed mainly of clay with Chert stone, green sand and upper marls. The underlying geology forms a series of ridges, valleys and plateaux, and is mostly farmed as pasture. The chert stone formed here is a type of silica, and is sometimes mistaken for flint. It is distinctively creamy coloured, milky brown or toffee brown in colour, with a rough textured appearance. Sometimes it is shiny and glassy with the consistency and semi-transparency of horn.

Finally the smallest geological area located to the north of the district (blue on the map) consists of Devonian limestones formed in the Carboniferous period some 300 million years ago. The landform is a mixture of elevated flat plateaux and undulating rolling pasture land. The limestone found here is known locally as Bampton Limestone, a tough durable grey stone. Another type of limestone, used less frequently, is Beer limestone. This is a chalkstone which is comparatively hard and shelly, with light cream tones. Usually used for refined features as it is softer and good for carving.







## Landscape Setting

### Landscape Pattern

Throughout Mid Devon the settlement form and its landscape setting represent a key characteristic feature in determining local character. The variation in slopes, small-scale differences in local landform coupled with features such as individual trees and tree groups result in a great variety and individualism among the district's villages and hamlets. As the landscape influences the pattern and form of Mid Devon's settlements, the urban form, such as the position of a settlement with the tower of the village church on a ridge just below the skyline, can provide a distinctive feature to the landscape.

The settlements in the northern part of the district tend to be located on high elevated plateau type landscape with a strong sense of isolation. The landscape here has a rather unsheltered windswept appearance, formed by the Culm Measures with sweeping views interrupted only occasionally by wind-shaped trees and small copses. The elevated position of settlements in the western area of the district allows expansive views over the surrounding countryside that dips away into the valleys. This is a tranquil, rural and relatively remote setting with good access to the countryside. The intricate course of the River Exe is the most defining landscape feature vertically dividing the district in two halves. The River Exe provides a continuous thread flowing from the northern extremities of the district right down to the south near Thorverton. Settlements located along its course benefit from an intricate landscape of steep valley slopes with well treed approaches. Towards the centre of the district, within the Mid Devon Farming Belt, the landscape is a gently undulating patchwork of irregular shaped arable and pasture fields. Here the highly rich fertile red

sandstone soils are responsible for the red mortar and pinkish stone building materials. The Culm valley is a low lying flat landscape which also benefits from the prosperous fertile soils. To the far east of the district the Blackdown Hills with their unique geology greatly inform the settlements through the use of chert stone, either located in the valley bottoms or on hillsides along spring line mires.

The Grand Western Canal is a highly beneficial resource for the town of Tiverton and villages situated along its length. It offers a myriad of recreational opportunities and is an important wildlife corridor with great diversity of plant species. The Exe Valley Way, a long distance route for walkers and cyclists, is a valuable resource exploring the length of the Exe River valley.



## Historical Evolution

### Prehistoric

Mid Devon has been settled for several thousand years, and evidence of this is found in the landscape. The earliest visible signs of human activity in Mid Devon include prehistoric settlements, field systems, linear earthwork boundaries, hill forts, burial monuments and ritual sites, many linked by prehistoric route ways. These visible features are located on high land or ridges, preserved amongst heath and common land. This does not necessarily mean that these were the only locations of early settlement, but rather conditions here are less likely to have been subject to more recent human activities which have hidden such evidence.

There is an abundant evidence of prehistoric activity within the Mid Devon area, indicative of settlement and agricultural activity. Finds include the recovery of: flint tools; hand axes; bronze age hoards; looped bronze age palstave; a barbed and tanged arrow; iron age coins; a greenstone adze; and prehistoric pottery. The presence of prehistoric enclosures such as: the iron age hill for 'Cranmore Castle'; a henge; ring ditches; and iron age hill slope enclosures; as well as the sites of funerary monuments and enclosures are all present within the district. The oldest settlements were established by the Celts, local name Dumnonii tribe, such as Morchard Bishop and Cruwys Morchard.

### Roman (AD43 - 5C)

The Romans invaded Britain in 43AD and the Mid Devon area was held under military occupation for some 350 years. Romano-British archaeological sites in the Mid Devon landscape are fairly sparse, with the most remarkable being a Roman villa protected as an Ancient Scheduled Monument, close to Crediton. Roman forts have also been identified to the west of Tiverton,

north of Cullompton, at Bury Barton near Lapford and at Cudmore Farm east of Bampton, although nothing in the way of standing earthworks survives. Artefacts found dating to this period include Roman coins, brooches and vases. Some enclosures have been identified through aerial photography as prehistoric, but may be of Romano-British date (AD 45 – 410). There is the presence of possible Roman roads through old Willand village and iron production is evidenced in the settlements of Craddock and Ashill, and is widespread in the Blackdown Hills.

### Middle Ages (5C - 15C)

Anglo Saxons expanded into Devon from the east around 600AD. The local name for the Anglo Saxon communities in the Mid Devon area was 'Defnas'. It was the Anglo Saxons who developed much of the rural economy with compact nucleated villages, examples of these include Thorverton, Silverton, Newton St Cyres and Hockworthy. Other settlements such as: Sampford Peverell; Halberton; Hockworthy; Holcombe Rogus; Lapford; Morchard Bishop; Hemyock; Sandford; Silverton; Uffculme; Willand; and Zeal Monachorum were recorded in Domesday 1086 indicating that there was a pre-conquest settlement already present usually centred around the parish church. By the 14th century, the foundations of prosperity had been laid with the establishment of new farms, hamlets and villages with their fine churches and the beginnings for the development of towns. One of Mid Devon's greatest historic legacies to arise from this period was the farmhouse, and there are some particularly fine examples from the 14th century onwards which contain a wealth of detail and style.

There are also an abundance of churches in the district, dating from the medieval period and many of the larger settlements have a medieval core still intact. Villages such as Bradninch and Bow, are characteristic of a planned medieval settlement as the layout exhibits narrow plots of land commonly referred to as 'burgage plots', aligned along a main through road. Medieval houses had small, timber frame windows with shutters rather than glass. The purpose being to balance the need to let in light and to conserve heat.

Many of the farmhouses in Mid Devon may have been built in the C15 or early C16 with layers of alteration completely disguising their earlier origin. Hundreds of farmhouses survive from this late medieval period thickly concentrated in Mid Devon particularly within the agricultural prosperous Mid Devon farming belt area. Originally these farmhouses from the late medieval period were open-halled or partly floored houses (Cherry & Pevsner, 1989).

### **Post Medieval period 16C - 18C**

The rise in the fortunes of the woollen industry resulted in the specialisation of sheep grazing and subsequent construction of special buildings required for power, processing and weaving the woollen cloth. Predominantly, settlements were farming communities, however mill industry for the production of either paper, textiles or corn is evident present in settlements such as Uffculme, Hele and Tiverton. A mill and mill pond, along with a number of leats and weirs are likely to be associated with the mill industry.

This affluence reached its zenith in the Tudor period with the development of the woollen trade, resulting in many fine buildings and churches. This is particularly well illustrated in Tiverton with Old Blundells School (now owned by the National Trust) and the improvement of farmhouses, for example, with fine plasterwork, oak screens and insertion of chimneys.



Newton St Cyres



Many of the villages exhibit C17 to C19 century development, many of which are listed, attesting to the growth and development of settlements during this period. Houses built in the countryside around 1700 have a narrow, long plan, referred to as a three room cross passage plan or 'hall houses'. These are distinct and separate from the Devon long houses that also housed animals and are usually concentrated within Dartmoor.

The three room cross passage type houses were traditionally thatched, many of these roofs have progressively been replaced by slate. The doors of these properties are low, the fires were open plan and buildings had no corridors. Historically, it was the length of timber available for floor beams which controlled the depth of buildings, therefore traditional buildings tend to be only four to five metres deep. Early glazed windows generally had a timber frame, with side hung timber casements fitted with leaded light windows. Until about 1600, the hall of the house was open to the roof because there was no chimney, smoke rose into the roof from a fireplace in the centre of the hall floor and escaped from vents in the hipped, gable ends of the roof. The insertion of chimneys from 1600 onwards, not only controlled the emission of smoke, but meant that it was now possible to build a first floor over the hall.

From the 1700s, houses were built with chimneys as an integral part of their construction. With building stone readily available in the area, hipped roofs were abandoned in place of full height, stone built gable ends that incorporated a chimney stack. The European fashion at this time was for architecture based on classical proportions. Georgian houses were often rendered to give smooth surface finish that was fashionable at the time. The orientation of windows changed from landscape to portrait to accommodate

the vertical sliding sash windows that were introduced to grand houses in the area in the eighteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century these were found even in workers cottages.

Pre-nineteenth century buildings, both barns and houses, were constructed of local stone (exposed or rendered) or rendered cob. They were a maximum of five metres deep and had thatched roofs. Thatch was the original roofing almost everywhere until this time. The traditional thatch material in Mid Devon was combe wheat-reed with a plain ridge that gives a gentle, unassuming finish to the traditional Devon roof. It is quite different from the much coarser finish of imported water-reed (Cherry & Pevsner, 1989).

Perhaps Mid Devon's most important architectural feature is its wealth of thatch and cob buildings. Cob is a mixture of earth, straw and water which dries to form a compound strong enough to use for house construction. Because the cohesion of the material only lasts so long as the cob is kept dry (otherwise reverting to mud again) cob walls are usually given the threefold weather protection of an insulating stone plinth underneath, a continuous weather-coating to the wall surface in lime render or limewash, and a wide eaves overhang of slate, thatch or tile above. Mixing cob is a heavy and labour intensive activity, and so was often done by cattle-treading. Straw is usually, but not always, added to assist drying out and to distribute shrinkage cracks throughout the wall. Walls were traditionally built without shuttering by pitching the soft but cohesive wet cob up on to the wall in layers or 'raises' about a foot deep, the surfaces being left rough until dry enough to be pared down. As the basic material for cob is on-site subsoil, the truly local character of cob is expressed in marked variations of colour and texture. This is often

seen where walls are left unrendered such as boundary walls and barns. The colour of the cob changes with the soils, from the strong reds of the Red Devon Sandstone in the middle of the district, to brown/grey clays of the Culm Measures found in the northwestern areas, and red/brown colours due to the 'Marl' mudstone soils in the far east. (Cherry & Pevsner, 1989)

Brick buildings are mainly focused in the towns and larger villages, usually dating from the Georgian, Victorian and 21st century. Prior to C17, red brick was rare for anything but chimneys. Properties dating from the Victorian period are traditionally red brick, with different coloured brick detailing such as yellow brick sourced from Marland, North Devon. The brick detailing is often in banding, quoins or segmental arched detailing around fenestration.

### 19 C to the present

There was a decline in fortune during the 19th century and so fewer buildings of great quality were constructed. Although a notable exception is Knightshayes country house, now owned by the National Trust. Other exceptions include: Stoodleigh Court (1881); and the Westex factory housing in Tiverton, built during the 1800s. This was philanthropic housing on a grand scale and brought a degree of 'polite' architectural proportions based on Georgian principles to the town. Other development in the early 19th century included the completion of the Grand Western Canal and later the Culm Valley Light Railway, opened in 1876.

In the 20th Century, modern demands meant that settlements inevitably changed to accommodate motor vehicles. Increased mobility has generated a surge of interest to live in villages, although the facilities within many of the villages declined, a trend continued today.

Most of the vernacular buildings in smaller settlements up until 1900, were constructed by local people using local materials such as cob, chert, thatch, slate and stone, with simple robust forms reflecting the surrounding landscape conditions. This produced buildings which fit well into their surroundings, contributing to and harmonising with the landscape.

However during the 1920s-1930's and 1950s-1960's, there was a flurry of building activity leading to large private and council residential estates. These were grafted onto settlements and were often located outside the village envelope, with little regard to the character of the village and its relationship to the landscape. Although it needs to be recognised that settlements are made up of elements built up over a long period of time and are constantly evolving, some recent development has been unsympathetic, detracting from the character of a number of Mid Devon's settlements.

**Summary:** There are presently 51 Scheduled Monuments and 2,572 listed buildings, some of which are also Scheduled Monuments. Of these there are 10 castles, 4 roman forts, 11 stone crosses, 1 cross socket stone, 6 bowl barrows, 1 henge, 1 ring ditch, 1 abbey, 2 iron age earthworks, 2 camps, 4 bridges, 1 romano british villa, 1 neolithic causewayed enclosure, 3 round barrows, 1 long barrow and 1 hillfort. Buildings which are also scheduled ancient monuments include The Great House and Blue Coats School in Tiverton.



## Historic Towns

There are four towns in Mid Devon, all of which have a particular historic importance. Tiverton is the main town with the other three (Cullompton, Crediton and Bampton) acting as smaller market towns.

**Tiverton** is the administrative centre of the district. It has origins as a ford across the Rivers Exe and Lowman, and was once a prosperous industrial centre for the wool and lace trade, acting as the main trading centre for the larger agricultural hinterland. It has an attractive historic centre and a rich legacy of buildings of all periods, despite suffering losses due to fires in the 18th and 19th century. The area by Newport Street, Bampton Street, Fore Street and St Peter Street possibly represents the earlier Saxon core of the town. The below-ground remains of medieval buildings have been found in this area. Outside this area the late 19th and early 20th century OS maps suggest medieval and post-medieval expansion of the town. In the north of the town lies the medieval Tiverton Castle. On the west side of the town is the Heathcoat textile factory, some elements of which are listed, as well as Westex factory housing associated with the 19th century factory.

**Crediton** has an ancient tradition as the birthplace of St. Boniface and the seat of a Bishop between 909 and 1050. The town prospered as a result of the woollen trade particularly from the 16th to the 18th century and there are some attractive historic buildings reflecting this affluence, although here as in Tiverton, many buildings were lost as a result of fires. The narrow, north-south aligned, medieval property boundaries shown on the late 19th and early 20th century OS maps can still be discerned in the extant boundaries on the south of High Street. To the north they have been largely removed by later housing

developments. At the eastern end of the town the late 19th century OS map marks the location of St Gregory's Cathedral in the vicinity of Holy Cross Church. Its exact location is unknown but may lie beneath the depot in East Town. Below-ground archaeological and artefactual remains associated with the medieval settlement in the town, are likely to survive within the historic core of the settlement.

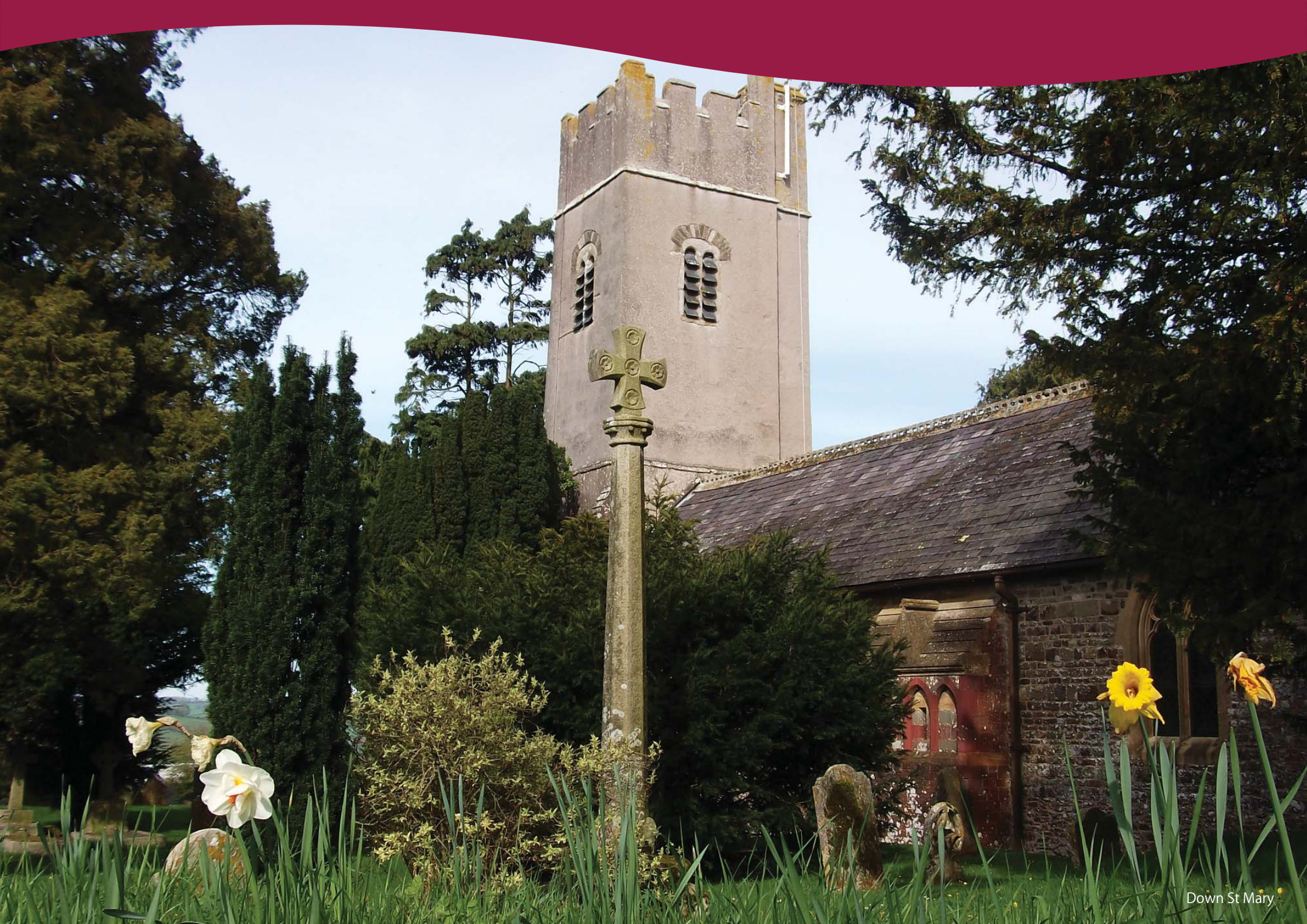
**Cullompton** is first mentioned in documentary sources in the 9th century. Earlier settlement in the town is demonstrated by the presence of a Roman fort on St Andrew's Hill to the north and recently discovered Roman occupation in the rear gardens of properties on the west side of Fore Street. More recent excavations to the west of the town have identified post-medieval brickworks and an iron working site. Cullompton was important as a centre of the woollen trade between the 16th and 18th century, and this is reflected in the attractive detailing of St. Andrew's Church. A significant building of local importance within the town is 'The Walronds' a tudor/jacobean grade 1 listed building which fronts on to Fore Street, and still retains its ancient burgage plot which stretches back 400 meters to Shortlands Lane. The townscape consists of a single main street with attractive alleyways and courts, and fine 17th century buildings. The narrow, east-west aligned, property boundaries and passageways aligned on Fore Street are characteristic of a medieval settlement. Industrial activity on the edge of the town is shown on the late 19th century OS maps with a tannery on the southern edge of the town, while to the east there were three mills.

**Bampton** is an appealing settlement, formerly a market town, prosperous through the woollen trade, with a well preserved townscape of 18th century houses built in the attractive local limestone. The town has a medieval core, with development of the town at this time appearing to be focused between the two sites along Castle Street, Back Street and Fore Street. A secondary development associated with milling possibly occurred around Town Mill on the northern side of Briton Street. At the northern end of the town lies Bampton Castle, a medieval motte and bailey castle. The extant buildings show post-medieval expansion of the town. Roman activity in the area is indicated by findspots of artefacts from that period.



Bampton







# 3. methodology

## Introduction

Mid Devon's Town and Village Character Assessment (TVCA) analyses the character of each settlement to expand knowledge, and understanding of what makes the towns and villages of Mid Devon locally distinctive. The TVCA loosely adopts the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) methodology (as produced by the Countryside Agency), but is dually informed by Devon's Historic Landscape Characterisation, a method for understanding and mapping the historic dimension of the present day townscape and landscape.

The TVCA has undertaken a two tiered approach, firstly identifying large geographic areas named 'Settlement Character Areas', and secondly by identifying the different land uses within the market towns and larger villages. Together, this provides a comprehensive characterisation of the Mid Devon District fulfilling the following objectives:

1. to understand how areas develop their character;
2. to assess an area's capacity for change, including the size and rate;
3. to identify where there may be opportunities to utilise the historic environment to achieve economic vitality and sustainable communities;
4. to ensure that the historic environment resource is not inadvertently diminished by ill-informed development;
5. to identify where there are heritage assets at risk that need to be targeted in planning or regeneration proposals;
6. to assess the need for site, asset type or area specific policies for the conservation and enjoyment of the environment.

## Stage 1: Settlement Character Areas

The district was divided into ten large geographical areas named Settlement Character Areas (SCAs). This was primarily a desk based exercise, with area boundaries refined once the field survey of the identification of settlement land uses had been completed. The Settlement Character Areas (SCAs) are tailored specifically to Mid Devon using various information presented in Geographic Information System (GIS) that include landscape character, landform, drainage, postal code, land cover, geology, soils, patterns of human occupation & activity, archaeology, and road & rail network. For ease of mapping and analysis, the Settlement Character Areas (SCAs) follow parish boundaries, though several parishes may be included within an area. The key characteristics of these areas describe the physical and human influences such as patterns of settlement and influences from pre-historic times to the present day, as well as perceptual characteristics.



## Stage 2: Land Use Types

Within each Settlement Character Area (SCA), the main town, if there is one, and larger villages were individually surveyed. Information within the Mid Devon Rural Services Survey (2011) helped determine which settlements were deemed to have sufficient infrastructure to warrant more detailed survey work (see appendix 2 for methodology matrix). The smaller villages and hamlets have been assessed in more general terms.

Each individually surveyed settlement is illustrated in map form with a pie chart to show the proportion of different land uses. This is then followed by a summary of settlement form, movement, various land uses and features of interest, allowing greater understanding of how our settlements have evolved over time, and how they compare. This exercise was not intended to define the use or age of every building, but to focus on the character and local distinctiveness of a place by identifying the broad locations and patterns of land use.

The different land use types recorded can be common to all the settlements in the district (and beyond) and were systematically and objectively classified. They included the historic core of each mapped settlement, industrial land, open space, institutional land or buildings (such as schools or hospitals), agricultural development, and housing within defined age categories. Where agricultural land use is mapped, it is considered to contribute to the character of the built environment, such as a farm located on the edge of the village. It is understood that agricultural land usually surrounds a settlement and its character has been described separately in the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment, October 2011.

Field survey work undertaken from October 2010 to August 2011 identified and assessed the land use types within 4 market towns and 27 villages. This was a systematic rigorous exercise that involved undertaking written observations, making map annotations, and taking photographs. Standard survey forms were used for each classification, helping to ensure that the settlement features and characteristics were recorded in a consistent and objective way. The results of the field survey are further detailed in appendix 3: field survey tables.

The field survey assessed and recorded each land use type in terms of its:

- **building enclosure and scale** (street and block pattern, 3D massing, scale and density of buildings, enclosure and street proportions and boundaries);
- **movement** (accessibility, pedestrianisation, cycle routes, public transport, choice of routes, road hierarchy, street signage, wayfinding, nodes, gateways, clearly defined paths, edges and mobility for disabled or elderly);
- **buildings** (style and condition/quality of architecture, vernacular style, materials, building frontages and renewable energies present);
- **public realm** (street scape materials, street furniture, street scape clutter, visual contrasts and evidence of vandalism);
- **landmarks** (building contextual cues, landmark buildings, focal points);
- **views** (framed views, underlying nature of the landscape, views in and out of town/village and the skyline); and
- **landscape elements** (vegetation types and their overall contribution to character and condition, private gardens and their contribution to street scape and open spaces).

### Stage 3: Consultation

The draft report was circulated to key stakeholders (Parish Councils and special interest groups) for a six week consultation period in June and July 2012, with publication of the final assessment in December 2012. Consultees were invited to comment on the draft classification, and feed into the evaluation section of the assessment. Written responses received through the formal consultation were incorporated into the text of the final report where appropriate.

### Stage 4: Evaluation

The final section of the document was prepared after the formal consultation period had ended and was informed by the responses received. It identifies the distinctive characteristics found throughout the Mid Devon district, and the broad patterns in which they occur.

