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# **CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR CULLOMPTON**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Cullompton Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) was approved by Planning Committee on 11 March 2009 and has been adopted as a material consideration in dealing with planning applications and enhancement proposals within the conservation area boundary.

The Cullompton CAMP should be read in conjunction with the Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal, chapters 1-5. The adopted CAMP supersedes chapters 6 and 7 of the Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal.

## **Policy Context**

### **Mid Devon District Council's Corporate Plan**

The Corporate Plan sets out the Authority's corporate priorities including Community well-being, Corporate Pledge 11 to improve town centres and employment opportunities. To meet this pledge the Council will work with Devon County Council to implement footpath links and traffic management measures in the town. The vitality and viability of the town centre will be monitored by measuring changes in footfall and the number of vacant retail units.

In Cullompton the provision of a relief road is seen as key to regeneration, requiring cooperation with Devon County Council to achieve this and subsequent enhancement of the town centre. The relief road is a commitment in the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework. Developer contributions are seen as the means of providing both the relief road and major enhancements of the town centre. It is also recognised that prior to achievement of this major goal there will need to be both development of an agreed long term enhancement scheme and short term improvements and enhancements to the centre. Associated with the environmental improvements is the commitment to publication of the Air Quality Management Action Plan for the town.

### **Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP)**

This emerging plan is looking at long term and short term measures to improve air quality in the town centre. The long-term measures would be linked to the provision of a relief road and is dependant upon development being completed in accordance with the proposals in the local Development Framework and the Culm Development Plan Document. In the short term the AQAP will develop traffic management and parking measures aimed at improving traffic flow and reducing traffic volume. Some proposals will need to be co-ordinated with heritage led environmental enhancement.

## The Local Development Framework

The closely related issues of air quality and traffic impact, which affect the heart of the Conservation Area, have informed the Council's adopted Core Strategy. The strategy for Cullompton (set out in full at Appendix 1) sets the following objective

- The Council will guide high quality development and other investment to
  - d) promote the removal of through traffic from the town centre and improve local air quality by enhancing walking and cycling opportunities around the town, completing a relief road system and implementing air quality action plan initiatives.

The Council is working on a more detailed Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan Document which will allocate land for development and propose infrastructure to achieve these objectives. A proposed submission version of the document was published for consultation in October 2009, with submission for examination by the Planning Inspectorate expected towards the end of December 2009. This followed on and built upon the Issues and Options consultation (July to September 2007) and the Preferred Options consultation (November to January 2008). Subject to a favourable outcome it is anticipated that the Development Plan Document will be adopted during 2010.

The key outcome from the point of view of the Core Strategy objective is the provision of an alternative route for through traffic and the subsequent opportunity to significantly enhance the main shopping street. However, this provision is unlikely to be in place before 2013. Accordingly the proposals for enhancement of the town centre should be dealt with in two phases; initial improvements before traffic is removed and then more significant enhancements to the public realm when traffic volumes have been considerably reduced. The Management Plan focuses on the first phase.

The Core Strategy Policy COR14 (adopted July 2007) sets out a range of objectives for the town including (see Appendix 1):

h) Manage the town centre so that economic regeneration and heritage reinforce each other promoting new homes, shops, leisure, offices and other key town centre uses which are well designed and contribute to vitality and viability...

and;

j) Enhance the tourism and visitor role of the town and area.

The saved Mid Devon Local Plan (adopted July 2006) incorporates Policy ENV11 and Policy ENV13 relating to the quality of development in conservation areas and environmental enhancement of conservation areas respectively (see Appendix 2).

## **Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal**

This document was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in September 2003. Whilst the document contained some analysis of opportunities for preservation and enhancement there was no separate Conservation Area Management Plan.

The adoption of the Cullompton CAMP supersedes chapters 6 and 7 of the adopted Conservation Area Appraisal and amendments to the conservation area boundary have required alterations to all the maps to reflect these changes.

## **Cullompton Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP)**

English Heritage in conjunction with the Planning Advisory Service published "Guidance on the management of conservation areas in February 2006". The Management Plan has been drafted in line with the guidance set out in that document.

The Cullompton Conservation Area Management Plan is intended to support Corporate Pledge 11, the Air Quality Action Plan and complement the Local Development Framework particularly the Cullompton Development Plan Document.

The Cullompton Town Centre Enhancement and Regeneration Advisory Group comprising of 4 elected members of the District Council, 4 elected members from Cullompton Town Council, 1 elected member of Devon County Council and a representative of the business community was set up following adoption of the CAMP. ADAPT is represented by one of the 4 District Council members. Officers from Devon County Council, Mid Devon District Council and Cullompton Town Clerk are included in the group. The group is tasked with advising on schemes and expenditure proposed for enhancement and regeneration of the town centre including prioritisation. Decisions on the implementation of schemes including expenditure is delegated to the Forward Planning and Conservation Manager in consultation with the Advisory Group.

## THE ISSUES

### SUMMARY

- Through traffic detracts from the environment of the town centre
- Erosion of historic character and appearance throughout the conservation area
- Decreasing vitality and viability of the town centre

The town has expanded and there are plans for further growth to increase its sustainability. The historic core of the town contains a number of high grade listed buildings, several traditional pubs, cafes, a variety of small independent shops as well a monthly farmers' market and a weekly indoor market.

There have been several small scale enhancement schemes in the central area particularly the Higher Bull Ring, New Cut and at Lower Bull Ring carried out 8-10 years ago. (*photo 1*)

Despite this the town centre generally lacks vitality and is not an attractive environment. The noise, fumes and dirt of heavy traffic constantly intrude and detract from the environment, particularly of Fore Street with its restricted carriageway and narrow pavements (*photo 2*). There are long term proposals for a relief road in connection with future development that would enable most traffic to be excluded from the town centre. In the meantime a range of traffic management measures together with environmental enhancement of the public realm and improvements to properties within the town centre would be beneficial to the historic environment and the local economy.

Many business premises have fronts that are poorly maintained or have had unsympathetic alterations to the shop fronts and upper floors that have eroded their historic character (*Photo 3*). In addition many properties are in need of repairs particularly to their roofs. Some narrow pavements are obstructed by free-standing advertisements or displays of goods.

There are an increasing number of empty shop units. (*photo 4*)

# *The Issues*



1 Previous enhancement scheme



2 Through Traffic



3 Modern fascias and shop fronts on historic buildings



4 Empty shop fronts

The recent opening of Tesco's on the edge of town has resulted in competition with some of the businesses in the town centre, but the new store is part of a strategy to make the town more self contained for shopping. The store will alter the dynamics of the town and the impact will need to be monitored. Pedestrian movements appear to have increased between Station Road and the town. The provision of a modest amount of Section 106 money for town centre improvements (£80 k) is to be used to enable enhancement and regeneration.

Based on the wider policy framework, the adopted conservation area appraisal, previous Local Improvement Scheme proposals, suggestions from the Cullompton Town Council, Local members and responses from public consultation on the draft Management Plan, this Cullompton CAMP has been published. It is intended to be a dynamic document to be reviewed as proposals are implemented and monitored.

The CAMP covers a range of potential enhancement opportunities in the public realm bearing in mind the monies currently available and potential opportunities through redevelopment of sites in public and private ownership and the enhancement of individual properties.

It is acknowledged that the problems arising from through traffic will not be resolved in the short term and this will delay comprehensive environmental improvement of the town centre. Nevertheless traffic management together with associated public realm enhancement and improvements to the historic environment can provide the necessary focus and impetus for regeneration making the town more attractive for residents, shoppers and visitors. Improved environment is recognised as a significant contributor to improved prosperity. Investment in the local environment can raise competitiveness or at the very least prevent further economic deterioration.\*

The aim is to encourage regeneration of the town centre through improvement of the heritage assets and to increase appreciation of the historic and architectural interest of the town for residents and visitors.

Small scale alterations to the built environment including alterations to dwellings allowed as permitted development have cumulatively eroded the character and appearance of the conservation area of particular concern are replacement windows and doors. Unauthorised satellite dishes also detract from the town.

Various discretionary powers exist to deal with problems previously identified as causing harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The council's Planning Committee made an Article 4(2) Direction in March 2009 and subsequently confirmed it in July 2009. (see section 6).

The opportunity was taken to review the conservation area boundary. The approved changes are shown on Plan .

*\* The contribution of the local environment to the local economy. Groundwork and the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.*



## **STRENGTHS**

- large number of independent traders
- regular indoor market and a regular farmers' market
- several high status listed buildings in the heart of the town
- Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust
- range of active community groups

## **WEAKNESSES**

- poor environment for pedestrians in main shopping street
- heavy through traffic
- lack of convenient parking at south end of town
- visual clutter (poles, signs, overhead wires)

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Section 106 monies
- Other potential sources of funding for enhancement and regeneration

## **THREATS**

- lack of investment in the fabric of buildings
- incremental alterations eroding the historic character and appearance of the conservation area



**ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC REALM (PLAN 1)****SUMMARY**

- Historic floorscapes require repair, restoration and reinstatement as part of public realm enhancements in and around the town centre including the main pedestrian links. Some issues of private ownership
- The enhancements should be capable of adaptation and reinforcement once the relief road is in place
- Need to ensure compatibility of public realm enhancements with traffic management and air quality improvement
- Reinstatement of markets in Higher Bull Ring would be beneficial to emphasise Cullomptons character as a market town
- Reduction of visual clutter eg overhead wires, highway signs and poles would improve appearance in key locations both within and on approach to the town centre
- Co-ordinated and good quality street furniture required
- Opportunities for habitat improvement and interpretation along Mill Leat
- Interpretation panels in historically significant locations

Proposals for enhancement have been identified in previous Local Plans and a number of small scale enhancements have taken place mainly through the Council's Local Improvement Scheme including new surfaces to footways and new street furniture such as bins and seats for example at Higher Bull Ring and Fore Street. The east end of New Cut was enhanced in 2001. Other work envisaged was enhancement of Gravel Walk as well as a range of environmental improvements to the wider public realm such as tree planting and undergrounding of overhead wires, although no detailed plans were ever drawn up. The Local Improvement Scheme budget has now been deleted so the Council has no monies available from this scheme.

The Local Development Framework includes a list of areas identified for environmental improvement in line with Policy ENV 13.

The specific areas are:

- New Cut
- Fore Street including the lanes off Fore Street
- New Street/Exeter Hill
- Church Street/Gravel Walk
- Brook Road/ Cockpit Hill

The policy envisages a range of public realm enhancements, drawn up through a process of public consultation.

Throughout the central area there are examples of interesting historic floorscape including pebble paths some with geometric patterns, cobbles and black diamond paving bricks. There are also several areas of natural stone kerbs and gullies. All these features make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the central part of the conservation area. However in several areas the old surfaces have been covered in whole or in part by tarmac, itself adorned with yellow lines, or disturbed by trenching carried out by the various utilities. (*photos 5-9*)

Restoration of these surfaces would improve the appearance of several areas and reinforce the historic character of the centre. It would also be helpful to have an agreed specification for works in the highway where historic surfaces exist, to ensure that these areas are dealt with appropriately in future. Some historic surfaces particularly in High Street are in private ownership. Wherever possible sensitive repair and restoration should be carried out to complement similar work in the public realm.

The utility companies should also be pursued to ensure that reinstatements are properly carried out. Where these reinstatements are not satisfactory the details should be notified to Devon County Council as Highway Authority to pursue the matter with the relevant companies.

The area around Church Street, Gravel Walk and Queen Square suffers from poor road surfaces, yellow lines, overhead wires, and the partial obliteration of historic floorscape surfaces, particularly cobbles and pebble patterns (*photo 10*). These elements all detract from the setting and approach to the Grade I listed parish church particularly the main approach from Church Street. This area would benefit from a package of enhancement measures including resurfacing of the carriageway and restoration of the cobbled and pebble pattern areas. In addition possible alternative ways of indicating parking restrictions, allowing deletion of yellow lines should be explored with Department of Transport in conjunction with Devon County Council. These various measures would enhance the approach and setting of the Grade I listed church as well as a number of other listed buildings.

Fore Street includes some attractive elements of floorscape particularly the contrasting materials of the crossing points that link with and complement the historic cobbled access lanes to the rear courts. Further crossing points could be introduced to emphasise the presence of the rear courts so typical of the central area.

The raised concrete kerb along much of Fore Street has been used as a method of surface water control. Enhancement should include replacement of this concrete kerbing with more appropriate kerbing along both sides of Fore Street. This unattractive feature is particularly prominent in the vicinity of the zebra crossing at the north end of Fore Street and adversely affects the setting of several high status listed buildings (*photo 11*). Relocation of the zebra crossing would enable enhancement of the setting of these buildings. Use of high quality materials for both the raised kerbs and for the footways would improve the appearance of this main shopping street. Vehicular crossing points should continue to be defined by use of materials of contrasting colour and texture to reflect those already in situ and to complement the historic context. Alterations within the highway would need to be designed and implemented by Devon County Council as Highway Authority.

Once the relief road is in place then vehicular access can be restricted within the town centre and the public realm enhancements of phase 1 can be reinforced.

The area of High Street / Higher Bull Ring has concrete kerbs and small concrete slabs. There are areas of the typical black diamond pattern paving bricks. The area has undergone some drainage works with initial reinstatement of existing materials but in the longer term resurfacing should reflect the materials and finishes for pavements, crossover points and kerbs along Fore Street.

The town has the advantage of many existing footpaths that link into Fore Street and the Higher Bull Ring. These pedestrian links to the town centre would benefit from a comprehensive upgrading of surfaces, lighting and installation of signs . These works could improve public safety. Wherever possible new development along any of these routes should be required to contribute to upgrading to encourage pedestrian use in the interests of sustainability through Section 106 contributions. In the case of Higher Mill Lane and Middle Mill Lane Devon County Council as Highway Authority has some Tesco Section 106 monies to assist with improving these pedestrian links.

Encouraging increased pedestrian activity by improving the existing footpaths would complement traffic management measures. Together these would comprise the first phase of improvements to the town ahead of the construction of a relief road. Footpath improvements and traffic management would contribute to a reduction in pollution and improvements to air quality and should be designed in conjunction with the Air Quality Action Plan.

High Street and Higher Bull Ring form an attractive space with wide paved areas and mature street trees. Through traffic and parking manoeuvres currently detract from the area. Phase 1 traffic management including alteration of the Station Road and High Street junction together with some redesign of parking arrangements would reduce the impact of traffic.

The Higher Bull Ring was the location of markets in the past. The reinstatement of regular street markets including the farmer's market would restore the character of this part of the town and would add vitality and visual vibrancy. This could be implemented in the short term and emphasise the role of Cullompton as a market town. Use of traditional colourful striped canvas over market stalls would be visually beneficial and help reinforce the market town image of Cullompton. Sources of finance and storage of stalls would need to be investigated. Management of lettings and organisation of loading / unloading/ parking of traders' vehicles would also need to be addressed.

Although previously the subject of some enhancement works, the area at Lower Bull Ring has been identified for two small discrete enhancement projects. Proposals for the east side of Lower Bull Ring and the west side in front of the Health Centre/ Magistrates Court will require design input from Devon County Council.

Whilst the main shopping frontage has benefitted from removal of overhead wires other streets just beyond the town centre are marred by wires and their supporting poles (*photo 12*). Western Power Distribution has been approached to assess the cost of undergrounding of overhead wires and is supportive in principle subject to availability of match funding. It is unlikely that where poles are shared with BT that undergrounding and removal of poles can be achieved as BT do not have an amenity programme and their involvement would involve significant additional costs. If match funding can be identified then consideration should be given to undergrounding of Western Power Distribution cables. Where the poles also support street lighting there will need to be replacement lighting units either on buildings or on columns of an appropriate design. This would require costing and funding would need to be identified.

All new and replacement street lighting should be carefully chosen to complement the historic character of the town and to reflect the constraints of the particular locality (*photo 13*). A previous scheme at Higher Bull Ring used simple square floodlights on the fronts of some of the taller buildings and this approach could be considered elsewhere. The main advantages of floodlighting include not having poles obstructing narrow pavements, an unobtrusive source of light and illumination of the interesting upper floors of historic buildings. Alternatively lighting units on columns offer the possibility of supporting other features such as brackets for hanging baskets and or banners as well as directional signs. If lamp columns are used for several functions then their size and strength must be increased to deal with the additional loading. It is recommended that if new lighting is on columns these should be of an agreed style throughout the conservation area.

An audit of existing street furniture and signage to identify areas of visual clutter with a view to rationalisation needs to be carried out in consultation with the Highway Authority. Wherever possible signs for parking restrictions should be placed on unlisted building frontages to allow removal of poles. Where signs cannot be attached to buildings then opportunities for pole sharing should be explored and any redundant poles removed.

New street furniture including bins, benches, railings and bollards will need to be chosen to match existing and complement the appearance of the town. Options will be included in consultations on the public realm schemes.

There is some potential for enhancement and increased wildlife benefits along the Mill Leat. The Mill Leat although in private ownership is managed by the Leat Conservation Board with whom proposals will need to be discussed. It is suggested that Devon County Council's Biodiversity Officer be requested to assess the area to identify opportunities for enriching wildlife. It may be appropriate for designation as a Local Nature Reserve. It is recommended that involvement of British Trust for Conservation Volunteers be invited to achieve this and to bring forward a programme of long term maintenance and management, both as an informal public open space and as a wild life habitat. It may be possible to access some Section 106 Public Open Space monies to enable improvements. A former Local Improvement Scheme proposal for a pedestrian link between Lower Mill and Duke Street could also be reconsidered. A range of complementary proposals could be developed in tandem with potential opportunities for enhancement of Station Road and CCA Fields currently being explored by the Town Council.

Both the Mill Leat and other areas of the town could benefit from interpretation boards to enable both local people and visitors to appreciate the heritage assets of the town. A grant from the Lottery Fund or Awards for All should be investigated.

Development of the various proposed schemes will follow further detailed consultations and a program drawn up to reflect the likely availability of identified sources of funding.



# ***Enhancement Opportunities in the Public Realm***

## ***Examples of Floorscape***



**5** Blackdiamond contrasting pavement crossover



**6** Blackdiamond pavers



**7** Cobble pavement



**8** Damaged and obscured traditional surfaces



**9** Remnants of cobbled surface

## ***Examples of Elements Detracting from Appearance of Town Centre***



**10** Damaged and obscured pebble lined gully



**11** Raised concrete kerb



**12** Overhead wires and unattractive street light Exeter Hill



**13** Prominent Street light on unattractive column



## ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH REDEVELOPMENT (PLAN 2)

### SUMMARY

- Magistrates Court and former Health Centre site allocated for Community use and a small car park in the Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan Document 2008
- Current proposal for a new library and community hub on former Health Centre site replace most of an inappropriately designed and sited building with a building that addresses the context and forms a focal point
- Police buildings at Station Road would require site design brief if the site is proposed for redevelopment
- Planning permission has been granted for a new community hall of contemporary design adjacent to the Parish Church at Pye Corner

There are sites in the town where public buildings constructed in the mid 20th century fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. These were identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal. These included the police station, police houses and garages at Station Road/ Forge Way, and the health centre and magistrates court at Exeter Hill.

The Magistrates Court and Health Centre at Exeter Hill were also identified as having redevelopment potential (*photo 14*). The Health Centre has now closed following the recent opening of the new Health Centre. The future of the Magistrates Court is unknown. Devon County Council has proposals for a replacement public library together with a community hub to be built on the site of the former Health Centre. The new building is proposed to be a landmark building making a positive contribution to both the character and appearance of the conservation area. It's location at the south end of the town centre is envisaged as a driver for improved vitality of the centre. Complementary public realm enhancement is proposed to the frontage whilst the magistrates court part of the site has no firm proposals. There are aspirations for some car parking at this end of the town centre that could improve it's vitality and viability as well as reduce illegal parking in the vicinity of Church Street.

Whilst there are no proposals for any redevelopment of the police station, police houses and garages at Station Road, the sites have been identified as having potential for redevelopment. If proposed then a site design brief should be prepared drawing on the information in the Conservation Area Appraisal and this Management Plan.

In addition to the previously identified 20th century buildings there are now proposals for redevelopment of the existing church hall adjacent to the Grade I parish church. The scheme will lead to the loss of the small frontage building at Pye Corner identified as an important unlisted building in the conservation area appraisal. It will also result in the removal of the later unattractive extension (*photo 15*). The proposal is for a building of modern appearance that will provide several flexible spaces to enable a range of community activities and events. The design of the new building takes into account the relationship with the church as well as the impact on the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area.

## ***Enhancement Opportunities Through Redevelopment***



**14** Former Health Centre and Magistrates Court site



**15** Church Hall site

## ENHANCEMENT OF PRIVATE ASSETS (PLAN 3)

### SUMMARY

- Through the Cullompton Town Centre Enhancement and Regeneration Advisory Group get a shop front improvement grant scheme set up in the short term
- Consider the option of pursuing a Townscape Heritage Initiative or other similar scheme in the long term (post relief road)
- The restoration of The Walronds likely to commence in 2011. The linked project of a town park is being designed
- Timetable for further works to the Merchants House needs to be ascertained
- Several small projects around the parish church need to be progressed preferably in tandem with the Church Street public realm enhancements and / or the new community hall at Pye Corner

Many of the shop premises along Fore Street and High Street retain elements of the old shop fronts with original fascias, stallrisers, blinds, pilasters (*photos 16,17,18,19*) and recessed doorways with mosaic tiled floors (*photos 20 and 21*). Unfortunately some shop front schemes have resulted in either the complete or partial loss of such original features (*photos 19,22,23*) rather than their integration into a refurbished frontage or even a full shop front restoration. It is suggested that a survey be carried out to identify those premises retaining such traditional features and a schedule of the features be produced. This could then be used to inform future development control negotiations and decisions.

A shop front design guide including detailed information on the architecture of shop fronts would be beneficial but has cost and staff time issues.

## *Private Assets*



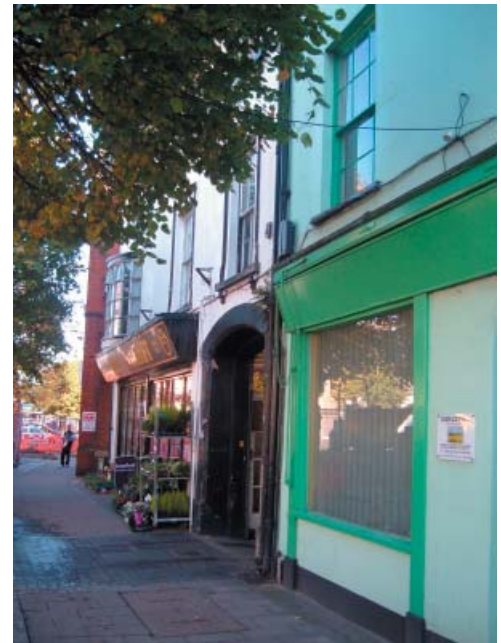
**16** Remnants of traditional shop front



**17** Remnants of traditional shop front



**18** Historic frontage



**19** A modern fascia and shop front and a traditional shop front, fascia with extending blind

Many businesses have poor frontage design with plastic fascias, inappropriate signage and blank shop windows that are not sensitive to either the building or the historic street frontage (*photo 22*). An approach should be made to the owners or businesses to see if their frontage could be refurbished or redesigned to reflect the local architectural context. It is suggested that some of the Tesco Section 106 money be used for a shop front grants scheme (for properties in 2009-10).

Other sources of funding could be explored in the longer term, for a comprehensive scheme of building repair and restoration, including English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund (see section 5 below.)

There are a number of commercial properties on Fore Street and High Street that are vacant or underused particularly shop premises and their upper floors. Many are in a poor state of repair with failing roofs and gable end cladding for example. As a consequence the area looks rather drab and dilapidated (*photos 24-29*). Owners could be approached to ascertain their future plans for these buildings and options such as getting upper floors into either residential or commercial use explored. This would be in line with the Local Development Framework development strategy for the town that wishes to promote housing above ground floors in the town centre. If an English Heritage Partnership Scheme or a Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme (see section 5 below) was successfully pursued in the medium or long term, grants could be available for comprehensive repairs to historic buildings subject to owners providing match funding.

The Walronds on Fore Street is a Grade I listed building currently on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register (*photo 30*). Now owned entirely by the Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust, plans are in hand for the restoration of the building and its garden. The building is already the focus of many cultural and community events in the town thereby contributing to the vitality of the town centre. The Trust is working in partnership with several agencies to achieve a building that will be continue to be a focal point both visually and socially for the town, together with a new public park providing a welcome green oasis in the town centre. (Appendix 3 includes a summary of proposals for The Walronds).

The adjacent Merchant's House on Fore Street, after being empty for several years and suffering from lack of maintenance and repair, was acquired by new owners in 2000 (*photo 31*). The building was included on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register and as a result became eligible for some grant aid. Some repairs have been carried out to help secure the future of this Grade II\* listed building. There is still much to be done but once restored this building will make a positive visual contribution to the heart of the conservation area. An approach will be made to the owners to establish the timescale for further works.



## ***Private Assets***



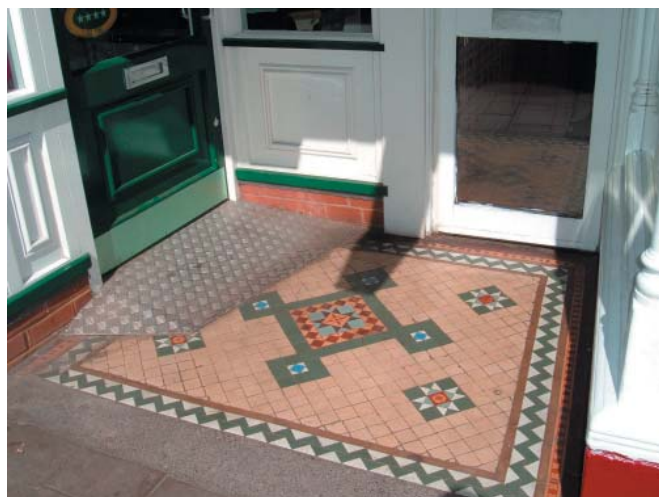
**20** Traditional recessed tiled access



**21** Good example of tiled mosaic shop entrance



**22** Modern fascias on historic buildings



**23** Disabled access ramp obscuring an attractive tiled mosaic shop entrance



# Private Assets

*Issues of maintenance of upper floors and roofs.*

*Potential for medium to long term scheme such as Townscape Heritage Initiative*



24 Cladding of gable end



25 Maintenance of leaded lights



26 Maintenance of dormers



27 Turnerised roof



28 Relationship of roofs



29 Turnerised roof

There are historic properties outside the town centre that are in poor condition. In the case of the listed building at 25 Higher Street, progress has been made. In the case of unlisted properties whose condition gives cause for concern the option of using Section 215 Notices will be considered.

Church Street is important to the setting of the parish church forming the main approach from Fore Street. In addition to the public realm enhancements envisaged in section 1 above there is scope for upgrading of both the surface and the boundary treatment of the (church owned) private car park at the junction with Gravel Walk (*photo 32*). Private ownership and use as private parking together with access to adjoining properties and highway authority requirements are likely to make this a challenging site both in drawing up a scheme and funding it.

The small car parking area to the rear of Fore Street properties also has scope for improvements as part of improvements in the vicinity of Church Street.

Pye Corner also part of the setting of the parish church, has an attractive area of cobbles, typical of the historic floorscape of the town (*photo 33*). However the surface is in poor condition and is in need of appropriate repairs. The area is in private ownership with a number of surrounding occupiers having access rights over it. Further investigations will be required and the interested parties will have to be approached to encourage repairs. Possible sources of financial help could also be explored.

## ***Private Assets***



**30** The Walronds a building a risk



**31** The Merchants House



**32** Private car park Gravel Walk



**33** Pebbled surface at Pye Corner



## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### SUMMARY

- New buildings including those of contemporary design should reflect the scale, massing, height, spacing, materials and colour palette of the conservation area
- Extensions and alterations to existing buildings should follow the scale, proportions, detailing and materials characteristic of the property type
- Works of maintenance, repair or replacement in the public realm should comply with an agreed palette of materials, colours and textures

Any new development proposals will be expected to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Cullompton Conservation Area and to comply with the relevant development plan policies. (See Appendix 2).

Scale, massing and height of all new buildings will be expected to reflect those of the existing built environment of the immediate context or of the wider conservation area context. This does not rule out good quality contemporary design.

There are several typical building types within the conservation area including two and three storey terraced cottages and houses running parallel or at right angles to the road frontage. There are also some large scale, formal Georgian and Victorian, often commercial, buildings many with ornate features. Domestic buildings display a high solid to void ratio, whilst the commercial premises often display large openings particularly at ground floor level. Roofs are generally gabled, some with modest dormers that provide a rhythm particularly to terraced houses. Retention of existing architectural elements and reinstatement should be encouraged.

For new development within or affecting the setting of Cullompton Conservation Area traditional materials typical of the conservation area will be encouraged to complement the existing built heritage. Typical materials include red and cream brickwork, pale colourwashed render or roughcast finishes to the walls. Roofs are mainly natural slate with a few buildings having red clay pantile or roman tile roofs. Where modern materials are proposed these should harmonise with the colours and textures that are characteristic of the particular part of the conservation area.

The design and finishes of windows and doors should reflect those traditionally found in the area for the particular type of building proposed. Windows should be painted timber and set well back within the opening. Depending on the scale and style of property, windows should be either side hung casements or sliding sashes with glazing bar configurations reflecting those found locally. Bays and oriel windows are frequently occurring features. Doors should be solid painted timber with 4 or 6 panels. Other local detailing includes chimneys and eaves patterning.

Space around buildings is also important and in the case of terraces set back from the frontage the use of low brick or stone walls with either copings or railings will provide a characteristic enclosure of garden space.

Extensions and alterations to existing buildings should be encouraged to follow the scale, proportions, detailing and materials characteristic of the existing property type. Following the making of the Article 4(2) direction, replacement windows and doors now require planning permission as do other changes to dwelling houses. Such changes will be expected to reflect the traditional style and materials typical of the conservation area.

A detailed design guide covering various aspects of the built environment whether new buildings or extensions and alteration of existing buildings would be beneficial but this will depend upon money being available for its production.

Devon County Council as Highway Authority could specify a palette of material following on from public consultation. These materials would then be used for future repair, replacement and maintenance work in the town. The development of a code of good practice with regard to highway works in the conservation area would avoid the problems of unsuitable surfacing and street clutter including poles and signs in connection with parking orders.

## FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

**SUMMARY**

- Section 106 monies from Tesco scheme to be used for
    - a) town centre improvements and
    - b) highway works including footpaths
    - a) £80k
    - b) £65k
  - LABGI. £25k for town centre enhancement and regeneration projects
  - Planning Delivery Grant. £25k for town centre enhancement and regeneration projects
  - Local Transport Plan public realm enhancement (in conjunction with S106 Tesco money above)
- £30k for design work and consultation 2009-2010  
 £300k for implementation 2011 - 2012

**Committed****Potential funding and partners**

- Cullompton Town Council precept
- Big Lottery Fund
- Landfill Communities Fund
- Western Power Distribution
- English Heritage Area Partnership Scheme
- Townscape Heritage Initiative (HLF)

## **Section 106 monies**

The new Tesco store was granted subject to a Section 106 Agreement to pay £80,000 for town centre improvements including new or improved street lighting to Fore Street, a fund for shop front improvement grants, improvement / upgrading of CCTV system or such initiatives as the Council consider maintain or improve the vitality and viability of Cullompton town centre. Other monies were also provided for highway works and will be used by Devon County Council to carry out works to footpaths and for traffic management measures at the north end of town. Open space S 106 monies may also be available for works for example in the vicinity of the Mill Leat.

## **Local Authority Business Growth Initiative (LABGI)**

£25k of the LABGI grant has been allocated for proposed towncentre enhancement and regeneration projects in Cullompton.

## **Planning Delivery Grant**

£25k of the Planning Delivery Grant has been allocated for town centre enhancement and regeneration projects in the town.

## **Devon County Council**

Local Transport Plan monies for public realm enhancement particularly for High Street, Fore Street and Exeter Hill have been enhanced. The proposal is for a budget to cover design work and public consultation in 2009-10 (£30,000) with money for implementation over the following two financial years (£300,000- £500,000). The County Council also has access to Section 106 monies for particular transport projects related to mitigation of impact of the Tesco's development at the north end of town.

## **Cullompton Town Council**

Through the precept the Town Council could provide some funding to target particular elements of the proposed public realm enhancement such as banners or items of street furniture. A fund for the provision planting and / or maintenance of hanging baskets, window boxes or other floral displays may be appropriate. Other discrete projects or applications for match funding would also be possible for example in connection with interpretation boards and enhancements in the vicinity of the Mill Leat and the adjacent CCA land.

## **Big Lottery Fund**

In conjunction with various voluntary organisations in the town such as Devon Gateway Development Trust applications could be made for sources of funding from the Big Lottery Fund for projects that complement and support the regeneration of the town centre.



### **Landfill Communities Fund**

Could be accessed by bodies other than a Local Authority for example to assist with improvements to parks and public open spaces and Grade I and II\* listed buildings open to the public.

### **Western Power Distribution**

Other potential partners include Western Power Distribution who have previously indicated a willingness to undertake undergrounding in New Street/ Exeter Hill subject to the related trenching being paid for. The availability of the funding would need to be verified along with revised costings.

### **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.**

The Mill Leat and land adjacent to it is privately owned and is managed by a Leat Conservation Board which has already undertaken improvement works. It may have potential for further development as a wildlife habitat including designation as a Local Nature Reserve. Devon County Council's Biodiversity Officer could be asked to advise. Additional conservation works may be undertaken by BTCV in conjunction with local groups of volunteers. Interpretation boards on both wildlife interest and the leat as a source of industrial power would increase appreciation of this part of the conservation area. Section 106 open space monies may enable bids to be made for match funding from a variety of sources eg Lottery.

### **Medium / Long Term Schemes**

At present Mid Devon District Council is unable to make a commitment to funding on the scale required. If the Cullompton Town Centre Enhancement and Regeneration Advisory Group recommend that such a scheme is desirable in the longer term then the District Council would need to consider a request for match funding to be allocated.

### **Area Partnership Scheme**

English Heritage runs an Area Partnership Scheme that provides funding to Local Authorities to enable the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. An Area Partnership Scheme is run by the Local Authority. The scheme is a partnership between English Heritage, the Local Authority and other funding bodies. The aim is to ensure the long-term sustainable future of a conservation area by supporting heritage based regeneration initiatives.

The available funding is limited and schemes must meet the scheme criteria and be measured against the national and regional priorities. The national priorities are for areas where significant elements of the historic environment are at risk and/or for proposals that strengthen management of the historic environment. The scheme must prove a financial need for grant, that work needs to be done within two years and will secure long term viability of the historic asset. Other factors that will be taken into account include economic regeneration and partnership with other funding sources. The south west regional priorities include partnership working to implement area- based regeneration schemes, provided a particular need can be demonstrated and which forms part of a co-ordinated approach at local level.

The Authority would need to demonstrate that match funding would be available for the duration of the scheme (English Heritage can provide up to £100,000 pa although this level of funding is rare). If there is support for an application then an informal discussion with the regional English Heritage office could provide an indication of likely suitability. If the feedback is encouraging then a preliminary application submission must be made. If successful this would be followed by a detailed application. Both the preliminary and the subsequent detailed application would require significant officer time commitment. If the detailed bid were successful then a project officer would be needed to run the scheme.

### **Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)**

Grants of between £500,000 and £2 million can be given towards a “common fund”. The priority of the THI grant scheme is for structural and external repair of historic buildings in a conservation area recognised as needing regeneration. There is an emphasis on conserving heritage, getting people actively involved in conserving heritage and improving learning about heritage. Partnership working and community involvement are essential. It is a two stage process and would require a significant input of staff time, requiring a project officer to make a bid. If successful this would be a medium or long-term scheme approximately 2 years after the start of the bidding process.

# 6

## ENFORCEMENT AND OTHER CONTROLS

Various negative elements need to be addressed if the steady erosion of the town's character and appearance is to be halted. There are various means available to the Local Planning Authority to deal with problems identified.

### Enforcement

Large numbers of commercial premises have had replacement windows inserted at first and second floor levels. There are also numerous examples of satellite dishes on front elevations or on chimneys. These are not permitted development and should have had planning permission. At the present time it is uncertain which ones have had the necessary permission. Where breaches have been identified the Authority has had success in getting compliance for example with suitable replacement of unauthorised windows.

An enforcement audit would be beneficial to identify breaches of planning control and distinguish between those that have gained immunity and those that have not. This has resource implications in terms of collecting information. A systematic approach will be essential. Following through with action to deal with identified breaches will have staff implications for development control staff particularly the enforcement team and for the legal section. Whilst a range of measures such as enforcement notices is available, it is likely that most breaches will be resolved through negotiation.

**A leaflet setting out a summary of permitted development rights for commercial premises, flats and dwellings would be helpful to raise awareness in conservation areas and reduce the number of future breaches. This would require identification of resources (staff time and printing costs)**

### Additional control through Article 4(2) Direction

Inclusion in a conservation area restricts various types of development. However property occupiers, particularly of dwelling houses, still enjoy some permitted development rights. Whilst these rights may have quite a minor impact on one or two individual properties, the cumulative impact when repeated, can seriously erode the historic character and appearance of either particular groups of buildings or the wider conservation area. This in turn undermines the visual quality of the area.

Many planning authorities use Article 4(2) Directions to remove a range of permitted development rights. For example features such as windows and doors could not be replaced, and re-roofing could not be carried out without planning permission; front garden walls or chimneys would require permission for demolition. Such works require owners and occupiers to apply for planning permission. These applications do not attract a planning fee.

The appraisal identified particular features as important to the appearance of the town, including roofing material, decorative brick chimneys, doorcases, timber doors and windows, and boundary walls.

Large numbers of unlisted historic cottages and houses in Cullompton have had uPVC and aluminium replacement windows and doors. The replacements are often unsuccessful imitations of the originals, lacking the detail and refinement of traditional joinery. In addition new windows are often almost flush with the outer wall face rather than set back within the opening. The cumulative effect of such alterations is to undermine the visual quality of this historic town.

In March 2009 the Local Planning Authority decided to make an Article 4(2) Direction covering the whole of the Cullompton Conservation Area, removing the permitted development rights on dwelling houses to

- replace windows and doors
- alter roofs including insertion of rooflights and demolition of chimneys
- construction of porches
- demolish gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure or elevations and frontages on to a highway, waterway or open space.

The Article 4(2) Direction was confirmed in July 2009.

Planning permission is required for the categories of development set out in the Direction. Such planning applications do not require a planning application fee.

A photographic survey was carried out at the time the Article 4(2) Direction was made. This will provide a record of relevant features on properties in the conservation area to assist in monitoring the implementation of the Direction.

### **Section 215 Notices**

If sites or buildings are in poor or derelict condition causing damage to amenity an untidy land notice under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 can be used to pursue identified problems. At present there are a few such sites in Cullompton including some shop premises in Fore Street and areas of land to the rear of Fore Street. A systematic survey to identify the sites is proposed to ensure a fair and even handed approach.

# 7

## CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

The conservation area boundary was reviewed at the time of the Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal in 2003. It was considered appropriate to look at the boundary again to see if any alterations were required as part of the Conservation Area Management Plan. The following areas were considered and the conclusions endorsed by the Planning Committee in March 2009.

### Station Road

The conservation area was extended along Station Road in 2003 to include an area enclosed by a loop of the mill leat. Part of this additional area has now been incorporated into the frontage and access to serve a new housing development. There was no benefit in having this small part of the new estate within the conservation area so it was agreed that this be deleted. The conservation area boundary now follows the east boundary of the terrace of cottages.

### Clark's Court

This new development was partly inside and partly outside the conservation area. As the development comprises flats and a shop none of the properties benefit from permitted development rights. The buildings were designed to reflect some of the typical characteristics of the conservation area in the overall height, massing and use of materials. The frontage development to High Street fits with the 3 storey development to either side. To the rear the development viewed from Forge Way makes a positive contribution and links visually with the rear tenements of High Street buildings. It was decided that the whole development should be included in the conservation area. (*photo 33*).

### New Cut

Consideration was given to the following properties along New Cut:

- The Rifle Club
- 15 New Cut
- The Field
- The Old Stables



**The Rifle Club** is an early 20th century building. It is single storey with a corrugated metal roof, a blank brick rear wall, a rendered front wall and a stone gable wall adjacent to the New Cut. It was initially used as a Drill Hall by the Cullompton Company of Volunteers and a Company of the 7th Devon Cyclists Regiment. In the context of New Cut the stone gable wall has visual merit; from other vantage points the building makes no positive visual contribution. It has some historic interest appreciated by local residents. It was agreed the building should be included in the conservation area. (*photos 34 and 35*).

**15 New Cut** is an early 20th century red brick house stands gable end on to the far west end of the New Cut. It displays the cream band detail typical of Cullompton. It has been altered and extended and does not have the more obvious quality of numbers 11 and 13 New Cut. It was decided not to include this in the conservation area.

**The Field** is rectangular area of land that has had a long planning history with various planning permissions. The latest permission includes provision for the retention and partial rebuilding of the stone and brick boundary wall to the New Cut. The field itself has no intrinsic merit and will be developed in time. It was decided not to include this in the conservation area.

The boundary wall was however confirmed as included in the conservation area designation as the logical defined boundary of the New Cut.

**The Old Stables** is a modern development of flats between the Masonic Hall and the Royal British Legion Club. It is a three storey development finished in red brick. It was not possible to delete the site from the conservation area since it is surrounded on all sides by the designated conservation area.

Plan 4 attached shows the revisions approved.

## ***New Inclusions To The Conservation Area***



**33** Clark's Court



**34** Rifle Club



**35** Rifle Club

## **Cullompton**

## **COR 14**

Cullompton will continue to develop as a small, growing market town with an expanding rural hinterland in the Culm Valley and adjacent areas. The strategy will aim to increase the self – sufficiency of the town and its area by improving access to housing, employment and services for its population and nearby rural areas. Proposals will provide for the following average annual development rates:

- a 67 market dwellings
- b 28 affordable dwellings
- c 4000 square metres employment gross floorspace.

The Council will guide high quality development and other investment to:

- d Promote the removal of through traffic from the town centre and improve local air quality by enhancing walking and cycling opportunities around the town, completing a relief road system and implementing air quality action plan initiatives.
- e Ensure developments within, adjoining or affecting the Air Quality Management Area provide measures to meet air quality objectives, taking full account of cumulative development impacts and based on air quality assessments giving realistic “baseline” and “with development” scenarios.
- f Make any necessary improvements to the motorway junction.
- g Promote further public transport improvements within Cullompton and to other urban centres (particularly Tiverton and Exeter) and improve access to the rail network.
- h Manage the town centre so that economic regeneration and heritage reinforce each other by promoting new homes, shops, leisure, offices and other key town centre uses which are well designed and contribute to vitality and viability, including an additional 1,950 square metres of convenience and 700 square metres of comparison net retail floorspace by 2016 in accordance with the sequential and other PPS6 retail policy considerations.
- i Reduce the risk of flooding.
- j Enhance the tourism and visitor role of the town and area.

- 7.51 Cullompton is the second largest settlement in Mid Devon. However, it has a smaller local economic base than this would imply. As a result, it has relatively low economic self – containment. However, committed employment and retail development, the former now commenced construction, will help to redress this imbalance. The Core Strategy supports this with additional economic development.
- 7.52 The Culm Valley Community Plan recognises a deficiency in local employment provision and aims to support a vibrant and thriving economy through various proactive projects. Allocated employment land has until recently been constrained by local highway infrastructure, but with these being resolved, additional employment land is now coming forward. This, and current retail commitments in the town indicate that there is strong potential to enhance the local economy and improve self-sufficiency, reducing levels of out-commuting for employment and leakage of retail expenditure. The committed retail site at Station Road (1613 sqm net convenience and 400 sqm net comparison) will not be completed before April 2006 and therefore will count against the figures shown. It will comfortably provide sufficient convenience capacity in the town up to 2016.
- 7.53 There are particular issues arising from the significant commuting and retail flows between Cullompton and Exeter; 19% of the working population are employed in the city. A key objective of the strategy is to further enhance the public transport links between the two settlements, both through improved bus links and the possibility of re-opening the mainline railway station in the long term. There are also concerns about the capacity of the Motorway junction, which will need to be addressed.
- 7.54 Cullompton's air quality problems, arising primarily from traffic flows on Station Road and the High Street, present a strategic issue for the District. The Core Strategy identifies solutions to help resolve the problem such as the completion of a relief road system. This will require careful planning of development in Cullompton to ensure these strategic objectives are met. There is a need to allocate sufficient development in Cullompton to support the necessary solutions. The Local Plan Inspector made longer term recommendations in this respect which the Core Strategy will allow to be addressed
- 7.55 It is anticipated that about 70% of the new housing will be on greenfield sites, together with the large bulk of the employment provision, most of which is already committed. In view of the importance of the objective of achieving a relief road it is essential that the critical threshold level of development to provide that road is achieved. Thus, a higher provision of housing (and in turn employment land, possibly in the form of a Business Park, to secure a balance of jobs and workers) might be needed to ensure that the desired aims are met for the town. In order to achieve the relief road (which is likely to be either to the north-west or to the east of the town), it is likely that development will be primarily in the form of a single, large mixed use urban extension, possibly to the north west of the town.

Mid Devon Local Plan (Adopted July 2006) saved policies

**ENV7 - Archaeological investigation Development will not be permitted**

- I) within defined Conservation Areas; or
- II) on sites elsewhere which contain or are likely to contain remains of archaeological significance;

unless the archaeological importance of the site is understood. Where current knowledge is insufficient to make such an assessment, development will not be permitted until the archaeological importance of the site has been determined through assessment and for evaluation.

**ENV8 - Buildings of special architectural or historic interest**

The change of use, alteration or extension of a listed building will only be permitted if:

- I) it preserves the special interest of the building, its features of architectural or historic interest and its setting; and
- II) the proposed use encourages the appropriate maintenance, repair or preservation of the building or the area generally; and
- III) any alteration or extension does not dominate or adversely affect the building through form, height or materials; and
- IV) the design, materials and building methods used are sympathetic to the age, character and appearance of the building; and
- V) any subdivision of a garden or other open space that is important to the character or setting of the building does not have a detrimental impact on the building.

The provision of car parking within the curtilage of a listed building will not be permitted unless the setting is preserved.

**ENV9 - Demolition of listed buildings**

Development involving the demolition of all or a substantial part of a listed building will not be permitted.



### **ENV11 - Conservation areas**

Development within or affecting a conservation area will only be permitted where it would preserve or enhance the appearance or character of the conservation area.

### **ENV12 - Demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas**

Proposals that involve the demolition of all or a substantial part of an unlisted building which makes a positive contribution to a conservation area will not be permitted Unless;

- I) there is clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use or find a viable new use and these efforts have failed; and
- II) preservation in some form of charitable or community ownership is not possible or suitable; or
- III) redevelopment would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.

An acceptable replacement must be secured and committed before demolition works commence.

### **ENV13 - Environmental enhancements**

Works of environmental enhancement are proposed, as identified on the proposals map.

## **Structure Plan Policy CO7 (saved)**

### **Historic Settlements and Buildings**

The quality of Devon's historic environment should be conserved and enhanced. In providing for new development particular care should be taken to conserve the special historic character of settlements, the character and appearance of conservation areas, the historic character of the landscape, listed or other buildings of historic or architectural interest and their settings and parks and gardens of special historic interest and their settings.

**PROPOSALS FOR THE WALRONDS**

The Walronds is a grade 1 property (listed 10E number 95284) and is on the English Heritage At Risk Register in poor condition. It is located in the centre of the town at 6 Fore Street, Cullompton EX15 1JL. It was built between 1602 and 1605 following a disastrous town fire in 1602 and has been in residential use ever since. It stands at the East end of a 2 furlong burgage plot facing on to Fore Street. The other end of the plot faces Shortlands Lane and despite the sale of three building sites in the last half century retains an acre of garden. The house contains three decorated plaster ceilings, three decorated plaster overmantels and fine panelling and much original glass and window catches.

The property was bequeathed to the Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust (Registered Charity number 1061913, Private Limited Company number 3328420) by Miss June Severn and Miss Beatrice Reeves and is in its sole ownership. Miss Severn and Miss Reeves opened the property for community use as far as they were able and wished the Trust to continue to do so. Trustees are determined that the property shall be used for the benefit of the community while recognising the need to generate sufficient funds for long-term maintenance and for establishing a system for effective management. To this end Trustees have formed a partnership with the Vivat Trust (Registered Charity Number 282921, Private Limited Company Number 156948). The Vivat Trust is dedicated to rescuing dilapidated listed buildings of architectural, historical or industrial interest and ensuring their future maintenance by use for holiday letting, but with frequent public access. The Vivat Trust will use the upper floors and inner garden for letting while the Walronds Trust will use the ground floor and outer garden for the community. With funding from Mid Devon District Council, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund (having achieved a first round pass) Trustees have appointed Benjamin and Beachamp of Wedmore as project architects. Development work is in progress with studies on stone, wood, plaster, glass, asbestos, fire prevention, disabled access, ecology and drainage all complete or nearing completion. The Conservation Management Plan is in final draft having been prepared by Keystone Historic Building consultants of Exeter. The Activity Plan is in preparation by Dr Melita Armitage and Michele Taylor. The detailed plans for the garden have been drawn up by Jill White of Hadham Gardens. Devon County Council and English Heritage have both expressed the intention to help fund construction with grants of £250,000 and the second round bid for £1.6 million to the Heritage Lottery Fund will be submitted in February 2010. Trustees are seeking a further £500,00 in matched funding.

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