

CULLOMPTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND CULLOMPTON CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

In March 2009, the Cullompton Conservation Area Management Plan was approved and adopted as a material planning consideration. The Management Plan supersedes sections 6 and 7 of the Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal. As a result the plans in the conservation area appraisal have been amended to reflect the revised conservation area boundary. In addition Appendix 1 has been deleted as there have been several changes to planning controls in conservation areas making it difficult to provide a simple summary. Appendix 2 has been deleted. Policy background is now included in the Conservation Area Management Plan and reflects the current policies applicable to Cullompton in particular and conservation areas in general.

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INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas are designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 69(1), by Local Planning Authorities. They are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. They are special areas where the buildings and the spaces around them interact to form distinctly recognisable areas of quality and interest.

In Conservation Areas, additional planning controls apply, to protect the existing street scene and encourage enhancement where appropriate.

The Mid Devon Local Plan includes policies to guide development in Conservation Areas.

Conservation Area Appraisals

A Conservation Area appraisal (or assessment) is essentially an analysis of what makes it special. Many Conservation Areas do not have Conservation Area appraisals, despite their recommendation within Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) which was produced in 1994 by the Department of the Environment (now the Department of Culture, Media and Sport). It is becoming increasingly important to have appraisals that define a Conservation Area's qualities, in order to:

- **understand what it is that should be protected or enhanced**
- **formulate effective policies**
- **make sensible development control decisions**
- **be able to justify the designation when making development control decisions and at appeal**
- **make sympathetic proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area's character and appearance, including the identification of development opportunities**
- **help residents, traders, council members, potential investors and other interested parties to understand the background to designation**
- **help potential developers to formulate their applications**
- **obtain funds and encourage inward investment**

This Conservation Area appraisal will assess the special characteristics of the Cullompton Town Conservation Area.

In order to specifically identify and assess the characteristics of the Conservation Area, the appraisal is divided into sections covering location, special architectural interest, character, appearance and preservation & enhancement.

LOCATION OF CULLOMPTON CONSERVATION AREA

Cullompton is a market town in Mid Devon. It is situated 11 miles north of Exeter and about 20 miles south west of Taunton.

The M5 motorway runs close to the east side of the town. The B 3181 runs through the centre of the town and links Exeter and Willand.

The town lies in the Culm Valley with the river passing the east side of the town. The underlying geology is red marl, sandstone and conglomerate and these make up the Devon Redlands. The geology gives rise to quite distinctive hummocky hills and well drained fertile soils which support arable farming.

The Conservation Area was designated in 1977 and encompasses the older core of the town (Plan 1) and largely coincides with the town as illustrated on the Town Plan 1633 (Plan 2). It comprises linear development running either side of the B3181. The commercial centre runs along this axis with most of the older frontage development flanking High Street and Fore Street

Special Architectural Interest



1. St Andrews Church



2. Trotts Almshouses



3. The Walronds



4. The Merchants House

Special Architectural Interest



5. The Manor House Hotel



6. New Street



7. 24 Fore Street

SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

There are 50 listed buildings within the Cullompton Conservation area. (See Plan 1). These include the Grade I 15th century St Andrews Church, the Grade II 16th century Trotts Almshouses, and the 17th century Grade I Walronds, Grade II* Merchants House and the Manor House Hotel.

The church, (photo1) parts of which are believed to date back to the early 15th century, displays architectural detail of very high quality, particularly the interior with its fan vaulting and other stonework. The church is built of local red sandstone with Beerstone dressings. The Lane aisle with its carvings of wool trade items is a particularly good example of how the wealth of wool merchants influenced the architectural development of churches.

Trotts Almshouses were erected in 1523. The row of local rubblestone houses was much altered in the 19th and 20th century refurbishments (photo 2).

The Walronds was completed in 1605 using local red sandstone and volcanic trap with Beerstone dressings. The front elevation is symmetrical, with the main range and two side wings enclosing a small cobbled courtyard (photo 3).

The Merchants House was constructed in the 17th century, having at that time shop premises and associated storage on the ground floor and living accommodation over (photo 4).

The Manor House Hotel was built in 1603 for a cloth merchant. It was extended and embellished in 1718 (photo 5).

The number and quality of these buildings reflect the great wealth of the town, particularly during the 16th to 18th centuries. These buildings have survived despite several catastrophic fires that affected the town notably in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The majority of the listed buildings in the Conservation area date from the 19th century and resulted from rebuilding or remodelling that seems to have followed the large scale destruction by the major fire of 1839. Most of these 19th century buildings are in Fore Street and High Street. Despite previous fires, largely spreading due to the use of thatch, many of the buildings in the town were still thatched at the time of the 1839 fire. After that event slate became the main roofing material in the town.

Most of buildings in the conservation area are simple terraced brick, plastered cob or rendered rubble cottages. Many were artisans' dwellings of the various artisans, with for example New Street being noted in 1854 as chiefly inhabited by weavers (photo 6).

The commercial properties of Fore Street are varied in architectural style, with many resulting from partial rebuilding following the several fires in the town. There are several substantially intact attractive 19th century shopfronts (photos 7). It is likely that behind the 19th century frontages there are older cores to many buildings.

SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST

It is thought that two important Roman Roads ran close to the area, one possibly linking Bampton with Hembury Fort and the other known as the Portway running east west. Evidence of the Roman occupation of the area can be found on the hilltop just to the north west of the town at St Andrews Hill. The site, now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, contains crop marks and earthwork evidence of two phases of fortification. The site is outside the boundary of the Conservation Area. (Plan 1)

Early in the 20th century some paving, possibly Roman, was discovered in the vicinity of the junction of Tiverton Road and High Street.

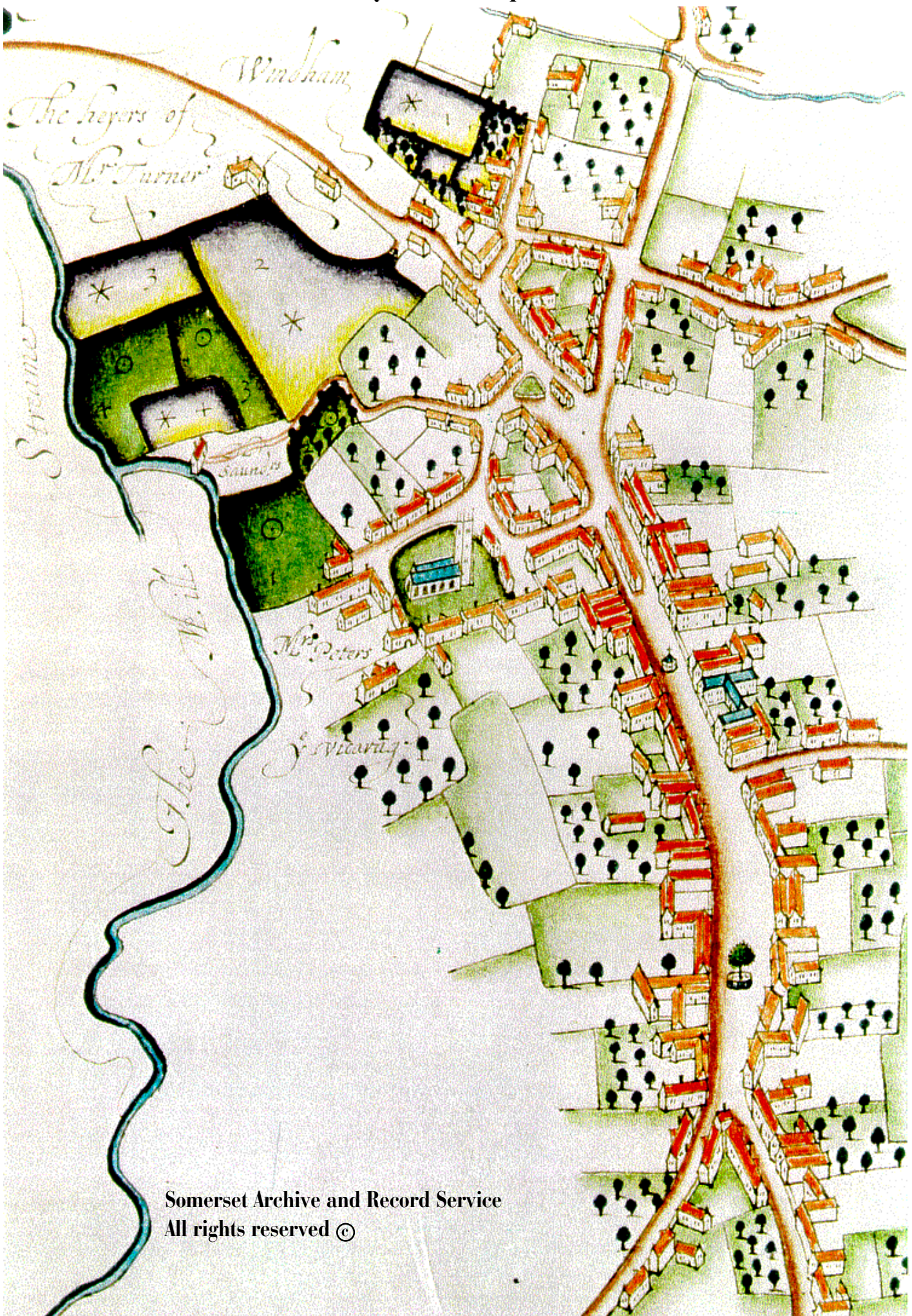
Cullompton appears to be Saxon in origin. Alfred the Great bequeathed the town and lands of 'Colomtune' to his son Ethelward in his will dated 872AD. An unusually elaborate late saxon stirrup ornament was found just behind the western frontage properties of Fore Street. There is also some evidence for a secular college of a Minster church with a precinct roughly bounded by the Mill Stream to the east, the northern boundary of the Old Vicarage, church hall car park, St Andrews Rest Home through to Fore Street to the north, Fore Street to the west, Cockpit Hill to the south west and a line roughly east west from the old depot on Cockpit Hill to Lower Mill.

A Collegiate church founded in the Saxon period was later annexed by William I to the Abbey of Battle in Sussex.

The settlement was recorded in the Domesday survey in the 11th century.

In 1278 the town was granted Thursday markets and an annual three day fair at the Festival of John the Baptist. In 1317 a further weekly market and annual three day fair at the Festival of St George was granted. The presence of these weekly markets is still witnessed today in the medieval street pattern particularly the very distinctive bow shape of the Upper Bullring which is a typical feature of towns holding street markets (photo 8).

The street pattern also includes a number of historic courts either side of Fore Street. These courts are typically narrow, usually pedestrian ways running at right angles to Fore Street. Some are open, others run through a covered passage (photo 9) and beyond the rear of the frontage buildings widen into courtyards flanked by residential or workshop units. These court areas to the rear of the Fore Street properties reflect the boundaries of the old burgage plots. Burgage plots were medieval property boundaries that arose from the original layout of a town, with standard width plots along the main road frontage. The frontages were occupied by shops with living accommodation over, whilst to the rear were the workshops, other outbuildings and gardens or orchards. Many of the burgage plots remain as densely developed areas with buildings fronting on to narrow pedestrian accesses. These courts are an integral part of the historic interest of the central part of the conservation area. A few plots, particularly on the west side and north end of Fore Street, have retained a more open character with gardens such as those at the rear of The Walronds and The Merchants House. Not all the old burgage plots are included within the existing conservation area.



In 1356 the Abbot of Buckland Abbey provided the town with a water course. The stream rises at Coombe Farm to the west of the town, and is joined by a second watercourse from Hillersdon. The water flowed to a pond at Shortlands after which it was channelled into three small leats; one running through what is now New Cut, the second running through the land on which the Walronds stands and the third being taken to the highest point on what is now Fore Street. This third leat was the main water supply with channels running either side of the main street and with spurs running off into the courts either side.

The church was probably started in the early 15th century. Additions including the Lane aisle were added from 1526 -1552; this aisle funded by John Lane a clothier of Cullompton, is notable for its external ornamentation representing the machinery used to manufacture cloth, for example cloth shears and teasel frames. The tower was added from 1539-1545. Over the next couple of centuries the development and decoration of the church reflected the great wealth of some of the townsfolk as a result of the woollen industry. The church was restored in the 19th century (photo 1).

In 1522 Almshouses were established for six poor men of the Parish by John Trott. The site of the original almshouses on Higher Street is still occupied by Trotts Almshouses. Little remains of the original building as it was subject of a 19th century scheme of extension and refurbishment; this scheme arose from concern in 1883 about the poor state of repair of the buildings. A bequest of £400 left by John Martin allowed for restoration and the addition of an extra room. Further alterations occurred in the 20th century (photo 2).

Cullompton, like other towns in Devon, manufactured kerseys for sale in London and abroad. The wealth from the woollen trade was reflected in merchants' town houses such as the Walronds built in 1603-5 by Sir John Petre, The Manor House built in 1603 for Thomas Trock and the Merchants House also built in the 17th century. Both the Walronds and the Manor House were built immediately after one of the towns earliest recorded major fires in 1602 (photos 3, 4 & 5).

The coloured 1633 Town Map clearly shows the church, the almshouses and these merchants' town houses (Plan 2). In addition the map shows the mill stream to the eastern edge of the town.

Whilst the Parish Church continued to flourish, the 18th century saw the development of a non-conformism in the town. John Wesley first preached in the town in 1748 and by 1785 a Methodist Church had been completed on a site at New Cut currently just outside the conservation area. This chapel was rebuilt in 1806 and again in 1872. Other chapels included the Baptist Chapel first established in 1743 and rebuilt in 1858 on the east side of High Street, the Plymouth Brethren Chapel at 61a High Street and a Unitarian Chapel at Cockpit Hill.

The 17th and 18th centuries saw the town develop industries other than woollen manufacture, particularly papermaking, tanning and rope making. All these industries took advantage of a good water supply used in the production processes. Water also provided a source of power in the form of the Mill Stream (photo 10) which ran Higher, Middle and Lower Mills. In addition in 1746 the town saw the establishment of Thomas Bilbie's bell foundry. However wool processing particularly serge making continued to be an important source of employment throughout the 18th century and into the 19th century. Even in 1838 the town had 500 looms, mainly used to produce serge with several large buildings at Shortlands used for this activity. There are a few remnants of the industrial past within the conservation area for example Higher Mill (photo 11) and a number lying just on the edge of the area for example Royal British Legion Club building adjacent to New Cut and one of the old tanneries at Crow Green.

The Gardens
in the Town of
Cullompton
on a larger Scale.

Special Historic Interest
Cullompton Tithe Map 1835

Plan 3



Devon Record Office
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Scale

0 1 2 3 4 5 10 Chains
three Chains to an inch.

The 19th century was a period of great change in the town. In the early part of the century there were frequent outbreaks of typhoid and malaria, arising from the insanitary conditions due to the lack of any sewer system and the resultant pollution of water supplies.

The town seems to have been in a state of decline by the early 19th being described in 1809 as consisting “ principally of one old street badly paved and the centre much disfigured and obstructed by some old shambles”

The Shambles, which served as both a meat market (flesh shambles) and a corn market, were removed in 1811 and a Market House built which was used for a time by the towns many butchers for a meat market.

The last instance of “bull baiting” took place in one of the bull rings in 1805 or 1806. Cattle markets and fairs took place in Higher Bull Ring into the early 20th century. (photo12) The last cattle market to take place here was in 1918.

The **Tithe Map 1835** (Plan 3) shows the layout of the town just prior to the great fire of 1839. This destroyed many houses (143, 151 or 264 depending on which account you read!) and appears to have been the impetus for a major rebuilding period in the town. A further fire in 1868 led to the loss of 11 houses. As a result of these fires few buildings were subsequently roofed with thatch, which was blamed for the rapid spread of the fires.

The **1889 Ordnance Survey map** (Plan 4) shows the town the street pattern still seen today. The Mill Stream ran three mills, (two for corn, one an axle works) and fed the mill pond on the eastern edge of town. At the northern end of town was a tannery and a rope/twine works, and two tanneries at the south end (all outside the current conservation area). There were two smithies in the town, one on Tiverton Road; the other on Higher Mill Lane is still recognisable (photo 13).

By 1910 the town was described as follows “ the houses for the most part are clean and smart in appearance, and the side streets and recently built terraces add considerably to the beauty of the town”. The new terraces including Belle Vue Terrace and Pen y dre appear on the **1904 Ordnance Survey map** (Plan 5).

Special Historic Interest



8. Old photo of Higher Bullring



9. Rear Court off Fore Street



10. Mill Stream

Special Historic Interest



11. Former Mill



12. Cattle Market in Higher Bullring*

* "Reproduced by kind permission from Tiverton and the Exe Valley by Mary de la Mahotiere, published in 1990 by Phillimore and Co Ltd, Shopwyke, Manor Barn, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 2BG."



13. Old Smithy

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CHARACTER

The Cullompton Conservation Area comprises four sub areas each with a different character.

The core of the area comprising the frontages along Exeter Hill, Fore Street and High Street is busy, with heavy vehicular and pedestrian flows. Short stay on street parking at the Higher Bullring (photo 14) to the north adds to this busy character. Fore Street can be particularly congested as both traffic and pedestrians compete for space in this narrow street. Heavy traffic passes through the centre. This core area contains the commercial centre of the town with shops, banks, pubs and public buildings such as the Town Hall, Health Centre, Library and Magistrates Court. The buildings are often substantial and several on Fore Street and High Street include attractive traditional 19th century shop fronts (photo 15).

In contrast, the areas around the Church and Gravel Walk to the south of the Conservation Area and Higher Street and College Road to the north are much quieter, as are the courts to the rear of Fore Street, and New Street.

The mill stream forms a distinctly peaceful area defining much of the eastern boundary of the conservation area (photo 16). To the north it separates the garden areas serving Garden Terrace and Belle Vue Terrace from the Western Way Industrial Estate at the north end of the town. To the south it divides the large private gardens of properties east of the parish church from the public open space at the south. Whilst this southern section of the mill stream is rural in appearance, this otherwise tranquil backwater is subject to the background noise of the nearby M5 motorway.

There is still much evidence of the original burgage plots that divided land along the main street frontages, together with courts of later development running at right angles to the main road. The courts are particularly characteristic of the areas behind the main road frontages in the centre of the conservation area. They have typically narrow accesses between buildings and running under the first floor (photo 17).

Landscape, open spaces and trees

The wooded area, millstream and millpond form the landscape setting for the eastern side of the conservation area (photo 18). This green area with its public footpath link with other areas of open space such as the rear gardens of properties east of the church or the gardens at Belle Vue Terrace and Garden Terrace.

The other main area of open space within Cullompton conservation area is the churchyard, lying elevated within its stone boundary walls (photo 19).

Character



14. Parking at Higher Bull Ring



15. Traditional Shop Front



17. Access to rear court



16. Mill Stream

At the north end of the conservation area is a green wedge of private garden along the driveway to Court House and Court House Cottages (photo 20). The garden area to the front of Wishcroft Terrace, Higher Street and the tiny cobbled courtyard of The Walronds are also important in the context of otherwise continuous back edge of pavement development. Similarly important to the character of the area, are the many small strips of greenery for example bordering several of the courts, to the front of Trotts Almshouses and properties on Queen Square.

Other important spaces include the distinctive bow shaped Upper Bull Ring, historic site of the markets and cattle fairs, the rather smaller Lower Bull Ring, Pound Square and Queen Square. These spaces tend to be dominated by traffic circulation and parking.

There are two trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders, within the Conservation Area, a cedar at Belle Vue Terrace and a sycamore at the Old Vicarage. Apart from these, some of the most important trees are the street trees of the Higher Bull Ring (photo 21). The lime trees are quite mature and are likely to be the remnants of those shown on photo 8. A number of mature trees stand in the rear gardens of properties south of the church.

These important features are shown on Plan 6.

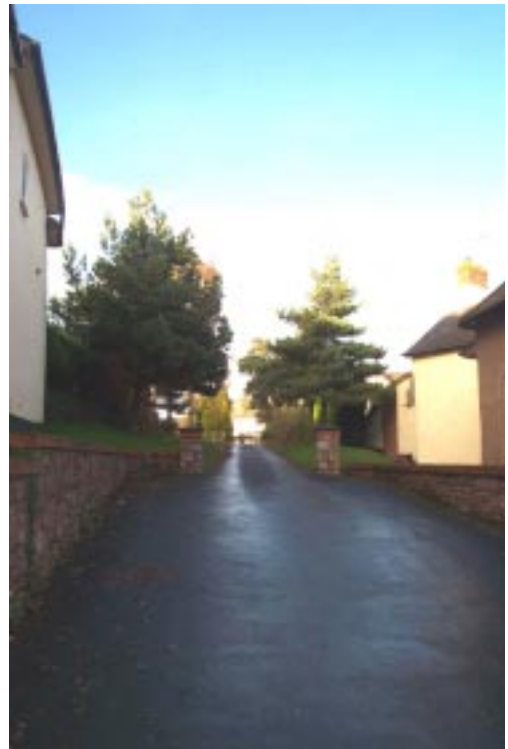
Landscape, Open Spaces and Trees



18. Wooded landscape adjacent to the Millstream



19. St Andrews Church



20. Court House driveway



**21.
Trees in Higher Bullring**

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APPEARANCE

The appearance of the Conservation Area, like its character varies from one sub area to the next.

Fore Street, High Street, Higher Street, New Street and Exeter Hill (photo 22), together with properties bordered by Ways Lane, Cockpit Hill, Duke Street and Lower Mill Lane, have densely developed continuous frontages. Some of these frontages are broken up by the openings into rear courts, or by the larger enclosures of the Higher and Lower Bull Rings, Pound Square and Queen Square (photo 23). Many of the buildings along the commercial frontages of Fore Street and High Street are tall, often three storeys or more.

The area around the Church is typified by substantial houses standing in large garden plots (photo 24).

Building materials, ornamentation and street furniture

Buildings are constructed in a variety of materials, although brick and render predominate. Some of the moulded brickwork is of high quality with detailed patterning (photo 25) and several properties display the use of contrasting coloured bricks (photo 26). There are some cob and stone buildings as well as buildings with a mix of materials. (Plan 7).

Roofs are mostly slate including artificial slate; a few have red clay tiles and a couple have thatched roofs (photo 27). Where roofs have dormers these are usually small, narrow and gabled (photo 28).

Another characteristic feature of buildings in the central part of the conservation area is the oriel window or canted bay windows to the upper floors (photos 29 & 30).

The detailing of several shop fronts includes historic decorative elements (photo 31). Regrettably many shop fronts retain only a few remnants of their traditional joinery with a consequent loss of distinctive or interesting appearance.

Most street furniture is modern, much of it the result of enhancement schemes in the 1990s.

Features of special importance

High cob, brick and stone walls are a significant element of the built environment around the church (photo 32) and Queen Square (photo 33) and along boundaries to some rear courts.

Cobbles appear as paths in a variety of patterns, particularly on the accesses through the covered ways into the courts for example adjacent to The White Hart public house (photo 34). In addition

they appear in gullies along roadsides for example along Church Street or in front of properties as at the north side of Station Road and at Pye Corner.

Black diamond patterned clay paviors are also a distinctive material used around the town for footways for example on the south side of Queen Square. This material has been used in enhancement schemes for example on High Street.

There is a substantial granite war memorial commemorating the dead of both World Wars standing in the Higher Bull Ring (photo 35). Also within the Higher Bull Ring there is a traditional red telephone box and free standing pillar box (photo 15).

On the gable end of Trotts Almshouses, is an attractive seat and lean-to shelter.

The former Police Station includes a public clock (photo 36) as does the Town Hall. Also on the Town Hall there is still Second World War First Aid Post sign on the front wall.

Traditional cast iron street signs can be seen throughout the conservation area. Many have unfortunately not been painted for many years and are difficult to read.

Important unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area

There are several unlisted buildings that make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Most of these buildings are highlighted to draw attention to their visual value or historic interest and to encourage any proposed alterations or extensions, to retain and enhance their particular qualities and characteristic. In the case of the Church Hall, Pye Corner, it is acknowledged that the building as a whole is not attractive due to the modern extension and alterations. However, the frontage to Pye Corner is attractive and most importantly gives a strong sense of enclosure to the courtyard or Pye Corner and preserves the setting of the nearby listed buildings. (See list below, Plan 8 and photos 37-40 illustrating some of these buildings). Some may be worthy of listing if considered to be under threat, or when English Heritage next carry out a resurvey.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ● 2 Queens Square | ● 1-8 Pen y dre |
| ● Belle Vue Terrace | ● 19 High Street and Market House Inn |
| ● 10-26 Tiverton Road | ● 1 High Street (good shop front) |
| ● Church Hall, Pye Corner | ● 9 High Street |
| ● War Memorial, Higher Bull Ring | ● 31 High Street |
| ● Wishcroft Terrace | ● 7 Exeter Hill (good shop front) |
| ● 58 Higher Street | ● 9 & 11 Exeter Hill |
| ● the forge Higher Mill Lane | ● Court House and Court House Cottages |
| ● outbuildings rear of 21 Higher Street | ● 66 Fore Street |
| | ● 2-12 Crow Green |

Appearance



22. Exeter Hill Frontage



23. Lower Bull Ring



24. House, Gravel Walk

Building Materials and Ornamentation



25. Moulded brickwork



26. Contrasting brickwork



27. Thatched roof

Building Materials and Ornamentation



28. Traditional dormers

29. Oriel Windows



30. Bay windows

31. Traditional shop front



Features of Special Importance



32. High walls near church



33. High walls



34. Cobbled path

35. War Memorial



36. Public Clock



Important Unlisted Buildings



37. 2 Queen Square



38. 10-26 Tiverton Road



39. 58 Higher Street



40. Church Hall

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 1. Somerset Archive and Record Service and the depositor for permission to use the Wyndham 1633 Town Map.
Also Councillor Mrs Jane Campbell for loan of her colour copy.**
- 2. Devon Record Office for the extract from the Cullompton Tithe Map**
- 3. Westcountry Studies Library for copies of the Ordnance Survey maps 1889 & 1904.**
- 4. Mary de la Mahotiere (author) and Phillimore & Co Ltd (publishers) for permission to reproduce a photograph from *Tiverton and the Exe Valley*.**
- 5. Cullompton Town Council for permission to reproduce some of their collection of old pictures of the town.**
- 6. Tiverton Museum Society and Ian Sutton Publishing Ltd for permission to use a photograph from 'Tiverton in Old Photographs' (black and white photograph on cover).**