

Bath and North East Somerset
Planning Services

Woollard Conservation Area Character Appraisal



March 2008



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Contents

Introduction	4
Summary of Special Interest	4
Assessment of Special Interest	5
Character Analysis	12
Summary of Issues and Recommended Management Proposals	14
Planning Policy Context	15
General Guidance	15
Further Reading	16
Glossary	16
Contact Details	16

Introduction



The special architectural and historic interest of Woollard was recognised by its designation as a Conservation Area on 25 July 1990.

The Council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning powers, and to periodically reappraise the boundaries. This appraisal will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

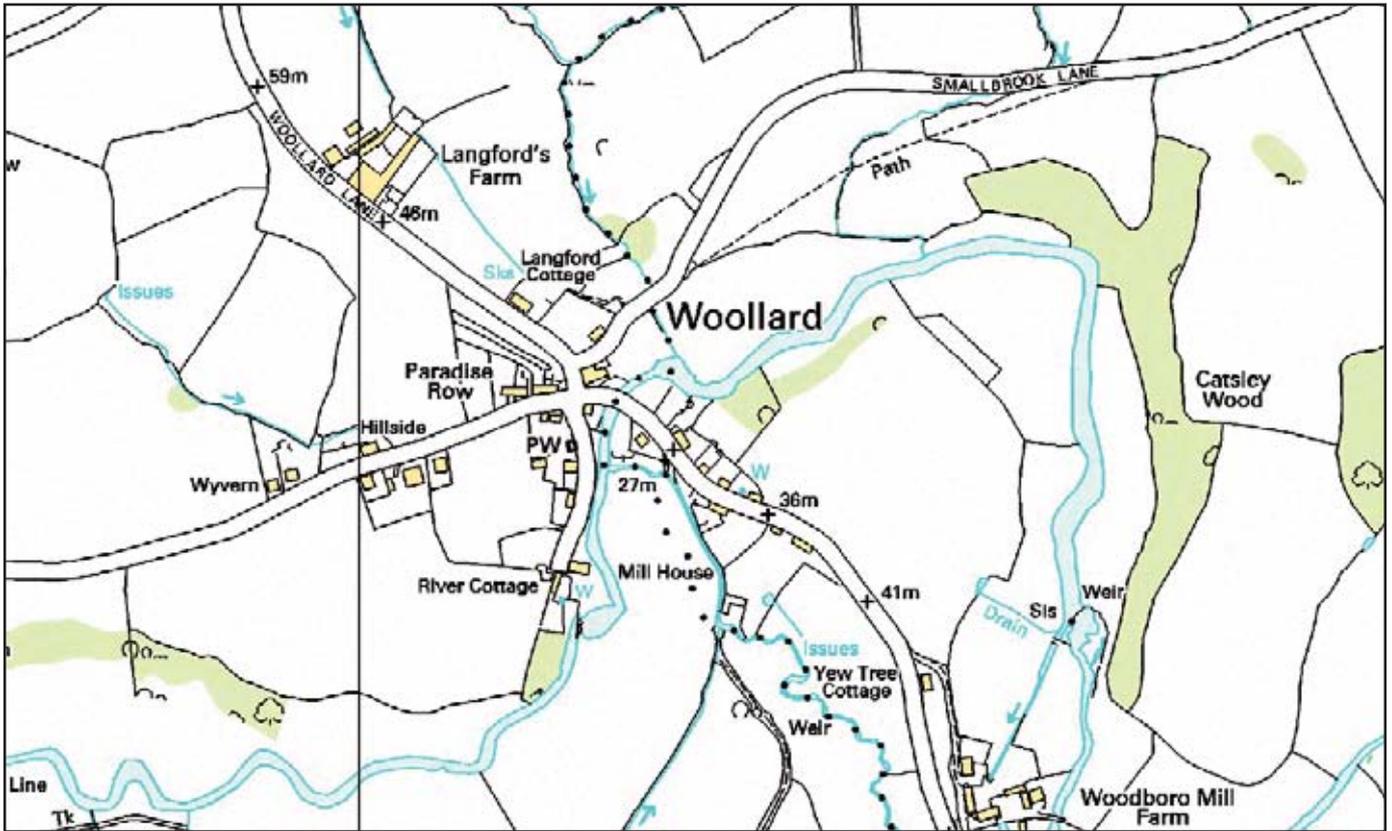
The appraisal identifies elements which contribute toward the character of the area and those that detract from it. This provides a base upon which to develop proposals for preservation and enhancement.

The preparation of the statement also enables local residents to participate in the identification of features which are important to the special character of the area in which they live.

Summary of Special Interest

- The landscape setting in the gently rolling hills of the Chew Valley
- The River Chew and its tributary Candlestick Brook; both attractive landscape features and formerly the source of power for mills
- Narrow, sunken lanes creating sequential views on the approach to Woollard, particularly from the south east
- The distinctive form of the village produced by the convergence of five routes
- A significant proportion of listed and other historic buildings forming the nucleus of the village
- The prevalent use of local lias limestone with characteristic red clay roof tiles, laid at a steep pitch
- The particular contribution of the natural landscape, especially mature trees, hedgerows and well-tended private gardens
- Low stone and hedgerow plot boundaries allowing frequent glimpses into and out of the Conservation Area
- Remnants of Woollard's industrial heritage, particularly along the River Chew, including mill ponds, sluices and weirs
- The peaceful rural environment, with very little traffic or activity disturbing the tranquillity of the area
- The restrained use of road markings, signage and other paraphernalia





Modern map of Woollard

Assessment of Special Interest

Location and Setting

The village of Woollard lies in the Chew Valley around six miles west of the city of Bath and three miles south of Keynsham. The village is divided between two parishes: Publow to the west and Compton Dando to the east.

The Chew Valley area¹ is characterised by rolling grassland and arable farmland which forms an irregular pattern of fields bounded by hedgerows.

General Character and Plan Form

The village of Woollard has a nucleated form, clustered around a staggered crossroad to the west of the River Chew. The narrowness and enclosure of the routes into Woollard contrasts with the open views at the bridge over the river.

The village form is largely made up of generous dwelling plots, with typically low stone or hedge boundaries affording views into well-treed gardens and glimpses of the surrounding countryside. Mature trees in gardens, along the river and in the surrounding hedgerows contribute to the rural character of the village.

There is a mixture of terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings generally built from lias limestone with red clay roof tiles.



¹ Area 2 of the 'Rural Landscapes of Bath & North East Somerset Landscape Character Assessment' SPG which may be read in conjunction with this document.



Aerial photograph of Woollard showing the distinctive star-shaped layout



The landscape setting of open countryside is essential to the rural character of the Conservation Area

Landscape Setting

The distinct physical character of Woollard is largely determined by its landscape setting, nestled within the rolling, wooded slopes of the Chew Valley. The village integrates comfortably with the surrounding countryside and the built form is considerably softened by trees and vegetation. It feels secluded and tranquil, away from busy roads and not visible from major built up areas. This is enhanced by its sunken position, framed by arable farmland and the woodland of the river valley.

The landscape surrounding the village has been managed and cultivated over the centuries, and the land form retains evidence of medieval enclosures and field boundaries. Ancient hedgerows and tree groups contribute to the wider historic interest and appearance of the area, but can easily be lost through insensitive development.

Of particular importance to Woollard's setting is the meadow between the River Chew and Candlestick Brook, and remnants of several old orchards around the edge of the village.

There are several weirs, ponds and other vestiges of the milling industry in Woollard. They are of considerable historic interest in themselves and important to the setting of the Conservation Area.

The ruined 18th century footbridge associated with Mill House is also within the setting of the village. This formed part of an historic path from Birchwood Lane to Mill House, an important route for workers travelling to the mills.

The village is within the Bristol-Bath Green Belt and the Forest of Avon. These designations indicate the importance of the landscape setting and help to prevent inappropriate development. The River Chew and nearby Catsley Wood, visible from the bridge, are designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance denoting their significant role in biodiversity conservation.



Historic Development

Woollard is thought to date back to a pre-Norman settlement clustered around a ford over the Chew.

The manor of Publow, within which Woollard lies, was for a long time held by the Hungerfords, descendants of the original Norman lords. In the early 17th century the manor passed to the Pophams, who held the land until the early 20th century.

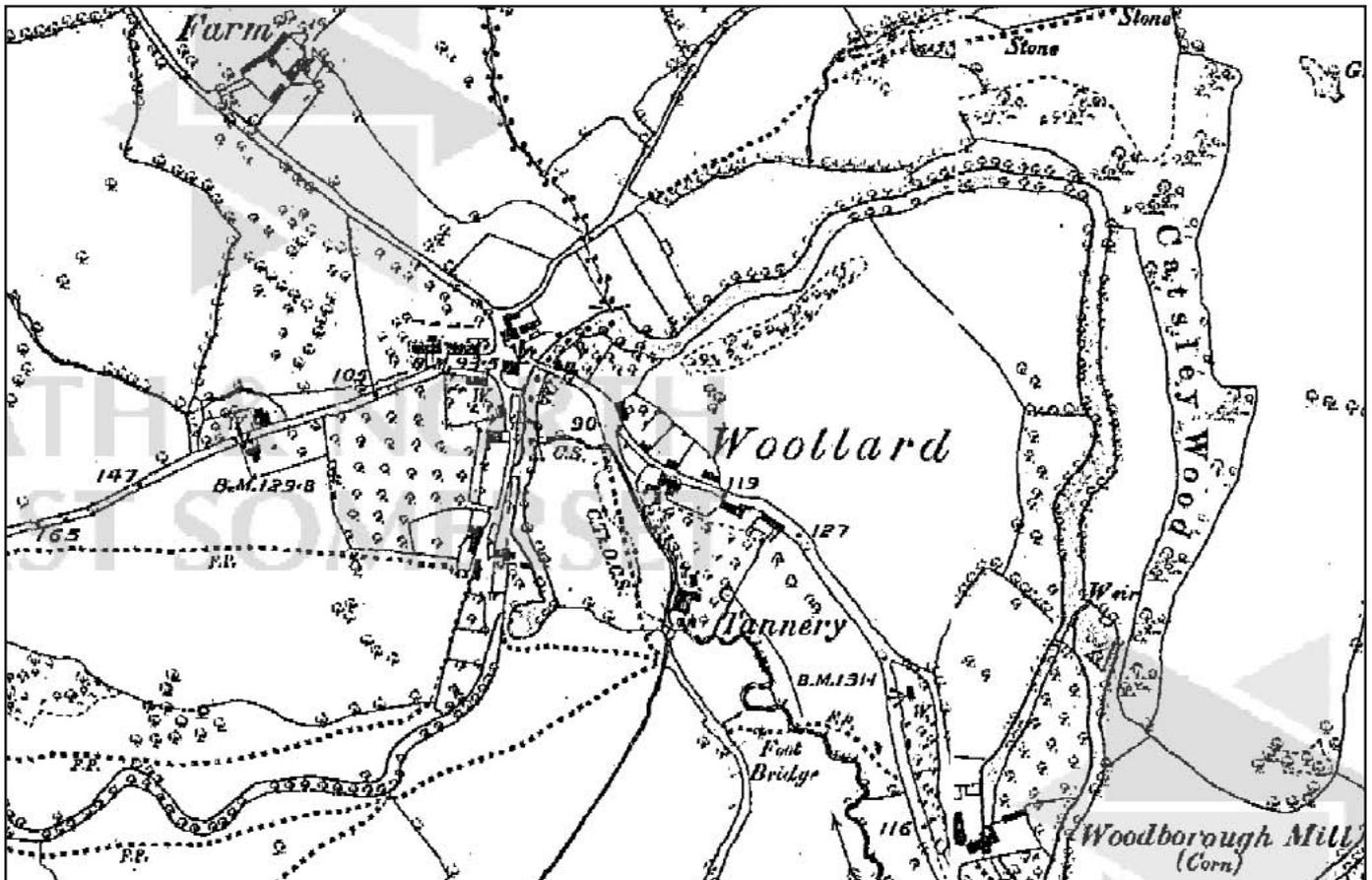
The Pophams resided at nearby Hunstrete House, although their principal residence was in Wiltshire. Throughout their estates the distinctive cast iron 'Popham window' can be seen.

Woollard's location on the River Chew made the settlement ideal for milling and the high mineral content of Candlestick Brook made it an excellent location for tanning leather.

In 1968 flooding devastated the Chew Valley. Many houses were inundated as the river burst its banks, and Woollard's medieval bridge was destroyed. A plaque marks the height of the flood water.

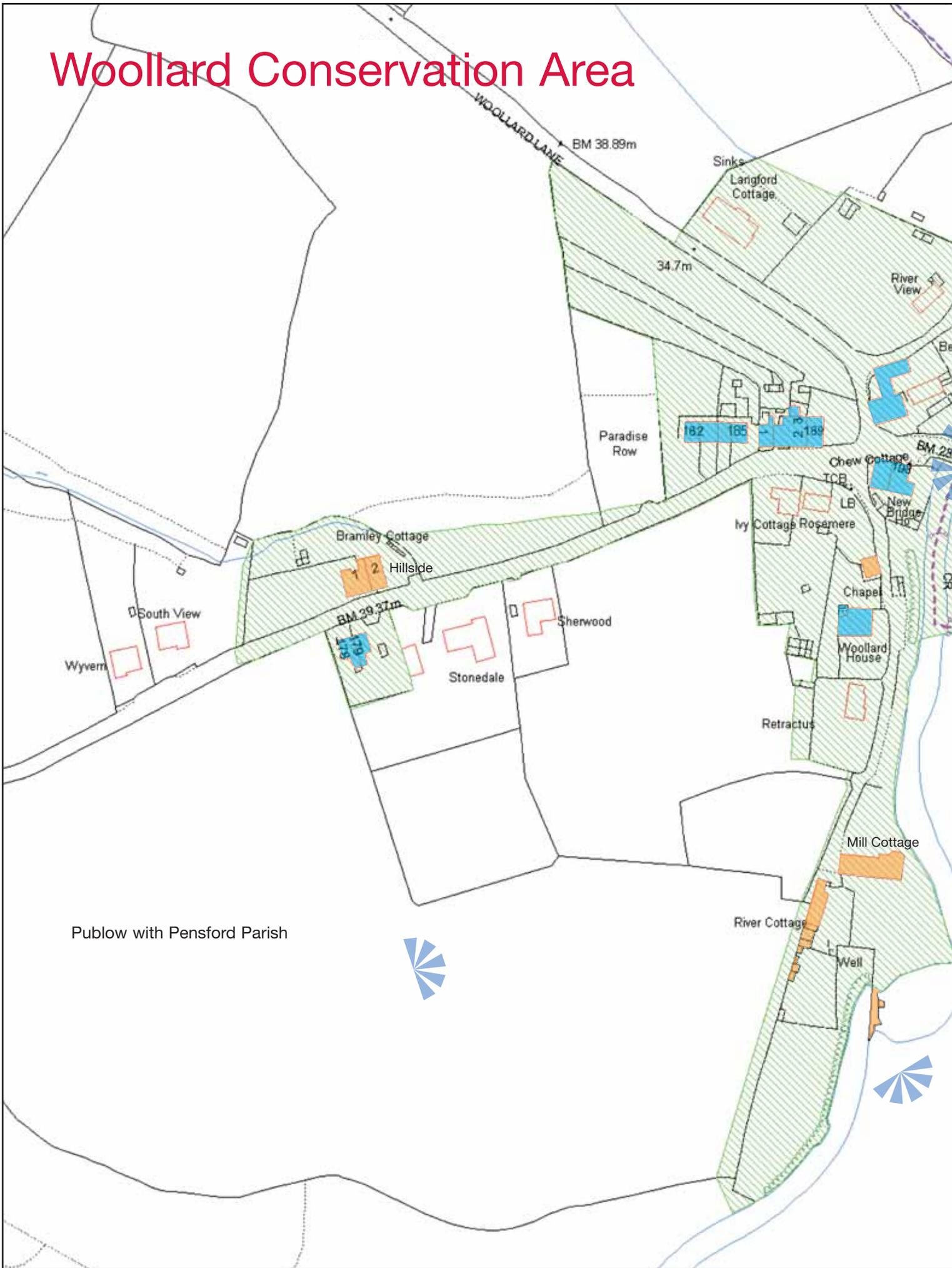


The distinctive 'Popham' cottages

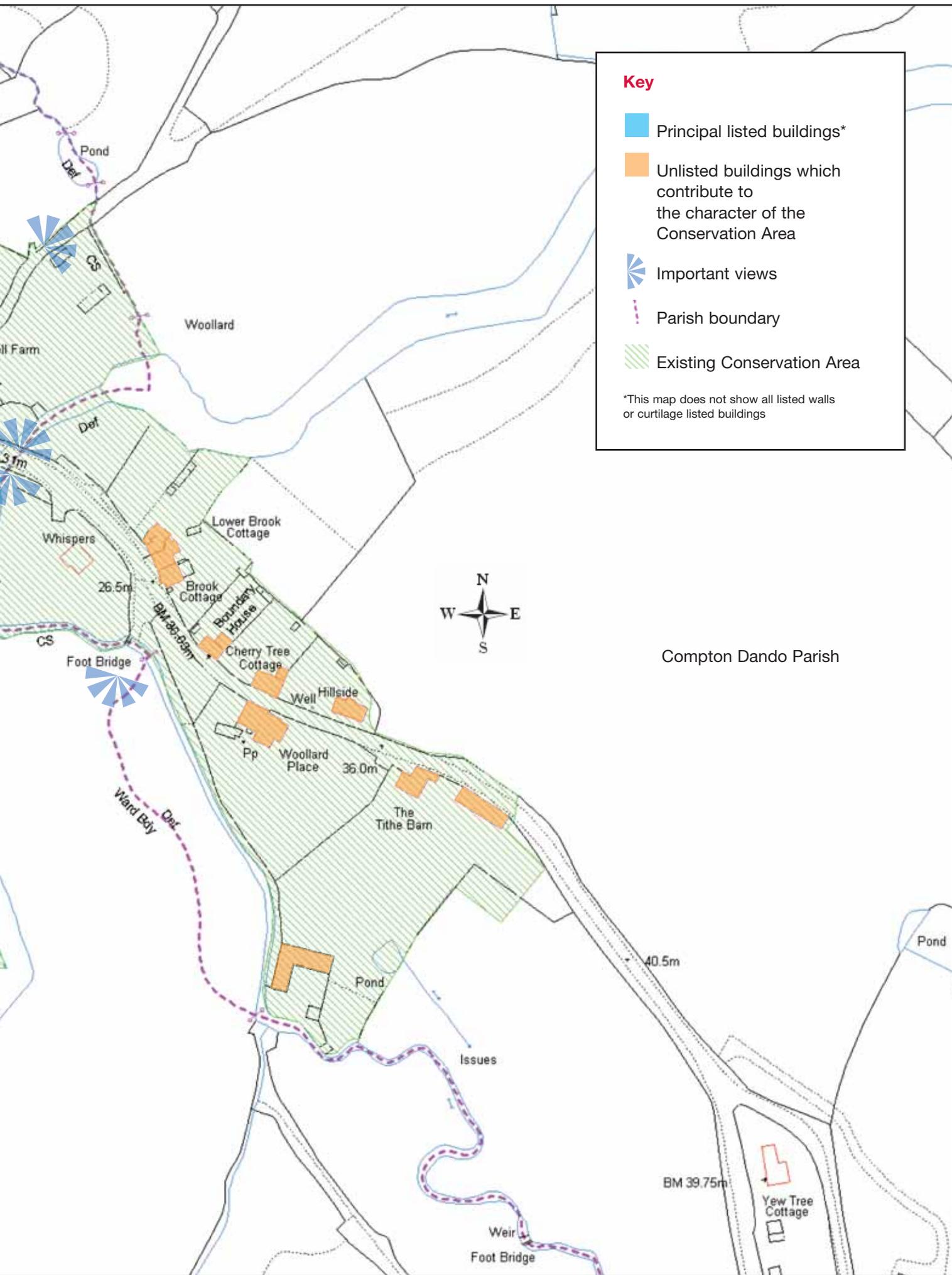


Historic map of Woollard (1885)

Woollard Conservation Area



Publow with Pensford Parish





The packhorse bridge and the Tannery are important historical relicts

The centre of the village is approached by narrow lanes which meet at the crossing over the River Chew

Archaeological Significance

Stone surviving from a medieval river crossing forms a commemorative focal point for the village, adjacent to the modern bridge.

The remains of the Tannery are located in the garden of Tithe Barn. This fell into disrepair at the end of the 19th century and is the largest industrial ruin in the Chew Valley.

Spatial Analysis

Woollard is set around a staggered five 'pronged' crossroads adjacent to the bridge over the River Chew. Approaching Woollard from all directions the lanes gently wind downwards to this central area. Many of the older listed buildings are clustered on this central crossroads. The River Chew enters the village from the south and leaves to the north east with the parish boundary straddling the river.

Of the five 'prongs', three routes are surfaced roads leading to neighbouring settlements; Publow Lane to the west and Woollard Lane to the south east and north west. Publow Lane also extends southwards as Mill Lane but only offers access to the residential development.

Smallbrook Lane to the north east is an historic route to Chewton Keynsham, avoiding the need to cross the Chew. However, this road has never been 'made'. The winding roads, paths and waterways create a network of intriguing informal paths and secluded spaces within and around the village.

The buildings on Woollard Lane and around the crossroads front directly on to the street, giving a sense of enclosure which contrasts with the open views from the bridge. The banks of the Chew are for the most part cultivated gardens. This interaction between the private and public space creates an intimate character.

Key Views and Vistas

The relatively dense grain and mature vegetation of Woollard restricts views into and out of the village although the River Chew interrupts the built form and opens up vantage points from the bridge. To the north, views are open, along the river towards the gentle slopes of the surrounding countryside.

The entrance to the village along Woollard Lane from the south east reveals sequential views as the road descends, weaving between buildings set hard on to the road. Looking south towards the village from Smallbrook Lane there is a good view of the roofscape highlighting traditional clay tiles and chimney pots and the haphazard alignment of buildings.

The meadow to the east of Publow Lane provides views of the dwellings along Woollard Lane, climbing down the ridge of the hill to the village centre. From the Tithe Barn looking northwest, tree covering shields the village and emphasises the valley location.



The meadows surrounding the village provide a pastoral setting which is essential to the character of the Conservation Area



The River Chew interrupts the built form and opens up vantage points from the bridge



Pitched roofs with traditional clay tiles create a distinctive roofscape

Character Analysis

Activity and Former Uses

The River Chew was the source of power for various industries, including three mills. Woollard Mill and Woodborough Mill originally processed corn and wool before progressing to production of metals using revolutionary new rolling techniques. Woodborough Mill produced brass and Woollard Mill tin. Woollard Mill later converted to copper production which ended in 1860. New Mill, which produced wire, was located by Birchwood Lane and Candlestick Brook. Remains of the mills' complex water-supply systems are still visible.

Tanning has been carried out in Woollard since the Norman era, when monks from Keynsham Abbey ran the Tannery. The Tannery closed in 1883.

Although two buildings have formerly been Inns, the village now has no such facilities. There is no church, pub, shop, or large area of public open space and as a result the village lacks a focal point or meeting place.

Architectural and Historic Qualities of the Buildings

Woollard Conservation Area has thirteen listed buildings, and numerous unlisted buildings of merit. Most of the older buildings are around the crossroads.

Most of the buildings are constructed from local lias limestone which unifies the village, creating a distinct sense of place. Dwellings are predominantly modest cottages, with a few larger buildings. Plot boundaries are generally marked by low stone walls or hedges, enhancing the role of private gardens as the setting for buildings.

Bell Farm is one of the oldest buildings, dating from the 15th century. It has a distinctive hooded doorway and a blank cinquefoil three-light stone mullioned window with ornate carved spandrels in the eastern gable. Bell Farm has variously been a Tannery office, Priest's house, bakery and inn before its present use.

Newbridge House and Chew Cottage were originally a single building, a bridge chapel. The west gable displays remains of a decorative ashlar cill band of shields within trefoils on the exterior; the moulding of a fine medieval window is preserved on the interior.

Paradise Row was built as part of the Popham estate to house mill workers. The buildings still have the characteristic 'Popham' window. These are a distinctive feature of villages within the Popham Estate and should be retained.

Red clay pantiles or double roman roof tiles laid at a steep pitch are characteristic and should be retained wherever possible to help maintain Woollard's rural charm. Old photographs and paintings suggest that many older dwellings were once thatched which would have presented a softer appearance than the replacement tiles.

South of the crossroads on Publow Lane, building materials are more variable, including stone, brick, rubble and modern rendered façades. The use of non-local materials dilutes the unity of the village and should be resisted in future developments.



Most of the buildings are built from the local lias stone which creates a distinct sense of place

Unlisted Buildings of Merit

There are several notable but unlisted buildings that contribute to the character of the village. A number of these could be considered for inclusion in the Council's List of Locally Important Buildings.

The Mill House dates back to the mid to late 17th century and was connected with Woollard Mill. Adjacent to Mill House is River Cottage, built of red brick, where the rents for the Popham Estate were collected. The mill, set in a large garden, is an important feature of the Conservation Area.

A ruined 18th century stone packhorse bridge crosses the Chew just south of Mill House next to a mill pond. The bridge was an important pedestrian thoroughfare for mill workers but is sadly neglected now. The ruined Tannery is another significant remnant of Woollard's industrial heritage. Both the bridge and the Tannery could be considered for inclusion on the Council's List of Locally Important Buildings.

Woollard Place is the only three storey dwelling in the village. The house was remodelled in 1889 by the last tanner to celebrate his marriage, including the addition of a red brick façade. The remainder of the house is stone and may date back as far as the 15th century.

Bramley Cottage and Hillside are an attractive pair of semi-detached cottages built from the local lias rubble stone. Only one retains its original Popham windows. Restoration of the traditional cast iron windows in estate cottages throughout the village would greatly enhance the character of the Conservation Area.



Trees and Green Spaces

Within the Woollard Conservation Area most of the notable green spaces are private gardens. Fields and woodland surround the village, emphasising the rural setting, even though public green space is minimal. Wildflowers and shrubs along the riverbank and brook, hedgerows and mature trees all contribute to the attractive appearance of the village.

The meadow between Publow Lane and Woollard Lane is outside the Conservation Area but its importance to the setting of the village should be noted. Numerous footpaths, including the 'Two Rivers Way' national route, cross the meadow.

Small orchards can be found at a number of sites around Woollard. Orchards were historically commonplace in the area and their importance to the setting of the village is recognised.



Fields and woodland surround the village emphasising the rural setting, although public green space is minimal

Opportunities for Enhancement

The crossroads has a number of items of modern signage and street furniture which creates a cluttered appearance. Modern signage contrasts unfavourably with the traditional materials found elsewhere in the village. Painted cast iron fingerposts are typically found in this area and reinstatement of traditional signage in the village would considerably enhance its rural character.

The modern bridge crossing the Chew is utilitarian in appearance with painted green metal railings which give a hard, urban feel. More sympathetic use of materials could help reduce its visual impact and improve the appearance of the river crossing.

Orchards were historically common in this area, but many of have been lost during the past century. Reinstatement and management of historic orchards where appropriate would enhance the Conservation Area and its setting.



Softening the hard urban detail of the bridge could enhance the rural character of Woollard

Neutral Areas

Some more recent residential development deviates from the local vernacular in siting and use of materials. However most modern development is set back from the road within mature gardens and does not significantly detract from the character of the area.

Some older buildings are constructed of the local materials but have suffered from unsympathetic replacement windows and alterations. This is particularly noticeable in the village centre.

General Condition

There are no buildings in Woollard on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register, and generally buildings are in good condition.

The ruins of the Tannery and packhorse bridge are important historical remnants, and should be conserved. Both are threatened by further deterioration from encroachment by vegetation upon the structures and would benefit from basic maintenance and consolidation.



The ruins of the Tannery would benefit from continued maintenance

Summary of Issues and Recommended Management Proposals

- Some alterations to traditional buildings have not been sympathetic to the character of the village, such as additions of porches. Applications for development of this type will be carefully assessed and inappropriate proposals will be refused. Enforcement action is recommended in cases of unauthorised works which adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area.
- Plastic windows and doors on historic buildings are unsustainable and detract from their character. It is recommended that an Article 4 Direction be considered to control alterations to doors and windows in unlisted buildings. This would help prevent loss of traditional details which cannot always be prevented at present.
- Protection of stone boundary walls is a high priority and traditional lime mortar repair should be encouraged. Enforcement action should be considered in cases of unauthorised works to boundary walls which adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area. An Article 4 Direction is recommended to control demolition of walls under 1m high (walls over 1m are protected under the Conservation Area designation)
- The unmarked, rural character of the roads and traditional boundary markers can contribute significantly to the character of a village. However the use of modern materials and designs in road signage detracts from the character of the area. When works are carried out to the highway or streetscape the opportunity should be taken to reinstate traditional signage and,

where relevant, should be considered with reference to the adopted *Streetscape Manual*² and *Manual for Streets*³.

- Trees provide a significant contribution to the special character of the Conservation Area and there are special provisions under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) for their protection. Where appropriate the Council will use its powers to make Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees that are under threat.
- Planting new specimen trees should be encouraged to provide and maintain a varied age range of trees and sustain the appearance of the area in the future. This is particularly relevant to orchards around the village.
- The use of underground cables for services would help prevent the streetscape and wider landscape being interrupted by overhead wires.
- The replacement of hedgerows within the village with hard boundaries such as railings or fences can detract from the rural character of the area. The retention of hedgerows should be encouraged and, where appropriate, enforced under the Hedgerows Regulations (1997).
- Woollard has historically relied on the River Chew to produce renewable energy to power its mills. There may be an opportunity to investigate the use of small scale hydro power systems in the village to generate renewable energy without detracting from the area's character.
- The policies that govern development in Conservation Areas in the *Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan 2007* should be carried forward into any replacement Local Development Document.

Planning Policy Context

A Conservation Area is designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) and is defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. The quality and interest of the area as a whole, rather than individual buildings, is the main consideration when designating such areas.

Section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to periodically formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas within the district. Section 72 requires that in considering applications for development in a Conservation Area, attention shall be paid to the desirability of conserving or enhancing the character of that area.

Conservation Area appraisals are considered by English Heritage to be vital to the conservation of these special areas. The content of this statement is based on the suggested approach set out by English Heritage⁴

Regional Planning Guidance 10 (2001) and the saved policies from the *Joint Replacement Structure Plan* (2002) (to be replaced in 2008 by the *Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West*) contain broad policies regarding the built and historic environment and Green Belt.

More detailed policies are to be found in the *Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan*. This was adopted in October 2007 and will be 'saved' for three years in the Council's *Local Development Framework*.

General Guidance

Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan 2007

Bath & North East Somerset Council, *Rural Landscapes of Bath & North East Somerset* (2003)

Bath & North East Somerset, *Living in a Conservation Area*, 2003

Bath & North East Somerset *Streetscape Manual*, (April 2005)

Manual for Streets, DoT, 2007

Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation Methodology, Chapman, 1997

Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2005

Guidance on Conservation Area Management Plans, English Heritage, 2005

The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A Guide to Good Practice, English Heritage, 2006

Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy

Community Involvement

Public support and involvement is essential to the successful management of Conservation Areas. Following the production of a first draft by Bath & North East Somerset Council, copies of this appraisal were provided for local amenity groups, Councillors and Local Libraries and posted onto the Council's website. Six weeks were allowed for comments to be submitted, after which the final draft was completed. This appraisal was approved by the Council on [insert date].

Bath and North East Somerset Council thank Publow with Pensford and Compton Dando Parish Councils, local residents, and especially local historian Barbara Bowes for their invaluable contribution of local knowledge and support during the production of this document.

² 'Streetscape Manual, A guide to the selection, design installation and care of the District's streetscape and its historical preservation', Bath & North East Somerset Council, adopted April 2005

³ *Manual for Streets*, DCLG et al. 2007

⁴ 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals', English Heritage, 2005.

Further Reading

The Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol, Pevsner N. (1958)

Pensford, Publow and Woollard: A Topographical History, Rowland Janes, (1989)

www.pensford.com is a local history site with further information on Pensford and the surrounding areas

Glossary

Listed Buildings: Buildings on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Conservation Area: Defined by English Heritage as ‘*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*’. Some permitted development rights are removed for owners of buildings in a Conservation Area and special planning controls may apply.

Article 4 Direction: A direction under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. Article 4 Directions remove specified permitted development rights and can be made to cover parts of a Conservation Area where there is a clear and immediate threat to the amenity of the area.

Locally Important Buildings: Buildings of particular local importance for their architectural interest, their contribution to the local environment or for their historical associations. Although these buildings do not benefit from the same statutory protection as listed buildings, their inclusion on the local list will be a material consideration in determining applications for planning permission. The council is currently in the process of drawing up a list of Locally Important Buildings.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO): An order made by a Local Planning Authority in respect of trees or woodlands to prohibit works to trees without consent (part VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999)

Contact Details

Contact Planning Services for advice regarding
Listed Buildings and Listed Building Consent: 01225 477632
Unlisted Buildings and Conservation Area Consent: 01225 477632
Works to trees within Conservation Areas: 01225 477520
Planning Permission: 01225 477722
Archaeology: 01225 477651
Planning Policy: 01225 477548

Email: historic_environment@bathnes.gov.uk

All the above teams are located at Planning Services, Trimbridge House, Trim Street, Bath, BA1 2DP

This document about the Woollard Conservation Area can be made available in a range of community languages, large print, Braille, on tape, electronic and accessible formats from Planning Services on 01225 394100

Prepared by Bath & North East Somerset Council Planning Services.