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1 Introduction

1.1 This Conservation Area Management Plan for Combe Martin follows on from the Conservation Area Character Appraisal for the village that was adopted in April 2011.

1.2 The management plan document will act as a reference and guide for all those who make decisions which may impact on the special character of Combe Martin – the Council, property owners, tenants, businesses, planners, developers, designers, and statutory undertakers and service providers.

1.3 The policy context for this management plan is set out in the Planning Acts – particularly the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, as amended October 2008 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended April 2008.

1.4 The special character of Combe Martin is identified in the preceding character appraisal. It is the purpose of this document to lay down what actions will be taken in the future to safeguard and enhance that character. Part of this process is to inform and advise local residents and businesses so that they better understand how their actions can affect the historic character of the area.

1.5 It is of fundamental importance that owners and contractors recognise that their actions can, and do, have a significant impact on the character and appearance of Combe Martin. Good decisions and sympathetic works do take more thought and can often cost more; but the rewards are great and will be appreciated in years to come by future generations. All actions, good and bad, form part of the legacy we leave.

2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Attractive coastal location with easy access to surrounding countryside and Exmoor National Park.	Relatively few listed buildings.	Building upon local historical themes and assets through the museum and local mining heritage.	Loss of traditional shopfronts from redundant retail premises in domestic use.
Surrounding topography and landscape constraints limit growth.	Single main street with on street parking causes some traffic congestion, particularly during Summer.	Views over conservation area roofscape from surrounding higher land and the valley sides.	Loss of enclosed continual frontage to provide access to 'backland' developments.
Diverse and attractive appearance of buildings, with several styles and periods well represented to create the local character.	Disused buildings overlooking the sea and beach with great potential but in need of investment and repair.	Potential to redevelop and enhance the disused buildings on the seafront / beachside as community and tourist facilities.	Potential for flooding from the River UMBER, old mine leats and tidal flooding.
Tangible historic remains of mining heritage.			

3 Archaeology

3.1 Archaeological evidence indicating prehistoric settlement is recorded in the wider landscape and documentary evidence suggests Combe Martin village may have Saxon origins. To date, no archaeological evidence has yet been recorded in the conservation area dating from the prehistoric period through to the Saxon times. This probably reflects the paucity of archaeological work undertaken in the area, rather than the absence of such sites.

3.2 Historic maps indicate that the area may contain evidence for former historic field boundaries, which would survive as infilled ditches and may provide evidence for early land division. The leats may contain preserved waterlogged deposits. Buried evidence for former buildings or structures may also be present and these may also be affected by any development within the historic core.

3.3 The area in and around Combe Martin contains a number of sites associated with the silver mining and milling industries. The depth and full extent of underground workings associated with the mining industry is unknown and further sites associated with the local hemp growing may yet come to light. As such the Devon County Historic Environment's advice to the North Devon District Council regarding any development within, or in proximity to, the historic core of the settlement would be that the impact on the archaeological resource or historic building fabric should be adequately considered and the appropriate mitigation implemented.

3.4 The settings of listed buildings located within the Combe Martin conservation areas and its surrounding environs may be directly impacted upon by any development in this area. This potential impact should be considered at an early stage in the design and layout of any new development within the conservation area, especially given the small number of listed buildings within the village.

3.5 Where work is subject to the planning process it will be considered within the context of PPS5 and may be subject to relevant conditions such as a period of professional quality archaeological investigation and recording.

3.6 When work not requiring consent is being carried out by private owners they should be aware of historic features; such as artifacts and wall footings and more subtle features such as changes in colour of the earth. If anything is found people are encouraged to contact the Council for advice. Significant finds ought to be recorded to add to our understanding of the history of Combe Martin and its development over time, and even relatively small finds that could at first glance be considered insignificant can add to our understanding of the village's history.

3.7 Statutory undertakers doing trench work ought to seek advice before starting and agree a watching brief where appropriate – for example, if cable undergrounding is carried out within the conservation area or when new service runs are being installed.

4 Roofscape

4.1 The roofscape is a prominent part of the conservation area, as a result of the landscape setting of the village, being within a valley with views down onto the village possible from the surrounding ridges of higher ground. The appraisal identifies several key views in which the roofscape plays its part, but it is not possible to identify every important view within the appraisal and the roofscape is generally of importance throughout the conservation area. This is particularly true of views from significant elevated positions such as the mine remains at Bowhay Lane. The continual frontage of the main street and its enclosed nature means that the roofslopes are not particularly prominent from the main street, however as side streets slope up from the main street the roofscape here is more prominent.

4.2 Other features such as chimneys, ridges and rainwater goods, add further interest to the roofscape in the town. The main roofing material is slate, often imported from Wales although some examples from Devon and Cornwall (Delabole).

Chimneys

4.3 Loss of chimneys is nearly always detrimental to the character of the roofscape and can interfere with the pattern of the streetscene. Indeed chimneys form a major element of the streetscape, especially when viewed from the valley sides or along sloping side streets.

4.4 It is seldom necessary to remove a chimney and ought to be resisted with repair often being a less costly option. Removal of a chimney should be avoided unless there are extenuating circumstances such as serious structural concerns that have been professionally identified. The buildings within the village have retained their chimneys, but the potential threat of their removal should not be ignored.

4.5 Alterations damage the distinctive character of chimneys by the application of smooth, crisp render that hides stonework or flattens an uneven surface. Removal of drip slates and historic pots also detracts from the character of the area and should be avoided wherever possible.

Rainwater Goods

4.6 There is a good degree of survival of historic cast iron rainwater goods within the conservation area. These are typically of traditional profiles, being half round or ogee. These rainwater goods add to the historic character of their buildings and enrich the streetscape, and have the added advantage that they can be painted to be in keeping with the building's wider colour scheme.

4.7 In some cases rainwater goods carry decorative features and embellishments and these are largely impossible to replicate in modern materials.

4.8 Correctly maintained cast iron rainwater goods can have a functional life in excess of 100 years, and when replacement is needed there are still suppliers of traditional gutter profiles available. With improved modern paints maintenance periods can stretch to several years. Lightweight cast aluminium rainwater goods may also be suitable for use on some buildings.

4.9 Plastic is in many ways an inferior modern product for use as rainwater goods, because it can be affected by exposure to sunlight and become brittle relatively quickly. Although plastic rainwater goods can last for over 25 years it is unlikely that an entire gutter system will last this long without some sections splitting and requiring replacement.

4.10 Plastic rainwater goods do not accept paint well and are available in a limited range of colours; typically fading of the plastic occurs within the first 5-10 years where exposed to direct sunlight. Modern box profile rainwater goods do not fit well with historic buildings as traditional guttering was never produced in these forms.

Slate As A Roof Covering

4.11 The dominant roofing material within the conservation area is natural slate, much of which arrived by sea from Wales.

4.12 A much wider variety of slate is now available in the UK, including slate imported from Spain, South America and China. Some of these imported slates may be suitable for roofing on new buildings or buildings not in prominent locations but their use on prominent historic roofs should be avoided as they have a noticeably different appearance, especially when wet. The implications of fuel miles of imported materials also favours more locally sourced slates.

4.13 New slate should be fixed to roofs using nails, as this is the traditional method. By using the correct double lap, wind lift can be avoided and so is not justification for the use of clips. With some imported slates the recommended use of clips is to disguise the fact that the slate is of poor quality and will split if holed for nailing. As such, slate from a source that recommends the use of clip fixings should be looked at cautiously.

4.14 It should be remembered that slate is a highly durable natural material and it is highly unlikely that an entire roof needs to be re-covered. In most cases slates slip because their nails have exceeded their functional life and the slates can be salvaged and re-attached with new nails. Roofs that feature rag slate, or slate in diminishing courses are particularly important and are also particularly vulnerable. Opportunistic and unscrupulous contractors will offer owners of such buildings an amazingly cheap price to re-roof in artificial or imported slate, knowing that the rag or random slate they reclaim can be sold on or re-used on much more lucrative work elsewhere.

Turnerised Coatings

4.15 Many of the slate roofs in Combe Martin have been sensitively repaired over the years, unfortunately a few have been treated with waterproof bituminous coatings applied over hessian, in a process called 'turnerisation'. This process was first developed in the 1880's and as such is not a new technique, although the process is still carried out with some refinements having been developed over the years.

4.16 The nature of this type of repair is a short term one as the coating softens in hot weather and becomes brittle in very cold weather, and after 10 years or so the coating begins to fail. This means that either the process must be repeated and an additional coat of the treatment applied at further cost, or the roof must be repaired in some other way.

4.17 The major drawback of the process is that once applied it is difficult and costly to remove. A repair of a slate roof may be more expensive but will last significantly longer (80+ years) and the majority of the slates can often be reused after this period, with only the timber batons and nails needing replacement. After turnerisation it is almost always the case that all of the slates must be discarded, leading to a much higher cost as new slates must then be purchased.

4.18 Property surveyors will be only too aware that the presence of turnerised coatings will potentially have future cost implications for owners as the coating implies that the roof covering itself was defective and the repair has only a limited lifespan as well as damaging the prospect of recycling the existing roofing materials. As such turnerisation may also have a negative impact on resale value of properties.

5 Walls

5.1 The majority of buildings within Combe Martin are rendered externally, although there are a number of exposed rubble stone buildings and examples built of brick. The growth of Combe Martin is such that buildings of differing periods and materials are scattered along the main street, either representing later infill or remodelling of facades, and produce an interesting and varied mix. Some other areas are representative of a specific period or phase of growth, particularly in the seaside area along Woodlands.

Repointing

5.2 Repointing of historic masonry is a process that needs to be carried out over the period of a building's history. The major risk this poses to historic buildings is when an ill-informed owner or contractor elects to use modern Portland cement to repoint historic masonry.

5.3 Traditional buildings were designed to be porous, the thickness of their walls ensured that the inner surface would not get wet and that when dry weather returned the wall could dry out again. As the traditional lime mortar was softer than the surrounding brick or stone much of the evaporation of moisture occurred through the mortar joints. In this way the mortar itself was sacrificial, slowly weathering away over many decades and eventually needing to be replaced by the process of repointing.

5.4 When modern cement is used the method of moisture transfer is altered. The Portland cement is harder and impermeable and as such moisture transfer is forced to occur through the face of the brick, eventually causing the decay of the brick itself. Portland cement is also brittle and inflexible and while lime mortar will allow a degree of movement within the building fabric, cement will crack at the slightest movement allowing moisture to further penetrate into the building through the cracks.

Rendering

5.5 The majority of the buildings within the Combe Martin Conservation Area are rendered and as such care and alteration of rendered finishes has the potential to have a large impact on the appearance of the area.

5.6 Examples of crudely finished rendered walls can be seen scattered throughout the conservation area. The visual effect of such work detracts from the character of the buildings, the heavily textured surfaces are in no way traditional and often look inappropriate.

5.7 Render was traditionally applied to buildings for a variety of reasons, either to cover up a poor quality building material which was visually unpleasant, or to protect a particularly porous or friable building material, such as cob, against damp ingress

and decay. Equally during the early 19th Century, wars with France had led to the high cost of building materials, and using poor quality stone or brick and using render to give a more aesthetically pleasing result became common.

5.8 Traditionally render was lime based, in the same way that mortars were lime based. Re-rendering a building in modern cement based renders or applying modern barrier paints can cause similar problems to repointing in modern cement mortars by changing the way in which moisture moves around the fabric of the building.

5.9 Movement within a building almost invariably leads to cracking of the hard but brittle cement render allowing moisture to get in through the cracks. The impervious nature of the cement render will trap this moisture within the wall and force it deeper into the building causing internal damp problems and the potential for damage to the fabric through the transfer of soluble salts from the cement itself.

5.10 Unrendered buildings should not typically be rendered for purely aesthetic reasons. Instead render should be applied only where there would be a technical advantage to doing so and when this is necessary materials must be compatible with the construction of the building. For historic buildings this invariably means using lime based materials.

5.11 The latest version of Part L of the Building Regulations (Conservation of Fuel and Power) recognises that buildings of traditional construction need to be treated differently to modern buildings when trying to improve thermal efficiency. As such thermal renders which may make an improvement to the U values of a modern structure may actually have the opposite, or a severely detrimental, effect on walls of traditional construction.

Polychrome Decoration

5.12 A small number of the brick built buildings within Combe Martin feature 'structural polychromy', that is to say that their materials have a variety of colours and these materials are used to create a decorative design feature, or to highlight architectural features, such as window openings.

5.13 The greatest threat to this architectural feature comes from painting or rendering over the building. The rendering over or painting of buildings displaying polychrome decoration should be avoided wherever possible and only considered where the fabric of the building is decaying to the point at which a protective layer of render is required to safeguard the building.

5.14 Once a building has been externally rendered or had a decorative scheme painted over, it is difficult, expensive and time consuming to effectively reverse these interventions, where it is possible at all, and return the building to its original appearance.

6 Joinery

6.1 Historic joinery can add significantly to the character of an area and the extent of its survival is typically representative of the proportion of listed buildings in an area, but is also dependent upon the value that people place on the historic value of their town. Like most places Combe Martin has retained a degree of historic joinery which sits alongside sensitive replacements as well as unsympathetic, poorly detailed modern joinery. The degree of survival is good given the small number of protected buildings. Surviving features such as traditional windows and shopfront features add to the character of the area.

6.2 At present the replacement of windows and doors is not controlled on unlisted buildings in use as private dwelling houses. Buildings in other uses, including apartments and retail premises require planning permission for alteration and replacement of windows and doors. North Devon Council will consider Article 4(2) directions to prevent harmful alterations to dwelling houses in the future. It is always preferable for owners to recognise that sensitive maintenance adds value to their own property and contributes to the sense of place and to make informed decisions for themselves.

6.3 Historic joinery ought to be seen as antique furniture that changes hands as part of a larger deal and can easily be overlooked. It only takes one inconsiderate owner to destroy the historic appearance of a building by ill-considered renovation; with property changing hands as frequently as it does today there is a steady stream of buildings whose luck has run out. There are few people who would throw a 200 year old chair or table in a skip – their potential value is usually appreciated – yet it happens to windows and doors regularly. These artifacts are a finite resource that embodies the craftsmanship of earlier generations and records the materials and techniques they used.

6.4 Unless badly neglected over a long period of time, traditional joinery is rarely beyond repair. In many cases the timber used was so well sourced and seasoned that it is far more durable than any modern alternative. If repair is not possible, replica replacement is the next best thing; though replacement requires the use of primary resources and energy that makes it a less sustainable option. The use of imported hardwood from unsustainable sources ought to be avoided and uPVC has significant ecological issues associated with its production process and later disposal. From a sustainability standpoint timber windows made from managed sources of timber are more environmentally sound than uPVC which does not decompose in landfill and produces chlorine based by-products and gases during manufacture.

6.5 There is no product that is maintenance free. Timber needs painting every few years, but each time the result looks fresh and new. After a hundred years or more sash cords or hinges may need renewal; this is quite easily done and gives the unit a

new lease of life. When modern opening mechanisms or double glazed units breakdown the answer is replacement of the whole unit – hence the piles of uPVC windows accumulating at recycling centres in the absence of satisfactory means of disposal.

Windows

6.6 The size, type and design of the windows in an historic building reveal much about its age or development, its use and the status of its occupants in the past. Humbler buildings often have casement windows that vary in design according to age, use and local custom. Sash windows also vary in size and detail according to age and use. The enduring popularity of sash windows reflects their versatility in providing controlled ventilation.

6.7 Historic glass survives in some windows and should be retained where possible. However, installing modern glass that has been treated to give it the appearance of historic glass is not considered appropriate.

6.8 When new windows are needed there are a number of issues to consider:

- Proportion and subdivision – The glazing pattern of the original windows ought to be retained, (or restored if lost), as that is a critical part of the whole building. It indicates the size of glass available or affordable at the time of construction.
- Mode of opening – The introduction of top hung or tilt-and-turn opening lights is always visually jarring and harmful to the historic character. Overlapping ‘storm-seal’ type details are an entirely modern introduction and are unnecessary if flush fitting units are properly made. Spring loaded sashes are an inferior replacement mechanism compared with properly weighted double-hung sashes.
- Glazing – Traditional glazing bar profiles, properly jointed and glazed with putty, (or glazing compound), rather than beading, will give a genuine appearance.
- Thermal insulation – Double glazing cannot be achieved within traditional multiple pane designs without bars being either much too thick or false. Beading is nearly always added which further detracts from the appearance. Attempting to introduce double glazing into a traditional design usually means a small air gap that hugely reduces the insulation properties anyway. The use of shutters and/or insulated curtains can greatly reduce heat loss without the need for window replacement.
- Draught-proofing – The majority of heat loss from historic windows is often through draughts caused by ill-fitting frames. Draft proofing systems are available that can be fitted to existing windows in situ and can be highly effective in reducing draughts and heat loss.
- Sound insulation – Cutting down noise is often given as a reason for replacing existing windows with double glazed units. However, tests have shown that secondary glazing is actually more effective at reducing transmitted noise. It is

often less costly than fitting double glazed units and also allows for the historic windows to be retained.

- Sills – Traditional sills should be retained unless beyond repair, when they should be replaced with matching sills in terms of both materials and details.

6.9 The concept that uPVC replacement windows last forever and require no maintenance is quickly becoming apparent as deceptive. Many companies specialising in uPVC window maintenance, and specialist paints and 'protective coatings' for uPVC, are beginning to appear and their success is indicative of the fact that these windows do in-fact require maintenance and all the costs that go along with it.

6.10 The piles of old uPVC windows appearing at recycling centres also puts paid to the concept that they can be expected to last forever. Usually components, such as rubber seals, locks and hinges fail first and are often impossible to replace, instead the only option is to discard the window and buy new.

6.11 It is worth noting that the uPVC itself is very difficult to recycle, as a thermosetting polymer it cannot be 'melted down' only ground up and used to bulk out new plastics. The reason these windows sit at recycling centres is primarily to have their metal components stripped and recycled.

Doors

6.12 Doors can add to the character of the streetscene in much the same way. It is worth remembering that a little time and money spent on periodic maintenance and painting can allow a good quality historic hardwood door to remain serviceable for many years.

6.13 It should also be remembered that traditional timber doors may hold 'door furniture' such as knockers, knobs, letterboxes and hinges which are still serviceable even when the door itself has been allowed to decay beyond salvaging. If a replacement timber door is sourced these older pieces of door furniture can be re-used on the new door. By their nature uPVC doors come with letterboxes, hinges and handles ready fitted, often moulded as part of the unit and the sensitive, and sustainable, re-use of historic features is not possible.

6.14 Where a door is accompanied by a doorcase or other associated architectural features it is often the case that the door was designed as part of the unit and replacement by a door of different design will detract from the appearance and character of the building as a whole. Even when not accompanied by doorcases the replacement of a well designed historic door with a standardised modern unit will be detrimental to the character of the building, and thus the wider streetscape.

Shopfronts

6.15 There are a good number of traditional shopfronts within the Combe Martin Conservation Area that survive relatively intact. Many of these are scattered around the village and a large number are no longer in use as shops.

6.16 Several examples have already been replaced by infilled 'domestic' frontages with widely varying degrees of sensitivity and success. Retention of key features and the shopfront character in alterations are key to retaining the feel and character of the village as a whole.

6.17 There are significant issues relating to shopfronts that can have a profound impact on the character of a place:

- Retention of features – Where historic and traditional features such as stallrisers survive they should be retained. It is also important that surviving features are not unnecessarily hidden by modern additions and signage.
- Signage – There was a time when the emphasis was on quality, legibility and illustration of function. Today the approach to shop signage seems to be to achieve the largest and brightest advertisement. Clumsy box fascias and totally obscured windows draw attention in the wrong way and detract from neighbouring businesses. Illumination should only be considered for businesses that trade at all hours and then should be limited to that needed for identification. Internally illuminated signs are not considered appropriate within historic shopping areas.
- Design – New shopfronts and signage require planning permission, and/or advertisement consent – North Devon Council will expect these elements to be competently designed to suit their context.
- Standardisation – National retailers and companies with standardised shop signage may be required to vary from their standard design so as to be better in keeping with the character of the conservation area. Many national retailers will have a 'conservation' variant of their standard signage which will be more appropriate.

7 Backland Development

7.1 The dense linear development enclosing both sides of Combe Martin's main street limits the prospects of infill development as there are few available spaces between existing buildings.

7.2 Backland development is, however, a possibility as open space is often present behind the frontage of the main street. The main drawback with this kind of development is providing access to the new development. Invariably it requires the acquisition and demolition of an existing building along the main frontage, which in turn erodes the character of the main street by introducing an alien sense of width and openness.

7.3 Additional junctions onto a road which already suffers issues of congestion, particularly during the summer, present a significant issue in themselves without the added impact of demolition.

7.4 Although the concept of further development in and around Combe Martin is not in itself objectionable, the impact of backland schemes on the conservation area must be considered carefully. It is doubtful that much opportunity remains for schemes of sufficient quality with adequate attainable access routes.

8 Article 4 Directions

8.1 Perhaps the greatest threat facing conservation areas in the UK is development not controlled by the planning system. The majority of these ‘permitted developments’ affect private dwelling houses and allow for minor works to be carried out without the need to apply for planning permission.

8.2 These rights were granted by the ‘Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995’ (as amended October 2008) and cover activities such as changing windows and doors, erecting satellite dishes and, most recently, some installations of on-site renewable energy generation equipment.

8.3 As well as granting these various rights of development, the order also made provision for revoking them under certain circumstances, primarily within architecturally, or historically, sensitive areas. The section of the order dealing with repealing permitted development rights is Article 4. For a direction to be enacted under this article certain conditions must be met.

8.4 For example if the local authority wanted to prevent homeowners in an area from replacing windows without planning permission that area would have to contain some surviving historic windows that would be protected by the measure. Equally the area would have to contain some inappropriate modern replacement windows – as this demonstrates that there is a threat from inappropriate works being carried out.

8.5 Article 4 directions do not remove all permitted development rights, rather they are targeted at specific forms of permitted development and the developments they target must be justified.

8.6 The possibility of utilising Article 4(2) directions within Combe Martin will be investigated as a result of this management plan, and if considered appropriate and practical may be implemented within the conservation area. Community consultation would precede any adoption of such a scheme.

8.7 It should also be noted that if a planning application is required exclusively as a result of an Article 4(2) direction then no application fee will be applicable.

9 Action Plan

Action	Lead Body	Timescale
Use the character appraisal & management plan as material considerations in determining planning applications within and adjoining the Combe Martin Conservation Area.	Ongoing	NDC, CMPC
Investigate the options and practicalities of Article 4(2) directions to control unsympathetic alterations.	6 Months	NDC
Implementation of the above if considered practical and appropriate.	12 Months	NDC
Develop options for redevelopment and reuse of the redundant beachside buildings owned by the Parish Council. The buildings are situated along the South West Coast Path at the gateway to the village and have the potential to fulfil a community / tourism / cultural role.		NDC / CMPC
Investigate funding options for repair and enhancement works necessary to deliver the above scheme.		NDC / CMPC