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1 Introduction

1.1 Conservation Areas are designated by Local Planning Authorities under the Planning Acts. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a Conservation Area as :

‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

1.2 North Devon Council, as the local planning authority, has a duty to designate parts of the District it sees appropriate as Conservation Areas. There are currently 41 Conservation Areas in this District (excluding those within Exmoor National Park).

1.3 Carrying out a Conservation Area Character Appraisal is an important method for identifying the qualities and characteristics that such an area possesses and to provide a basic summary of the elements, which collectively contribute towards the special character and appearance of the conservation area. A clear and comprehensive appraisal of the Witheridge Conservation Area provides a sound basis for development management decision-making, and assists the Council in defending such decisions that are subject to appeal. Generally the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be preserved or enhanced through:

- Providing controls and regulating development through the planning system.
- Applying the extra controls that designation provides over demolition, minor development and the protection of trees.
- Environmental enhancement schemes and possibly providing financial assistance for the repair and restoration of specific buildings.
- Encouraging public bodies such as the local highways authority or utility companies to take opportunities to improve the street scene through the appropriate design and sensitive siting of street furniture (and retention of historic features of interest), or the removal of eyesores and street features that have a negative impact such as overhead wires.

1.4 The purpose of this character appraisal is to:

- Analyse the character of the designated area and identify the components and features of its special interest.
- Outline the planning policies and controls that apply to the Conservation Area.
- Identify opportunities for the future enhancement of the Conservation Area.

1.5 It should be noted that the omission of any particular building, structure, tree, wall or any other feature from being highlighted within this character appraisal does not imply that it is not of special interest, nor is there an implication in such an omission that it does not make a positive contribution, or conversely a negative contribution, to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Also the map is unable to identify accurately every tree of significance and value to the Conservation Area.

2 Facts & Figures

2.1 The Witheridge Conservation Area was first adopted before 1974 by Devon County Council, and the boundary was last subject to review in November 2012.

2.2 The conservation area covers an area of 4.8 hectares or 11.9 acres (4 hectares and 9.9 acres prior to the adoption of the amended boundary in May 2013) and contains 45 listed buildings, 44 grade II listed and 1 (the parish church of St. John the Baptist) grade I listed.

For details of the changes from the pre-1974 boundary please see Chapter 6: Boundary Changes Adopted May 2013 and the map in Appendix 3(IV).

2.3 There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the conservation area, the nearest is a group of 3 bowl barrows arranged along a ridge on Dart Raffe Moor 2 kilometres to the North-Northwest of the Conservation Area.

A list of Listed Buildings within the Witheridge Conservation Area is given in Appendix 1. A map showing the existing (May 2013) boundary and the positions of listed buildings is given in Appendix 3(II).

3 What is Special About The Witheridge Conservation Area?

3.1 Witheridge is a sizable village, based upon a historic core of development which represents a failed market town. The proximity of other established markets at South Molton and Tiverton meant that the market at Witheridge was never successful.

3.2 The village retains examples of vernacular thatched cottages, built on a modest scale and retaining traditional features, but also has a number of Georgian properties, both new-build and remodelled pre-existing properties, which demonstrate that a good number of local residents were affluent enough to invest in grand property improvements.

3.3 The spaces within the village range from wide streets converging on spacious junctions overlooked by traditional houses, to the wide open spaces of The Square and narrow back lanes running to the sides and rear of properties along West Street. This variety in the degrees of enclosure within different parts of the village contribute to the sense of locally distinctive character.

4 History & Development

4.1 The area around Witheridge features prehistoric remains, in the form of recovered flint tools and shards, and most prominently the 3 bowl barrows 2 kilometres North-North West of the present village which would have been constructed during the bronze age (in Britain c.2500BC - 800BC). However, no remains from this period have been discovered within Witheridge itself. It is possible that there was no human habitation on the site of the current village at this time; it is equally possible that a combination of destruction by later phases of occupation, and limited archaeological investigation mean that no evidence remains, or has yet been uncovered.

4.2 It has also been suggested that modern Witheridge is located in a position that would be typical for an Iron Age (in Britain c. 900BC - 100AD) hillfort, on a spur of high land with good views and access to water from nearby rivers which also restrict routes of approach. Again there is no evidence beyond the apparent suitability of the site, but this could again be explained by lack of investigation, and loss of evidence due to later phases of development and occupation.

4.3 Witheridge is first mentioned in the written record in Domesday Book (1086) in which it is written 'Wirige'. The spelling has changed considerably over time, through over 20 variants including 'Wutherygge', 'Wetheridge' and 'Wetherudge'. The manor at this time included land which had previously been held by two thanes; these were men who were free from serfdom and owned their own lands, or were free to choose their own lords, but were not Manor Lords in their own right. After the Norman Conquest the social rank of Thane was replaced by 'Baron'. Thanes were usually in service to the King, either within his court or as part of the local civil administration. The presence of Thanes within the manor, and within the wider 'hundered' of Witheridge which was significantly larger than the modern parish, suggests that the area was significantly affluent during the late Saxon period.

4.4 Witheridge is situated in what was once a wooded area, the Down Wood (Donewold), stretching from the edge of Exmoor down to Dartmoor. It has been suggested that many of the settlements in the area were relatively young at the time of the Norman Conquest, having grown up in modest clearings within the wood, sections of which had been used as hunting forest by the Saxon nobility and even royalty.

4.5 In 1248 the lord of the manor of Witheridge, Robert Fitzpaine, was granted a charter for a weekly market and annual fair, although the market has not been held since before 1774. At some point Witheridge was elevated in status to that of a 'Borough', although the charter is lost and the precise date at which it was granted is unknown. It is known that Witheridge was not yet a Borough in 1316 but it is referred to as being a Borough in 1499. Borough's were given a degree of self governance and could elect members to Parliament as well as electing Portreeves to act as governors for the Borough. Boroughs were highly reliant on trade and business and successful

Boroughs attracted merchants and businessmen from the surrounding area. Unfortunately Witheridge's location, only 10 miles away from two pre-existing and successful Boroughs (South Molton and Tiverton), meant the Borough here was never destined to thrive.

4.6 In 1396 there began a period of association with the Duchy of Lancaster when William Botreaux inherited as a minor and the Manor was taken into Lordship by the Duke of Lancaster until the boy's coming of age. The relationship continued long afterwards, with Duchy Court sessions being held in Witheridge as late as 1850. William Botreaux had an illustrious military and political career, summoned to Parliament at the age of only 23, serving Henry V during the Battle of Agincourt, and being appointed as Forester of the Royal Forest of Exmoor. William died without a male heir in 1462 and at this point the Manor of Witheridge may have passed back into the hands of the Duchy.

4.7 The parish once had several corn mills, including at least 1 windmill. There was a water powered mill within Witheridge itself, at the North West edge of the village. Evidence is limited and the Witheridge mill does not appear on a 1765 map but it is known that the mill existed by 1870 at which time it was in the ownership of Henry Arthur Fellowes. Witheridge Mill remained in operation until the 1950's.

4.8 Together with the two public houses currently within the village there were previously an additional four (The Black Dog Inn, closed c. 1919; The Hare and Hounds; The Bell Inn, burned down 1886; The Commercial Inn, closed 1895).

Witheridge Congregational Church on Fore Street.



4.9 Poor relief within Witheridge came in the form of 'Poor Houses' owned by the then vicar of the parish, Rev. W. P. Thomas, being 8 houses in Church Lane. Although privately owned by the vicar they are referred to in the Church warden's accounts as the parish did spend money on the upkeep of the buildings, being described as for the housing of the parish's elderly poor, the only alternative being the Union Workhouse in South Molton. There is no mention of these poor houses after 1837.

4.10 Increase in 19th Century non-conformist religion is evidenced in the history of Witheridge. A Congregational Church was opened in 1839 and registered for Marriages in 1845. In 1845 a Chapel School was opened near The Square, before being relocated adjacent to the church in Fore Street in 1898. The Manse was erected in 1854. In 1855 Methodism arrived in Witheridge, with a barn

in West Street being fitted out for use as a chapel. In 1859 the two adjacent cottages were purchased and demolished to build a new and larger Chapel, which still stands today. In 1903 the Methodists also built a school room adjacent to their chapel.

4.11 Witheridge has expanded significantly in the 20th Century, with estates of houses and bungalows being built to the South and West, together with an industrial estate to the North West of the village. There is minimal development extending to the North of the village. The historic core of the village, around The Square, retains a significant number of early and mid 18th Century properties.

5 Views and Vistas

5.1 Witheridge is located at one end of a ridge of high ground running East - West, with the Little Dart River valley running to the North and West, and the River Dalch to the South.

5.2 Significant development to the South of the historic core make views in this direction difficult and unrewarding, mainly consisting of the roofs of modern estate housing and little of the surrounding natural environment.

5.3 Views to the North of the historic core are similarly difficult as there are few breaks in the line of development to the North. The churchyard would offer good views to the North, however it is surrounded by extensive tree cover which restricts such views. Instead land behind the parish hall offers the best views to the North, where the ground can be seen to slope downwards towards the valley of the Little Dart River, and gently sloping back upwards again on the other side of the valley. The landscape is mostly open in this direction, with some small groupings of mature trees, and ribbons of woodland along the routes of rivers.

5.4 To the East, along East Street, views focus on the road itself, flanked by hedge and trees, heading off into almost flat countryside of fields separated by banks and hedges or fences. Tree cover is sparse, although more prominent towards the horizon. Only a handful of isolated farms and farm buildings populate a view otherwise devoid of buildings.

5.5 To the West views are similar, although more restricted by development along the South side of the road. Views North-West are again relatively flat with field boundaries, banks and hedgerows featuring prominently together with individual trees. A line of electricity poles also features as an engineered element of the view.

5.6 From outside of the village its most prominent feature is the tower of the parish church, which is visible from some distance away along the Rackenford Road (to the North East). From other directions Witheridge is well hidden from views by topography and despite its elevated position it is not prominent within the landscape.

6 Architectural Character

6.1 The layout of Witheridge is unusual in that the Parish Church, rather than being at the heart of the village, is very clearly out on the North Western edge of the village. The form of the settlement is neither nuclear nor truly linear; there is a clear concentration around the open space of The Square, however the settlement is also elongated East - West along the routes of Church Street, West Street, Fore Street and North Street.

Formal Architecture In Witheridge

6.2 The church is the oldest and grandest building within the village, and it shows evolution in phases built over time. The church is one of the largest in an area of Devon generally devoid of substantial churches. Most of what now remains dates to the end of the Medieval Period, (c. 1400 - 1550) identified by the Perpendicular Gothic style of the West tower and West window (which is a particularly late example). The church was also significantly altered and re-built in 1841. The fabric of the church does, however, incorporate fragments of simple Norman carving from an 11th Century church on the site.

6.3 The two non-conformist chapels in Witheridge adopt some of the key stylistic features of Gothic Architecture. This style became identified with early European Christianity during the late Georgian and Victorian periods. The Church of England was keen to use the style to reinforce the fact that it was the established and official church, while some branches of non-conformists adopted simplified versions of the style to create a sense of continuity and legitimacy. The, slightly earlier, Methodist Church utilises 'Gothick' style windows, essentially in sash window proportions but with the glazing bars tapering to the pinnacle of a pointed arch at the tops of the openings. The walls are now rendered, but old photographs show that the building was originally of exposed stonework with brick dressings around the window and door openings. The later Congregational Church is much more similar to a traditional church, tall and imposing with tall narrow lancet style windows typical of the early medieval period.

The former school opposite the church.



6.4 Beyond these churches there are several other examples of 'formal' architecture within the village. The former school on Church Street, now used as office and warehouse space for Mole Valley Farmers, was built in 1846 (right hand section) and later extended in 1898 (from the left hand gable). The school was built in a mock Tudor

style, with mullion and transom windows, flat window lintels and shallow 4 centred arches over doorways. The exposed random rubble stone construction reflects well that of the church which stands almost opposite.

6.5 The Firs is another example of 'formal architecture' and is another building incorporating some elements of design typical of Tudor buildings. Its relationship to its own formal grounds and driveway also helps to emphasise the grandeur of its design.

More detail relating to 'The Firs' is given in the "*Boundary Changes Adopted May 2013*" chapter.

The Mitre Inn expresses some of the formal ideals of Georgian Architecture.



6.6 There are also some examples of 'near formal' architecture, buildings which aspire to the appearance and form of established architectural styles, but which are executed by local vernacular craftsmen perhaps unfamiliar with the finer details of the style. Thus we see examples such as 19 The Square which is built in the high Georgian neo-classical style, with well proportioned sliding sash windows, a bold but simple doorcase and symmetrical double hipped roof. Yet the basic rule of the style, that of symmetry, is ignored for the positioning of the front door.

6.7 The Mitre Inn is a similar example, again with well proportioned windows, more elaborate doorcase with panelled reveals and decorative fanlight above the front door. Yet symmetry is again sacrificed because the front door is not central, the right hand bay has a ground floor carriage arch in place of its symmetrically opposite window and the arrangement of chimneys makes for an asymmetrical roof-line.

6.8 Numbers 13 and 23 Fore Street are examples of lower status dwellings which have more successfully imitated the stylistic features of formal architecture, albeit stripped of most of the decorative elements, except for a very basic doorcase at number 13 and some traditional cast iron railings enclosing the frontage of number 23.

Vernacular Architecture

6.9 Beyond these buildings the majority of what remains within the conservation area are examples of vernacular architecture. Designed and built by local craftsmen, usually trained by their fathers in the use of local materials, local techniques and local styles and resulting in a locally distinctive style of building.

6.10 Perhaps the lowest status vernacular building remaining is the rear portion of 8 The Square. The back half of the property is given over to workshops and storage. The building is of rough rubble stone, previously rendered although possibly not originally and much has not fallen anyway. The windows are particularly interesting, being glazed in agricultural glass in small overlapping panes fixed between slender vertical glazing bars. The far end of the building has two pairs of large timber doors, one above the other. The doors on the upper floor are highly unusual, being much wider than most upper loading doors that are encountered on buildings. These doors are clearly modern replacements, with window openings incorporated into them, but the opening which they occupy appears to be original. The rear wall has a full width and height window, again in agricultural glass. It is not clear what use this building originally fulfilled, but what is clear is that the work required good levels of natural light.

North Street / Fore Street / The Square / West Street Junction

The fire insurance plaque seen on 3 Fore Street.



windows, although clearly the building itself is much older than this. Ditchetts House

6.11 Several buildings in Witheridge occupy curving corner plots, an example being a short terrace run of 6 & 6a Fore Street, and Ditchetts House, which turn the shallow corner between Fore Street and West Street. The outer 2 examples (number 6a and Ditchetts House) are both thatched and listed, while number 3 is thatched for its main body but also has a pair of slate hipped gables facing outwards into the street. The visual result is a very odd, yet interesting, juxtaposition of roofing materials and roof forms. It may be that the slated section suffered a fire at some point and was re-roofed in this fashion, certainly at least 1 former owner was sufficiently concerned about the risk of fire that he was a member of a fire insurance company, illustrated by the lead insurance plaque above the front door. The 3 buildings have mainly 2 over 2 Victorian sash

also features a lead fire insurance plaque above the front door from the sun Alliance Fire Insurance Company; the identifying number below the sun emblem is just visible as 403564.

6.12 Another corner plot example is 1 Fore Street, where the property has a full height 3 sided projecting bay at the corner with large sash windows looking out onto the road junction as well as Fore Street and North Street. The building may have been built as a toll house.

6.13 1 & 3 North Street and Trafalgar House form the shallow corner between North Street and Church Street and stand opposite the Ditchetts House group. Number 3 is mostly hidden behind the dense screen of numerous climbing plants, with a semi-regular arrangement of 6 over 6 sliding sash windows being visible through the foliage, together with at least one 6 paned fixed light above the front door. The neighbouring property, number 1 (High Cross) has examples of Georgian marginal light sash windows, 6 over 6 full panes with marginal panes around each edge. This building also has a simple doorcase rising into a flat projecting porch canopy supported on cast iron decorative brackets.

Looking West at the junction of The Square and West Street.



North Street

6.14 Along from these properties, further into North Street, there are a small number of more industrial buildings, such as The Old Fire Station. Here buildings have large entrance doors, including one with a sizable timber sliding door on old fixed runners. These buildings are largely of local stone, with some use of red brick as quoins and on window reveals and with natural slate roofs. The Old Fire Station engine shed has large double bi-folding doors, and has been re-roofed in asbestos sheets, with the gables in-filled with vertical timber boarding. Opposite the rear elevations of 3 and 5 Fore Street also has a reasonable size double door which reinforces the sense that this part of the village has a greater light industrial role. There is also a highly unusual arrangement where the upper floor at the North West corner of the building is jettied, overhanging the ground floor external wall. Whether this has always been the case, or whether the ground floor was realigned to accommodate road traffic below, is unclear.

6.15 Even further along North Street a more domestic character is resumed, with Swift Cottage (complete with nest boxes slung under the eaves) and the semi-detached pair of Beggars Roost and 6 North Street. The latter pair retain thatched roofs, and amongst a small number of properties within the village which do so. The properties also have few windows, of a mix of casement styles, 6 and 4 pane single light casements, 4 light twins, 6 light twins and a larger 4 pane per light 3 light casement at

the far East end. Given that the properties are quite narrow it may be that there are a greater number of window openings on the South elevation, overlooking the property gardens. Swift Cottage has undergone several key material changes over time, including concrete interlocking roof tiles and uPVC windows. Some portions of cast iron rainwater goods (downpipes) survive as do the property's 3 sizable red brick chimneys, complete with decorative corbelled courses of brickwork.

Fore Street

6.16 Access from North Street to Fore Street is possible via a narrow alleyway to the West of Swift Cottage. The alleyway is not straight, but rather has several dog-legs before it emerges again between numbers 9 and 13 Fore Street. The alleyway is interesting in that it is here that some of the only exposed cob walls in the village can be found. A significant number of properties within Witheridge are of cob construction. Swift Cottage is almost certainly cob, and the buildings on the opposite side of the alley from the exposed cob examples are clearly of cob from their irregular wall finishes.

A narrow lane gives direct access between North Street and Fore Street.



6.17 Several of the buildings lining the alleyway have a very agricultural character, being single storey with lightweight roofs (some corrugated iron replacements) and barn doors; their associated dwellings were almost certainly farmhouses or smallholdings.

6.18 Fore Street has a very one-sided character; much of the Southern side of the street has been redeveloped and as a result several of the buildings shown here on the 1889 1st Series Ordnance Survey Map no longer exist.

6.19 Although now on the fringes of the core of the village, the surviving redundant shop front at 7 Fore Street shows how this area was once a part of the commercial heart of the village. The property, together with neighbouring 9 Fore Street, is a thatched cob house. Number 7 has been altered over the years, undoubtedly the shopfront is an enlargement of a former window opening, and the ground floor sash windows most likely replace side hung casement windows replaced to keep up with the latest fashions in the mid 1800's, while the upper floor windows (in the more private parts of the house, not frequented by guests) remained as 6 pane per light 2 light casements.

6.20 17, 19, 21 and 23 Fore Street are the next terraced group to the East along the North side of Fore Street. Number 23 is slightly set back from its neighbours and is of a more formal appearance, with symmetrically arranged windows and a central front door. The whole group has natural slate roofs with red clay ridge tiles, the ridges at number 17 having decorative upstanding waves. The whole group also has replacement uPVC double glazing, most having no indication of their former glazing pattern, although number 19 has artificial glazing bars mimicking a 2 over 2 sash arrangement which is almost certainly not reflective of the original glazing pattern.

West Street (East)

6.21 Moving back West along West Street Cannington House is another example of the modest Georgian houses which appear around the edges of Witheridge, decorated in a blue and white contrasting paint scheme which accentuates the key architectural features of the building, including the cast iron railings which enclose the small front garden area. The facade of the building may at some point have been symmetrical, however the frontage of the neighbouring property (3 West Street) now envelopes the right side of the house.

6.22 Number 3 West Street itself is one of few exposed red brick properties within the village and forms a significant contrast to its neighbours. The bricks used here are a soft natured brick with a pale orange/red pastel appearance, tightly jointed showing some high degree of skill on the part of the builders. All window openings are headed by rubbed brick vousiored arches with white painted keystones; those on the upper floor are flat arches, while the ground floor has segmental round arches. Half of the frontage had previously housed a shop and retains a traditional late 19th Century shopfront with stallrisers and a recessed central entrance door flanked by plate glass display windows. The neighbouring number 5 West Street appears to have the same construction and was part of a semi-detached pair. Unfortunately number 5 has had its distinctive brickwork painted white. This is almost certainly irreversible and judging by the condition of the brickwork at number 3 was a purely aesthetic choice rather than a requirement to protect the fabric of the building.

3 West Street is one of few exposed brick buildings in Witheridge.



6.23 Opposite this pair is a run of terraced Georgian properties, the only significant alteration being that they appear to have suffered is replacement uPVC windows, which can be compared to those in the end bay of the building which are still hornless original Georgian windows. The replacements have attached horns, not present in the windows they replaced, and clearly not part of the frame as a joint can be seen across the top of the horn. The frames and rails are also notably chunkier than those on the originals and the glazing bars, although reasonably slender, are false 'stick on' examples which lack depth.

10 West Street has experienced fewer alterations than its neighbours along the North side of the street.



6.24 The neighbouring properties to the West are hidden behind an elevated garden terrace above garages to the rear of the Georgian house at 6 West Street. The elevated deck looks unusual, while the open area beneath and garage doors provides a relatively uninteresting elevation fronting West Street. This is perhaps worsened by the free-standing garage block, of concrete rendered blockwork with parapet wall hiding the roofslopes, situated to the immediate West. Number 8 West Street, which is served by these second set of garages, has been heavily modernised, concrete interlocking roof tiles have given an

very modern appearance to the roof, while a single skin blockwork open fronted porch has further detracted from the intended appearance of the property so too has the textured render which has been applied over the external walls. Interestingly the property's windows, which are often the first thing to be replaced in the name of fashion or progress, have been retained and are still a variety of styles and sizes of side hung casements.

6.25 By contrast the neighbouring number 10 West Street has had few external alterations. It retains a natural slate roof and a glazed timber porch featuring etched glass panels. Although of some age the porch itself is unlikely to be an original component of the building, however its design and proportions have been well considered and it forms a positive addition to the building to which it is attached. Window and door openings are surrounded by rendered panels to create a quoining effect, which is then painted white in contrast to the very dark exposed stonework from which the walls are constructed.

6.26 Opposite stands the Methodist Church and its attached school rooms. The church itself has had its stone walls rendered over at some point in the past, giving it a stark grey appearance today whilst the school has retained its exposed stone finish. The building is relatively modest in its design, essentially a rectangular hall, with only the form of the window openings having any suggestion of architectural decoration.

The Square

6.27 The Square is the core of the village. The Stone House stands at the Northern side of the Square and provides a small degree of enclosure to the otherwise open space. The building, as the name suggests, is of well dressed exposed stone and of a mock Tudor arts-and-crafts style. At the Eastern edge a single storey modern toilet block stands just apart from the Stone House, with a projecting arcade roof of corrugated sheet metal on 3 sides. This is the only single storey building within The Square and is slightly incongruous, although its relatively small dimensions do make it a very minor intrusion.

6.28 The remainder of the Square is an odd mix of very tall and grand Georgian properties, including buildings such as The Angel Hotel and 14 West Street. Despite The Angel being 2 Storey and 14 West Street being 3 storey, both are almost exactly the same height. Both tower above numbers 3 and 5 The Square (The Old Pound House) which stands sandwiched between them. This property is a much more modest thatched cottage, the top of the 1st floor windows level with the bottom of the 1st floor windows on The Angel Hotel. The Angel Hotel itself is on the North East corner of The Square and has its Northern side left unrendered, while the elevations facing The Square are rendered and painted.

6.29 Other thatched properties also face onto The Square, including Wheelwright Cottage (number 9), number 11 The Square and number 5 West Street. Wheelwright Cottage also includes an early 19th Century shopfront and display window, complete with moulded timber pilasters and fascia.

6.30 The irregular shape of The Square, together with the irregular historic pattern of buildings which enclose it and the expanse of open space between them gives this part of the village a strong and distinctive character. At the South West corner of The Square the form of buildings began to create smaller partly enclosed spaces, leading ultimately into narrow alleyways between properties which open into West Street. Several of these alleyways have cobbled surfaces, or retain evidence or partial cobbled surfaces. The contrast between these narrow access lanes and the wide space which they open into is particularly striking.

West Street (West)

6.31 West Street itself has a mix of buildings, just like elsewhere they are mainly rendered cob or stone, with Wisteria (number 13) in exposed red brick being the exception. The Post Office at number 17 retains a 19th Century traditional shopfront, albeit incorporating very modern and colourful signage. A particularly striking feature is the decorative cast ironwork which stands on top of the projecting fascia, whilst a much plainer shopfront remains at number 23. Two Moors Way Bed and Breakfast (number 19) has decorative render features applied around the ground floor doorways and windows in the form of rusticated surrounds, imitating stonework but formed out of relief plasterwork.

6.32 The Southern side of West Street is made up of Georgian and early Victorian properties, with well proportioned window openings and retaining traditional sash windows and occasional shopfronts. Projecting hood porches are also present at numbers 19 and 21, the former being relatively plain and the latter supported on decorative cast iron brackets. The Northern side is much more vernacular in its character and consists of lower thatched cottages, with irregularly sized and arranged casement windows. These buildings, unlike those opposite, are also set slightly back from the roadside with private frontages enclosed by low stone walls.

6.33 Numbers 25 and 27 West Street are perhaps the exception to the North / South architectural division of West Street. The buildings have the casement windows more commonly seen on the North side of the street, and from marks on their chimneys there is the potential that they previously had a more steeply pitched thatched roof. The buildings are also set back significantly from the roadside, whilst other properties along the South of West Street are built up against the edge of the road. Although the area in front of the properties is not bounded by a wall or other means of enclosure the surface is cobbled and forms a traditional contrast to the surface of the highway.

25 and 27 West Street are on the South side of the Street, but more typical of the vernacular character of the North side.



6.34 Between numbers 23 and 25 West Street a lane leads towards the Church Rooms and a number of houses. The Church Rooms were built as a church school room, but are now used by a number of community groups as a meeting space. The

building has a blank window reveal high on its principal facade, as well as a projecting timber enclosed porch with a decorative entrance door featuring Gothic style moulding details.

Surface Treatments

6.35 The majority of Witheridge has its roads and pavements treated with standardised modern materials, typically standard 'black-top' tarmac.

6.36 There are, however, some fragmentary sections of older cobbled street surfaces which remain within the conservation area. The most obvious are within The Square, although rather than significant areas of surfacing they are restrained to narrow bands, often around sunken drainage channels built into the street surface, or nearest to the walls of surrounding properties. Other strips of cobbles survive outside of numbers 4 and 6 North Street (opposite the Village Hall), again running in a narrow band up against the external wall of the houses.

Public Realm

6.37 The two most prominent items within the public realm in Witheridge are the memorial 'stocks' outside the Churchyard and a public water pump along the side of number 8 The Square.

6.38 The stocks are not themselves old; they were produced during the 1990's to commemorate the centenary of Witheridge Parish Council in 1994. They are made to the same pattern as an 'original' set of stocks, of unknown date, previously belonging to the parish and make an interesting feature along the roadside. A small inscribed plaque gives details of the event which they commemorate and when they were unveiled (31st December 1994, by Mrs. Gladys Bristow, a 92 year old local, who had lived all her life in the village).

6.39 The public water pump now stands along what is a dead-end semi-private driveway, but would previously have been an approach to The Vicarage. It is of a basic and functional design typical of surviving examples seen in villages such as Knowstone and Burrington.

7 Boundary Changes Adopted May 2013

7.1 The conservation area boundary had not been reviewed or revised from before 1974 up until late 2012. In the 38 years that had passed there had been changes in attitude towards the historic environment, particularly in relation to buildings and structures from the 19th Century, as well as changes in national policies which handle conservation of the historic environment.

7.2 Despite the significant amount of time that had passed the conservation area boundary remained surprisingly relevant today, with the vast majority of its route still reflecting more modern attitudes towards the historic built environment.

7.3 To the East there are a number of buildings which appear to have been 'missed out' from the initial designation.

The former church school of the Witheridge Congregational Church.



7.4 Along the North East side of Fore Street are 4 buildings which merited inclusion within the Witheridge Conservation Area. The Witheridge Congregational Church was constructed in 1839. Its dour grey cement render does little to convey the elegance of the building. Despite this features such as the narrow lancet style windows help to emphasise the height of the building, giving it a grand and imposing character. The graveyard to the South East of the building forms and integral part of its setting and the entire group is enclosed behind low wrought and cast iron railings.

7.5 To the West of the church stands its former school rooms, now a doctors surgery, built in 1898. The school is much lower and smaller than the church, although its stone walls and red brick dressings may hint at the materials of the church itself, now hidden behind that dull render. The school features tall and narrow windows, albeit not so narrow as to be considered lancets, but still arranged in a fashion typical of arrangements used for lancet windows, especially at the West end where a triple arrangement can be seen.

The Firs is amongst the largest houses in Witheridge.



7.6 Moving West again we come to The Firs, a large late Victorian villa, set far back from the road so as to accommodate a spacious driveway and grounds. The building is now in use as a care home. The house is part rendered, partly of exposed stone, with a full set of marginal light sash windows and similarly styled lights above the main entrance door. The Eastern conservatory also features matching glazing, while that to the West is clearly a much more recent addition. The roof form consists of two pitched gables facing the road with a flat valley roof between. This flat roof is hidden behind a decorative parapet and it may be that the architect intended the flat roof section to be utilised, perhaps as an Arts and Crafts style reflection of the use of Medieval and Tudor palace roofs for perambulations.

7.7 To the West again we have 25 Fore Street, a 'U' shaped building, again Victorian and featuring stone walls with red brick dressings and quoins and a mixed brick and stone front boundary wall. The building retains original sash windows at the front, stepping down to casement windows at the rear. This building, together with The Firs, both appear on maps sometime between 1889 and 1904. In 1904 they were in the same ownership and the driveway arrangement suggests that this was either a lodge or coach-house. Interestingly The Firs is labelled as 'The Bungalow' on this map. The building may have originally been single storey and the maps would appear to suggest that a new front was added to the building sometime in the 1920's or early 1930's.

7.8 Other boundary changes were also made in May 2013, including a series of small extensions and reductions intended to ensure that individual plots and properties are either entirely within or entirely without the conservation area. Previously there were addresses where one end of a garden was within the conservation area while the other end was not, or where a house was within the conservation area but its garden was not. These minor boundary changes provide clarity as to whether an individual property is inside or outside of the conservation area.

The Witheridge Conservation Area Boundary was changed in May 2013 to include:

- 25 Fore Street ('Gordon House')
- The Firs
- The Old School
- The Witheridge Congregational Church

A map showing these boundary changes can be found in Appendix 3 (IV)

8 Development Pressures

8.1 Perhaps the biggest development threat facing conservation areas nation-wide is that of alterations carried out to dwelling houses which do not need planning permission. Such alterations may have only a minor impact on the character of the wider conservation area when viewed in isolation. However they can have a cumulative effect which can lead to major degradation of the historic character of the conservation area. Traditionally the largest such threat has come from the removal of timber sashes and casements in favour of the installation of uPVC windows.

8.2 As of 6th April 2008 the provision of some sources of renewable energy can be, under certain circumstances, a permitted development, which does not require planning permission or conservation area consent. The rules covering when the installation of, for example, solar panels is a permitted development is dependent on the location of the panels, their size and height, as well as the area they cover. As such advice should be sought from the planning office, as not all installations will be considered to be permitted without planning permission. The problem caused by this is that there will be no immediate control over such alterations within conservation areas, and as such there is potential for unsympathetic alterations to damage the character of the area instead of less damaging siting and designs being agreed.

8.3 Surviving cobbled surfaces exist in places, often in narrow back lanes, but also in parts of The Square. Works involving excavation in cobbled areas, or covering over of cobbles with cement or tarmac to address perceived or implied trip hazards should be avoided.

9 The Future

9.1 The aim of this character assessment has been to identify which buildings, open spaces, and features from Witheridge's past and present survive to contribute towards its special character into the future.

9.2 The character appraisal has also aimed to identify potential development pressures the area is likely to face in the near future and to identify areas within the designation which may be suitable for enhancement.

9.3 What this document does not aim to achieve is to propose the means and methods by which the identified character is to be safeguarded, or enhanced, for the future. This will be the subject of a subsequent management plan for the conservation area. The aim of such a document will be to propose the ways in which the characteristics identified within this character appraisal can be protected from unsympathetic alterations and future developments, or enhanced by positive and well planned schemes. This will also ensure that all future planning decisions that affect the conservation area and its setting are treated in a consistent manner.

1 Listed Buildings in the Witheridge Conservation Area

Fore Street

Address	Listing Grade
Ditchetts (#4 Fore Street)	II
1	II
7 & 9	II
6	II
The Lawn, Including Barn at Rear	II
Tween Moors	II

North Street

Address	Listing Grade
Trafalgar House	II
Highcroft	II

The Square

Address	Listing Grade
The Angel Inn	II
Wheelwrights Cottage	II
K6 Telephone Kiosk	II
3	II
Black Dog Cottage (#7)	II
The Mitre Hotel	II
Mitre Cottage	II
Pound House and Walled Garden at Rear (#5)	II

1 Listed Buildings in the Witheridge Conservation Area

West Street

Address	Listing Grade
Cannington House, and Forecourt Area Railings with wall (#9 & 11)	II
21 & 23	II
8 Including Forecourt Railings	II
Plovers Barrows (#18)	II
Leigh House (#14)	II
Rosemont Cottages (#25 &27)	II
Highfields (#12)	II
Fern Cottage (#10)	II
Primrose Cottage (#20)	II
#26 and #28	II
#19	II
Methodist Church	II
The Village Stores (#17)	II
Lynecroft (#16)	II
Lantern Cottage (#22)	II

Church Street

Address	Listing Grade
Gate Piers, Gates & Railings Bounding the South Side of Churchyard of Church of St John The Baptist	II
Church of St John The Baptist	I
Former School & School-house now Offices & Workshop to Valley Farmers	II

Tracy Green

Address	Listing Grade
Rose Dene	II
Rose Mont Villa	II
Non-conformist Chapel, now Village Hall	II

2 Historic Mapping

3 Conservation Area Mapping

I - Key

II - Existing Boundary & Listed Buildings

III - Key Views & Viewpoints

IV - Boundary Changes Adopted May 2013

Key To Mapping

	Grade I Listed Building		Road & Building Plot Outline
	Grade II* Listed Building		Building Outline
	Grade II Listed Building		Existing Conservation Area Boundary
	Single Storey Building		Wall With Slate Hanging
	2 Storey Building		External Views
	3 Storey Building		Internal Views
	4+ Storey Building		Morte Slate Boundary Wall
	Area To Be Added To Conservation area		Morte Slate & White Spar Boundary Wall
	Area To Be Removed From Conservation Area		Focal Point Of Views
	Building Making a Neutral Contribution to Local Character		Key Viewpoint
	Building Making a Positive Contribution to Local Character		Prominent Bay Window
	Building Making an Outstanding Contribution to Local Character		Prominent Bow Window
	Building With Rendered Walls		Negative / Positive Public Seating
	Building With Bare or Limewashed / Painted Walls		Positive / Negative Bollard
	Building With Slate Window Sills		Decorated Barge Boards
	Public Green Space		Negative / Positive Street Lighting
	Building In Poor Condition		Memorial - ie. War Memorial
	Area For Potential Enhancement		Mosaic Feature
	Building With Decorated Eaves		Important Tree / Tree With Tree Preservation Order
	Various Seperate Character Zones		Miscellaneous Feature (Labled)
			Miscellaneous Linear Feature (Labled)
			Railings As A Positive Streetscape Feature
			Railings As A Negative Streetscape Feature
			River / Aquatic Feature
	Scheduled Ancient Monument		Public Right of Way
	Historic Door		Focal Streetscape Feature
	Historic Bridge		Negative / Positive Signage Feature
	Intrusive Overhead Lines		Historic Telephone Kiosk
	Historic Post Box		Position of Historic Town Gate





