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1 Introduction

1.1 Conservation Areas are designed 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 39 Conservation Areas in this District (excluding those within Exmoor National Park Authority area).

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 Woolacombe Conservation Area provides a sound basis for development control decision-making, and assists the District 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.
- To outline the planning policies and controls that apply to the Conservation Area.
- To 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 Background

- This appraisal for the Woolacombe Conservation area was initiated in February 2008.
- The first designation of land found within the present conservation area boundary was by North Devon Council in September 1983.
- A major extension of the conservation area to the north was adopted as part of the character appraisal in March 2009.

3 Facts and Figures about the Conservation Area

3.1 The conservation area covers an area of 32 hectares (79 acres)an increase from 26 hectares (64 acres) prior to the March 2009 extension of the conservation area.

3.2 Of the buildings within the area there is just one included on the List of buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Listed Buildings), being The Castle Hotel, listed grade II.

3.3 There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the conservation area.

4 Why is Woolacombe Special

4.1 Woolacombe is a typical Edwardian / Victorian coastal resort town, dominated by large villa style houses and grand hotels. The historic core is dwarfed and almost completely obscured by the scale of the speculative development of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

4.2 The setting of the town, backing an award winning 4.8 km (3 mile) stretch of sandy beach, between a pair of rocky headlands, with an undeveloped landscape running back along the sides of the valley inland, is a spectacular backdrop.

4.3 The architectural styles of the late 19th century are well represented in Woolacombe: gothic revival, classical, Tudor revival and renaissance. As such it is the mixture of architectural styles, executed to a high quality, that give Woolacombe its special character, combined with its setting and its planned layout, designed to make the most of impressive views and walks along the shoreline to the north of the historic core of the town.

A map showing the existing Woolacombe Conservation Area, and identifying the Grade II Listed Castle Hotel, can be found as appendix 3(i)

5 Historic Events and Developments

5.1 Evidence of early periods within Woolacombe has been uncovered, examples including prehistoric flint tools, the standing stones to the north east and a possible Bronze Age cremation pit uncovered by coastal erosion in 1938.

5.2 Roman activity is indicated by finds of Roman potsherds recovered from the eroding cliff faces and a coin from the reign of Constantine the Great (AD306 – 337) has been discovered on the beach.

5.3 Woolacombe appears in Domesday Book as Wolnecoma literally ‘Wolves Valley’. At the time the valley here was thickly wooded and presumably wolves could be found here. There were no inhabitants living in Woolacombe at the time of the Domesday survey; even the parish centre of Morteheo was little more than a single farm.

5.4 Woolacombe Tracey, the medieval manor, is shown on the site of Woolacombe Farm on early Ordnance Survey maps, and medieval rubble has been found near this site supporting the possibility. Woolacombe Tracey was the seat of the Tracey family, Sir William de Tracey was said to have lived here after his involvement in the murder of Thomas a Becket (1170).

5.5 The 1840’s Tithe map for Morteheo Parish shows Woolacombe as a small cluster of buildings located around the Beach Road junction with Sandy Lane. Some distance to the east could be found two other settlements of similar size, being East Woolacombe and Over Woolacombe. At this time there was no development along the shoreline and Woolacombe was only a modest village or large hamlet – having no church of its own.

5.6 The area that would become The Esplanade and the streets immediately behind, are shown on the 1894 first series OS maps as being the site of several quarries, presumably extracting slate as harder material can still be seen protruding from the ground at various points along the frontage of The Esplanade.

5.7 In the 1880’s a Barnstaple Architect, Arnold Thorne, laid out Woolacombe for development as a coastal resort. Even so the development only ever achieved a slow pace, the seafront along The Esplanade being mainly a row of Victorian and Edwardian Villas, with a rapid period of building from 1890, when maps show The Esplanade devoid of buildings, to 1905 when the shoreline frontage is mainly as it is today. Behind The Esplanade, is what Nikolaus Pevsner describes, in his 1952 ‘Buildings of England – Devon’, as a “formless spread of 20th Century seaside flats, an insult to the glorious sweep of the bay.”

5.8 Several buildings within the conservation area were constructed by the Chichester Estate, Hartland House was used as an estate office for several years and the next-door Parade House was built for Dame Rosalie Chichester as a summer residence in 1890.

By 1919 the resort had all of the services tourists of the time would expect to find, including 2 banks, a post office and printers, a golf-course and 45 houses offering apartments or lodgings.

5.9 During the Second World War Woolacombe beach was used by the US Army Assault Training Centre, based in Woolacombe, for amphibious infantry landing practice involving hundreds of small boats – the long flat beach and the surrounding landscape were thought to sufficiently resemble Normandy as to make this a realistic training environment.

6 Views and Vistas

6.1 Woolacombe has a wealth of major landscape features which are the focal points of views out of the conservation area. The rocky headlands of Morte Point, to the north, and Baggy Point, to the south, are both important landscape features that can be seen from various points within the conservation area. These two headlands frame Woolacombe Sands and form a dark grey backdrop to the golden sands. Clearly the beach is at the heart of Woolacombe, being the key driving force behind the Victorian seaside resort and the more recent arrival of surfing. As such the beach is also a key element of the town and is the focal point of several key views.

P01 - View to Morte Point from beside The Esplanade, The line of white posts along the edge of the road draws the eye into the distance, to buildings in the proposed conservation area extension. To the left stands a WWII lookout building, now used for storage, amidst a row of benches.



6.2 As a result any point within Woolacombe from which one, or more, of these three major landscape features can be seen, has a key view. The loss of these views over the beach and out to the two headlands would be disastrous to the character of the place. There are several points along Bay View Road and Sunnyside Road from which the sea and the beach can be seen through the gaps between buildings. The buildings are often spaced widely on the northern and western part of the town and this allows for glimpses of key landscape features between the buildings. These glimpses are equally as important as the views across open ground.

6.3 Internal views focus on long sweeping stretches of The Esplanade which are possible at several points along its length, at the northern end from Gonville House looking north-east, from the Devon Beach Hotel looking North and south-east. From The Esplanade there are also views down into Barricane Beach and Grunta Beach. The line of white painted wooden posts, which prevent vehicles from parking on the grass on the west side of the Esplanade, act to draw the eye towards the distance, emphasising the curves of the road and the continuity between Town Centre, Esplanade and Upper Clay Park beyond.

6.4 Views of The Castle Hotel are limited, being from the immediate approaches along the Esplanade to the North and South, as well as from the cliff tops to the west, and from Rockfield Road behind. A long view to the Castle is possible from Potters Hill but it is partly obscured by other buildings. These views, of what is arguably the most architecturally splendid building in the town, are an important feature of The Esplanade.

6.5 From the far West of Rockfield Road views are possible out towards Morte Point, with the higher elevation giving slightly better views than from a similar position on The Esplanade.

6.6 Another interesting feature within the townscape of Woolacombe is a number of small footpaths passing through the lines of property development. Examples join Bay View Road and The Esplanade as well as Sunnyside Road and Bay View Road. The footpaths not only allow faster pedestrian access between these areas but also allow for glimpse views along their narrow lengths. The footpaths are enclosed by walls and as such draw the viewers gaze towards the distance, creating some splendid views out over the cliffs to the sea.

6.7 An increasing number of people get their first look at Woolacombe from the various paths and trails (including the Tarka Trail and the South West Coast Path) which run through Woolacombe from north to south. As such views from Potters Hill out over Woolacombe are important from the south, and from the path out to Morte Point at the north.

A map identifying the key views within the conservation area, and key external views, can be found as appendix 3(ii)

7 Landscape and Streetscape

7.1 The major landscape features are clearly the Beach and the two headlands, Morte Point and Baggy Point, which frame its sands. The beach is visible from the vast majority of points within the town, and forms the focus of the majority of key views. The two rocky headlands of dark limestone and slate form a stark contrast with the golden sands of the beach and often form a backdrop to views of the beach.

7.2 The town is located along both the sea front and the slopes of a river valley to the east, and the slopes of the valley side form an inland backdrop to the conservation area, while the sea and beach forms a seaward backdrop, ensuring that there is always a pleasing visual setting for the town from whatever direction it is viewed.

P02 - A view from the bottom of Potters Hill to the South, across the dunes to Woolacombe. The Esplanade stretches out to the left of the main bulk of the town on the right of the picture



7.3 The Historic core of the town is centred to the East of the current conservation area around the small settlement shown on the 1840's tithe map, no historic buildings survive even in this area as redevelopment over a period of years has resulted in their loss. The majority of the town takes its form from subsequent stages of planned layout by a series of architects and developers. The earliest such planned layout was created by Arnold Thorne, a Barnstaple architect, in 1880 where plots were set out and leased

to individual developers for periods of 99 years by the Chichester Estate. To make this site attractive to developers the plots were arranged along a road that was laid down, and sewage infrastructure was pre-installed free of charge.

7.4 This period of building resulted in the creation of The Esplanade in much the way it appears today, and by 1904 maps show “Parade Road” with The Castle as the last building to the north along its length, and with a few vacant sites awaiting development. Rockfield road is also partly constructed, with just two properties at its junction with “Parade Road” which would later become The Esplanade. Bay View Road is also shown in 1904, although then called “South Road”, with development from the east as far as what is now Bentley Court. Sunnyside Road is not shown in 1904, although there is a building on the plot now occupied by “Sunnyside” which may have given its name to the road added later.

7.5 Thus in the two decades since the laying out of Woolacombe for development the town had grown significantly from the small village shown on the first edition ordinance survey of 1894. The growth of The Esplanade means that the town becomes much more recognisable by the early 1900’s, although the growth is hardly rapid for the period, and the greatest density of development can be seen in the terraces to the north and east of the Woolacombe Bay Hotel.

7.6 The buildings along The Esplanade are always set back some distance from the street, and usually have a wall fronting the street. In places along the northern end of the esplanade this wall is constructed of stacked slate. Sometimes simply stacked in beds, in places arranged in a pleasing herringbone pattern, with some gateways having voussioired slate arches as well as examples of stacked slate gate piers. In some places the slate wall simply fills in gaps between natural rock outcroppings already present on the site and being used as a boundary line. Although this slate walling is less common at the southern end of The Esplanade it can also be found outside the tourist information centre. In other areas such slate walling may exist but is either partially, or completely, hidden by vegetation – for example small sections of slate walling can be seen outside of the Castle Hotel.

7.7 Along The Esplanade, on the east side of the road, stand 22 cast iron lampposts, all painted dark blue, complete with ladder bars. The rest of the conservation area has more contemporary street lighting of less distinctive design. The retention of the historic street lighting along The Esplanade is important in maintaining the character of the street, which would be partially eroded by the installation of lampposts of any other design.

7.8 The layout of Woolacombe is, as such, a relatively modern creation without any historic associations. However the layout and plan form of Woolacombe and its streets still contributes heavily to its character, perhaps none more so than the Esplanade, which relies heavily on its sea views made possible by its single sided development.

At various points along its length there is space for building to the west of the road – however this would be disastrous for the character of the most prominent road in the conservation area.

7.9 Streets tend to gently curve within the conservation area, the only straight roads being short terraced streets to the east of the conservation area, such as Arlington Road and South Street. These curving roads often follow natural features, whether that be the shoreline or natural contours. Exceptions to these rules include the sharply curving access road to Southern Court overlooking the town.

7.10 The shopping centre of the town to the east of the conservation area is also of good quality, with the terrace of shops along West Road having a good feeling of continuity in terms of the flow of their facades and the regularity of their 1st floor balconies projecting over the entrances to the shops below. This flow and regularity is somewhat eroded by an inconsistency in the size, number and location of signage on the shopfronts. Signage, particularly along West Street, is dealt with in a separate chapter.

7.11 A series of large car parks dominate the area at the southern end of the Esplanade, to the detriment of a key location at the northern edge of the beach and the grandest road in the conservation area. Additionally parking is available on the coastal side of The Esplanade for its entire length, with a series of parking ticket machines located on the opposite pavement. Additional large car parks and coach parking, operating on a seasonal basis, is available to the south of the conservation area.

8 Architecture

8.1 The Castle Hotel is the only listed building within the Woolacombe conservation area. Originally built as a private residence and built to resemble a Gothic folly as a castellated mansion, constructed of snecked rubble stone and ashlar dressings. The building is both grand and imposing, being located above The Esplanade and its gothic revival architecture is of high quality and design. From the south The Castle Hotel can be seen for only a short distance along the Esplanade before being hidden from view around the sweeping curve of the street. The building can be seen, at least partially, from Potters Hill, but is obscured from view by its neighbours Ocean View and Little Beach.

8.2 While the pattern of more recent development is not as stark as Pevsner describes, it does not match the quality of the Victorian and Edwardian stages of the town's development. This is in part a result of the fact that the earlier developers had already selected the more prestigious plots along the shoreline and latter developments have had to be accommodated behind, although some of these still command impressive views across Morte Bay. There are some impressive buildings to be found within this region, Swiss Cottage, for example, in its clean whitewash with various levels of patio and balcony surrounded by balustrade and railings of various design. The timber cladding to the front projection is intended to stir images of alpine cabins.

8.3 Wych Elm is another example of a well designed and executed building of 20th Century origin. The building is a grand arts and crafts style dwelling with rounded turret at its west end, a main elevation chimney stack along with several gabled projections and slate hanging. The buildings timber windows have glazing bars and chunky verticals to give the impression of mullions.

8.4 Other buildings of architectural note include the Woolacombe Bay Hotel, the core of the building is of 4 storeys, with wings of three storeys. Constructed in a Tudor Revival style with mock timber framing and detailing the building makes an impressive sight when viewed across the open space of its own extensive grounds. This space has within it a swimming pool and tennis courts and overlooks the beach and Morte Bay. Views of the hotel itself are available only from relatively short distances within the conservation area, but from beyond it stands as a major landmark. Behind the grand and imposing bulk of the hotel the streets take on a terraced pattern, with terraced houses found along Arlington Road within the conservation area.

8.5 The White House, in the centre of the Esplanade is an Edwardian Villa, and has retained all of its period details including sash windows, shutters, and some very attractive Morte slate garden walls and archway over an iron gate bearing the name of the house.

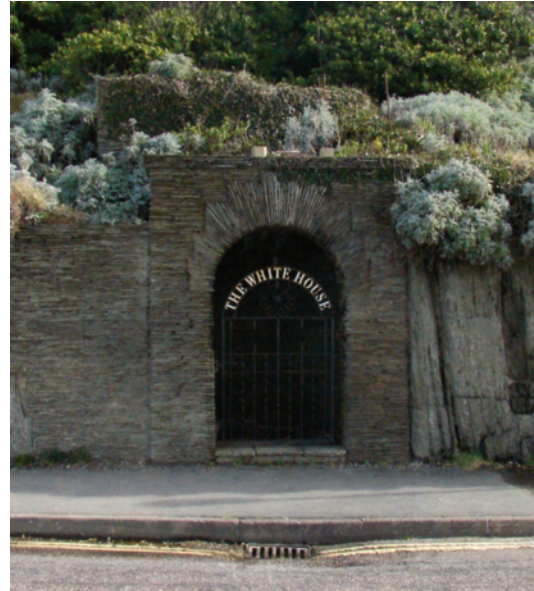
8.6 The tourist information centre is a new building designed so as to be sympathetic to the other buildings in the core of the town, its timber framed glazed walling being of particular interest, as is its rendered rough stone construction. Windows are narrow and tall arranged in groups on the eastern section of the building. Being much lower than surrounding buildings it takes on a subordinate stature and does not attempt in any way to compete with the grand scale of the Victorian and Edwardian developments along the remainder of The Esplanade.

8.7 The next structure to the east from the Tourist Information centre is the bus shelter, constructed of rendered and whitewashed brick with a tile roof and timber detailing around window openings. The building demonstrates a good deal of effort to produce a bus shelter that does not detract from its historic and architectural setting and is a vast improvement over more conventional stock bus shelters.

8.8 The bus shelter is an attractive addition to the street scene, with a grass bank surrounding the shelter and forming a visual, and physical, boundary between The Esplanade and Bay View Road.

8.9 On the coast side of the Esplanade there are only two built structures, the first is the pumping station opposite the White Rose nursing home and the other is a former wartime lookout constructed during the Second World War opposite Chichester House. The pumping station is not of impressive appearance, unfortunately its location is unavoidable. The wartime lookout is now used for storage by a cafe which serves tourists visiting Barricane Beach, the building is small and whitewashed. Its low profile minimises its impact on the surrounding landscape. In terms of architectural quality, both of these buildings are found to be lacking, however their impact is significantly less than it otherwise could be, thanks to their relatively small scale.

P03 - Morte slate gateway and wall of 'The White House' on The Esplanade, featuring decorative iron gate.



8.10 The two weatherboard buildings located at the southern edge of the conservation area, and now in use as surf hire stalls, provide a frame for a view out across the beach and add character to the southern edge of the conservation area. The building to the south was previously the Boathouse Cafe (named such after having been in previous use as a Lifeboat House), as shown on the 1894 first edition Ordnance Survey map (see appendix 1)

P04 - An example of the slate walling found in various locations along the Esplanade, this example is in front of Rock a Nore, showing stacked piers topped with copings, and herringbone pattern in the walls.



P05 - The former Lifeboat House along Challacombe Hill Road, now used as a surf hire stall, with the beach and stream behind



8.11 The largest hotel within the conservation area is the Woolacombe Bay Hotel. Throughout most of Woolacombe's tourism history the vast majority of holiday makers have been accommodated in small scale guesthouses rather than large hotels. The Woolacombe Bay hotel was under construction in 1887 when it applied for its first license, and was initially called the "Shakespeare Hotel", although this must have been short-lived as the building is labelled as the Woolacombe Bay Hotel on the 1904 OS mapping.

8.12 By 1939 the hotel had been enlarged to accommodate up to 180 residents, reflecting the increased number of tourists wishing to stay in Woolacombe in the heyday of British seaside resorts. The building today represents several alterations and enlargements carried out throughout its history, all reflecting the original 'Mock-Tudor' style of the original design, and sections of the building have between 2 and 4 floors. The upper sections have mock timber framing with rendered infill panels, while the lower portions are of exposed red brick. Balconies and bays, alongside a cupola and, on the older portions, chimney stacks

add to the character of the building. The latest additions at the southern end show a decline in quality of design from the older portions of the building. The scale and proportion remains sympathetic along with the use of brick and render, however the mock timber-framing has disappeared on the newest additions. The hotel also retains large grounds facing towards the beach, with its own swimming pool and tennis courts, as well as a private path leading down towards the beach near the old Lifeboat House. Photographs showing the Hotel under construction show how, at the time, it was surrounded by empty fields for some distance, highlighting just how small Woolacombe was before the late 1800's and how speculative these developments were.

P06 - The Woolacombe Bay Hotel, (1887 in part) viewed from Challacombe Hill Road



A map showing the heights of buildings within the conservation area can be found as appendix 3(iii)

Surface Treatment

8.13 Pavements within the conservation area are not typically of high quality, most being of tarmac. Where alternative, higher quality, materials have been used there has been no consistency. In places tessellated paving bricks are used to good effect. In others irregular slate paving is used and works well alongside the Morte Slate walls found within the conservation area. Materials clash and change for no apparent reason, creating confusion in the streetscape.

P07 - Unnecessary changes of material can be unsightly within the streetscape, even when the materials themselves are of high quality. Consistency of materials would improve the character of the streets within Woolacombe.



8.14 Morte Slate has also been used as a curbing material along some of the quieter streets off The Esplanade. Although this material is not particularly durable in this application it is another interesting use of a local material which works well on streets where vehicular traffic is light.

P08 - Morte Slate curbing along the pavement edge on Rockfield Road



Signage

8.15 Woolacombe's status as a tourist destination has led to the establishment and growth of a large number of tourist driven businesses, and as a result signs have multiplied to advertise the presence of these various establishments. Not all of these

signs can be seen to have taken into consideration the character of the conservation area and the vast number serves as an unwelcome distraction from the landscape character and historic environment that many of these tourist have come to enjoy.

8.16 In some cases the result is free standing signs obstructing pedestrian flow along pavements, or signs affixed to walls some considerable distance from the business they represent in an attempt to draw in customers. On some occasions the frontages of shops appear overloaded with a vast array of signs that clutter and confuse the main elevations of their buildings.

8.17 By contrast the pedestrian and street signage within the conservation area has, in the main, been well planned. Road signs are affixed to lamp posts or other such features so as to reduce the number of additional posts needed, which can be a distraction to views of the streetscene. Pedestrian signage is on the whole good – with old finger post columns having been refitted with slightly enlarged signs. Presumably this is to make their text larger and clearer, and the over all effect is of high quality and allows historic signage posts to remain in use.

8.18 Signs for car parks are large and imposing, carrying information which is not always necessary – “Welcome to Woolacombe’s Award Winning Beach” is proudly displayed on a large sign on the inland edge of the Esplanade car park, facing out towards the town. Such a sign would be better placed along the access ways onto the beach, and need not be so large, nor indeed free standing. Other parking signs state that “Disturbances likely to cause a breach of the peace” are prohibited, a statement that should not need to be made and implying that such disturbances are welcomed elsewhere.

P09



8.19 Street clutter should be managed more effectively, and through the application of sensible townscape management schemes street signage, pedestrian barriers and traffic signals can typically be reduced through a process of rationalisation.

A map showing street furniture within the Woolacombe Conservation Area can be found as appendix 3(iv)

Shopfronts

8.20 Shop frontages are a problem in their own right, with wild differences between subtle and effective shop fronts and wildly extravagant and confusing shopfronts, to examples where banners, sign boards and fascias jostle for space against posters and affixed lettering on windows.

8.21 By using window space as a base for such signage views into the building are blocked or at least obscured. Most of the time a potential customer can learn more about a shop by looking in through the windows than he or she could ever learn from an array of signs and notices displayed in the windows. More signage is not always a better thing, potential customers do not tirelessly read every sign they come across and beyond a basic fascia declaring the shop's name and its function, (ie. stationers, or florist) additional signage may have little to add.

8.22 Additional signage also has the effect of obscuring parts of the building, sometimes hiding architectural features or spoiling the flow of a regular facade or terrace. This is true along West Road where the railings to balconies are often hidden by large banners or additional fascia signs. These railings form a striking part of the frontage where they can be seen and hiding them behind signage is unnecessary when there is sufficient alternative locations for signage. When neighbouring shops have vastly different levels of signage the visual effect is an unappealing clash.

8.23 Several shops within Woolacombe have had garish treatments applied to their walls. Although this can be seen to be attractive in some ways it does not reflect the established architectural character of Woolacombe and is out of place within the conservation area.

P10 - An example of inappropriate wall treatment within the conservation area.



9 Northern Boundary Extension

9.1 The northern extension of the conservation area continues many of the architectural and visual themes of the lower portion of The Esplanade, as well as being a highly visible area itself thanks to its elevated position. The majority of the extension is technically a part of Morteheo, however the buildings in this area have more in common with the northern part of Woolacombe's Esplanade than the southern part of the historic village of Morteheo.

9.2 The buildings here are more recent than those at the bottom of The Esplanade, and this is most probably the reason they were excluded from the original designation. Architectural features which can be viewed as contiguous with the currently designated area include the extensive use of Morte Slate for boundary and retaining walls, although the walls become more functional and less elaborate beyond the Watersmeet Hotel.

9.3 As previously mentioned the buildings here can be seen for some distance back along the Esplanade, as well as from Potters Hill to the south of the existing designation. The area also commands good views back over Woolacombe, and out to Woolacombe Sands and Morte Bay.

P11 - The Watersmeet Hotel with Buildings along Upper Clay Park and Sharp Rock behind, showing a continuation on the theme of large Villa style buildings in generous plots.



9.4 The Watersmeet hotel is identified as one of four major hotels within Woolacombe the redevelopment, or change of use, of which is to be prohibited where it would harm the tourism character and status of the area (North Devon Local Plan 28.12 WOO3). Due to the dominant position and scale of this hotel building it has a huge influence on the character and setting of the open space and buildings at the northern end of the existing designation and as such should be brought within the designation so as to protect the appearance, function and scale of the area.

9.5 The buildings here also continue the precedent of detached buildings set within open plots established along the length of The Esplanade. The more irregular road pattern is due to the change in the landscape beyond the existing designation, and can be seen as the unavoidable outcome of building in this location.

9.6 Although the buildings in this extension area are more recent, and often of lesser architectural merit than those along The Esplanade, they do contribute to the character and feel of the area. They contribute to views of the town from Potters Hill and as such unsympathetic development here could dramatically impact upon the existing designation. By extending the designation to include these buildings it is the intention to avoid detrimental change and encourage high quality redevelopment where it is proposed in the future.

9.7 The extension includes buildings up to and including Foamlea along Chapel Hill, which has retained traditional features including timber sash windows and is set in well maintained grounds which add to the character of the surrounding area.

9.8 This character is very similar to some areas of the rest of the conservation area, especially the area behind The Esplanade which is identified as a separate character zone described on page 30.

A map showing the alterations to the boundary of the conservation area, as adopted in March 2009 can be found as appendix 3(v)

10 Character Zones

10.1 The special architectural or historic character and appearance of the conservation area is such that it can be split into 4 distinct character zones.

These Character Zones and their boundaries are illustrated in Appendix 3(vi)

1. The Esplanade & The Beach

10.2 The key characteristic of the Esplanade is the predominance of Victorian and Edwardian buildings along its length, along with a large quantity of high quality street furniture including benches and street lamps. The Esplanade is also characterised by the one sided nature of the development along its length, with undeveloped green spaces, cliffs, the beach and various bays and coves to the west of the street.

10.3 The open spaces along the shoreline, and between the existing buildings, are vital parts of the character of this zone, as is the very architecturally mixed nature of the developments along its length – ranging from the castellated Castle Hotel to the almost Italian styling of some of the polychrome villas.

10.4 The designation of what amounts to a whole lane's width of the Esplanade for vehicular parking has essentially transformed the Esplanade from a splendid, wide and dominating road into a regular width two lane street throughout the summer months, the road only returning to its grander width in the winter when demand for parking space falls again. This has at least been a worthwhile sacrifice in that by providing ample on street parking the temptation for hotels to level their own plots for provision of parking has been removed. Such action would undoubtedly harm the character of the Esplanade in a permanent fashion, while the effect of on-street parking can be seen as a seasonal issue.

10.5 The dunes behind the beach are managed by the National Trust both as a geographical feature and as an important biodiversity habitat. As such their conservation is not at issue, the National Trust having its own extensive guidelines for the management of coastal sites and wildlife habitats.

10.6 This zone also contains a large area of car parking to the north of the beach at the southern end of The Esplanade, the area fulfils a functional need but adds nothing to the character of the area.

2. East of West Road

10.7 The region to the east of West Road has a higher density of development than the rest of the conservation area, holding the only terraced streets found within the area. Building use within this zone is a mixture of residential, commercial and tourism related functions. Three storied terraces of shops front West Road while to the south the Woolacombe Bay Hotel is also included in this area.

10.8 The Woolacombe Bay Hotel is the largest within the conservation area and has more associated land than any other building in Woolacombe. Part of this has been given over to the provision of leisure facilities for guests such as swimming pool and tennis courts. The buildings related to the swimming pool and tennis courts are all small single storey buildings thus having a minimal impact upon views of the Hotel and the views of the town and beach from the hotel, as well as retaining the building within its open setting.

10.9 The Shop buildings fronting West Road are all of three storeys, while the terraced rows behind are two storey residential buildings of the early 1900's, together with old stables and other buildings to the south of the fire station possibly associated with Barton Farm. The terraced shops also have balconies, or verandas, above the street level, with good quality timber railings.

3. Bay View, Sunnyside & Rockfield Roads

10.10 The streets behind The Esplanade are laid out in a similar fashion to The Esplanade itself – with detached or semi-detached buildings located in the centres of large plots and set back from the roads. However these buildings are, mostly, more recent than the Victorian and Edwardian buildings which can be found along the Esplanade. These streets are also developed on both sides and have only limited views of the beach where line of sight is afforded between buildings on The Esplanade. These views are an important part of this area's character and should be protected from infill building along the Esplanade.

10.11 Narrow paths run between some buildings allowing pedestrian access through the lines of development, for example between Sunnyside Road and Bay View Road.

10.12 To the east side of this character zone can be found the recent 'Sandy Lane Court' development. The sharp stepping, and repetitive pattern of its construction makes the building stand out as what is essentially a terrace within a zone of detached villa style buildings. The development is clearly an example of the type of infill development that detracts from the character of the conservation area, having been built on part of the rear plot of 'Sandleigh' which fronts Bay View Road. The building is of bare red brick, devoid of rendered sections, and without any hint of polychromy in its construction. The result is a very bland and uninteresting building when compared to its neighbours.

4. Northern Area (Sharp Rock, Lower & Upper Clay Park, Chapel Hill including The Watersmeet Hotel)

10.13 This area has much in common with Character Zone 3, being of similar style to the Esplanade, with large detached villa buildings which sit in, and interact with, their large building plots. Again, much like character zone 3, the buildings are more modern and lack the exceptional quality of architecture found along The Esplanade. However features tie this extension zone to The Esplanade, the similar building and plot sizes, the continued use of Morte Slate as a boundary feature and inter-linking key views between this elevated area and the northern regions of The Esplanade from where these buildings are particularly prominent.

11 Development Pressures

11.1 Woolacombe, like many other Victorian seaside resorts has faced the problem of falling numbers of holidaymakers since the advent of the package holiday and mass air travel. One result of this is a spiral of decline as a result of lack of funds for refurbishment to hotels and guesthouses and a trend towards self-catering holidays as indicated by the large caravan parks to the east of the town.

11.2 A solution rolled out in the past has been for hotels to be partitioned into apartments and sold off, more often than not as second homes for seasonal visitors. The result is less choice of holiday accommodation for tourists leading to further decline in numbers. The conversion of hotels into residential accommodation is a contentious issue, owners clearly needing funding for refurbishment to their property that is difficult to find by any other means.

11.3 Woolacombe is fortunate in that it still has attractions which can bring in large numbers of tourists throughout the summer season. With the beach regularly winning awards and making lists of best beaches in the UK, or even the world! Woolacombe remains an attractive proposition to general holidaymakers and surfers alike. Clearly these are the groups which Woolacombe should focus on attracting, and part of that is ensuring that sufficient accommodation is available for the numbers of tourists.

11.4 The relatively large amount of land associated with individual properties within the conservation area, especially along The Esplanade presents another potential threat to the character of the area. The development of 'gap sites' by building new properties, on land formerly belonging to neighbouring properties can distort the sense of scale and setting, both for individual properties and, eventually, for entire streets. The extension outward of existing properties also has the effect of filling up plots and reducing the spacing between properties as well as altering the scale of buildings. Such 'in-fill' development must be controlled if the character of the detached houses and widely spaced streets of the conservation area is to be retained, particularly in terms of key views between buildings.

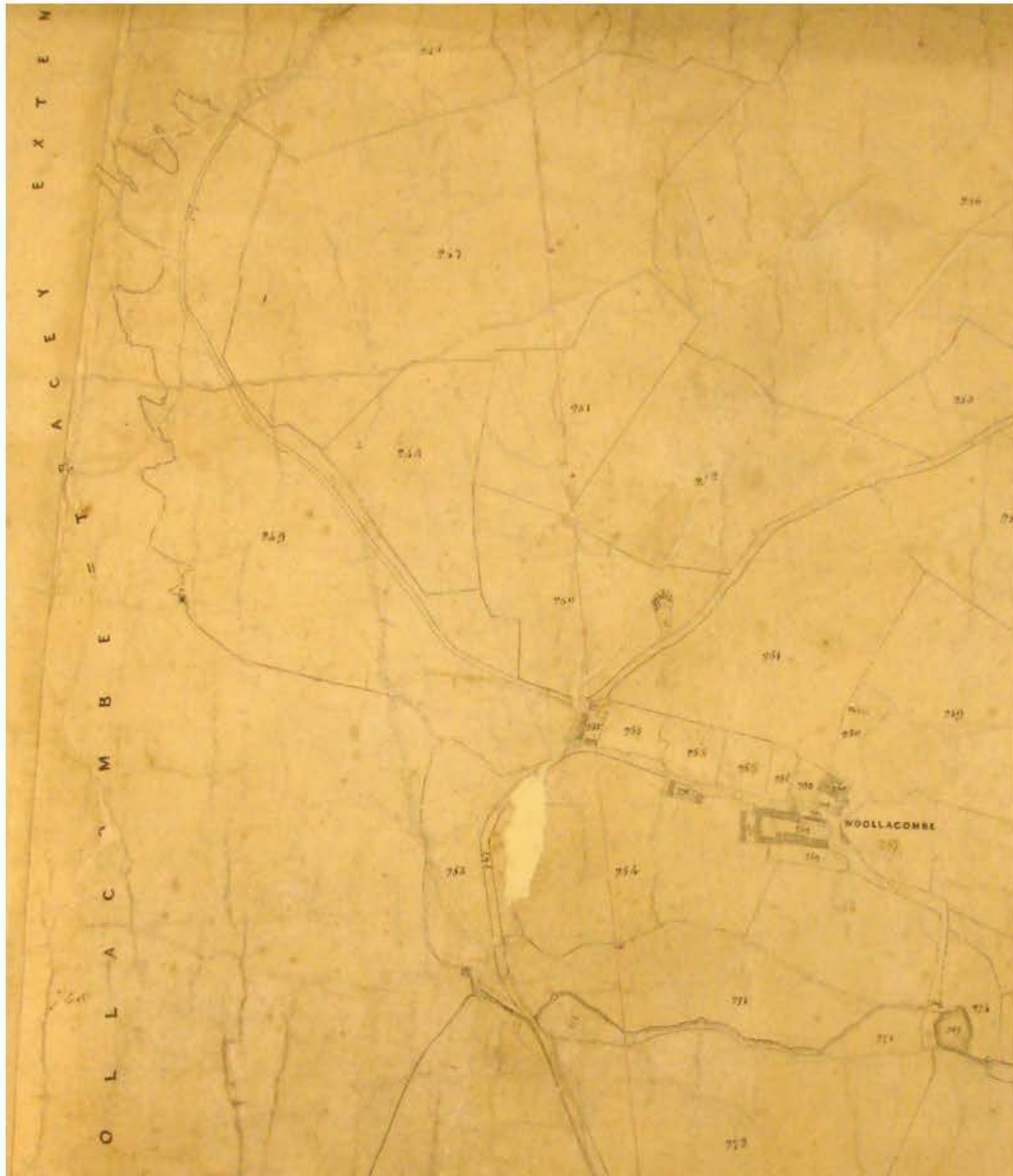
11.5 Woolacombe's development post 20th Century is in question, there is very little room for the town to expand given various geographical restrictions, as well as the fact that much of the surrounding land is owned by the National Trust and as such unavailable for building. To the south the landscape becomes hilly, and is in National Trust ownership, the situation being similar to the north. To the north east the ground is slightly more gently sloping, but is again in National Trust ownership. As a result of this the majority of new development is likely to be located within the existing boundaries of Woolacombe.

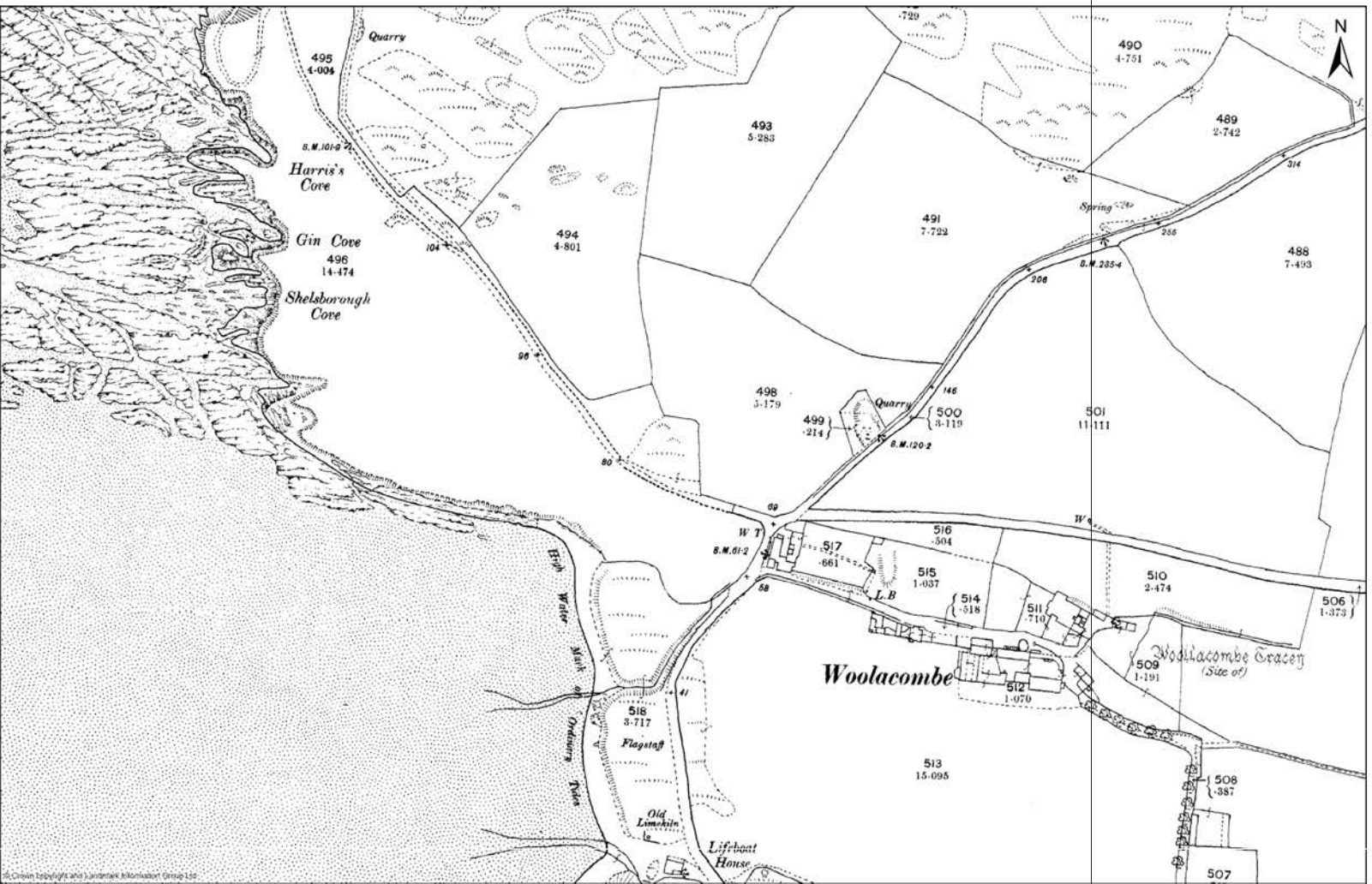
1 Appendix 1 - Historic Mapping

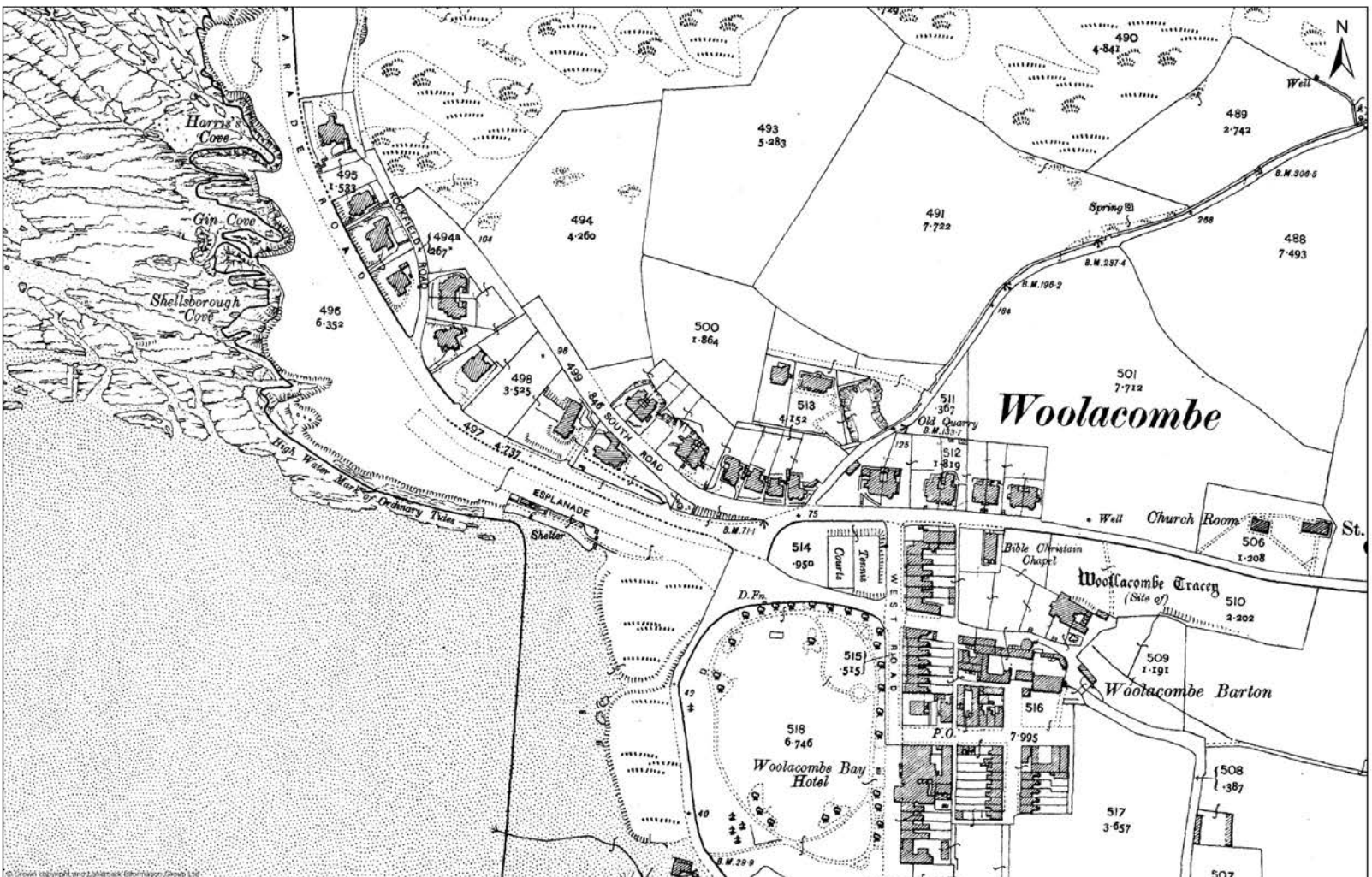
I - Tithe Map (c.1840's)

II - 1st Series Ordnance Survey Map (c.1880)

III - Ordnance Survey Map (c.1904-06)







2 Appendix 2 - Glossary

Applied Polychromy : A building where materials of regular appearance in terms of colour have been utilised, either as a result of availability or economy, and then different colours have been applied by way of paints, dyes or washes is said to have 'Applied Polychromy'

Ashlar : Finished and dressed stone laid in courses with fine and regular mortar joints.

Castelated : A building, the appearance of which has been designed to resemble a medieval castle or fortified manor can be said to be 'Castelated'.

Dynamic Space : A dynamic space could be a street or alleyway, they are routes which people take in order to reach destinations, but are not destinations in their own rights and people rarely feel comfortable stopping and lingering in them.

Facade : The principal elevation of a building, often being its grandest and most lavishly decorated. Sometimes a facade can be remodelled to give the impression of a more modern, or grander, building than that which relay lies behind it.

Gothic : An Architectural style associated with the mediaeval period, incorporating windows with pointed heads and in some cases decorated tracery.

Revival Architecture : The Victorian era saw architects seeking inspiration from past architectural styles and developing techniques by which to replicate their grandeur to varying degrees of success, Classical, Gothic, and Egyptian architecture enjoyed revivals during this period.

Roofscape : The levels, pitches and variety of coverings and decorative elements, such as chimney stacks and barge-boards, which combine to create a view across a 'landscape' of building roofs.

Static Space : Within an urban environment there exist static and dynamic spaces. A static space could be a plaza or courtyard, or even a churchyard which could be viewed as a destination where people could arrive at and feel comfortable lingering in.

Street Clutter : Street Furniture which has a negative impact on the street scene, either through the generic nature of its appearance, its inappropriate positioning, the excessive use of similar items (such as excessive numbers of road signs) or its poor condition or initial design quality.

Street Furniture : Any object within the streetscape that is not a building, for example street-lamps, signs, benches, litter bins. The term is usually used in the manner that it excludes features which could be better described as 'Street Clutter'.

Streetscape : The layout, pattern of development, scale of buildings, degree of enclosure, views and a series of other features and factors which combine to create a street of unique interest and character.

Structural Polychromy : A building where materials of differing colours or shades have been utilised so as to produce patterns, or to highlight features such as arches above doors and windows, has 'Structural Polychromy'

Surface Treatment : The material and/or finish used to form the surface of a road, pavement, footpath, driveways or any other ground surface.

Vousoir : A shaped stone or brick, usually wedge shaped, which forms a part of an arch or vault.

3 Appendix 3 - Mapping

Key

- i - Conservation Area Boundary & Listed Buildings
- ii - Key Views & Green Space
- iii - Building Heights
- iv - Street Furniture & Slate Walls
- v - Proposed Extension to the Conservation Area
- vi - Character Zones

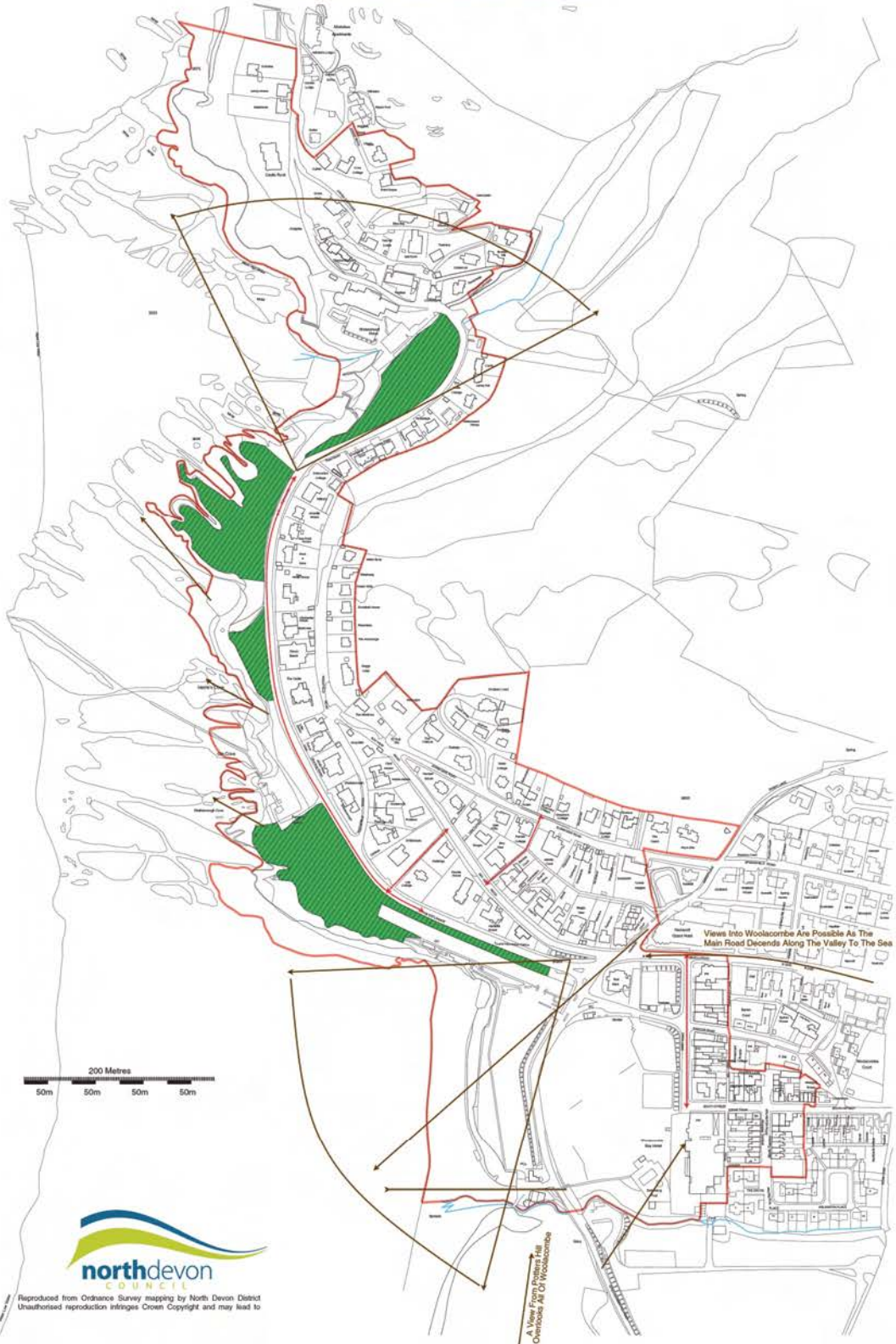
Key To Mapping

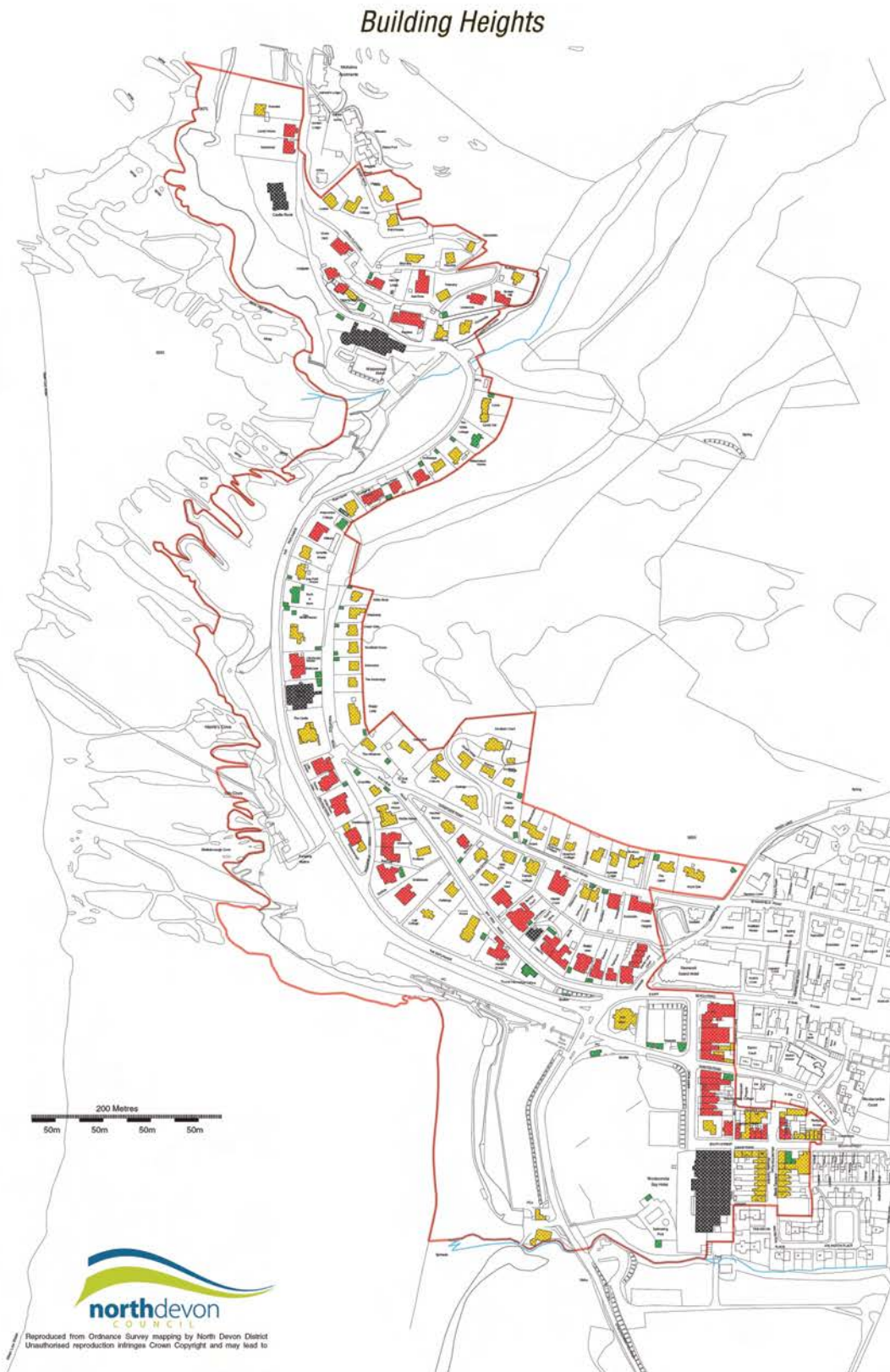
	Grade I Listed Building		Road & Building Plot Outline
	Grade II* Listed Building		Building Outline
	Grade II Listed Building		Existing Conservation Area Boundary
	Single Storey Building		Wall With Slate Hanging
	2 Storey Building		External Views
	3 Storey Building		Internal Views
	4+ Storey Building		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 With uPVC Windows		Prominent Bay Window
	Building With Timber Windows		Negative / Positive Public Seating
	Building With A Mix Of Windows		Positive / Negative Bollard
	Building With Rendered Walls		Decorated Barge Boards
	Building With Bare or Limewashed / Painted Walls		Negative / Positive Street Lighting
	Building With Slate Window Sills		Memorial - ie. War Memorial
	Public Green Space		Scheduled Ancient Monument
	Building In Poor Condition		Mosaic Feature
	Area For Potential Redevelopment		Important Tree / Tree With Tree Preservation Order
	Character Zone 1		Miscellaneous Feature (Labled)
	Character Zone 2		Miscellaneous Linear Feature (Labled)
	Character Zone 3		Railings As A Positive Streetscape Feature
	Character Zone 4		Railings As A Negative Streetscape Feature
	Character Zone 5		River / Aquatic Feature
			Focal Streetscape Feature
			Negative / Positive Signage Feature

Woolacombe Conservation Area & Listed Buildings

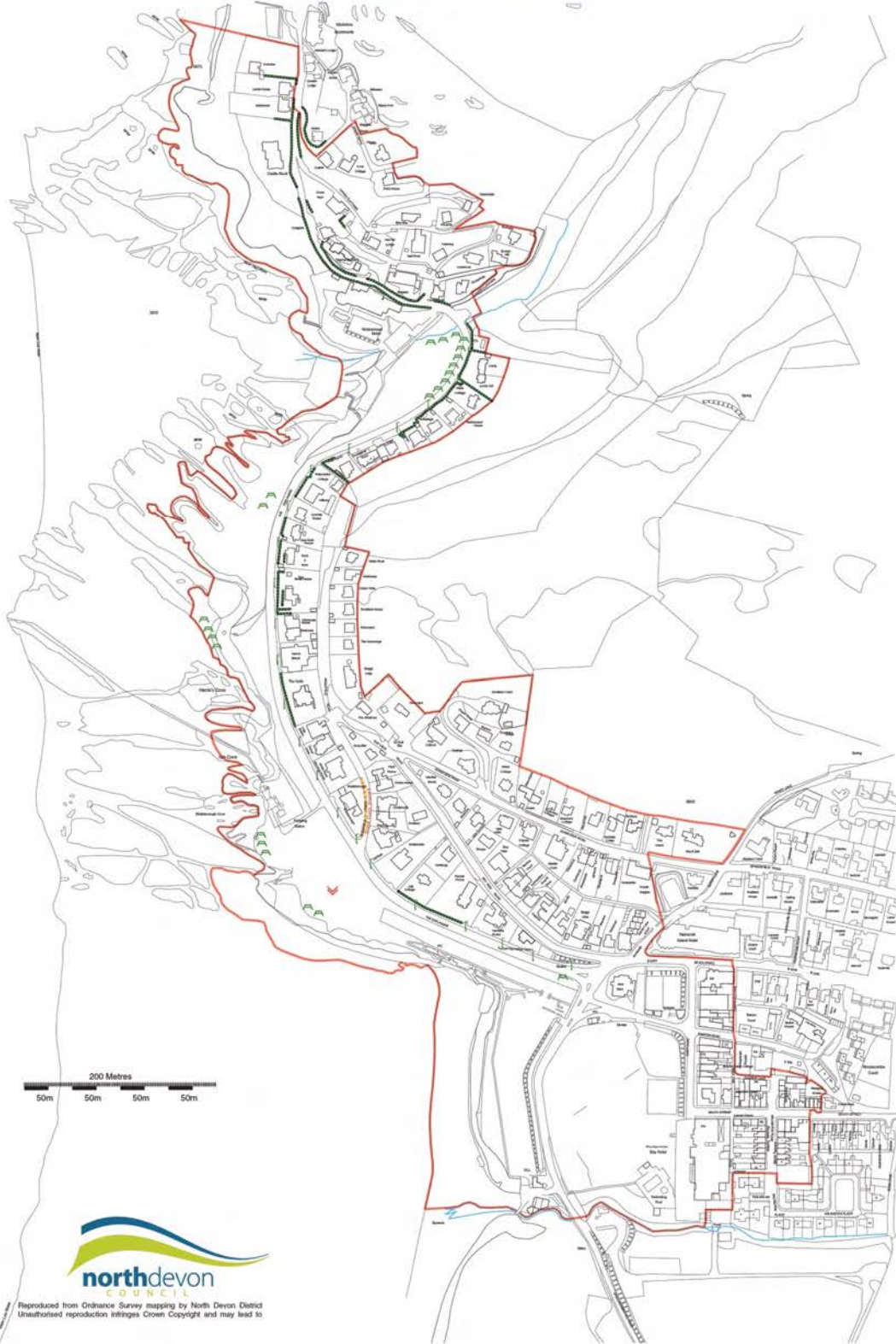


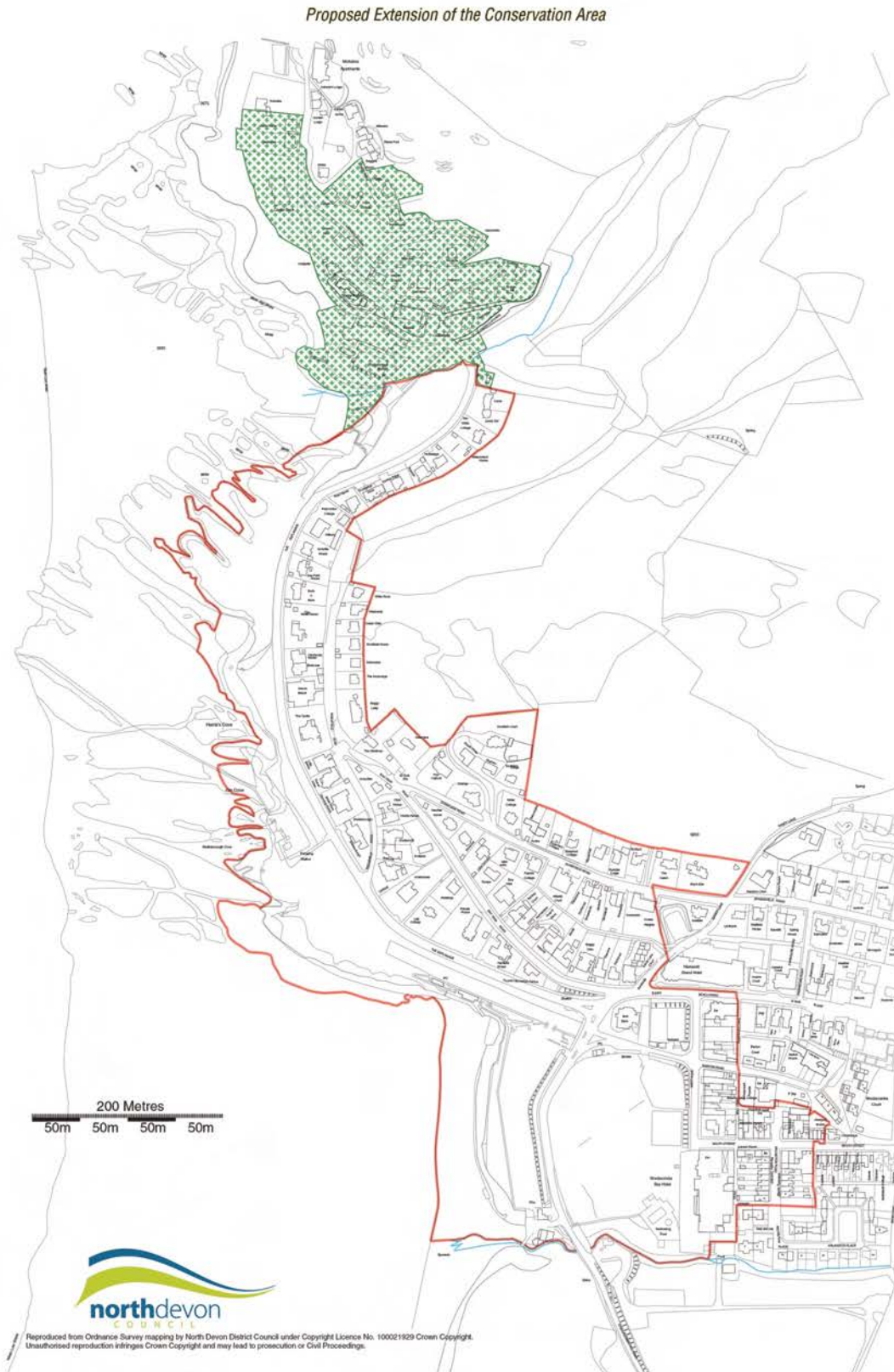
Key Views & Green Space





Key Streetscape Features & Slate Walls





Conservation Area Character Zones

