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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 Knowstone 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 Knowstone Conservation Area was first adopted by North Devon District Council on 1st November 1975, and this boundary was then subject to its first formal review in November of 2012.

2.2 The conservation area covers an area of 2.6 hectares (6.2 acres), enlarged from 1.9 hectares (4.6 acres) prior to 2013, and contains 14 listed buildings, 13 grade II listed and 1 (the parish church of St. Peter) grade II* listed.

For details of the 1975 boundary and the changes made to it during the 2012-13 boundary review 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, however there are several in the immediate vicinity including an Iron Age fortified camp in East Kidland Woods (1.5km West of Knowstone), a grouping of 4 bowl barrows near New Moor Cross (1.8km Northeast of Knowstone) and a saucer barrow near Knowstone Moor Cross (1.4km South-Southeast of Knowstone).

A list of Listed Buildings within the Knowstone 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 History & Development

3.1 The first written reference to the settlement of Knowstone is contained within Domesday Book (1086) in which the village is referred to as '*Chenutdestana*'. The spelling of the village name has changed considerably over time, being 'Cnouston' in 1220 before its first recording as Knowstone in 1489.

3.2 The fact that the village is recorded in Domesday Book indicates that there was already an established settlement here at that time and as such the settlement must, at the latest, have a Saxon origin. Nothing of the built fabric of the settlement today survives from that period. Given that Knowstone is the chief settlement of its parish it is likely that there was a modest church, or at least a chapel, in the village during the Saxon period. This building was likely constructed of timber and would probably have been on the site of the existing, medieval, church. No archaeological remains have been recovered which date from the Saxon period, but this is probably more a reflection of a lack of archaeological investigation, rather than an absence of historic material.

3.3 Up until the recent past the settlement had an agricultural basis, and indeed farming is still carried on from surrounding farms today. Grain produced here was loaded onto ships in Plymouth for export to young American Colonies amongst other things. It is most likely that the foundation of a settlement on this site was a result of access to well drained agricultural land and grazing land at the edge of Exmoor. Rivers flow nearby to the East and West of the village and several springs and wells exist within the village. With good access to agricultural land and fresh water the site would represent a good location to settle. Nearby high ground, particularly that to the Northwest protected by rivers on 3 sides, would provide safe havens in times of conflict. Also the scattering of prehistoric sites in the local area suggests that people have been living within the area for significant periods of time.

The rededicated tower of the Parish Church of St. Peter.



3.4 The oldest structure in the village today is the parish church, which has some sections of masonry dating back to the Norman period, including a good quality doorway. Much of the church has been rebuilt and added to over time including significant extension and alteration in the 13th Century (from which period most of the existing church dates), again in the 15th Century, and further internal rearrangement works in the 18th Century from which period most of the internal furnishing dates.

3.5 Of the other buildings standing today The Mason's Arms is perhaps the oldest, dating to the 16th Century. Contrary to popular belief the name 'Mason's Arms' is nothing to do with the pub having been built by masons working on the church. Indeed the building was a Church House when it was built in the 16th Century, not the 10th or 13th Centuries like the church itself.

3.6 Church Houses were originally built as separate structures from which to operate non-liturgical functions of the church, such as raising funds, collecting taxes, holding civil meetings and the distribution of alms to the poor so that the church itself could be entirely dedicated to religious service. The idea was particularly popular in Devon where almost every parish had

a 'church house', whilst church houses elsewhere in England appear in only a very small proportion of parishes. Many Devon church houses later became schools (such as the examples at Westleigh and Swimbridge).

3.7 Knowstone was the birthplace of Sir John Berry (1635 - 90), a Royal Navy officer who was involved in the convoys supplying goods to the new settlers in Newfoundland. He also disagreed with the British Committee for Trade and Plantations which believed that the small number of surviving settlers after the first year of the establishment of the colony should be brought home, his views eventually being accepted. Berry later became governor of the province of New Jersey from 1672-1673. John Berry was born at the old vicarage, his father (Daniel Berry) having been the vicar of Knowstone-cum-Molland.

3.8 The majority of the buildings in the village today date from the late 17th Century. Only the old vicarage (now Knowstone Court) dates to the 18th Century, almost totally rebuilt after a significant fire, the 19th Century is not represented within the built environment in any notable way. The Old Chapel, formerly a Methodist Chapel now converted to residential use was constructed in the late 1920's and a small number of modern homes have appeared during the 20th Century, including Rose Meadow and Indilake Cottage, with Town Close and East Hill just outside of the conservation area to the West.

4 Views and Vistas

4.1 Knowstone is situated along a tributary of the River Mole, some 8 miles of the East-Southeast of South Molton, 11 miles Northwest of Tiverton and just 3 miles from the Somerset border within the upper section of the river valley, surrounded by Culm grassland and moor.

4.2 The village occupies a spur of high ground running Northwest - Southeast between two tributaries of the River Mole, but with slightly higher ground to the immediate Northwest and Southeast. As such views into the village are restricted from the surrounding landscape, either by the topography (North and South), or by trees (East and West).

4.3

View towards the North from beside the Masons Arms.



From within the conservation area the easiest views into the surrounding landscape are those to the North and, to a lesser extent, South. Views North from alongside the Mason's Arms take in a landscape of undulating hills with sporadic groups of trees appearing from hedge lines and disappearing into some of the valleys between the hills. Similarly landscapes can be seen out to the East from the far Eastern end of the conservation area, but only through breaks in hedges, such as at the gateways to fields.

4.4 Views to the West are less easily accessible and show a landscape more heavily dominated by trees, particularly along the course of the river running towards South Molton. It is apparent how few buildings and infrastructure feature in any of these views.

4.5 Within the village the most prominent feature in any view is the abundance of thatched properties, particularly along the North side of the main road where only 1 of the 11 properties is not thatched (Indilake). These properties make a significant

contribution to the character and appearance of the settlement, particularly from approaches into the village from the Southeast and in views along the length of the main street. The roofscape can also be appreciated from elevated areas such as the churchyard and the church / parish hall carpark.

5 Architectural Character

5.1 Local Devon vernacular architecture dominates the character of Knowstone, with its cob and stone thatched cottages being the single most striking feature within the streetscape of the village. Along the North side of the main road through the linear village this type of building is predominant.

The Mason's Arms stands opposite the parish church.



5.2 The Mason's Arms is perhaps typical of the style of vernacular architecture found along the North side of the main street. The building is thatched in the regional long straw thatch and has timber casement windows - 2 light casements on the upper floor (6 panes per light) and larger 3 light casements on the ground floor (6 panes per light). This hierarchy of window sizes between floors is found on many older properties around the district. The East end of the building appears to

be a later addition and there is a clear ridge of masonry on the frontage indicating where the two phases of work meet. Perhaps the only unusual feature is its set back position, allowing for a private frontage which the other properties on this side of the road do not enjoy. The curved corners at the West side are indicative of cob construction, probably on a low stone plinth wall.

5.3 The projecting barn / store at the East end is clearly built of stone with a thick layer of limewash built up over the centuries through which individual stones can still be seen.

5.4 The stone used is probably sourced locally, the bedrock being just below the surface in Knowstone, indeed in places (such as the farmyard at East Hole Farm) the bedrock can be seen exposed on the surface.

5.5 Of the group of 6 cottages to the West of the Manon's Arms, Enfield Cottage (at the West end of the terrace) has had its upper floor windows enlarged, now forming eyebrow windows, projecting up beyond the line of the eaves and sheltered under sculpted projections of the thatch. The ground floor here retains 3 light casements similar to those on the pub whilst the other 5 properties in the row have 2 light casements on both floors, although usually significantly smaller examples on the upper floors. The windows on 'Little Owl' (2 doors in from East end) have been replaced with modern timber top hung casement windows. From the stone sills it would appear that the

dimensions of the old openings have not been modified, however the stark contrast of the modern replacement windows with their traditional neighbours does have a negative impact on the overall appearance of the row.

5.6 Doors on this row all appear to be modern replacements, although there is a pattern of vertical planking which may well indicate that replacements have been selected or designed to reflect the original joinery style. The only property not to have a vertical planked door is April Cottage which has a Georgian style 15 pane fully glazed door. Gossip Cottage best reveals the construction materials of the row, with individual stones of the plinth wall visible at the base of the walls and to a point approximately 0.5 metre up the walls, while the upper sections are smooth rendered and most likely of cob construction. The chimneys of the row are all of red brick, at least in their upper sections visible above the roofline, whilst the internal stacks are most probably of stone.

Gossip Cottage illustrates the method of construction of the row.



Rose Cottage with its single storey extension.



5.7 The group of cottages to the West of these, Westview, Town Cottage, The Old Post Office and Rose Cottage are again very similar in style. Rose Cottage has a single storey lean-to extension on its East gable wall with a slate roof. This style of addition or extension is reasonably common on thatched cottages within Devon and does not appear out of place here. The render on Rose Cottage again hints at a stone plinth wall supporting cob upper walls, however the manner in which the render is finished is somewhat uncomplimentary. The render is clearly a hard cement render which is technically incompatible with traditional construction methods, and particularly with materials such as cob. The lower section has been deliberately 'rough finished' with semi-circular float gouges adding 'texture'

in an attempt to replicate the look of other buildings where stonework remains visible below a thick layer of limewash or thin render coat. The result is unconvincing and crude.

5.8 Like Enfield Cottage, Rose Cottage also has enlarged eyebrow windows on its upper floor. Town Cottage shows stone construction right up to the eaves line, while Westview Cottage at the West end of the row shows the more typical pattern where evidence of stone construction ends at the heads of the ground floor windows, with the higher work probably being of cob. Windows on Town Cottage are again 2 light casements, but 4 pane per light; similar windows appear on Rose Cottage but as 2 panes per light, while the Old Post Office has false 'diamond' leading on a single glass pane for each casement light. Old Post Office also has the hierarchical window form of 3 light casements on the ground floor and 2 light casements upstairs.

5.9 Manor Cottage and The Hunting follow this typical pattern. The building was originally a single dwelling, although long since divided in two, and would once have had a thatched roof much like its near contemporary neighbours opposite. Being set within a plot at the road junction this is one of the few properties within the village which has several visible elevations. Being set back from the roadside it is also one of the few properties with porches, including a projecting thatched hood porch on the Eastern elevation.

The Old School House is now converted to residential use.



5.10 Within the Eastern half of the conservation area there are only 2 un-rendered properties. Both are near the parish church being The Old School House and Knowstone Court (the former vicarage). The Old School House runs at right angles to the main street towards the church. The property features cruciform mullion and transom casement windows with minor gothic stylistic pretensions such as its pointed arched entrances. The walls are of well dressed stone laid as random rubble and the roof finished in large dimension natural

slates. Additional features such as a small timber bell cupola on the North end of the ridge add further interest to the roofline.

5.11 The Old School House does form part of the setting of the parish church, which unusually has its tower and North wall of the nave rendered. Although we are much more used to seeing churches in bare stone, historically the rendering of churches was not unusual in Britain.

5.12 To the East of the church is Knowstone Court, formerly the vicarage for the parish. From the main street the house is largely hidden, although the roof is visible, as the tree lined driveway to the house stands between the house and the road. Views of Knowstone Court are similarly restricted from within the churchyard. The house features tall thin casement windows which give it vertical emphasis together with cruciform mullion and transom windows similar to those on the Old School. Red brick dressings and quoins add detail to the exposed stone walls and the natural slate roof utilises two different colours of slate (blue/grey and green) to produce a decorative banding effect.

5.13 Other than these structures there are also several old agricultural outbuildings within the conservation area. The stone walled and thatched 'barn / store' building attached to The Mason's Arms is one example mentioned earlier. Others can be found to the North of the parish hall alongside the main road where the small barn has exposed cob and a modern agricultural corrugated sheet metal roof, and at the entrance lane to Indilake Farm where there is another small stone and cob barn with a sheet metal roof, hidden behind several lightweight lean-to additions.

5.14 One final agricultural building stands alongside the main street North of Manor Cottage. This is the largest example within the existing conservation area and is again of cob above a stone plinth wall. The building also has a weeping well half buried within its plinth wall and accessible through a cavity left in the footings of the wall. Such wells can also be seen in and around East Hole Farm. Clearly springs and water sources are abundant within the surrounding landscape.

Street Furniture

5.15 Knowstone, on first inspection, has very little in the way of street furniture besides two modest 'finger-post' road signs at either end of the village.

5.16 Looking closer there are two old public water pumps still surviving within the public realm. The first is at the East wall of a roadside barn just North of the parish hall, while the second is almost hidden in vegetation on the roadside bank opposite Rose Cottage. These pumps are rare survivals from a time before mains water was piped directly to individual properties and as such serve as a public reminder of once commonplace infrastructure.

One of the two water pumps which survive in the village.



The location of the two water pumps is given on a map in Appendix 3 (IV)

6 Boundary Changes Adopted May 2013

East Hole Farmhouse is grade II listed and retains many historic features.



6.1 The original conservation area boundary had not been reviewed or revised since 1975. In the 37 years that had passed there were 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.

6.2 As a result the boundary was re-evaluated during 2012 and the following buildings were brought within the conservation area through a number of extensions of the boundary.

6.3 To the West of the existing conservation area is a complex of

buildings clustered around East Hole Farmhouse.

6.4 The Grade II listed East Hole Farmhouse is situated back from Hittsford Lane to the North West of Rosemary Cottage. The building is thatched and of similar scale to the properties within the conservation area, featuring tall 8 pane per light 3 light casement windows. The building is rendered, but has a lower stone plinth wall left exposed in places (such as the Eastern gable end) and may be of cob construction higher up the walls.

Despite appearance Valley Rise is a modern dwelling.



6.5 To the North of East Hole is Valley Rise, a new build in the style of a barn conversion begun in 2000. The building is thatched and features axial stack chimneys. The building is a remarkably good and rather convincing effort at producing a replica mid 17th Century house.

Although modernised Rosemary Cottage retains many interesting traditional features.



6.6 The whole complex also features several barns, both modern and old, including at least one modest cob barn with a 20th Century corrugated sheet metal roof.

6.7 Rosemary Cottage stands along Hittsford Lane, its Eastern gable end featuring a very large stone built chimney stack with bread oven at its base, the rendering at this end of the property also reveals its rubble stone construction. The windows also demonstrate the age of the property, being 3 light casements with leaded 8 pane lights and iron framed

central opening lights. Windows of this style probably date to the late 17th Century or very early 18th and their survival is rather unusual. The front porch is a later addition, as are the range of eyebrow dormers at the Western end of the property, the lower ridge of which suggests it may have originally been an attached barn rather than part of the house.

6.8 Next door at Pound House we have one of the few examples of 18th Century houses in the village, probably dating from the end of the 18th Century. The building has a half hipped roof and is much closer to being square in plan than its older neighbours. Windows are still casements, in groups of 2 or 3, mostly 6 panes per light, with the exception of a low and long upper floor 3 light casement where each light has 9 panes, although the overall appearance is somewhat out of proportion and the window may have originally been narrower, or possible a 4 light arrangement.

6.9 This group of buildings, on the whole, dates to a period similar to those properties within the existing conservation area and the styles of the properties here are also comparable. As such the area shares a special historic and architectural character with the core of Knowstone Village.

6.10 To the East The Old Chapel stands at the edge of the original conservation area, but just outside of its boundary. The Old Chapel is a converted former Methodist Chapel which retains some features, such as Gothick style pointed arch window openings with heavy central divisions where a first floor has been inserted.

The Old Chapel is a converted chapel at the edge of the existing conservation area.



In May 2013 the conservation area boundary was extended to include:

- East Hole Farm
- Valley Rise
- Pound House
- Rosemary Cottage
- The Old Chapel

7 Development Pressures

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 In Knowstone the majority of properties are also listed buildings and as such require consent for even minor changes as discussed above and as such the potential for cumulative harm is small.

7.4 There is also pressure within the wider area for development of large scale wind and solar farms. In the case of windfarms which can be highly visible over significant distances, there is significant potential for impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting. Any impact would need to be carefully considered against any potential wider benefits of the proposals.

8 The Future

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

8.2 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.

8.3 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 Knowstone Conservation Area

Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area

Address	Listing Grade
Manor Cottage & The Hunting	II
Moorview, The Post Office & Rose Cottage	II
Row of 6 Cottages inc. Cluny Cottage & April Cottages - Immediately West of Masons Arms	II
Masons Arms	II
Church of St. Peter	II*
East Hole Farmhouse	II

2 Historic Mapping

3 Conservation Area Mapping

I - Key

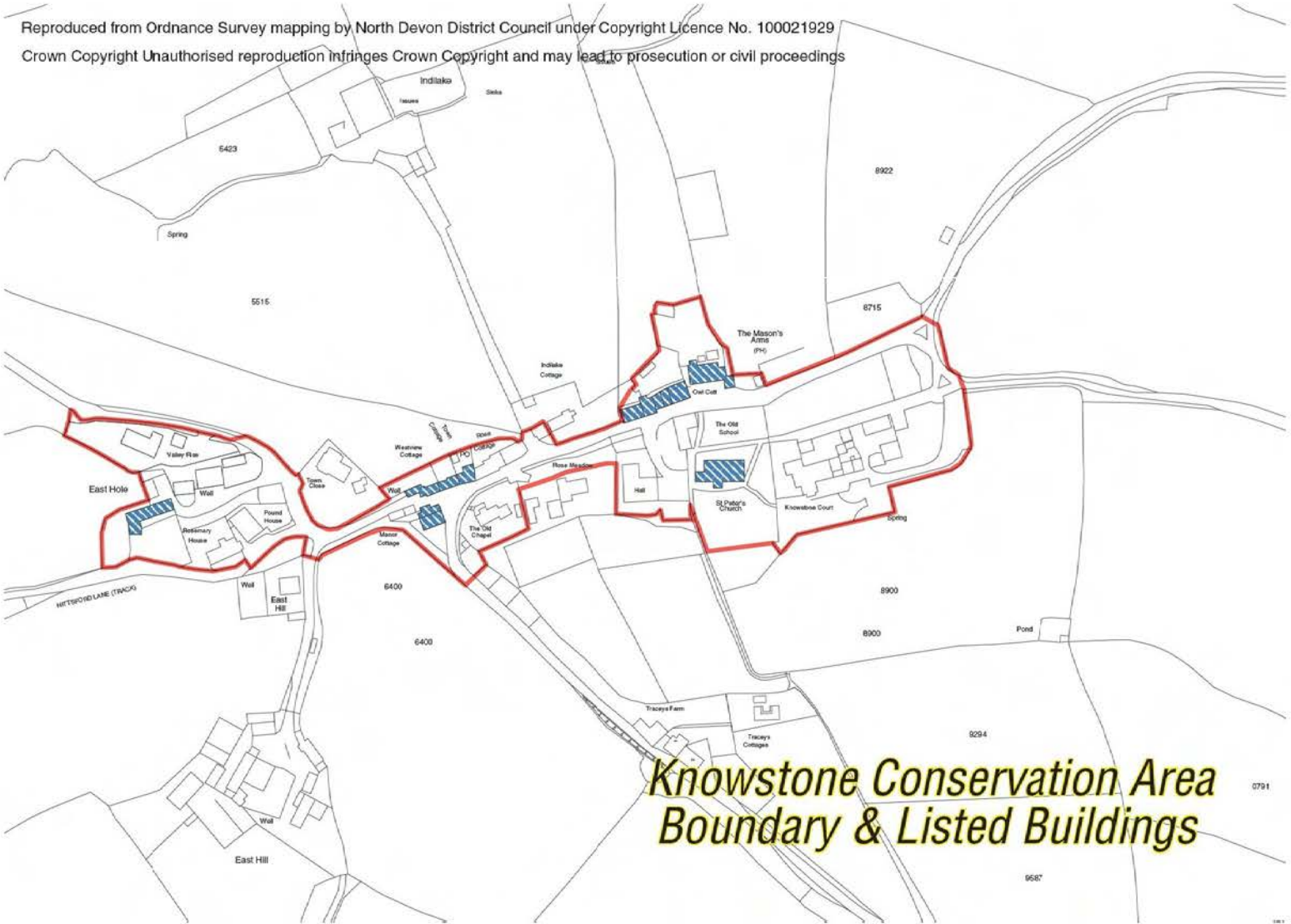
II - Existing Boundary & Listed Buildings

III - Key Views & Viewpoints

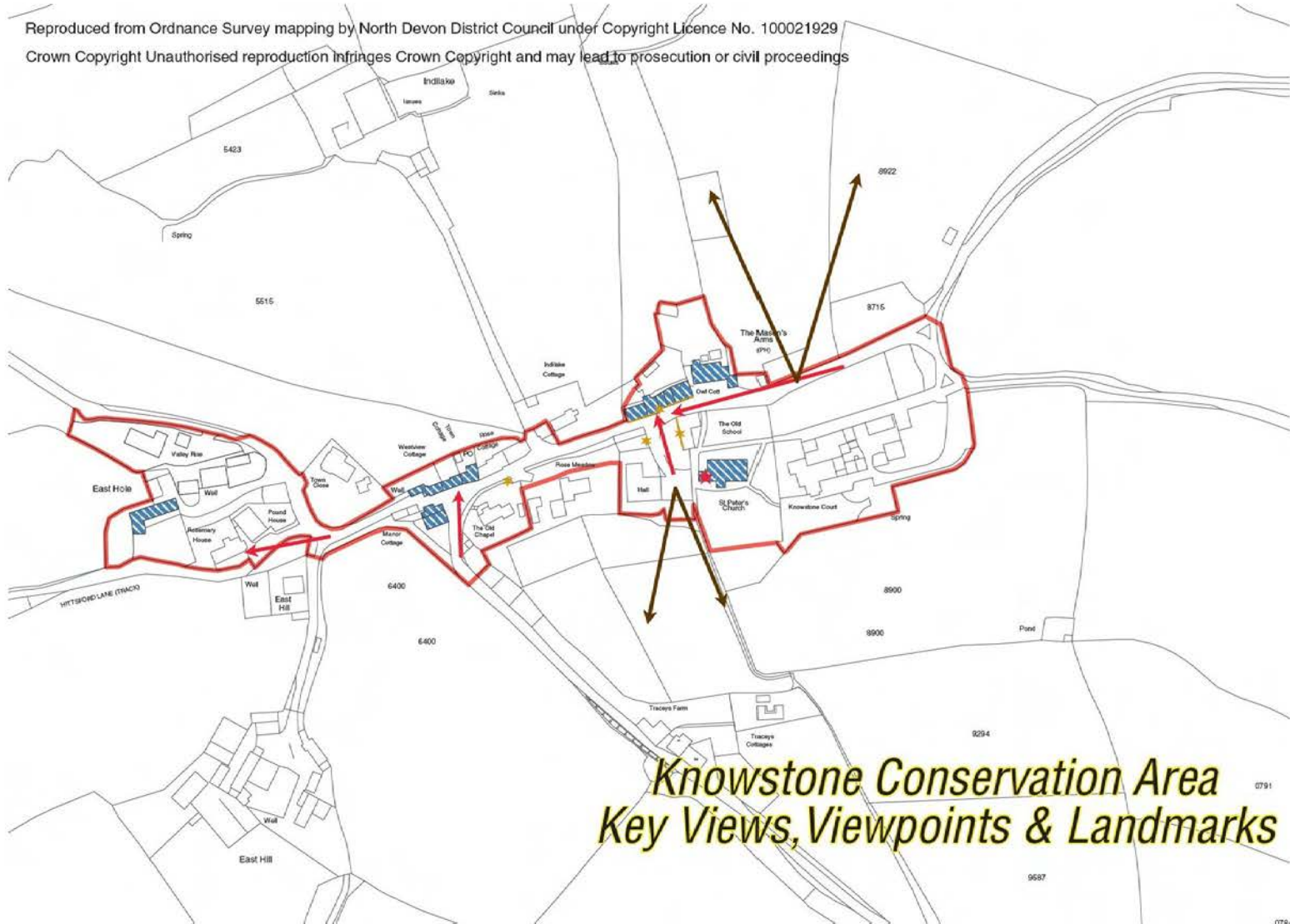
IV - Proposed Boundary Changes

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



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*Knowstone Conservation Area
Key Views, Viewpoints & Landmarks*

