

**Ottery St Mary Neighbourhood Development Plan
Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat
Regulations Assessment**

Final Screening Report

Prepared by Officers of East Devon District Council

May 2017

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to assess the policies contained within the draft Ottery St Mary & West Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan to determine whether it requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. An SEA is required under this legislation for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.2 This report will also screen to determine whether or not the Plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. An HRA is required when it is deemed that the implementation of the plan is likely to cause negative significant effects on protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites).
- 1.3 The conclusion of the assessment is that the plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment so an SEA is not required to accompany the Plan. It is also unlikely to have a negative impact on any Natura 2000 sites so should not be subject to HRA.
- 1.4 This report has been sent to the three statutory consultees designated in the Regulations (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) to elicit their views on the findings. Historic England and Natural England both provided responses, each agreeing with the view that SEA and HRA are not required. These can be found in appendix 3.

2 Ottery St Mary & West Hill Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been in production for approximately two years. It has undergone significant consultation and a first draft of the plan has recently been drawn up
- 2.2 Although all policies of the plan have been considered, the Local Authority's view is that there are a number of key policies of the plan and have been a particular consideration in the formation of this report. The policies in question that they have specifically identified land for a particular use or purpose and/or they deviate from the Local Plan in what would generally be considered policy compliant and therefore have the greatest potential for environmental impact. These are as follows:
 - Policy NP4: Settlement Containment
 - Policy NP5: Local Green Spaces
 - Policy NP12: Locally-tied Affordable Self Build Exceptions Plots
 - Policy NP29: Exception Site for housing development in Alfington

3 SEA screening

- 3.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005).
- 3.2 The objective of SEA is '*to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of development plans.... with a view to promoting sustainable development*' EU Directive 2001/42/EC (Article 1).
- 3.3 At present, there is no legal requirement for all Neighbourhood Plans to produce an accompanying SEA; however, Local Authorities are legally obliged to advise the plan producers as to whether an SEA is required based on the contents of the plan.
- 3.4 To ascertain if SEA is required, a "screening" exercise will be undertaken by East Devon District Council evaluating the plan against the criteria set out in the SEA Directive. These criteria are set out in the SEA Directive and can be found in Figure 1.
- 3.5 Should the screening report reach the conclusion that the plan will have a significant impact on the environment; a full SEA should be undertaken.
- 3.6 An SEA was conducted to accompany the adopted East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 and has been taken into account whilst undertaking this screening assessment.

Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

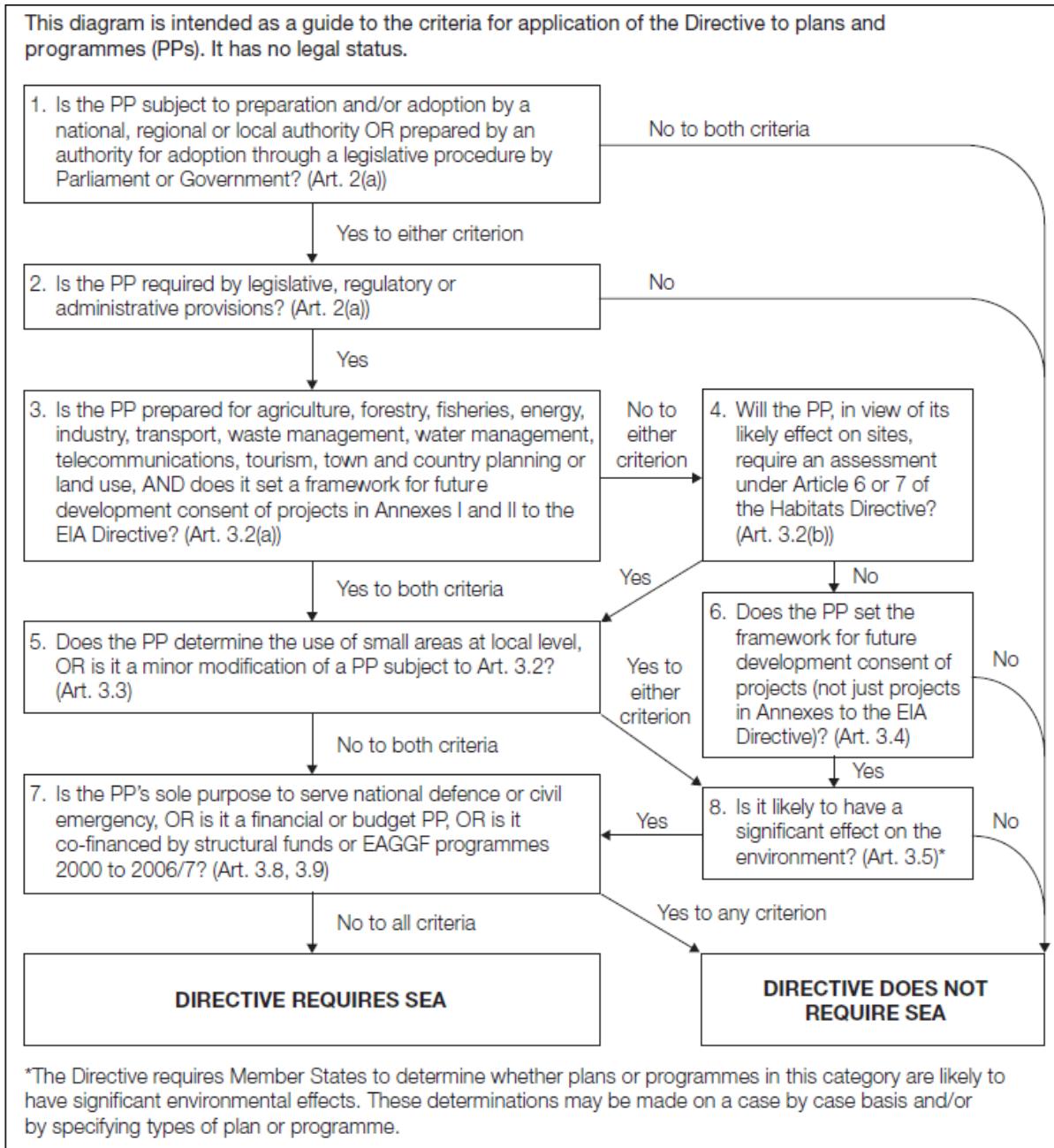
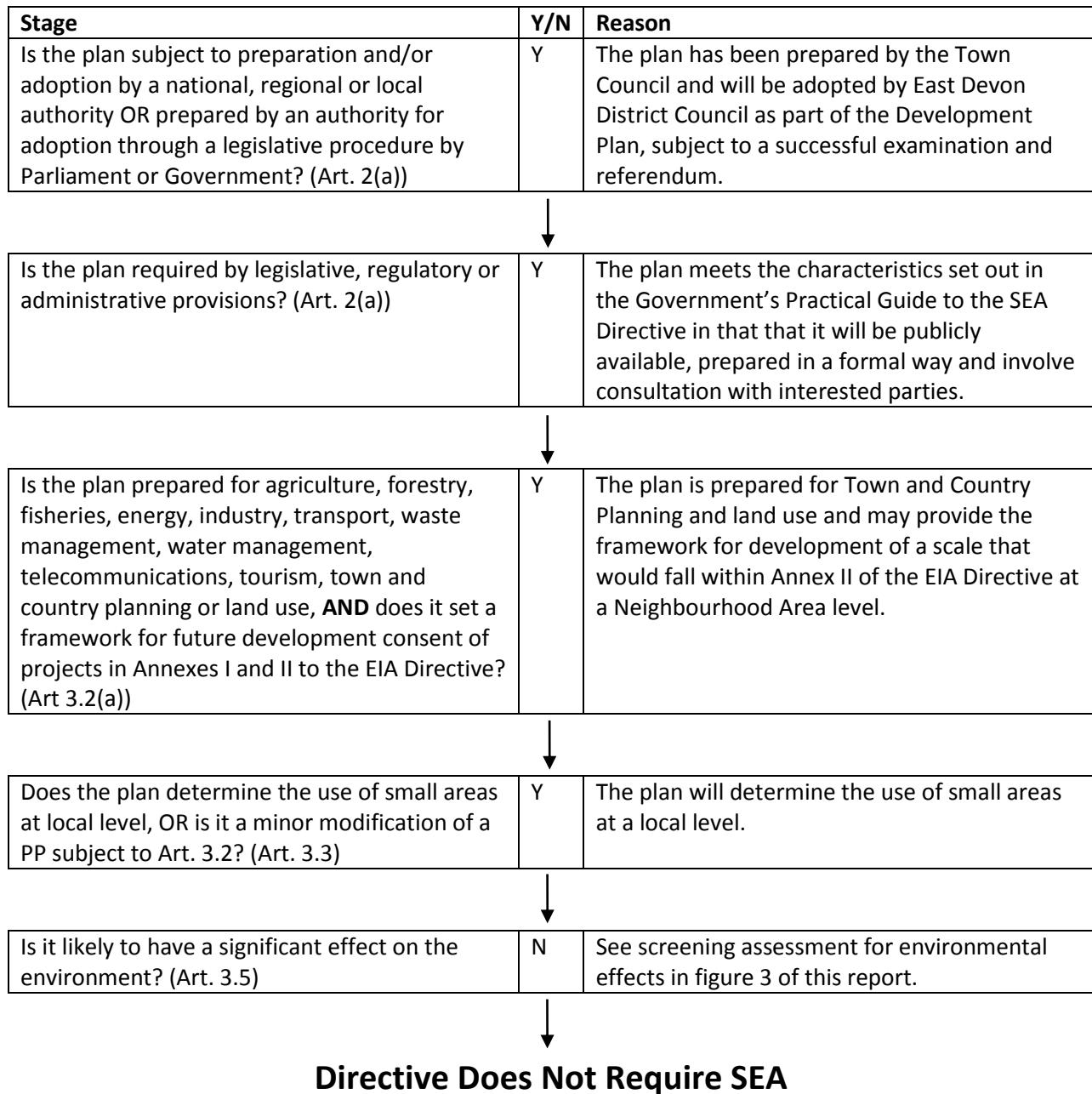


Figure 2: Screening assessment against the criteria for whether the plan requires an SEA.



4 Assessment of Environmental effects

- 4.1 Under step 8 of the Application of the SEA directive (Figure 1), in order to establish whether a plan requires an SEA, it was necessary to conduct a thorough assessment of whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
- 4.2 The table below sets out the criteria on which the impact of the plan will be judged, as outlined in Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive.

Figure 3: Environmental impact screening assessment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Schedule 1 of SEA regulations)	Is the plan likely to have a significant environmental effect?	Justification for Screening Assessment
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	N	The plan sets a framework for developments within the neighbourhood area. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan identifies land as a green wedge, the identified area comprises locations outside of the built-up area boundary designated in the Local Plan, and therefore would not normally be considered areas to be acceptable for development, so a significant impact is unlikely in this regard. The Plan also identifies various areas as local green space. It is considered that all of these either comprise existing recreational land or areas otherwise afforded some protection through Local Plan policy and therefore their identification is not expected to have a significant environmental impact. The Neighbourhood Plan also seeks to allow for self-build affordable exceptions housing in the 4 main settlements. Local Plan strategy 35 currently allows for exceptions housing coming forward outside of built-up area boundaries where there is a demonstrable Local affordable housing need. It is considered that this approach is not wholly different than the Local Plan policy in this regard as it would be allowing housing to come forward for those in local need and therefore a significant negative impact is not expected. The Plan also allocates a small site for 5 dwellings in Alfington. Although the size of the allocation is small it is situated in a location in the Local Plan that is not

		considered suitable for open market housing due to its lack of services and facilities, although affordable housing would be acceptable in principle. On this basis there is a small conflict with the local plan, although it should be noted that the site was previously allocated in the Villages Development Plan Document for 5 dwellings prior to a change in approach prompted by the Local Plan Inspector. In terms of location, the site is set back off the main road and with no dedicated pedestrian footway. The site is however fairly well related to the settlement, located centrally between the two 'halves' of Alfington. It is noted is noted that there is the opportunity to provide improved pedestrian footpath access to other parts of the village alongside the potential of increased play park provision. The proposal is a small development of 5 houses and on balance it is considered that the size and location of the allocation in Alfington in principle is unlikely to have a significant environmental effect. The remaining policies are more general encouraging or setting criteria for particular kinds of development and are not considered to have a significant environmental impact.
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	N	The plan must be in general conformity with the adopted East Devon Local Plan and have regard to national guidance. It must also be compatible with EU law and the ECHR obligations. It is not considered to have an influence on other plans other than individual planning applications that may come forward in the area.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	N	The plan will contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development, as required by the "basic conditions" on which the plan will be judged at examination. In the plan there is an emphasis on the protection of the natural environment but the impact of this is considered to be small.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or	N	The plan proposals are not considered to have a significant impact on any existing

programme.		environmental problems that are present in Ottery St Mary.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	N	These community legislation types are not relevant to the plan and will not need to be considered.
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	N	The plan will influence development that will likely come forward over the plan period and therefore any impact will be long term and not easily revisable. However, the impact of this is likely to be small.
The cumulative nature of the effects.	N	The cumulative effects of the plan are not considered to have a significant effect on the environment.
The trans-boundary nature of the effects.	N	There are not considered to be any proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan which will have a significant trans-boundary effect.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	N	There will be a minor positive impact on human health through the promotion of wellbeing and recreation spaces.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	N	The plan is concerned only with development within the parishes of Ottery St Mary, which has a joint resident population of 5185. If there are any effects they are not considered to be wide ranging.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; intensive land-use; the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	N	<p>Ottery St Mary Parish is situated in an area which is very sensitive in terms of environmental and heritage considerations.</p> <p>The entirety of the Neighbourhood Area is covered by the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an area recognised nationally for its distinctive character and beauty.</p> <p>In terms of the site allocation in Alvington, landscape appraisals of the site were conducted as part of the draft version of the Villages plan 2014. The landscape impact of the site was considered overall</p>

	<p>to be Low-Medium and concluded that ‘The enclosed nature of the site, the exception being from views from the west, and its existing on-site buildings, means that it and development on it should be less sensitive in terms of adverse impacts than other potential development locations.’. This appraisal is reproduced in appendix 1.</p> <p>The Otter Estuary and Cliffs are designated as sites of special scientific interest and the Town itself is flanked by 4 county wildlife sites- The Golf Course, Floors and Knowle to the west and Otter Meadows to the east. No significant impact is anticipated on any of these sites and the plan includes policies to protect and enhance existing sites rich in ecological value.</p> <p>With regards to heritage, the parish has a total of 40 listed features in the parish- all grade 2. 30 of these are situated within the conservation area located in the town centre. The plan includes a policy seeking to protect existing heritage assets in the parish.</p> <p>The heritage impact of the site allocation in Alfington is addressed in the accompanying heritage impact review, provided in appendix 2. The site is approximately 30m away from the nearby grade II listed Alfington Farmhouse. The review concludes that a minimal impact is likely with the potential for some improvement, due to its brownfield nature with the possibility of renovating a number of dilapidated buildings on the site that have lain derelict since 1998. Views towards the nearby listed building are largely obstructed by deep vegetation along the southern boundary. The vegetation acts as a natural barrier and officer visual assessment is that the proposed site does not make an active contribution to the setting of the listed building.</p>
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Conclusion

4.3 Taking the above assessment into consideration, The plan is unlikely to have a significant environmental impact beyond that has previously been identified through the SEA of the Local Plan. Although Ottery St Mary is located in a sensitive area in the district, the impact of the policies in the plan is not considered to be significant enough to warrant further analysis through a bespoke SEA.

6 Habitat Regulations Screening Assessment

- 6.1 The draft version of the plan has been used to undertake this screening assessment. As the conclusion is that a full Habitat Regulations Screening is not required, any significant variations or additions to Plan will be subject to a further screening. A screening report was produced as part of the production of the adopted Local Plan and has been taken into account in undertaking this screening assessment.
- 6.2 The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (The Habitats Regulations) transpose the requirements of the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC into UK law. The Habitats Directive and Regulations afford protection to plants, animals and habitats that are rare and vulnerable in a European context.
- 6.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a systematic process through which the performance of a plan or project can be assessed for its likely impact on the integrity of a European Site. European Sites, also referred to as Natura 2000 sites, consist of Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); Potential Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (pSPA and cSAC); and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.
- 6.4 Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives'.

- 6.5 A small part of the Pebblebed Heath SAC, SPA and SSSI lies within, at the extreme south west edge, of Ottery St Mary Parish. The Parish is within the mitigation zone for this area. There are several traditional orchards, a scheduled ancient monument, a number of county wildlife sites and a small section of AONB also within the Parish.

Screening Criteria Questions

1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan directly connected with, or necessary to the management of a European site for nature conservation?

No

2. Does the Neighbourhood Plan propose new development or allocate sites for development?

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes one specific site for new housing, at Alfinton, to the north of the Parish. This site is small, and the Neighbourhood Plan Policy states that it is suitable for up to 5 houses. Any housing which is constructed is considered to be sufficiently far away from the pebblebed heaths that any impact can be satisfactorily mitigated, and this mitigation is provided for

in Local Plan policy. The Neighbourhood Plan requires the scheme to provide an equipped play park which will reduce the need for local residents to travel to facilities elsewhere. A range of larger alternative areas for recreation and access to the countryside are also available at a similar or closer distance to the site than the pebblebed heath, for instance at the nearby town of Ottery St Mary. The Neighbourhood Plan also allows for affordable housing schemes at Tipton St John and Alfington, outside the AONB. The scale of such development would be in line with Local Plan policy and this type of growth was envisaged in Local Plan policy.

A screening opinion was provided by Land Use Consultants early in the Local Plan production process and an HRA was completed by Footprint Ecology before, and informed, the submission version of the Local Plan. It indicated that the Local Plan will have sufficient policy provisions to enable the subsequent delivery of necessary measures to avoid and mitigate adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites.

3. Are there any other projects or plans that together with the Neighbourhood Plan could impact on the integrity of a European Site?

No

Conclusion

6.6 The Ottery St Mary Neighbourhood Plan does not require a Habitat Regulation Assessment.

6.7 The Ottery St Mary Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have an adverse effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (d), alone or in combination with other plans and projects. It does not propose a level of development significantly over and above that in the adopted Local Plan (which was itself subject to SEA). Should adverse impacts arise, there is an agreed range of mitigation measures which will be implemented.

Location and landscape character context

This assessment considers the village of Alfington and a 1.5 km radius around¹. Alfington is located approximately 3 km north of Ottery St Mary. Alfington itself is a small village stretching along the north-south running B137, this road forms a dominant feature bisecting the village and it forms the main easterly access route from the A30 to Ottery St Mary (and Otter Nursery). The village has one notable pinch point (northern part of the village) and the heavy traffic using this road causes adverse environmental impacts, congestion and safety concerns at this point and elsewhere.

Alfington has limited public footpaths, only parts of the B3177 has paths, and a terrace of houses in the north of the village front directly on to this road. Travelling both north and south out of the village there are no footpaths along the side of the B3177 which makes for uncomfortable pedestrian access. However quiet villages roads away from the main road and path provision elsewhere does provide for some safe pedestrian access. There are limited community facilities in Alfington. These do include a shop/petrol filling station on the southern edge and a village hall in the northern part of Alfington. Until recently a public house, now converted into a dwelling, occupied a position in the centre of Alfington.

The village is formed by a mixture of older and newer properties and Alfington lies on the western side of the River Otter adjacent to its lower lying floodplain. The southern parts of the village are also lower lying and bisected by a stream that forms a tributary to the Otter. The northern parts of the village, which includes a number of lower density more modern (20th century built) homes are on rising/higher land. There has been a recent 'cottage style' development of a dozen or so properties to the east of the B137 in a central point in the village.

Overall the village has a rolling/undulating character and land to the east of the village rises quite sharply. The East Devon AONB lies around 1.25 kilometres to the east of the village and the boundary of the designated AONB area includes the higher land to the east of the village and specifically the scarp slopes and higher plateau that sits above the village. North and west of the village, stretching across the floodplain of the river Otter, the land is much flatter with fewer and less well defined hills.

Alfington is in Ottery St Mary town Council area and the roadside hamlet of Fenny Bridges lies around ½ km to the north of the core of Alfington village. Fenny Bridges is bisected by the (still busy) old A30. The properties of Fenny Bridges vary in age from older historic to a number of newer buildings. There are a number of commercial businesses strung along the old A30 with some in or close to the hamlet of Fenny Bridges, including the Greyhound Public House. Whilst there are small groupings/clusters of dwellings and buildings around Alfington there are no other settlements in the immediate surrounds.

The assessment criteria have been applied with regard to small scale residential development (9m height/2 storey properties) unless otherwise identified. Six potential sites for development have been put forward around Alfington. One of these sites is at Fenny Bridges, initially promoted in the 2010 SHLAA as a substantial area though submitted in the 2012 SHLAA as a much smaller roadside site. As this Fenny Bridges site is not considered to be at Alfington, and therefore not compliant with the emerging Local Plan policy it has not been assessed.

¹ 1.5km was selected as this captures the likely extent of visual issues associated with potential settlement edge development.

The Draft Local Plan indicates 5 dwellings for Alfington, which amounts to an increase in settlement size of approximately 5 %.

National character area (NCA): Alfington falls within The Devon Redlands National Character Area (NCA). See:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca/southwest.aspx>

The assessment advises "has a very strong, unified character. The underlying red sandstone and consequent red soil dominate the landscape through ploughed fields, cliffs and exposures, and are visually evident in the traditional stone and cob farmsteads, hamlets and villages that are scattered across the area."

District LCA: The East Devon District landscape character assessment identifies the settlement of Alfington as falling within landscape character type/s (LCT) 4: Valley floors - LCT 4D LOWLAND PLAINS

The assessment shows most of Alfington village lying in an area classified as a **Lowlands Plain area**. Land to the west of the village is classified as **Unsettled farmed valley floors** and land to the east as **Upper undulating farmed and wooded slopes**. The map below shows areas edges/boundaries.

Key Characteristics

- Level to gently sloping landform
- Mixed farmland, often in arable cultivation
- Small discrete broadleaf woodlands
- Regular medium to large field pattern with local variation
- Wide low roadside hedges and banks with hedgerow oaks
- Settled, with mixed pattern of large villages, hamlets or isolated farms
- Some villages significantly enlarged and modified by 20th century expansion
- Victorian estate cottages and large farm buildings
- Extensive commercial development
- Long views over low hedges
- Surprising feeling of remoteness in some parts, despite general level of development

These characteristics are largely represented in the landscape at and surrounding Alfington which includes an undulating mix of arable and pastoral small to medium fields, bordered by wide low hedges and hedgerow trees.

The **Devon Landscape Character Assessment** classifies Alfington and surroundings as falling in the East Devon Area – **Clyst Lowland Farmland** area.

See:

http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environmentplanning/natural_environment/landscape/landscapecharacter/landscape-map.htm

Of this overall classification it advises that:

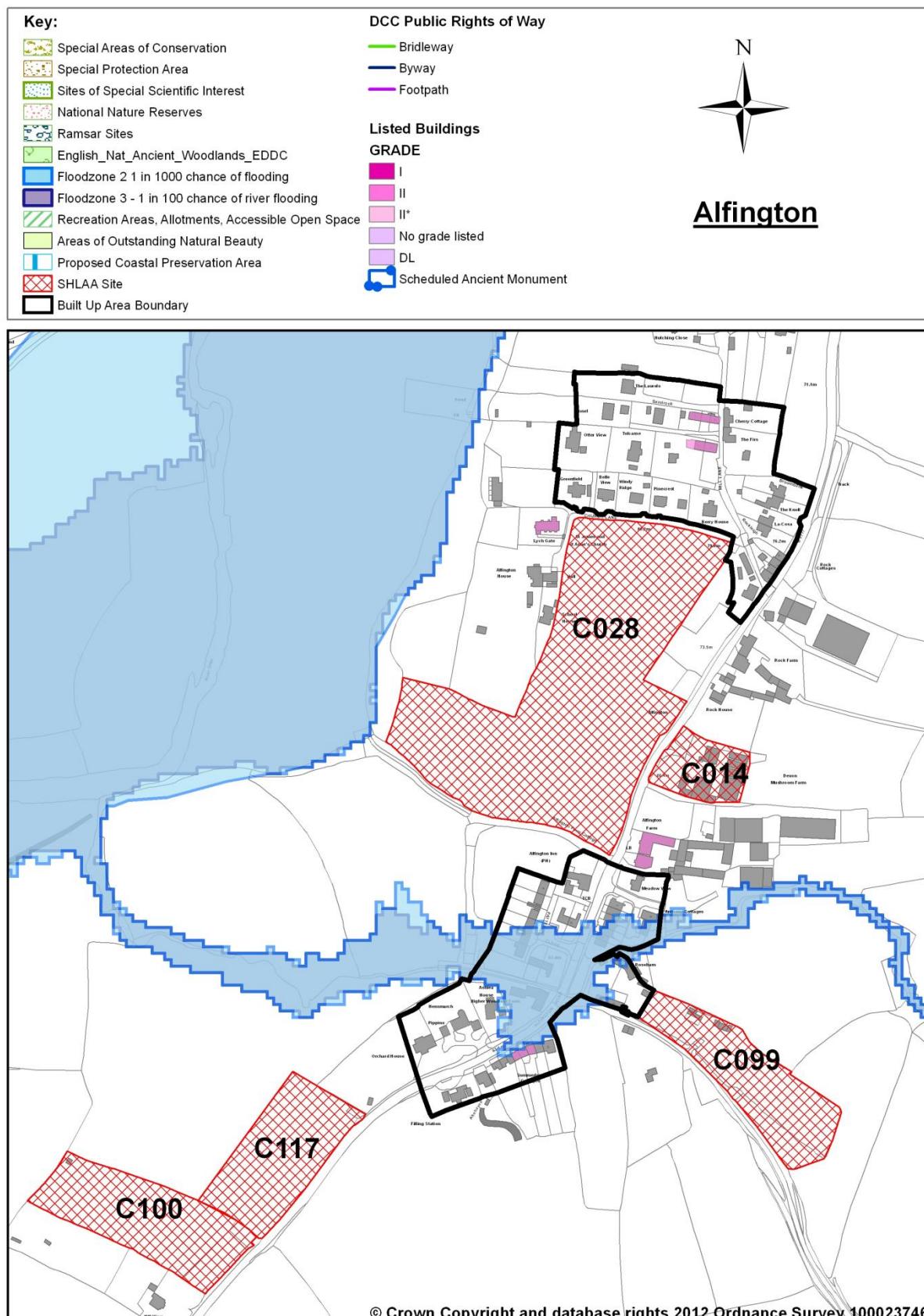
"This is a low lying, intensively farmed landscape with a uniformity to its undulating topography except in the north where there are a couple of outliers of higher ground. The uniform topography and pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees mean that there are few distinguishing features and this coupled with winding rural lanes results in a landscape which can feel quite disorientating. A distinguishing element of the area are 'Clyst' place names which mean 'clear water' and the numerous small streams which drain the area, along with the more prominent Clyst and Tale valleys, are defining characteristics. This is a settled landscape with a dispersed pattern of villages and farmsteads and includes modern communications and infrastructure, namely the A30 corridor, railway lines, pylons and more recently Exeter Airport. It also includes the town of Honiton."

The assessment advises of an overall strategy for this area classification:

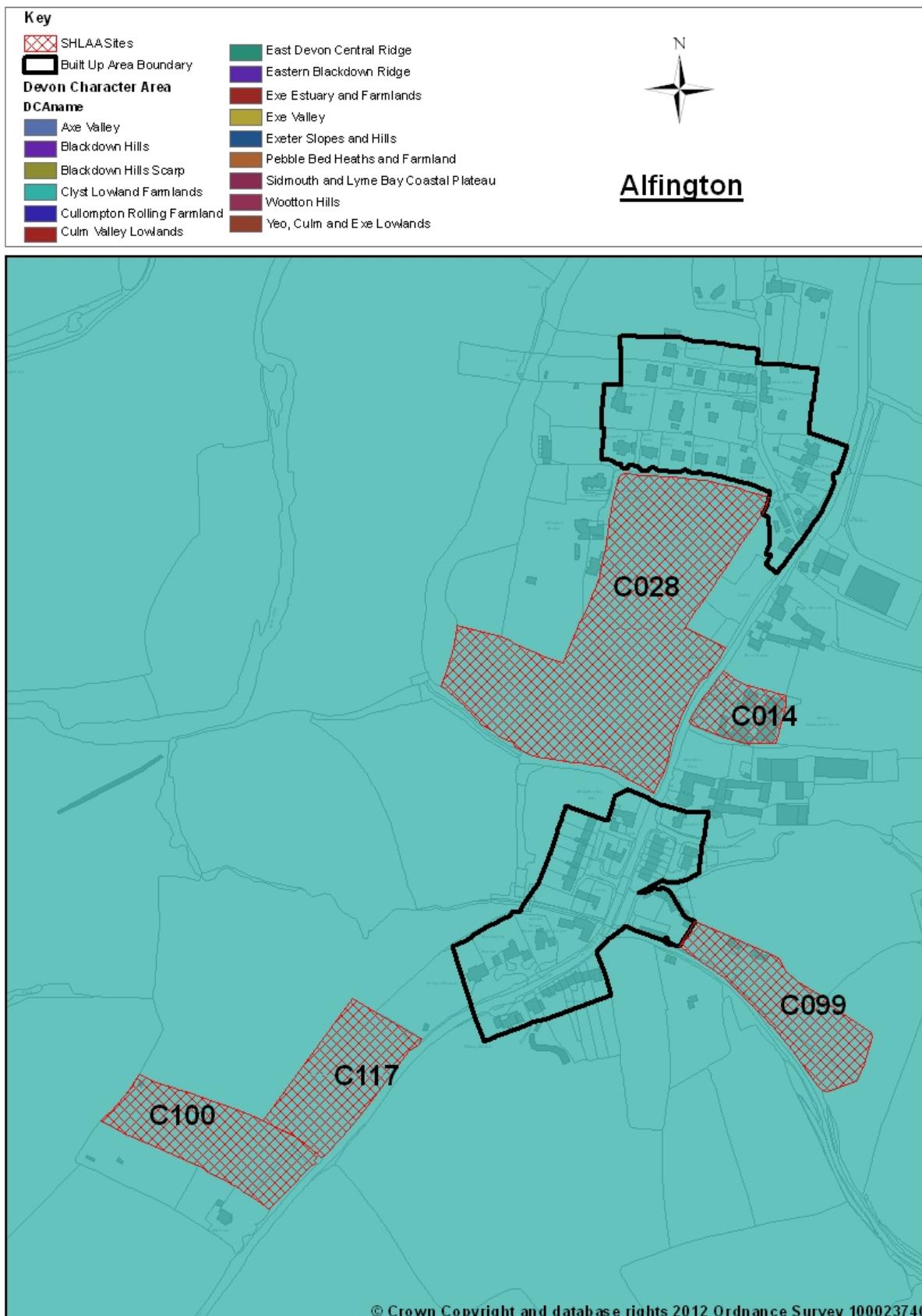
"To protect and enhance the landscape's low-lying wetland character associated with streams and rivers and also the views to wooded skylines on hills within and around the area.

Opportunities are sought to restore conifer plantations to broadleaves and heathland habitats on the higher land to the north which forms important skyline features and to sustain population of veteran trees within parklands. Field patterns are reinforced through the restoration and management of characteristic hedges. Distinctive tree-lined streams and wet grassland along watercourses are managed and expanded to help prevent downstream flooding, protect water quality and conserve and enhance wildlife. Traditional orchards are conserved and expanded where feasible. The landscape's settlement pattern and place names continue to have a strong influence, whilst opportunities for sustainable recreation and limited low-carbon development are sensitively accommodated."

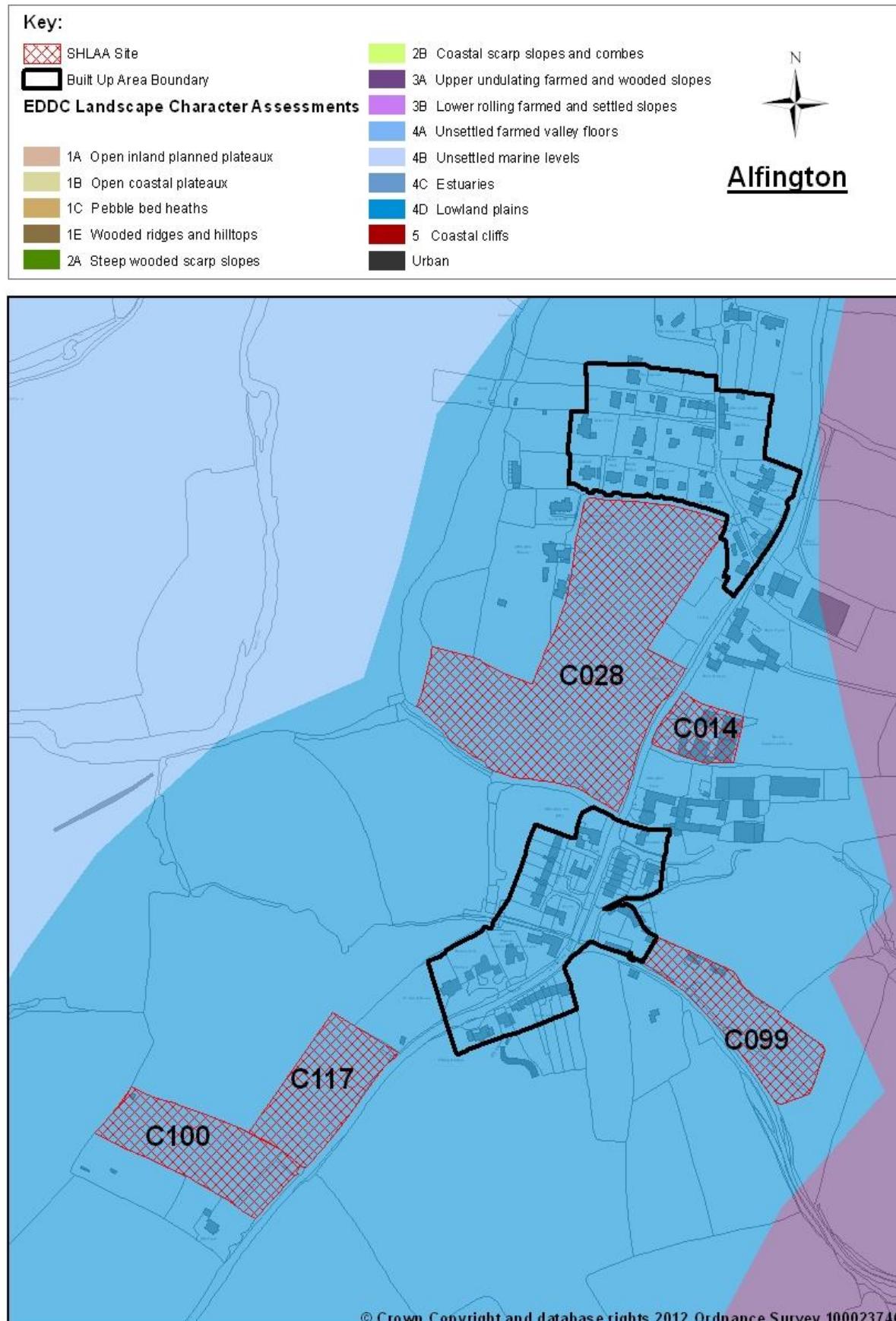
Map showing Site locations and constraints



Map showing DCC LCAs



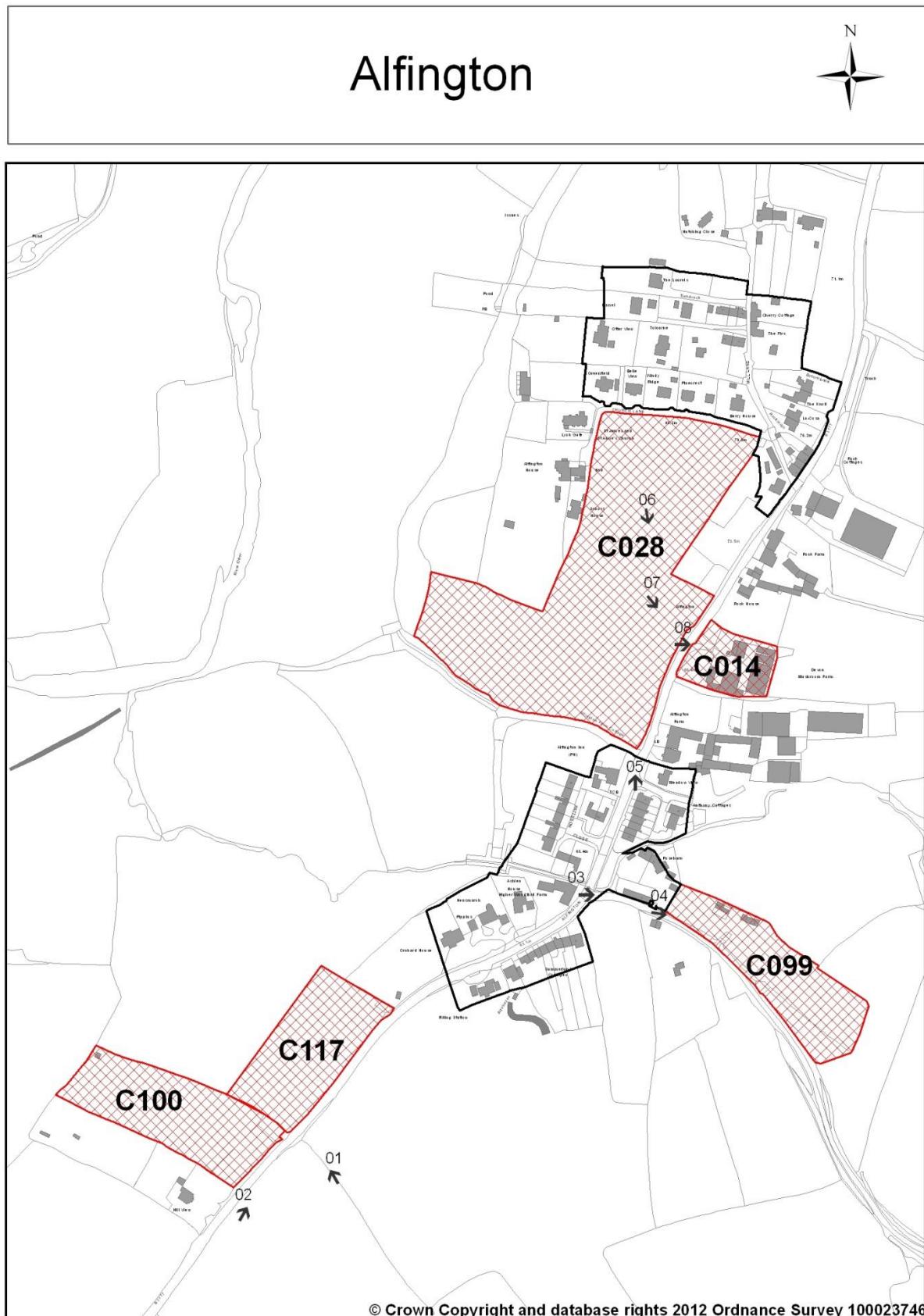
Map showing EDDC LCAs



Aerial photograph showing Site locations



Map showing photo points



Alfington Individual Site Assessments

Site name and location: **C100 and C117**

Date and time of assessment: **afternoon – 12 February 2013**

Surveyor: **MD**

Weather: **Hazy / Overcast**



Looking north west into sites C100 and C117

This view is looking in a north-westerly direction across the road frontages of Sites C100 and C117. Site C110 is to the left of the telegraph pole (left of car) and it extends backwards to include land beyond to wooden fencing that's sits on the ridgeline. Site C117 extends roughly between the two telegraph poles and fronts on to the road. The southerly built edge of the village of Alfington lies on the right hand side of the photo-montage (see white gable ended property).

Looking north east across the eastern edge of Site C117

This view point is looking in a north easterly direction past Site C117 (on the left hand side) towards the village of Alfington. The northern edge of site C117 coincides roughly with the telegraph pole sitting centre right in the photograph. The site frontage abuts the road (left hand site of photograph).



Site Assessment - Site C100

Criteria	Lower sensitivity			↔	Higher sensitivity	
Special qualities/significance of designated landscapes		L-M				
	Site C100 does not fall in a specifically protected landscape and is not close to any features of built heritage importance. The site does not fall in the nearby visual alignment of any historic features or assets of visual prominence or importance. The site is formed by small-scale enclosed pastoral field edged by hedgebanks.					
Skylines and landform				M-H		
	The site occupies a slightly elevated location, for the most part sloping gently in a westerly direction. The site forms part of a largely uninterrupted unsettled skyline area that in views to the west has flatter profiles and to the east is seen against a rising/undulating hillside. Trees and a house to the south-west of the site break up views to a small extent though the flatness and openness of immediate surrounds provide for a number of longer distance views.					
Sense of openness and enclosure				MH		
	Partially enclosed small scale field with managed hedges and some timber fencing. A small number of mature trees are located in the hedge bank and overall the site has an open feel. This in part reflects the separation of the site from the village.					
Landscape pattern and complexity				M-H		
	Pasture field currently used for grazing that is Gently sloping towards the River Otter. Hedges forming field boundary are maintained and cropped but with a small number of mature trees present. The field is a regular rectangular shape with longer distance northerly and westerly views over open countryside and the River Otter but also with some more easterly views towards and over parts of the village.					
Experiential landscape character			M			
	The site occupies a relatively Tranquil but open landscape that is actively farmed. The relatively busy road to Ottery St Mary fronts onto the site but changes in topography of the site mean that only a smaller southerly part of the site is visually connected to the road. The bulk of the site lies beyond the small elevated ridge that runs parallel to the road some 25 metres into the site. The bulk of the site has an open aspect that is somewhat from the built form of the village.					
Relationship to existing settlement edge and cultural pattern		L-M				
	The nearest village houses, that in themselves form a linear roadside pattern of development, are located some 200 meters from the eastern edge of the site. Development of this site would be relatively remote from the built form of the village and would lead to an outlying area of development in a visual open location.					
Visual sensitivities and intervisibility			M			
	The site lies in open landscape setting though there are few obvious close-by public viewpoints. Glimpses of the site can be gained from elevated parts of Alfington village and from more distance viewpoints to the north and south.					
Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development				M-H		
	The location of the site, in a lowland plain area, but in a slightly elevated position and in an open setting away from the existing built form of Alfington means that it is of some sensitivity which development could easily compromise.					

Landscape Guidance	Any development at this site would need to be accompanied by very careful landscaping treatment, and development design would need to be carefully handled to avoid adverse impacts. Extensive screening and planting, as a minimum, would likely to be essential.
Site ranking (including consideration of most/least sensitive areas if the villages is to be taken forward)	The site is considered to be of sensitivity to development being in a relatively elevated position in an open landscape setting that is relatively remote from the village of Alfington. In landscape terms the site would feature low-down in a hierarchy of potential site choices.

Site Assessment - Site C117

Criteria	Lower sensitivity ← → Higher sensitivity				
Special qualities/significance of designated landscapes		L-M			
	Site C117 does not fall in a specifically protected landscape and is not especially close to any features of built heritage importance. The site does not fall in the nearby visual alignment of any historic features or assets of visual prominence or importance. The site is formed by a road frontage strip of a visually open field on the southerly side of Alfington.				
Skalines and landform				M-H	
	The site occupies a slightly elevated position on gently upward sloping land rising away from the village. The site forms part of a largely uninterrupted unsettled skyline area that in views to the west has flatter profiles and to the east is seen against rising/undulating hillside. There are limited features at or near to the site to break up open views and the open nature of the site in its wider setting ensures an openness of character.				
Sense of openness and enclosure				MH	
	The roadside hedge, with some open patches, forming the southerly boundary of the site is the only feature creating any real sense of enclosure. This hedge bank is, however low and the absence of any boundary feature at the northern edge of the site ensures that the site is very open in character. There are a small group of trees at/to the northern site boundary but other than these there is very little sense of enclosure at or around the site.				
Landscape pattern and complexity				M-H	
	Open Pasture field currently used for grazing the frontage of which, for some of its length, slopes towards the main road through the village. The frontage of the field, forming the site, is a regular rectangular shape with longer distance easterly and westerly views.				
Experiential landscape character			M		
	The site occupies a relatively Tranquil but open landscape that is actively farmed. The relatively busy road to Ottery St Mary forms the road fronts onto the site and it constitutes a site dominant feature with adverse, albeit localised impacts. The site has an open aspect that is set away from the built form of the village.				
Relationship to		L-M			

existing settlement edge and cultural pattern	The southerly edge of Alfington is formed by a linear roadside pattern of development. This site is to the south of and does not immediately abut the built form of the village. Development of this site would extend the linear character of village in a visual open location.									
Visual sensitivities and intervisibility	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">M</td> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FFA500;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FF0000;"></td> </tr> </table>							M		
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Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">M-H</td> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FFA500;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FF0000;"></td> </tr> </table>							M-H		
		M-H								
Landscape Guidance	<p>Any development at this site would need to be accompanied by very careful landscaping treatment, and development design would need to be carefully handled to avoid adverse impacts. Extensive screening and planting, as a minimum, would likely to be essential.</p>									
Site ranking (including consideration of most/least sensitive areas if the villages is to be taken forward)	<p>The site is considered to be of sensitivity to development being in a relatively elevated position in an open landscape setting that is relatively remote from the village of Alfington. In landscape terms the site would feature low-down in a hierarchy of potential site choices.</p>									

Site name and location: **C099**

Date and time of assessment: **afternoon – 12 February 2013**

Surveyor: **MD**

Weather: **Hazy / Overcast**

	
<p>View taken in an easterly Direction Towards the Site</p> <p>The site lies directly beyond the single story stone and brick building in the centre/left ground of the picture</p>	<p>View of Easterly Hedgerow Boundary of the Site</p> <p>The site lies to the left (north) of the mature hedgerow on the left of the lane.</p>

Site Assessment - Site C099

Criteria	Lower sensitivity	↔	Higher sensitivity
Special		L-M	

qualities/significance of designated landscapes	Site C099 does not fall in a specifically protected landscape and is not especially close to any features of built heritage importance. The site does not fall in the nearby visual alignment of any historic features or assets of visual prominence or importance. The site is fronted by a country lane formed by a small field on the southerly side of Alfington.				
Skalines and landform			M		
	The site occupies a slightly elevated position on gently upward westerly sloping land rising away from the village. The gentle pattern of the regular upward sloping land beyond the site means that although development would be visible (from a number of points) it would typically not stand on or above any skylines and as such could be expected to be reasonably contained. There are a number of mature trees and blocks of trees at or close to the site that help break up views.				
Sense of openness and enclosure			MH		
	The site has a strong sense of enclosure that is accounted for by the mature hedgerows that form strong boundary features. Although the lane runs along the southern side of the site, and is the area with public access that is closest to the site, there are limited views into the site on account of the height and density of the hedgerow boundary.				
Landscape pattern and complexity			M-H		
	The field that forms the site is used/appeared to be used for keeping horses. The strong planting around the site ensures that the site, especially in the context of land to the west, has an intimate feel. The site itself, although reasonably regular albeit of an elongated rectangular shape, falls within an area of intimate and irregular shaped small fields, some form orchards, that have strong boundary planting and some mature trees.				
Experiential landscape character			M-H		
	The site occupies a tranquil position on the south eastern edges of the built form of the village. Although quite close to the main village road the site has an enclosed quiet rural feel. The fact that the site extends, in a linear fashion, some way into the surrounding open areas and fields emphasises the rural nature and feeling of the site.				
Relationship to existing settlement edge and cultural pattern			M		
	The south-eastern built edges of Alfington are close to the site. However development of the site could result in a linear shaped area of development extending somewhat into what is open, although reasonably visually enclosed, countryside				
Visual sensitivities and intervisibility			M-H		
	The intimate nature of the site, in its setting and surroundings, ensures that it is a visually sensitive. Whilst screening as a result of planting, in places dense, ensures some limitations of views of the site this planting also contributes greatly to its intimacy.				
Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development			M-H		
Landscape Guidance	The existing screening to the site would need to help inform any development and landscaping would need to reinforce and preserve the enclosed site character and surroundings.				
Site ranking (including consideration of most/least sensitive areas if the villages)	The site is considered to be sensitive to development on account of the intimate character of its landscape setting and although mature planting				

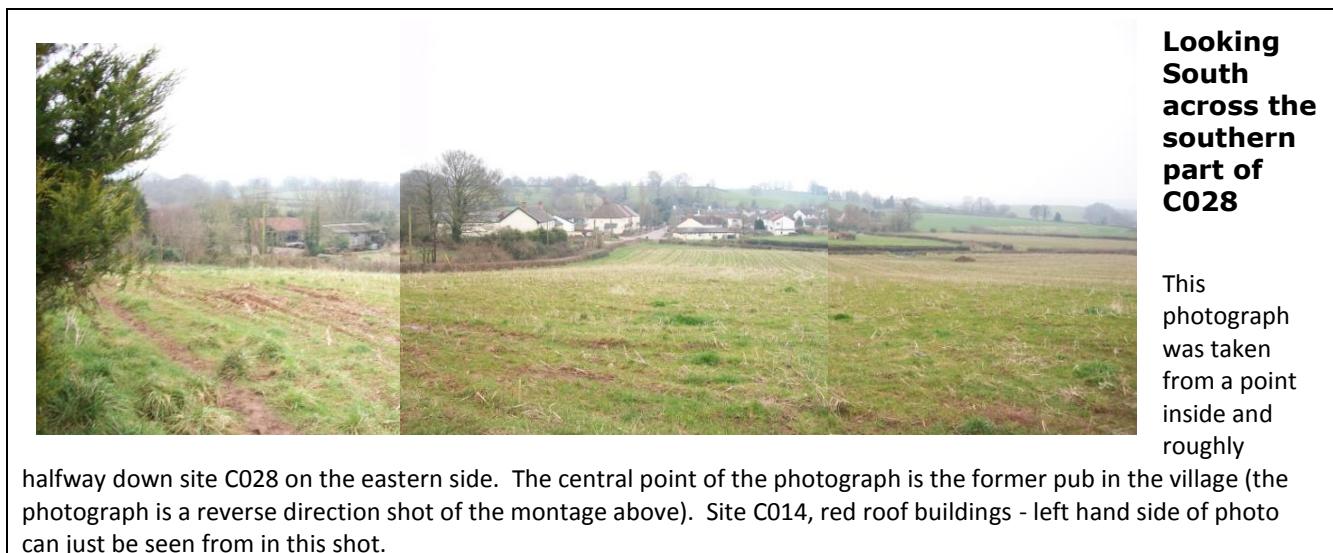
is to be taken forward)	could be reasonably expected to break-up some views of the site and any development on it the site is on rising ground and parts of it are, therefore, elevated from lower lying parts of the village.
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Site name and location: **Site Number – C28**

Date and time of assessment: **afternoon – 12 February 2013**

Surveyor: **MD**

Weather: **Hazy / Overcast**



Criteria	Lower sensitivity			↔	Higher sensitivity	
Special qualities/significance of designated landscapes		L-M				

Site C028 is a substantial open field occupying a central part of the village. At around 3.5 hectares it could have capacity to accommodate 100 plus dwellings, way more than the five allocated in the Local Plan.

The field does not fall in a specifically protected landscape and is not especially close to any features of built heritage importance other than

	a small number of listed buildings close to but beyond the site boundary. The central location of the sites means that parts of it, if not the whole, are visible from a wide ranging number of viewpoints within and beyond the village.				
Skylines and landform	The southerly part of the site (specifically the southern boundary) is low lying sitting on a flat valley floor but the site slopes upwards, in places quite sharply, to a high point for the site, and for the village as a whole, that occupies a northerly position on the site. The northern boundary of the site coincides with a flat elevated ridgeline that is of some prominence in respect of more distant and closer views from the south. To the north of the site and also in part to the west there are lower density residential properties, interspersed with mature trees, that are of some prominence on this skyline.		M-H		
Sense of openness and enclosure	The size of the site and its openness from views from the south ensures that it has a very open sweeping feel. However, and despite being on/close to the ridgeline area, some more northerly parts of the site are more enclosed in character. Mature planting, and some buildings, especially on the more northerly edges of the site provide some degree of enclosure that to some extent counters the otherwise openness that is a more general characteristic of the site. The southern parts of the site have far less boundary planting and as a consequence of this and also because of the wider sweeping valley floor character they have a more open feel.		MH		
Landscape pattern and complexity	The open field that comprises the site appeared to be rough grass/grazing use though could also have recently been used for growing crops. The site is irregular in shape and may have been formed from amalgamation of smaller fields in the past. To the north of the site a number of large mid 20 th century properties in substantial gardens dominate however there are some older properties interspersed with these. Remnant tree planting and hedgerows and some smaller nearby fields suggest a former intimate pattern of fields in this area. Fields to south and west of the site, that views open up on to, are typically larger, flatter and more open in character, sweeping views across the site extend for some distance into this open landscape. Visual connections to the east, although in some parts very open, are less pronounced. In part as the main village road forms a significant feature running past the site and also there is development beyond this road. The openness of the site field means that it lacks a specific complexity of character.		M		
Experiential landscape character	The site feels very visually open, this is despite development, albeit low density development, bounding it on its northern sides. The site and its setting has a pleasant though not especially distinct feel. However being elevated, rising upward to its northern edge and otherwise being open, it results in an openness to longer distance views, with a wider distinct open, edge of village, countryside feel. The south-easterly parts of the site lie adjacent to the main road running through the village and this road has some noticeable adverse noise and visual impacts (though for some length it falls below the site in a cutting). South westerly parts of the site have a distinctly more open rural feel.		M		
Relationship to existing settlement edge and cultural pattern	Alfington abuts the site in a number of areas, especially on the northerly sides and some parts to the east and south. The site, or at least easterly parts of it, are visually well related to the village. The lower density development to the north of the site lacks a historic cultural presence and character (noting one or two buildings of historic importance).		M		
Visual sensitivities				M-H	

and intervisibility	Because the site is in an open aspect, albeit with some more significant boundary features, it (or at least large parts of it) would be sensitive to development. The site lies in open landscape setting though there are few obvious close by public viewpoints. Glimpses of the site can be gained from parts of Alvington village and from more distance viewpoints.
Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development	The open nature of the site is such that it would be sensitive to development which could adversely impact on the landscape. Being so large a site there are, however, parts of the sit that are less sensitive than others. The south westerly parts of the site, for example would be a far more sensitive location, with a far more distinctly open countryside character than some of the more northerly parts of the site (even though northerly parts are more elevated).
Landscape Guidance	Any site development would have to be very careful managed given the openness and prominence of large parts of the site. Any Development would need to avoid intruding above skylines but also avoid intruding in to areas that have a distinctly open feel.
Site ranking (including consideration of most/least sensitive areas if the villages is to be taken forward)	The site is considered to be of some sensitivity to development being in an open aspect location in the wider countryside. The site or at least parts of it are, however, close to the built form of Alvington. In landscape terms the site is considered to feature in a mid point position in respect of potential site choices.

Site name and location: **Site Number – C014**

Date and time of assessment: **afternoon – 12 February 2013**

Surveyor: **MD**

Weather: **Hazy / Overcast**



Looking Eastward Into Site C014

This photomontage was taken from inside C028 in an easterly direction looking into the site.



Looking Eastward Into Site C014

This photomontage was taken looking east into the site through the metal gates that occupy a centre left position in the photo above.

Criteria	Lower sensitivity			↔	Higher sensitivity	
Special qualities/significance of designated landscapes		L-M				
	<p>Site C014 occupies a central part of the village that has capacity to comfortably accommodate five or more new dwellings. The site comprises of older agricultural sheds and buildings that were understood to be formerly used for mushroom farming.</p> <p>The site does fall in a specifically protected landscape and is not especially close to any features of built heritage importance. The central location of the site means that it is visible from a range of viewpoints within and beyond the village.</p>					
Skalines and landform			M			
	<p>The bulk of the site is flat and elevated above the main road running through the village and the site generally sits on land rising away to the east. Although of some prominence the site does not appear on the skyline, because of rising ground beyond, except in some near-up views, notably at the site entrance.</p>					
Sense of openness and enclosure		M-L				
	<p>Public viewpoints of the site are mostly to the east and although being slightly elevated because of frontage tree cover the site does not have an open and exposed character. There are also loosely grouped buildings to the north and south, also with mature trees, that reinforce the sense of enclosure.</p>					
Landscape pattern and complexity		L-M				
	<p>The site, comprising of hard standing and buildings, does not have a undeveloped landscape character in itself and buildings and gardens/open spaces to the north and south present a semi-developed adjoining land character. In a wider context larger scale farmed open fields lie to the east and west of the site though these are somewhat disconnected form the site.</p>					
Experiential landscape character		L-M				
	<p>The site feels visually quite enclosed and whilst the buildings on the site have a certain rustic and semi-abandoned charm they are old farm buildings sitting on poor quality and in part breaking-up concrete surfaces. The western boundary of the site, the green undeveloped part, abuts the main road through the village with this having a screening role to the site frontage. On higher land away from this frontage the site has a much quieter feel.</p>					
Relationship to existing settlement edge and cultural pattern			M			
	<p>The site occupies a very central part of the village and is well related to the existing built form, albeit surrounding buildings and houses are at lower densities though some buildings are in themselves off some physical mass.</p>					
Visual sensitivities and intervisibility		L-M				
	<p>Despite its slightly elevated position the significant site frontage and boundary planting reduces visual connectivity to surrounding areas.</p>					
Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development		L-M				
	<p>The enclosed nature of the site, the exception being from views from the west, and its existing on-site buildings, means that it and development on it should be less sensitive in terms of adverse impacts than other potential development locations.</p>					
Landscape Guidance	<p>The planted boundaries of the site and especially the planted frontage are key assets that would need</p>					

	to be retained and reinforced through any development. The easterly boundary of the site, in particular, would require specific attention in order to reinforce the current sense of enclosure that forms part of the character of the site.
Site ranking (including consideration of most/least sensitive areas if the villages is to be taken forward)	The site is considered suitable for development ahead of other site options on account the lower visual impacts that development would be likely to cause and also because it does already contain buildings.

Appendix 2: Heritage Impact Review

Heritage Impact Notes - Alfington Mushroom Farm Site

5th January 2017. Prep by DM.

There are six listed buildings in the village of Alfington, all of which are Grade II, including the Church of St James and St Anne. All are located within the village boundary. There is no conservation area in the village.

The Neighbourhood Plan for the parishes of Ottery St Mary and West Hill provides for a single site at Alfington to facilitate development of up to five dwellings, and including the possibility of a Children's playpark, at a location midway between the upper and lower parts of the village. This site was previously used commercially as a Mushroom farm, and consultation exercises undertaken with the local community have shown the site as being preferred for any future small housing development.

Only one listed building has been identified as having the potential to be affected because of its proximity to the allocated site. The remaining five are all at a distance of at least 240m, at locations which in all cases by virtue of topography or existing buildings are not visible from the proposed site.

Alfington Farmhouse is described by Heritage England as Grade II listed, 2 storey, stucco, under a slate roof with wide eaves on shaped brackets and extended at gable with bargeboards. Its a substantial 18th or early 19th century two storey 7 bedroom house. It is located to the south west of the proposed site, and separated from it by a large garden approximately 35 metres wide. The farmhouse is set slightly back from the road, on an alignment such that the north eastern facade, (that facing the proposed site) presents to the proposed site a view of a sizeable gable end plus single storey extension to the east. There are two small windows in this combined elevation. . Beyond this to the east, a cluster of outbuildings in various states of disrepair surround the listed building's old farmyard, and lie generally close to its south east elevation.

These outbuildings have been the subject of two failed planning applications in the past. Reference numbers: 07/2824/FUL (for nine dwellings) Validated 10th January 2008, and 08/1091/FUL (for four dwellings) Validated 21st April 2008.

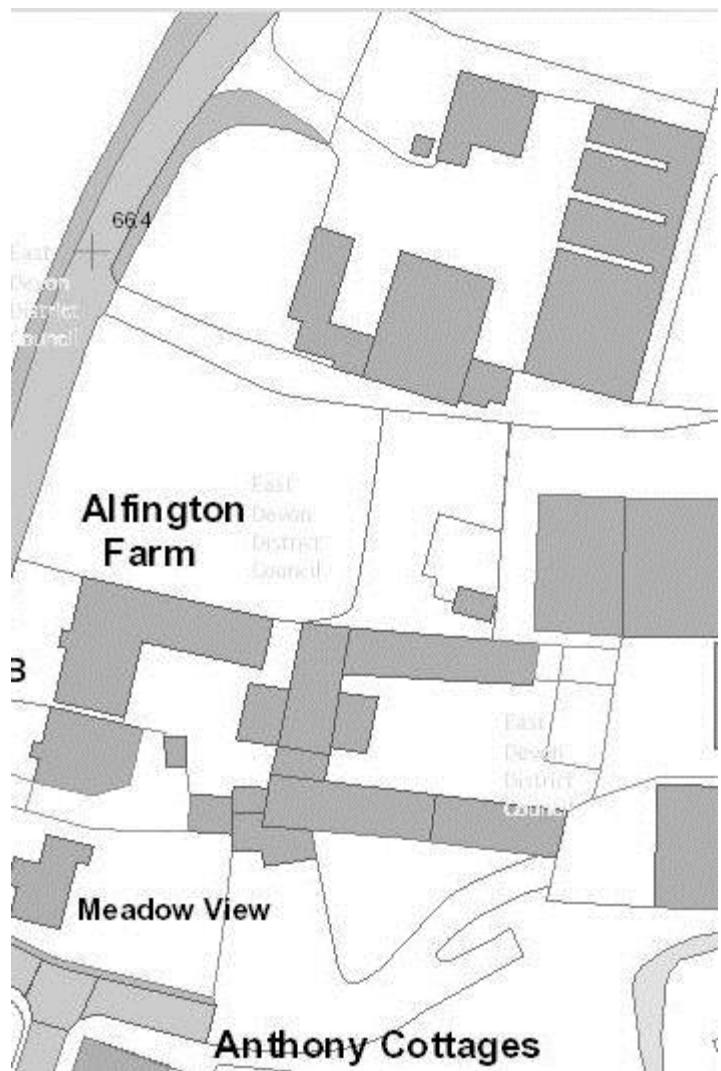
The boundary between the sites comprises a line of semi-mature trees and deep vegetation, which on looking south west from the proposed site provides an effective screen to the secluded garden and listed building gable-end and single storey extension beyond.

Initial assessment is that any housing constructed on the proposed site will have minimal or minor impact on the listed building. Indeed the probability is of rather less impact than the situation pertaining today, because of the uncompromising nature of the assortment of steel, timber and possibly asbestos style buildings still standing on the site but derelict since 1998. Views to and from the site towards the listed building are largely blocked by the boundary screen of quite deep vegetation, which has grown considerably in the years since commercial operations ceased. Taken together the site has little or no material impact on the setting of the only nearby heritage asset.

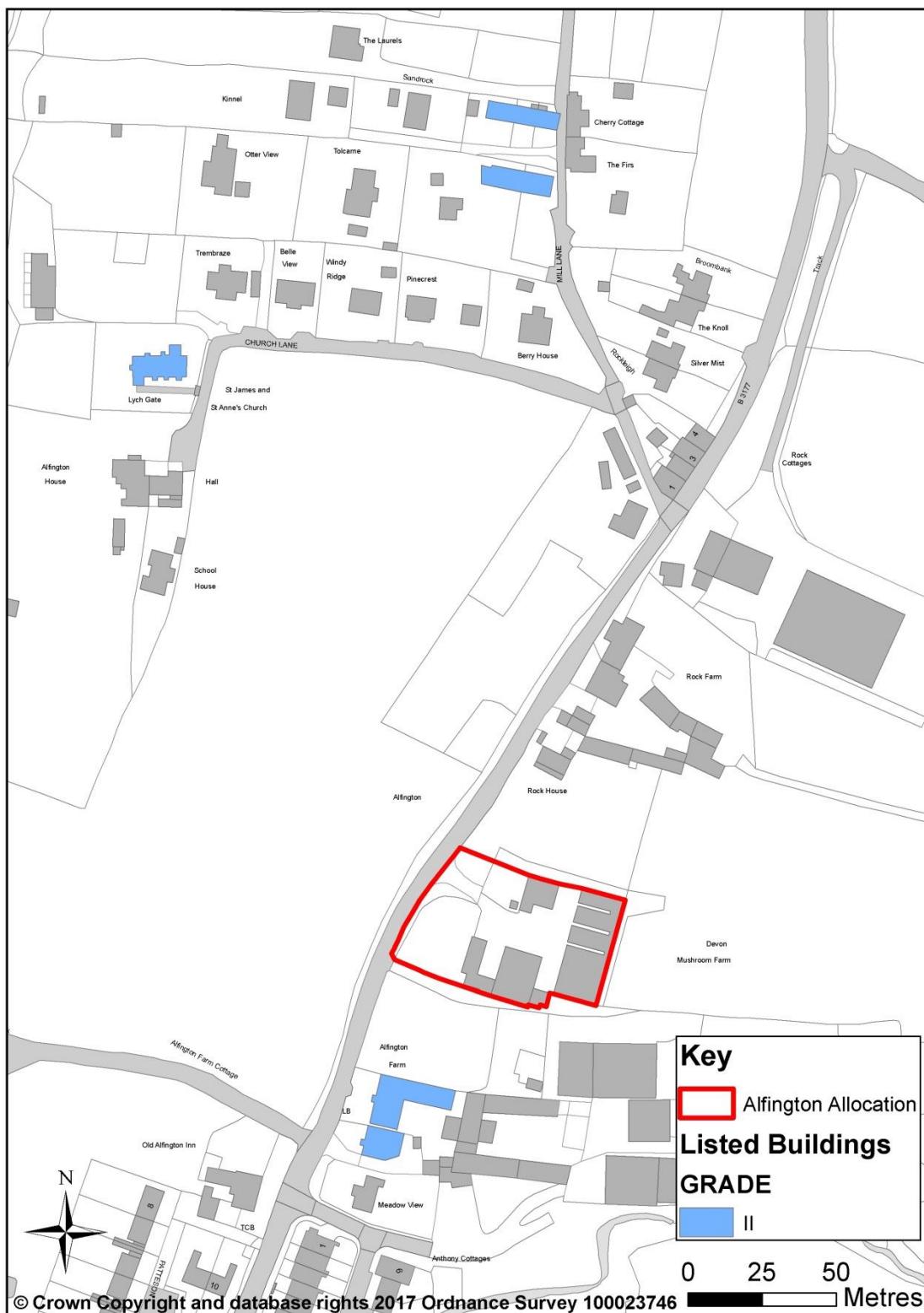
(ends)

Map showing the relative location of the proposed site - indicated by buildings at top (approx North) of plan, and Alfington Farmhouse (buildings immediately below, and barns and other agricultural buildings generally to the right of the annotation 'Alfington Farmhouse.'

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Map showing the allocation site and its proximity to nearby listed buildings.



Map showing an aerial photograph view of the proposed site and surroundings.



View north-east towards the site from outside the listed building.



Appendix 3: consultee responses

Timothy Spurway

From: Stuart, David <David.Stuart@HistoricEngland.org.uk>
Sent: 04 May 2017 14:45
To: Timothy Spurway
Subject: RE: Ottery St Mary and West Hill SEA/HRA screening consultation -
UNCLASSIFIED:
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Tim

Thank you for your consultation on the SEA Screening for the Ottery St Mary and West Hill Neighbourhood Plan. Our apologies for not responding before now.

I can confirm that we have no objection to the conclusion that an SEA will not be required for this Plan.

In coming to this position it was useful to have access to the draft Plan. I note that it is badged as a Consultation Draft though we have not received a copy separately from the community. Do you know if there has been a recent, perhaps Reg 14, consultation exercise? Having engaged with the community in its preparation stages I am perhaps a little surprised that they havn't sent us a copy.

I also note that the Plan website states that it has been formally submitted to EDDC so is that a Reg 16 consultation and is that the version you sent to us? Is your consultation also then a consultation on the Plan as well as the SEA Screening or will we receive a subsequent Reg 16 consultation subsequently – from 19th May for 6 weeks as per what the website says?

With this uncertainty it makes sense to provide a response on the Plan in the form received.

Generally there is little which we would wish to comment on and our observations can therefore be summarised as follows:

1. The Plan is comprehensive and impressive in its objective of reinforcing distinctive local character. The focus of our attention is on Ottery itself and while the Conservation Area is no longer on the national Heritage At Risk Register there remain issues associated with its wellbeing which we are pleased to see covered in the Plan. It is pleasing too to note the community's intention to create action groups for tackling them.
2. As the Conservation Area is no longer on the national Heritage At Risk Register (pp17 & 71) such referencing needs to be updated and text could perhaps refer to being on the Register until recently but that many of the (negative) issues responsible for that status remain in need of attention. I should highlight too that while the Area was on the Historic England Register it was EDDC's survey that originally determined it as At Risk, and then

when it wasn't.

3. Chapter 9 on the town centre covers the main issues which remain but excludes a policy on traffic management – a key factor in creating a sustainable and viable future for the town centre. The need to address this issue has been extensively highlighted in the Plan's Objectives (p23) and in Appendix 4 on Road Network Issues Plans/Proposals but this doesn't appear to have been carried through to policy in the same way as parking and public realm enhancement have been. There is a risk that such omission will be seen as a downplaying or suggesting a lack of priority for this issue, perhaps by those who will need to be major stakeholders in tackling it.

Whatever the difficulties in effecting a solution to the problem of traffic in the town centre it is important to highlight its resolution as part of an integrated approach along with those other policy areas identified. It is therefore desirable and consistent to afford it the same status in the Plan.

4. Mushroom Farm site, Alfington (Policy NP27). We note that this is a previously developed site and that redevelopment can take place without harming the setting of designated heritage assets. However, such a conclusion derives from screening provided by the heavily vegetated nature of the southern boundary of the site and the land between it and the Grade II Listed Alfington Farmhouse. While we therefore have no objection in principle to this allocation it is important to highlight the need to prevent harm to the setting of the Farmhouse, perhaps by retaining or consolidating significant aspects of the existing landscape/vegetative character, and we would recommend that this be included as a criterion in the wording of the policy itself.

Please forward comments to the
community as appropriate. Kind regards

David

David Stuart | Historic Places
Adviser South West Direct Line:
0117 975 0680 | Mobile: 0797 924
0316

Historic England | 29 Queen Square | Bristol | BS1 4ND

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Date: 04 May 2017
Our ref: 210946



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T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Spurway,

Planning consultation: Ottery St Mary and West Hill SEA/HRA screening consultation

Location: The Parishes of Ottery St Mary and West Hill in East Devon.

Thank you for your consultation on the SEA and HRA Screening of the above Neighbourhood Plan (NP), which was received by Natural England on 15 March 2017.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING, ENGLAND – THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING (GENERAL) REGULATIONS 2012

Comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan:

We are pleased to see that the richness of the local environment is highlighted in the description of the parishes and we appreciate the hard work that has gone into the development of the draft NP.

Chapter 2 notes that part of the village of Tipton St John is within the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It should also be made clear that the AONB covers an area along most of the eastern and south-eastern boundary of the parishes.

Policy NP8: Protection of Local Wildlife Sites and Features of Ecological Value

We are pleased to see the inclusion of this policy. However, we suggest its focus on the protection of County Wildlife Sites and Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites could be broadened to include the small part of the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SSSI (also designated as the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC and East Devon Heaths SPA) in the south western corner of the NP area (although the sites mostly fall outside of the NP area, housing developments within the parishes fall within the 'zone of influence' as set out in the Local Plan and the South East Devon European Sites Mitigation Strategy (SEDEMS)) and the numerous areas of Priority Habitats spread across the parishes, including traditional orchards, coastal floodplain and grazing marsh as well as ancient woodland and replanted ancient woodland sites. Priority Habitats are highlighted in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) - [click here](#) for more information.

Green Infrastructure (GI)

We are pleased to see that the plan seeks to protect local green spaces and that it recognises the benefits of good networks of walking and cycling routes as part of the local GI network.

We suggest that stronger links are made between the protection of green spaces and biodiversity with encouraging and enabling healthier lifestyles. We suggest that these interrelated and multifunctional benefits of green space and biodiversity could be pulled together more coherently through a policy on Green Infrastructure.

In addition the benefits outlined above, multi-functional green infrastructure can perform a range of functions including improved flood risk management, climate change adaptation and biodiversity enhancement. Resilience to a changing climate is helped by looking at the GI assets across an area and making linkages between them. Evidence and advice on green infrastructure, including the economic benefits of GI can be found on the [Gov.uk Natural Environment web pages](#).

Housing

We note that the plan allocates one site for the development of five houses at Alfington (Policy NP 27). This site looks to be well related to the village and is not within a designated site or protected landscape.

We suggest that the text on page 51 concerning new housing needs to more clearly state that they are not allocations in the NP.

We recommend changing the wording regarding in Policy NP12 regarding suitable site locations to ‘within or well related to named settlement and not constituting isolated or sporadic development’.

Appendices

The maps contained in Appendix 1 are not clear or very useful without a map key.

A map of the County and Undesignated Wildlife Sites would be useful but is currently unpopulated (Appendix 3). It may also be useful to map green spaces and other areas of biodiversity interest here, such as areas of Priority Habitat. This could be used to highlight areas where the strategic green infrastructure network could improve linkages between sites in order to facilitate sustainable transport links (walking and cycling) and wildlife corridors. This in turn would improve the areas’ biodiversity and landscape resilience in the face of the increasing challenges posed by climate change.

SEA and HRA Screening

Natural England agrees with the conclusion of the SEA screening report that a Strategic Environmental Assessment would not be required. We consider that, based on the material supplied with the consultation, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned, significant environmental effects resulting from the neighbourhood plan are unlikely.

We also agree with the report’s conclusions that the Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European site either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work under the Habitats Regulations would be required.

These screening opinions are given based on the provided material. If the plan were to change

significantly (e.g. especially if it introduced site allocations) then a screening update may be needed.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Darren Horn. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Darren Horn
Lead Adviser – Exe, East Devon and Exmoor
Team darren.horn@naturalengland.org.uk