

# Westbury-sub-Mendip

## Village Character Assessment



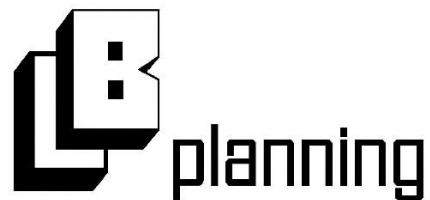
October 2023

## Acknowledgements

This report is based on research and the guided survey work of the Westbury-sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Planning Group. Liz Beth of LB Planning facilitated a group survey on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Conditions were warm and sunny, and survey information was collated by Liz Beth and checked for local accuracy by members of the group, who have also undertaken additional survey work subsequent to that date. The BANES methodology, slightly adapted, was used to structure the survey and analysis of local character. Photographs have been provided by the Group.



Logo: Westbury S-M Parish Council



## Abbreviations used in the text:

The Village Character Assessment is abbreviated to 'VCA'

The National Planning Policy Framework is abbreviated to 'NPPF'

The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is abbreviated to 'AONB'. AONB is now also referred to as a 'National Landscape'.

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All plans are sketches, and not to scale.

## Introduction

This report has been produced as an evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan, and future development in the parish will be expected to pay regard to the guidance within it. It is a reflection of higher level planning policy. The NPPF in section 12 emphasises the importance of good design:

“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve” (para 126)

The NPPF also sees neighbourhood planning groups as having an important role in identifying the special qualities of an area (para 127). Design guides are seen as a key tool to provide clarity on what will be expected and considered good design (para 128). Policy DP1 in the Mendip Local Plan Part 1 reflects this national guidance and emphasises the need for development proposals to ‘maintain and enhance local identity and distinctiveness’.

This Village Character Assessment (VCA) has been produced to provide guidance on what locally responsive good design in Westbury sub-Mendip means in practice, both in terms of materials, style and layout of buildings. It is the local detail needed for higher level policy to be truly effective. The Westbury-sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Plan aims to promote excellent design in new development that protects and enhances local character and uniqueness. In this way the village and its setting will continue to charm both local residents and visitors, and maintain the important historical legacy visible in its form and location.



## 1. Westbury-sub-Mendip

1.1 Westbury-sub-Mendip is an historic village located on the southern edge of the scarp slope of the Mendip Hills and the northern edge of the Somerset Levels. Part of the parish is within the Mendip Hills AONB, and the village immediately abuts the AONB boundary. The village is located within the district of Mendip, although with the creation of the new unitary authority, Somerset Council is now the local planning authority. The village has a population of just over 800 (2021 Census figure is 813). It is located 4 miles from Cheddar to the west, and 4 miles from Wells to the east, along the A371, an historic route linking settlements located along the spring line at the junction of the Mendip Hills and the Levels. Weston Super-Mare is 14 miles to the west of the village.

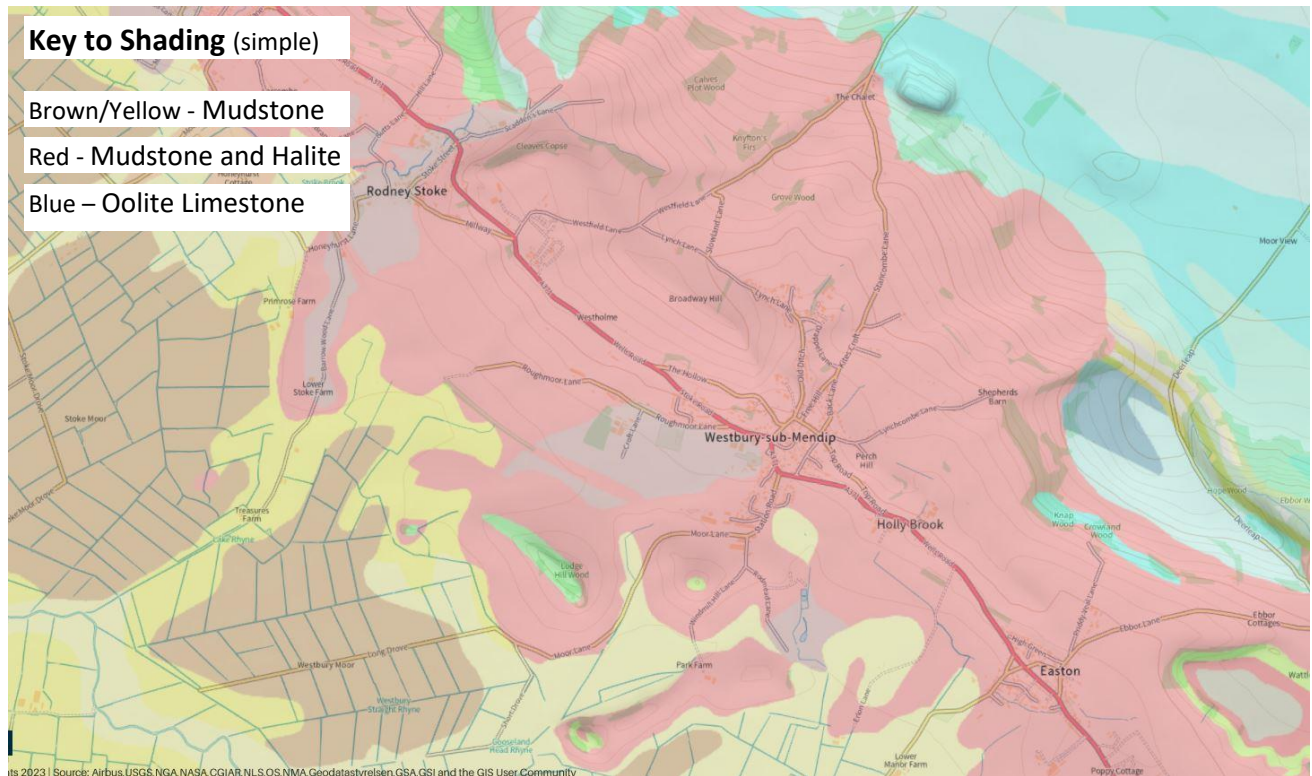
1.2 Agriculture and some quarrying were traditionally the main economic activities. The village incorporates farms within the settlement, both on the low slopes and flatter lands at the edge of the Levels. The twentieth century saw some new development including a small industrial estate on the site of the former station, and new residential development.

1.3 There are 25 units on a small industrial estate, but few of those employed are from the village. There are several working farms, a garage and agricultural contractors. The village has a shop owned and run by the community which includes a post-office; a pub and several bed and breakfast establishments. Other community facilities are the Parish Church, a primary school, playing fields and the village hall. There is a very limited bus service between Wells and Cheddar Monday to Saturday, which may be extended to Weston Super-Mare in the future. The nearest railway stations are a 40 minute drive away.

1.4 The population is older than the national average with a significant minority of people retired. 19% of the population are under 18 years of age, 32% are over 65 years old. Around a quarter of those in employment commute out of the village beyond the local area of Wells and Cheddar.

## 2. Landscape and Geology of the Village and surrounding area

2.1 Figure 1 is a simplified diagrammatic explanation of the local geology. The Mendip Hills are a carboniferous limestone formation, and demonstrate the dry, karst landscape associated with this rock in many places. Westbury Sub-Mendip lies below the central plateau of the Mendips, and has a transitional geology where mudstone formations overlay the limestone and become the base rock at the Somerset Levels. The limestone aquifer overlays Old Red Sandstone, which is less permeable to water – and the settlements along the A371 originally grew up as a result of the springs and water available from the aquifer.



**Figure 1: The local base rock (source: British Geological Survey website)**

2.2 The limestone, and later Dolomitic Conglomerate rock (known locally as Draycott Marble), were traditionally used as building stone around the Mendips. In Westbury it is the conglomerate and general rubble stones found in the underlying geology that have been used traditionally. Simple quarries are a feature of the higher reaches of the village and fields beyond.

2.3 In 1996 a landscape study of the Mendip Hills was commissioned from Chris Blandford Associates by a group of local councils and the Countryside commission. Although somewhat dated now, it is still a good evidence base for the AONB's landscape attributes. Westbury is assessed in this report to be part of the South Western Slopes area of the Mendips. The village developed on the (relatively) less steep ridges up to Old Ditch, and agriculture expanded on the fertile more level land at the base of the hills. The underlying rock is visible in many parts of the village above the A371 and is reflected in the buildings and walls. The former railway line carried strawberries out to London until it was closed as part of the Beeching review, and Westbury is part of the Strawberry Belt identified in the report. Agriculture on the Somerset Levels that forms the southern section of the Parish is mixed arable and livestock. On the slopes of the Mendip Hills, farming practices are pastoral.

2.4 The beauty and uniqueness of the setting of the village is recognised in the nationally important designation of the Mendip Hills as an AONB. While the boundary of the AONB does not include the village, it comes hard up to the settlement boundary, and thus development within the village needs to respect design guidance from the Mendip Hills Partnership, as its impact on the visual and other attributes of the AONB will be significant.

2.5 There are many significant views out across the levels and beyond from the village. Views out are considered a special quality of the AONB, as defined in the AONB Management Plan 2019-24 and their quality needs to be preserved. They are also a feature of the area mentioned in 2020 landscape study commissioned by Mendip District Council from Macgregor Smith. Extensive views will have no doubt influenced the location of the Westbury Camp Iron Age Hillfort above the village. Key views within and from the village and its surrounding countryside are shown in figure 2.

2.6 Dark Skies are also a defined special quality of the AONB, and all of the village north of the A371 has no street lighting – a decision put to a local vote. South of the A371 two of the newer estates voted to have street lighting. The Parish Council has a dark skies policy, which also covers seeks to limit external light spill from homes and other buildings by discouraging designs featuring large rooflights and full height apex glazing.



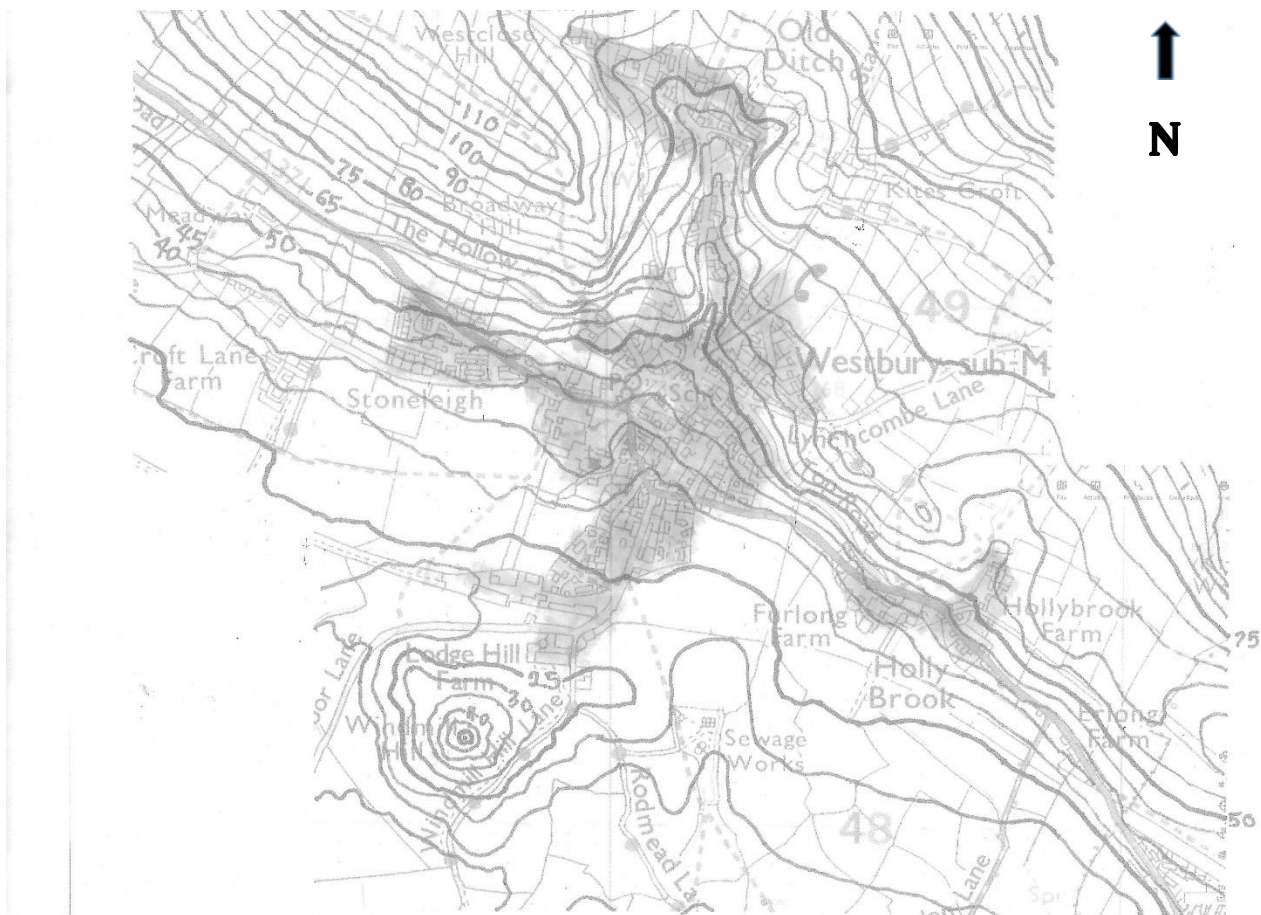
**Figure 2: Significant views are taken of Westbury sub-Mendip and its hinterland**



2.7 The steep gradients of that part of the village that climbs up the lower reaches of the scarp slope is a key characteristic of the village. Viewed from a distance, homes on the hill are set within extensive woodland cover, partly because they nestle into the small valleys within the slopes. Figure 3 below shows the extent of the village with respect to the contours of the land.

2.8 A consultation survey (Attitudes to the Roughmoor Lane Development Proposals: Feb 23 Parish Website) demonstrated an awareness locally of the visual attributes of the village and its setting. When questioned about visual impact of the development (which is on the south side of the A371 to the west of the church), 28% of people stated that they were concerned about the visual impact from their home, but nearly 60% were concerned about visual impact as they walked around the village and the surrounding countryside. People in the village care about and notice the visual qualities of their village, beyond their immediate home environment.

2.9 The consultation survey, which had a response rate of about 33%, also showed significant concern about pedestrian safety with respect to the main A371 road that runs through the village. With over 50% of respondents stating they would be likely to reduce their car use within the village if safe off-road routes were available. Traffic, and the lack of safety for pedestrians, on the main road impacts negatively on the visual and auditory characteristics of Westbury.



**Figure 3: The relationship of Westbury Sub-Mendip (shaded grey) to gradient**



**Dwellings nestling in vegetation and trees**

2.10 The limestone karst scenery does not provide many streams and rivers, but there are small watercourses in the village which emerge at various points before disappearing underground again. These are evidence of the changed geology of the lower slope leading to the emergence of aquifer water – the historic reason for the settlement developing at this location.

**Small watercourses have been built into the urban form**

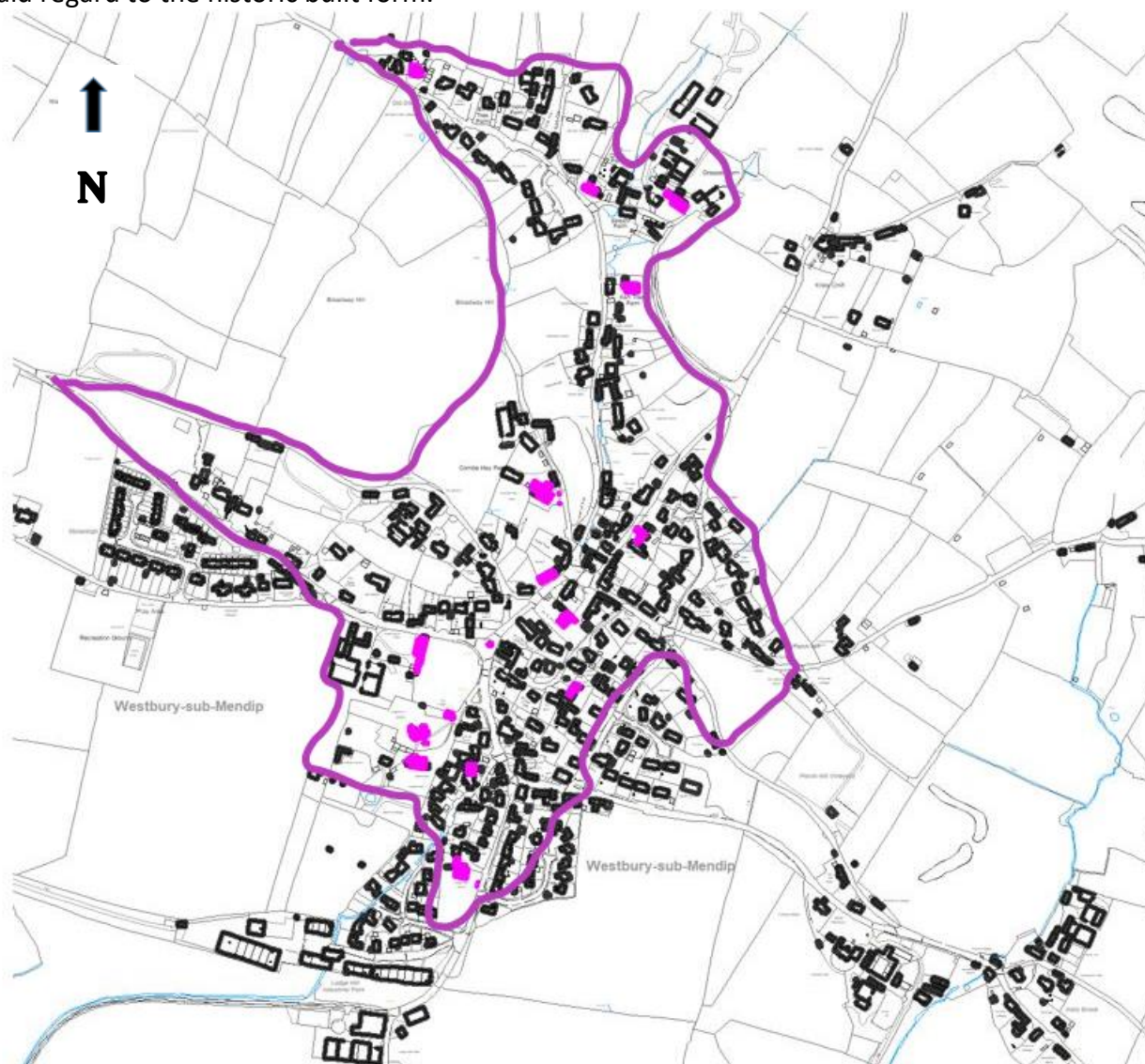




### 3. Historical Development of Westbury Sub-Mendip

3.1 Westbury-sub-Mendip is mentioned in the Domesday Book of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, though there is evidence of older settlement. Ancient field systems and medieval farmsteads can be identified along the South Western Slopes area that includes the village. Quarrying has left its mark in the landscape, and would have been a significant source of employment and income historically.

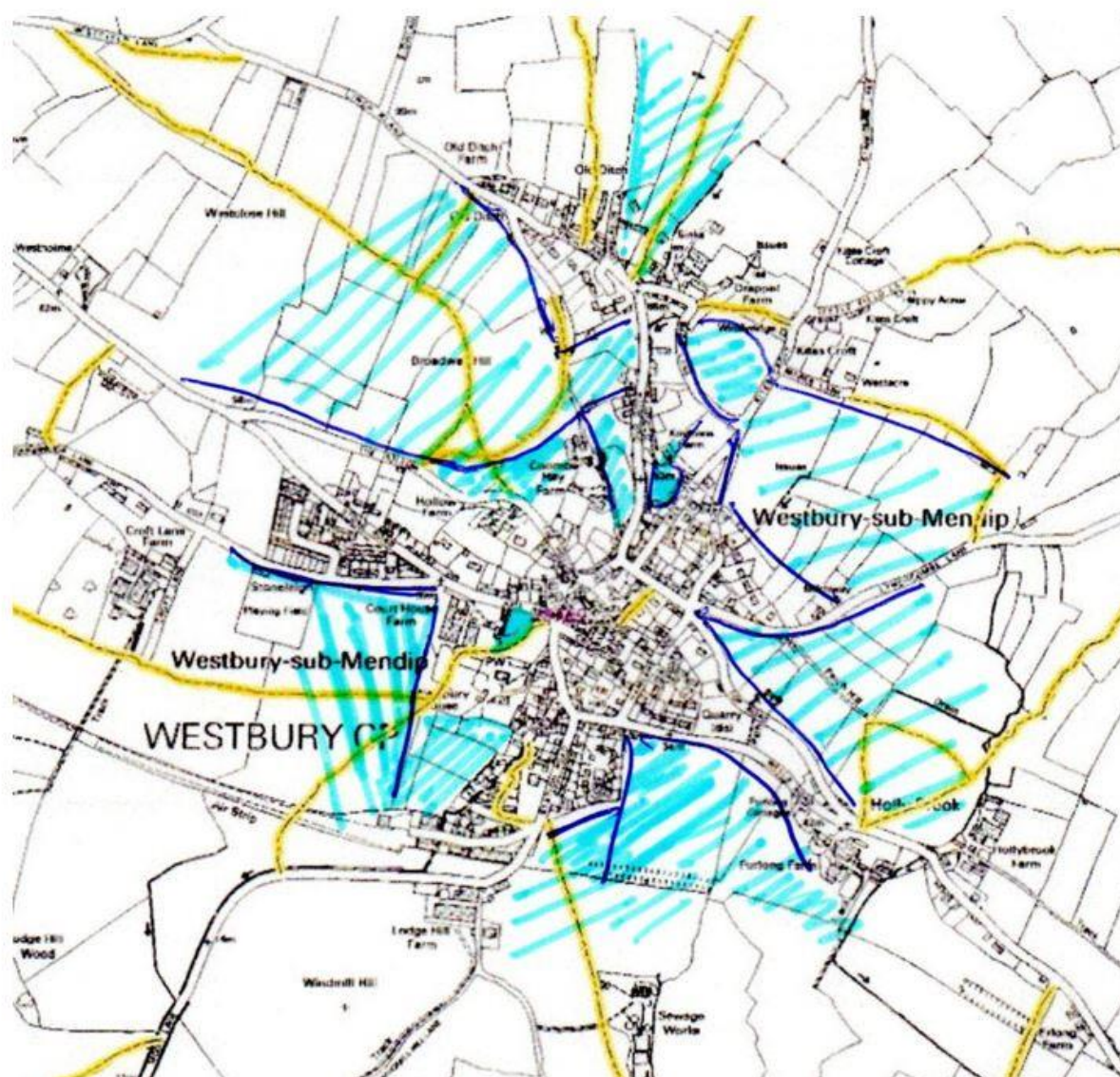
3.2 The population increase of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century did not bypass Westbury Sub-Mendip, but the village grew slowly - by some 2.4 houses per year from 1945. The two largest new estates were built in phases, so areas of new housing do not dominate the village. Some new residential development has paid regard to the historic built form.



**Figure 4: Conservation Area Boundary** (purple line -approximate) **and Listed Buildings** (purple)

3.3 The Conservation Area shown in Figure 3 includes all of the older village and significant areas of field and farmland, particularly on the northern slopes. Inclusion of open land within a conservation area is not usual. If it happens it is indicative of its importance to the historic form and setting of the conservation area. In the case of Westbury it is because the historic form of much of the village was built around working farms that were part of the village. This results in areas of green space penetrating between built up areas (Green Wedges), often towards the village centre. Maintaining this open space is therefore important for conservation reasons, besides its distinctive and attractive visual attributes.

No appraisal has been done for the conservation area, but the reasons for designating it were given as: **This is so far not available - Conservation Section have been asked.** The areas of green space and countryside penetrating the built environment (referred to in this report as “green wedges”) are a key characteristic of the village. They have been included within the Conservation Area – indicating that they are an important attribute of the historic village. Figure 4a shows the wedges, and how they relate to the footpath network as well as the built form. Westbury’s green wedges contrast with the more grid like pattern of development in other Mendip villages such as Draycott.



**Figure 4a: The Green Wedges of Westbury sub-Mendip**

3.4 The listed buildings in Westbury are also frequently the local landmarks identified in the character survey – not surprisingly (shown in figures 5a and 5b). They are a mix of farm houses and outbuildings, civic buildings and other residences. In Westbury limestone dressed stone is not a common building material and used only on the church in part, as a feature element or on homes of status. Building of these stone homes is mostly begun in the seventeenth century – a likely indication



of a period of prosperity at this time. The nineteenth century saw further building in stone, and extensive renovation of others, again indicative of prosperity.

The traditional stone used in buildings is the local reddish-brown conglomerate mudstone-base limestone rock, laid random and uncoursed in lime mortar and finished with a bagged joint. Squared limestone was used at quoins; jambs of windows and doors, were usually in stone, with a curved head, or in brickwork with soldier arches over. Windows are mostly two casements with a single mullion. Entrance doors typically have a pitched canopy or porch. Some use in more modern dwellings of squared and coursed Blue Lias stone or reconstituted stone, such as Bradstone is not in character with the rest of the village and is not encouraged. Given that the local conglomerate stone is no longer quarried, a common alternative is lime render with a bagged finish.



**Above: St Lawrence's Church, below Lower Old Ditch Farm. Both listed and landmark buildings**





## 4. The Built Character and Form of Westbury Sub-Mendip

4.1 The survey working sheet attached as Appendix 1 details the factors considered in the survey undertaken in late May 2023. From this work, the following analysis has been developed. Variation within the village and character areas will be discussed in section 5.

4.2 **Landmark Buildings:** Figure 5 shows the buildings defined as ‘landmarks’, meaning they offer a visual reference within the built form that aids recognition and distinctiveness. Smaller features have also been identified, things such as the old water pumps – which are distinctive and unique but not a significant and immediate visual reference point. Features add to the richness of the urban form however and need to be conserved if possible. In Westbury the landmarks are mostly within the older village. To the north they are farmhouses, in the centre of the village they are mixed residences and civic buildings.

4.3 **Boundary Treatments:** Figure 5 shows boundary hedges and stone walls. Sometimes a boundary has both hedge and stone wall, in which case the visually prominent feature is shown. Hedges are more common on the village fringe and the northern area of the village, stone walls are a general feature, but particularly dominant in the old town area, usually finished with “cock and hen” coping stones.

4.4 **Views within the Village:** Both panoramic and glimpsed views of the countryside have been identified in Figure 5. As discussed above (2.5 and 3.3), views and close proximity to areas of green space are a feature of the village and its hinterland. It is generally true that panoramic views are taken over open land while glimpsed views are predominantly a feature of built-up streets, and Westbury-sub-Mendip is no exception.



**The Community Shop – landmark building**



Figure 5 a) and b): Landmarks, boundary treatment and views





Above: view from Broadhay  
Below: hedge and stone wall boundaries



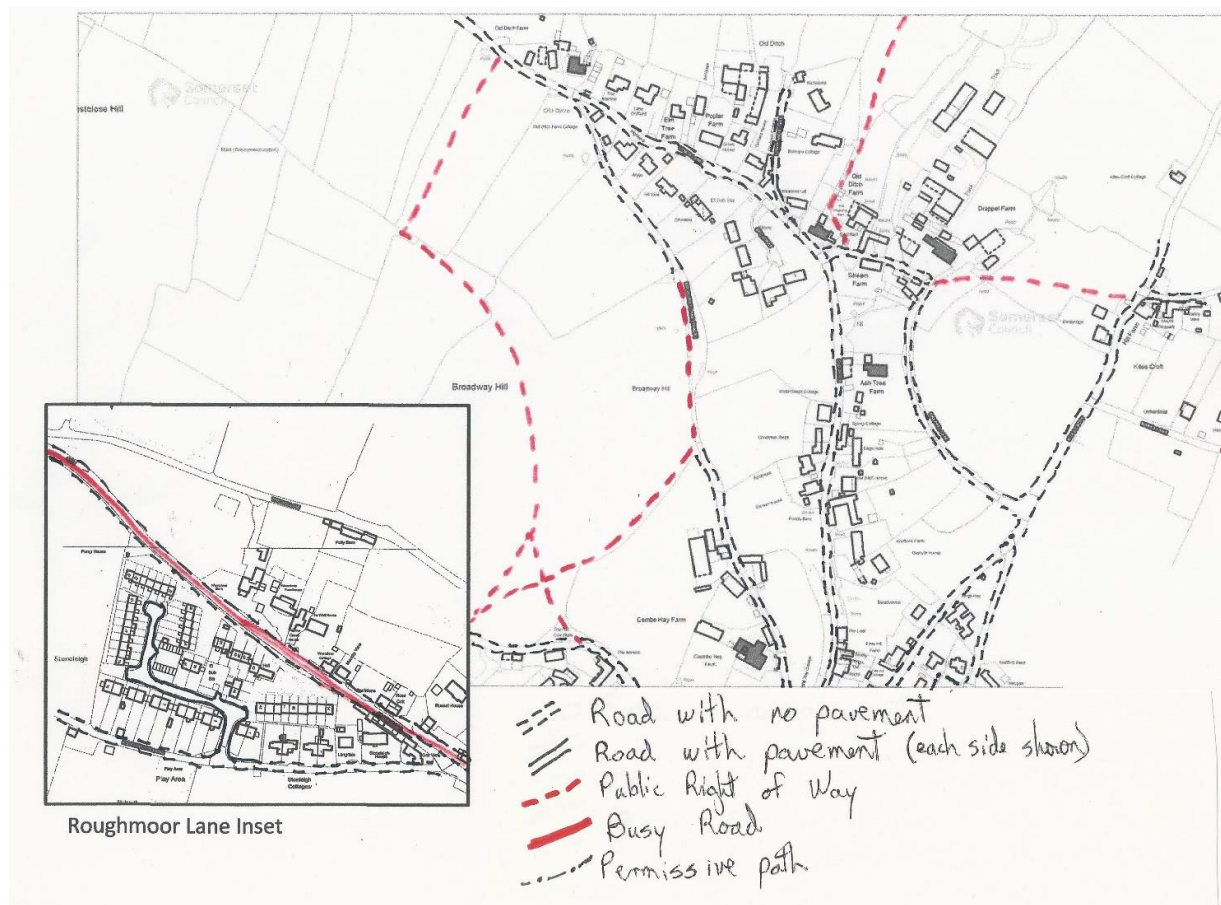


**4.5 The Road and Path Network** was assessed mainly in terms of the amount of traffic on it, and whether or not a footway was provided alongside the carriageway. Figures 6a and 6b show the survey analysis results. The majority of streets have no footway and are traditional narrow lanes. More modern residential development has introduced footways, which are often a jarring visual intrusion into the street scene. On the minor residential roads, a shared solution on short streets would work better. The exception of course is the main road through the village, the A371. Here the lack of footway and crossings is a barrier to movement on foot and other active travel modes. The safety concerns of residents were shown in a recent survey to discourage sustainable travel within the village (see para 2.9 above). Where there is not the width on the A371 to provide footways, a traffic calming solution should be found that gives pedestrians better defined rights to use and cross the street safely and slows vehicular traffic. The permeability offered by the footpath and rights of way network should be protected and extended where possible.

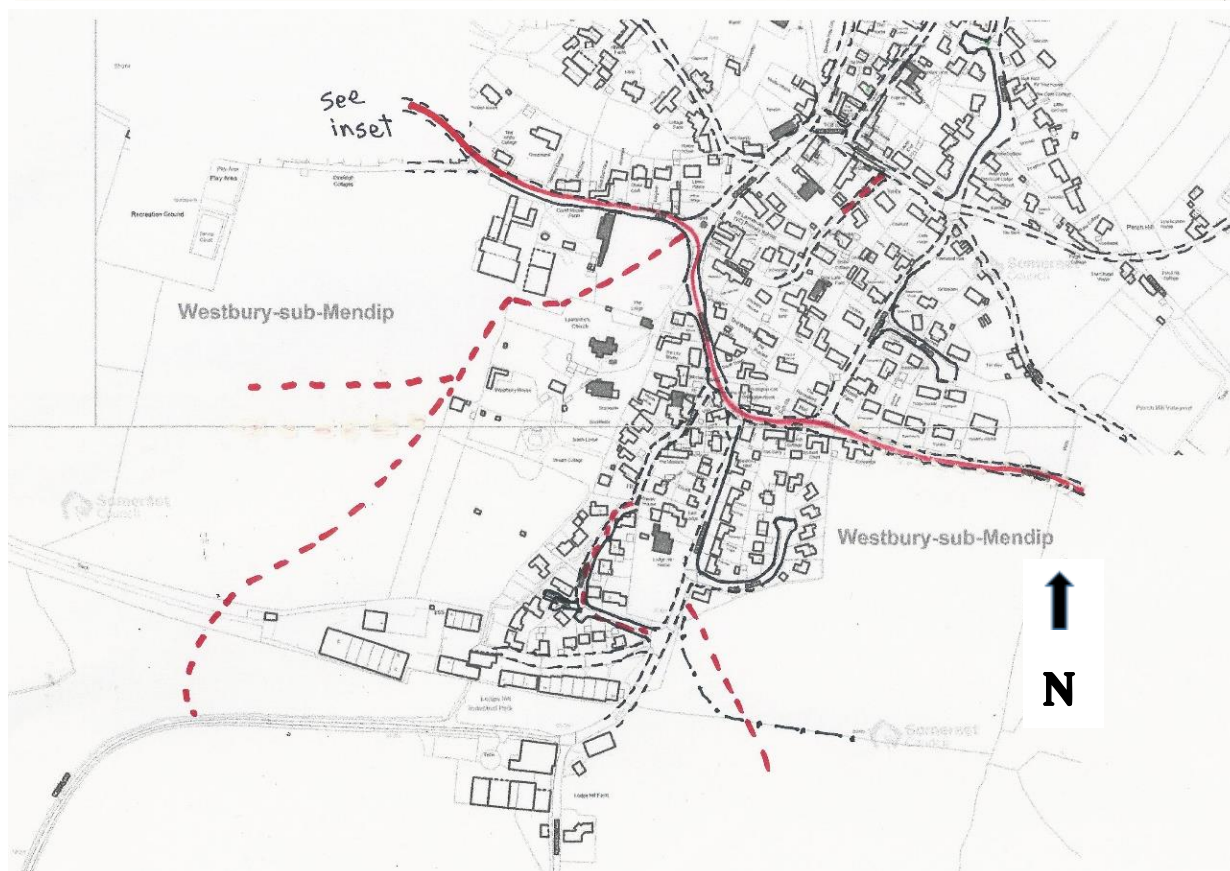


**The A371 through Westbury Sub-Mendip**





**a)**



**b)**

**Figure 6a and 6b: Roads and Footpath network**



**4.6 Natural Features in the built environment:** Figure 7 details the significant trees in the urban environment, open space and water features. The surrounding fields and areas of green space with orchards shown separately are also indicated. The rural setting of the northern area farms and dwellings shows clearly. The older parts of the village often have more blurred boundaries between homes and fields as well. Green Open Space open to the public is found at the western end of the village, off Roughmoor Lane, and around the church and churchyard; elsewhere there is extensive green space within the village but in private hands. The Square in the centre of the village is an area of hard landscaping – with a mainly tarmac surface. It is used for car-parking but also for events such as street parties and informal socialising.



**Socialising in the Square**

**Right: watercourse and trees Lodge Lane**

**Below: Recreation Area off Roughmoor Lane**







a)



b)

Figure 7 a) and b) detail natural features within the built environment



4.7 **Roofing materials** are either slate or double or triple Roman clay tiles for the most part, on roof slopes of at least 45 degrees. Figure 8 (source Google Maps) shows a roofscape of the village. This demonstrates a mix of these materials for roofing, more varied in the older village, with the uniform treatment on the newer estates less in keeping.

**Figure 8: Roofscape Westbury Sub-Mendip** (from Google Earth 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023)

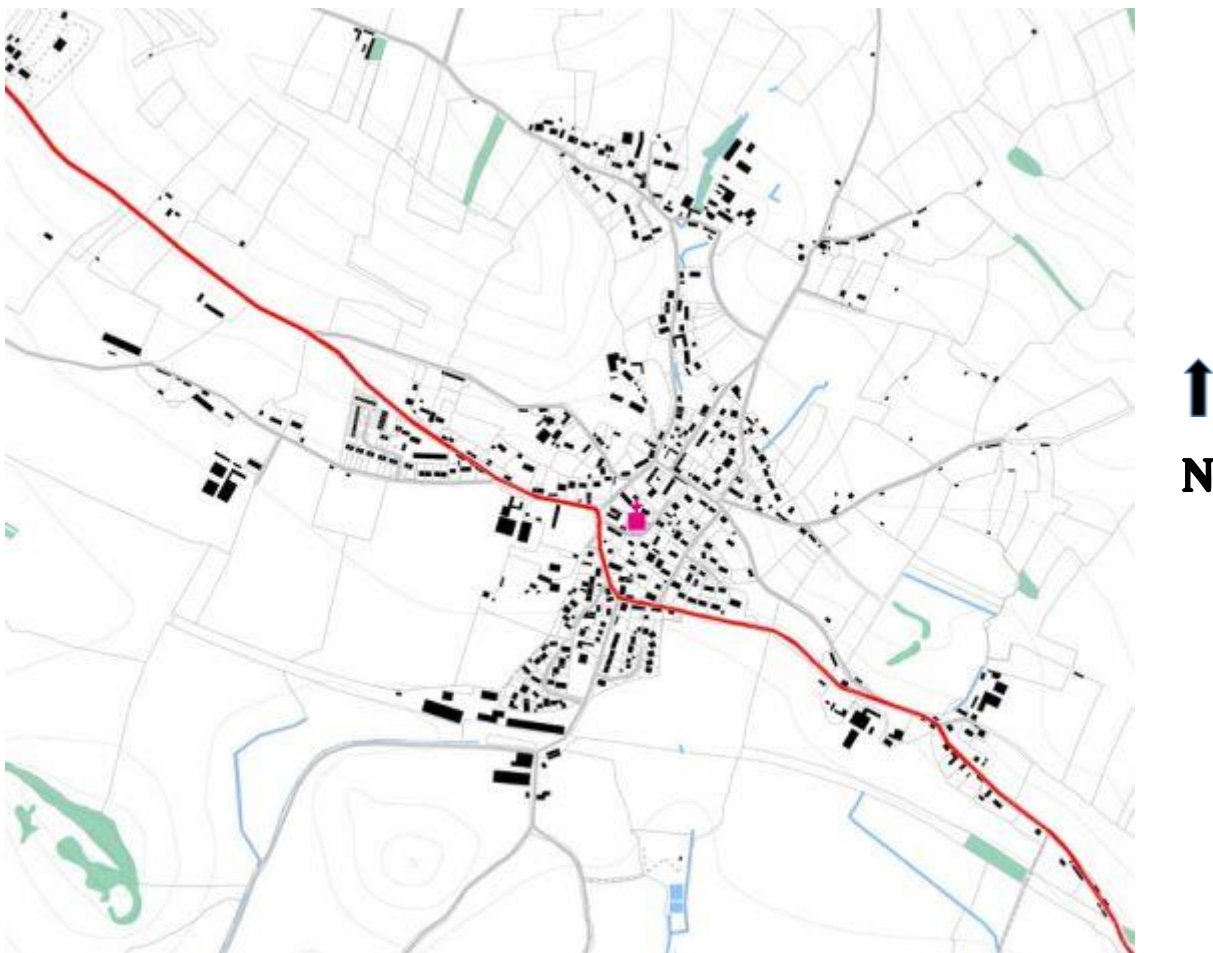




**4.8 Building layout in the village** is shown in Figure 9. The more spaced nature of the northern area, and more regular street layouts in the modern residential developments can be seen. The older village shows a less regular layout, often because gradient differences needed to be accommodated. The effect is heightened by the differing frontage to the lanes of properties, and frequent orientation of the side of a dwelling to the lane. The Old and New Slopes area, with normally single infill dwellings added, has carried on this informal layout, further softened by the trees and vegetation of the area. The greater variation in layout on the Lodge Hill Estate is an exception among the modern estate development.

**4.9 Building types** Dwellings in the village are either one or two storey for the most part, with the upper storey often in the roof space. The older village has a mix of heights, within this narrow range. Gradient differences mean that bungalows can fit into a roofline along with two storey dwellings, and gentle variation is part of the visual charm of the village. As discussed in the geology section above, the traditional building material for elevations was the local conglomerate limestone, not laid to regular courses. There is also use of render on old and well as newer buildings, but brick should be avoided for elevations.

**Figure 9: Urban Ground of Westbury Sub-Mendip** *NB The church is in the wrong location on original!*



From MacGregor and Smith 2020

4.9 The features of older buildings are normally more varied and complex than the modern developments. Given that modern development has been built in small estates at the same time, and older development will have been undertaken individually for the most part, this is not surprising. Too much uniformity in new development is out of keeping with the character of the older village and conservation area however, and should be avoided.

## 5. Character Areas in Westbury Sub-Mendip

5.1 From the analysis of the survey data in Section 4 above, the village can be usefully divided into 7 distinct areas as shown in Figure 11. They are the:

**1. Dispersed settlement and farmsteads of the Northern Slopes** Set in a valley into the Mendip hills, this area includes traditional farms and very low density development. Dwellings are almost lost within the trees and vegetation and nestle into the slopes. The area is within the conservation area and there are several listed buildings, the old farmhouses. A small water course feature has been built into the historic fabric of the area, and there is limited, dispersed infill of more modern development.

**2. Church and Environs, including the allocated site to the west of the church** The church and its setting among its courtyard and leafy large homes and gardens is an important historic and visual asset of the village. It is unlikely new development will be encouraged within the curtilage of the church and other listed buildings of this enclave. However a site to the west of the church has been allocated for residential development in the Local Plan, and has been included within this area for design guidance purposes.

**3. Village Edge Estates (post-war development)** Recent development where opportunities have been missed to reflect the form of the old village and conservation area. Although this area is the only one not included within the conservation area, the newer estates are all adjacent to the conservation area boundary.

**4. Lodge Hill Estate** Recent development with some design features that blend in with the historic village. This small estate has a distinct character, and the treatment of the water course and irregular layout of dwellings has paid regard to the character and form of the old village.

**5. Old Village** The Old Village in contrast to the Northern Slopes, has a much higher density of development, and while vegetation is still a feature, particularly to the north of the A371, it is the built form that dominates. Narrow lanes, often with steep gradients are the typical street form. Homes are closer to the lanes, and elevations vary in aspect. Traditional materials are generally used, but roof types are varied. Stone wall boundaries predominate over hedgerows. There is some variation in roof height, but few buildings over two storeys.

**6. Old and New Slopes** This area includes traditional and new dwellings, with small-scale infill developments a feature. Steep slopes and extensive vegetation make this area closer in character to the Northern Slopes than the Old Town. The density of development is low and buildings are more hidden among vegetation. There is a soft boundary with the surrounding countryside, and green wedges within it are an important feature.

**7. Village Edge and “Green Wedges”** A key feature of Westbury is that it can be hard to determine where the village actually ends. Historically the village has soft and irregular edges, but new development is beginning to lose this organic edge effect. The green wedges - areas of green space penetrating between built up areas - are a crucial feature of the village, protected within the conservation area as a feature, and should be maintained.

There may be some discussion about exact boundaries, but these defined areas provide a useful framework in which to consider the village character and design guidance for them. They are

considered separately further in this section, after the general design guidance in 5.2, which will apply to all of them. The industrial estate has been excluded from consideration.

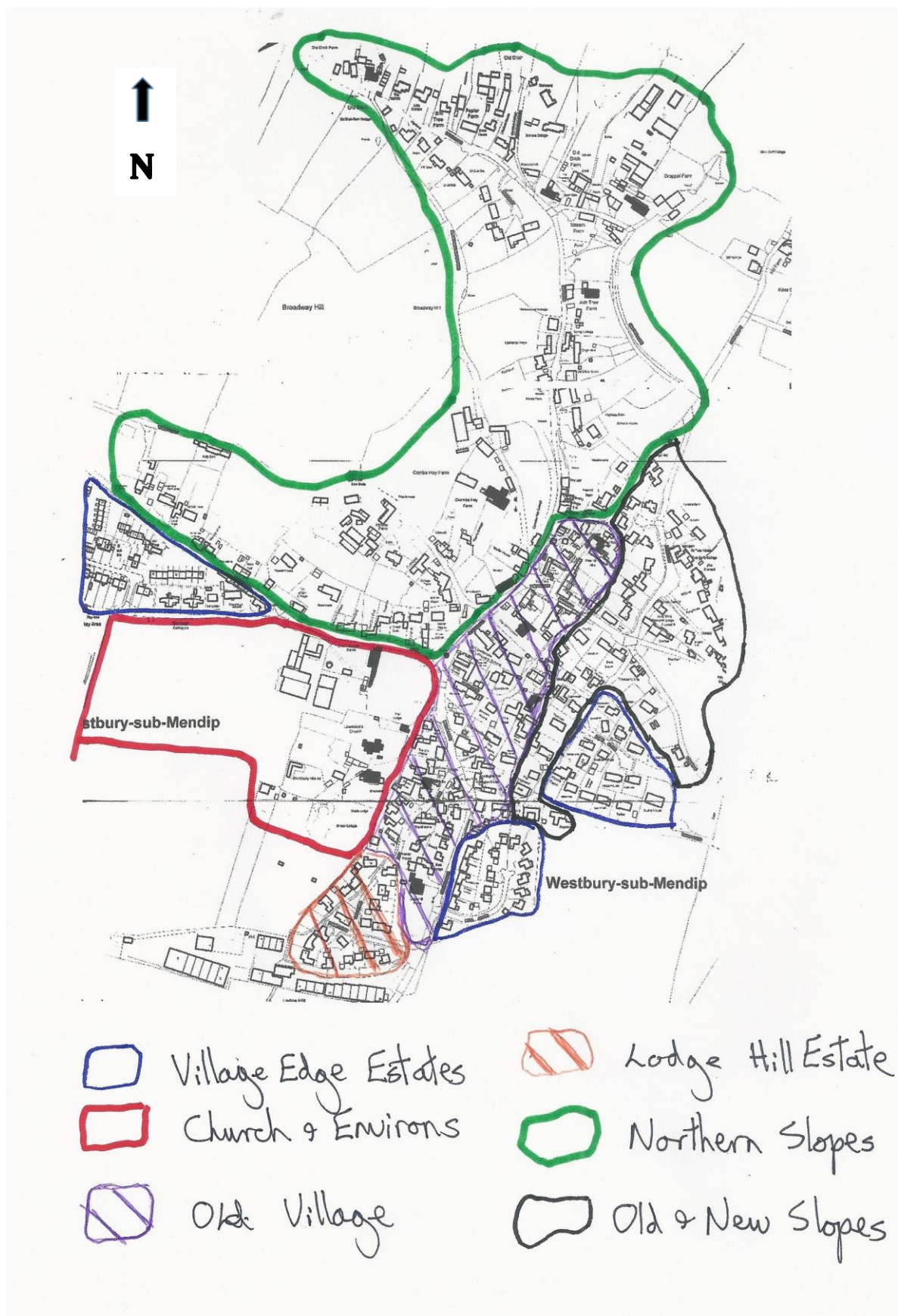


Figure 11: Character Areas in Westbury-sub-Mendip

## General Design Guidelines for the Village

5.2 Besides the guidance for each character area, there are some general guidelines for development in Westbury set out below. All development will be expected to comply with them, as well as the specific guidelines for the relevant character area:

- Dwelling layouts should respect the form of the character area and reflect traditional building features. This form includes a mix of size and types of property in close proximity with homes close to the narrow lanes. The "modern builds" have introduced a homogenous urban style that would best not be repeated.
- New residential road layouts should be similar in scale to the traditional lanes of the village, with the soft edges and varying width and alignment of the lanes. Shared surface solutions designed to slow vehicle traffic are preferred, where pedestrians have priority and a safe environment.
- New development should be consistent with the overall radial pattern of buildings within the settlement and should maintain areas of green space penetrating between built up areas towards the village centre. Layout within any significant new development should not introduce a rectilinear grid.
- Elevations should use a local stone that reflects the local reddish-brown conglomerate base limestone rock or reconstituted stone that presents an acceptable appearance of such stone, laid random and uncoursed with some render in less visible areas and used to good overall effect. Use of squared limestone at quoins; stone jambs to windows and doors with a curved brickwork head in key buildings or elevations will usefully repeat local character. Larger developments will need to vary building elevations and scale in order to be in keeping with the small-scale variation found in the traditional village.
- Roofs should be steep, at least 45°. Double or triple Roman clay tiles and slates feature in the village, extensions to existing buildings should continue with the existing roofing material. New build may use either, but a substantial development of more than 10 homes should consider mixing the use of roofing material to maintain the mix of material in the village.
- Development will generally be expected to be no more than two storeys in height, exceptionally a third storey partially or wholly within the roof space will be acceptable depending on context, particularly the heights of adjacent properties, and character area.
- Door and window treatments should respect the vernacular wherever possible, unless an innovative and modern design requires an alternative treatment. On developments of several homes, the mixed features of the older village should be echoed, to avoid a uniformity of appearance that will clash with the wider village.
- Street lighting is not used in the village to the north of the A371, and only in two areas to the south of the main road. The dark sky policy of the parish council and the AONB Board require lighting to maintain and support the dark skies that are a strength of the AONB. Any lighting of buildings should take care not to cause light pollution, external lighting to be shaded and as subdued as possible.

- Boundary treatments will normally be required, and should be constructed in stone or a planted hedge in line with the treatment of surrounding properties. Any existing stone walls on a site should be retained.
- Any substantial new development should be required to contribute to traffic calming measures on the A371 in Westbury Sub-Mendip, to compensate for the increased traffic on it the development will create. Crossing points – perhaps at chicane width restrictions – will improve the ambience of the village as well as increasing the use of sustainable travel within it.
- The public footpath network should be protected in any development, and where possible extended. This will ensure the permeability of the village for pedestrians and promote active travel, a health benefit for residents and contribution to reducing the carbon footprint of the village.

## **Area 1: Northern Slopes**

5.3 Set in a valley into the Mendip hills, this area includes traditional farms and very low density development. Dwellings are almost lost within the trees and vegetation and nestle into the slopes. The area is within the conservation area and there are several listed buildings, the old farmhouses. A small water course feature has been built into the historic fabric of the area, and there is limited dispersed infill of more modern development.

### **Additional Guidelines:**

- Development should continue the low density of this area, and respect and maintain open space and green wedges.
- Any new dwelling should continue the informal and varied layout of buildings, with variety of form within a general 2 storey, pitched roof brief.
- Dwellings and extensions should be built into the slope and gradient so that the dominance of the surrounding vegetation is maintained.
- Materials for elevations should use the traditional dolomite limestone or rubble stone as appropriate. Some use of render in new development may be acceptable. The conservation section of the LPA will advise further on appropriate materials and features.
- Existing chimneys should be retained, and it may be appropriate to include chimneys on extensions to some traditional buildings.
- Any new street or shared drive should continue the safe shared surface design, and blend into existing lanes in form.
- Trees and hedgerows are to be protected and retained in any new development with new planting of native species as required to continue the dominance of trees and vegetation over the built form in the visual appearance of the area.
- Boundary treatments to be in a local stone wall or hedge as immediate context determines. Existing stone walls are to be retained.
- Landmarks and features to be maintained, including watercourses. Where possible, the enhancement of watercourses is encouraged.





**Farm and homes in the landscape**





## Area 2: Church and Environs

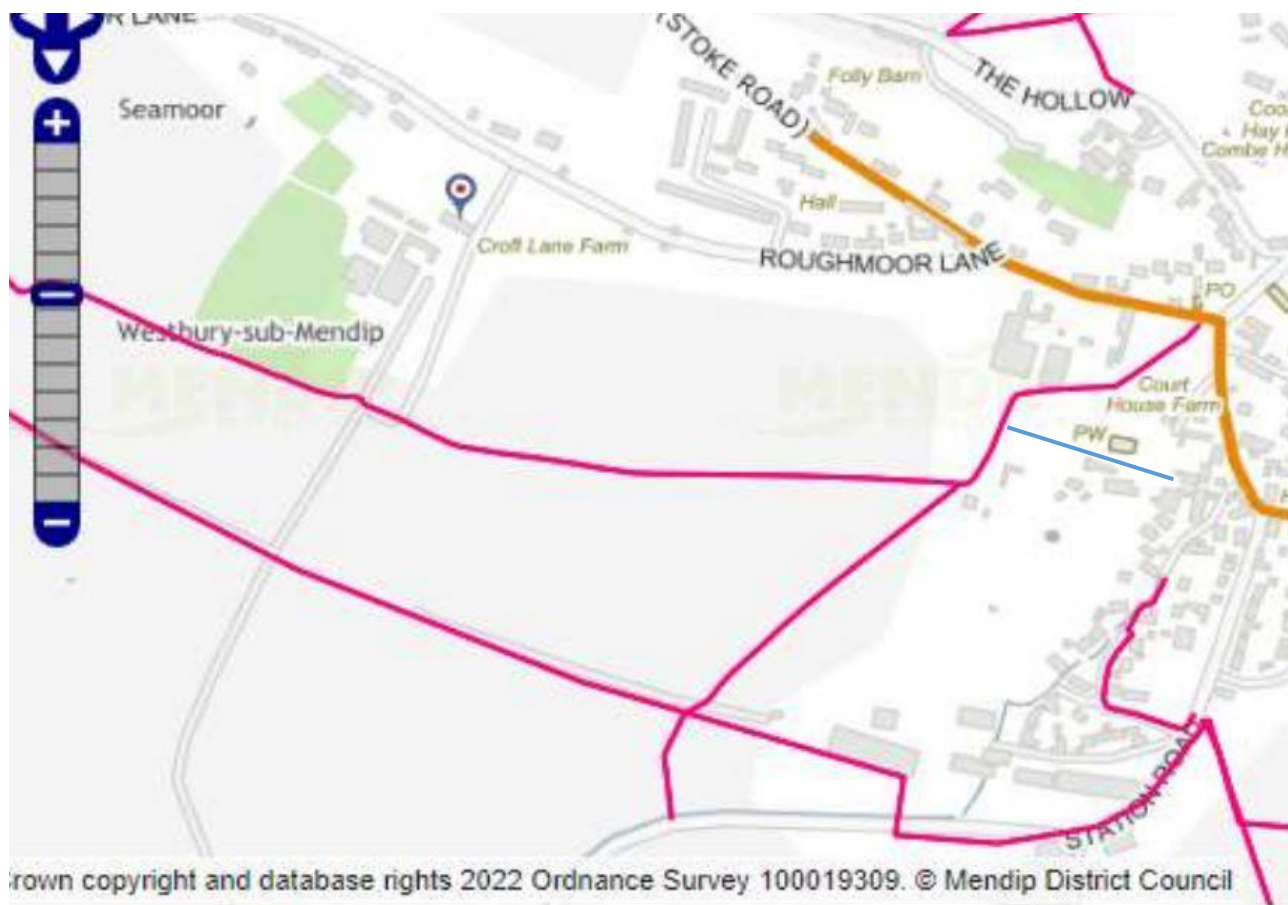
5.5 The church and its setting among its courtyard and leafy large homes and gardens is an important historic and visual asset of the village. It is unlikely new development will be encouraged within the curtilage of the church and other listed buildings of this enclave. However a site to the west of the church has been allocated for residential development in the Local Plan, and the following design guidelines apply to development on this site.

### Design Guidelines for land off Roughmoor Lane

- Existing rights of way should be retained and incorporated into the development where they cross it. A new right of way should be provided that links into the church graveyard and from there into the village.
- An informal and non-regimented design and layout of the dwellings on site should maintain the irregular presentation of buildings to streets as found in the old village area.
- A range of dwelling size will assist in breaking down any tendency of the new development to appear uniform and regimented.
- The Palette of materials used for elevations and roofs should vary, maintaining the links with materials found in the Old Village, and the variation. Old Village guidance, as set out in Area 5 below, is together with the general guidance, most appropriate for this site.
- Streets should use a shared surface solution for access.
- Boundaries should be clearly defined, and normally constructed in local stone rather than hedgerows. Existing stone walls and hedgerows are to be retained.
- The edges of the development should follow the guidance for Area 7, and ensure a soft edge to the development is created with tree-planting, variation in dwelling layouts and gardens or open space mostly forming the boundary.
- The redundant modern farm buildings that marr views of the listed church should be removed as part of this development.
- There will be a requirement for open space on the site which should replicate areas of green space penetrating towards the village centre incorporating footpath links.



**The Lodge: landmark building**



Footpaths crossing site at Roughmoor Lane and indicative new link required (blue line).

(Source: Pre-app 2022/2055/L7PA)



St Lawrence Church and Environs



### Area 3: Village Edge Estates

Recent development where opportunities have been missed to reflect the form of the old village and conservation area. Although this area is the only one not included within the conservation area, the newer estates are all adjacent to the conservation area boundary, and development within them needs to ensure that the attributes of the conservation area are continued.

#### Design Guidelines

- Complying with the general guidance on page 22 will ensure that future development is more in keeping with the character of Westbury Sub-Mendip.
- Any development at the village edge should contribute areas of green space penetrating between built up areas towards the village centre
- Opportunities to improve the sensitivity of these areas to the character of the historic village should be considered in any extension or redevelopment proposals.



**Glimpsed view – Roughmoor Lane estate.**



**Bell Close Estate from above**



#### Area 4: Lodge Hill

Recent development with some design features aiming to blend in with the historic village. This small estate has a distinct character, and the treatment of the water course and irregular layout of dwellings has paid regard to the character and form of the old village.

#### Design Guidelines

- Maintain informal layout and green spaces.
- Amendment of some design features, such as porticos around the porch, to more traditional forms and features would help the estate echo the existing village.
- The street has moved away from the footway and carriageway design of the modern estates, and a shared surface approach to street design should be followed in any future extension of this area.
- Materials used in this development are not in keeping with traditional materials, and there is less variety in roofing materials than the general guidance would prefer. Any future extension to the area should vary the treatment and materials of elevations and roofs.



**Informal layout, retention of natural features and less formal street design go some way to making this development more compatible with the old village form.**



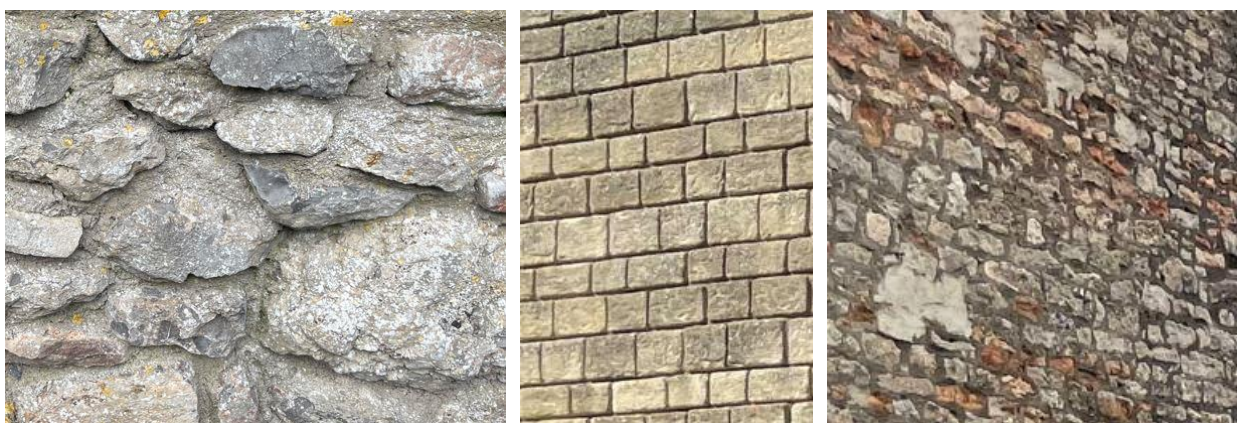
## Area 5: Old Village

5.4 The Old Village in contrast to the Northern Slopes, has a much higher density of development, and while vegetation is still a feature, particularly to the north of the A371, it is the built form that dominates. Like most of the village this area is within the conservation area, and there are several listed buildings, both civic buildings and farms. Further guidance on design and materials should be sought from the Conservation Section of Somerset Council.

Narrow lanes, often with steep gradients are the typical street form, sometimes only allowing pedestrians access through. Homes are closer to the lanes, and varied in which elevation is presented to the street, and how close to the highway it is. Traditional materials are generally used, but roof types in particular show variation as a feature. Stone wall boundaries predominate over hedgerows. There is a gentle variation in roof height, but there are hardly any buildings over two storeys.

### Guidelines:

- Development should continue the informal layout of dwellings and informal and varied building line and roof ridges and should maintain areas of green space penetrating between built up areas towards the village centre.
- The density of development in this area varies somewhat, but is generally high. Development density in the area should be in keeping with its immediate context.
- Traditional building materials should be used, in keeping with the conservation area. Some use of render may be acceptable.
- Existing chimneys should be retained, and other features of a dwelling carried over into any extension.
- Any new streets should use a safe shared surface approach, in keeping with existing lanes.
- The square is to be protected as a meeting place, and the environment for people and visual appearance improved if opportunities arise.
- Boundary treatments to be stone walls normally. Hedge boundary treatment may be appropriate in some locations, particularly on boundaries with the open countryside. Existing stone walls are to be retained.
- Landmark buildings and features are to be retained, and their setting enhanced where possible.



**Traditional wall and elevation, with reconstituted stone elevation (centre)**





**Pump feature Duck Lane**



**Traditional windows and door with porch**



**Old Town Roofscapes above and below**





## Area 6: Old and New Slopes

Within this area are found traditional buildings and dwellings, as well as many new developments – normally individual infill sites, or a few dwellings built at the same time. The slope and gradient, and extensive vegetation mean that this area is closer to the Northern Slopes in density of development. It has a similar visual appearance of buildings nestling into the countryside, and has been included within the Conservation Area boundary. The area has a generally soft boundary with the surrounding countryside, and green wedges within it are an important feature of the area and the conservation area.

### Guidelines:

- The green wedges penetrating between built up areas should be protected and maintained
- Tree-planting and soft landscaping will be required as part of any new development, particularly on the village edge.
- The density of development in this area will be nearer the low density of the Northern Slopes area.
- Building materials in new development will have due regard to traditional form, but render solutions are more prevalent in the area, and some use of render will normally be acceptable.



**New infill development – informal layout and low density**

**Below: New development and green wedge**



## Area 7: Village edge and Green Wedges

A key feature of Westbury Sub-Mendip is that it can be hard to determine where the village actually ends. The northern slopes present dwellings almost hidden in the landscape. The old town areas normally have soft and irregular edges to the village. New development however, with the building out of a regular parcel of land is beginning to lose this organic edge effect, to the detriment of the character of the village. The areas of green space (green wedges) shown on figure 4a above (page 11) penetrate the built up area of the village from all directions. They are a crucial feature of the village, included within the designated conservation area, and must be protected and conserved.

### Design Guidelines

- Development on the edge of the village and green corridors should not present a hard visual edge but blend into the green space and fields with appropriate soft landscaping and layouts.
- The green wedges penetrating between built up areas towards the village centre should be protected and maintained.

### Example of how this can be managed:



**Hedgerow retained on boundary Bell Close**



**Gives a softer edge to the village at this location**





**Fields (green wedge) comes into the built environment, and typical lane (Northern Slopes)**

## References

British Geological Survey Website

Landscape Assessment of Mendip District: Chris Blandford and Associates 1997

Mendip Landscape Types and Character Areas: MacGregor and Smith 2020

Mendip District Council: Design Guidance for Extensions

Westbury sub-Mendip Parish Plan 2008

## Appendix 1: Methodology and Survey Pro-Forma

### Settlement Assessment Proforma

[BANES toolkit adapted]

**Surveyor:** ..... **Area:** .....

**Date:** ..... **Weather:** .....

Use these questions as a starting point, ignore any that are not relevant. Mark the map up as you go, and add notes on these sheets. If you begin to see distinct character areas arising within the area you are surveying, make notes of the difference as you go along, and mark the boundary on the plan.

#### Key for Village Character Appraisal



Panoramic View (arrow indicates direction)



Focused View (arrow indicates direction)



Landmark feature/building



Significant trees/groups of trees



Hedgerow

XXXXX Stone Wall



Busy road with pavements



Road, no pavements



Open Space (soft = green; hard = hatched line)



Water features (pond, stream etc)

If other features are noteworthy in your view, add them to the map and make a note of the symbol you have used. For example the key refers to hedgerows, but boundary treatments can also be fencing or walls (brick or stone).

**General Notes:**

The following table suggests attributes of the area you are surveying to look for. Use the questions as a starting point, makes notes as is useful for you, and don't forget to mark the map using the key.

Character Element	Photos
Is your area similar or are different character areas apparent?	
<b>Is the topography:</b> flat; hilly; in a valley; plateau? Steep or shallow?	
<b>Streets:</b> Winding? Grid-like? Narrow or wide? Cul-de-sacs? On street parking? Buildings close or set back? Boundary treatments to properties/fields – walls, hedges, fences or open? Pavements or not?	
<b>Residential layout:</b> Front Gardens – wide/thin long/short? Houses set in generous gardens or close together?	



Character Element	Photos
<p><b>Open spaces and public areas:</b> Hard or soft landscaping? Clear centre to the area? Well used public space or not? Small or large?</p>	
<p><b>Natural features:</b> Note large, landmark trees (stand alone) and visually significant groups of trees. Note significant hedgerows (over 1m high and 10m long); ponds and wildlife/wilderness areas</p>	
<p><b>Landmarks:</b> Note buildings or features that are visually prominent in the street scene. Make a note of interesting smaller features – an old pump for example.</p>	
<p><b>Views:</b> Are there views out from your area? Are these wide and panoramic or narrow, focused views seen through buildings? Are they to the sea? Is your area visible from other places?</p>	
<p><b>Building types:</b> How many storeys and does this vary much? Terraced/Flats/semi-detached or detached? Do the roofs have a steep or shallow pitch generally or are they flat or with a parapet?</p>	

Character Element	Photos
<p><b>Predominant Materials for buildings:</b> Are the buildings mostly similar or varied? <b>Walls:</b> brick, stone, render or other? <b>Roofs:</b> tile, slate or other? <b>Ground:</b> tarmac, paving stones, concrete setts or other?</p>	
<p><b>Other distinctive details:</b> Chimneys? Benches? Window shapes? Porches?</p>	
<p>Positive features of the area?</p>	
<p>Negative features of the area?</p>	