

Alfington

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 bisecting 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.

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

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

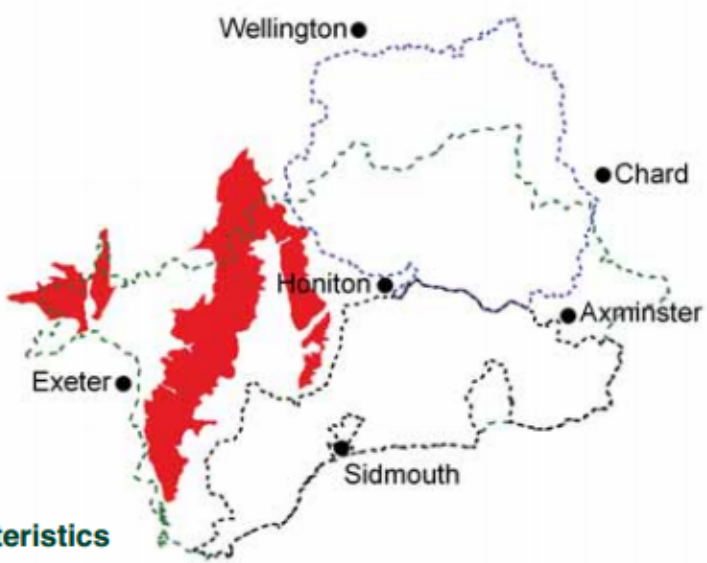
National character area (NCA): Alfington falls within The Devon Redlands National Character Area (NCA). See:

<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

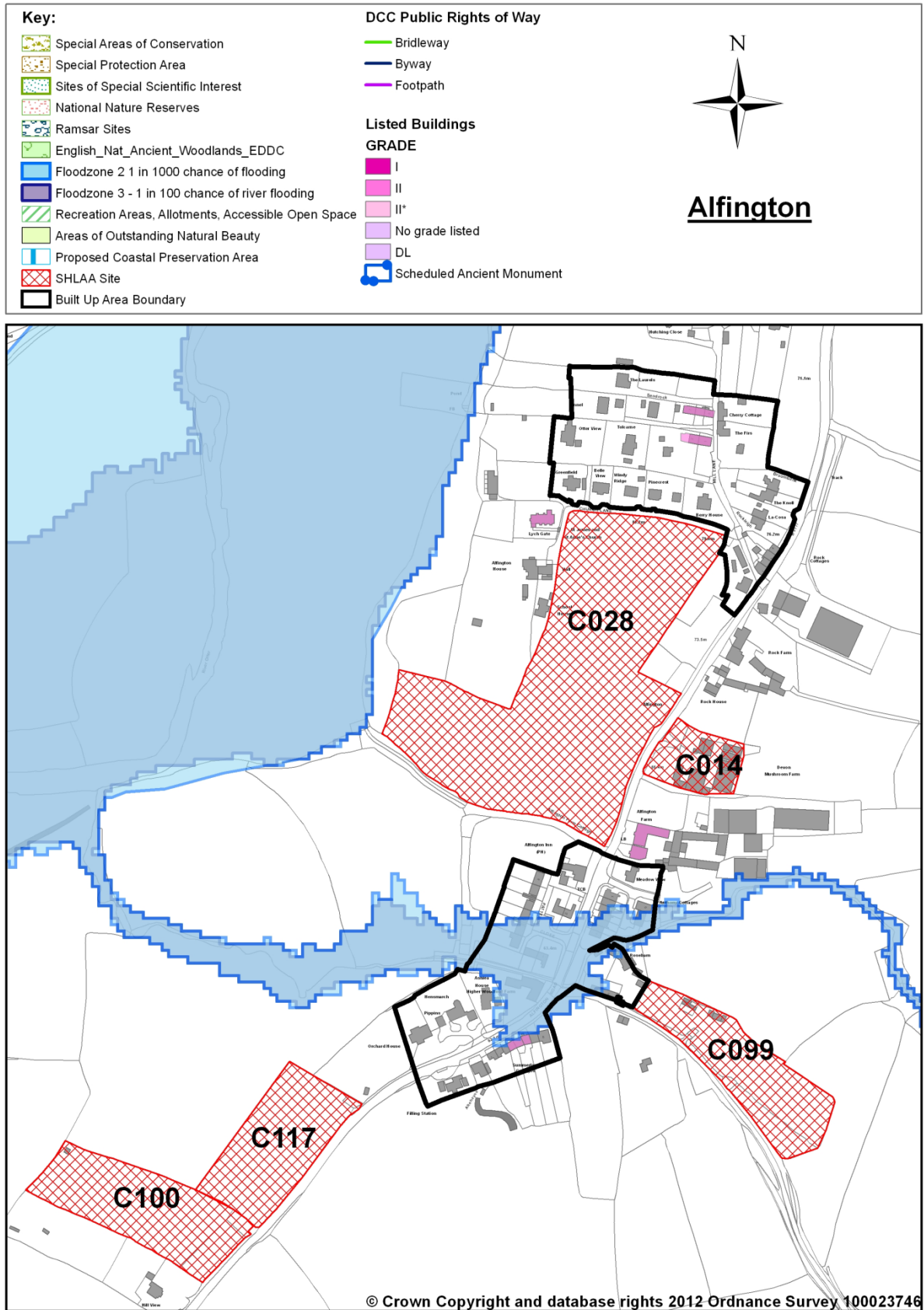
Of this overall classification it advises that:

"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 hedgerows 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."

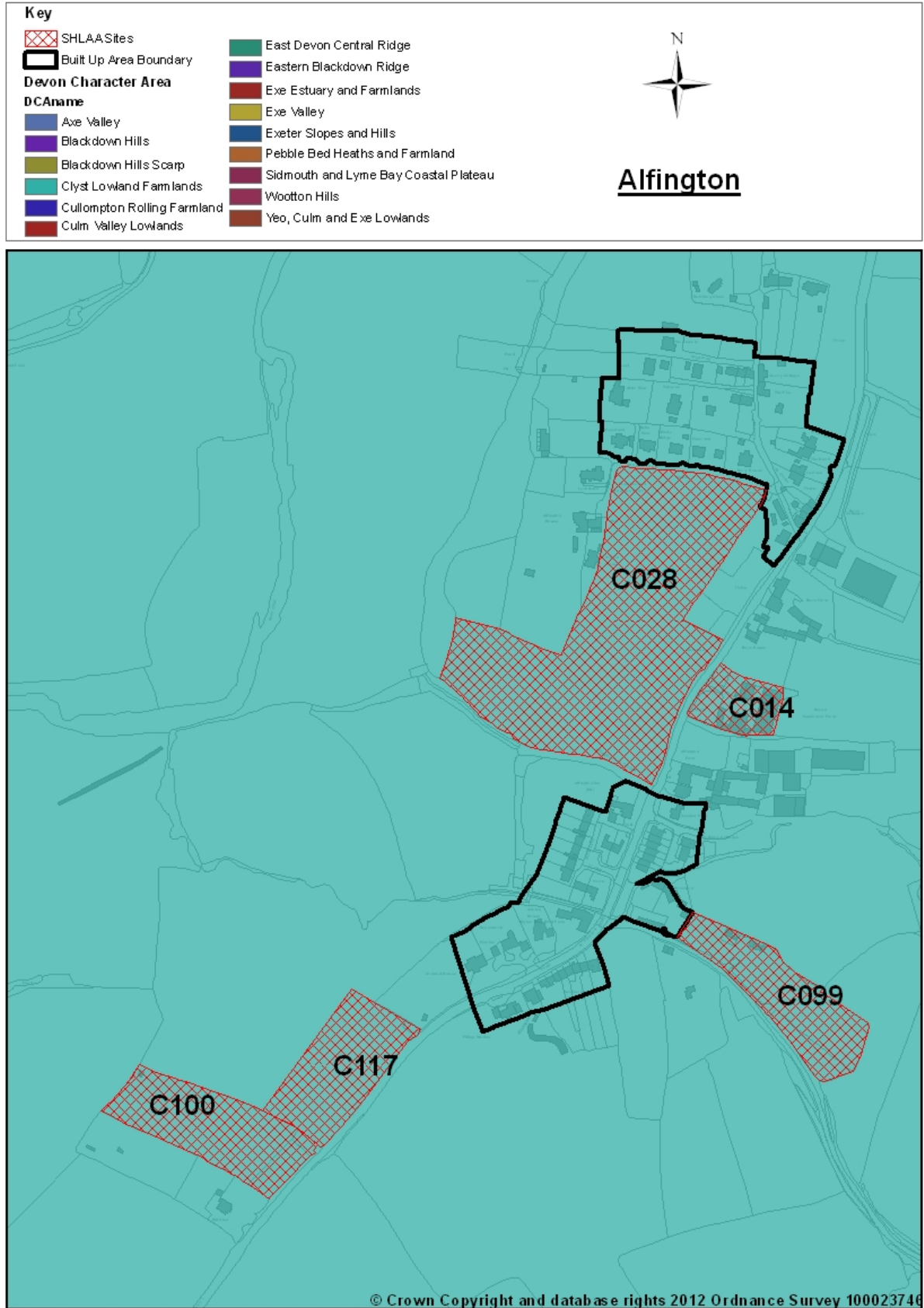
The assessment advises of an overall strategy for this area classification:

"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."

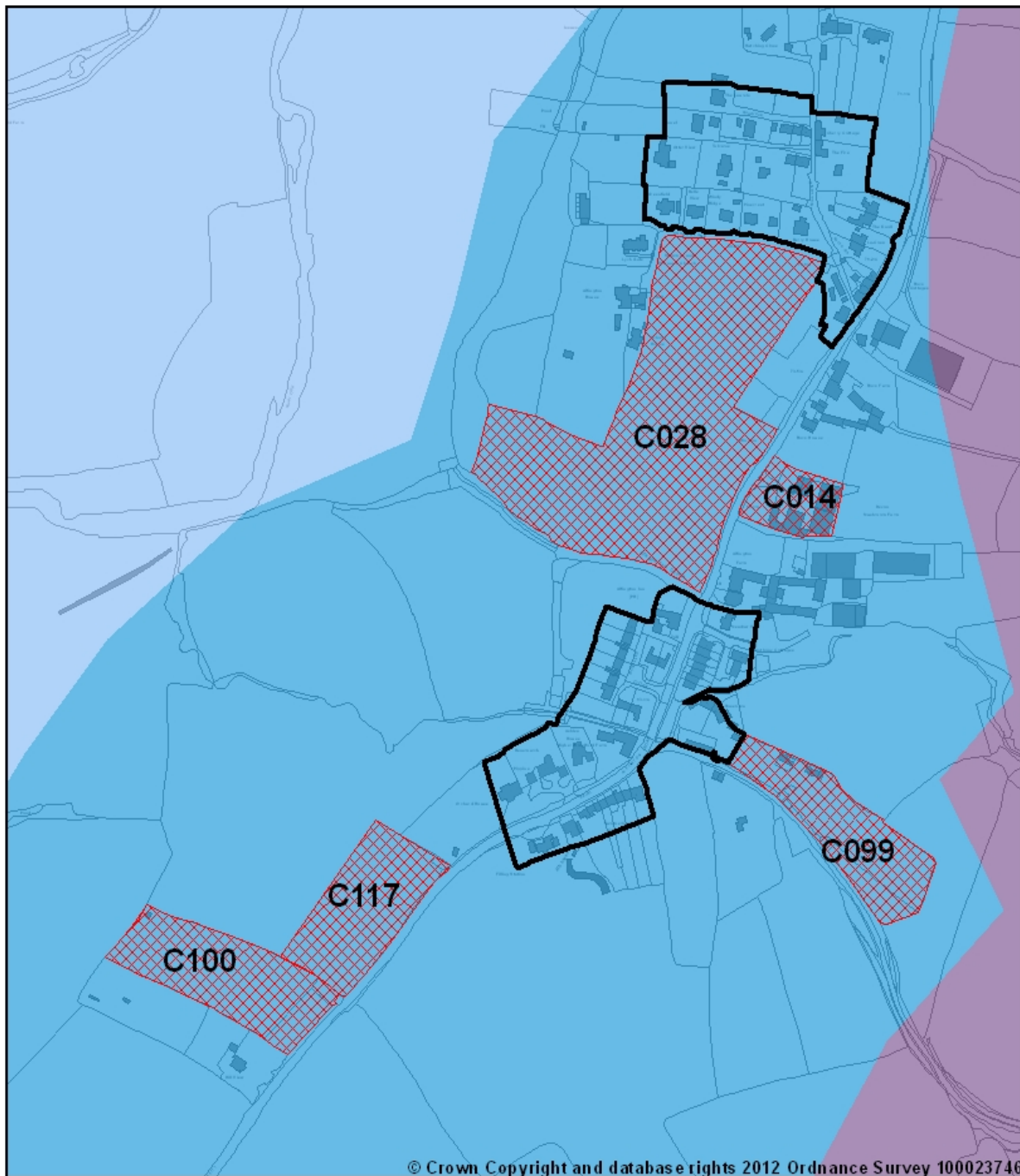
Map showing Site locations and constraints



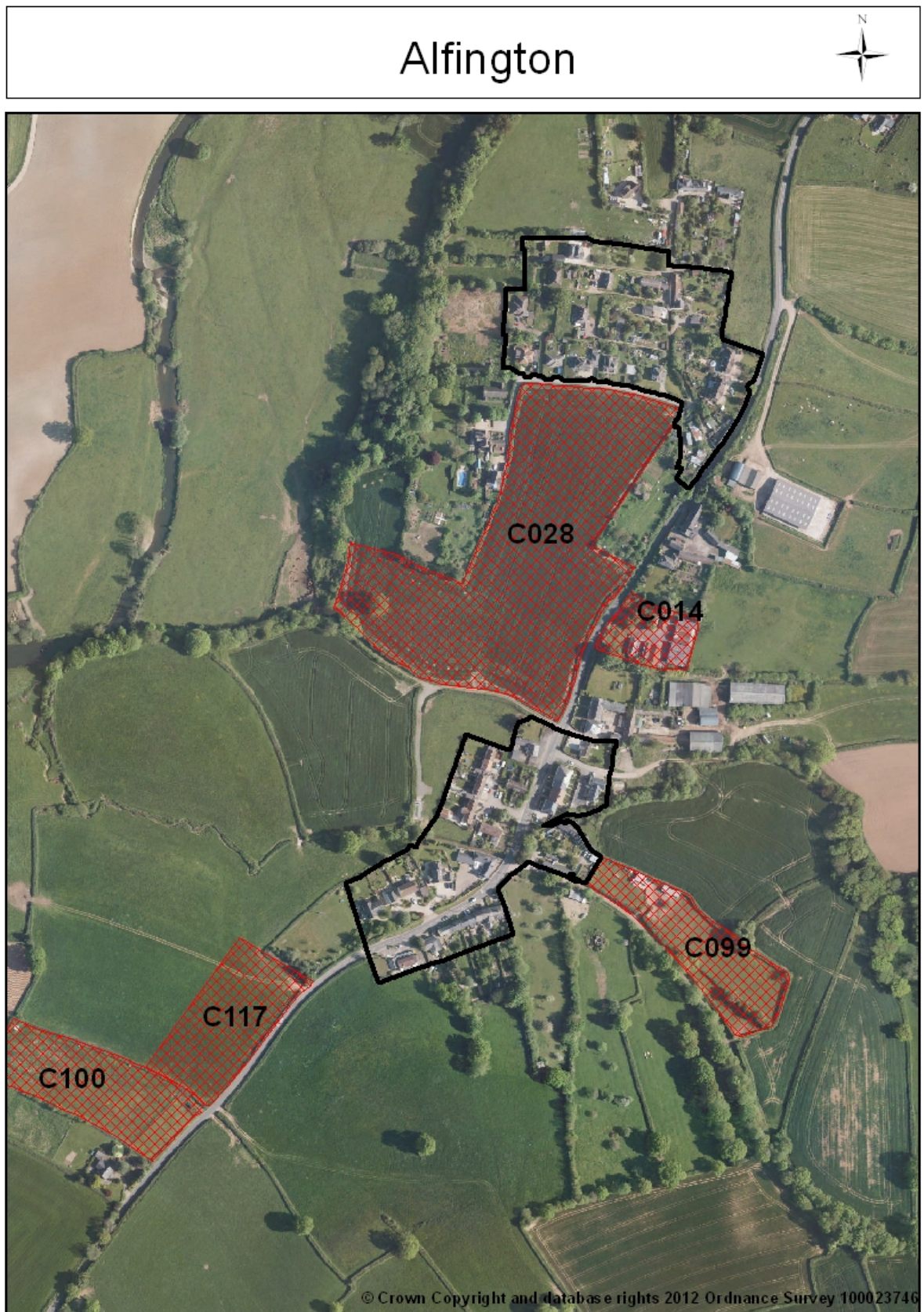
Map showing DCC LCAs



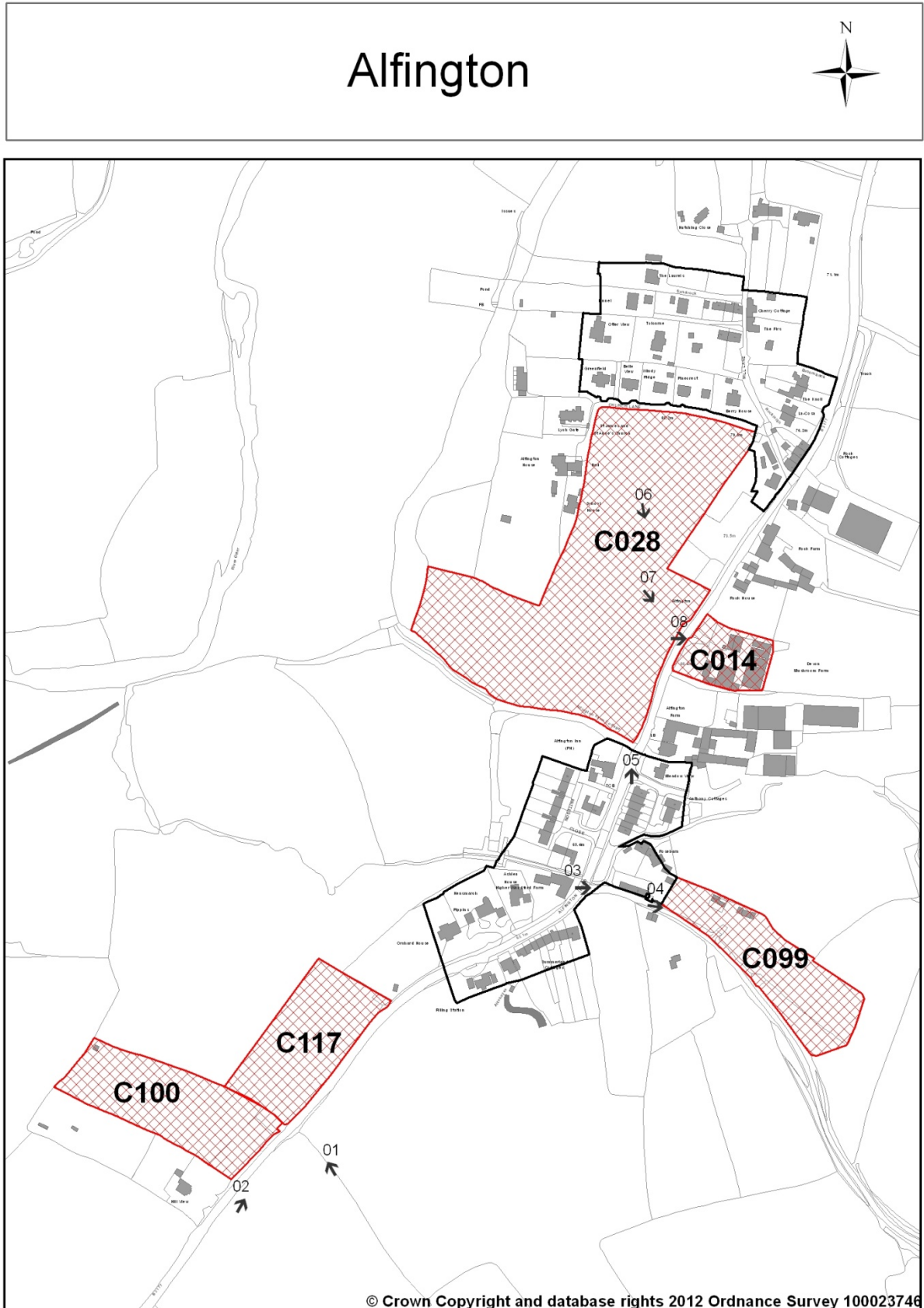
Map showing EDDC LCAs



Aerial photograph showing Site locations



Map showing photo points



Alfington Individual Site Assessments

Site name and location: **C100 and C1117**

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 away 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	The site is considered to be of sensitivity to development being in a		

(including consideration of most/least sensitive areas if the villages is to be taken forward)	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.
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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.		
Skylines 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 existing settlement edge and cultural pattern	L-M		
	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		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 parts of Alfington village and from more distance viewpoints.		
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 beyond the southern 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 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 qualities/significance of designated landscapes		L-M	
	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 land formed by a small field on the southerly side of Alfington.		
Skylines 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 (form 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 someway 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 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	
	The location of the site, in a lowland plain area, but in a rising position in an intimate landscape setting means that it would be sensitive to development.				
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 is to be taken forward)	The site is considered to be sensitive to development on account of the intimate character of its landscape setting and although mature planting 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.				

Site name and location: **Site Number – C28**

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

Surveyor: **MD**

Weather: **Hazy / Overcast**



Looking northward into Site C028

This photograph is taken from a central position in the village looking northwards past the former pub (white house on left of picture).



Looking South across the southern part of C028

This photograph was taken from a point inside

and roughly halfway down site C028 on the eastern side. The central point of the photograph is the former pub in the village (the photograph is a reverse direction shot of the montage above). Site C014, red roof buildings - left hand side of photo can just be seen from in this shot.

Criteria	Lower sensitivity	↔	Higher sensitivity
Special qualities/significance of designated landscapes		L-M	
	<p>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.</p> <p>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</p>		

	the whole, are visible from a wide ranging number of viewpoints within and beyond the village.			
Skylines and landform			M-H	
	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.			
Sense of openness and enclosure			MH	
	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.			
Landscape pattern and complexity			M	
	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.			
Experiential landscape character			M	
	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.			
Relationship to existing settlement edge and cultural pattern			M	
	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).			
Visual sensitivities and intervisibility			M-H	
	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 Alfington village and from more distance viewpoints.				
Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development				M-H	
	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 Alfington. 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>		
Skylines and		M	

landform	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.				
Sense of openness and enclosure		M-L			
	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.				
Landscape pattern and complexity		L-M			
	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.				
Experiential landscape character		L-M			
	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.				
Relationship to existing settlement edge and cultural pattern			M		
	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.				
Visual sensitivities and intervisibility		L-M			
	Despite its slightly elevated position the significant site frontage and boundary planting reduces visual connectivity to surrounding areas.				
Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development		L-M			
	The enclosed nature of the site, the exception being from views form 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.				
Landscape Guidance	The planted boundaries of the site and especially the planted frontage are key assets that would need 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 if 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.				