

ALVINGTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



**SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL
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Introduction

Alvington is a small hamlet consisting of a cluster of historic cottages and a former farm set around a pattern of rural lanes. This rural character contrasts markedly with extensive modern development in the surrounding area, with housing estates to the north and west and a business park to the east, at the junction of Alvington Lane and Bluebell Road.

The District Council has designated the cluster of historic buildings and some of the adjacent open space as a conservation area, in April 2008. Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Designation allows for strengthened planning controls, gives protection to trees, and provides control over the demolition of unlisted buildings. An appraisal of the assets and any detriments will be useful in protecting the character of Alvington. The appraisal follows the content recommended in advice from English Heritage, 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals', published by English Heritage/Planning Advisory Service/DCMS, 2006.

The planning policy context

The Regional Spatial Strategy and the South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted 2006) form the context for conservation area policies. Additional guidance on the protection and management of conservation areas is contained in the national Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment'.

Summary of special interest - the area's key characteristics

- a predominantly rural character, discretely located and hidden although in proximity to large areas of modern development;
- high roadside hedges and occasional trees;
- a simple linear form based on one east-west lane;
- a coherent group of older buildings on Alvington Lane;
- two Listed buildings, three unlisted buildings of intrinsic merit or group value and a noteworthy boundary wall and railings to another unlisted property;
- the consistent use of local limestones in ashlar, dressed and rubble forms, on buildings and boundary walls;
- some characterful details, such as boundary walling, gate piers and iron railings and gates.

MAP ONE SHOWS THE ASSETS OF ALVINGTON

Assessment of the special interest

Location and context

Alvington is situated about two miles (three kilometres) west of Yeovil town centre, to the north of Brympton D' Evercy and the A3088 road to Montacute, and south of Bluebell Road and considerable modern development. The hamlet is at about 60m AOD, on a fairly flat site, with a gentle up slope northward.

General character and plan form

The hamlet is linear, with older cottages set on or near the highway. It is closely related to Alvington Lane which runs past the former Alvington Farm and a small group of stone

cottages to a Y junction. The **plan** form is thus a small agglomeration around a minor junction in a rural lane.

To the west is a large area of green space and modern housing. The southern part of the fork runs down to Alvington Bridge, where it is stopped up by the modern A3088. The northern leg performs a right angle from the fork and runs through modern development back to Bluebell Road.

Landscape setting

The eastern approach is through suburbs of Yeovil and Alvington Lane is accessed via a cluster of modern business and office units. It then assumes a rural character, with high hedges and trees and glimpses of large rectangular fields separated by hedgerows and the busy A3088 is seen and heard to the south. The former nursery site to the north of the lane provides additional trees that are visible by the access. The linear character of the lane and the visual containment provided by trees and hedges gives a relatively enclosed and private character.

Historic development and archaeology

Alvington is part of Brympton parish and there seems to be a limited amount of historical archive material due to the very small size of the settlement. Brympton and Houndstone were owned by the Sydenhams until the early C18 and then the Fane and Ponsonby-Fane families, until Brympton House was sold in 1992. Alvington Farm and the adjacent cottages were tenanted by the estate.

The Ordnance Survey County Series 1st Edition of 1884-7 (**Fig. 1**) shows the Farm, two cottage groups and Alvington Villa at the fork, and Alvington Cottage on the northern leg of the lane. The GWR line to Montacute and Taunton ran to the south. To the north, Lufton Lane was largely undeveloped, apart from Houndstone House and scattered farms.

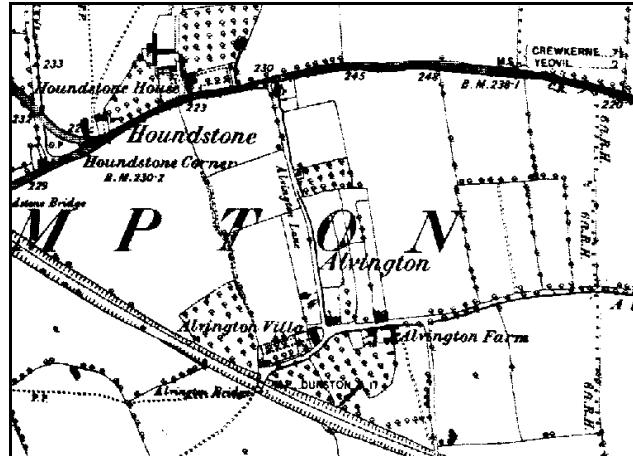


Fig. 1, 1884-7 OS Map

The railway line, closed in 1964, was later used as the route for the A3088 link to the A303 (T) and the fields to the west and north of Alvington have been developed for residential use. Alvington Farm is currently awaiting some form of reuse or development, although the farmhouse is still in residential use. On the other side of the lane, Golden Acres Nursery similarly is due for development. The Business Park to the east completes the process of envelopment by modern uses, although the fields between Alvington Lane and the A3088 remain open.

This recent development or proposed development has produced a number of archaeological watching briefs or limited investigation and there are records of sites and features on both sides of the lane, notably a possible Romano-British farmstead (on the Golden Acres Nursery site) and a post-medieval pit and ditch (on the eastern part of the lane). The oldest visible structures are the base and lower shaft of a medieval cross by Clare Cottage, on the fork, Nos. 12 and 14, early C17 vernacular cottages and Nos. 2-8, early C19, with, possibly, older elements. Alvington Farmhouse has some mullioned windows with drip moulds, indicating a C17 date. Sunny Bank, No. 10, is a substantial early C20 house and Alvington Cottage appears to be late C19. Clare Cottage is a largely modern rebuild of Alvington Villa, but older stonework is visible on its northern elevation.



Base of medieval cross

In terms of **archaeological potential**, there would appear to be limited opportunities for further investigation, apart from a watching brief for evidence of the Romano-British site when Golden Acres Nursery is developed.

Spatial analysis

The character and interrelationship of spaces

Development is low density and loose-knit, small and rural in character. The key spatial factors are the linear form and the Y-junction in the lane and the irregularly spaced buildings, which have a number of significant gaps between them. The basic linearity creates views of the gable ends of buildings and elevations in perspective with only one direct, full-on view of a façade at Clare Cottage, which faces the eastern approach at right angles to the lane. Stone boundary walls emphasise the

containment of the linear space. The gaps include the Farm courtyard, the former nursery site and large fields to the south. The latter are only glimpsed from the lane and are scheduled for development. They are more evident in views from the A3088, where they are seen as a foreground to sporadic development interspersed with hedges and large trees.



Approach from the east

There are views back east from the Y-junction, again showing strong perspectives, strengthened by the slight elevation of No. 10, Sunny Bank above the road level. The house's stone boundary walls are a particularly noticeable feature.



View back east

Key views and vistas are restricted to the long views east and west on Alvington Lane and the narrow view from the public open space back to the gable end of No. 14. There

are occasional views from the lane south towards the A3088, across fields.

The **colours** of the area are predominantly the tawny buff of the local stone, seen in buildings and boundary walls, the rusty brown of pantiles and clay tiles or the grey of slate. The various greens of trees and hedges and other colours from garden shrubs and flowers are important, varying with the seasons.

There are no outstanding **landmarks**, although Clare Cottage has a definite function of a view stopper looking west down Alvington Lane.

MAP TWO SHOWS ELEMENTS OF THE SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Character analysis

Definition of character

The historic buildings are set sequentially along an apparently secluded rural lane, in an organic and sporadic layout. There is a mixture of C17 vernacular, C19 Tudor Revival and several late C19-early C20 stone-built houses, all relating to each other in terms of building materials and colour.

Activity, uses and influences on form are or were:

- agricultural, with the Farm having a yard of sheds in a U-shape, facing the farmhouse set at right angles to the lane;
- residential, formerly as agricultural cottages and now as private houses.

Building types are:

- vernacular cottages, stone built of two storeys, with chimneys at the gable ends; double pile in plan, the two Listed rows have one front room on the ground and first floors;



Vernacular cottage, Nos. 12 & 14

- polite architecture, No. 10 is a late C19-early C20 detached house and Alvington Cottage is a late C19 block, with a regular rhythm of windows and blank openings, possibly combining two smaller cottages.



Polite architecture, Alvington Cottage

The **layout characteristics** are:

- linear, creating a minor group, apart from the slightly detached Alvington Cottage with no one building standing out from the ensemble;
- informal, with cottages set near and parallel to the road line, with two exceptions, in the Farmhouse and Cottage, which are both set at right angles to the lane.

Boundaries are important with:

- trees and hedges linking buildings and defining the general corridor character

- of the lane, preserving a sense of a rural environment, by effectively screening surrounding modern development;
- walls linking buildings and defining spaces.

The use of local stone, in rubble and dressed form, gives an overall **unity** to the settlement.

Qualities of buildings and contribution to the area

The two Listed Buildings are important, both as examples of early C18 vernacular (Nos. 12 and 14) and mid-Victorian Tudor Revival (Nos. 2-8) buildings and as townscape elements.



Nos. 2-8 Alvington Lane



Alvington Farmhouse

In addition, the stone buildings of Alvington Farm have intrinsic architectural value and are

townscape and group assets. The sheds are in very poor condition but there are remains of details such as wooden casement windows. The farmhouse has stone mullioned windows with labels, coped gables and a catslide roof to its eastern bay, suggesting a similar early C18 date as Nos. 12 and 14.

No. 10, Sunny Bank, is an impressive late C19-early C20 dressed stone and tile house with two large two storey canted bays and a central pentice roofed porch on wooden brackets. Its ashlar gate piers, hooped iron gate and stone boundary walls with cock-and-hen coping are all noteworthy. The house has group value.



Sunny Bank

Alvington Cottage is a detached late C19 - there is a date stone of 1980 at one end, probably relating to repairs or extensions - six bay house, double hipped, with a central chimney stack, the first floor having alternate casements and blank openings. It is difficult to see from the lane but is more visible from the open space behind Clare Cottage.

Clare Cottage's dressed stone boundary walls, gate piers and early C19 iron railings and gate are attractive and are very visible at the fork in the lane. The adjacent cross base is of archaeological and local historical value.



Clare Cottage's boundary

The whole of the east-west part of Alvington Lane, including Clare Cottage, forms a coherent **group**.

- Hamstone seen as dressed boundary walling (as at Clare Cottage and Sunny Bank) or as random rubble;
- some boundary walling of dry stone construction;



Dry stone walling & cock-and-hen coping

Local prevalent building materials

Materials are distinctive with:

- the use of Junction Bed liassic limestone (Yeovil stone), of a biscuity brown colour, capable of being dressed but often seen in coursed or random rubble forms;
- Ham Hill stone, of better quality, capable of being worked as ashlar, of a deeper golden brown colour and very attractive and characteristic;
- the two stones appearing in combination, with rubble or dressed stone walls and Hamstone dressings;



Two stone combination, Nos. 12 & 14

- roofs of slate, clay tile or, at Nos. 12 and 14, of a narrow V-sectioned clay or triple point tile (originally thatch);
- roofs stone coped or hipped in form; No. 12 has a single storey extension with clay pantiles.

Local details

- hollow chamfered stone mullioned windows with either a continuous drip mould over groups or an individual drip mould and returned label;
- inset leaded lights or metal casements;
- wooden casements in some late C19 buildings;
- doorways set in four-centred arches or under flat lintels;
- vertically planked doors with Nos. 12 and 14 having single glazed lights;
- a distinctive stepping up of the continuous drip mould over the door openings, at Nos. 2-8 and 12 and 14;
- a four panelled door at Sunny Bank with a plain fanlight over;
- brick chimney stacks of simple form;
- some good ironwork, notably the gate of Sunny Bank, the simple post and rail fence on the western end of No. 14, and the rails and gate of Clare Cottage;

- A reset C15 carving of a shield set in a quatrefoil on the garages adjacent to Sunny Bank.



Ironwork: Clare Cottage (top); No. 14 (above)

The sheet of drawings, at the end of the report, shows some of the above buildings and details.

Parks, gardens, trees and green spaces

Alvington has a well-treed character, with high hedges on the southern side of Alvington Lane, occasional overhanging trees, and individual trees around the entrance to the former

nursery, behind Clare Cottage and in the garden of Alvington Cottage. The front garden to No. 10 is attractive, being raised up from the lane. There are Tree Preservation Orders on the eastern part of Alvington Lane, in the rear garden of No. 14 and to the SW of Alvington Lane.

The open spaces vary between those that are usable by the public, notably the amenity area behind Clare Cottage and private land, not very visible from the public realm, such as the nursery site and the fields of Alvington Farm.

The garden on the east side of Alvington Farmhouse with its enclosing trees adjacent to the lane forms a significant green space, punctuating and relieving the build-up frontage.



Sunny Bank's garden

Negative factors

There are two issues relating to the reuse of sites and the effects of any new development on the character and quality of the potential conservation area. Both the former nursery site and Alvington Farm are the subject of current or recent planning applications and, subject to any other planning policy considerations, opportunities should be sought to improve their overall condition, retain mature trees and reuse, in the case of the Farm, any substantial stone buildings.

The damaged boundary wall and railings to Clare Cottage should be repaired, respecting original techniques and details. The cross base might also be reset as part of this work.



The entrance to the former nursery site



Alvington Farm

Summary of issues

The hamlet has an overall coherence, despite the proximity of large areas of modern development. Any proposals for new development should conserve and enhance this quality and character and avoid any elements of suburbanisation created by building styles, layouts or access details.

Alvington Farm's outbuildings are in a poor condition and efforts should be made to repair or replicate the older parts in any proposals for the site. The repair of the handsome boundary wall to Clare Cottage and a resetting of the cross base should be seen as a priority.

Advice

The District Council can advise on the need for Listed Building Consent or any planning permission that may be required, and can provide advice on matters such as methods of maintenance and repair, alterations and extensions to Listed Buildings and suitable materials.

Useful information

Criteria used for assessing the contribution made by unlisted buildings: the actual design characteristics, such as mass, skyline, interesting details and materials; and position relative to the wider setting, individual or groups of Listed Buildings.



Sunny Bank's gate and walls

References and further reading

Understanding Place, Guidance on conservation area appraisals, English Heritage, August 2005

The Schedule of buildings of Special Architectural and Historical Interest, DCMS

The Somerset Historic Environment Records (SHERS), Somerset County Council

South Somerset Local Plan (adopted 2004), SSDC

Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning & The Historic Environment, Department of the Environment & Department of National Heritage, September 1994

Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology & Planning, Department of the Environment, November 1990

Maps

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Glossary of architectural terms

Ashlar: best quality masonry with smooth face and narrow joints

Canted bay: splayed or angled sides to projecting window

Casement: opening lights hinged at one side

Catslide roof: subsidiary roof that carries on from main slope

Cock-and-hen coping: vertical, alternating long and short stones on top of a wall

Coped gable: angled capping, usually raised above height of adjoining roof

Double pile: two rooms depth behind frontage

Dressed stone: masonry worked to produce an even finish but not as precisely as ashlar

Drip mould and label: projecting horizontal moulding to throw off rain and the decorative end stops commonly seen in Tudor, C17 and Tudor revival buildings

Four-centred arch: Tudor arch of flattened profile

Hipped roof: both roof slopes are angled back at corners

Hollow chamfer: side of stone window or door or mullion with a sunken profile

Lintel (or lintol): horizontal stone or wood former to top of door or window opening

Mullion: vertical bar dividing window lights

Pantile: a clay roof tile of shaped or curved section

Pentice roof: a lean-to against a main structure

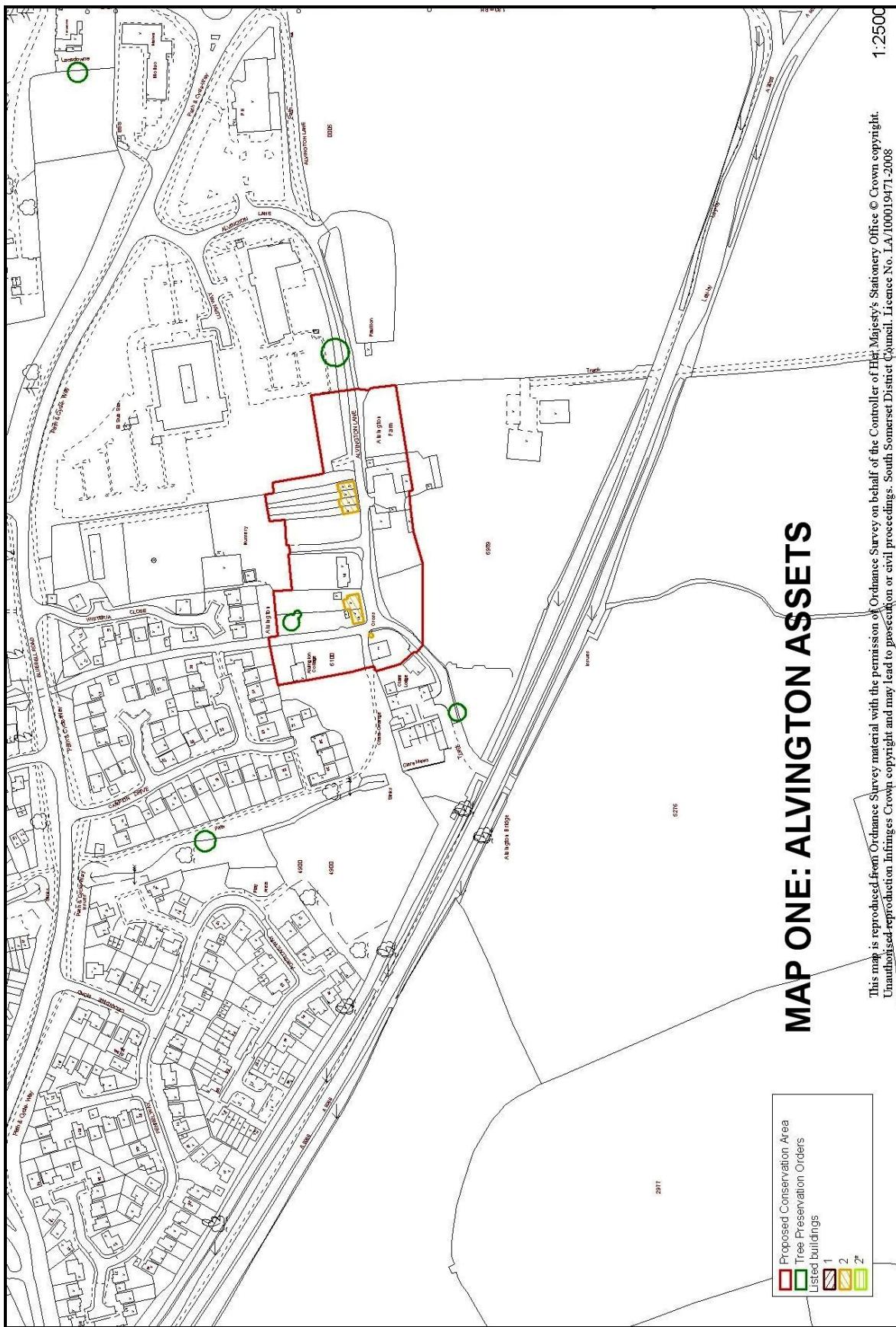
Polite: architecture that accords with national fashions and techniques, usually fairly up-to-date

Quatrefoil: a four lobed ornamental shape

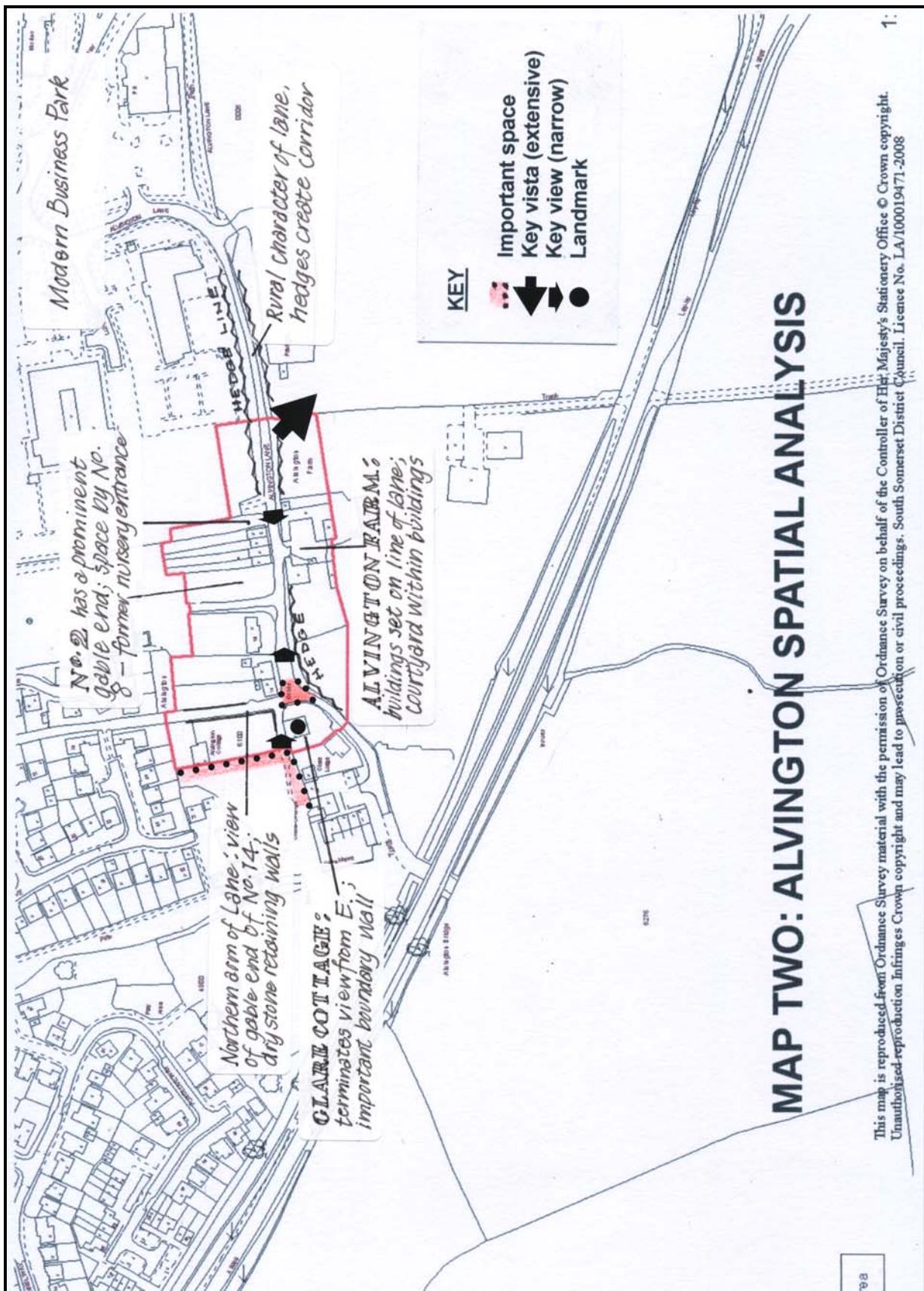
Tudor Revival: C19-early C20 reuse of Tudor forms and details

Vernacular: buildings of local styles and details, as opposed to fashionable, national ('polite') styles

MAP ONE: ALVINGTON ASSETS



MAP TWO: ALVINGTON SPATIAL ANALYSIS



Alvington

