

Gittisham Interim Conservation Area Review

Purpose of the Review

There is a requirement under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 of all local authorities to review their conservation areas and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Reviews must be carried out every five years as the character and appearance of a conservation area can change over even small periods of time. The purpose of this interim review is to identify the principal changes since the publication of the Conservation Area Appraisal and to outline potential changes to the conservation area boundary which will form part of a full consultation exercise when the draft Management Plan is produced.

Key recent changes in Gittisham Conservation Area.

- Trees marked as a feature in front of the village hall have gone.
- Thatches throughout the village are in poor condition.
- A timber shed type bus shelter has been erected in the centre of the village and stained a very obtrusive orange-brown colour.



New timber bus shelter in the village centre



Poor condition of thatched cottages awaiting re-thatching.

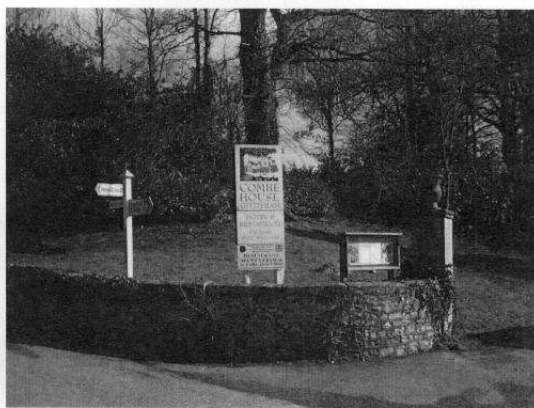
- Satellite dishes are becoming more prevalent, possibly due to poor TV reception in the village.
- The last remaining shop has closed down and there is no public house.
- A strange flat granite slab on granite supports has appeared on the village green in front of the church.
- Most stone walls are in good condition but poor slap pointing has been applied to at least two.
- Town Farm barn buildings have now been converted to residential units. The conversion is of mixed success. Town Farm location in a very prominent position at the western entrance to the conservation area and to the village. The prolific use of rooflights, flues, modern-style windows, plastic guttering downpipes does not complement the character of the barns very

well. The rear parking area and small walled gardens are suburban in appearance.

- Olive Tree Cottage, formerly Lewis Cottage, has had a rear extension built. This is a successful small building of brick and slate.
- Signage is proliferating, particularly at the western end of the village and at the entrance to the Combe House Hotel, and is an unattractive feature that should be better controlled.
- No progress has been made in dealing with obtrusive overhead wires; however a resident has successfully camouflaged one example.



The conversion of barns at Town Farm are prominent within the conservation area with an array of roof lights and flues.



More signage appears to have been erected at the entrance to the Combe House Hotel.

Potential review of conservation area boundary.

The existing CA boundary covers almost the whole of the village. Contrary to what is stated in the CA appraisal 1999, Pomeroy House has now been included. It was suggested in that appraisal that the CA should be extended to the area to the south of Curlditch House, to include Talbots and Myrtle Cottages. This is recommended as the land between the cottages and the conservation area consists of an orchard and a short distance of lane with Devon banks. There is possibly development potential in this location and a greater control over this visually important entrance to the village is desirable.

It would also be beneficial if the plank bridge and its environs were included in the CA as any future work to them could harm the conservation area. This aspect of conservation area review will be fully considered during the consultation process.

Principle reasons for erosion or changes to conservation area character.

- The character of Gittisham is very special and even relatively small changes that are out of character can seriously affect the quality of the environment. Care has to be taken when considering the conversion of redundant rural buildings and any new additions to existing historic buildings.
- The spaces between buildings are equally as important and every effort should be made to resist extraneous structures, sheds, fences and other suburban forms.

GITTISHAM

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with contributions from Town and Parish Councils and Amenity Societies in East Devon

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Contents

1	HISTORIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND	3
2	SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA	3
3	BUILT ENVIRONMENT	4
4	LANDSCAPE AND TREES	4
5	HARD SURFACES	4
6	BUILDING MATERIALS AND ORNAMENT	6
7	STREET FURNITURE AND SPECIAL FEATURES	7
8	SYNOPSIS OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS	8
9	FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE	9
10	LOSS OF CHARACTER AND INTRUSION	9
11	SUMMARY	9
	HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS	10
	APPRAISAL MAPS	14

GITTISHAM



Cottage group opposite entrance to church dating from the late 16th century

1 HISTORIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

1.1 Gittisham is an exceptionally attractive village with groups of cottages spaciouly and informally arranged off the main street, mainly of cob, thatch and flint. "This village must have looked much the same 200-300 years ago. Very little is new or even 19th century"¹

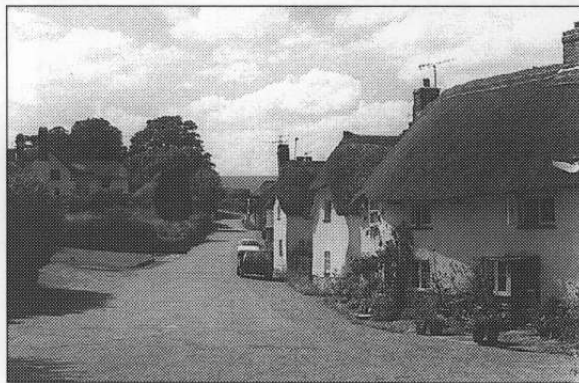
1.2 The apple variety Tom Putt, is named after Thomas Putt (1722 -87) who perfected it, and who also planted the Beech Walk on Gittisham Hill.

2 SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 Gittisham Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1982, comprises almost the whole of the village apart from Pomeroy House and Lodge to the north, and the avenue of trees leading to Combe House Hotel to the southeast (see 3.3). This is part of the extensive park and gardens surrounding the Hotel which is included in the National Register.

2.2 The village has a near perfect setting in a slight hollow fed by a stream, and surrounded by largely pastoral countryside set against the wooded backdrop of Gittisham Hill (240m) and parkland setting of Combe House Hotel to the south and east.

2.3 Within the existing conservation area are some 43 individually listed buildings giving 27 separate list entries. These are shown on Map 1.



The main village street showing informal groups, one of the two village greens, backdrop of trees and farmland beyond.

¹ *Shell Guide to Devon*

3 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Gittisham vies with Broadhembury as being the most complete and unchanged thatched estate village in East Devon, with few rivals in having such a perfectly preserved character.

3.2 The village has resisted virtually all incursions of recent development. Apart from the 1927 Village Hall there has been no later building apart from a small group of local authority houses just beyond the conservation area boundary and the conversion of a group of farm buildings to dwellings and craft workshops, tastefully executed and paying particular regard to original character including two sets of brick gate piers.

3.3 The layout of the village is delightfully informal with two main groups; one roughly following the stream, the other grouped around the green immediately north of the Parish Church. The lane running east-west through the village provides an almost uninterrupted frontage of cottages, gardens, grassed areas, walls and tree groups. No less than four lanes, in addition to the avenue approach to Combe House, branch from this main route. There are further informal groupings of cottages, farmhouses and farm buildings along several of them.

4 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

4.1 The most significant tree group is the fine avenue of mixed species running southeast which forms part of the historic landscape setting of Combe House immediately adjoining the conservation area. There is also a good row of limes north of the village hall which are an important feature close to the village centre.

4.2 A further group at the western edge of the conservation area, mostly re-established elms, together with several large oaks fringing the lane beyond are an important visual feature framing the vista looking west from the centre.

4.3 Elsewhere are several good tree specimens such as the blue cedar on the larger green (planted to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V on May 6th 1935); the yew by the lych gate and the group of oaks and clipped trees and shrubs on the small green by the stream. At Curlditch House a holly tree has been planted to commemorate the 50th anniversary of VE day.

5 HARD SURFACES

5.1 Those parts of the village with public access possess little variation from the usual surface of loose chippings embedded in tar. The road loop around the Green is edged with brick paving which also extends across part of the road itself. The recent conversion of the group of agricultural buildings with attractive entrances through double timber gates between brick piers is partially brick paved and with an area of loose chippings.

5.2 Of chief historic interest in Gittisham is the large cobbled area adjoining and extending well to the rear of Town Farm on its western side. This is mainly constructed of chert with some vegetation allowed to grow between. It is thought to be characteristic of similar surfaces provided as yards between farmhouse and adjoining outbuildings which often date from the mid to late 19th century.



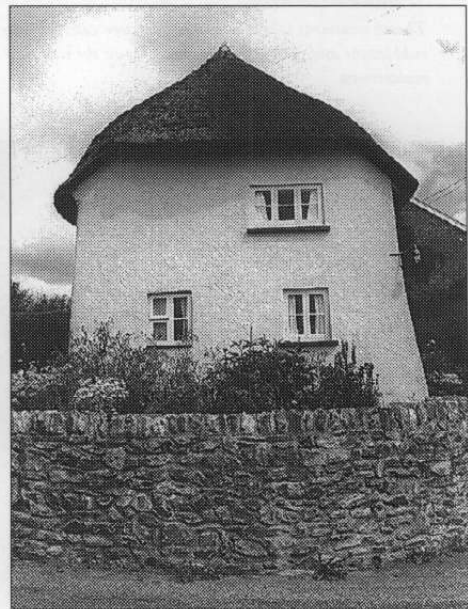
Recent conversion of former 19th century large farmyard group to houses and studio workshops, well executed and particularly unobtrusive when viewed along village street (above). Note the well-wooded backdrop to the village



Town Farm has possible medieval origins and is listed Grade II with an extensively cobbled area leading to the yard at the rear*

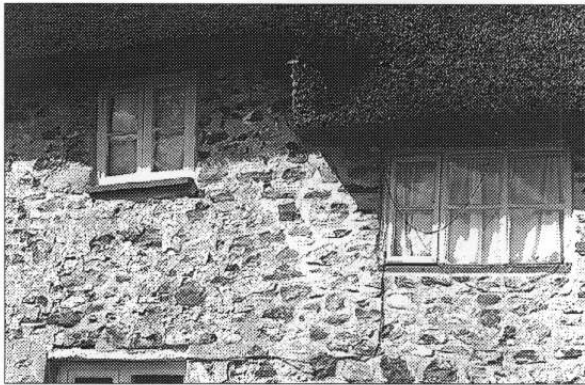


Cob cottage on village outskirts showing tapered walls thickening towards the base. The chert rubble garden wall is typical.

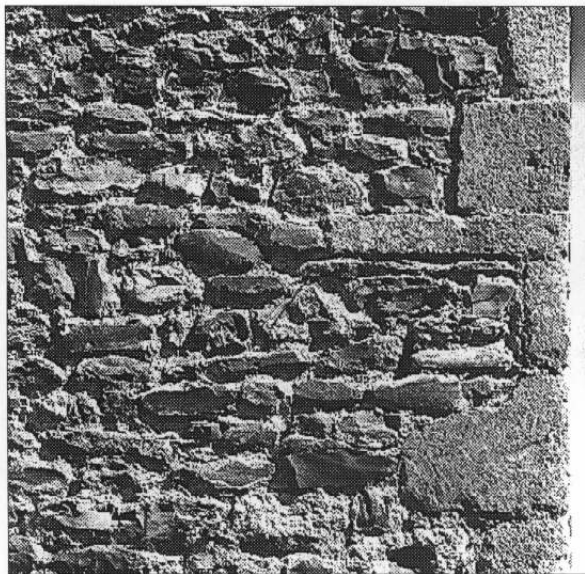


6 BUILDING MATERIALS AND ORNAMENT

6.1 Gittisham is a remarkably cohesive thatched estate village and there is almost nothing to mar the overall completeness of the concept. Recent research on vernacular buildings suggests that such villages have evolved over time rather than representing a consciously planned layout of a particular date. This impression is provided by the later imprint of standard estate features such as doors, windows, chimneys, style of thatching etc. Crabbs Cottage has a 1575 date stone, but some dwellings are likely to be of earlier origin which only detailed research would properly reveal. Town Farmhouse in a prominent position at the west end of the village is of particular quality and listed Grade II*. It has a good exterior with a fine set of mullioned windows, a wealth of interesting interior features and a plan form unaltered this century.



Thatch treatment where levels drop between cottages; note random chert rubblestone and casement windows; that on the right is a late metal replacement.

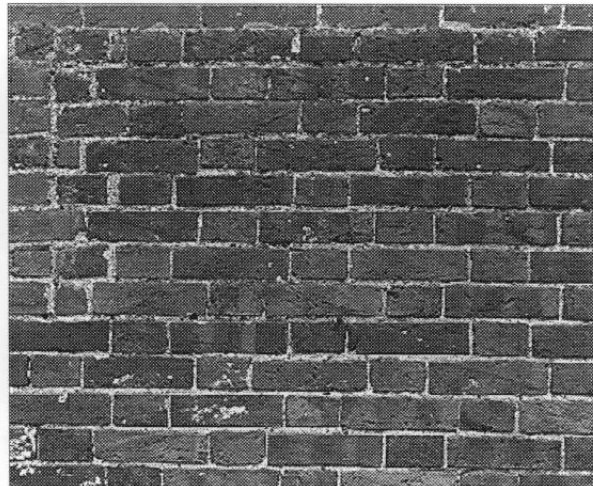


End wall of the former school (established 1720 by the Putt family) of roughly coursed rubble stone with dressed quoins

6.2 In Gittisham there is a mixture of stone, mainly chert, and of cob on stone footings. Whereas the latter is invariably rendered and cream or buff colour-washed, the former is more commonly exposed random rubblestone. Brick and stucco are encountered in 18th/early 19th century buildings. The two examples, both at the east end of the village are respectively, Parkers, c.1720, a modestly scaled gentry house with hand-made brick laid in Flemish bond with attractive blue headers (indicating wood-firing). The roof is plain tiled. Almost opposite is Lower Lodge at the entrance of the drive to Combe House. Typically early 19th century, with modest ornament such as a pair of diagonally set chimneys, dentilled cornices all in white painted stucco-render under a slate roof. Both these buildings on rising ground act as a pleasant foil to the predominant groups of vernacular thatched cottages in the village centre.

6.3 The thatch for which the village is renowned appears to be mainly wheat-reed and swept over half-hipped to almost fully hipped gables, and also slightly over some first floor windows, or even stepped. As at Broadhembury, in a few locations it is in rather poor condition, or has been patched. Apart from thatch, slate is the most widely used material, especially the church, former school adjoining the church, and former farmhouse, now divided into three cottages just north of the village centre.

6.4 Doors and windows are for the most part plain timber side-opening casements with glazing bars and timber sills. Close to the stream crossing there is what appears to be a former shopfront with square projecting bay. Doors are mainly planked, some with fixed lights. The paintwork of the estate cottages is a dark blue-green and the overall effect is low-key and very pleasant in its vernacular context even though of recent replacement in some instances.



Section of wall at Parkers with hand-made brick laid in Flemish bond with blue wood-fired headers providing a contrasting pattern more typical of South East England

7 STREET FURNITURE AND SPECIAL FEATURES

7.1 In the village centre, the shelter forms an attractive focal point as well as serving a useful purpose. Its origins are not known. Nearby is a K6 cast iron telephone kiosk designed by Sir Giles Gilbert-Scott in 1935 and now listed. A stream forms an attractive focal point with the bridge crossing and adjoining small green at the heart of the village. To the south the stream is contained within a channel of concrete sections with stone embedded - an unusual if slightly marring feature.



Curlditch is also of late medieval origin, but was remodelled in the late 17th/early 18th century and includes the listed walls of a walled garden to the east. In the foreground is the stream enclosed by the unusual prefabricated blocks (see also below)



Close-up view of the pre-fabricated stone impregnated concrete wall enclosing the stream along much of its course through the village

8 SYNOPSIS OF LISTED BUILDINGS

8.1 **St. Michael's Church**, originally mainly 15th to 16th century, was badly damaged in the Civil War, and repaired by William Putt of Combe who died in 1662. There is an ornamental gutter with his arms at the east end. The west tower is unbuttressed and the 14th century chancel arch has been repaired. The south aisle is good Perpendicular, probably built by Henry Beaumont between 1528-48 and the chancel chapel has a ceiled roof with bosses. Apart from a 19th century restoration of the chancel, with some attractive painting, the character is largely early 18th century. The Georgian west gallery was given by Sir Thomas Putt in 1701, and the box pews date from 1715. There is much decoration and several fine monuments; to the Beaumonts dated 1591 and 1627, and to various members of the Putt family between 1674 and 1844, most notably Sir Thomas Putt and his wife in ornate marble, dated 1686.

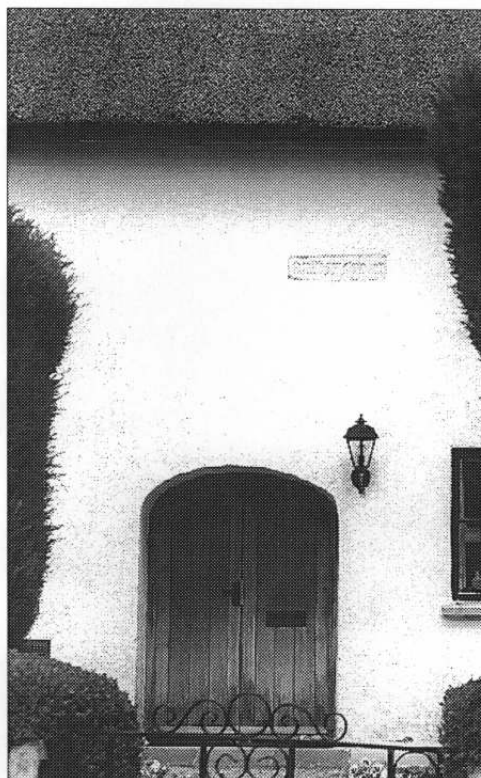
8.2 On higher ground is **Town Farmhouse**, with a projecting porch of 1600, (datestone "R.S") and a fine set of late 17th century timber cross-windows. The west stack is dated 1678. The cottages near the church are a former school, founded by Sir Thomas Putt in 1720.

Catshays Farm is recorded as a Domesday Manor.

Important Buildings outside the Conservation Area

8.3 **Combe House** (0.7 mile south-east) is Grade I listed and in an historic landscaped setting (Grade II), on the slopes of Gittisham Hill. The house is a good Elizabethan example in the Somerset, rather than the Devon style. It was probably built by Henry Beaumont (died 1591) whose striking monument is in the parish church. It was sold to the Putt family in 1615, who held it until 1792, when it passed by marriage to the Markers. In recent years it has become a country hotel.

8.4 On Gittisham Hill is Devon's largest **Barrow Cemetery**, and a large stone at the crossroads on the hill is probably of prehistoric ritual significance, but has twice been moved during the past 100 years.



House with possibly early 16th century origins, remodelled and perhaps extended in the late 16th century with 1675 datestone on the front wall



Parish Church of St Michael with former village school to the right

9 FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

9.1 The elements in the Gittisham conservation area which are considered most worthy of retention in terms of maintaining its special character are as follows:

- a well cared for estate village, in an especially attractive narrow valley setting
- a spacious layout with two greens, both carefully maintained and landscaped, one with seating around a commemorative cedar tree
- no unharmonious new development
- most vernacular details, especially doors and windows, retained or sympathetically replaced by the Combe Estate
- good tree groups, especially to the south and east of the village
- a large area of cobbles probably laid in the 19th century at Town Farm

10 LOSS OF CHARACTER AND INTRUSION

10.1 Apart from some overhead power lines at the eastern periphery of the village, there is very little other detail which can be said to markedly detract from the character of the conservation area. Should any additional footpath or parking surfaces be considered desirable it is recommended that use of asphalt and concrete paving be avoided and new surfaces are made using natural materials preferably from a local source.

11 SUMMARY

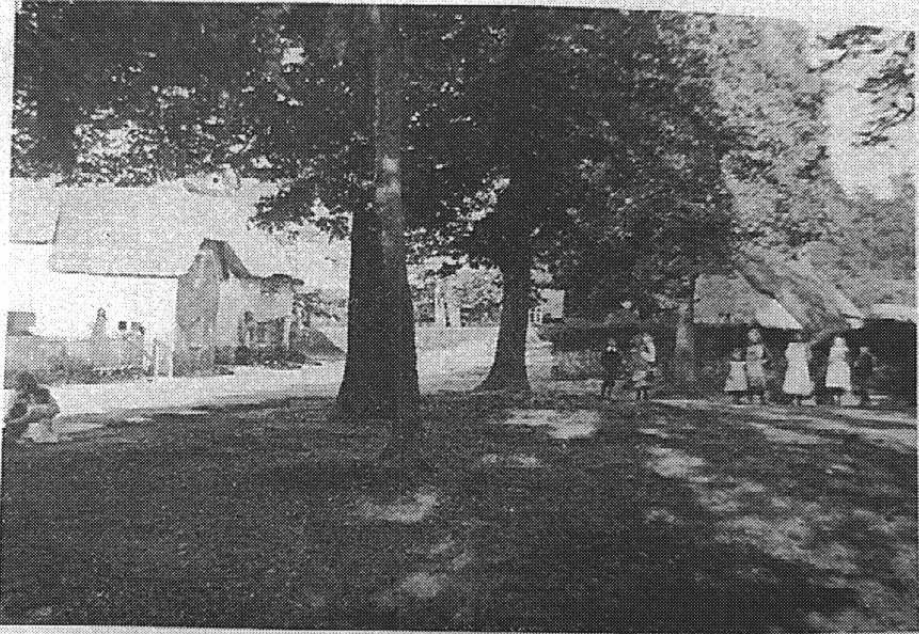
11.1 Gittisham is a small but exceptionally attractive village with some good examples of vernacular architecture mainly in thatch, rendered stone and cob, but with fairly extensive use of exposed stone, mainly chert, especially in boundary walls. Levels of maintenance are generally high, and there is little to mar the overall appearance.

11.2 It is considered there is little threat to the character of this estate owned village. There could be a case for an extension of the conservation area to include Pomeroy, and its listed walled garden, the pair of mid 17th century cottages at the south end of Curlditch; (said in the listing details to be a rare survival of a pair of that date), and the fine avenue of trees running southeast from Lower Lodge.



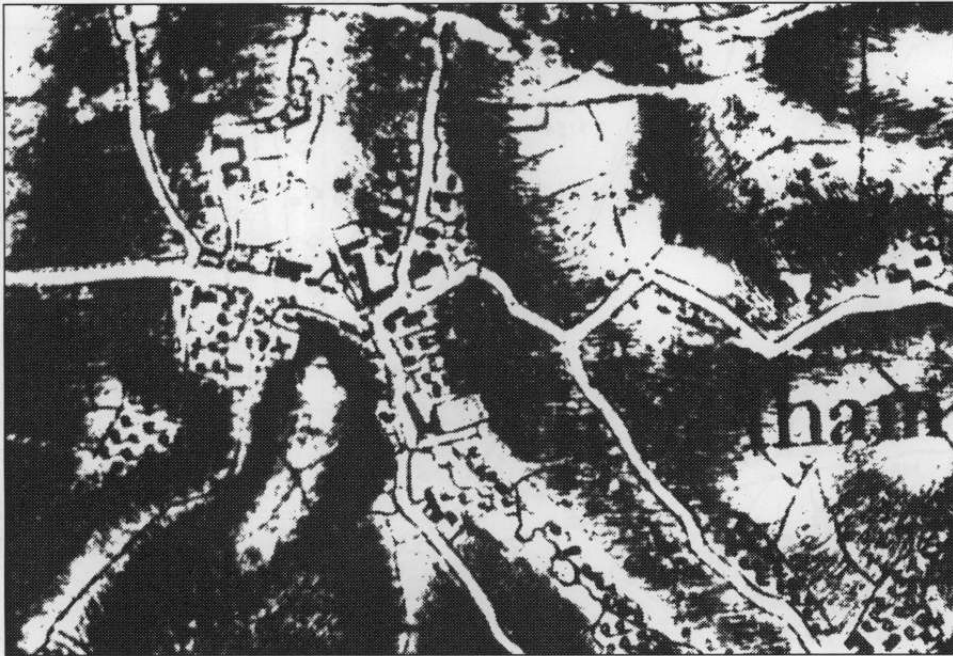
Lower Lodge, early 19th century at the entrance to Combe House half a mile to the southeast is listed, together with its garden walls

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS

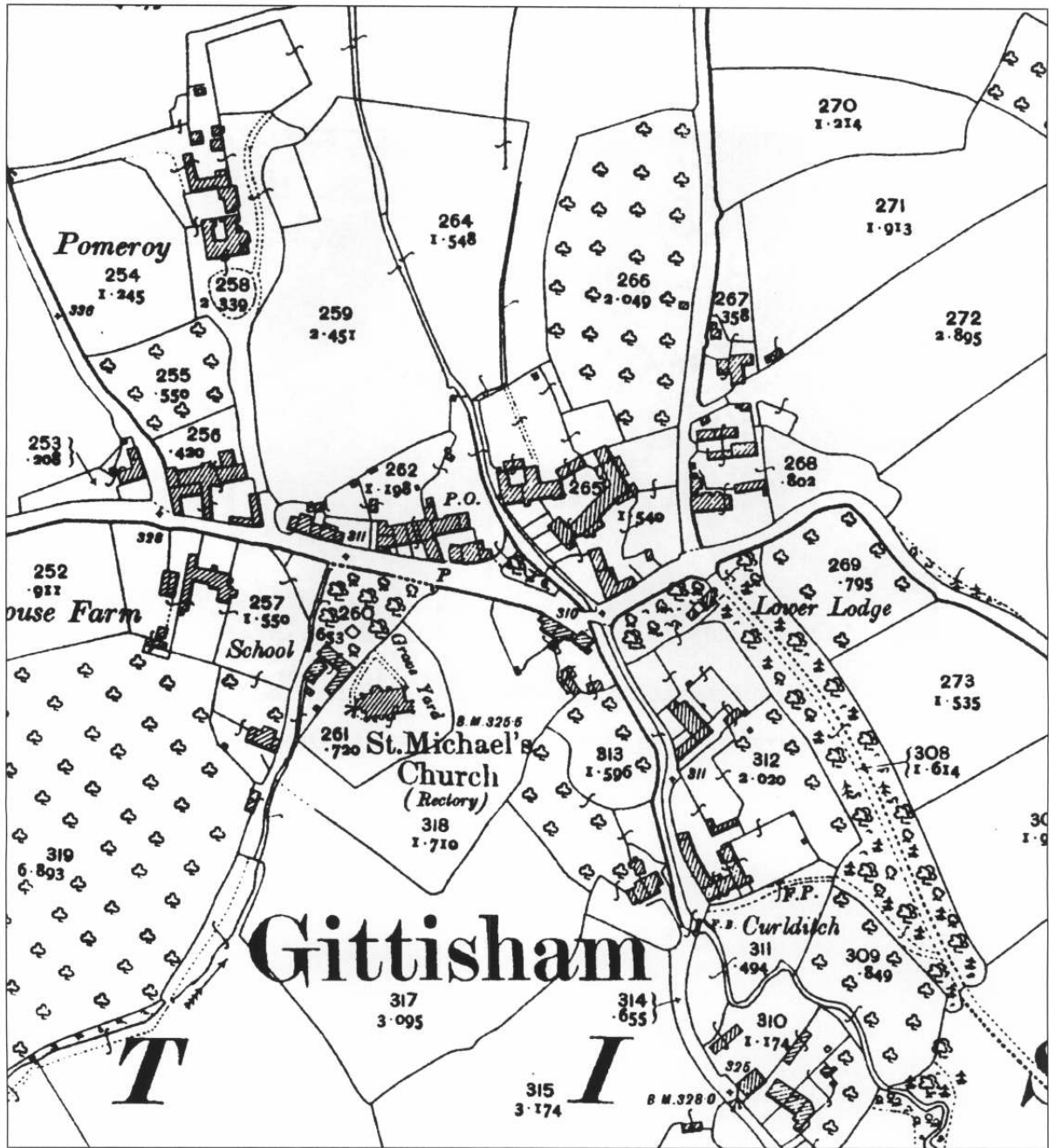


88. A WEST COUNTRY GREEN, GITTISHAM, DEVONSHIRE.

HISTORIC MAPS



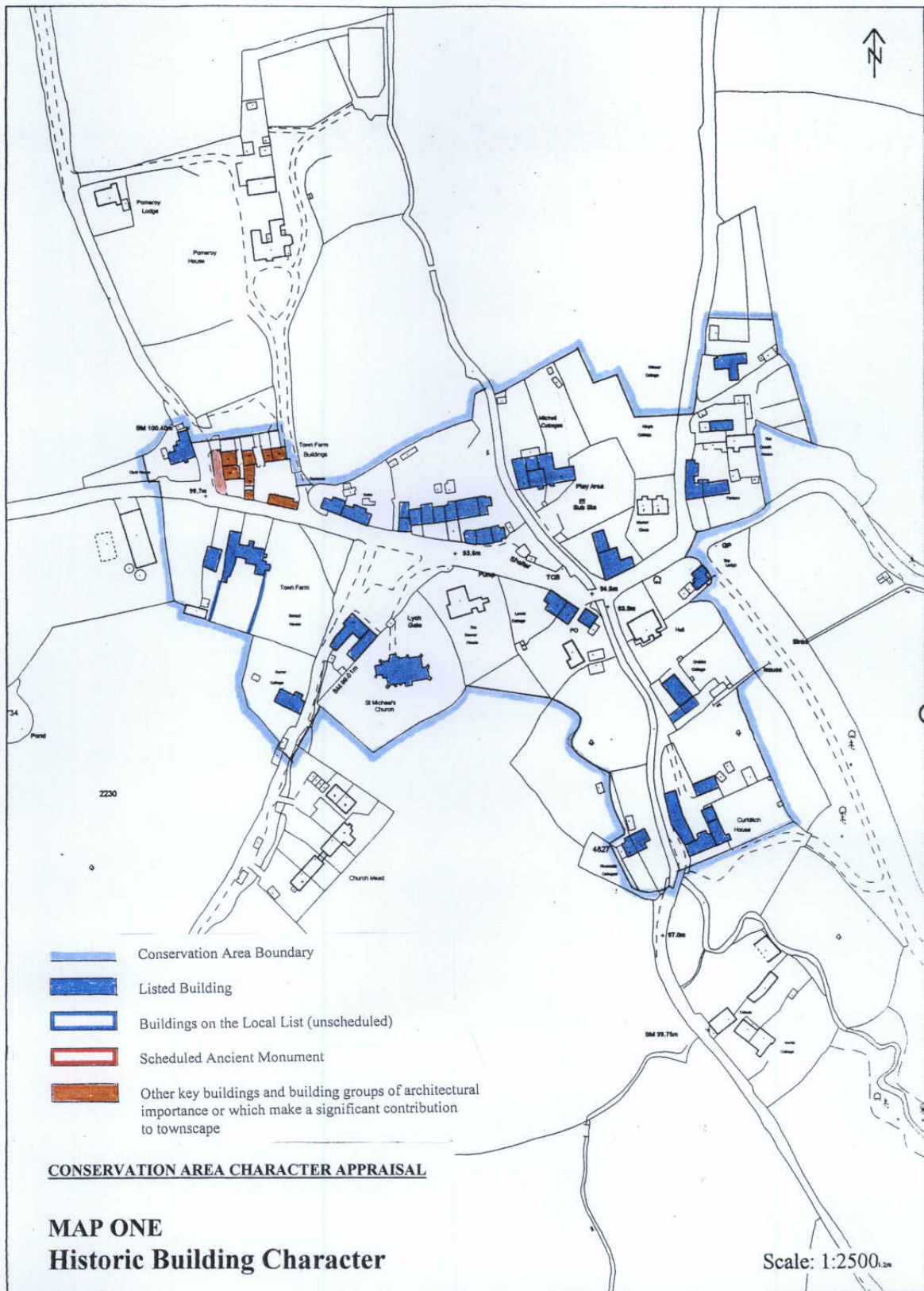
1805 Devon County Survey: Scale: originally 3 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of the report)



c.1905 Ordnance Survey Second Edition. Scale originally 25 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of fitting the report)



Ordnance Survey Second Edition or Provisional Edition.
 Scale originally 6 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of fitting the report)



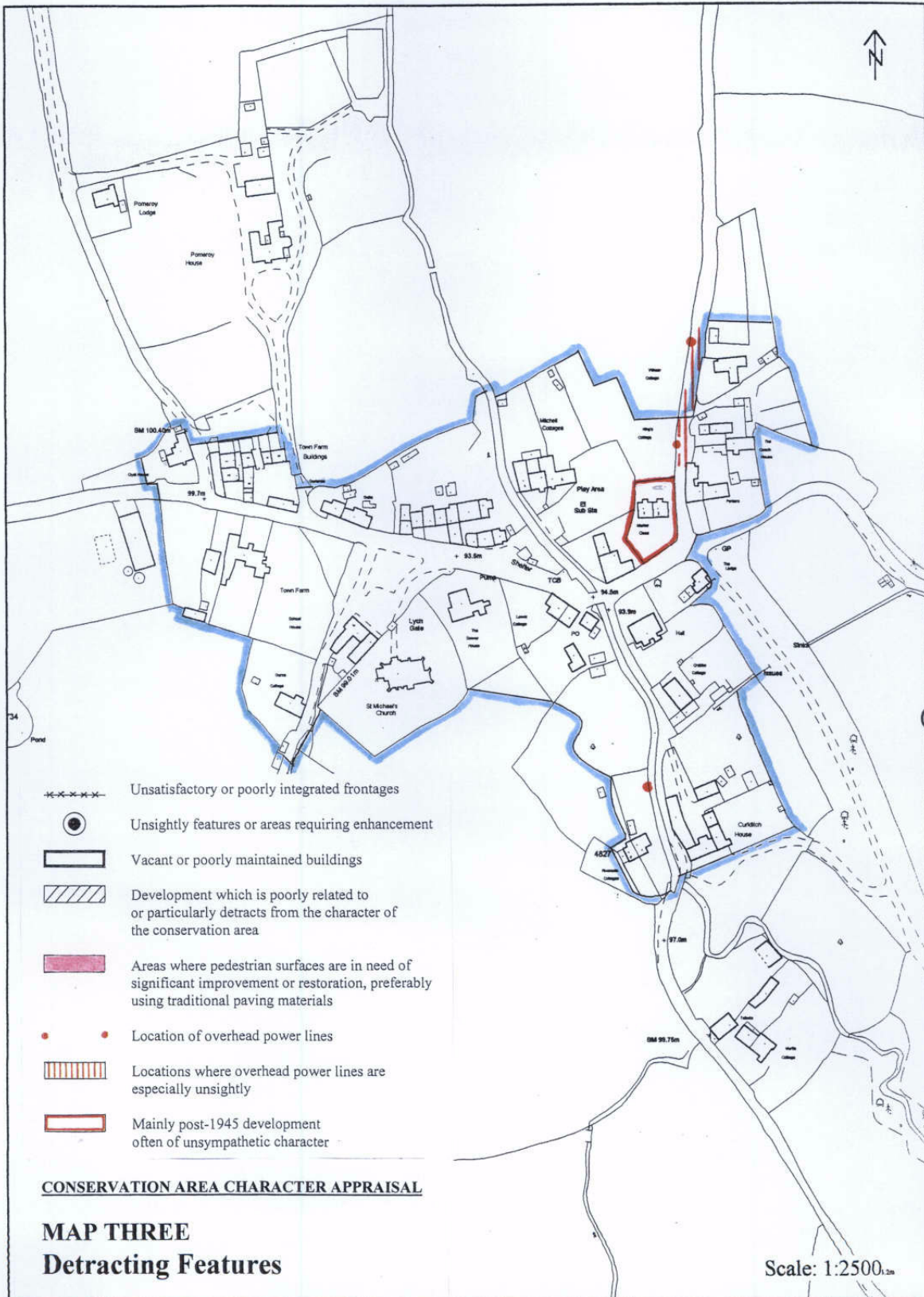
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-  Unsatisfactory or poorly integrated frontages
-  Unsightly features or areas requiring enhancement
-  Vacant or poorly maintained buildings
-  Development which is poorly related to or particularly detracts from the character of the conservation area
-  Areas where pedestrian surfaces are in need of significant improvement or restoration, preferably using traditional paving materials
-  Location of overhead power lines
-  Locations where overhead power lines are especially unsightly
-  Mainly post-1945 development often of unsympathetic character

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

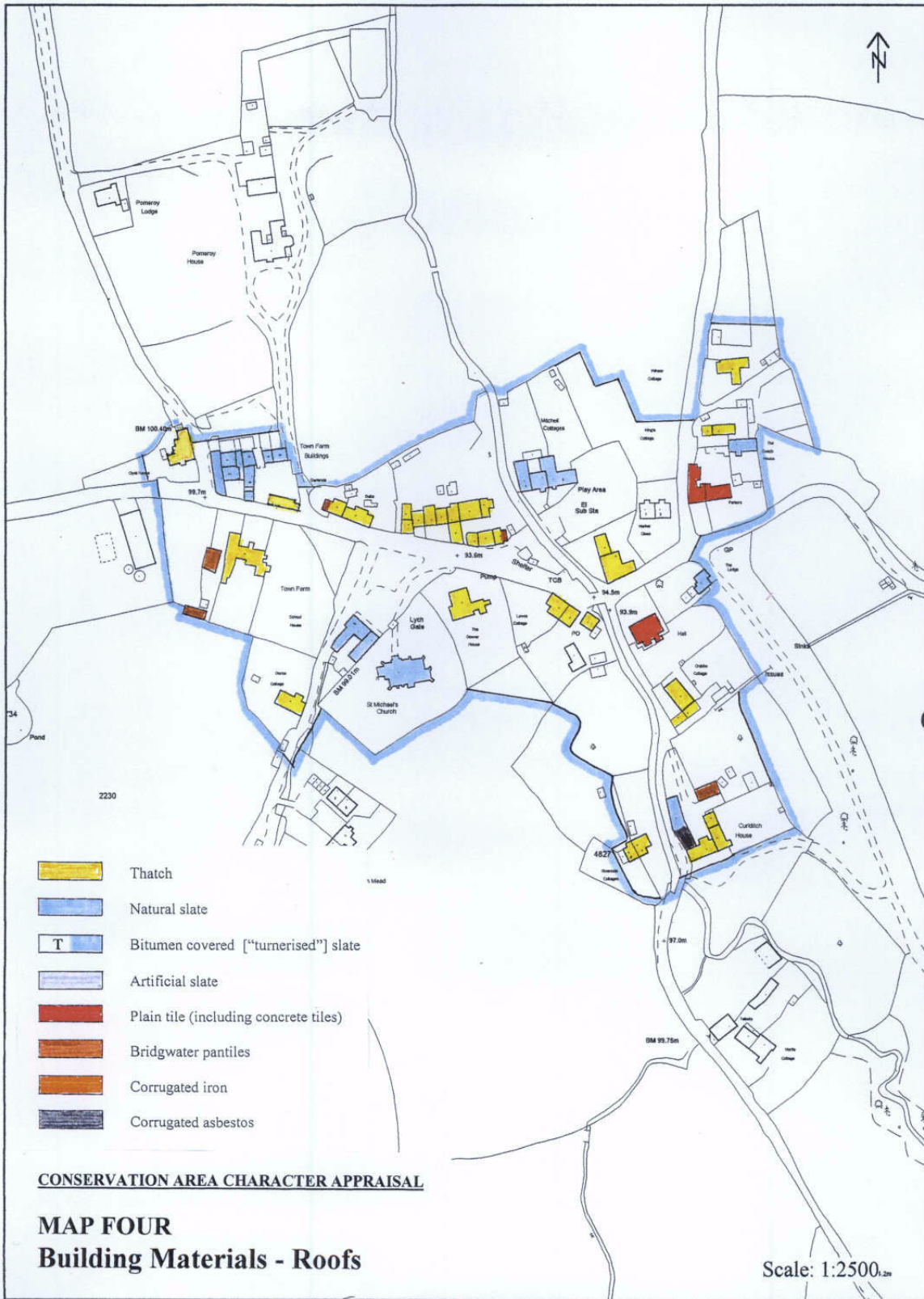
**MAP THREE
Detracting Features**

Scale: 1:2500_{1:2500}



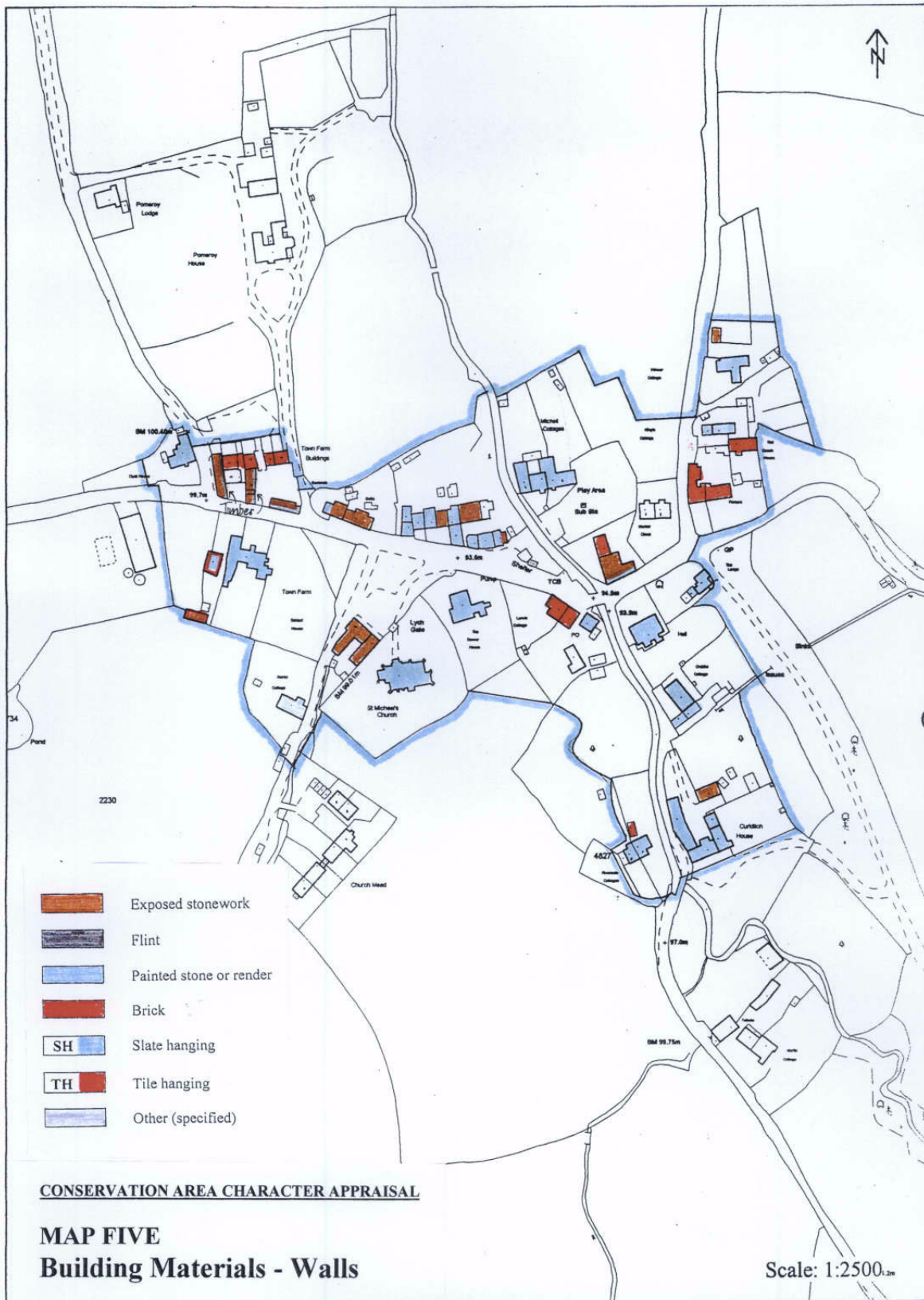
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