

## Musbury 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 Musbury Conservation Area.

- The most evident incremental change of the last few years is the use of replacement PVCu windows in many of the key buildings in the village. Examples are the Old Bakery Cottage, several houses in Rosemary Lane, Hillside Villas, Cartree Cottage and Mountfield Lodge.
- Other examples where historic fabric is being removed are the old stone walls being demolished to provide parking places, for example in Rosemary Lane.
- Many of the remaining stone boundary walls are being poorly maintained, some with inappropriate pointing almost obscuring the stones in the wall, for example in Combyne Road and in the church footpath. Some new garden walls in Axminster Road have been built with artificial stone which contrasts poorly with the real stone. However two good new stone boundary walls have been built, one at Monmouth House and one at the entrance to the conservation area at the junction of Marlborough Close and The Street.
- There seems to be more conspicuous overhead wires in this village than in almost any other conservation area. The tangled web of overhead wires is made more visible by the use of essential safety wrapping and bird deterrent balls. The most obtrusive overhead wires are in The Street and in Doatshayne Lane.



*Inappropriate PVCu windows fitted into a key building.*



*Two examples of re-pointing where cement has been used and obscured the individual stones.*

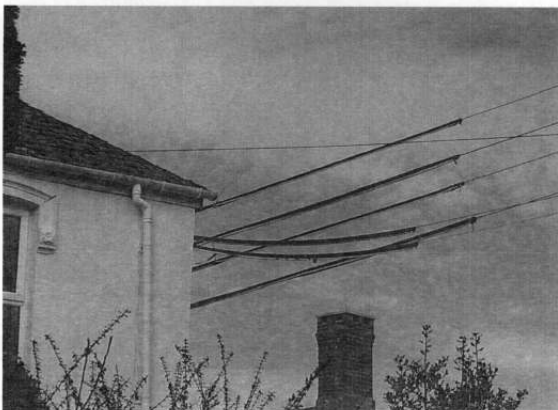
- Mountfield is an important listed building that is deteriorating and is still at risk with its future undetermined. The visually important trees in the grounds of Mountfield are maturing without being cared for and there has been no obvious replanting. The historic milestone outside Mountfield Lodge has been cracked, possibly by vehicle impact, however the cracking may be only superficial.

### **Potential review of conservation area boundary.**

The existing conservation area boundary covers the historic area of the village. Development outside the boundary is mainly modern and does not meet the criteria for inclusion. There are very few undeveloped areas within Built up Area Boundary which would benefit from Conservation area designation and therefore there appears to be no reason to extend the conservation area or to omit existing areas due to eroded character. This aspect of conservation area review will be fully considered during the consultation process.

### **Principle reasons for erosion or changes to conservation area character.**

- While there is no statutory control over replacement windows in many unlisted buildings the pressure to replace traditional timber windows with PVCu alternatives remains. The removal of traditional windows is the single most apparent change to the conservation area in recent years. There is greater awareness of the environmental impact of PVCu production and waste and while it is hoped that timber replacement windows are seen as the more sustainable option the marketing drives of the major PVCu window companies continue. In the light of this it is anticipated that a proposal to serve an Article 4 Direction to control replacement windows would form part of a future public consultation exercise.
- Old stone walls being demolished to provide parking places. Many of the remaining stone boundary walls being poorly maintained, some with inappropriate pointing almost obscuring the stones in the wall.
- Overhead wires made more visible by the use of essential safety wrapping and bird deterrents.



# MUSBURY

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

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# MUSBURY



*View south at the village centre crossroads*

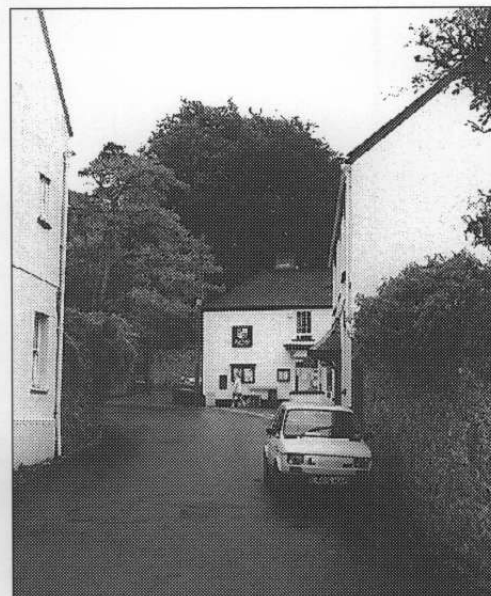
## 1 HISTORIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

1.1 Musbury is attractively located at the foot of a west-facing slope at the margin of the valley of the River Axe, approximately midway between Axminster and Seaton. Although the main route between these two towns originally passed through the village, there has been a by-pass immediately to the west of the village since the 1940's.

1.2 The village contains a variety of buildings reflecting a range of period styles, traditions of design and use of building materials, with none especially dominant, although render painted white or cream is encountered widely.

1.3 The historic road pattern is essentially cruciform. Church Hill rises steeply from the centre and contains several striking buildings, mainly of cob and thatch and culminating in the group consisting of parish church, primary school and Musbury Farm; this latter group within a richly varied landscape.

1.4 St. Michael's Church is much visited on account of a large monument to several generations of the Drake family dating from 1588 to 1643. The 15th century Ashe House with a 14th century tiltyard, which was once their home is approximately a mile to the north of the village. Musbury is also a starting point for the walk to Musbury Castle, an Iron Age fort 170 metres in height and a mile to the east.



*Similar view east towards Church Hill with a backdrop of trees in the grounds of Mountfield*

## 2 SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 The conservation area covers the historic core of the village and includes The Street, Church Hill, Axminster Road, parts of Rosemary and Doatshayne Lanes and Compyne Road. The main concentration of development is on an east-west axis with a strong focal point at the cross-roads. Otherwise the settlement pattern is fragmented with an isolated group of cottages forming a narrow northern spur to the conservation area. Other scattered but significant groups of cottages and farms surround the periphery, especially Whitford Road to the east and Maidenhayne Lane to the north.

2.2 There has been a good deal of suburban infilling which virtually encloses the conservation area to the west, north and east. However within the heart of the village, and forming the northeast quadrant of the cross-roads is an important open space, part pasture, part tree-covered and enclosed to the south and west by an extensive stone wall. This undoubtedly contributes much to the secluded atmosphere that Musbury enjoys and is integral to the wider mainly pastoral setting of the village. This well-wooded setting complements the glimpses of more open landscapes from the village that lie across the Axe valley and towards the lofty hill ridge to the east which has a broadly similar geology to the Blackdown Hills.

2.3 Musbury Conservation Area was first designated in February 1994 and contains 17 statutorily listed buildings covered by 16 separate list entries. The location of these is indicated on Map 1.

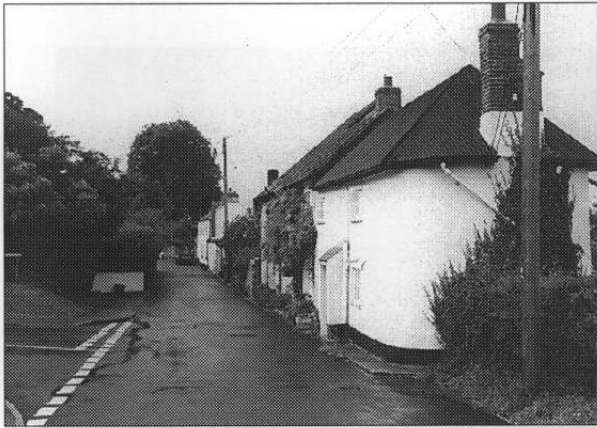
## 3 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

3.1 The boundary of the conservation area has been tightly drawn such that almost all 20th century additions are excluded. There have thus been few significant changes and Church Hill, in particular, retains much original character and a strong sense of enclosure enhanced by boundary walls and overhanging trees. Infill along the Axminster Road is set back sufficiently behind the earlier building line for parts of Axminster Road to retain a similar character.

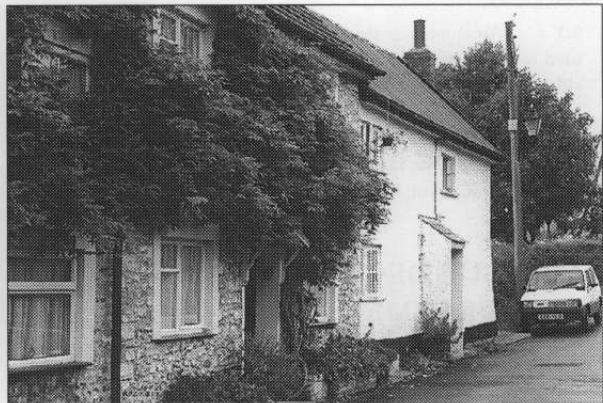
3.2 The Street with its slightly curving alignment and buildings somewhat haphazardly arranged has pleasing vistas from either end, and the mixture of cottages and farmhouses of different ages and materials adds further visual interest. A more intricate grouping of buildings in Compyne Road and Rosemary Lane, and an important and probably ancient footpath link from the top of Church Hill provides another area of quite distinct character within the village. The small groups of cottages at the northern edge of the conservation area form an attractive group and are somewhat isolated from the historic core of the village.



*The Street; an attractive curving street with cottages and farmhouses informally grouped. Rosemary Lane to the left (above) contains further cottage groups*



*(Left and below) Axminster Road at Northfields with a typical cottage group, that in the foreground having a corrugated iron roof*



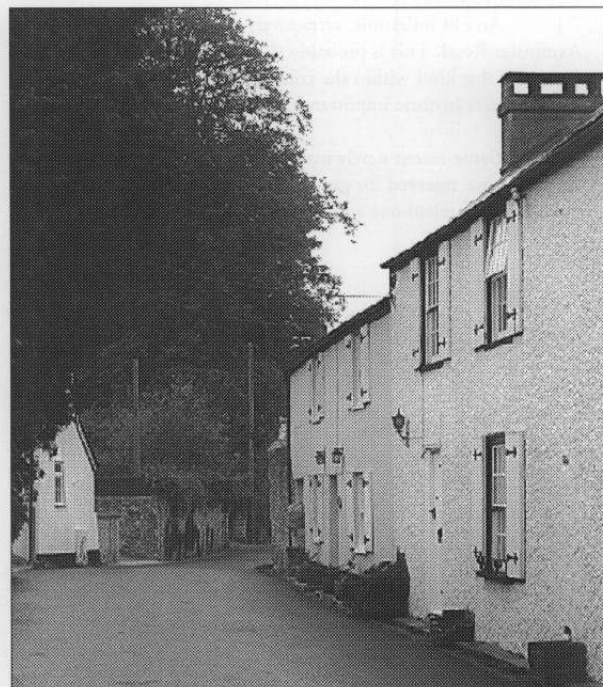
## 4 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

4.1 To the south and west of the village the landscape is best described as level or gently undulating pasture in a valley setting with the flood plain of the Axe about half a mile to the west. East of the village cross-roads the land starts to rise steeply, though irregularly which allows the quite dramatic landscaping around the church and Musbury Farm to take account of significant changes of level.

4.2 The significant area of open land in the heart of the village has already been described. The number and quality of mainly deciduous mature trees here is exceptional with, for example, several fine limes. These make a vital contribution to the overall character of the conservation area.

4.3 Whilst this space has no public access, it is visually linked to another important landscaped area further east consisting of churchyard, car park, and the start of the footpath route to Musbury Castle. Here too the footpath to the lower part of the village descends abruptly by some steps. Whilst trees here are less dominant, more scattered and interspersed with buildings, they are equally important in their context. Several sharp changes in level leading to a small stream in a hollow have created a particularly intimate landscape, part natural, part man-made with buildings almost obscured by the richness and variety of vegetation.

4.4 Elsewhere landscape features within the conservation area are confined to trees and shrubs, mainly behind walls or within garden curtilages. A few trees survive along field boundaries between developed and agricultural land.



*(Above centre) Church Hill, junction with Doatsbayne Lane; a quiet corner of the village with extensive walls*

*(Above) Axminster Road, view towards village centre. Roughcast render and shutters tend to compromise original character*

## 5 HARD SURFACES

5.1 Areas where natural materials have traditionally been used to cover ground surfaces now appear to be very limited, although some earlier surfaces may have been covered over.

5.2 The only remaining areas where ubiquitous tarmacadam is not found are the car park and the footpath linking Church Hill and Compbyne Road.

## 6 BUILDING MATERIALS AND ORNAMENT

6.1 Musbury, like many East Devon villages, has a wide range of building materials mainly consisting of cob on stone footings, local chert stone and brick. Beer stone is used in dressings and the Parish Church displays an attractive combination of roughly coursed chert and moulded ashlar Beer stone.

6.2 Roof materials are mainly of slate or thatch, but with several instances of bitumenised corrugated iron, normally an indication of an earlier thatched roof. Boundary walls are mainly of chert or brick, and as will be noted in the illustrated examples, are sometimes found in need of strengthening or repair and repointing.

## 7 STREET FURNITURE AND SPECIAL FEATURES

7.1 An old milestone, attractively marked, abuts a cottage in Axminster Road. This is probably the most significant remaining feature of this kind within the conservation area, and a reminder of the former historic importance of this road through the village.

7.2 Some recent newly installed streetlights which imitate the style once reserved for gas lamps are mounted to brackets on posts carrying telephone and electricity cables.



*Wall detail of the Parish Church tower showing dressed Beer stone and coursed chert*



*Axminster Road; milestone with cast iron detail*

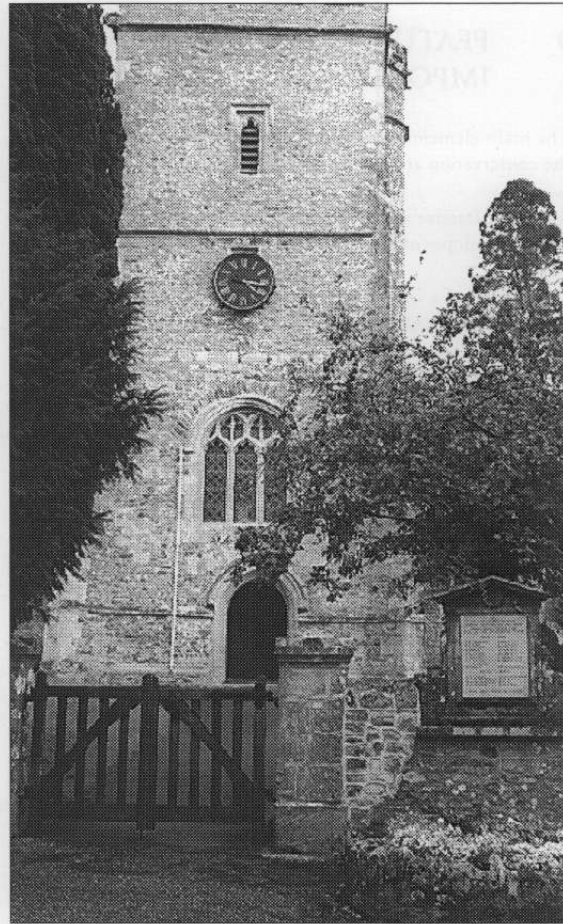
## 8 SYNOPSIS OF LISTED BUILDINGS

8.1 **St. Michael's Church** has a 15th century tower, but is otherwise much restored with a chancel of 1865 and north aisle of 1875 by Hayward of Exeter. The south aisle is 15th century, but windows generally are mid to late 19th century. The church is mainly visited because of the Drake monument erected in 1611 by John Drake to commemorate three generations of his family, and it was extended by a bay in 1646.

### Important Buildings/Historic Sites outside the Conservation Area

8.2 **Ashe** (one mile north) came to be owned by John Drake of Exmouth in about 1415. His descendants held it until 1793. The present **Ashe House** was rebuilt by Sir John Drake, (2nd bart.) c.1670-80, though there are some slight remains of its 14th/15th century predecessor. There is a detached chapel on the site of one licensed in 1387. This was rebuilt in the 17th century.

8.3 **Musbury Castle** is an Iron Age hill fort covering six acres, which overlooks the village.



*The Parish Church of St Michael (above) is attractively sited on higher ground in the east of the conservation area which also contains Musbury Farm (below) which probably dates from the 17th century*



## 9 FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

The main elements which contribute to the essential character of the conservation area are as follows:

- the attractive and secluded setting of the village on the lower eastern slopes of the Axe Valley
- the use of a wide range of local building materials in a mainly vernacular context
- as a complement to the above, extensive boundary walls in stone and brick, providing a strong sense of enclosure; providing continuity between different parts of the village, and reinforcing an intricacy of scale
- several good examples of vernacular features in cottages, farmhouses and outbuildings, and for the most part a clear acknowledgement of features worthy of conservation, some of which are obviously cherished
- many fine tree groups, especially to the south and east of the village centre
- the attractive landscaped setting surrounding the Parish Church and Musbury Farm
- the open land in front of Mountfield, fringed by mature trees which is an essential focal point of landscape significance within the heart of the conservation area
- an important footpath link across the village and from the village to Musbury Castle, probably both of considerable antiquity



## 10 LOSS OF CHARACTER AND INTRUSION

10.1 Factors which are tending to cause a loss or compromising of character within the conservation area are as follows:

- prominent overhead power lines, especially in Axminster Road, The Street and Doatshayne Lane
- the somewhat poor condition of some sections of stonework and brickwork in boundary walls, gate piers etc.
- the gradual erosion of original detail, especially of traditional carpentry to doors and windows, inappropriate pointing, and a few examples of restoration which include hard cement coated render and other later embellishments that are unsympathetic and tend to detract from the original character of the building.



*Close-up detail of garden walls in Doatshayne Lane showing typical problems of decayed mortar and frost damaged brickwork (left) and the need to use wall ties to prevent further movement of structurally unsound sections. Here successive applications of cement mortar/render have almost obscured the stonework*



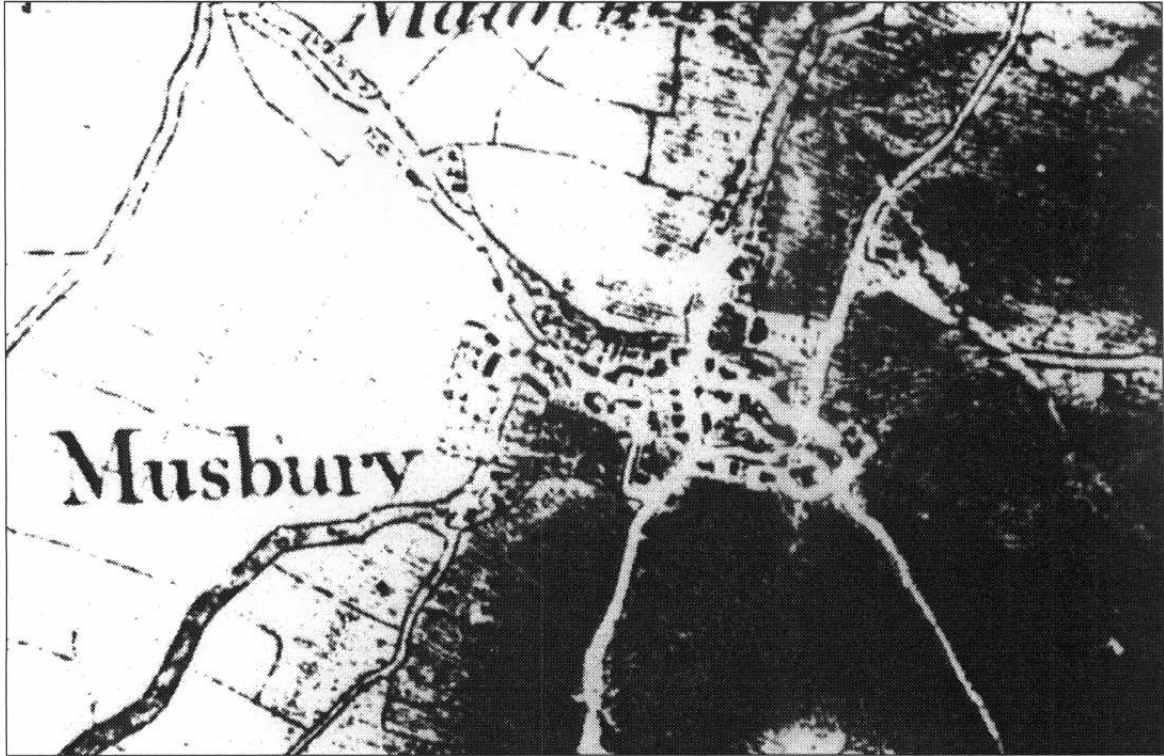
*View west from the edge of the conservation area showing further cottage groups, severed from the historic core of the village by the A358 by-pass*

## 11 SUMMARY

11.1 Musbury, although a relatively small village, retains much unspectacular but original character. Although the majority of buildings in the conservation area do not appear to be under immediate threat, alterations allowable under permitted development, have tended to undermine their intrinsic character in places. It may therefore be considered necessary to introduce an Article 4(2) Direction to enable additional control over frontage and boundary treatment, and to encourage the retention, repair or suitable replacement of traditional features, such as windows, doors, boundary walls and entrances.

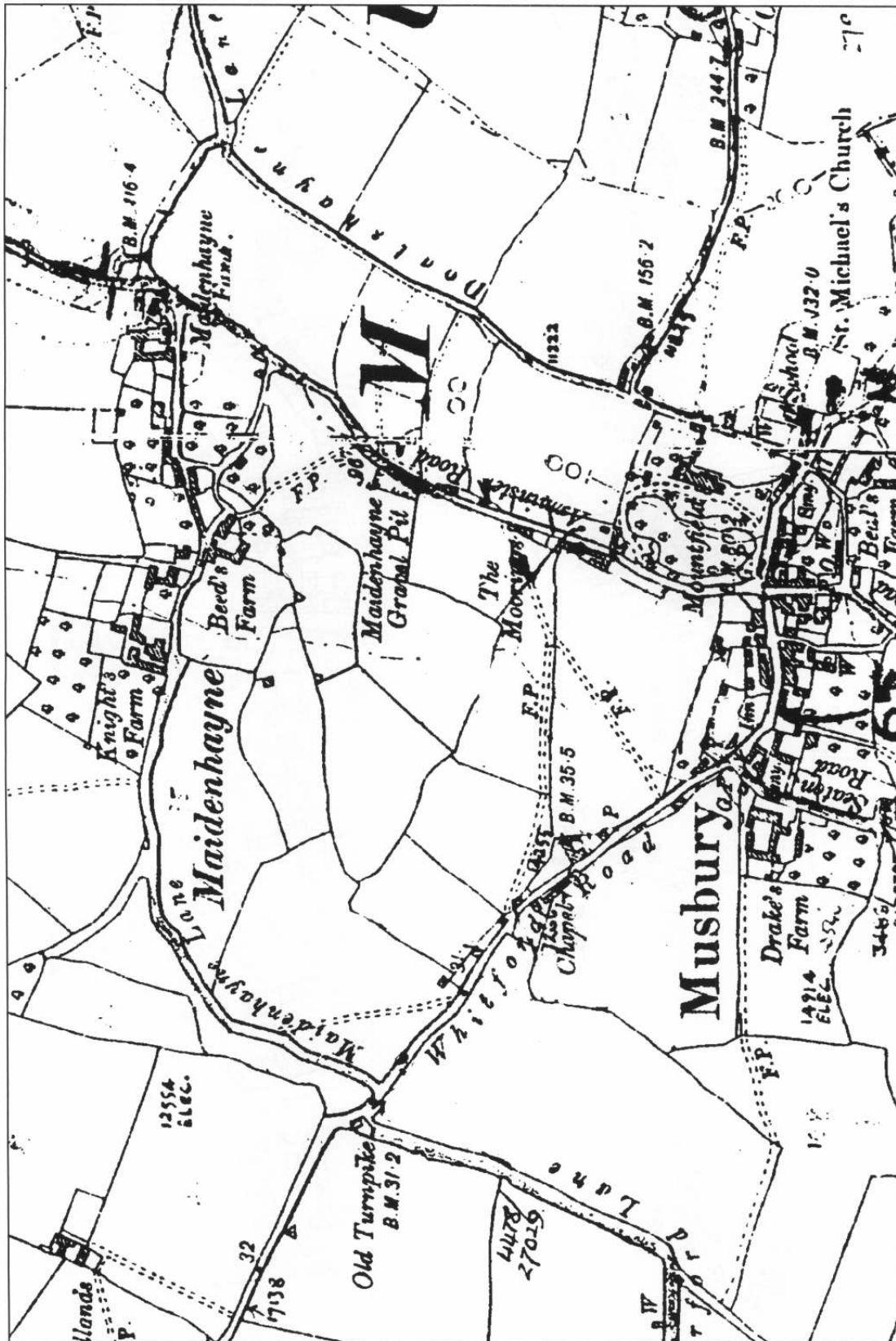
11.2 It is worthy of note that the village has several quite extensive cottage and farm groups representative of the wider settlement pattern of the locality beyond the present conservation area boundary. In spite of the recent designation, consideration could be given to these outliers and the quality of their landscape setting as a possible extension to the existing conservation area boundary, although this would need to be backed up by further research into the archaeology of the area to determine the historic as well as the architectural significance.

## HISTORIC MAPS



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

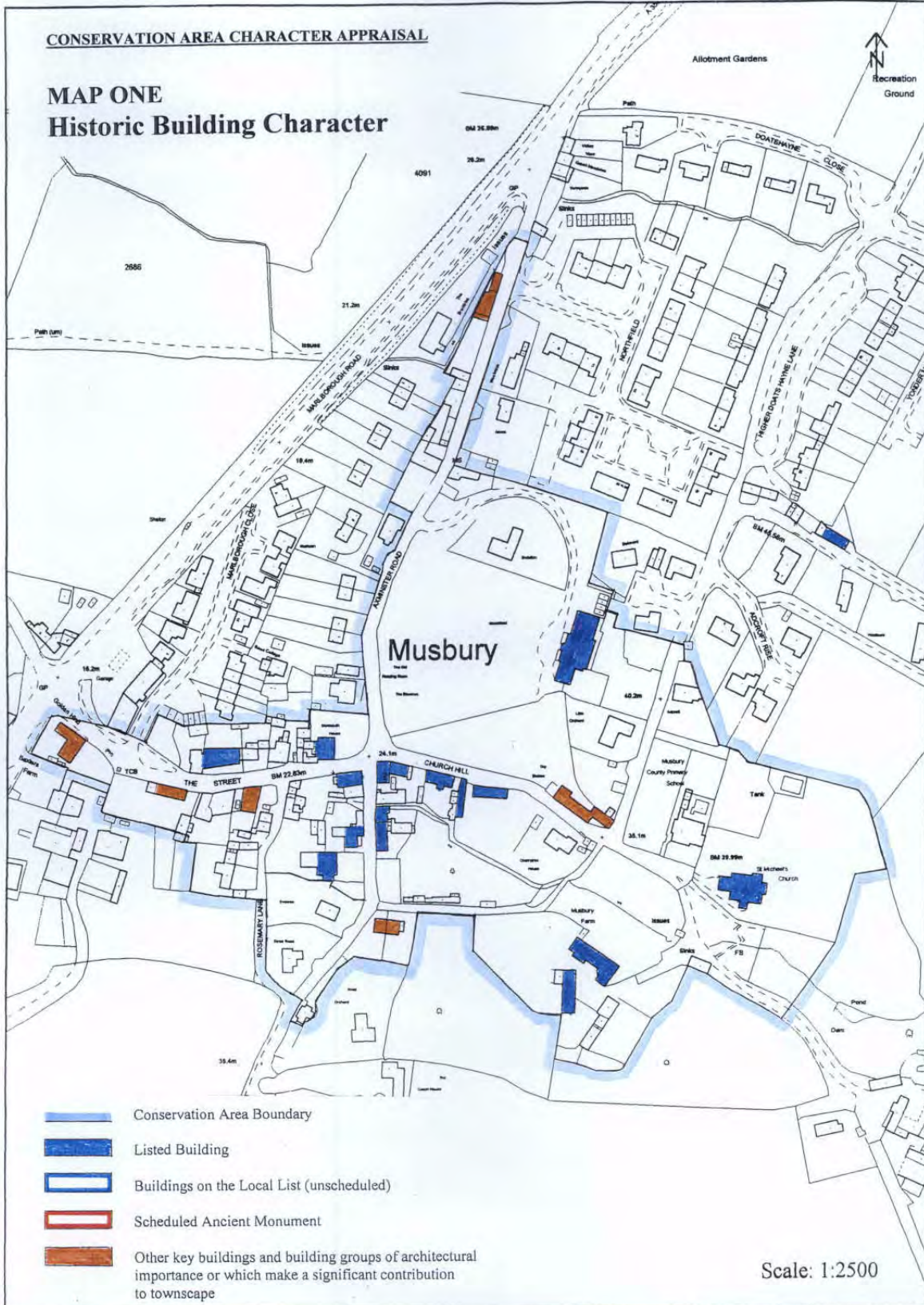




Early 20th Century Ordnance Survey Second Edition or Provisional Edition. Scale originally 6 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of fitting the report)

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP ONE  
Historic Building Character



Musbury Conservation Area  
East Devon District Council

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**CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

**MAP TWO  
Important Features**

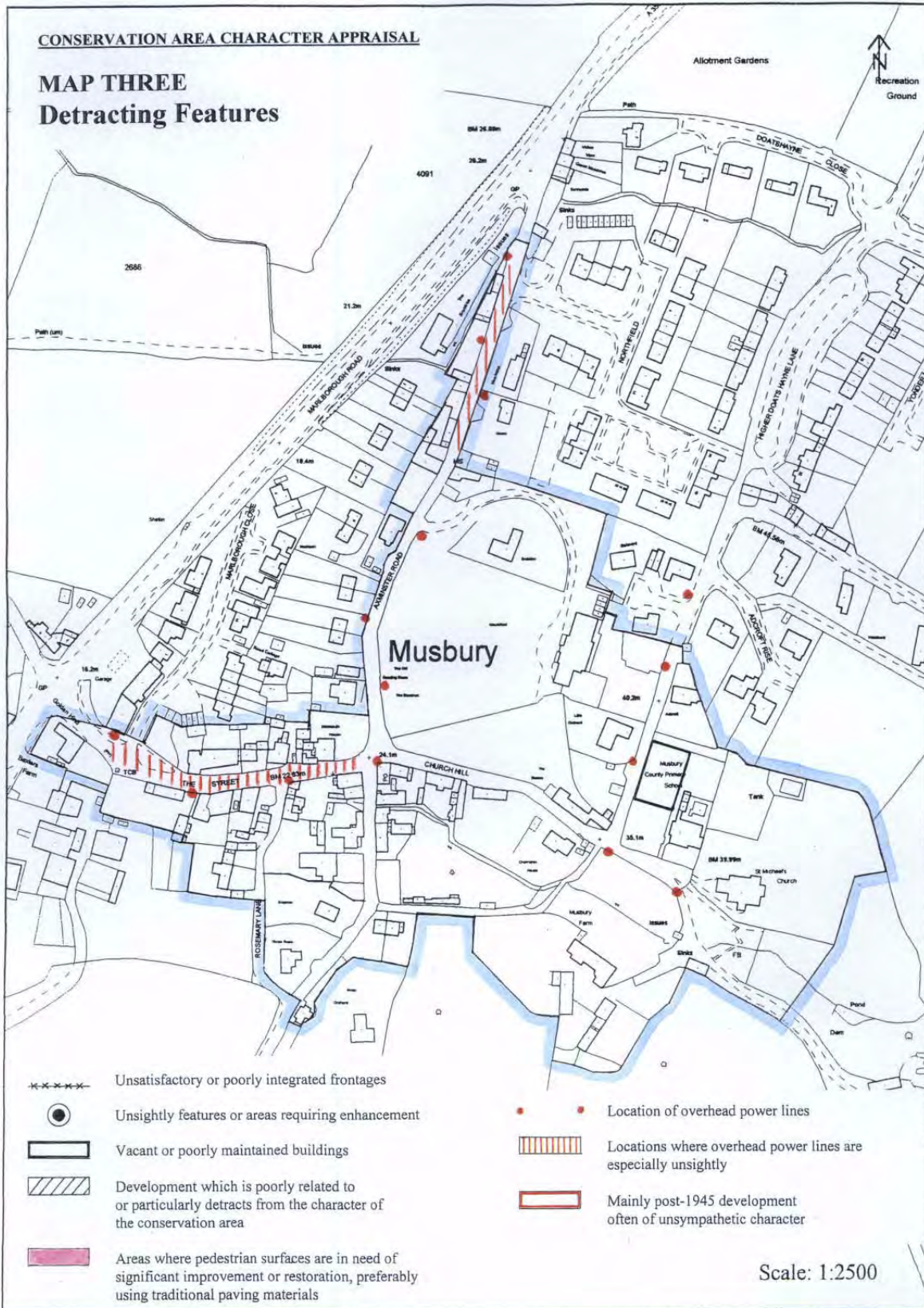


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**CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

**MAP THREE  
Detracting Features**

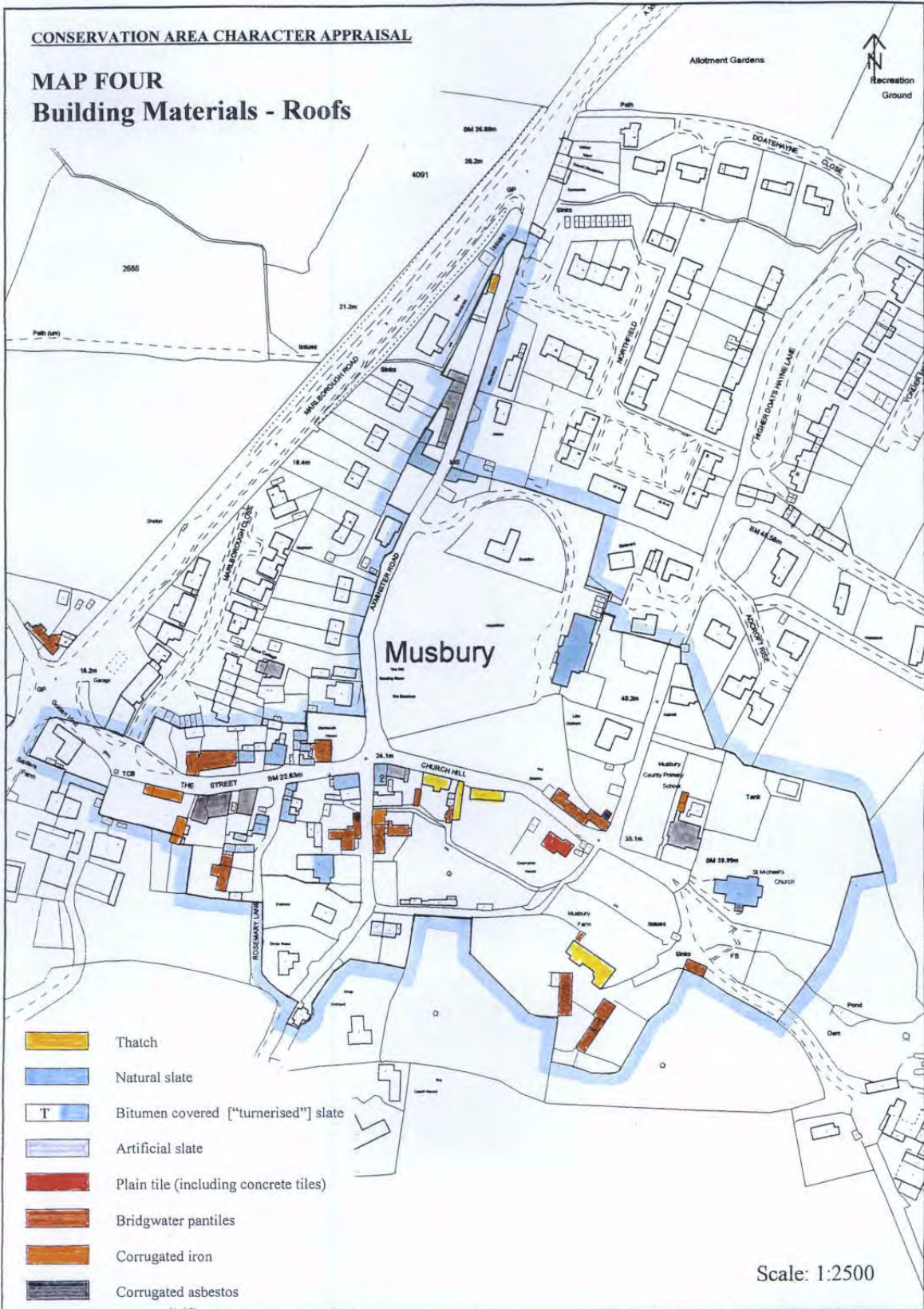


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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP FOUR  
Building Materials - Roofs

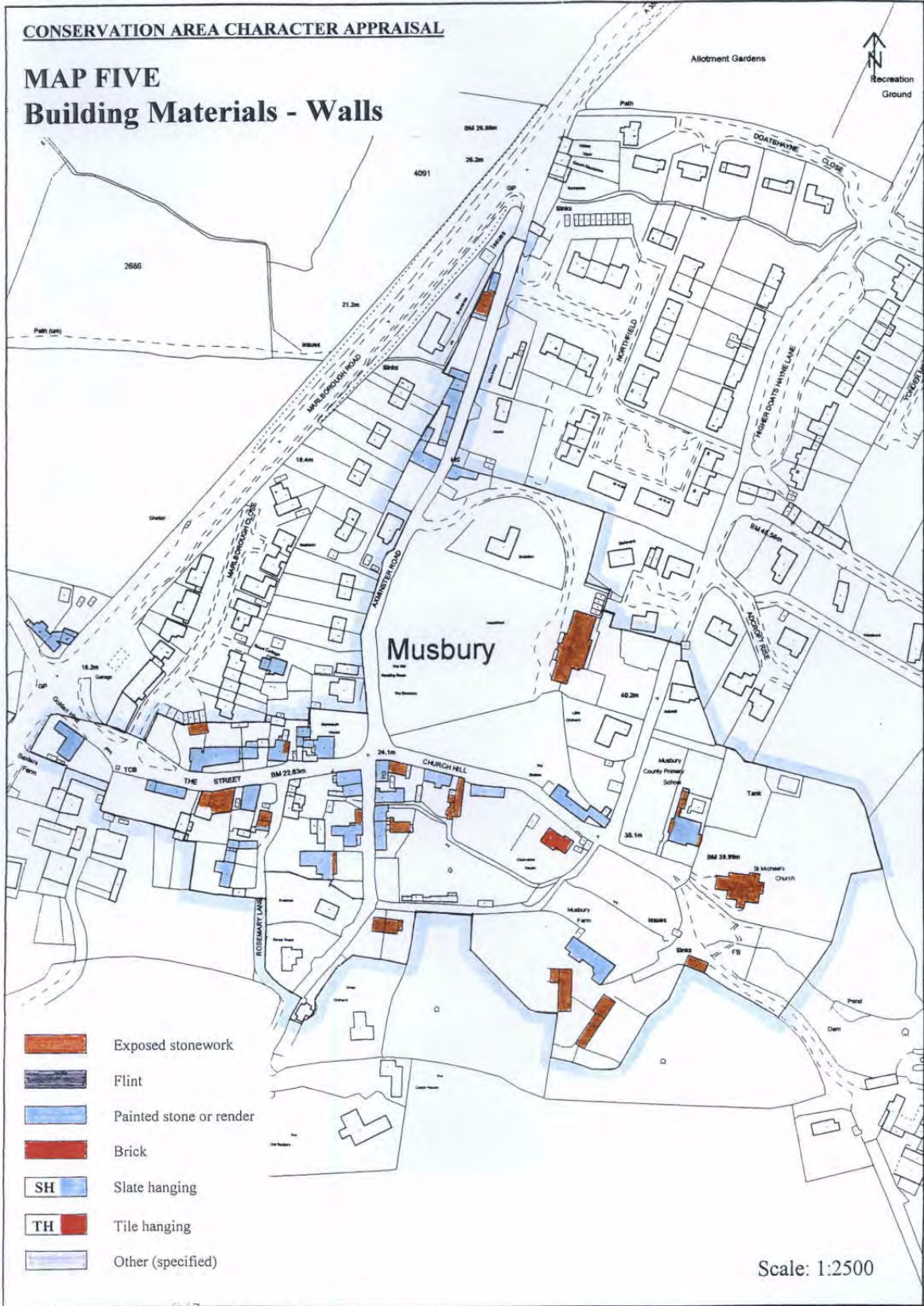


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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP FIVE  
Building Materials - Walls



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