

Whimble Interim Conservation Area Review

Purpose of the Review

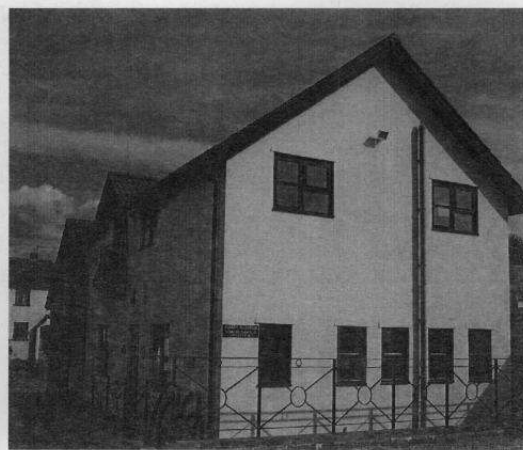
There is a requirement under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 of all local authorities to review their conservation areas and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Reviews must be carried out every five years as the character and appearance 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 Whimble Conservation Area.

- The village has an increasingly suburban air with new housing encroaching on all sides and is losing its rural setting among apple orchards and rapidly losing its associated industrial history connected with the cider making industry.
- Much new housing has been built even since the 1999 review. The old cider factory and other employment sites are all now redeveloped as housing and both the Inns have redeveloped their outbuildings. Unfortunately the new housing has little consistency of style with little effort to use vernacular materials or to blend with the historic fabric of the village. A little of the housing has by contrast introduced craft and some wit to the design, with visual references to the cider-making industry that preceded the dormitory developments. In a very few examples, simple style and a small palette of materials blend well with the vernacular of the older part of the village.
- A new heritage building housing the history society has been constructed from a converted linhay in the car park of the New Fountain Inn. This is flanked by a new house and garages at the rear of the Inn.



New residential development with strong suburban overtones, yet incorporating a barrel motif in the brick boundary wall.



The new Heritage Centre behind The Fountain Inn.

- The church is an extremely prominent central landmark in the village but its important presence is marred by the fact that its front boundary retaining wall in local sandstone is in poor condition with the coping crumbling away. Consent has now been granted to replace and repair the coping stones. The main elevation of the church is also spoilt by the proliferation of notices and signs of random sizes and styles that has now become a serious problem in this most sensitive part of the village.
- The historic ground treatment, of pebbles laid in earth, on the north side of The Square is now deteriorating and is being patched at random with tarmac. The lower-lying areas are also becoming muddy and unusable. Unless this surface is properly maintained it will be lost.
- The village is cut in half by the railway and unfortunately the rail infrastructure and the two railway bridges are not well maintained and the area around the road bridge is in poor condition, with signage that is poorly fixed and posts that are rusting away. The area around the second bridge is worse, with fencing around a children's' playground that could be a pleasant pedestrian walk.

Potential review of conservation area boundary.

The existing CA boundary covers most of the historic core area of the village. Development outside the boundary is mainly modern and does not meet criteria for inclusion. There are very few undeveloped areas within Built up Area Boundary and none which would benefit from Conservation area designation and therefore there appears to be no reason to extend the conservation area. The loss of character of the core conservation area is mainly superficial therefore there is no reason to omit existing areas due to eroded character. These aspects of conservation area review will be fully considered during the consultation process.

Principle reasons for erosion or changes to conservation area character.

- The mainline railway station has brought huge pressure for new housing into this convenient commuter village which has resulted in large unsympathetic housing developments within and immediately outside the conservation area, particularly on the northern edge. The use in the new houses of non-vernacular materials and inappropriate styles are incoherent with the historic fabric of the village.
- Loss of traditional industry and the use of redundant sites for new housing have been accompanied by no discernible improvement in associated infrastructure. The obvious effects are temporary buildings in the village school and the increased road traffic needing physical control measures such as traffic calming and signage.
- There are some unfortunate examples of PVCu windows being installed in key historic buildings. While this is currently permitted development home owners need to be fully aware of the implications of installing inappropriate windows.

WHIMPLE

Prepared for East Devon District Council by John Fisher BA, MA, MRTPI
with contributions from Town and Parish Councils and Amenity Societies in East Devon

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WHIMPLE



Views of The Square looking east (above) and west (below). The mature trees, grass verges and small stream enhance an already attractive space and the sense of enclosure.

1 HISTORIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

1.1 The village is in an area of cider orchards, now much less extensive than formerly. Although there is no documentary evidence it is considered likely that a small timber-built Saxon church formerly occupied the site of the present one which is thought to date from the 13th century. The name of the village derives from the British words Gwyn (white) and Pwll (pool) and is therefore of ancient origin. The village may have been burned by the Danes in 1001 when they unsuccessfully besieged Exeter but at an ensuing battle at Pinhoe the English were defeated and forced to retreat eastwards.

1.2 Farming has long been and still is an important activity in the locality. In the 19th century, Whimple had a brick and tile works using locally available marl. There is also evidence of smithing and tanning having been linked to the coaching trade. Cider making was established on an industrial scale during the late 19th century, and Whiteways Cyder - a household name, became established here. Manufacture ceased some years ago; the factory buildings have now gone and are being replaced by extensive new housing.



2 SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 The village has a largely rural setting in gently undulating pasture, crossed by the London to Exeter railway. With the demolition of the cider factory and loss of many of the orchards that formerly surrounded it, the village appeared to have lost its original *raison d'être*. On the former cider factory site, new housing development has taken place on a considerable scale and is making Whimble a commuter settlement for Exeter, no doubt helped by the rail link. Some housing already completed has somewhat scant regard for the several good examples of local traditional buildings that remain, a number of which have fortunately escaped over-restoration.

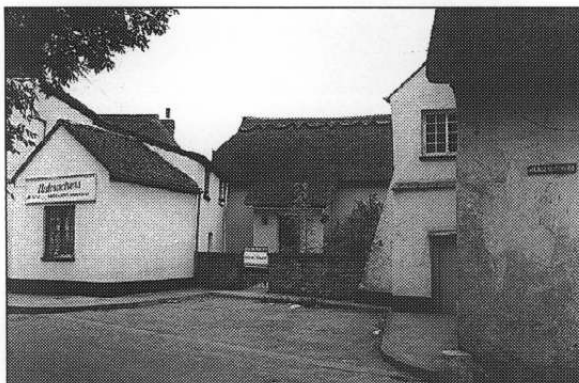
2.2 The Whimble Conservation Area mainly comprises the nucleus set around The Square and Church Road to the south. It also extends in a narrow strip north of the railway with a second smaller nucleus grouped around the T-junction.

2.3 First designated in March 1992, within the conservation area are some 22 individually listed buildings giving 14 separate list entries, the location of which are shown on Map 1.

3 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

3.1 In spite of large-scale changes taking place at several points immediately adjoining the conservation area, much of the intrinsic character of the conservation area itself has so far been remarkably little disturbed. The Square and the several short rows of cottages in streets adjoining constitute one of the most pleasing environments to be found in any East Devon village. There is a contrasting combination of hard and soft surfaces, and buildings on a harmonious scale with many retaining at least some original features. There are also some good mature trees and tree groups, an attractive water feature, and the church though dominant within the scene, especially close to The Square, is never overbearing.

3.2 The other good group of buildings, small but concentrated close to the T-junction at the northern end, has a mixture of red brick and slate, as well as cob on stone footings with mostly plain thatch. Southwest of the junction is an especially good group with an intricate layout having several different frontage alignments.



A particularly attractive group of cottages at the northern end of the conservation area.

4 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

4.1 Apart from the important and conspicuous group in The Square, trees are not an overtly dominant feature within the conservation area; rather a backdrop or complement to buildings. One such example are those to the rear of the Thirsty Farmer public house; another is the group of elms at the northern end of Church Road.

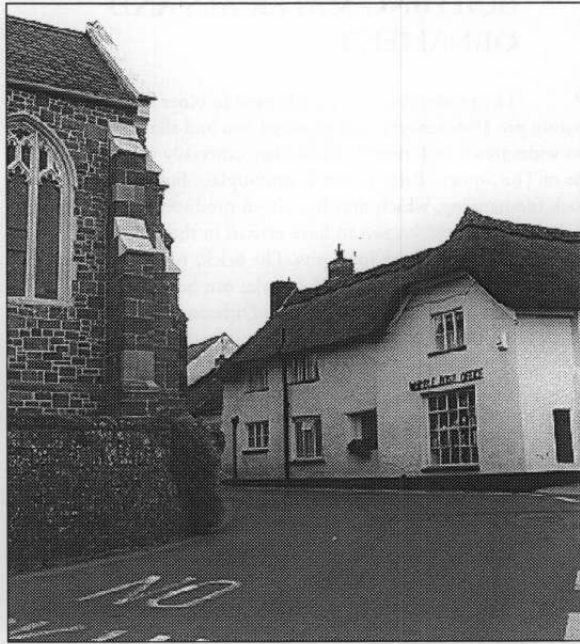
4.2 There is considerable greenery throughout the village evidenced by grass verges or banks, hedges, ornamental trees and shrubs within gardens and the churchyard. This tends to infuse the conservation area with a suburban rather than entirely rural character which is tending to be exacerbated by the new housing developments. Having regard to the nature of the conservation area it is recommended that native species of deciduous tree are planted or replaced wherever possible.

5 HARD SURFACES

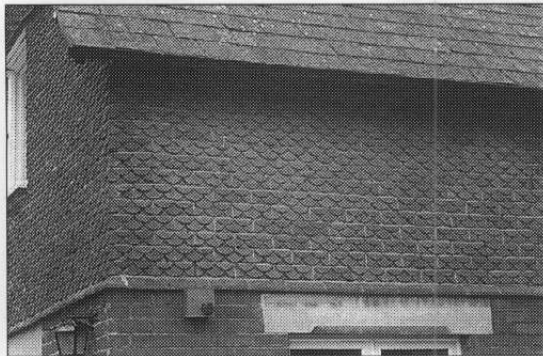
5.1 Ground surfaces using natural materials are very localised. Of significance is the pathway fronting cottages on the north side of The Square which consists mainly of round pebbles with apparently compacted soil between. This produces a firm and effective surface, even in wet conditions.



A considerable area of this ground surface exists along the north side of The Square. It has been carefully prepared to give adequate drainage without run-off, and remains firm in wet weather.



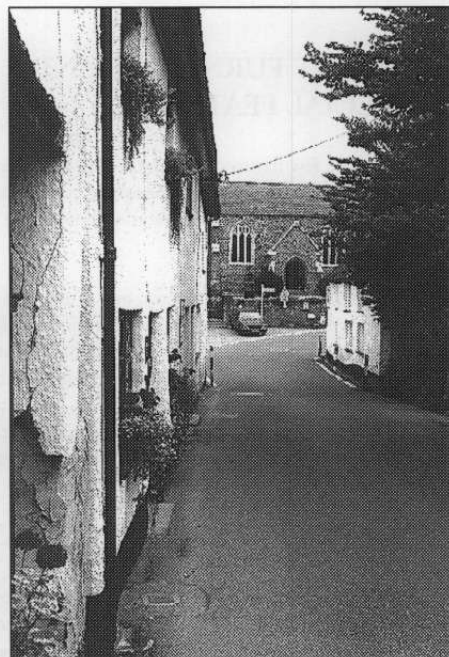
At the entrance to The Square the road follows a dog-leg course enabling a strong sense of enclosure, and effective in slowing down traffic. In (top left) an unusual shopfront where fascia brackets appear to have been inverted.



Whimble is the only East Devon village where this unusual brick, imitating tile-hanging has been noted. It could have been the innovative product of a local brickworks, several of which are known to have existed in the area up to the late 19th century.



Retaining wall enclosing churchyard. Attractive squared-off, possibly sawn stone in a variety of dimensions, probably mid 19th century; a demonstration of once widespread skills of stonemasonry.



Row of plain 18th/early 19th century cottages, rendered cob; probably formerly thatched but now with slate roofs

6 BUILDING MATERIALS AND ORNAMENT

6.1 The predominant materials used in older buildings (mainly pre 19th century) are plastered cob and thatch, with slate also widespread, including Cornish slate especially on the south side of The Square. Brick is also commonplace including the mock tile-hanging, which may have been produced by the local brick and tile works known to have existed in the 19th century and using clay marl from local pits. The bricks produced were slightly larger than average, and examples can be seen at The White House and Thirsty Farmer Inn. Different patterns of crested ridge tiles also decorate several buildings.

6.2 The Primary School with a plaque "Whimble National School 1848" has a stone front elevation and stone mullioned windows and roughcast render on the west elevation. The recent brick extension to the rear with artificial slate and red ridge tiles is somewhat utilitarian.

6.3 The photograph at the top of page 8 shows new housing in brick and tile with some decoration including ornamented ridge tiles. Whilst reflecting some traditional features of the village this bears little resemblance to the plain cob and thatch cottages immediately opposite.

6.4 The bulk of the church fabric and surrounding walls in red/purple sandstone, squared off and attractively coursed, probably dates from the virtual rebuild of 1844 and is a good example of the skill of the stonemasons who probably lived locally, although some would be journeymen, travelling from place to place. Such skill was commonplace in the 19th century but it normally applied only to major restoration projects. The base of the church boundary wall is corroding quite badly in places, partly due to the effect of road salt which is detrimental to many limestones and sandstones and which can cause rapid decay in some vulnerable locations.

7 STREET FURNITURE AND SPECIAL FEATURES

7.1 There are few fixtures or free-standing artefacts of note apart from a group near the church consisting of the usual parish notice board, also an excellent interpretation board, and a seat and telephone kiosk.

7.2 With regard to special features, one of the great strengths of the village is the extent of plain vernacular features that survive; plastered cob, thatch, timber casement windows with glazing bars, unadorned entrances with simple timber doors in recesses, and an absence of added on porches. This understated authenticity can all too easily be placed under threat because of pressure to comply with contemporary fashion or convenience.

8 SYNOPSIS OF LISTED BUILDINGS

8.1 **St. Mary's Church** with a low ashlar stone tower and stunted pinnacles on the battlements is thought to date from the 15th century. Much of the remainder was enlarged and rebuilt in about 1845 by John Hayward, a well-known Devon church architect, when a south aisle was added to match the existing perpendicular north arcade.

Important Buildings outside the Conservation Area

8.2 **Fordton, The Green**, (0.3 of a mile northwest) is a late medieval farmhouse; the back wall of the former open hall, now within the outshot, has an original 3-light timber window with timber heads and a later, lower tier with similar heads.

8.3 **Larkbear Court** (1.0 miles east) having associations with Thackeray who stayed there as a schoolboy; also **Strete Raleigh** (1.5 miles south), situated in parkland and with a stuccoed 19th century Tudor Revival front.

8.4 At **Knowle Cross** (0.5 of a mile northwest) near the road junction are several 18th and early 19th century cob cottages with hipped thatched roofs. These are survivals of plain one or two room ground floor plans, probably former squatter cottages, as they immediately front the road with no land behind.

9 FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

Within the conservation area are the following elements which should be considered as important to its character:

- The Square forms a strong focal point, and provides an excellent sense of enclosure and satisfying spatial arrangement, with the Parish Church being a dominant feature. The stream and mature trees add to the character in this part of the village.

- several excellent examples of plain vernacular architecture; small terraced cottages in short rows or groups constructed of cob on rubblestone footings with thatch or slate roofs and plastered and whitewashed in the traditional manner, although not always using traditional materials.

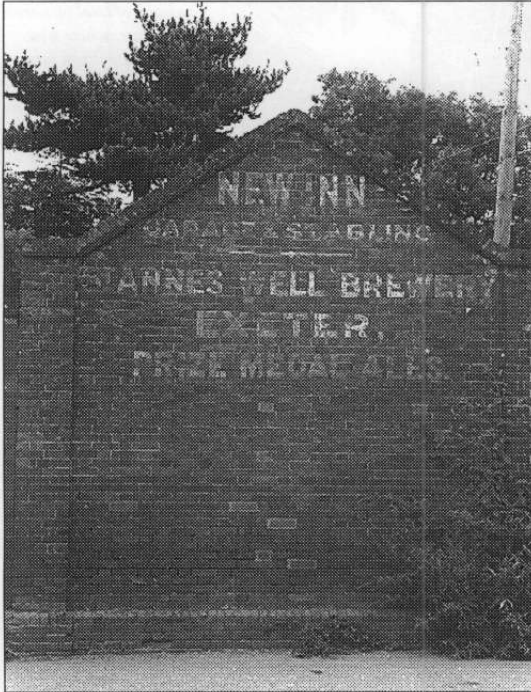
- attractive surface to the path on the north side of the village square constructed mainly of water-worn pebbles in a variety of sizes.

- an unusual form of brick made to imitate "fish-scale" tile hanging. It is possible this was made locally as it is known that the village once had a brick-works.

- preserved lettering on the wall of the original stable block of the former New Inn, preserving a little local history.

- significant boundary and retaining walls, mainly in local sandstone, and demonstrating well the skill of the traditional stonemason, a craft that had largely ceased, other than in important restoration work, by the early 20th century.

- a village information board, of interest to residents and visitors alike (a good example rarely seen elsewhere). This is also close to the Parish Notices, the churchyard entrance and some seating which creates a natural focal point for informal social gathering.



Such interesting survivals are always worthy of retention and are a tangible link with local history.

10 LOSS OF CHARACTER AND INTRUSION

The main elements within the conservation which are leading to a loss of character and undermining its significance are considered to be:

- prominent overhead power lines in some parts of the village
- the northern part of the conservation area is a rather isolated entity, not helped by the railway
- following demolition of the cider factory site, relatively large areas have been developed immediately adjoining the conservation area. Some developments are tending to contrast unsympathetically in style and materials with vernacular buildings within the conservation area. One example is at the northern edge of the conservation area, immediately opposite Hazel Cottages.

11 SUMMARY

11.1 Whimble has had its overall character and rural setting much compromised by the considerable extent of 20th century development which has taken place especially since the demise of the former cider factory. There are examples where development immediately adjoining the conservation area has not always had adequate regard to the traditional buildings within it, and somewhat compromised their character and setting.

11.2 By contrast, a considerable amount of historic and vernacular detail survives within the conservation area itself. Inevitable pressures for further changes should therefore be resisted as far as possible. The removal of overhead power lines and television aerials would further enhance the appearance. Existing elevational detail of historic buildings within the conservation area, including any proposals for extensions or alterations, should be maintained or enhanced using traditional materials and methods of construction as far as possible.

IN DAYS OF YORE!

The English Place Name Society have concluded that the name Whimble was originally a stream name, being a compound of the British words corresponding to GWYN (White) and PWLL (Pool). "That this was so is made certain by the fact that there was a place called Wypmellwell in parochia de Tataton, referring to the spot where the stream rises in Talaton parish".

Long established dwellings are CLYSTEBARNEVILLE (1482); COBBEWIMPLE (1242); RUTTENLAND (1616); ESTRETA (1086); CROSTOWNE (1628); PERYTON (1632); PUTHEGHS (1330); RULL (1662); SLOWE TOWN (1665); WOODHAINE (1628); YOLLAND (1634); HOLEWEYE (1333); FORTON or FORDPLACE (1646); and KNOLLE (1330).

Although no documentary evidence exists, it is reasonable to suppose that a small timber built Saxon church occupied Whimble's present church site, a pleasant spot on the western slope of a slight ridge dividing the Otter and Clyst valleys. The present church was wholly rebuilt in its former style with the exception of the tower and was consecrated on 26th April, 1846. The recorded incumbents date back to the resignation of William Pincerna who was succeeded by Roger de Dertiford on 23rd May, 1258.

In 1001 Exeter was besieged by the Danes, but thanks to King Athelstan's fortifications the city walls were not breached. The Danes retreated and camped at Pinhoe, where a battle ensued. The English were defeated, the Danes moving eastward burning Pinhoe, Broadclyst and possibly Whimble on their way.

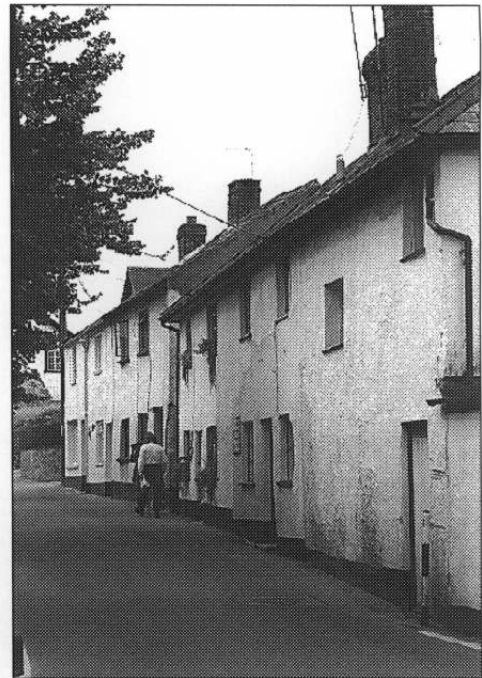
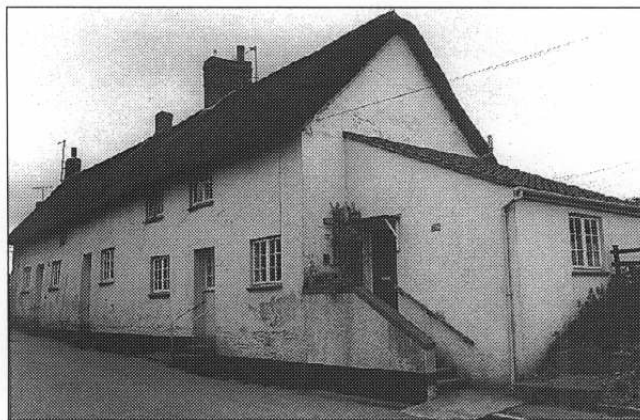
Farming has been the lifeblood of the village for centuries but Whimble in the 19th century had a Brick and Tile works, collecting Marl locally from still visible pits. The bricks were slightly larger than those produced today and examples can be seen at The White House and The Thirsty Farmer Inn.

There is also much evidence of the Smithing and Tanning trades, providing services for the Stage Coach. Latterly Cider Making has predominated, but change is once again taking place and Horticulture is now coming to the fore.

Excellent example of village interpretation, well-positioned against a wall close to the church. There are also historic photographs and a map showing public rights of way. It was produced in 1990 in association with Devon County Council, and grant aided by the Countryside Commission.



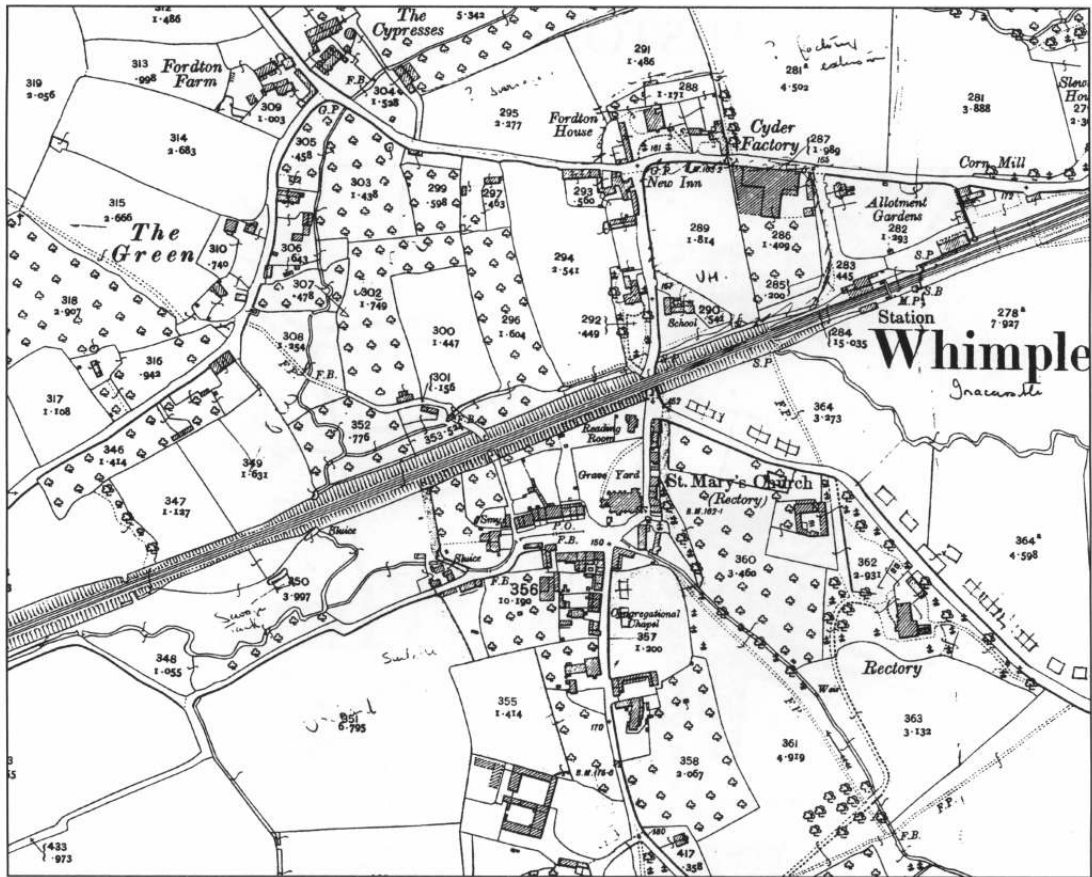
Examples of local vernacular architecture, where some buildings are listed, others not. New housing (left) does not appear to have taken account of the plain form and detailing of the cottages.



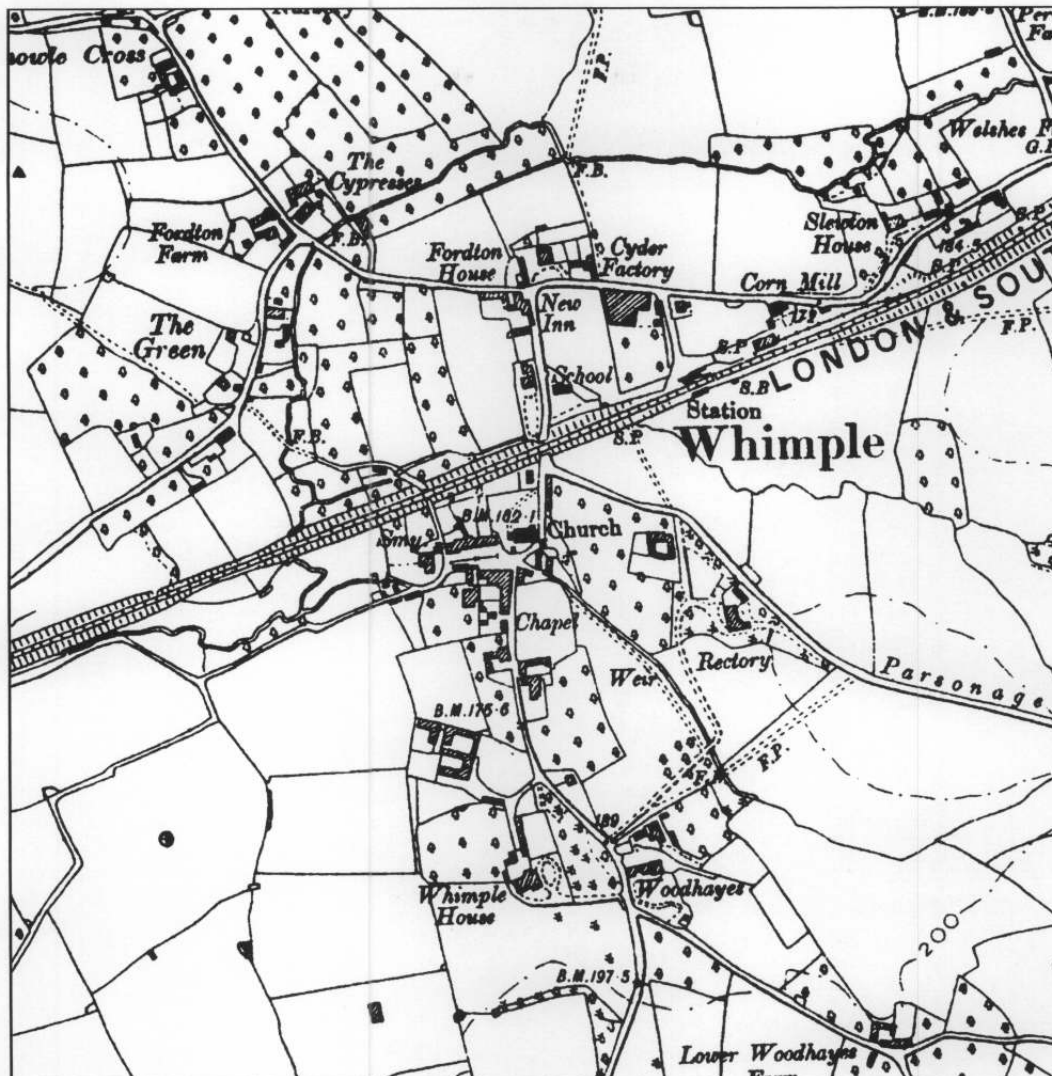
HISTORIC MAPS



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)

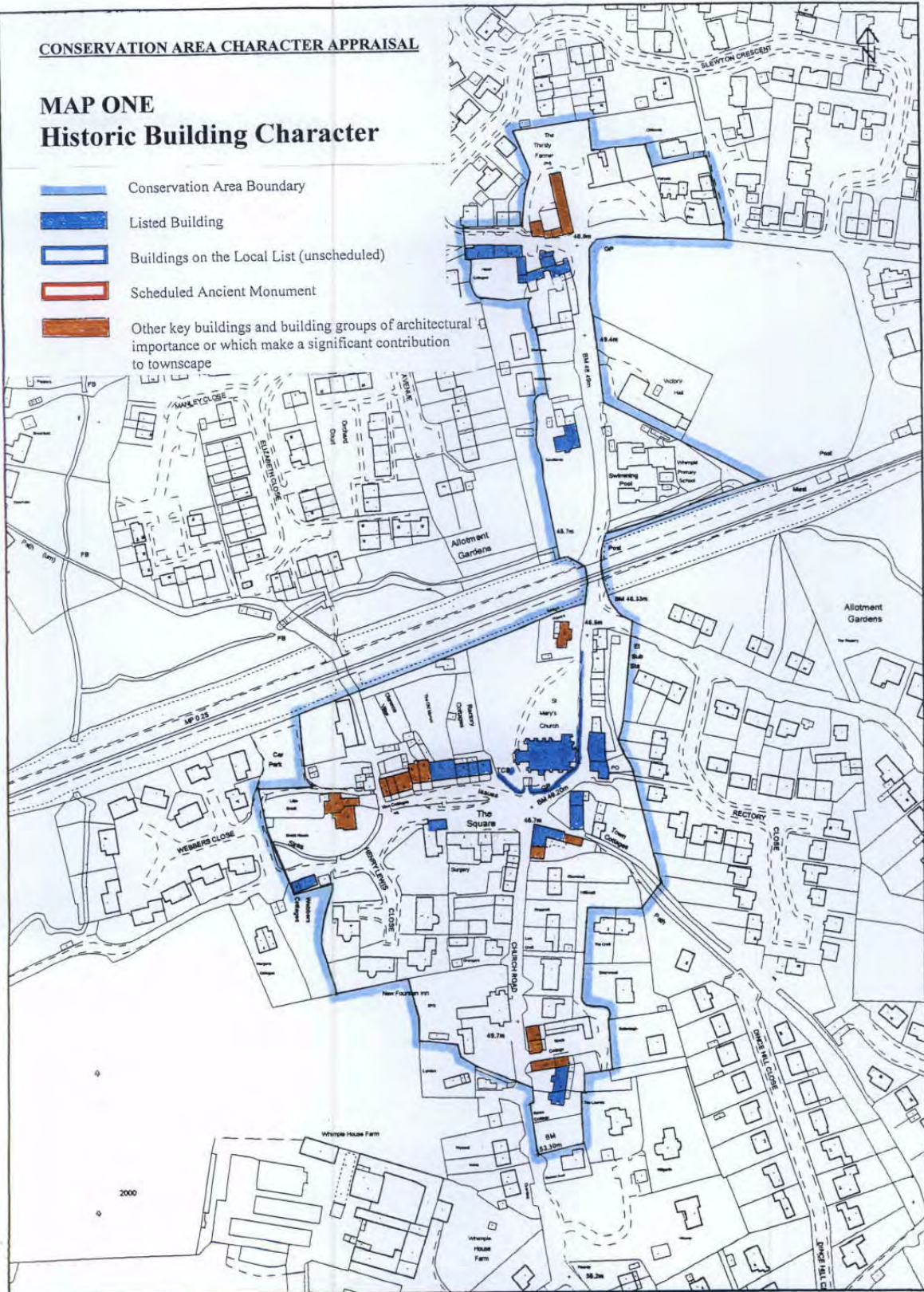


Early 20th Century Ordnance Survey Second Edition or Provisional Edition.
Scale originally 6 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of fitting the report)

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP ONE
Historic Building Character

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Building
-  Buildings on the Local List (unscheduled)
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument
-  Other key buildings and building groups of architectural importance or which make a significant contribution to townscape

















Whimple Conservation Area

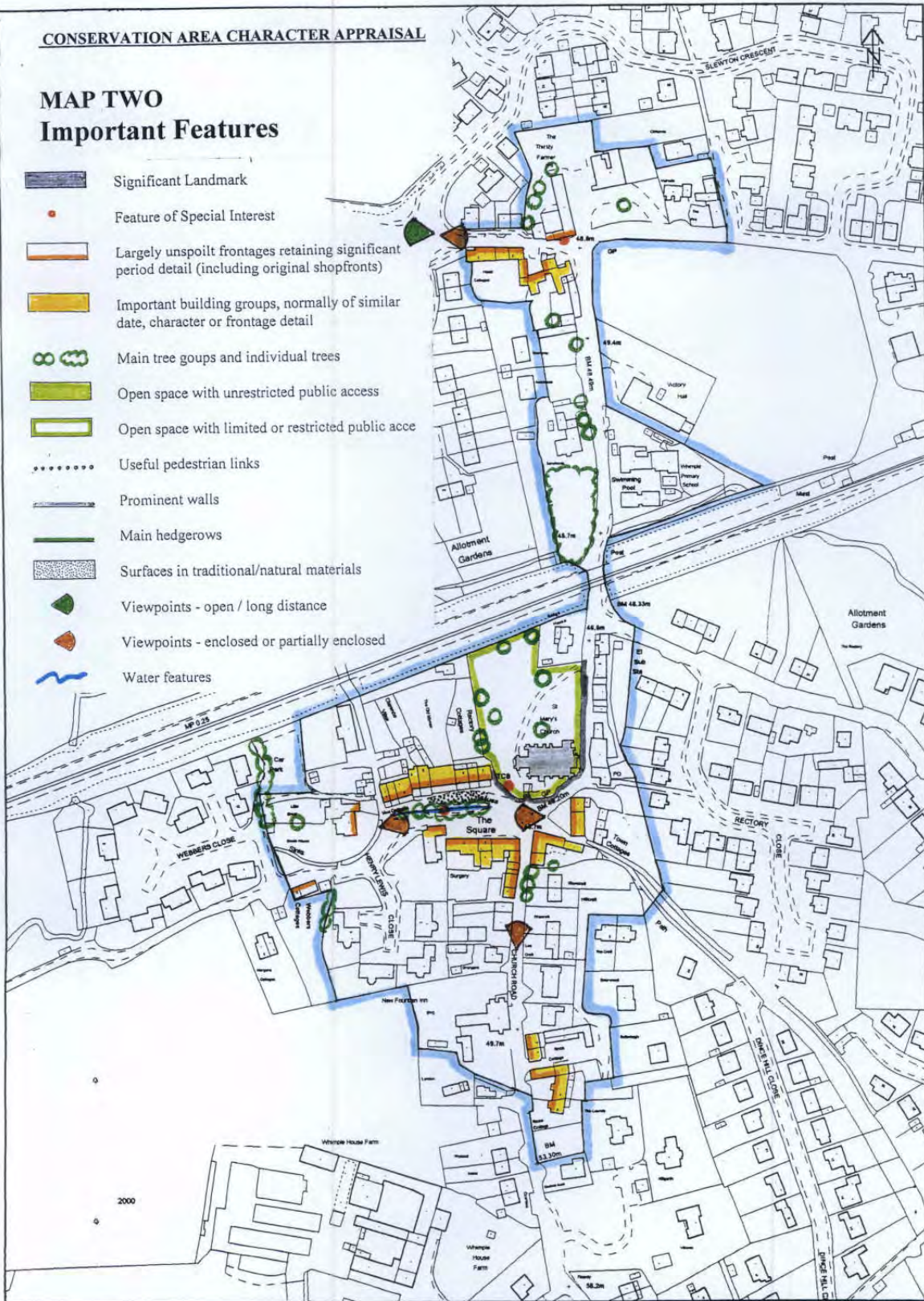
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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

**MAP TWO
Important Features**

-  Significant Landmark
-  Feature of Special Interest
-  Largely unspoilt frontages retaining significant period detail (including original shopfronts)
-  Important building groups, normally of similar date, character or frontage detail
-  Main tree groups and individual trees
-  Open space with unrestricted public access
-  Open space with limited or restricted public access
-  Useful pedestrian links
-  Prominent walls
-  Main hedgerows
-  Surfaces in traditional/natural materials
-  Viewpoints - open / long distance
-  Viewpoints - enclosed or partially enclosed
-  Water features











Whimpey Conservation Area

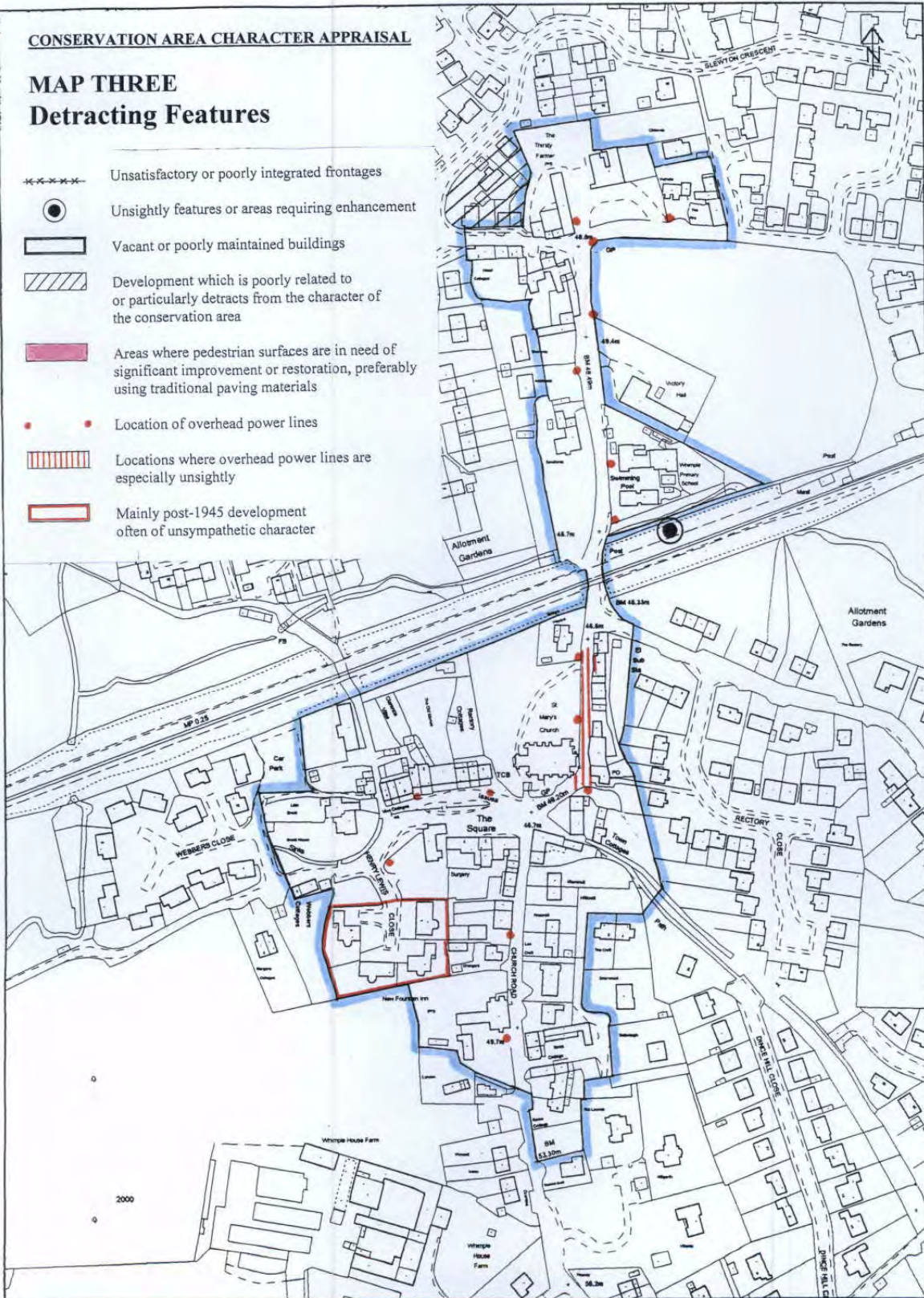
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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

**MAP THREE
Detracting Features**

-  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











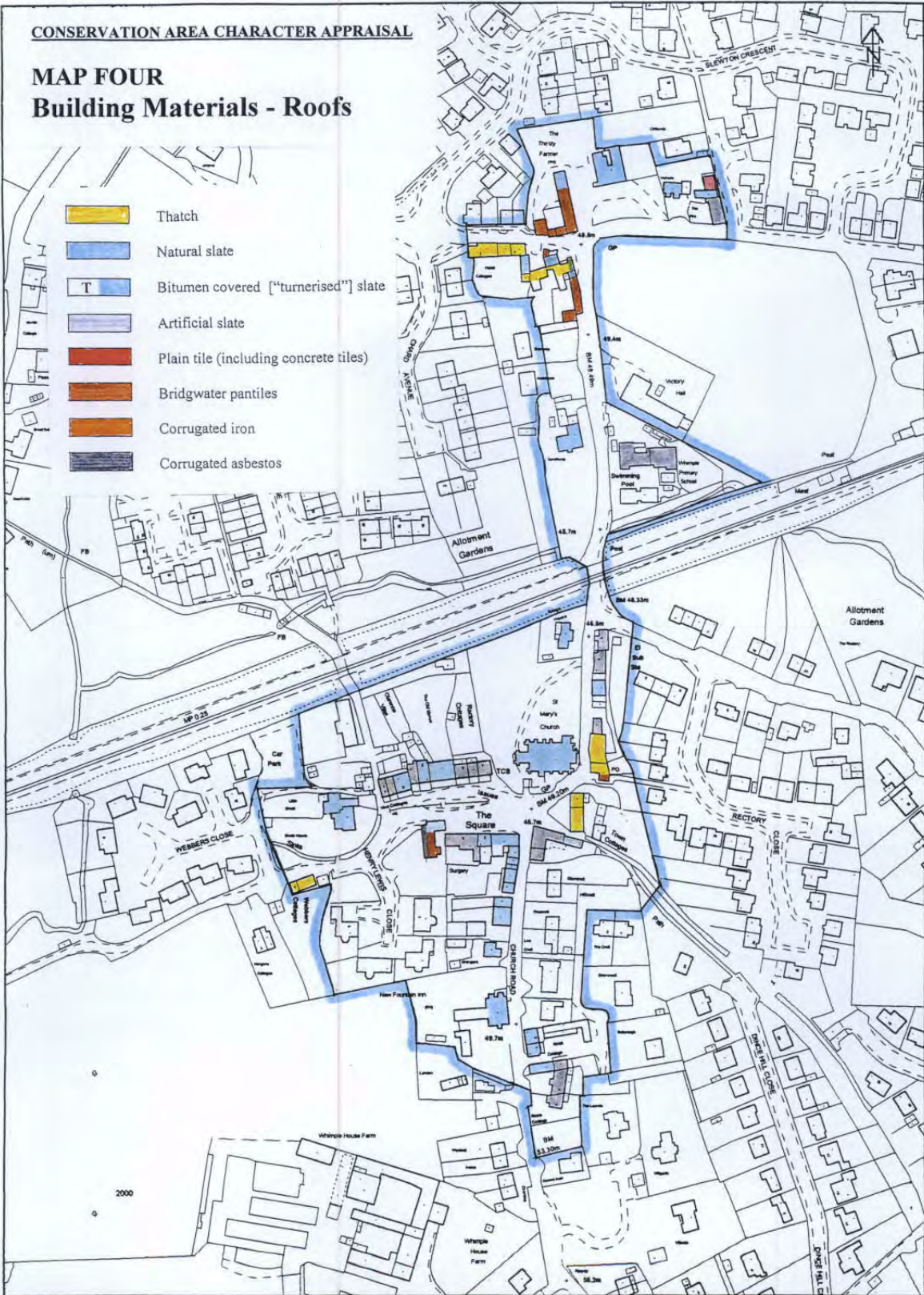
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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

**MAP FOUR
Building Materials - Roofs**

-  Thatch
-  Natural slate
-  Bitumen covered ["turnerised"] slate
-  Artificial slate
-  Plain tile (including concrete tiles)
-  Bridgwater pantiles
-  Corrugated iron
-  Corrugated asbestos



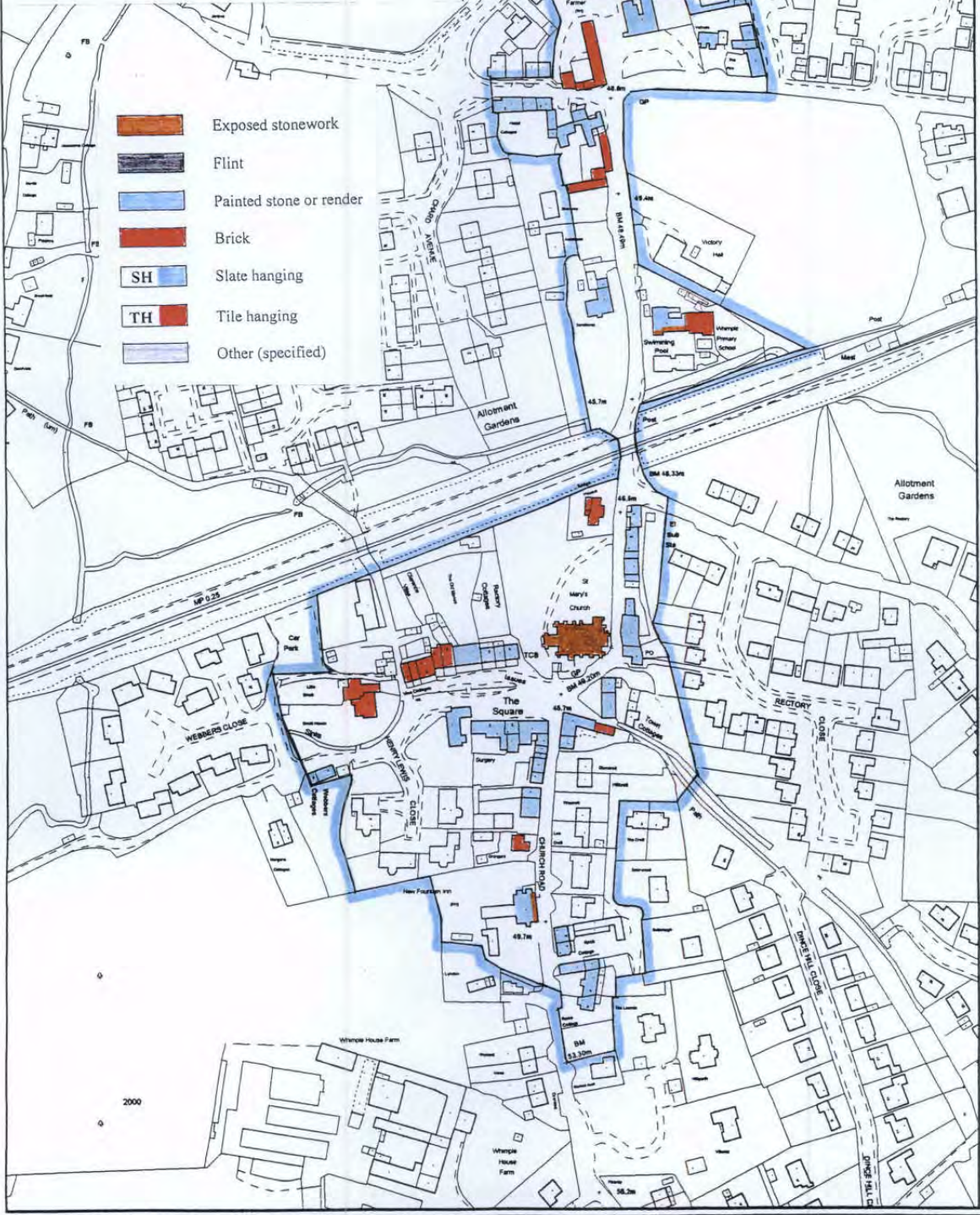
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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

**MAP FIVE
Building Materials - Walls**



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