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Teignbridge District Conservation Area Character Appraisals

Abbotskerswell

The conservation area boundary as indicated here is for illustrative purposes only, and is not intended to be a true representation of the conservation area as formally adopted. The accurate and definitive conservation area maps can instead be inspected at the main reception area of Teignbridge District Council offices, during normal office hours.

Not all important features of this conservation area are necessarily highlighted here, therefore no omissions that may have been made as part of this appraisal are intended to imply that omitted features that are found to be of interest from future reviews of the document are not of significance in their own right.



Acknowledgements

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Archive information and historic maps were obtained from the Westcountry Studies Library and Devon Records Office in Exeter. The archaeological analysis was informed by the Sites and Monuments Register, maintained by Devon County Council.



Consultations

Any comments, observations or suggestions relating to this document should be sent to:

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1:0 INTRODUCTION

The initial Conservation Area Character Statement for Abbotskerswell was endorsed by the Planning Committee on 18 December 2000. Since that time it has been the subject of public consultation, with copies being distributed to the Parish Council and many individuals. It has also been available for download from the Teignbridge website - a facility that has proved very popular. The document was discussed at a public meeting in the village on 30th July 2001.

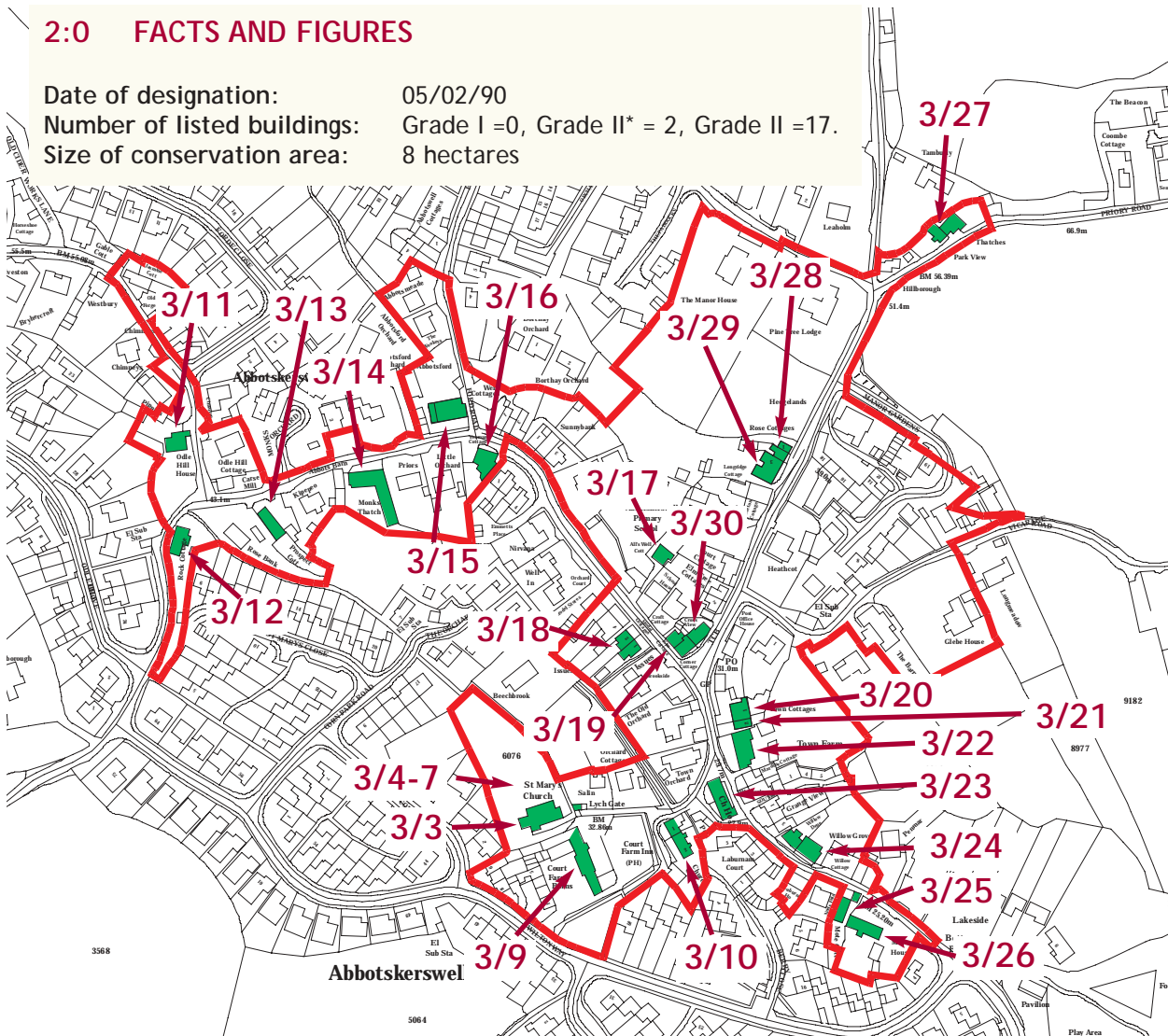
The feedback from the public and other interested bodies has been fully considered and a number of amendments have been made as a result - notably further amendments to the proposed Conservation Area boundary. The new boundary will be confirmed during the next few years and the Parish Council will be informed when that happens.

This completed Character Appraisal was adopted in May 2004 via the Development Plan Steering Group as a document to support current and future development plans. Consequently its contents are now a material consideration for any planning application which affects the conservation area or its setting. It will be distributed to the utility companies, Devon County Council and other interested parties such as English Heritage. Printed copies will be available for public viewing at Forde House and it may be downloaded from www.teignbridge.gov.uk as well.

A full review of this Character Appraisal will be undertaken in future years, when its effectiveness will be considered and necessary amendments made. A public meeting will be held if either Teignbridge or the Parish Council consider that it would be beneficial.

2:0 FACTS AND FIGURES

Date of designation: 05/02/90
 Number of listed buildings: Grade I =0, Grade II* = 2, Grade II =17.
 Size of conservation area: 8 hectares



The green coloured areas of this map represent listed buildings that lie within the Abbotskerswell conservation area. A summary of these listings may be found in Appendix four.

3.0 LOCATION & GEOLOGY

Abbotskerswell lies at the head of a combe, whose stream runs for about 1km south-east to the Aller Brook. The site was probably chosen for its fresh water supply and shelter from the prevailing winds. The village was an agricultural community, a fact reflected in the large number of surviving 15th-17th century farmhouses.

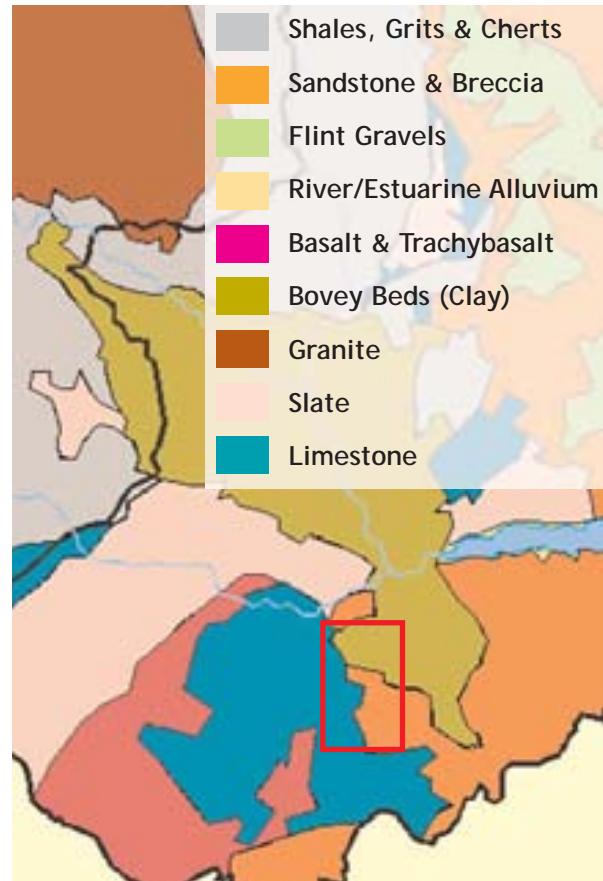
Once surrounded by fertile farmland, development in the 20th century has encircled old Abbotskerswell and changed this quiet, self-contained rural community quite fundamentally. In many ways it is now a satellite settlement to the adjacent town of Newton Abbot, though the conservation area retains plenty of authentic village character.

Geologically, Abbotskerswell is complex with upper Devonian slate on the north side of the valley, middle Devonian limestone on the south and Permian breccia to the east. Alluvial deposits of the Pleistocene period have accumulated in the valley floor. Spilitic lava intrusions of the Devonian period are also found in the vicinity.



Location

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Geology

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The local grey limestone is often tinged with pink or orange iron staining.

4:0 VILLAGE MORPHOLOGY & ARCHAEOLOGY

The ecclesiastical centre of Abbotskerswell is set aside from the main settlement area. Its close association with Court Farm, (the former manor house), is typical of the medieval period.

The rest of the village has developed on several focal points: one is around the early 16th century church house immediately to the east of the church. Further settlement runs up the valley to the north-west and clusters around the road junction in the vicinity of Carse Mill, a 19th century corn mill. The west side of Priory Road, to the north-east of the church, may have been laid out in the 15th-16th century as a planned settlement extension. It had a row of equally-spaced farmhouses with small plots running back from the street. Development in the 19th century of large villas on the eastern valley side has removed parts of this layout.

The stream which runs down the valley is largely culverted now, but close to the church it runs through gardens as an open but walled stream. Historically the stream was the lifeblood of the village, providing water for the residents and their stock, as well as power for the corn mill.

Later infill in the form of houses and bungalows of the 1950s onwards has given the settlement a rather suburban character, which does impose upon the character of the conservation area in places. The precious areas of open space, both within the village and to its east are partly protected by the conservation area and by virtue of being outside the village envelope. Nevertheless, the remaining open space should be protected as an essential element in the character of the conservation area, see section 9:0.

- The historic plan of Abbotskerswell is an intrinsic part of the charm of the village. This character should not be eroded further by backland or infill development as there is very little green space surviving within the village. Opportunities for further development are thus strictly limited within the historic core.
- A village mapping or history project would increase understanding and may identify new information on Abbotskerswell's past. This could be pursued through partnership with Abbotskerswell Parish Council, TDC and Devon County Council Archaeology Service.



The historic network of farmsteads linked by lanes has been encased by later development, but at street level the old village survives within the conservation area.

5:0 ARCHITECTURE

St. Mary's Church is a fine building in the perpendicular style, with the tall buttressed tower and relatively short nave typical of south Devon churches. Its location in the valley bottom means it can be viewed from many locations within the village. The church house, of the early 16th century is very well preserved, having been sensitively restored in the 1930s. It is unusual in being still used for parish activities and as such it is a distinctive asset.

Substantial buildings are not common in Abbotskerswell, but higher status houses of the early 19th century survive at Abbotsford and Heathcot, with a late 18th century house in the 'gothick' style at Treeton Cottage. The hill leading to Priory Road with its high pavement seems to have been the higher status part of Abbotskerswell from at least the 17th century. Numbers 1-3 Rose Cottages in particular, formed a small mansion of the early 17th century; its carved stone windows with hood-mouldings marking out its higher status. The raised pavements along much of the main street are a distinctive feature of the village. They are of unknown date, but 17th century or earlier buildings line them. While uncommon, these are a recognised feature of some towns and villages in Devon, e.g. Bishopsteignton.

Two buildings in the village are of 'estate' type. Model Cottages, in the main street adjoining the shop, are of limestone rubble with 'rustic' timber porches and diamond leaded windows. Gable Cottage appears to have been a lodge, perhaps to Mallands, a large later 19th century house presently outside the conservation area to the north-west.

Traditional vernacular building forms are common and are epitomised by Town Farm Cottages, Monks Thatch and Church Cottage. Many of the older buildings have been altered in the 20th century, with additions and fittings which are out of character. The poor quality conversion of some farm buildings has been detrimental to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area.

- Any building which is allowed within, or affecting the setting of, the conservation area (including garages and other service buildings), must be of a demonstrably high design standard incorporating quality materials. Applicants must show how their proposal will contribute positively to the character of the area and the setting of nearby buildings.
- The results of an Architectural Character Survey are illustrated on the map, along with a brief summary of the criteria used, in Appendix two.



Unlisted buildings can add a great deal to the character of the street scene



Three outstanding buildings, physically separated but seen viewed as a group



Court Farm and the church sit comfortably together



Town Farm and cottages are a fantastic group of vernacular buildings



A new thatched house and a simple garage; both designed within the guidelines in Appendix One

6:0 BUILDING MATERIALS

Local Devonian limestone is primarily used in construction, with surprisingly little usage of the slate to the north-west of the village or the breccia to the south-east. Quoin stones used on the church are large and well-tooled, but the brittle quality of the limestone means that most buildings were constructed of rubble and rendered. Most of the surviving traditional thatched cottages retain their render, but the early 16th century church house was stripped earlier in the 20th century.

Apart from the church and manor house, which were originally slated, straw thatch was the traditional roof covering in Abbotskerswell. Where a building was originally thatched and there are real townscape benefits to be gained by its re-instatement, this will be encouraged. Suitable buildings in prominent positions include Elm Cottage, Mote House, Corner Cottage and Cross View. All are listed 16th-17th century cottages and houses, originally thatched. The current use of asbestos slates on some reduces their potential contribution to the character of the conservation area. The use of thatch on new buildings in prominent locations would help them fit in with the prevailing historic character.

Timber windows of various ages are found within the village. The use of modern materials or finishes strikes a discordant note and must be avoided. Where windows have been replaced in the past, it is most desirable that suitably designed units are reinstated. The fragmented reflections seen in authentic windows are an attractive feature which is lost in modern replacements.

For the most part, stone walls form enclosure. A few traditional hedgebanks are also found. In the village, the walls are of coursed or random limestone rubble, tightly laid in lime mortar with a coarse aggregate. The few traditional Devon hedgebanks are constructed of earth with a stone core and planted with deciduous trees. Where these have survived, they are commonly overgrown and would benefit from a suitable management regime.

- The characteristic architectural features and building materials of Abbotskerswell are summarized in Appendix one.



Historically, Church Cottages would've been rendered and/or limewashed. This view, however, illustrates the archetypal building materials of Abbotskerswell

7:0 POSITIVE CHARACTER FEATURES

The special character of Abbotskerswell Conservation Area is not derived solely from the buildings. Some other features are summarized below:-

7:1 SURFACING: Some surviving remnants of historic surfacing illustrate the types of treatments used in the past. Traces of waterworn limestone cobbles survive rarely, for example on the apron of Monks Thatch. It is likely that other parts of the village, especially the raised pavements, were treated in the same way in the past. Slabs of thinly bedded limestone are a distinctive feature of Abbotskerswell and the surviving examples must be retained



Water worn cobbles



Limestone slabs

7:2 TREES: Specimen trees add considerably to focal points within the village, notably the churchyard, with its yews. Some hedgebanks in this area and up the steep lane past Rock Cottage at the west end of the village are extensively overgrown. Where they are becoming overgrown, active management is needed if their character value is to be preserved. The 1880s OS map marks a mature tree, possibly an oak at the junction in front of Corner Cottage. Consideration could be given to planting new trees in prominent locations like this as living focal points add to the richness of the streetscene.



Trees form an important backdrop to the church and village centre

7:3 ORCHARDS: The old maps show the extent of orchards in the past. Their relevance to the cultural history of the village cannot be overstated, nor can their vulnerability to modern neglect. The remaining orchards, including isolated trees must be retained and new ones should be planted. This could be achieved as part of a community project with the involvement of local schools and amenity societies.

7:4 WATER: The stream running through the village powered Carse Mill before running alongside the main street. While much is now culverted, it emerges beneath the church path in a stone walled channel which continues down the valley to the east. The sights and sounds of the water help to make this area very attractive.



Stone walled channel of the stream

7:5 VIEWS: Panoramic views from the high ground to the north of the Conservation Area are a positive feature, as are the backdrop of trees on the hill to the south, especially around Court Grange. The impact of developments such as farm buildings and new housing schemes must be considered, even though the site may be some distance from the village core.

7:6 RAISED PAVEMENTS: The raised pavements of Abbotskerswell, built of limestone rubble and topped with iron railings, are important contributors to Abbotskerswell's historic character. They need conservation, with lime mortar pointing becoming urgent in places. Consideration should be given to their enhancement, perhaps with cobbled



Raised pavement

edges in prominent locations.

7:7 STONE WALLS: It is hard to find a view in Abbotkerswell which is not enhanced by rubble limestone walls. The continuity and consistency of character they offer is a positive feature.

7:8 PUBS & SHOP: Abbotkerswell is unusual in that it has a shop and two historic public houses. These make a considerable contribution to the vibrancy of village life.

7:9 THE SCHOOL: Abbotkerswell primary school flourishes in a cluster of late 19th century and subsequent buildings in the centre of the village. The old school building is attractive and the sounds of children at play are a welcome daytime feature. Any expansion must, however, respect the historic setting.

7:10 THE CHURCH HOUSE: This early 16th century building was built for parochial activities and is still in use as such. The importance of this continuity needs to be acknowledged as it is a rare survival.



Door at the Church House

8:0 NEGATIVE FEATURES

8:1 OVERHEAD CABLES: Abbotkerswell has extensive overhead telephone cables on obtrusive tall poles. These are most obvious at the major road junctions and on Priory Hill.

8:2 STREET LIGHTING: The quality of street lighting is generally poor, both in terms of fittings and the ambience created by sodium units. These issues need to be addressed sympathetically by DCC in consultation with the parish council.

8:3 MOTOR VEHICLES: The narrow winding streets are clogged in places with parked cars. Backland development has removed most opportunities for the creation of residents' parking areas, but such a facility could greatly enhance the appearance of the conservation area. Any traffic management measures must be thoughtfully designed with minimal signage, road markings and avoidance of intrusive physical measures (bollards, humps, chicanes, etc).



Congestion is common in some places, but any solutions must have local support

8:4 REPLACEMENT WINDOWS, DOORS etc: There are some dismal examples of modern windows and doors which do not even attempt to imitate those they replaced. The same applies to roofing materials, rainwater goods and other features vulnerable to insensitive alteration. Guidance will be made available to encourage a conservative approach to maintenance and repair. The possibility of Article 4(2)* directions and/or grant aid, to influence some of these changes will need to be considered.

9:0 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ABBOTSKERSWELL CONSERVATION AREA

With reference to the map below, some extensions are possible in several parts of the village, to acknowledge the contribution of significant open spaces to the character of the conservation area. These are summarized below:-

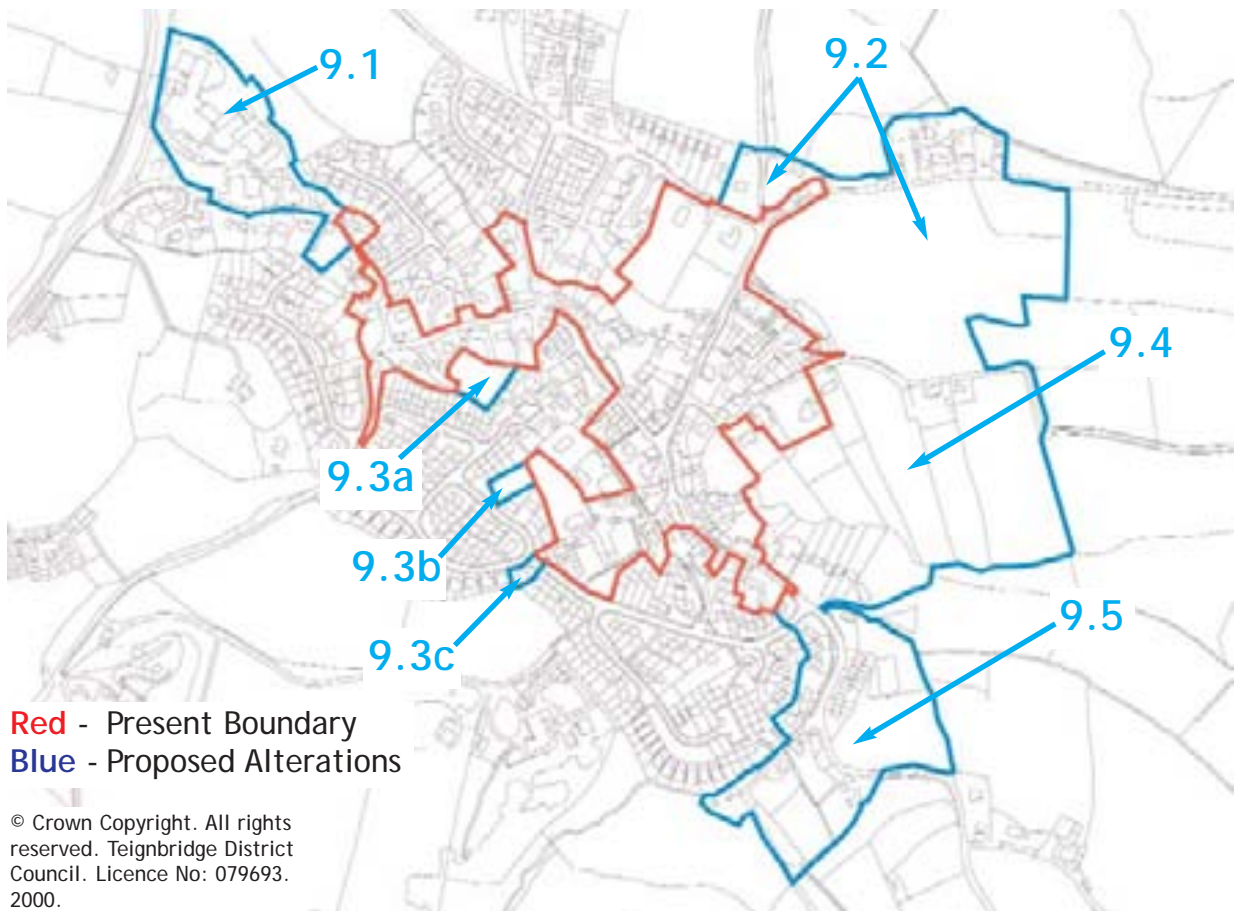
9:1 NORTH WEST: This area along the Ipplepen road to the north-west, has scope for protecting several unlisted 19th century buildings, especially Westbury, with its cast iron railings and Mallands House with its coach house alongside. Despite the replacement of sash windows with unsuitable aluminium units, this group has the potential for future improvement on the approach to Abbotskerswell from the main road. The area could also extend to include the old cider works, an important reminder of the social and economic importance of cider making.

9:2 NORTH EAST: Leaholm, at the junction of Stonemans Hill and Priory Road, has a large, attractive garden, surrounding the early 20th century house. A characteristic development of its kind which contributes positively to the fringe of the conservation area. The cluster of buildings which includes The Beacon and Rockstone is very prominent on the skyline. Extensions or alterations should seek to enhance this area. The field opposite is also a very visible space worthy of protection for its contribution to the setting of the conservation area. Any further development along Priory Road must be firmly discouraged to protect views of the village towards the Priory grounds, and vice versa.

9:3a, b & c REMNANT SPACES: These are small green islands within heavily built up areas which offer a little breathing space. In a densely developed village like Abbotskerswell, such green spaces should be jealously guarded against infill development. The Friends burial ground is a particularly unusual village feature worthy of enhanced maintenance.

9:4 EAST: This area retains the best surviving remnants of the medieval land use pattern which may have existed in the past. Boundaries must be retained as a character feature. The open aspect itself is also an attractive part of the setting of the conservation area. The village hall and modern buildings to the east do not add to the character of the village, but are proposed for inclusion to highlight the desirability of enhancing this vicinity.

9:5 SOUTH EAST: The entrance to Abbotskerswell from the south east is very attractive. Buildings of varied ages are mostly complementary, with the Butchers Arms being the focal point. The lodge to Court Grange is a charming surprise on the track which leads to the south.



APPENDIX ONE

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF BUILDINGS IN ABBOTSKERSWELL

BASICS

- Steeply pitched thatched roofs with flush or straight block-cut ridges.
- Clay tile ridges and mitred hips on slate roofs. Closed eaves without overhang and often without fascia board. Open eaves with large overhang and no soffit board.
- Massive rendered walls in stone and/or cob, limewashed and often angled from base to eaves.
- Heavy rendered chimneys with slate or limestone drips and tapered tops.
- Small windows set in deep reveals with a dominance of solid over void.
- Traditionally proportioned side-hung casements and vertical sliding sashes in painted timber.
- Most dwellings set back from the road. Walls and railings provide enclosure.



The typical vernacular home found in Abbotskerswell

PALETTE OF MATERIALS

ROOFING: Thatch, natural slate. Plain (or black/dark green painted) corrugated iron may be acceptable for outbuildings.

RAINWATER GOODS: Half-round or ogee gutters in cast iron.

WALLS: Lime render, often roughcast, but sometimes smooth and natural stone, either of which may be limewashed. Natural or black/grey stained timber weatherboarding may have limited uses.

WINDOWS & DOORS: Painted softwood, (opaque stains are occasionally suitable for new build). Natural timber may be suitable for doors and maybe windows in some instances, but only if it is oak.

ENCLOSURE: Limestone walls, Devon banks and/or hedgerows. Hazel hurdles can provide a quick solution for temporary or short-term enclosure. Iron railings and gates feature on some 18th and 19th century properties.

SURFACING: Angular or waterworn cobbles, limestone slabs granite setts, hoggin or blacktop (if used judiciously). Rustic concrete setts may be acceptable in non-prominent locations. Buff patterned pavements have been used historically in some locations.



Local materials combined to great effect



Stucco render on a nicely proportioned Georgian house



An attractive village scene



Limestone slab steps

MATERIALS TO BE AVOIDED

ROOFING: Artificial slate, tiles (especially concrete) and man-made ridge/hip tiles. Industrial-type corrugated sheeting.

RAINWATER GOODS: Plastic, especially box-profile guttering in grey, white or brown.

WALLS: Brick, reconstituted stone and textured renders (apart from roughcast). Stained timber or plastic weatherboarding. Real or imitation timber framing.

WINDOWS AND DOORS: PVCu, stained timber and powder-coated metal frames are all incongruous.

ENCLOSURE: Brick or block walls, even if rendered are not acceptable. Larch-lap or close-boarded fencing and evergreen hedges, especially conifers.

SURFACING: Large areas of blacktop, concrete or chippings should be avoided. Modern brick pavements or imprinted concrete are unsuitable in a conservation area with the character of Abbotskerswell.

APPENDIX TWO

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to identify which buildings within the conservation area contribute positively or negatively to townscape character. Three character bands are used (see map 1) and the criteria for each are summarised below.

In assessing individual buildings, it is their form, design and architectural potential which is most important. Ephemeral considerations like plastic windows or slight disrepair will not usually result in buildings being categorised lower. This does not imply that, for example, plastic windows in a building making a positive contribution to the area are in themselves a positive feature. They may, however, have prevented it from being classed as 'outstanding'. In addition, a quite modest but attractive building in a very prominent location may be rated as 'outstanding', even though it might only be judged as 'positive' if it were tucked away among other buildings.

Category 1 : Outstanding

These buildings may be of any age, but are most likely to be either ancient and unspoiled vernacular buildings or distinctive examples of a particular architectural style.

Buildings identified as outstanding are the highlights of any conservation area. Planning applications and other proposals which may effect their character, or that of their setting, should only be considered if they offer an enhancement. Harmful proposals must be rejected and demolition is very unlikely to be accepted under any circumstances.

Category 2 : Positive

Buildings in this category are the backbone of every conservation area. They will usually be unpretentious but attractive buildings of their type that do not necessarily demand individual attention, but possess considerable group value. Some may have been altered or extended in uncomplimentary ways, but the true character of these buildings could be restored.

The majority of structures in most conservation areas are likely to fall into this category. Alterations should only be made to positive items if they result in an enhancement of the building and the contribution it makes to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Demolition must only be considered in exceptional circumstances where significant aesthetic enhancement and/or community benefits would be realised.

- **Proposals which would detract from the special character of these buildings will be resisted.**

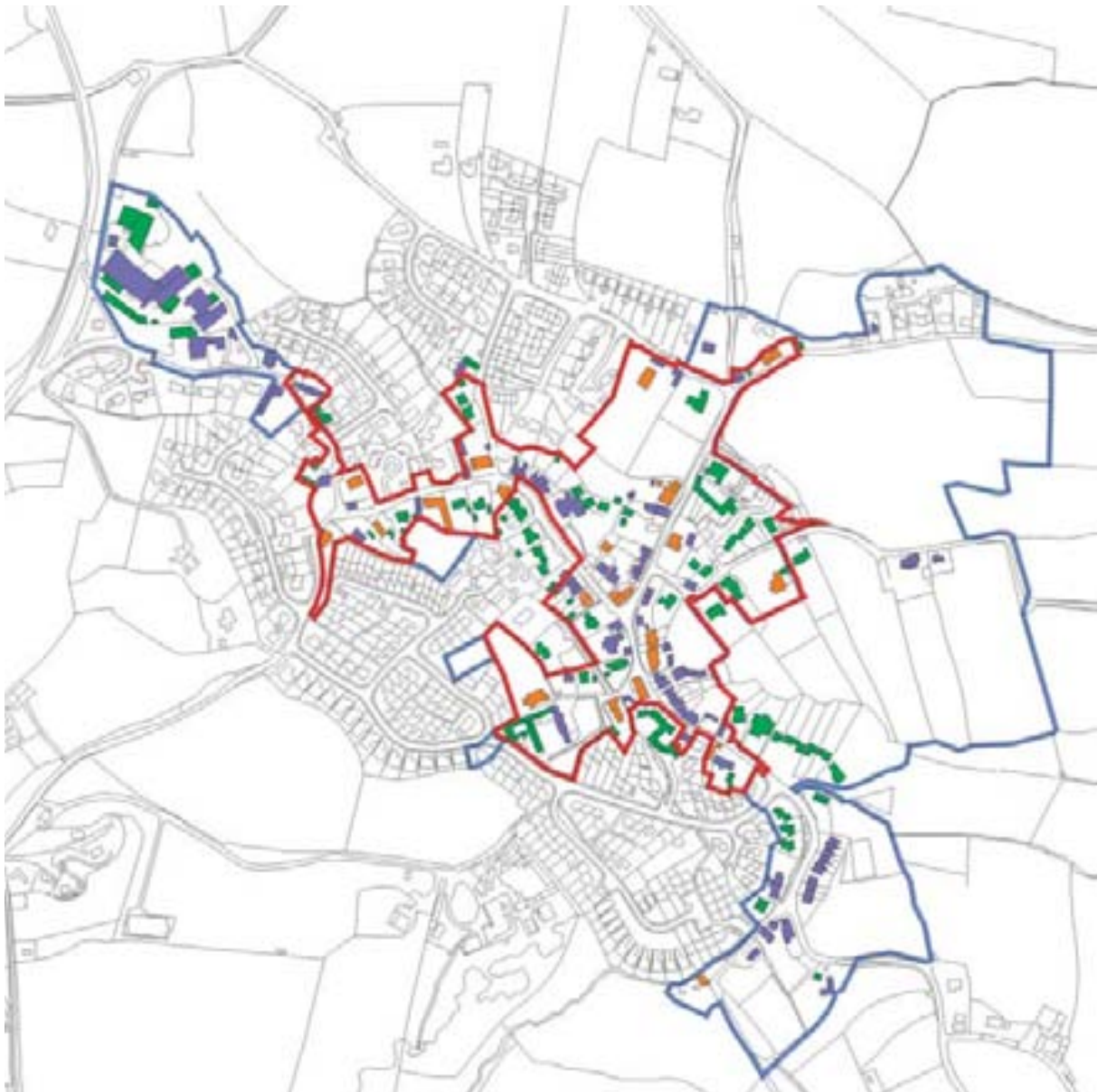
Category 3 : Neutral or Negative

Most conservation areas have buildings that are neither positive nor negative in their contribution to overall character. These will often be twentieth century buildings which may be inoffensive in scale and location, but which lack quality in terms of detailing, materials and design. It must also be accepted that there are usually some buildings in conservation areas which cause actual harm to the character and appearance of that area. These will most commonly be twentieth century buildings which, by a combination of scale, form, location, materials or design, are harmful to the character of the area.

Judgements on these matters will always be open to criticism that they are subjective. Consequently the 'neutral' and 'negative' categories, (which featured in the draft Character Statement), have been combined in this Character Appraisal.




Planning applications for alteration, extension or replacement of buildings in this category will be expected to offer a preservation or enhancement of the conservation area. Where a building is clearly detrimental due to design, scale or location, its replacement will be encouraged. The use of planting, or other landscaping, to reduce the visual impact of less attractive buildings, may achieve considerable aesthetic benefits at relatively little cost.

- **Proposals to enhance the conservation area by either re-modelling buildings, or re-developing sites in this category will be welcomed. Re-development will be expected to demonstrate a very high standard of contextual design and a thorough understanding of prevailing character.**

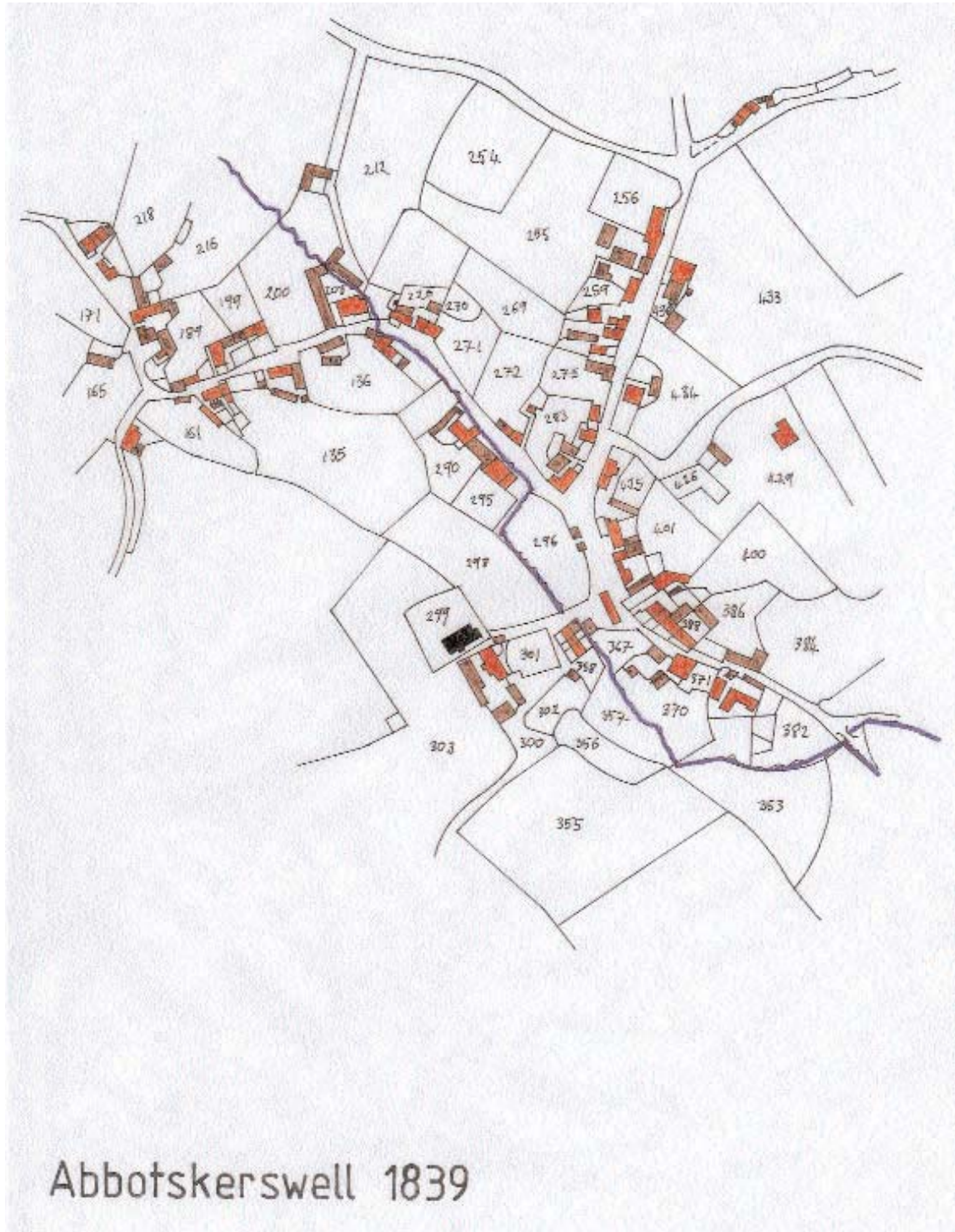


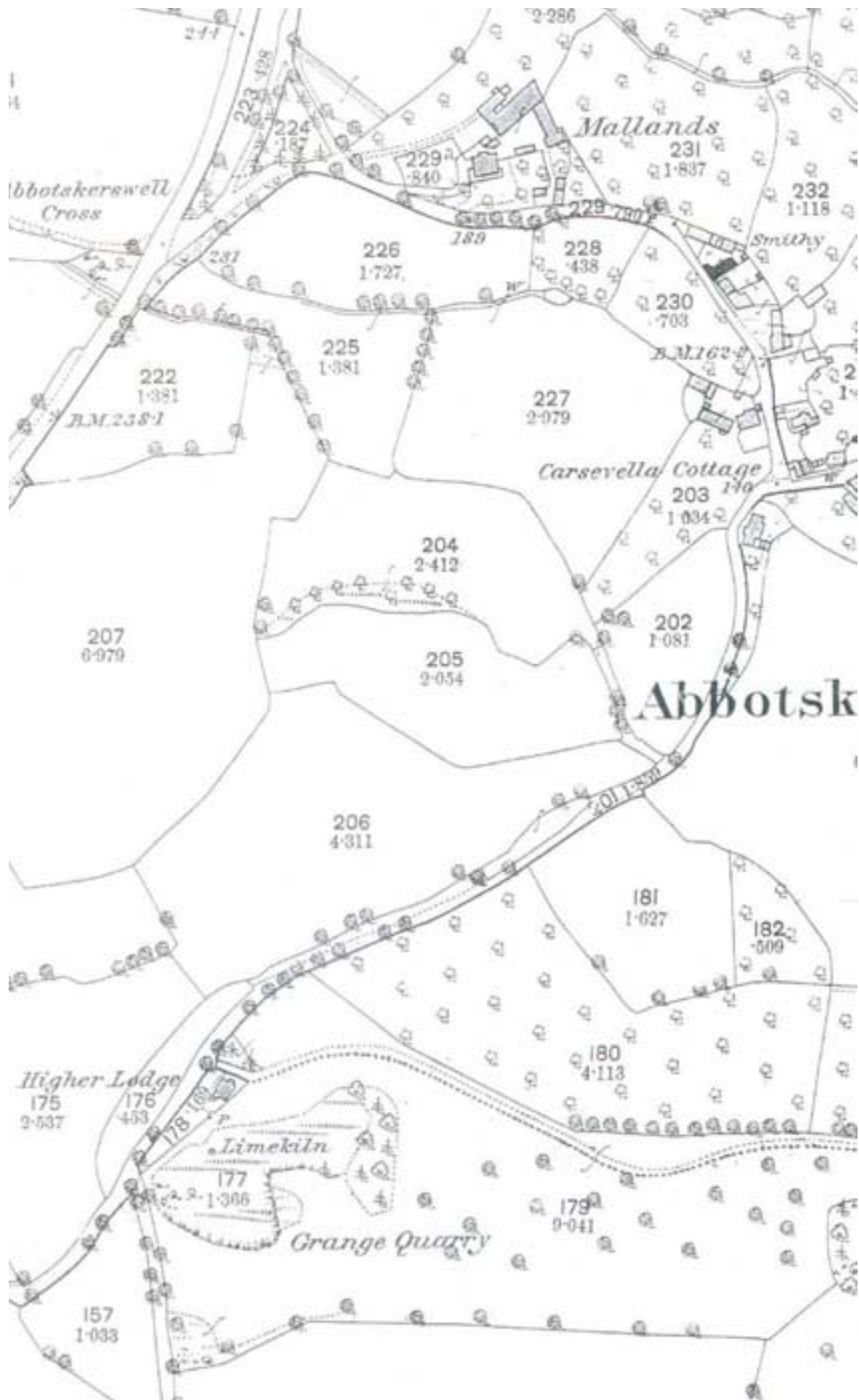
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Key to Character Survey Map

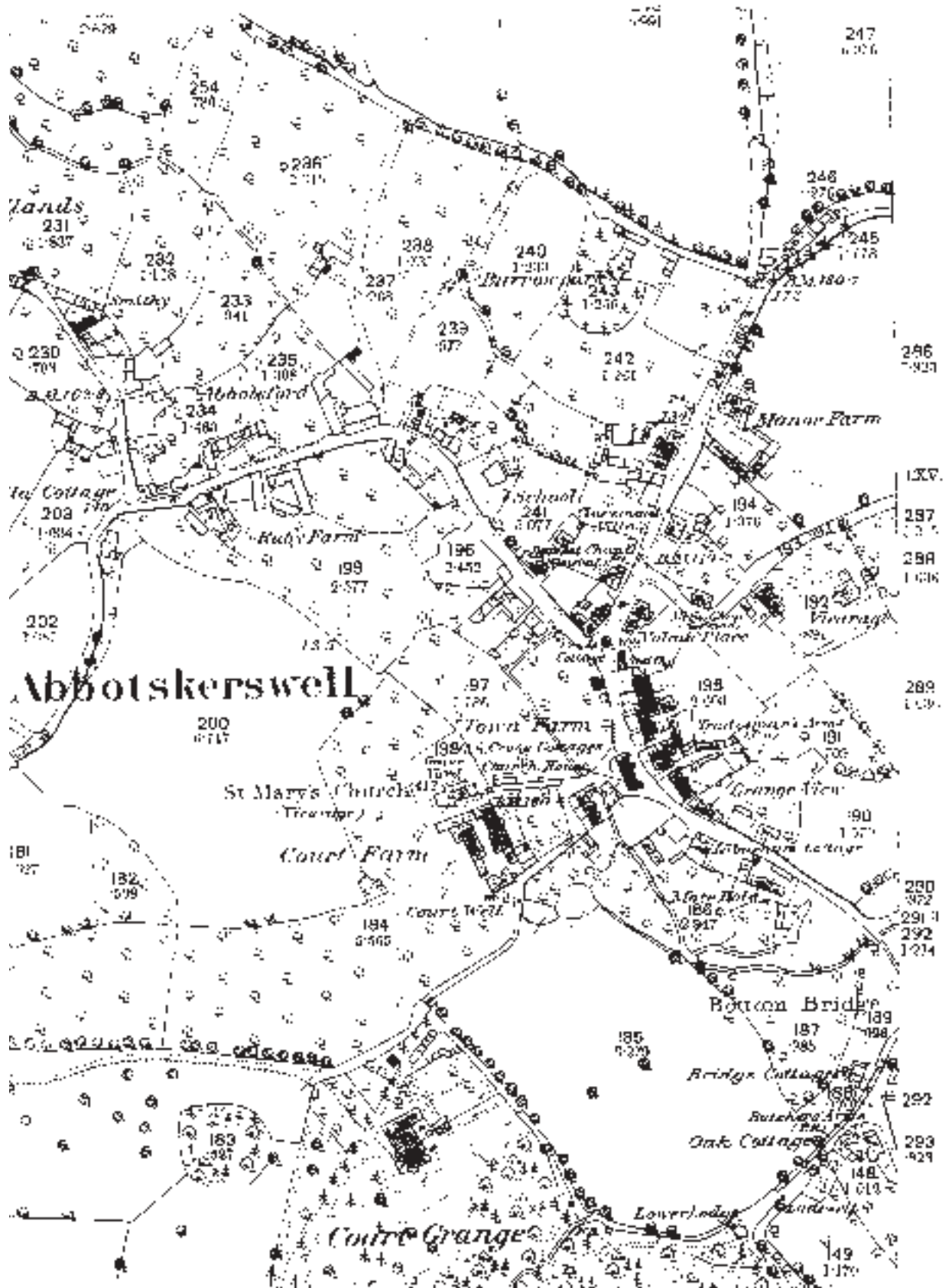
-  Category 1: Outstanding
-  Category 2: Positive
-  Category 3: Neutral/Negative







1st Edition OS., 1880s.



PARISH SUMMARY LIST OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORICAL INTEREST FOR
ABBOTSKERSWELL CONSERVATION AREA

Ref. No.	Grade	Date of Listing	Item
3/3	II*	1955	Church of St Mary
3/4	II	1987	Headstone approx 1½m south-west of Church of St Mary
3/5	II	1987	Henley Headstone approx 2m west of Church of St Mary
3/6	II	1987	Chest Tomb approx 2m south-east of chancel of Church of St Mary
3/7	II	1987	Thomas Henley Headstone approx 3m south-west of Church of St Mary
3/8	II	1987	Lych gate approx 5m south-west of Church of St Mary
3/9	II	1955	Court Farm Inn
3/10	II	1987	Numbers 1 and 2 Church Cottages
3/11	II	1987	Odle Hill Cottage, Main St (east side)
3/12	II	1987	Rock Cottage, Main St (south side)
3/13	II	1987	Prospect Cottage, Main St (south side)
3/14	II	1977	Monk's Thatch, Main St (south side)
3/15	II	1955	Abbotsford, Main St (north side)
3/16	II	1987	Yeomans Cottage, Main St (south side)
3/17	II	1987	All's Well Cottage, Main St (north side)
3/18	II	1987	Model Cottage and The Quest, Main St (south side)
3/19	II	1987	Elm Cottage, Main St (east side)
3/20	II*	1987	Number 1 Town Farm Cottage, Main St (east side)
3/21	II	1987	Number 2 Town Farm Cottage, Main St (east side)
3/22	II	1955	Town Farmhouse, Main St (east side)
3/23	II	1955	Church House, Main St (west side)
3/24	II	1987	Willow Dene and Willow Grove, Main St (east side)
3/25	II	1987	Mote Cottage, Main St (west side)
3/26	II	1987	Mote House, Main St (west side)
3/27	II	1977	Thatches and Park View, Priory Road
3/28	II	1987	Numbers 1 and 2 Rose Cottages, Slade Lane
3/29	II	1955	Number 3 Rose Cottages, Slade Lane
3/30	II	1977	Corner Cottage and Cross View, Slade Lane

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alluvial: Sand and soil deposited by a river or stream.

Breccia: A red stone with fragments of limestone and other rocks of various size in a sandy matrix.

Cob: Walls built of earth.

Devonian: Geological period prior to carboniferous, about 350 million years before present.

Hoggin: Compressed aggregate of varied size and composition used as a surfacing material.

Lime: Binding agent in traditional mortars.

Limewash: Protective/decorative surface coating made using lime putty.

Nave: The main body of a church.

Ogee: Traditional decorative moulding profile, commonly used for guttering.

Permian: geological era approximately 250 million years before present.

Perpendicular: Architectural style of the later medieval period, characterised by strong vertical forms.

Pleistocene: Recent geological epoch dominated by the 'Ice Age'.

Quoin stones: Large stones, dressed and squared to form the corners of a building.

Spilitic lavas: Extrusive igneous rock similar to basalt.

Vernacular: The traditional architecture of a locality which is functional and uses locally available materials.

