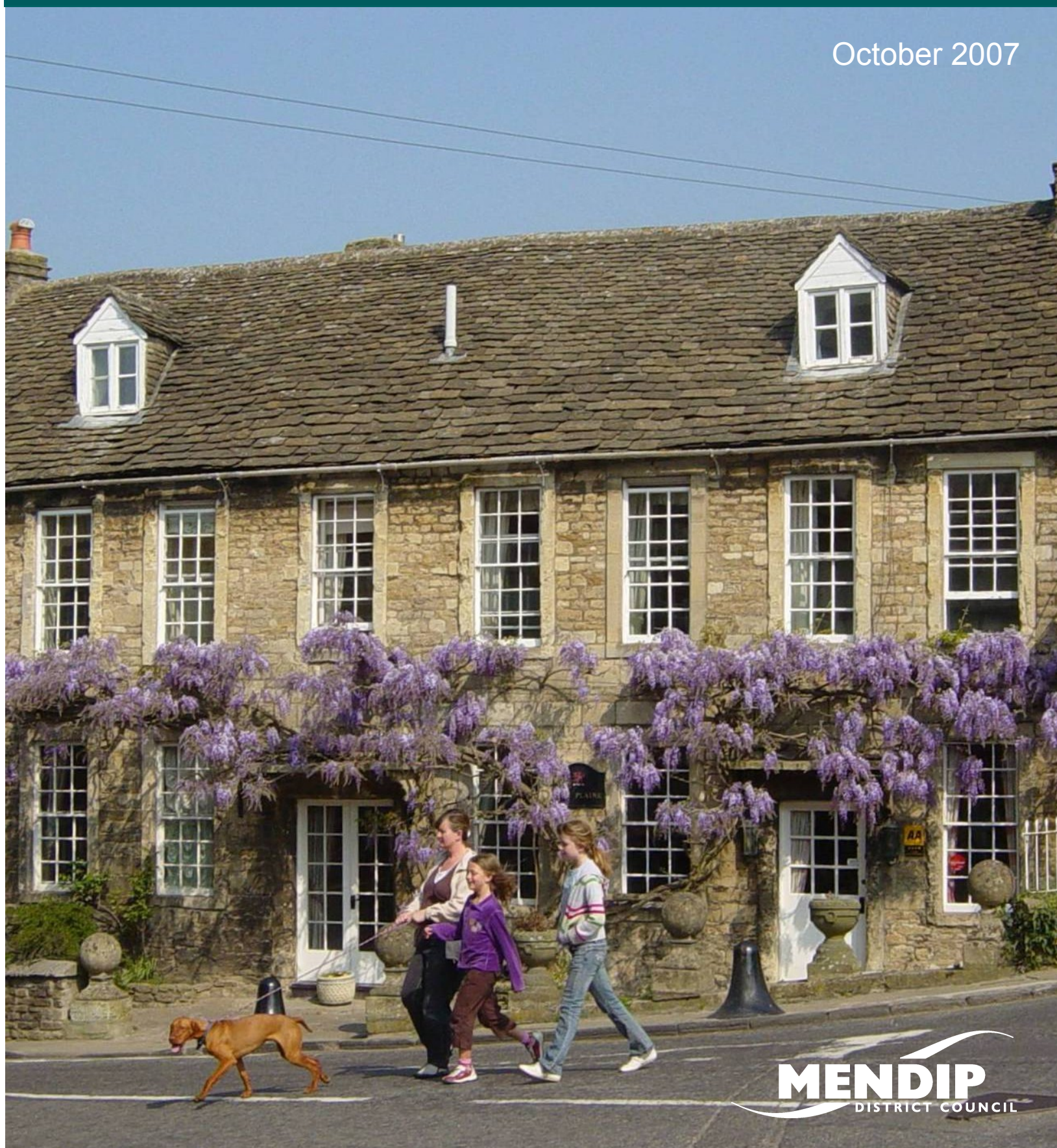


# Conservation Area Appraisal Norton St Philip

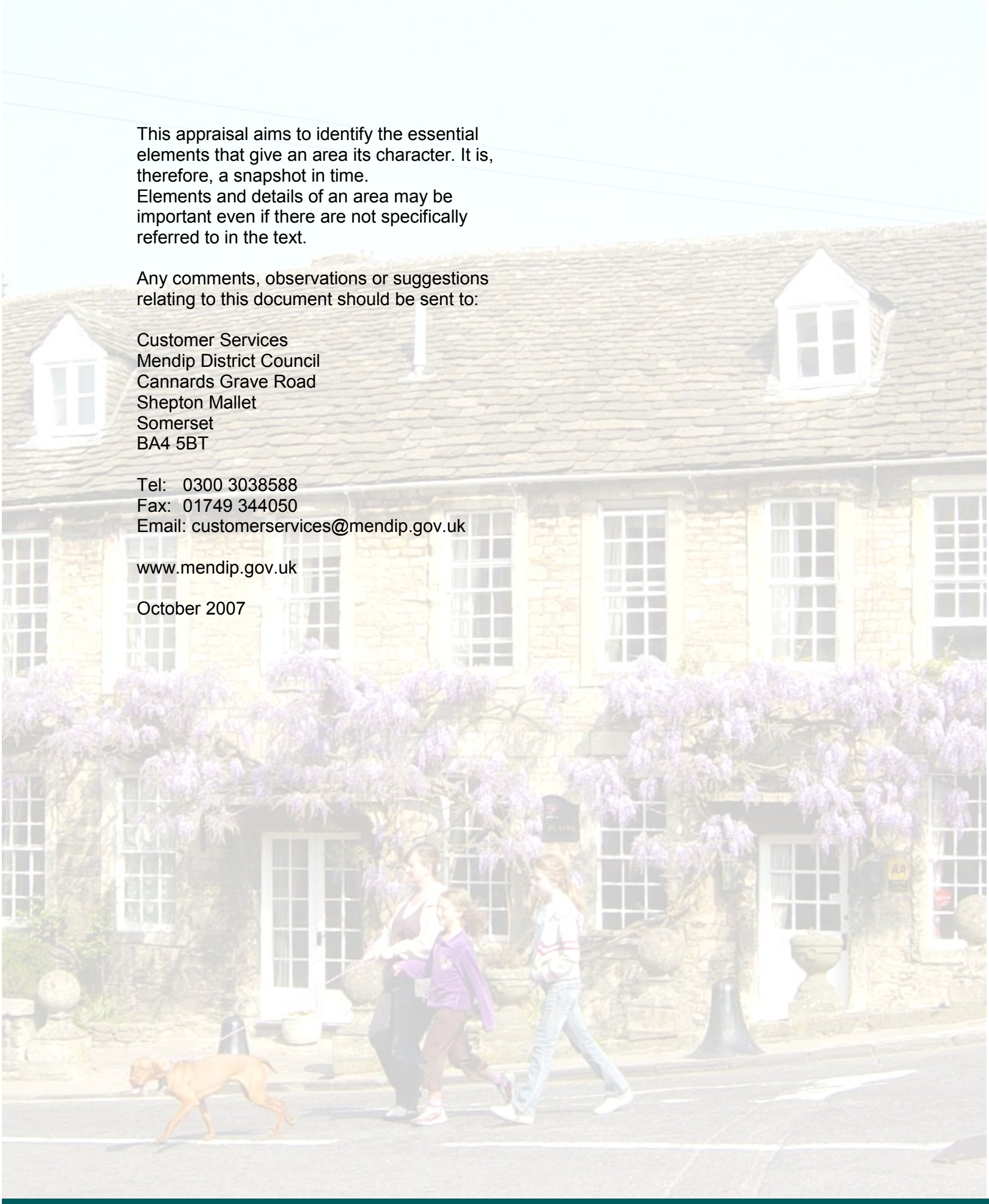
October 2007



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This appraisal aims to identify the essential elements that give an area its character. It is, therefore, a snapshot in time. Elements and details of an area may be important even if there are not specifically referred to in the text.

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October 2007

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## I. Introduction

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1.1 The Norton St Philip Conservation Area was first designated in 1969 by Somerset County Council. The boundary was subsequently amended and extended in 1996 by Mendip District Council.

1.2 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to determine from time to time which parts of their area are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and to designate these areas as conservation areas.

1.3 Planning authorities also have a duty to protect these areas from development which would harm their special historic or architectural character and this is reflected in the policies contained in Mendip District Council's Adopted Local Plan.

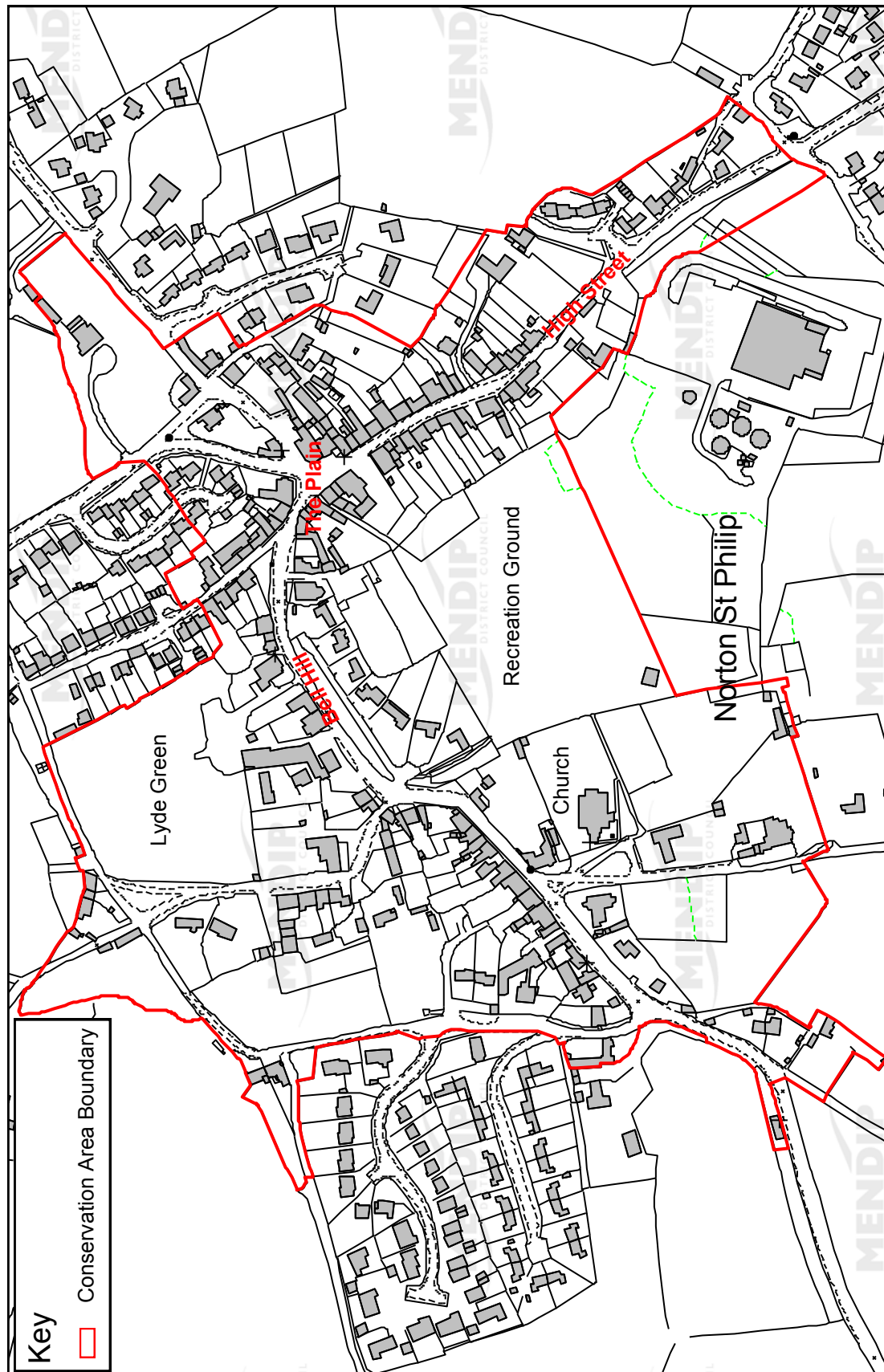
1.4 The purpose of this appraisal is to define the qualities of the area that make it worthy of conservation area status. A clear, comprehensive appraisal of the character of a conservation area provides a sound basis for development control decisions and for developing initiatives to improve the area. It will also enable the development of a robust policy framework for the future management of the area, on which applications can be considered.

1.5 This appraisal has been produced in accordance with the English Heritage publication: 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (August 2005).

1.6 This appraisal was endorsed by the council on 17 October 2007 as a material planning consideration, and will be taken into account when assessing local planning applications.



## I. Introduction



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Ordnance Survey Map showing Norton St Philip Conservation Area Boundary

## 2. Location and Landscape Setting

2.1 Norton St Philip is located approximately 12km (9 miles) south of Bath and 11km (8 miles) north of Frome, situated around the junction of the A366 Wells to Trowbridge road and the B3110 route, about 1.5km west of the A36(T) main route from Bath to Warminster. The historic core of the village is at about 110-120m above sea level and the western extremity, at the foot of Church Street, is at about 84m. It occupies an elevated position on a pronounced west-facing ridge overlooking the valley of Norton Brook which springs from the lower end of Church Street and flows north and west. The settlement is located within the oolitic limestone hills of East Somerset, in outcrops of Forest Marble, a shelly, grey stone seen throughout the village, along with other local limestones.

2.2 The village is surrounded by farmland on all sides with small fields bounded by hedges and small copses of trees. The elevated, exposed position of Norton St Philip has restricted tree cover to limited areas, notably around the large green space of Church Mead to the south of the angle between High Street and Bell Hill (which lies considerably lower than the main settlement and is thus sheltered)

and around the former poultry processing factory at Town End, on the south-east extremity.

2.3 The village's position on a ridge and down its western slopes, means that it dominates its immediate surroundings and is visible from lower ground to the west. The older buildings of High Street and The Plain form a strong skyline when viewed from Church Mead and the area around the Parish Church.

2.4 There are areas of modern development at both ends of the B3110 (the northern and southern entries), on the eastern edge off the A366, and at the western extremity, west of Ringwell Lane. These adjuncts have tended to markedly expand the physical area of the settlement and weaken the former strong boundaries between compact older development and open countryside. Modern development has also linked the two previously separate historic clusters on the ridge (High Street, The Plain and North Street) and the area around the Parish Church. A ribbon of bungalows on the south side of Bell Hill and older, mixed housing types on the north have filled in the historic pattern.



*Church Mead and the High Street skyline*



*Looking down Chever's Lane to the west*



### 3. History and Development



*The George and medieval market place*

3.1 In the early medieval period the manor belonged to the Earls of Salisbury, who granted it to their nearby foundation of the Carthusian Priory at Hinton. A flourishing cloth-trading industry and markets and fairs were established. The medieval market place seems to have been at the major road junction on The Plain, where there was a market cross. The George was a large hostelry, owned by the Priory, and its building history and details show late 15th-early 16th-century rebuilding and improvement from a 14th-century core.

3.2 The original site of the village may have been around the Parish Church and the group of buildings known as Manor Farm at The Barton, originally a grange of Hinton Priory, either side of Church Street. High Street was on the line of the old Bath to Salisbury road, continued along North Street, and the monastic landlords seem to have taken advantage of the through traffic with the building of The George and the laying out of about thirty regular burgage plots on both sides of the road.



*The High Street planned layout*

3.3 The medieval road pattern consisted of the High Street-North Street route which extended along Tellisford Lane to a crossing of the River Frome and an east-west route along Chever's and Ringwell Lanes and then south-west along Watery Lane. Church Street may have only run from Ringwell Lane to The Barton and thence to Chever's Lane, and Bell Hill may be a later improvement, more directly linking the lower settlement to the higher planned township. The very restricted plots on the North Street/Bell Hill junction suggest that the latter route was imposed on an older pattern, resulting in both reduction of plot sizes and awkward shapes. It is difficult to suggest a date for the Bell Hill improvement. It exists on a mid-19th century tithe map and its buildings all seem to be of the same period (date of 1836 on the former chapel).

## 3. History and Development

3.4 Norton survived the shocks of the Reformation with a change in manorial ownership and the development of the woollen cloth industry, characterised by hand looms within domestic properties. The market continued into the 18th century and the fairs until 1902. The village was the site of a skirmish during the Monmouth Rebellion and twelve men were hanged, drawn and quartered in the market place at The Plain. The skirmish took place in the vicinity of Chever's Lane which, to this day, is known in the village as Bloody Lane.



*The North Street/Bell Hill junction*

3.5 Many of the village's buildings are 17th-century stone structures, at least on their street frontages, some undoubtedly rebuilds of medieval plots. There was a corn mill, possibly on the site of a structure listed in Domesday, on Wellow Lane. The village had additional public buildings in the early 19th century, in the form of a school of 1827 and a Baptist Chapel of 1814. Later in the century, a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel on Bell Hill, a Police Station (Farleigh Road) and Jubilee (Palaiet) Hall on Church Street were provided.

3.6 The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map of c.1880 shows two compact groups of buildings centred on Church Street and High Street/ The Plain/North Street, linked by a sporadic ribbon of development on the north side of Bell Hill. The Parish Church, Vicarage and School stood in a small precinct on the south side of Church Street and Norton House sat in its own grounds on the north-east extremity. Manor Farm and Upper Farm were located on the western and eastern ends of the village respectively. The Victorian village also had a forge and a smithy in Farleigh Road, two public houses at The Plain (plus a third at The Old White Hart) and others such as The Blucher Arms at the foot of Bell Hill, and a number of shops, including a Post Office, in High Street. Industrial activity included clay pipe manufacture, a small brewery and two malt houses (mentioned in Kelly's Directory at various late 19<sup>th</sup>-century dates). The village



*The Plain*



### 3. History and Development

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*The Palaiet Hall*



*The Manor Farm dovecot*

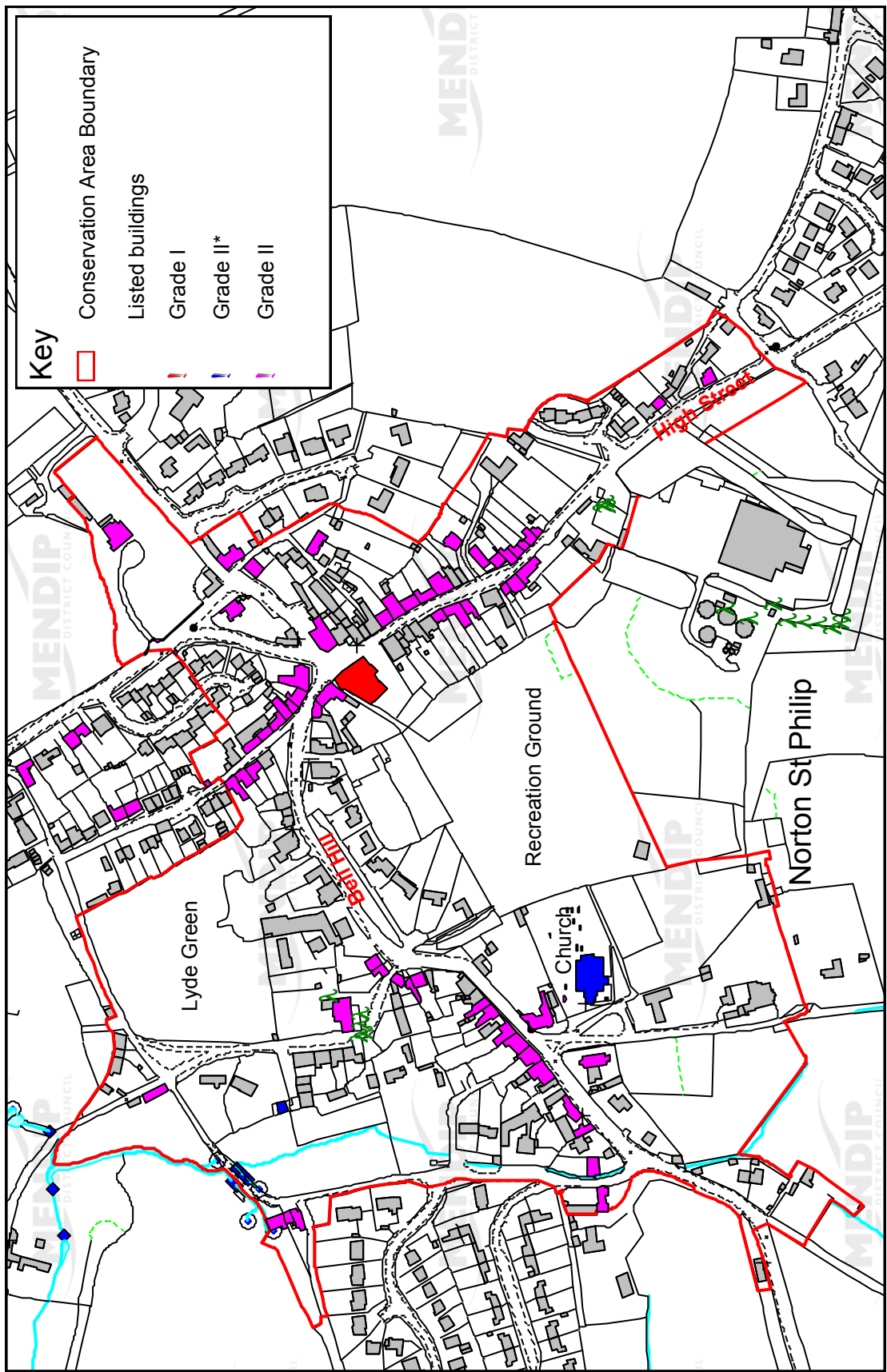
population, from census returns, peaked at 788 in 1851, reduced to 448 in 1921 (reflecting the general decline in the agricultural economy either side of the Great War) but is now in excess of 800.

3.7 The 20<sup>th</sup>-century infilling on Bell Hill, along The Barton, between North Street and Bath Road, and the two significant blocks of housing west of Ringwell Lane and south of Farleigh Road have been previously mentioned and their impact on village form and landscape noted. The Monmouth Paddock and Norton Grange housing developments are on the site of two local businesses.

3.8 There are 85 entries in the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest within the Norton St Philip Conservation Area, accounting for individual buildings or structures (some entries cover more than one building/structure). The George Inn is listed Grade I and the Parish Church of St Philip and St James and the dovecot at Manor Farm are both listed Grade II\*.

3.9 There are a number of trees within the conservation area that are protected under Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), around Manor Farm and on the former poultry processing factory at Town End.

### 3. History and Development



Ordnance Survey Map showing Statutorily Designated Sites and Features



## 4. Character of Norton St Philip

4.1 The village has a coherent, tightly knit character, particularly when seen from the main through routes, due to the almost continuous runs of houses and cottages along both sides of High Street, around The Plain, along North Street and on the north side of Church Street. This continuity is complemented by some of the infill on Bell Hill but diluted by other modern infill and residential close and estate development, which has tended to suburbanise the western, northern and southern approaches to the historic core. Notwithstanding this, the conservation area has a large number of historic buildings, in large groups, with the majority set in long terraces hard on the highway or pavement edge. The Plain has the character of a central place or square, tightly bounded by buildings on its three sides.

4.2 The Parish Church, School, Vicarage and Old Vicarage stand rather separately from the main flow of development, along Vicarage Lane, on the south-west edge of the village. This limb of buildings, the south side of Bell Hill and the west side of High Street all enclose a large rectangular green space, Church Mead, which is hidden from much of the rest of the village but is an essential landscape and amenity element. Its southern edge faces open countryside. Lyde Green is another, smaller, green space to the north of Bell Hill, surrounded by a rectangle of lanes and a looser grain of houses and the historic buildings of Manor Farm.



*Lyde Green*

## 5. Spatial Analysis

5.1 Each settlement differs in its relationships between buildings, public space, gardens and open countryside and within conservation areas, (usually the historic core of a village), there are unique progressions of spaces with varying degrees of enclosure or exposure, depending on the density and height of buildings, their position relative to the highway, the character of boundaries and the dominance or dearth of trees and views out to countryside or into the village core. The effects of topography – the rise and fall and alignment of roads and paths – are also important determinants of spatial character. These factors are all facets of townscape, a method of describing the mixture of buildings, streets and spaces that make up the village environment. Townscape analysis and vocabulary enable places to be described using three elements:

- The sequence of views obtained in passing through an area, a chain of events termed as *serial vision*;
- The feelings of relative exposure and enclosure depending upon the size and shape of adjacent buildings, boundaries and spaces;
- The important content of an historic area: colour, texture, scale, style, personality and the many little details (materials, street furniture and other visual and cultural assets) that underlie the local distinctiveness of the area.

5.2 Norton St Philip has an interesting plan form, dispersed rather than strongly nucleated in general character, with two distinct nuclei around High Street and its associated wider space at The Plain, with three roads forming junctions and a fourth, North Street, being slightly offset; and on Church Street, focused on the Parish Church and later School. Two gentry houses, Norton House and Manor Farm,

are both somewhat detached from these concentrations of buildings and land uses. Bell Hill's ribbon of development tenuously ties the two areas together but the effects of dramatically changing levels rather reinforces the idea of a 'high' and 'low' village.

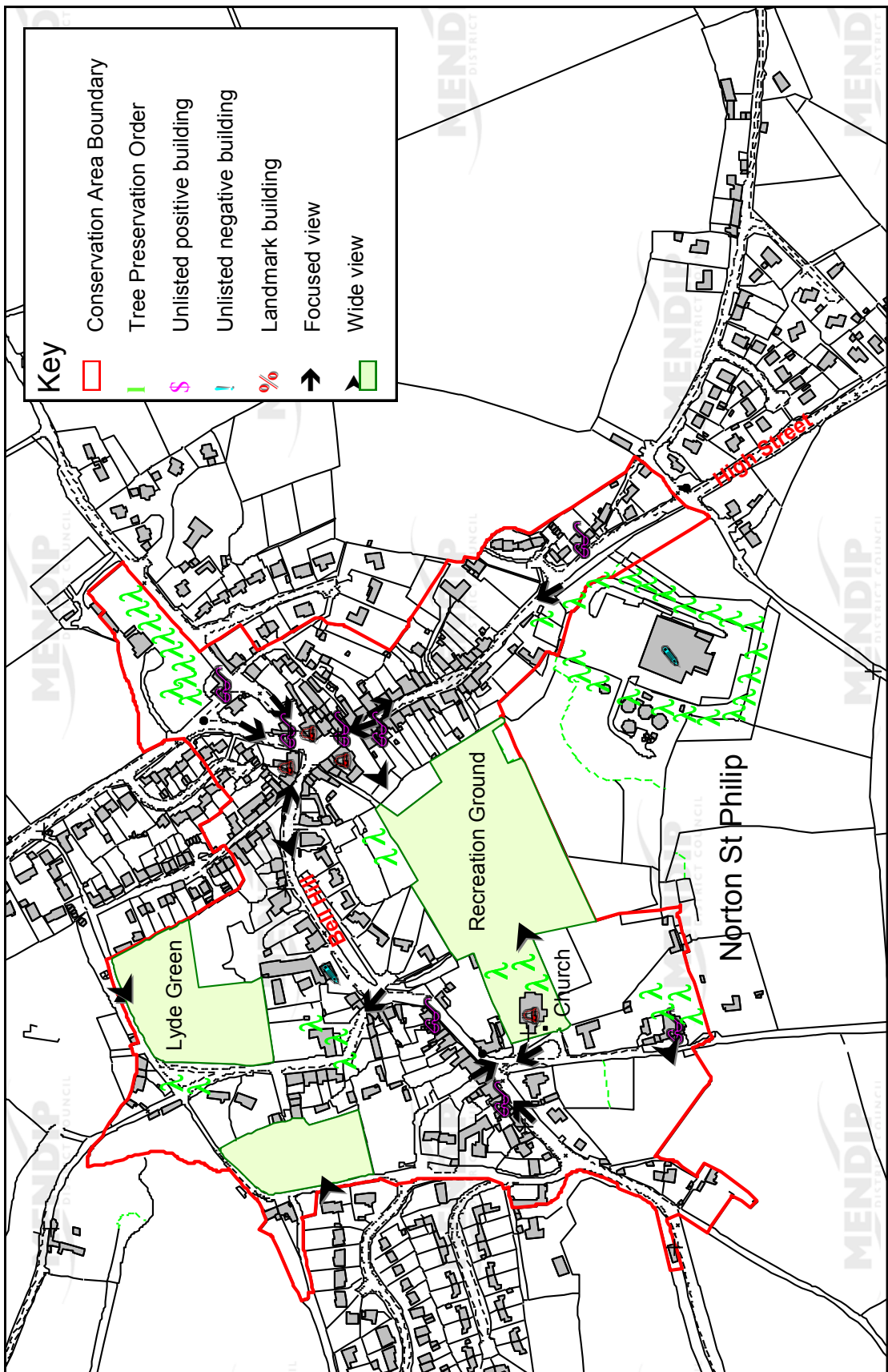
5.3 Chever's and Ringwell Lanes form a pattern of back lanes, parallel to Church Street/Bell Hill and North Street respectively, characterised by much lower -density, sporadic development compared with the main routes. There is a minor focal point at Lyde Green, where The Barton bisects Chever's Lane and a triangular grassed and treed space has a small cluster of cottages.

5.4 It is possible to bring these characteristics and other townscape details to life by describing a route, or transect, through the village. Routes from any of the main entry points would be instructive but the chosen one is from the south-east, from Town End, to the western, Wells Road, extremity, along High Street-The Plain-Bell Hill-Church Street, with diversions onto significant adjoining roads and paths. Where relevant, views back and across the main corridor will be described.

5.5 From the south, modern housing leads to a crossing of two lanes, with trees to the left (west) and a traditional Somerset County Council (SCC) finger post on the opposite side of the road. Entering the conservation area, there is a mixture of Victorian and older cottages on the right (east), with some 'in keeping' modern development. Pleasant, small front gardens and the characterful local stone boundary walls with bold 'cock-and-hen' coping help to tie the group together. Opposite is a low stone retaining wall and a grassed bank leading to the bare and open entry to the former poultry processing factory.



# 5. Spatial Analysis



Ordnance Survey Map showing Spatial Analysis

## 5. Spatial Analysis

5.6 On the east, again, higher stone boundary walls are pierced by two resited late medieval doorways, and shrubs and trees project over the walls into the road.

5.7 There is a sudden change in character with High Street's almost continuous terraces forming a tight corridor of stone facades either side of a meandering road line. The marked curve to the left, to the right and then a gentler return towards The Plain creates a series of framed views, stopped by building elevations seen in perspective. Long eaves lines of 18th-century houses are interrupted by the gable ends of older cottages and Victorian infill (towards the northern end). The series of angled views of buildings throws into prominence stone and pantiled roofs and chimneys.

5.8 There is one gap in the otherwise continuous frontages on the east side, where the former Baptist Chapel (now Bible Chapel) is set back slightly from the general line behind a small forecourt and a flanking grassed burial ground, and a winding path leads to Albion Cottage, standing tall at a slight angle to the road terrace. On the west, Norton Cottage has space either side, with views down to the tower of the Parish Church and the countryside beyond. The long façade of The Plaine is a terminal feature looking north. There is a large gap at the side of The George, where parked cars are visible, but the pub's flank shows handsome stone tiled roofs at various levels and configurations. There is also a fine elevated view from the car park over Church Mead, the cricket pavilion, Church, School, churchyard trees and the low ridge to the west of the village.

5.9 The George dominates a funnel-shaped space, The Plain, created by the coming together of Farleigh and Bath Roads and Bell Hill. The stone and timbered façade is seen in sharp perspective from High Street (with the projecting sign and mass of the roof visible) but the whole elevation is



*Town End resited doorway*



*The curving entry into High Street*



*View over Church Mead*



## 5. Spatial Analysis



*The Fleur de Lys on its corner site*



*The Old Forge, Bath and Farleigh Roads*



*View back up Bell Hill*

exposed in views from the north-east, down Farleigh and Bath Roads. The space is also emphasised by the setting back of the building line of the Fleur de Lys and the chamfering of its corner into Farleigh Road. The Plain is not level, with a pronounced slope up from west to east and, on the northern side, the 18th-century front of The Plaine stops the view but seems to be falling away down the contours, its building line set at an angle towards Bell Hill.

5.10 The Old Forge fills the sharp angle between Farleigh and Bath Roads but the corridor along Farleigh Road is compromised by the leaking away of space, at the side of the Fleur de Lys, for a car park. The junction between Farleigh and Bath Roads forms a triangular block and Farleigh Road climbs to the stone block of the urbane Old Police House and the narrow entry to Town Barton and then to the long boundary wall and trees of Norton House, which is not visible from the public realm. There is a short link between Bath Road's final change of direction as it approaches The Plain and Farleigh Road, by the gated entrance to Norton House. The House's trees are echoed by three large pines on the south side of the road and the attractive front of The Old Police House terminates the view to the south.

5.11 There are views back downhill to The Plain, firmly stopped by the full frontage of The George. Turning into Bell Hill, buildings on both sides form a pinch point that opens up into the North Street junction. North Street begins with an unbroken group of 17th- and 18th-century buildings on its east side, answered by a smaller group to the west. There is also a gazebo and an adjacent high stone boundary wall. The coherence weakens towards Chever's Lane, with modern buildings set back behind the older building lines and car lay-bys. Back on Bell Hill, there are extensive views downhill towards the Church and open countryside. There is a reverse view uphill into The Plain, where the curving

## 5. Spatial Analysis

building lines either side of the hill's summit define a curving corridor stopped by the chamfered corner of the Fleur de Lys. The steep descent down Bell Hill is marked by a curve, and a high stone retaining wall, small cottages and the converted chapel sit on or near the road line. Opposite, to the south, the modern bungalows of Fair Close are effectively hidden by a thick coniferous hedge.

5.12 The foot of the hill has a sudden sharp bend into Church Street and Corner Cottage and its neighbours provide both a firm termination to views from the higher slopes and a narrow entry into The Barton. There is an alluring glimpse of the handsome façade of Manor Farm House between flanking cottages. The Farm House has its own small space, formed by a dogleg undertaken by The Barton and enhanced by mature trees. Returning to the main road and turning the corner, the almost continuous terrace on the north side of Church Street sits well up on its raised stone pavement, positioned hard on the road line and punctuated by gables amongst a run of straight eaves.

5.13 The Parish Church, Church Cottage and School suddenly present themselves in a raised enclave to the south of the road. There is a short, sharp climb into a rectangular space, with a central green dominated by a large tree and the west tower of the Church. The School forms a good Gothick frontage to the west. There is a view back into Church Street of the stone terrace.

5.14 The progression of spaces and views ends at the junction with Ringwell Lane, marked by the attractive facades of Bell and Bridgefoot Cottages. There is an interesting walk up the relatively rural Ringwell Lane, to the triangular space of Lyde Green, and then sharply uphill to Chever's Lane and Bath Road.



*Church Street group and its raised pavement*



*A glimpse of Manor Farm House*



*The 'precinct' by the church and school*

## 5. Spatial Analysis

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*Parish Church tower as a landmark*

5.15 There are a number of landmark buildings, notably The George, The Fleur de Lys and The Plaine around The Plain; and the tower of the Parish Church. Other important buildings, such as Norton Manor and Manor Farm House are either hidden from public view or are only visible in close views.



## 6. Character Analysis

6.1 Norton has a number of distinctive character areas, formed by differing historical factors and the effects of topography.

**6.2 High Street, The Plain and entry routes:** the 'high' village on the ridge, formed around entry routes and the complex junction around The Plain. High Street is a good example of a medieval planned suburb (if the area around the Parish Church is viewed as the older village core), with regular burgage plots and, in The George, a monastic hostelry. The Plain seems to have been a medieval market place at a route junction. The overall character of the main routes is that of a corridor of almost continuous terraces. The architecture is mainly 17th- and 18th-century, with the important exception of the medieval George and some Victorian Gothic and Tudor Revival properties. The use of local stone and consistent building lines provide an overall unity, despite variations provided by gable end and set-backs at Albion Cottage and the Fleur de Lys. The density of development lessens on Bath and Farleigh Roads but boundary walls and large trees link buildings together.

**6.3 Church Street, the Parish Church 'precinct', Church Mead and Bell Hill:** the original core of the village, taking into account the possible settlement remains south of the churchyard, a T-shaped cluster may be speculated, created by the junction of Vicarage Lane and Church Street. The main road has a continuous building frontage on its north side and a looser assembly of Church, School and Church Cottage on the south. The latter buildings are placed around a rectangular green space. The churchyard links this with the larger expanse of Church Mead, edged by trees and overlooked by the higher ridge of High Street. Bell Hill seems to be a later link to High Street but, because of steep contours, seems more obviously linked to the 'low' village. Architectural character is varied, with a 'Cotswold' mixture of 17<sup>th</sup>-

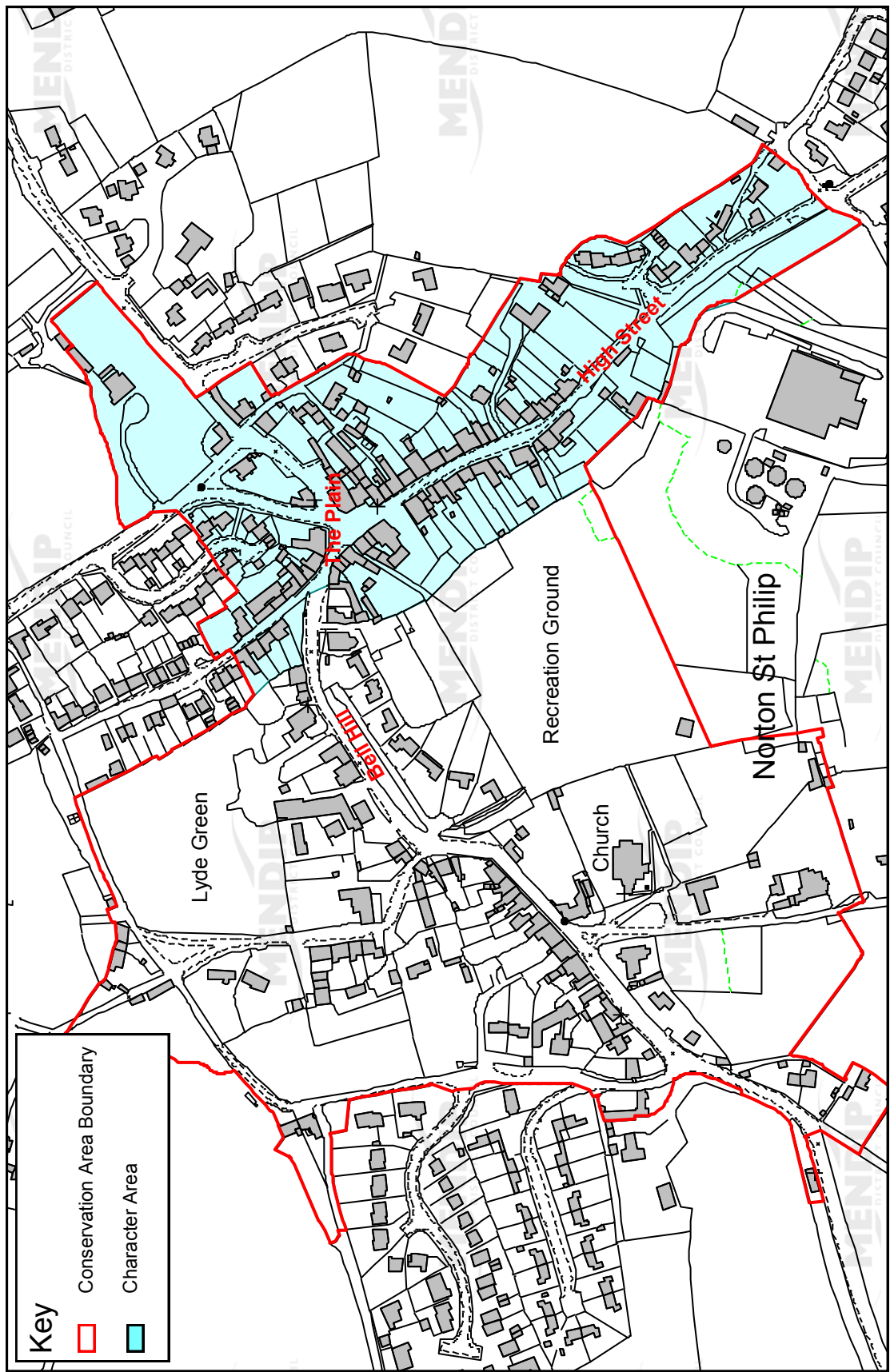
and early 18<sup>th</sup>-century gable ends and more regular 18<sup>th</sup>-century facades on Church Street; an interplay between genuine late Gothic, post-medieval survival and Victorian restoration in the Parish Church; vernacular and 19<sup>th</sup>-century building at Church Cottage, Regency Gothick at the School and Victorian Tudor Revival at The Old Vicarage.

**6.4 Ringwell Lane, The Barton, Lyde Green and Chever's Lane:** these form a rectangular pattern of mainly rural lanes, set back from the traffic, and higher density of development of the main routes. There are small clusters of development along Chever's Lane and Lyde Green; the west side of Ringwell Lane adjoins the modern Ringwell and Spring Field estate roads; and The Barton has the important gentry house of Manor Farm, its dovecot and other converted former farm buildings. There is also modern infill on its west side. There are two significant undeveloped areas on the east side of Ringwell Lane (along the Norton Brook) and at The Old Orchard, between the east side of The Barton and the rear boundaries of North Street and Bell Hill properties. Trees and hedges underline the rural character but stone walls also form boundaries or retain slopes. The buildings are a mixture of 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century vernacular, Victorian Gothic and Tudor Revivals, and modern infill of varying sensitivity to the historic environment.



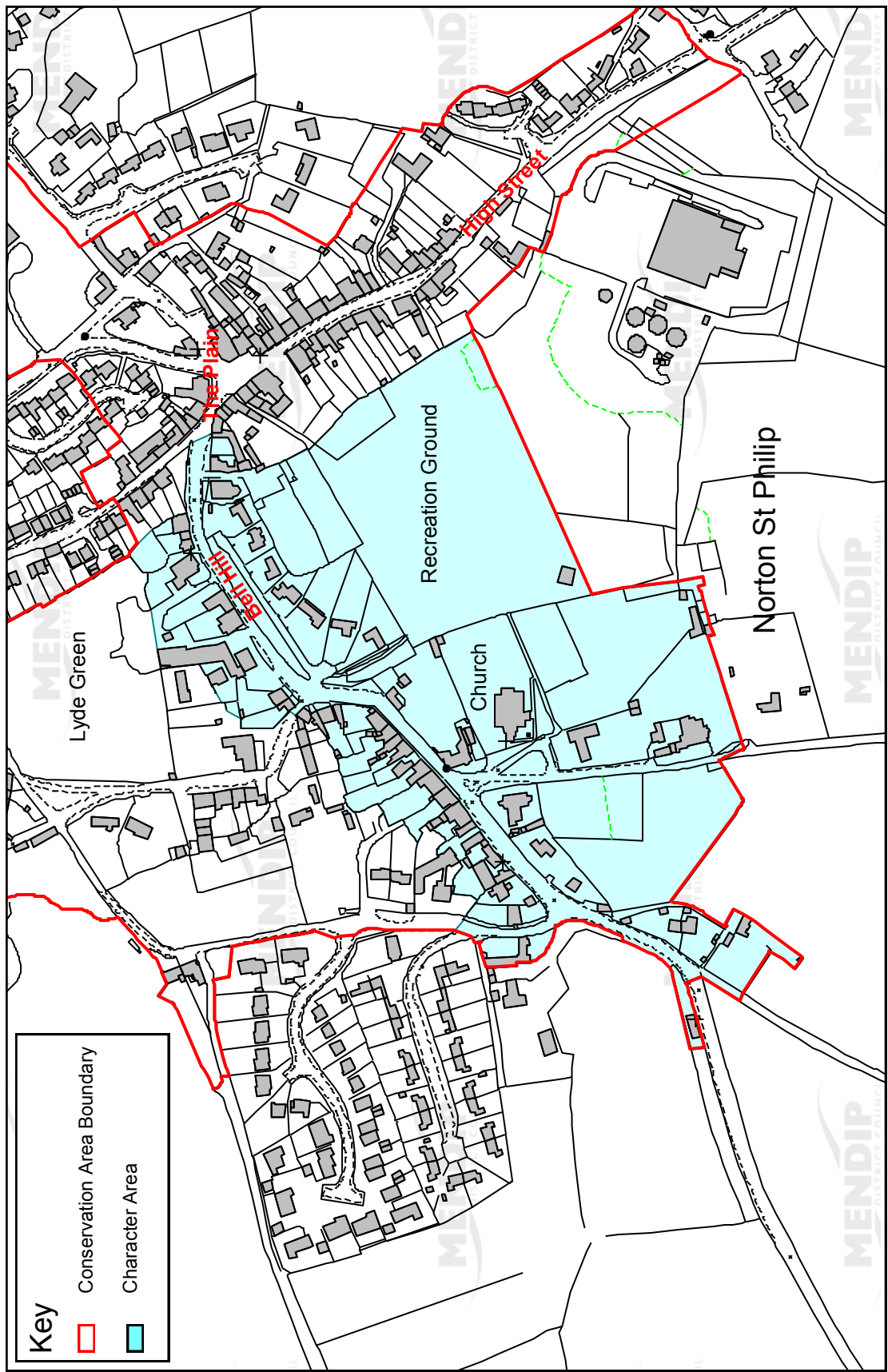
*High Street looking towards The Plain*

## 6. Character Analysis



Ordnance Survey Map showing High Street, The Plain and entry routes

# 6. Character Analysis

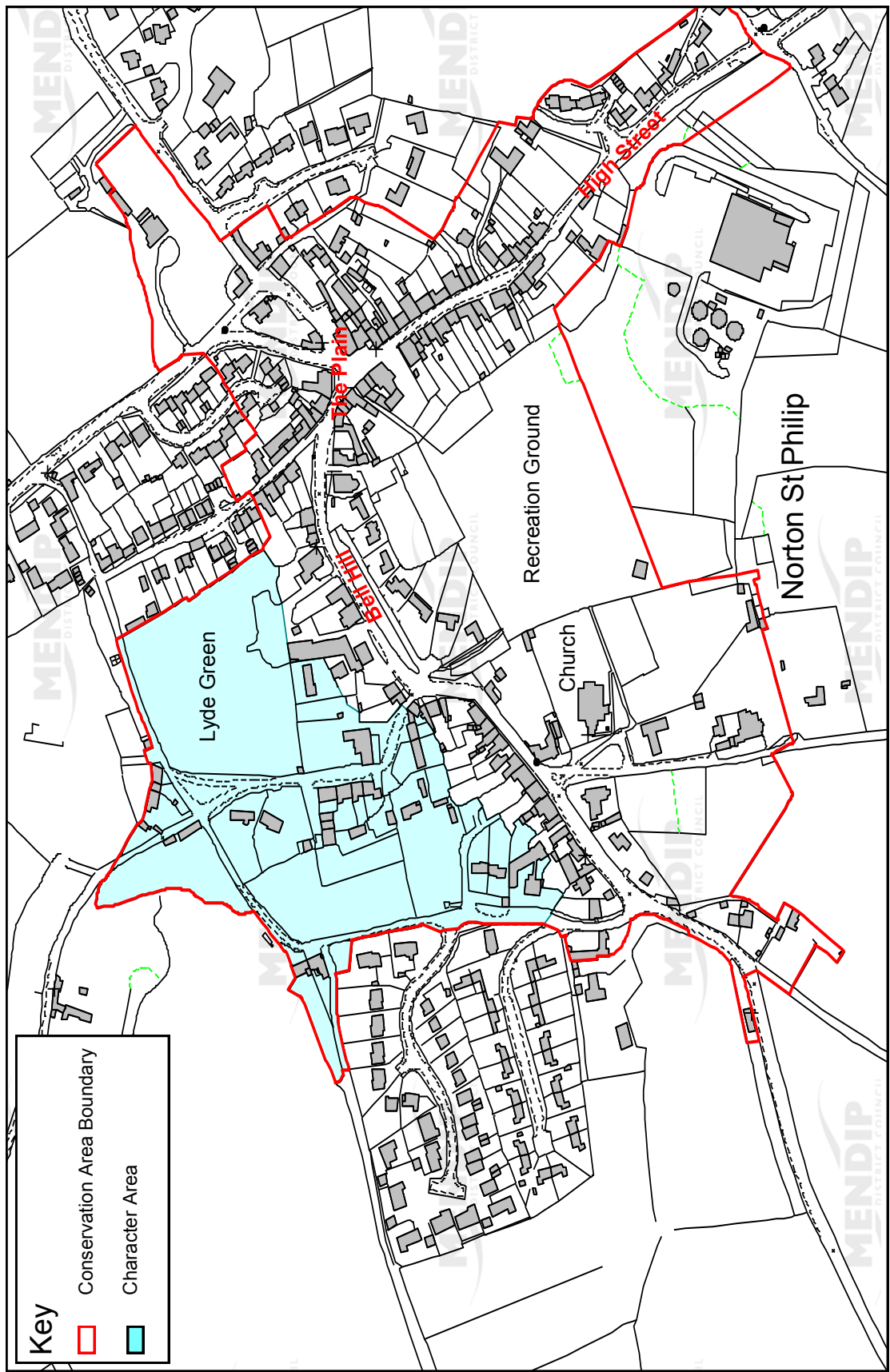


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Ordnance Survey Map showing Church Street, the Parish Church 'precinct', Church Mead and Bell Hill



## 6. Character Analysis



Ordnance Survey Map showing Ringwell Lane, The Barton, Lyde Green and Chever's Lane

## 7. Local Building Patterns

(There are drawings of groups of buildings and details included as an appendix to this document).

7.1 The Parish Church is a basically 14th- and 15th-century assemblage of west tower, nave and aisles, south porch, chancel and chapels, suggesting medieval wealth and patronage. There are interesting details (tower and arcades) that may be reused elements from Hinton Priory. The tower has some 17th-century alterations and details which may suggest Gothic Survival work. The Victorian restoration (1847) was an early work by Sir George Gilbert Scott.



*The Parish Church's medieval, 17th-century and Victorian assemblage*

7.2 The George is a rare example of a large, purpose-built hostelry, deliberately designed for show, with two jettied storeys over a stone ground floor, a central porch, bay windows and angle buttresses, and rectangular timber framing enriched with mouldings and curved braces.



*Manor Farm House*

7.3 Manor Farm House appears to be a long early 18<sup>th</sup>-century building but the rear wall appears to be late medieval and its plan was originally a three-roomed and cross-passage house with an attached byre on the downhill slope (thus a 'long house'). Other houses of high status, such as The Plaine, Westmead and White House, date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and were originally single-storey three-roomed houses with features like raised cruck roofs.

7.4 There are a large number of smaller examples of medieval plan forms and structures behind several of the apparently later frontages in High Street and Church Street, such as the Fleur de Lys Inn (open hall house with screens passage and the solar over service rooms in a cross wing); Nos. 2, 6 and 7 High Street; Yew Tree Cottage (hall and jettied solar over the inner room); The Gables, High Street; Vanity Park Cottage; and the Malt House. The survival of so many medieval structures



*Medieval, 17th- and 18th-century elements, North Street*



## 7. Local Building Patterns



*Albion Cottage*



*Vernacular houses, Church Street*



*Grafton House's Classical details*

may be explained by the absence of the fires that seemed to be a regular occurrence in other settlements and a willingness by owners to adapt and extend rather than totally demolish.

7.5 There are many examples of alterations in the 17th and early 18th centuries, usually in the form of the raising of roofs to form upper floors; the insertion of ceilings into open halls; the building of rear wings and the refronting of main elevations, seen in houses like Gable and Tudor Cottages, Yew Tree Cottage, Dunkerton, The Plaine and White House. Albion Cottage is a tall three-storey addition to a lost earlier house.

7.6 The typical façade up to about 1720 is of one or two storeys, with either a full gable end to the street or gablets on a basically single-storey unit. The upper floor is usually set in the roof space of the gable. Gable Cottage in Church Street and The Gables in High Street both have two full storeys plus a third set in the gable. The design vocabulary includes stone-mullioned or grouped casement windows under projecting string courses or squared labels, sometimes doors are included in a wider window drip mould and gables may be plain or stone-coped. There is an overall character of prosperous, vernacular houses typical of the oolitic limestone belt across southern England and the Midlands. Window and door openings are usually not consciously regularly spaced or symmetrically arranged; the, often older, plan form dictating their position. This sort of house may be termed a vernacular type, with post-medieval elements and was built from about 1550 to the mid 18th century.

7.7 From the late 17th century, however, there was an increasing awareness of the fashion for regularity and symmetry, expressed in the national introduction of classical architecture. In the village, there is evidence of window openings of similar sizes, lined up vertically, sometimes regularly spaced around a door (Manor



## 7. Local Building Patterns

Farm, Chapel Row). Classical details are often absent, with a continuing use of vernacular openings and mouldings, but there may be half-digested architraves or pilasters around a door. As the 18th century progressed, Classical details became the norm, with vertical sash windows instead of mullioned lights or casements and bracketed or pedimented canopies over doors. Window and door architraves tended to remain plain, as a flush ashlar surround.

7.8 The School is an attractive example of Regency Gothick, with Y tracery, regular rhythms of openings and a full panoply of battlements and pinnacles. The Baptist Chapel is a simpler echo, with intersecting tracery in its pointed windows. The former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel is sternly Neo-Greek. The village has a number of mid-Victorian Gothic and Tudor Revival buildings, the former reinterpreting original details, with pastiche timbering, bargeboards and brackets, canted bays and arched porches. The Tudor-influenced houses have detailing similar to older examples in the village, with mullioned windows, drip moulds and labels, four-centred arched doors and gables. Modern properties are either detached and semi-detached houses or bungalows set in their own plots, usually behind traditional building lines; or conversions of old farm buildings and new infill in short terrace form that is more 'in keeping' with the historic environment.

7.9 **Walls.** The predominant building material is Doultong Stone, a fairly coarse-grained limestone with good weathering properties. It is basically pale grey, weathering to cream or orange. It has produced good quality ashlar and rubble. In ashlar form, it is usually well coursed and with tight joints. Forest Marble, an oolitic limestone that can be worked reasonably well to produce squared rubble brought to courses or random rubble, is a more local building stone, again grey and with a richness of fossils. It may weather to a



*Victorian revivalist styles in High Street*



*Rubble and ashlar dressings, High Street*



*Stone mullioned and casement windows, High Street*

## 7. Local Building Patterns

biscuit colour. Bath Stone, a fine-grained creamy white or buff oolitic limestone, appears on 19th-century buildings, usually as ashlar work. Rubble is often combined with ashlar dressings, in the form of corner quoins, window and door openings. There are several facades that are entirely of ashlar work, such as The Old Police House and the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. Side and rear elevations are usually built of rubble.

7.10 Rubble may sometimes be lime rendered or washed in lime, to provide additional weather proofing. Render is seen on several houses, such as The Old Bakery in High Street and Road Menders in Town Barton, and there are also examples of Roman Cement scribed to represent ashlar stonework (The Cottage in High Street and Nos. 1 and 2 Wells Road).

7.11 **Windows and Doors.** Types and details vary according to the history and status of buildings and a wide range is seen in the village. The George has stone canted bays with angle buttresses, cusped lights and wood-framed oriels; there are many examples of 16th- and 17th-century stone mullioned (ovolo or square chamfered) windows with drip moulds over, returned and with square stops. Mullioned windows also appear without drip moulds and the two varieties may be mixed together on one elevation. There are sometimes curved relieving arches over the rectangular opening, for example at Vanity Park Cottage and the adjoining No.3 North Street. Some of the mullioned units retain leaded lights but others are now predominantly metal or wooden casements and, less often, wooden vertical sashes have been inserted between the mullions. Later casements vary between two panes divided by a horizontal rail and multiple panes.

7.12 Manor Farm House has an impressive front façade with nine bays of early 18th-century mullion and transom cross

windows, classically proportioned but also retaining vernacular, post-medieval details. Many windows have a plain, flat dressed stone surround. Several buildings (such as Albion Cottage) have a round or oval opening set in a square frame in their gables. This is a distinctive 17th- and early 18th-century detail seen in Somerset. In the latter part of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century, the vertical wooden sash was fashionable, with varying numbers of divisions and panes. The Old Police House has tripartite sashes, known as Venetian windows, set in stone frames, the middle unit with a semi-circular head and the spoked glazing bars ornamented by festoons or swags, a detail seen in 18th-century Bath. The Baptist Chapel has pointed Gothick windows with intersecting glazing bars.

7.13 Victorian stylistic revivals reintroduced consciously picturesque oriels (The Old Vicarage), bays and mullioned windows (for example, Bell Cottage). There are several surviving shop windows in High Street: The Old Shop with a 24-pane unit and Crossed Swords Cottage with twin windows and a central door, all under a pentice roof. No.6 retains its long fascia board but the shop windows have been infilled.

7.14 Doors are equally varied, with late-medieval pointed arches (The George), four-centred, moulded openings (Albion Cottage, Vanity Park and The White House) and many examples of very flat arches or rectangular openings (later 16th and 17th centuries), usually with bolection or bead edge mouldings. Elaborate classical door cases are not in evidence, Westmead Cottage having a rudimentary semi-circular hood and School House with fluted decoration and enriched, curved volutes. There are numerous examples of flat, stone canopies over doors, supported by consoles (curved brackets). Nortons, in North Street, has elaborately sectioned brackets, with a series of varying curves. There are gabled porches, often with stone



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tiles, exemplified by Angel Cottage. Doors are often planked and braced and ledged, sometimes with ribbed detailing or expressed nail heads. Later doors are usually panelled, flush, sunk or fielded, four or six panels, with the top two often glazed. Fanlights are rare and may be simple one or two rectangular lights over the door.

**7.15 Roofs.** The village has many examples of stone tiled roofs, graded from ridge to eaves, providing subtle colours and textures. The stone is probably the local Forest Marble, which may be fissile and easily split into thin slabs. The George's main roof and those of the subsidiary buildings, the Parish Church and The Plaine, are but three examples of this attractive material. By far the most common roofing finish is the use of Double Roman pantiles, possibly from Bridgwater, which ripple and undulate throughout the village. Slate appears on 19th-century buildings and there is one known use of clay plain tiles with fancy fish-scale patterning, at Church Cottage. Roofs may be of compass type, hipped or, rarely, of mansard form. Stone coped gables and gablets are common and, on stone tiled roofs, verges are swept. Dormer windows are usually of pitched roof, gabled type but there are a few examples of hipped or monopitched roofs.

**7.16 Chimneys** are particularly important in perspective views and on skylines. The George has good medieval octagonal, pierced types; there are 17th-century ashlar stone examples with flat projecting caps or coved mouldings or rubble stacks. On 16th- and 17th-century houses, stone stacks often run through the apex of a gable. There are a few examples of swagger ashlar stone octagons, sometimes joined into groups, as on Bow Cottage. These were also popular in early 19th-century Tudor Revival buildings. Brick chimneys also appear. Clay pots tend to be simple in design but tall. There are glazed pots with diaper ornament at Wayside Cottage.



*School House's curvaceous brackets and canopy*



*Stone tiles and clay pantiles, High Street*



*Chimney stacks and pots*



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*Stone wall details, Wellow Lane*

Rainwater goods are predominantly cast iron and held on gutter pins or are attached to wooden fascia boards (on 19th- and early 20th-century buildings).

**7.17 Boundaries.** Boundary walls are a very important asset to the conservation area, defining spaces and linking building groups. They are of rubble, sometimes brought to course, Douling Stone or Forest Marble, with vertical 'cock and hen' coping, flat slabs or chamfered tops (as on the wall around the churchyard). Changes of level may be accommodated by curved ramps. Wall heights vary from dwarf boundaries and retaining walls to 3m+ examples, such as those on the south side of Church Street and north of Brewery House in North Street. Piers are usually of rubble with simple flat caps, occasionally of ashlar, as at Norton House, or Gothic Revival gabled and chamfered at the Parish Church. Some of the higher walls are pierced by archways, including the two reset examples at Town End. There are simple iron spear railings on top of the retaining wall on Bell Hill, in front of the Baptist Chapel and at the side of The Plaine.



*Victorian cast iron pump, North Street*

**7.18 Other Details.** Norton has a number of other interesting details, including hanging signs at the two pubs and on Bell Hill; four finger posts with SCC pyramidal finials; a listed K6 telephone box; the remains of a 19th-century painted sign on The Old Shop; various date and inscription stones; a cast iron pump in North Street; and iron boot scrapers, both set into walls or free standing (as at the Parish Church). There are ten listed stone table tombs in the churchyard, ranging in date from the late 17th century to the early 19th. They have varied ornaments: corner pilasters, cornices, cherubs, panels, roses, vines and leaves, urns and ribbons.

**7.19 Trees and Green Spaces.** Trees are hardly apparent in densely developed areas such as High Street or The Plain but are important assets elsewhere, such as at the

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entry points (Town End, Farleigh and Bath Roads and the Wells Road end of Church Street), the grounds of Norton House, The Old Vicarage and the churchyard, where there are some impressive yews. The large sycamore between the Church and School has previously been mentioned. There are TPOs by Manor Farm House, Monmouth Lodge and the adjacent former poultry factory.

7.20 Gardens are also important, again where buildings are not in continuous rows on the highway edge, such as in Town End, The Barton and Vicarage Lane. Some individual features, such as the superb wisteria in front of The Plaine, are of particular value to the public realm.

7.21 The important green spaces in the conservation area are Church Mead (with some stone boundary walls and trees), Lyde Green and the adjoining Old Orchard, the field to the south of the School and the course of Norton Brook, on the east side of Ringwell Lane.

7.22 **Surfaces.** Most of the road and paving surfaces are of tarmac or modern stone or concrete blocks. The Plain is a particularly wide expanse of obvious road space and the (necessary) traffic calming at Town End has rather unsympathetic finishes. There are, however, stretches of traditional stone setts in front of the Baptist Chapel in High Street, through the yard of The George and in the churchyard. There are raised stone pavements on the north side of Church Street and the south-east end of North Street, probably constructed of Forest Marble.

7.23 **Contribution of Unlisted Buildings.** Despite the large number of listed buildings, there are several unlisted ones of individual interest and/or of group value.

These include:



*The Old Vicarage, garden and trees*



*Stone setts in the churchyard*



*Crossed Swords Cottage, The Old Bakery group*



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- Foxglove Cottage, at Town End, adjacent to the listed Town End and of similar character, Victorian Tudor Revival, stone and slate, with a porch and a four-centred arched doorway and mullioned windows, decorative bargeboards; group value;
  - On the west side of High Street, a row of 19th-century Tudor and Gothic Revival houses, from No.6 to Lyndhurst, with details such as gables, porches, jettying, canted bays and mullioned windows; Rose Cottage has applied half-timbering; all have group value and provide a suitable lead into the genuine Gothic of The George;
  - On the opposite side, a small group from The Old Bakery to Crossed Swords Cottage, of mixed character, including a handsome Victorian pair with stone tiles and canted oriels, the rendered Old Bakery (sashed) and the set-back façade of Crossed Swords Cottage, with a former shop front and a canted bay; of group value, leading into The Plain;
  - Haven Cottage and No.1 Church Street, with a mixture of vernacular and classical details (Haven Cottage with a mansard roof); of group value;
  - Hazelmere, on Church Street, is a narrow fronted early 19th-century house with sashes and a six-panelled door, of individual merit and of group value with the remainder of the listed terrace to the east;
  - The Old Forge, stone and pantiles, early 19th-century (?), in an important position at a junction and in the wider Plain group, the chamfered angle being of interest; there is an attractive western wing with a round-headed window;
  - The Old Coach House, Farleigh Road, single-storey stone and pantiles, the triple gables are a visible townscape feature;
  - The Old Vicarage is a mid-19th century Tudor Revival house, with features like oriel windows and bold gables and a stone-tiled outhouse; the building and its landscaped garden are positive features on the southern part of the conservation area.
- 7.24 In addition, the buildings on the north side of Bell Hill, including Bell Hill House, Chapel House (former Wesleyan Methodist chapel, dated 1836, with Greek Revival details), No.3, Bell Hill and Cozie Cottages, have group value, in spite of some modern alterations. On the other side of the road, Wayside Cottage (stone and pantiles, single windows to the road with flat mullions, a single-storey lean-to and circular glazed chimney pots) has some visual interest and relates to the listed buildings to its east. The same comments on group value are applicable to Lyde Green Cottage and its attached neighbours, which form a minor feature overlooking the green space.
- 7.25 Extent of Intrusion or Damage.** Some modern infill has been constructed with reconstituted stone, which lacks the subtleties of colour and texture of the three natural stones found in the village. Some modern development on the edges of the conservation area does not relate well to historic building patterns or architectural detailing: this is apparent in North Street (where there are particularly visible road widenings and set backs of the building line) and at Town End. The larger Monmouth Paddock and Upper Farm Close cul-de-sacs and the Ringwell and Spring Field block are not particularly conspicuous from within the conservation area. The Fair Close bungalows, on Bell Hill, are unsympathetic to general character but the



## 7. Local Building Patterns

thick screening on the main road edge renders them virtually invisible.

7.26 The garage on Bell Hill is the one obvious intrusion into the historic townscape, introducing a large, blocky structure and breaking the continuity of building frontages. The concrete apron, metal gates and fencing and general aura of decay make the entrance to the former poultry processing factory at Town End a detriment to the conservation area. The factory buildings are also very conspicuous on the skyline when viewed from the west or south. Any future redevelopment of these large sites must pay due regard to the sensitive nature of their setting and the character of the wider conservation area. There are conspicuous wirescapes and poles by the garage, in the important space between the Parish Church and School, on High and North Streets and along The Barton.



*Bell Hill*

7.27 The impacts of through traffic are, in spite of traffic calming measures, still significant, with particular problems on the narrow High Street and on the junction between The Plain and Bell Hill. Listed buildings, such as The George, The Malthouse and the Fleur de Lys have been damaged on several occasions by large vehicles. The Plain is a large tarmac space that adds little to the setting of its fine architecture. The play area on the eastern edge of Church Mead has a visual impact because of its position on a slope and the bright colours of the equipment. It is, however, a valuable facility and could be 'softened' by a boundary hedge.

7.28 Whilst the great majority of the listed buildings seem to have been stewarded well, there are a few examples of inappropriate alteration of details, such as the uPVC guttering and down pipe at Grafton House and the introduction of lattice windows of non-traditional detail on The Cottage, Church Street. There is evidence of the gradual replacement of



*Pole and wires, Church Street*

## 7. Local Building Patterns

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*The George's car park*

traditional windows with uPVC types in unlisted buildings, resulting in incremental erosion of character, particularly on Bell Hill. Replacement windows, despite attempts to produce designs sympathetic to historic patterns, are often composed of clumsy, thick sub-divisions and frames.

**7.29 Existence of Neutral Areas.** The current large expanse of road space at The Plain has the potential to be more of a central space. The nearby car parks at the sides of The George and the Fleur de Lys are rather bare and featureless and would benefit from better edge definition against the main road.

**7.30 Condition of Built Fabric.** The majority of buildings appear to be in good condition. Recent repair work to The Malthouse has rescued an attractive and historically important building.

## 8. Synthesis of Appraisal

8.1 Norton St Philip has an overall homogenous character, created by strong local building traditions and the use of a limited range of materials. There is a rich interplay between medieval, vernacular Cotswold-type and classical architecture, mixed with some positive Victorian contributions. Buildings, many smaller details, boundaries and trees all combine in a complex townscape. There are, however, distinct character areas within the village, because of historical and socio-economic factors.

8.2 The dense corridor of development along High Street and the adjoining wider space of The Plain and its approaches contrast with the mixture of terraced development, green space around the Parish Church and the historic buildings of Barton Farm and the relative rural character of the back lanes along Ringwell and Chever's Lanes.

8.3 One of the great assets is the visual and psychological contrast between 'urban' and rural elements, experienced in the sudden views over the lower slopes and open countryside from The George's car park and the summit of Bell Hill. The views back east to the ridge and the skyline of High Street and The Plain from Church Mead and the Wells Road entry are also significant.

8.4 There are a number of detrimental features and sites that detract from the overall quality, including the effects of traffic, a modern former industrial site, the current garage, and poles and wires. The impacts of incremental permitted development on unlisted buildings need to be carefully monitored and considered.

8.5 The conservation area boundary has been recently extended and no further changes are proposed.

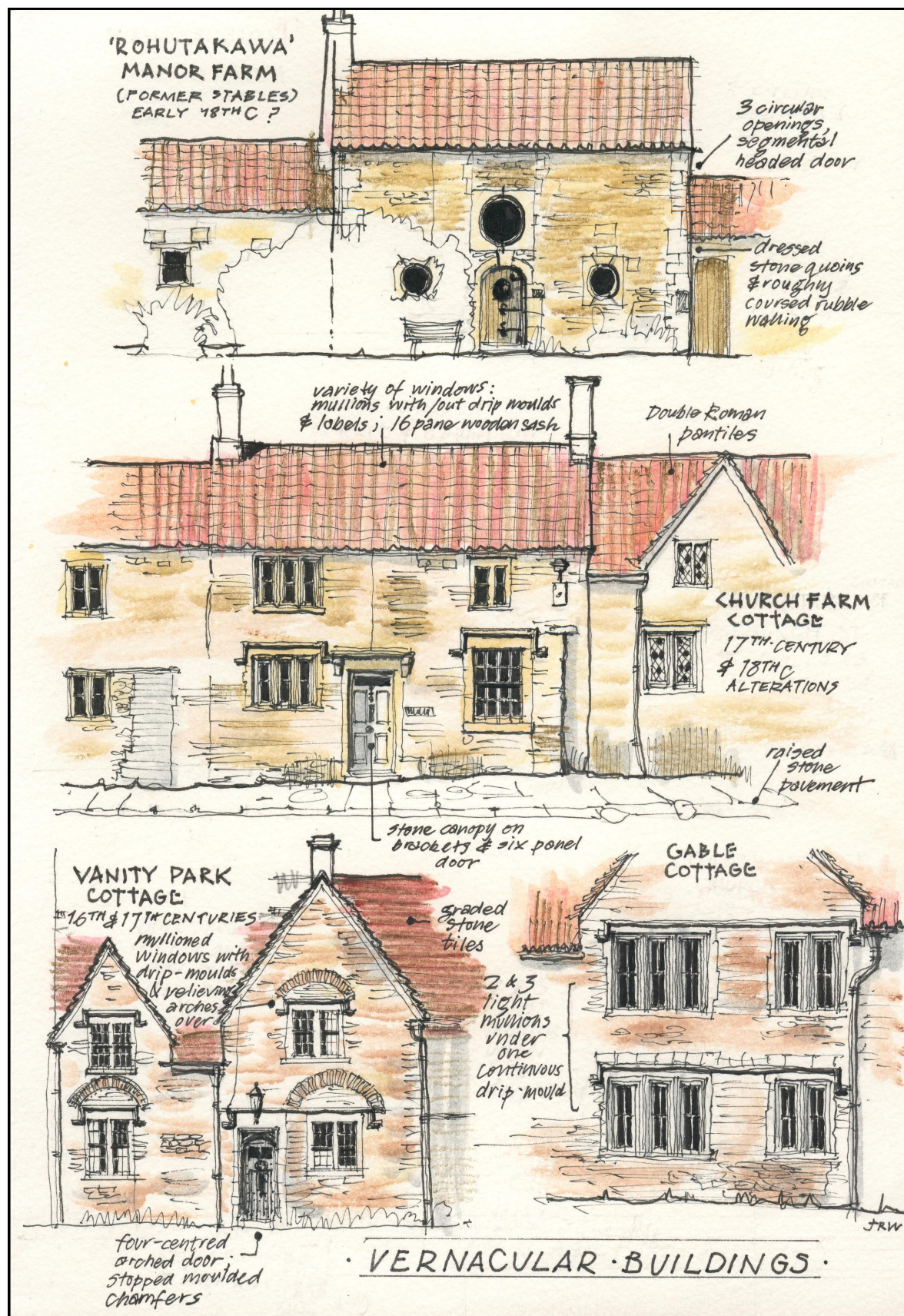
8.6 This Conservation Area Appraisal is to be read in conjunction with local planning policies and the proposed Conservation Area Management Plan.



*School House*

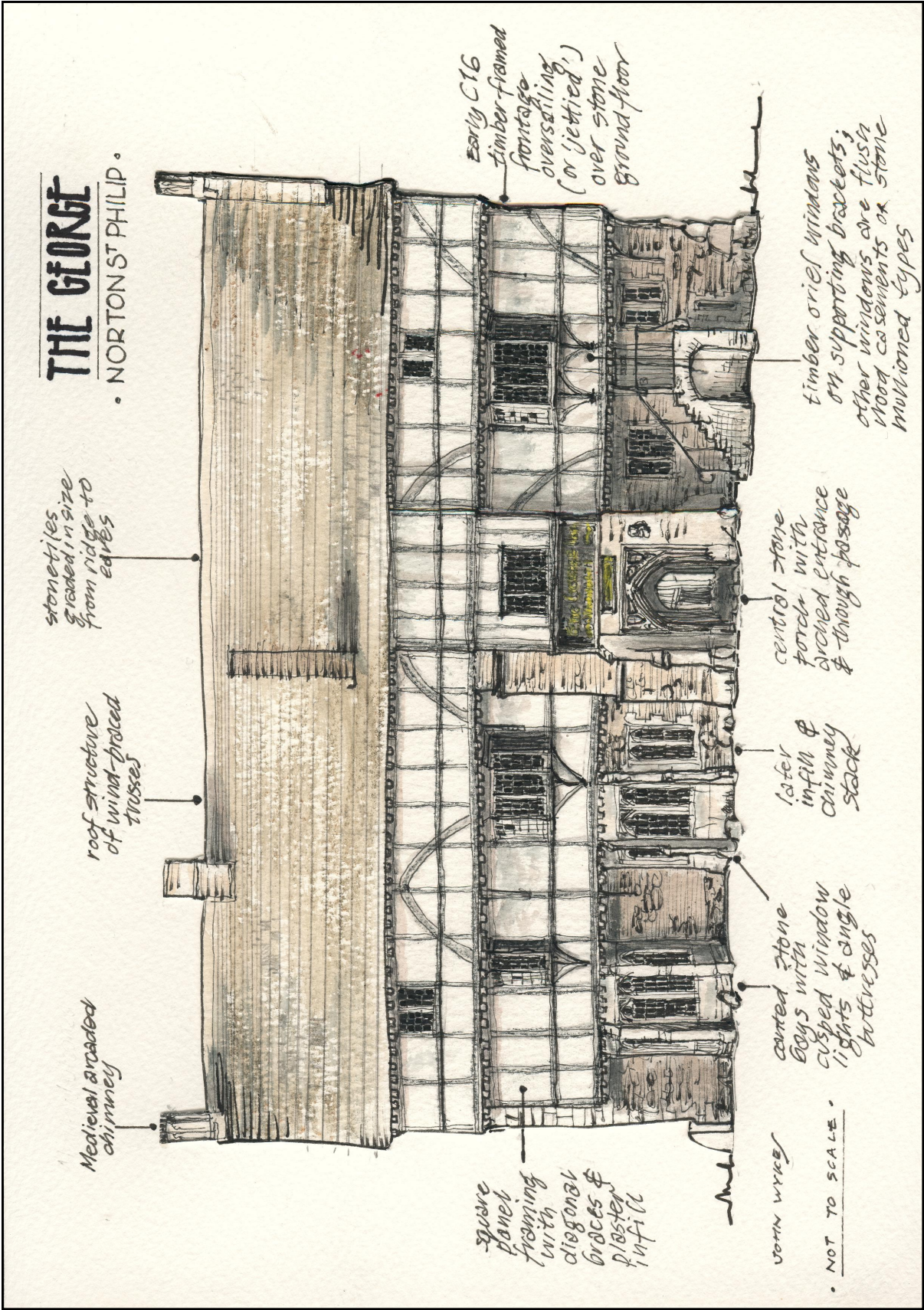


## Appendix I: Drawings



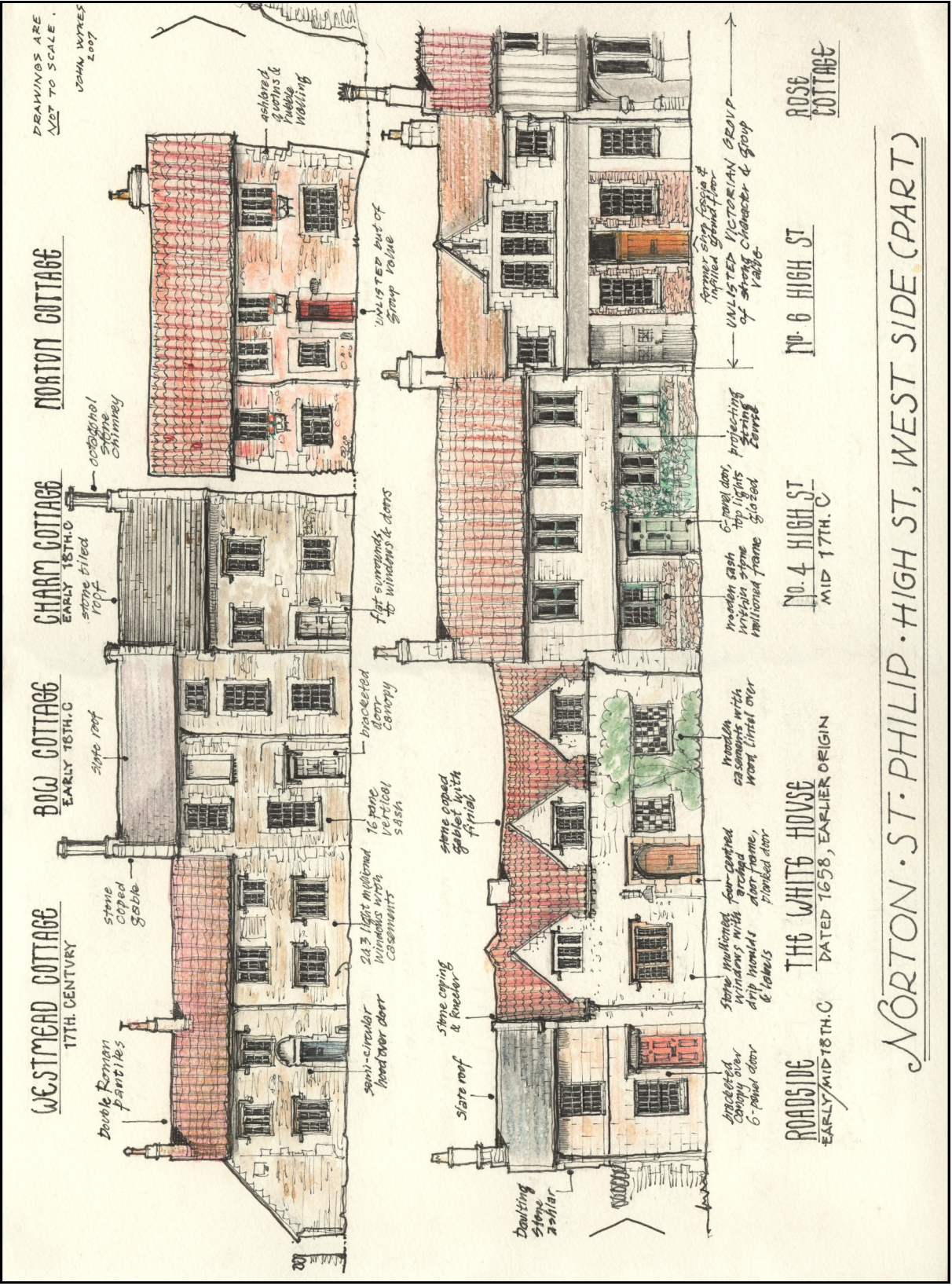


Appendix I: Drawings



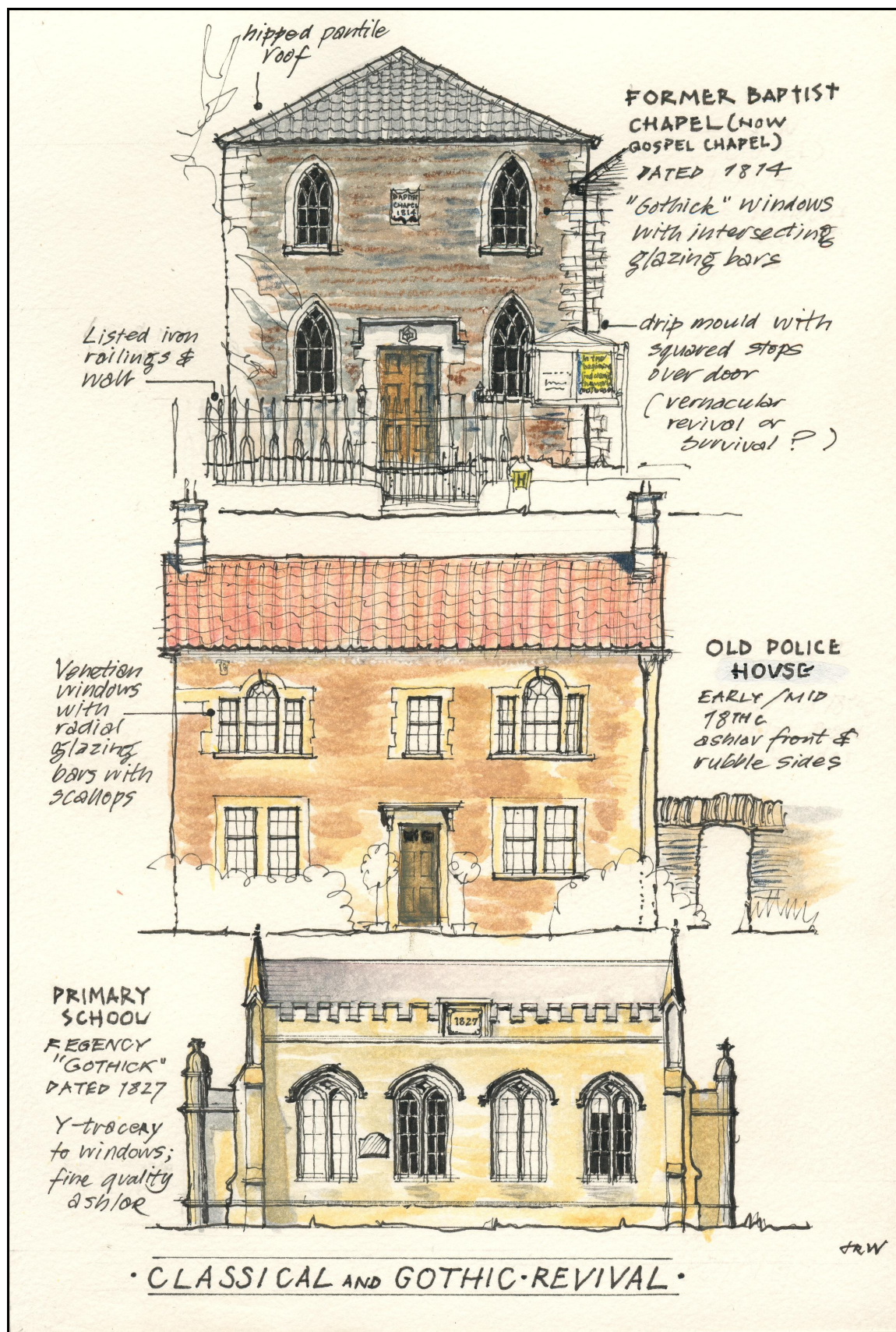


Appendix I: Drawings





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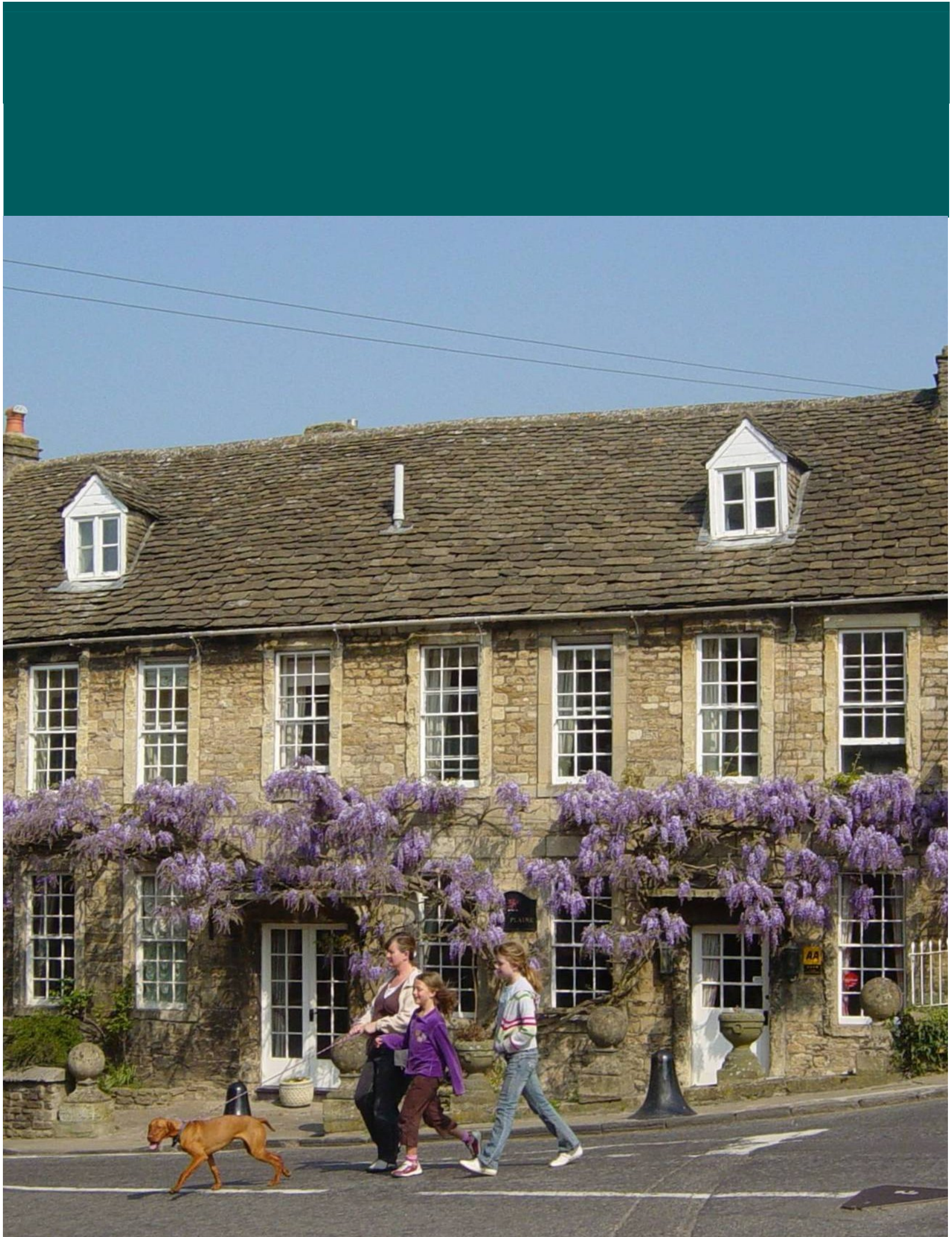




## Summary of Key Characteristics

- The ridge of the eastern part of the village contrasts with the slopes to the west, giving good views out and into the historic core.
- An interesting archaeological context, with possible traces of a shrunken or displaced medieval settlement and a medieval planned suburb as a result of monastic speculation.
- A large number of medieval house plans and surviving architectural and structural features.
- 85 listed building entries, including the Grade I George and a Grade II\* Parish Church and 15th-century dovecot at Manor Farm.
- Large areas of unspoilt historic buildings, particularly on High Street, The Plain, the south end of North Street and Church Street, with a mixture of vernacular and polite of varying styles and ages, employing three good, locally available building stones.
- Groups of buildings in informal terraces with ridges parallel to the road line and interspersed with the gable ends of buildings at right angles to this general line.
- A variety of window and door types and details, including stone mullioned windows under drip moulds, side-hung metal or painted timber casements, vertically-hung sashes, bracketed canopies and gabled porches and planked and panelled doors.
- The important contributions of stone tile and panelled roofs enlivened with dormer windows, gablets, stone and brick chimneys.
- Well defined boundary walls of random or roughly coursed Doultling or Forest Marble stone rubble.
- Individual and groups of trees in specific areas such as the churchyard, around larger gentry houses, at gateways into the village and along the more rural back lanes, allied to occasional significant gardens.
- Areas of green space, such as Church Mead, Lyde Green and the area between the Parish Church and the School.





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