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1 Introduction

1.1 Conservation Areas are designated by Local Planning Authorities under the Planning Acts. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a Conservation Area as :

‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

1.2 North Devon Council, as the local planning authority, has a duty to designate parts of the District it sees appropriate as Conservation Areas. There are currently 40 Conservation Areas in this District (excluding those within Exmoor National Park).

1.3 Carrying out a Conservation Area Character Appraisal is an important method for identifying the qualities and characteristics that such an area possesses and to provide a basic summary of the elements, which collectively contribute towards the special character and appearance of the conservation area. A clear and comprehensive appraisal of the Bickington Conservation Area provides a sound basis for development control decision-making, and assists the Council in defending such decisions that are subject to appeal. Generally the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be preserved or enhanced through:

- Providing controls and regulating development through the planning system.
- Applying the extra controls that designation provides over demolition, minor development and the protection of trees.
- Environmental enhancement schemes and possibly providing financial assistance for the repair and restoration of specific buildings.

1.4 Encouraging public bodies such as the local highways authority or utility companies to take opportunities to improve the street scene through the appropriate design and sensitive siting of street furniture (and retention of historic features of interest), or the removal of eyesores and street features that have a negative impact such as overhead wires.

1.5 The purpose of this character appraisal is to:

- Analyse the character of the designated area and identify the components and features of its special interest.
- Outline the planning policies and controls that apply to the Conservation Area.
- Identify opportunities for the future enhancement of the Conservation Area.

1.6 It should be noted that the omission of any particular building, structure, tree, wall or any other feature from being highlighted within this character appraisal does not imply that it is not of special interest, nor is there an implication in such an omission that it does not make a positive contribution, or conversely a negative contribution, to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Also the map is unable to identify accurately every tree of significance and value to the Conservation Area.

2 Background

2.1 This appraisal for the Bickington Conservation Area was initiated in December 2009 and adopted by North Devon Council in December 2010.

2.2 The first designation of land found within the present conservation area boundary was by North Devon Council in May 1978.

The residential character along Bickington Road is demonstrated by this Georgian terrace at Orchard Court.



3 Facts & Figures

3.1 The Bickington Conservation Area covers an area of 4.9 hectares (12.1 acres) a slight reduction from 5.2 hectares (12.8 acres) prior to the review of the boundary. Of the buildings and structures within it 8 are listed, all of which are Grade II listed.

The listed building descriptions for listed buildings within the Bickington Conservation Area are given in Appendix 1.

3.2 There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the boundary of the conservation area or within its immediate vicinity.

4 Historic Development

4.1 Bickington is a relatively modern settlement. It does not appear in Domesday Book and most likely developed sometime after the 16th century as a linear settlement along the main road from Fremington to Barnstaple. Both Longhope Cottage and Hillside contain some fabric dating to the early 16th Century and this may represent the earliest origins of the settlement.

4.2 It is possible that some isolated occupation along the lines of dispersed farmsteads predates the 16th century, but not to the extent to which this occupation could be described as a settlement.

4.3 Bickington is found referenced as '*Buckyngton*' in documents from 1570 and as '*Bukington*' in 1606. Like Fremington, Bickington has experienced rapid growth during the 20th century.

4.4 Most of the buildings within the conservation area had been built by the time of the 1st Series Ordnance Survey Maps of the 1880's and date to the late 18th century or early 19th century. There was almost no change between 1880 and the 1st revised Ordnance Survey maps of 1904-06. These two maps also show that a large proportion of the land immediately surrounding the developed settlement was in use as orchards, a fact preserved in names such as 'Orchard View' and 'Orchard Terrace' both of which were shown on the 1880's OS maps.

4.5 The conservation area became surrounded by further housing development with more rapid expansion beginning after the Second World War. The growth of Bickington is still continuing today.

4.6 Farms such as Woolmers, North House and Babbages (west of the conservation area) demonstrate the strong farming roots of the community, as do the names of local public houses such as the 'Plough Inn'.

4.7 The historic core of Bickington was once surrounded by medieval field enclosures based on former strip fields, possibly associated with nearby Barnstaple or Fremington. However, these medieval field systems now largely lay under housing developments or have been lost to the enlargement of the modern field system. Elements of medieval enclosures based on former strip fields survive directly to the northwest and modern enclosures are located just to the northeast.

Archaeological Potential

4.8 No formal archaeological investigations have been undertaken within the Bickington Conservation Area. It is anticipated that the historic core of the settlement (of which the conservation area forms a significant part) will hold the highest potential for the presence and survival of archaeological evidence associated with the development, origins and growth of the settlement of Bickington.

5 Character

5.1 Bickington has two distinct characters; that of the dense predominantly residential development along the Bickington Road and the farms, cottages and converted farm buildings to the North. The exception to the typical division of these characters is Pudding Court Farm which has a rural agricultural character but is within the domestic area of Bickington Road.

5.2 The domestic character of the conservation area is related to the historic linear development along Bickington Road. This region is not entirely residential and more formal buildings stand out in the form of The Old School House, which was formerly the local school but has since been converted to residential use, The United Reformed Church (1835) and the more agricultural buildings of Pudding Court Farm. Another departure for the domestic character is Bickington Car Sales and Baskerville Services, although the offices for Bickington Car Sales have all the appearance of an adapted domestic house.

5.3 The majority of the domestic buildings are short to mid length terraces of 3 to 10 homes although detached and semi-detached buildings are also represented. Almost all of the buildings within the conservation area are two storey, with a small number of bungalows being the exception.

5.4 Most of these buildings date to the Georgian period and examples include Orchard View, 1-6 Hilltop, the house at Pudding Court Farm, and Union Terrace. The vast majority have had replacement windows although some do retain timber sashes or casements.

5.5 The roofscape across the conservation area is predominantly slate, and this was most likely the traditional material within the area. Some properties, including the entire length of North Terrace, have been re-roofed in modern interlocking concrete roof tiles.

The United Reformed Church building is a formal Georgian building and marks a departure from the typically residential character along Bickington Road.



The Plough inn has a domestic appearance, featuring marginal light sash windows and decorative barge boards.



5.6 Buildings such as the Plough Inn retain a domestic character, with attractive and modest signage mainly in the form of a painted hanging sign supported on an elaborate wrought iron bracket projecting from a decorative gable. The building is also one of two examples within the conservation area to feature a full set of marginal light sash windows, the other being Pudding Court Farmhouse.

5.7 The Homestead and Homestead Cottage (Grade II Listed) are just a short distance away along Bickington Road and also feature a series of three small gabled

casement windows on the 1st floor. The ground floor windows below have decorative pointed glazing sections in their upper panes giving a hint of early Georgian experiments with gothic style. The building has formal pretensions and some interesting features while its symmetry, a key feature of formal Georgian architecture, is lost through asymmetrical chimney arrangements. The building itself dates to the 17th Century, with extensive re-modeling and extension in the 19th century, probably explaining why the Georgian features don't have the degree of symmetry which would be expected.

5.8 In contrast the Old School House next door is a good example of Gothic Revival architecture in which overall symmetry is of less significance. The building itself shows some signs of unsympathetic works, such as the television aerial and satellite dish fixed straight above the main door on the front elevation. The building is mainly of coursed local stone with some brick dressings around windows in a decorative combination of red and Marland bricks. The front boundary wall with its railings and gates make a positive contribution to the conservation area as well as forming part of the setting of the building being typical of boundary treatments seen on schools of the period.

5.9 The lane leading south towards Lyddicleave features three pleasant cottages with decorative red brickwork around window and door openings as well as quoining at the corners of the buildings. In some cases this has been painted over or picked out in black paint, but one of the buildings (Town Meadow) retains its original unpainted red brick decorative scheme in a crisp and marked contrast to the white finished render of the main body of the building. This particular building also has a 'messy' finish to the quoining near the front door as it would appear that the builder was unsure how to treat the area where the corner quoining and the decorative doorway brickwork meet with a quite uneven and indecisive appearance as a result.

5.10 Other striking examples include East and Cheyne Cottages with their centrally mounted axial chimney stack and 4 eyebrow dormer windows. These buildings are probably of a local stone and cob construction beneath their render and may be amongst the earliest standing buildings within the village.

East and Heather Cottages with their distinctive and prominent central axial chimney stack.



5.11 To the west of the conservation area is North Terrace, with a series of added porches affecting the regular pattern which such a terrace would once have had, to the point at which the houses without porches now appear as the exceptions. Windows and doors have also been replaced in unsympathetic modern uPVC units, some with false glazing bars, some with false sandwiched 'lead effect' strips and some with neither leading to a large visual inconsistency along the row. The terrace is rendered and the standard two storey height common throughout Bickington. The pattern of fenestration is also still original and evident, each unit having one window on each of the two floors, situated one above the other with the front door set to the left of the ground floor window.

5.12 To the north of Bickington Road there is a change in character to a more rural atmosphere along North Lane towards North Farm. The agricultural buildings and barns on the west side of the road, built of exposed rubble stone have a very traditional and utilitarian appearance. Although some of the ground floor openings are now partly blocked, reflecting a change in the nature of their use, the buildings are remarkably unaltered. Newer barns also stand nearby, such as the large central building built in timber plank boarding above concrete block plinth walls, which reflect the continuing agricultural use of this part of the conservation area.

Some barns and agricultural buildings around North Court Farm and Woolmers' retain their agricultural functions.



5.13 Opposite these stand the buildings of Barn End Court and Barn End Cottage, a former agricultural courtyard of buildings now converted to residential use. The unpainted cement render along the side facing North Lane has a particularly bland

appearance while the conversion is typical of those of the latter half of the 20th century where much of the utilitarian character of the buildings has been lost and replaced with a domestic appearance.

5.14 Oak Cottage and North Farmhouse retain traditional features such as timber sash windows and a natural slate roof. Garden walls, probably of cob or rubble stone with clay pan-tile ridges are prominent, being particularly attractive at the boundary between the two properties, while the front boundary has been replaced with standardised timber fencing panels above a low rendered plinth wall.

5.15 The row of cottages, Netherfield, April Cottage, Pansy Cottage and Sunnymead, mark the beginning of a transition back to the domestic character along Bickington Road; this row has been much altered. Windows and doors as well as roof coverings are now inconsistent between the four premises although the general layout remains as does an axial chimney stack on the front of April Cottage and the exposed stone boundary walls with rounded brick copings to the front of the property boundaries.

Woolmers' farmhouse is a striking classical Georgian house from the front, but the rear of the building appears much earlier.



5.16 Woolmers' Farmhouse is particularly striking, with its principal elevation visible from the end of North Lane and particularly from the elevated position of the car park. The near symmetrical Georgian facade, with its arrangement of windows and a central doorway and porch is striking, although the windows have all been replaced with unsympathetic top hung uPVC casements which do not adequately replicate the appearance of traditional timber sashes. The main facade might suggest an attractive and formal Georgian building, but features at the rear such as axial chimney stacks suggest an earlier origin for the building, with a probable remodelling in the Georgian period in order to keep up with changing fashions.

Streetscape Features

5.17 The most significant traditional streetscape feature is a Dartmoor granite milestone located on the Bickington Road just outside the front door of number 7 Orchard View. The stone is inscribed "2 BARUM" with the lettering picked out in whitewash.

The traditional granite milestone beside the door to 7 Orchard View



5.18 Another feature is the exposed local stone front boundary walls. Not all properties have these and many directly front the road, but where they are present they make a positive contribution to the streetscape. Often these walls have crenellated copings, sometimes subtle with only small variations in the height of adjacent stones and sometimes more pronounced. Some properties at the east end of the conservation area have new front boundary walls of herringbone coursed slate.

5.19 This particular feature is one found across large parts of North Devon, however it is not a traditional feature found elsewhere in Bickington. Despite this these walls are very well finished and do make a positive contribution to the appearance of the conservation area.

5.20 Some elements of street furniture do not add to the character of the conservation area, such as the standard bus shelter next to the car park, or the large array of overhead lines which intrude into almost every view within the conservation area.

Open Space

5.21 There are two areas of large open space within the conservation area; the fields to the northwest of the Tomlin Hall and the village car park which lies long the north side of Bickington Road at the centre of the conservation area.

5.22 The open space to the north west forms part of the setting of the farmhouse at Woolmers' farm as well as enabling views to the open ground to the north and west of the conservation area. The open space also has a degree of biodiversity value.

5.23 The car park provides an important local amenity while being lightly shielded from direct views by planting of both trees and bushes along a grass bank, although there are large breaks in this line of planting meaning the car park does remain visible from along Bickington Road. Although this means that it intrudes upon views into the historic core of the village, it also means that the area is overlooked giving a degree of passive surveillance. The layout of the car park also incorporates small grassed

areas further breaking up the space. The car park is far from being the most attractive feature within the conservation area, but some effort has been made to make it more attractive than it could easily be.

6 Views & Vistas

6.1 The conservation area sits on an elevated area of land, with the highest point locally being the ridge to the north between Bickington and the Taw Estuary just outside the conservation area to the north east. The land along the main road through the conservation area slopes gradually upwards from low ground to the west at the crossing of Fremington Pill at Muddlebridge.

6.2 Views out of the conservation are limited by the surrounding modern development which is present on three sides. On the northern side near North Down Farm a more rural setting becomes apparent, although the rising ground on this side of the conservation area prevents estuary views. To the south narrow lanes between buildings also allow for views to the green hilltops towards Brynsworthy, to the south of Barnstaple and the A39.

6.3 Within the conservation area perhaps the most interesting series of views are those when moving north from the main Bickington Road along North Lane. As the lane makes several turns new features, which were previously hidden, become visible during a walk northwards. At the same time the residential character near the main road gives way to more agricultural buildings and a greater level of open space to the north. The new development to the east at Lower Cross Road is apparent from the north end of North Lane despite being sheltered by planting and somewhat disturbs the otherwise rural character of the northward aspects.

Views along North Lane slowly reveal more agricultural buildings before opening out into open space to the north.



6.4 Views along Bickington Road are also interesting. In places the mixture of long and short terraces with individual properties creates an interesting and dynamic streetscape within which individual buildings and features stand out. Examples include the axial chimney stacks of Hillside Cottage, the elegant Georgian symmetry of the United Reformed Church, the squat Gothic form of the old school house, the short domestic Georgian terrace at Orchard View with a traditional milestone outside one of the entrances and the exposed stone construction of the farm buildings at Pudding Court Farm.

6.5 Views into Bickington are restricted by the local topography, although some views are possible from hilltops to the south. From these vantage points the settlement appears as part of a continuous westward expansion of Barnstaple rather than as a separate entity and the historic core is difficult to distinguish from the surrounding development.

7 Boundary Changes Adopted December 2010

7.1 During the appraisal process an alteration to the boundary was identified.

7.2 An area to the northeast of the former boundary of the conservation area has been removed. This area covers the modern buildings at the western end of Lower Cross Road. These buildings are of good quality and design, however they are not particularly in keeping with the materials and style of established local building within the conservation area and the historic core of Bickington.

7.3 This boundary change was adopted, together with the character appraisal, in December 2010.

8 Development Pressures

8.1 Perhaps the biggest development threat facing conservation areas nation-wide is that of alterations carried out to dwelling houses which do not need planning permission. Such alterations may have only a minor impact on the character of the wider conservation area when viewed in isolation. However they can have a cumulative effect which can lead to major degradation of the historic character of the conservation area. Traditionally the largest such threat has come from the removal of timber sashes and casements in favour of the installation of uPVC windows. This threat has already had a significant impact upon Bickington, with many windows having already been replaced in this manner

8.2 As of 6th April 2008 the provision of some sources of renewable energy can be, under certain circumstances, a permitted development, which does not require planning permission or conservation area consent. The rules covering when the installation of, for example, solar panels is a permitted development is dependent on the location of the panels, their size and height, as well as the area they cover. As such advice should be sought from the planning office, as not all installations will be considered to be permitted without planning permission. The problem caused by this is that there will be no immediate control over such alterations within conservation areas, and as such there is potential for unsympathetic alterations to damage the character of the area instead of less damaging siting and designs being agreed.

8.3 As well as these more general pressures Bickington also has a series of pressures and issues which are more specific to its own situation:

8.4 Some undeveloped space within the historic core of the village may result in pressure for infill or backland development, which could have a negative impact on the character of the conservation area if not carried out in a sensitive manner.

8.5 Need for highways and junction improvements as a result of the level of through traffic the village experiences may also lead to further development and engineering works within Bickington. These could represent an opportunity to enhance the village, but could also have a negative impact on the character of the area if carried out in an insensitive fashion.

8.6 The sustainable location of Bickington on a main route between Bideford and Barnstaple means that it will continue to come under pressure for further development and expansion in the future. If handled in an appropriate way any future development should provide a catalyst to enhance the character of the area. A growing demand for additional infrastructure and local facilities to serve a growing population may result in pressures for further development to provide additional community facilities. Potential for further development exists on greenfield land to the northwest of the conservation area on land behind the Tomlin Hall.

9 The Future

9.1 The aim of this character appraisal has been to identify which buildings, open spaces and features from Bickington's past and present survive to contribute towards its special character.

9.2 The character appraisal has also aimed to identify potential development pressures the area is likely to face in the near future and to identify areas within the designation which may benefit from redevelopment or enhancement schemes.

9.3 What this document does not aim to achieve is to propose the means and methods by which the identified character is to be safeguarded, or enhanced, for the future. This will be the subject of a subsequent management plan for the conservation area. The aim of such a document will be to propose the ways in which the characteristics identified within this character appraisal can be protected from unsympathetic alterations and future developments, or enhanced by positive and well designed schemes. This will also ensure that all future planning decisions that affect the conservation area and its setting are treated in a consistent manner.

1 Listed Buildings Within The Conservation Area Boundary

Bickington Road

Building Address	Listing Grade
United Reform Church	II
Homestead Cottage & The Homestead	II
Hillside & Longhope Cottage	II

North Lane

Building Addresses	Listing Grade
North Farmhouse	II
April Cottage & Sunnymead Cottage	II

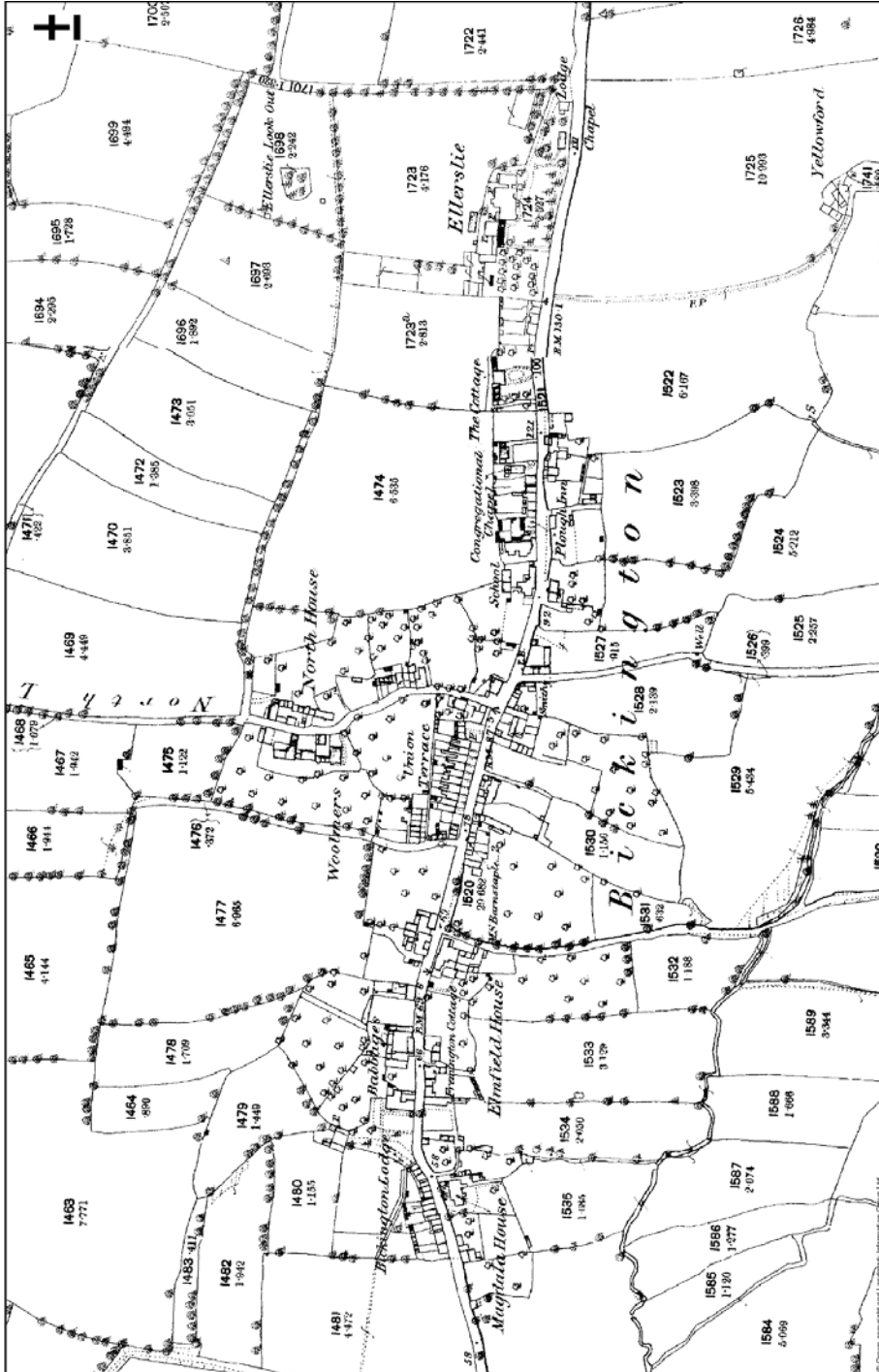
2 Glossary

3 Historic Mapping

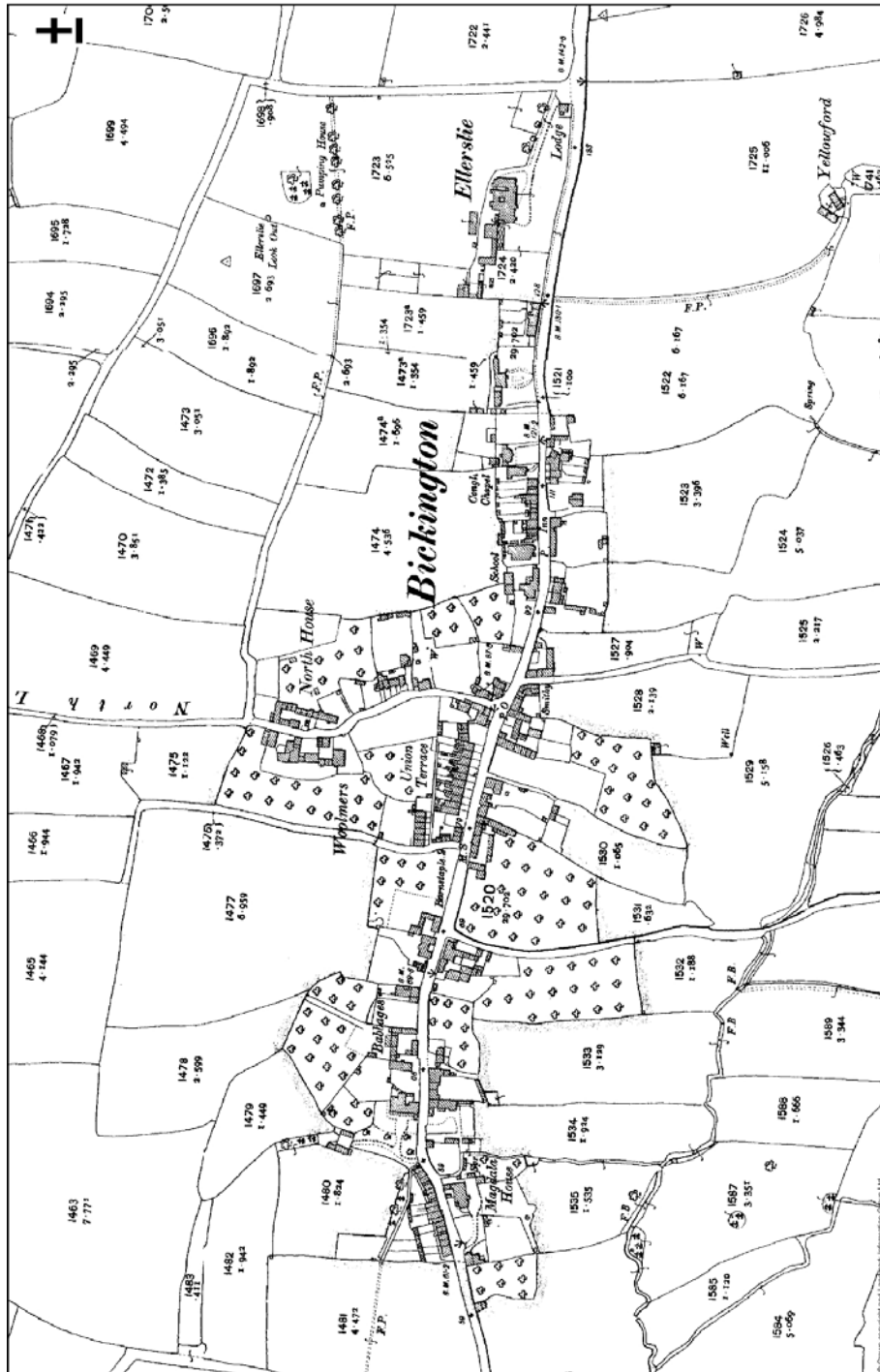
I - Ordnance Survey, 1st Series Mapping c. 1880

II - Ordnance Survey, Revised Mapping c. 1904

c. 1880 Ordnance Survey Map



c. 1904 Ordnance Survey Map



4 Conservation Area Mapping

I - Conservation Area Boundary & Listed Buildings

II - Changes to the Conservation Area Boundary Adopted December 2010

III - Key Views

