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1 Introduction

1.1 Conservation Areas are designed 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 39 Conservation Areas in this District (excluding those within Exmoor National Park Authority area).

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 Lake Conservation Area provides a sound basis for development control decision-making, and assists the District 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.
- 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.

1.4 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.
- To outline the planning policies and controls that apply to the Conservation Area.
- To identify opportunities for the future enhancement of the Conservation Area.

1.5 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

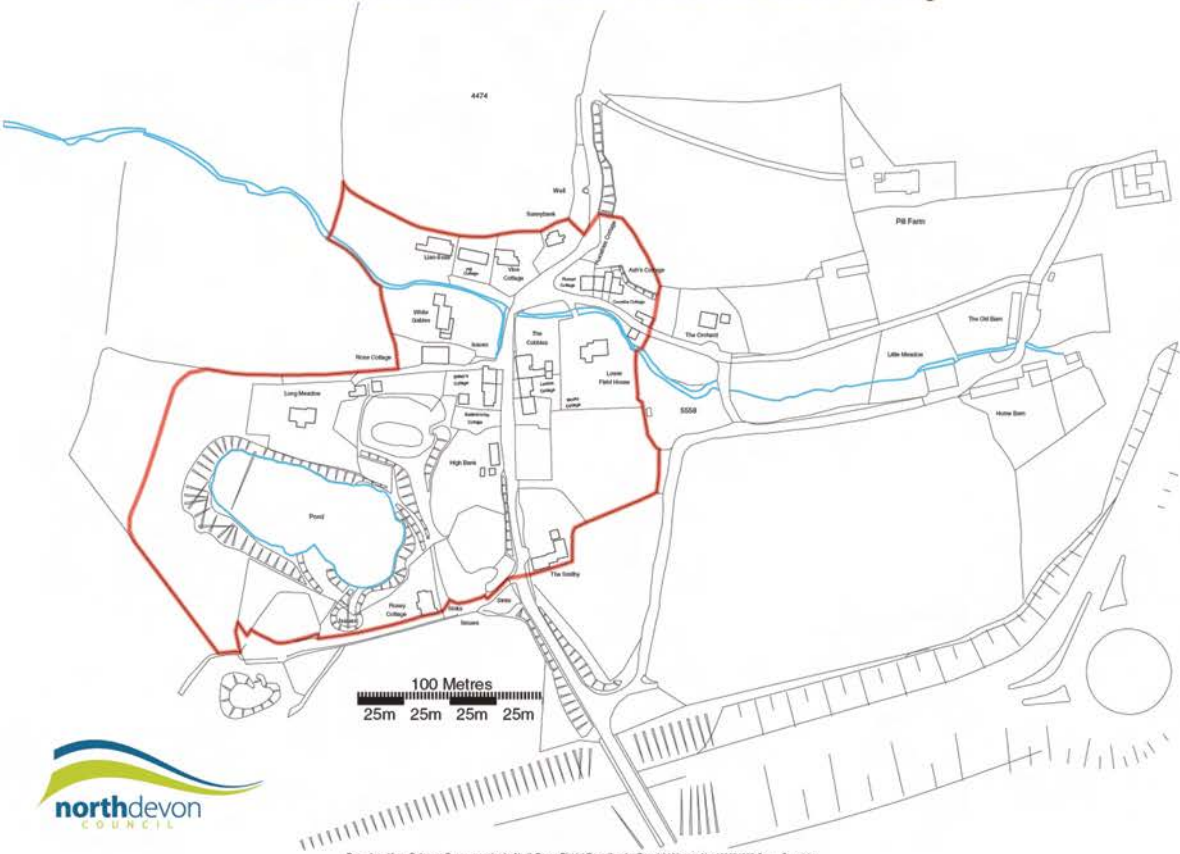
- This appraisal for the Lake Conservation area was initiated in February 2008.
- The first designation of land found within the present conservation area boundary was by North Devon Council in January 1992
- This appraisal, including its recommended boundary revisions, was adopted in March 2009.
- The conservation area's special interest is linked mainly to its scale and setting, being a rural type hamlet set in green surroundings but only 1.6 km (1 mile) from central Barnstaple. The architectural quality of the buildings themselves is significant in terms of the group value of a hamlet of small, vernacular, cottages with some larger and grander Georgian houses providing some formal elegance. The scale of the buildings, their positioning relative to roadways and the spaces formed between them are significant contributors to the character of the area, as is the absence of insensitive alterations such as uPVC windows and doors.

3 Facts and Figures about the Conservation Area

3.1 The conservation area covers an area of 3.35 hectares (8.25 acres). There are 18 dwellings within the existing conservation area, of these buildings there are none included on the List of buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Listed Buildings)

3.2 There are also no scheduled ancient monuments within the conservation area.

Lake Conservation Area Boundary



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4 Changes to the Boundary - March 2009

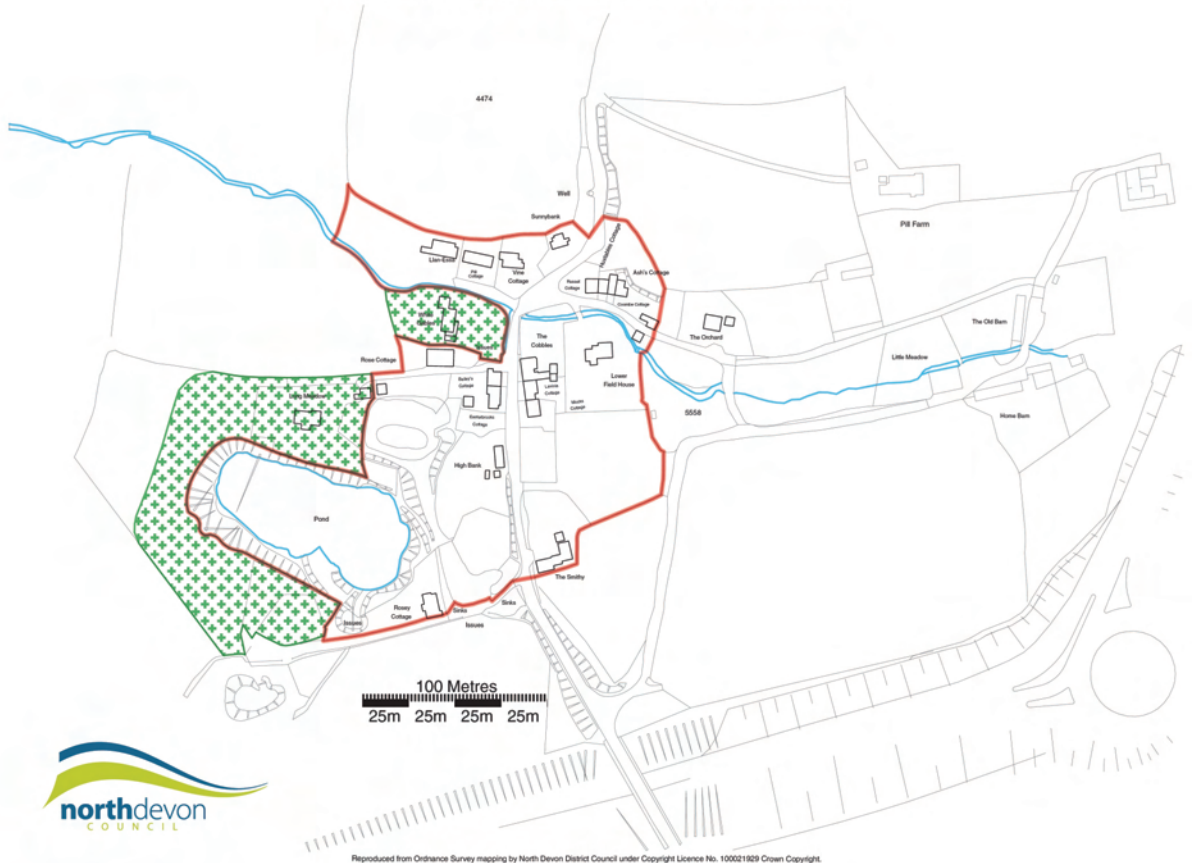
4.1 The conservation area has been extended in two areas. The first brought White Gables into the conservation area, being the only building within the centre of the settlement which has been previously excluded.

4.2 The second extension incorporated a zone of land around the Lake itself, being a major feature the lake is worthy of protection as a key landscape feature. This will also allow more control over any future proposals that may affect the setting of this important landscape feature. This extension also brings 'Long Meadow' into the conservation area effectively including all of the dwellings within the settlement. Section 4.6 of PPG15 (Planning and The Historic Environment) facilitates the inclusion of the surroundings of key features within a conservation area. While this approach is more typically applied to buildings in this case the lake is the most important feature of the landscape of the settlement.

4.3 Although it could be argued that White Gables and Long Meadow are modern buildings which do not add to the historic character of the built environment of Lake they do follow the typical building pattern. These newer buildings are also not out of proportion with the historic buildings, retaining a sense of traditional scale. They also contribute to the layout of the buildings and roads within the settlement, and their situation in the wider landscape. As such they do add to the character of the conservation area in terms of its layout, while not eroding the setting of the settlement.

Figure 2

Proposed Changes to the Conservation Area Boundary



5 Historic Events and Development

5.1 In the reign of Henry II the manor of Tawstock belonged to William Lord Brewer, and later in Henry's reign to Robert Earl of Leicester. Passing between families through marriage and inheritance the manor eventually came into the hands of Sir Christopher Wrey in the mid 1700's, and has been in the Wrey Family ever since, with the exception of some land in the settlement itself which was sold off by the estate in 1976. Even so the Wrey estate is still a major holder of land in the area surrounding the settlement today.

5.2 Evidence of earlier historical periods can be found in the fields surrounding Lake. Although there are no known excavated Roman sites in the immediate area a field name in the 1842 Tithe map apportionment of 'Pavings Field' may be evidence of Roman activity, in other sites around England field names with 'pavement' as a name theme are often associated with Roman roads.

5.3 Pill Farm to the east is mentioned in 1390 documentary sources as 'Pulle' and excavations here have discovered medieval pottery, with further medieval pottery assemblages found in the fields to the west.

5.4 Copper slag deposits and a copper axe head found in the fields to the north-east of the conservation area are signs of activity around Lake in prehistoric times, and show the area to have had some involvement in metal working.

5.5 The majority of the houses within Lake date from the 18th and early 19th Centuries, with buildings such as Long Meadow, White Gables, and Lower Field House being more recent additions to the settlement.

5.6 The Lake as it appears today was created when a series of former limestone quarries were flooded, being shown as 'Old Quarries' on the first series Ordnance Survey maps (Appendix 1). At this time (1880) there were two separate bodies of water with quarry workings between and around them, it is probable that these two smaller lakes or pools were the natural features which gave the settlement its name. Alternately it is possible that the origins of the name Lake can be found in a corruption of the Old English '*lacu*' meaning '*small stream*', as a stream does indeed run through the hamlet.

5.7 Exact dates for the activity of the quarries at Lake are not known. However it is clear that extraction at the site had ceased by the mid 19th century and the enlarged lake formed sometime after 1904.

6 Landscape and Setting

6.1 The special character of the Lake conservation area is linked inextricably to its landscape and setting. Despite being only 1.6km from the town centre of Barnstaple it maintains the appearance and setting of a rural hamlet. The settlement is based within an east-west valley within a slight depression in the landscape, with a stream running through the centre of the settlement carrying water into the River Taw to the east. This gives the hamlet a great sense of seclusion, and the hamlet is not visible within the landscape beyond.

P-02 View from the eastern edge of the conservation area looking East. This view reinforces the rural appearance of the landscape around Lake, which is so important to the character and setting of the conservation area



6.2 The major landscape feature of Lake is the large body of water to the South West of the settlement, enlarged when quarry workings here were flooded. The earthwork remains of a further two quarry sites can be seen nearby to the south west, although these are not as large and have not been flooded. Despite giving its name to the settlement there is no public access to the lake itself, and it cannot be seen from any vantage point within the conservation area due to vegetation cover and tall banks of earth surrounding the lake.

6.3 The buildings within the settlement are not of exceptional architectural quality, and the majority have undergone alterations over previous years removing much of their historic identity. Despite this they have value and merit as examples of local vernacular architecture, and together form a strong and coherent group, which has not been swamped by later development. The handful of larger and grander Georgian buildings in the hamlet show the social variances within late 18th century society as a

contrast to the unpretentious vernacular cottages. With Lake it is the scale of the settlement, its narrow winding streets, its mix of buildings on pavement edge and set back, often at angles to roads, and the open spaces between buildings as well as the relationship to the surrounding landscape, which define the special character and significance of the place.

6.4 To the east and west are open fields and gentle hills, atop some of which modern residential developments at the edge of Barnstaple can be seen. The apparently rural setting of Lake is an important part of its special identity and defines the character of the place. It is now relatively unusual to find such a rural settlement quite so close to the heart of a growing major town, most already having been swallowed up by urban sprawl.

6.5 Trees are numerous within the conservation area and often serve to limit views from the main north-south road. Gardens and houses are also shielded from view by trees and low garden walls, the lake being particularly well hidden from view by vegetation. This gives the village an even more secluded and rural feel, almost isolating it from the nearby urban environment.

6.6 At the northern end of the settlement several small lanes converge at a wider junction area, part of which is used for vehicular parking. Within this space is the village telephone box, which is an example of the jubilee kiosk as designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Although this particular example is not currently listed many others throughout the country are, due to their iconic appearance and increasing rarity.

6.7 Water forms a key feature of the setting of Lake, not only in the form of the lake itself which is an obvious key landscape feature, but also the small stream which runs through the conservation area from higher ground to the west to its meeting with the Taw to the east.

6.8 To the south of the settlement the major road enters a cutting and becomes heavily enclosed by the banks to either side as the ground rises for a short distance. Beyond the edge of the conservation area this route crosses a bridge over the North Devon Link Road, which highlights how well planned the development was as the link road has a minimal impact on the settlement, there is no visual impact and no noticeable noise issues.

P-03 The public telephone box in Lake, an iconic and instantly recognisable form.



6.9 Although this is a testament to the foresight of those planning the Link Road, it is regrettable that recent works within Barnstaple have resulted in Lake becoming a place very difficult to access by road. This makes the hamlet feel even more rural and isolated, by the lack of traffic passing through, the invisibility of the surrounding road network and the tranquil setting.

6.10 Lake was home to a small rural community. The main limiting factor to its further growth and development was the close proximity of the Market Town of Barnstaple. As such communal facilities such as markets were far too easily accessible for Lake to ever consider needing its own market. Barnstaple also attracted the youth of Lake who wished to further themselves in a trade while Lake would have held little attraction for the people of the town. Essentially a hamlet of farmer's cottages and quarry workers homes, to serve either private land or workers of the Wrey estate. A blacksmith provided the metalwork required for agriculture and mineral extraction and was perhaps the only resource to which the hamlet needed more immediate access than Barnstaple could supply. Today Lake is essentially a commuter village, offering residential accommodation but no services or employment opportunities of any kind, lacking even a village shop or post office. The only public amenity is the phone box located at the main road junction in the centre of the hamlet.

7 Views and Vistas

7.1 The narrow and winding roads within the conservation area limit internal views, indeed the only major internal views are from the main road to the north of Lake looking back down the hill into the settlement. A similar view is possible from the south but this is less impressive.

P-04 View into Lake from the north along the main road running from north to south. This view immediately sets the scene on the small rural nature of the conservation area



7.2 External views can be had for long distances to the East of the area from Ash's Cottage looking out over Pill Farm and its barns. Other key views are possible to the west from Long Meadow up the valley to the west and also to the north-west. Views to the south are limited by the nature of the terrain and the cutting for the main road to the south. Views to the north are similarly difficult as the ground slopes sharply upward at the northern edge of the settlement blocking northerly views from the core of the settlement. Northerly views are possible, but only from the far east and west edges of the conservation area.

7.3 Views are mainly of the green slopes of the valley side, already being somewhat disrupted by development on the tops of the slopes visible from the edges of lake. Should further development take place within the valley, either to the east or the west, the effect could be detrimental to the setting of the conservation area, and as such significant thought would need to be given to the design of any such development.

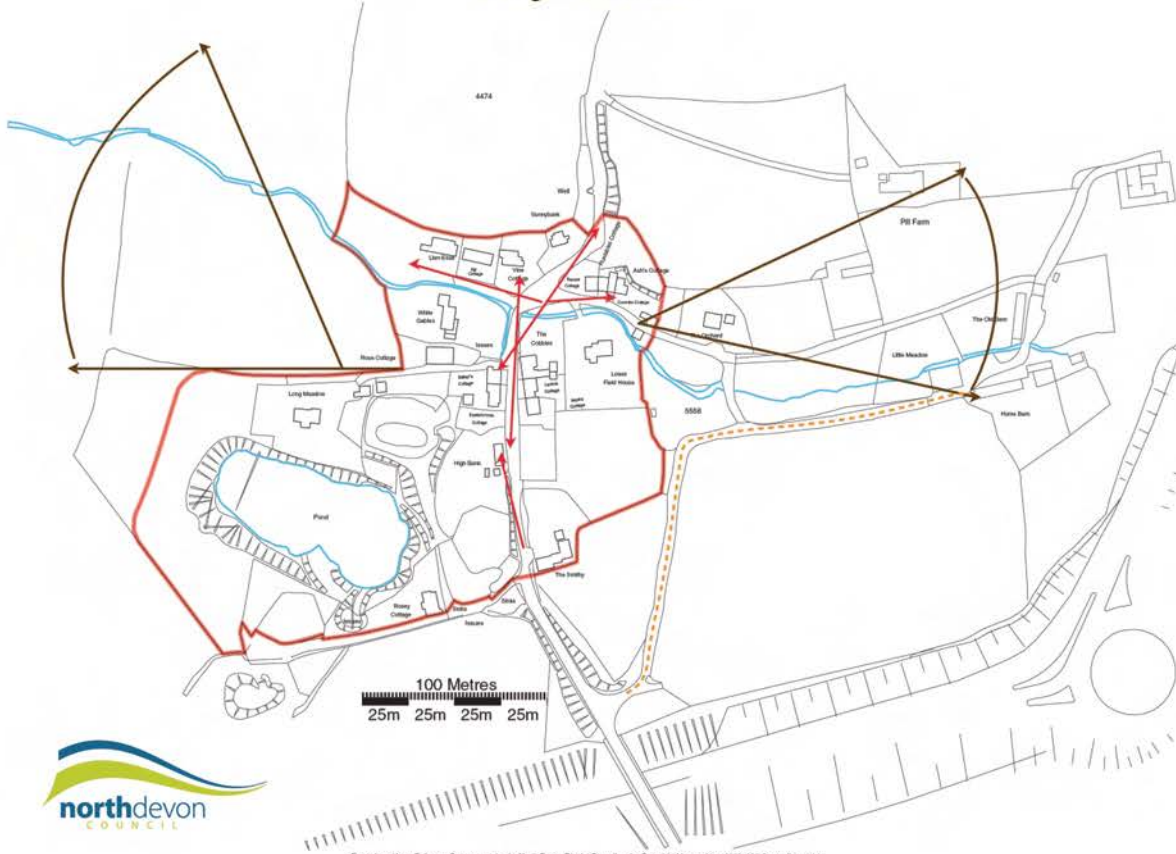
7.4 The large number of trees and hedges within the conservation area, lining the major routes, limit views and also serve to obscure the buildings. In other instances these trees provide a green backdrop, effectively framing the whitewashed buildings and making the streetscape appear more interesting thanks to the interplay of shapes and colours.

7.5 Views due south and due north are restricted by the undulating landscape, and good tree cover and as such views into the village are not possible along the two main approach routes for the same reasons.

P-05 View from the edge of the conservation area to the north, note the encroachment of buildings on the tops of the hills.



Key Views



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8 Architecture

8.1 The buildings within the conservation area are modest in scale – the majority having been farm worker’s cottages at sometime in the past, or dwellings for quarry workers. Some of the buildings within the conservation area are of an appearance that suggests they may be of cob construction, while the majority have been rendered to give them a more regular appearance, especially around window openings and doorways. A prime example of this can be seen in the cottages to the east where Russet Cottage and Coombe Cottage have had their window openings squared to give a regular appearance while Ash’s Cottage in the middle of the row has rather wavy and irregular edges to its window openings.

8.2 The conservation area is largely unaltered from the 19th Century, with the construction of Long Meadow, White Gables and Lower Field House being the only new additions to the Conservation Area. Conversely the only major loss has been the demolition of labourers’ cottages at the rear of what is now Bailey’s Cottage.

P-06 Georgian building at the north west edge of the conservation area, this building is grander and of larger scale than the predominant cottages in Lake.



8.3 Although most buildings along the north-south route through Lake are farm or quarry workers’ cottages of modest size and design, the buildings arranged to the North West are larger and grander detached dwellings of Georgian origin. These buildings possibly represent the homes of senior workers or foremen at the quarry site. These buildings represent the height of architecture within the conservation area, although today some are in need of maintenance.

8.4 Some buildings, for example Llan-Essa, have been extended so as to provide additional space. In this example the extension has been designed sympathetically although it does represent a doubling of the size of the building, which has altered its scale and proportions. The new section of this property retains windows of the same size and design as the older portion of the house. However the horizontal spacing between windows is shorter than on the older portion of the house and the symmetry of the frontage is further eroded as the main entrance and the steps leading up to it are now located far from the central axis. Nonetheless the extension is of high quality, and although not necessarily adding anything to the character of the conservation area nor does it detract from that character.

8.5 The names of some buildings represent aspects of their history, for example Pill Cottage was once in the same ownership as Pill Farm to the east of the conservation area, and The Smithy may well have been the blacksmith's shop of James Dun, whom the Devon Directory names as a Lake Blacksmith throughout the period from 1856 until 1902.

8.6 Unusually, within the conservation area, uPVC windows and doors are conspicuous only by their near absence, demonstrating that successive owners of property in Lake have taken pride in the traditional appearance of their village and not been tempted to install cheap, and visually unpleasant plastic fenestration.

8.7 Even the few relatively modern buildings within the Conservation Area, Lower Field House and White Gables have traditional styled timber windows. Clearly a sense of pride in the appearance of the settlement has played a part in the design of these new buildings which seek to harmonise with their surroundings.

P-07 The Smithy at the southern edge of the conservation area, remained in use by a blacksmith until at least 1902.



P-08 View along the main road through Lake, from the south looking north into the conservation area



8.8 The Smithy, to the south of the conservation area, is a pleasant arrangement of buildings on an 'L' shaped plan. The building is chiefly of a rough stone construction with some repairs in brick. The building has been rendered, however irregular portions of the wall have been left exposed, the reasoning behind this is unknown.

8.9 The conservation area also contains a Victorian post box, set into a wall just to the north of The Cobbles. The postal service in Britain was founded during the reign of Queen Victoria and as such this represents one of the earliest forms of post box and an unusual survival.

8.10 Boundary treatments are mainly in the form of high hedges, adding to the 'green' rural feel of the settlement. Trees and hedges help to enclose the lanes in and out of Lake giving them clear boundaries and 'tunnelling' views into and out of the settlement. These trees and hedges also serve to block views into the surrounding landscape.

8.11 The designation of a conservation area is not intended as a device for the protection of the natural landscape, only as a method of protecting structures and historical landscape features, such as ridge and furrow remains, earthworks etc. As a result it is not possible to include vast tracts of open ground within a conservation area as the designation is not designed for this purpose. The designation will, however, have an impact on proposals which affect the wider setting of the conservation area, requiring new developments to have regard to the special character of the conservation area and be sympathetic to that character.

9 Development Pressures

9.1 The most immediate threat to the character of Lake comes from options for an urban extension to Barnstaple which would impact heavily on Lake's apparently rural setting. As this conservation area derives much of its character from the setting and spacing of its buildings, rather than the special architectural qualities of the individual buildings, this is a major issue.

9.2 The quality and character of the immediate surroundings must be retained in order to protect the identity and character of Lake, as well as to ensure that the settlement survives as a separate entity, rather than simply becoming a part of Barnstaple.

9.3 The proximity of the cutting for the bypass to the south of the settlement has effectively prohibited future development to the immediate south of Lake. Barn conversions at Pill Farm to the east have had some success in retaining the rural feel of the area whilst providing new housing space. Development to increase the density of dwellings to the east is another potential solution to meeting the housing demands of Barnstaple, however this is one of the major views out of the conservation area and as such should be protected against large scale development in the future.

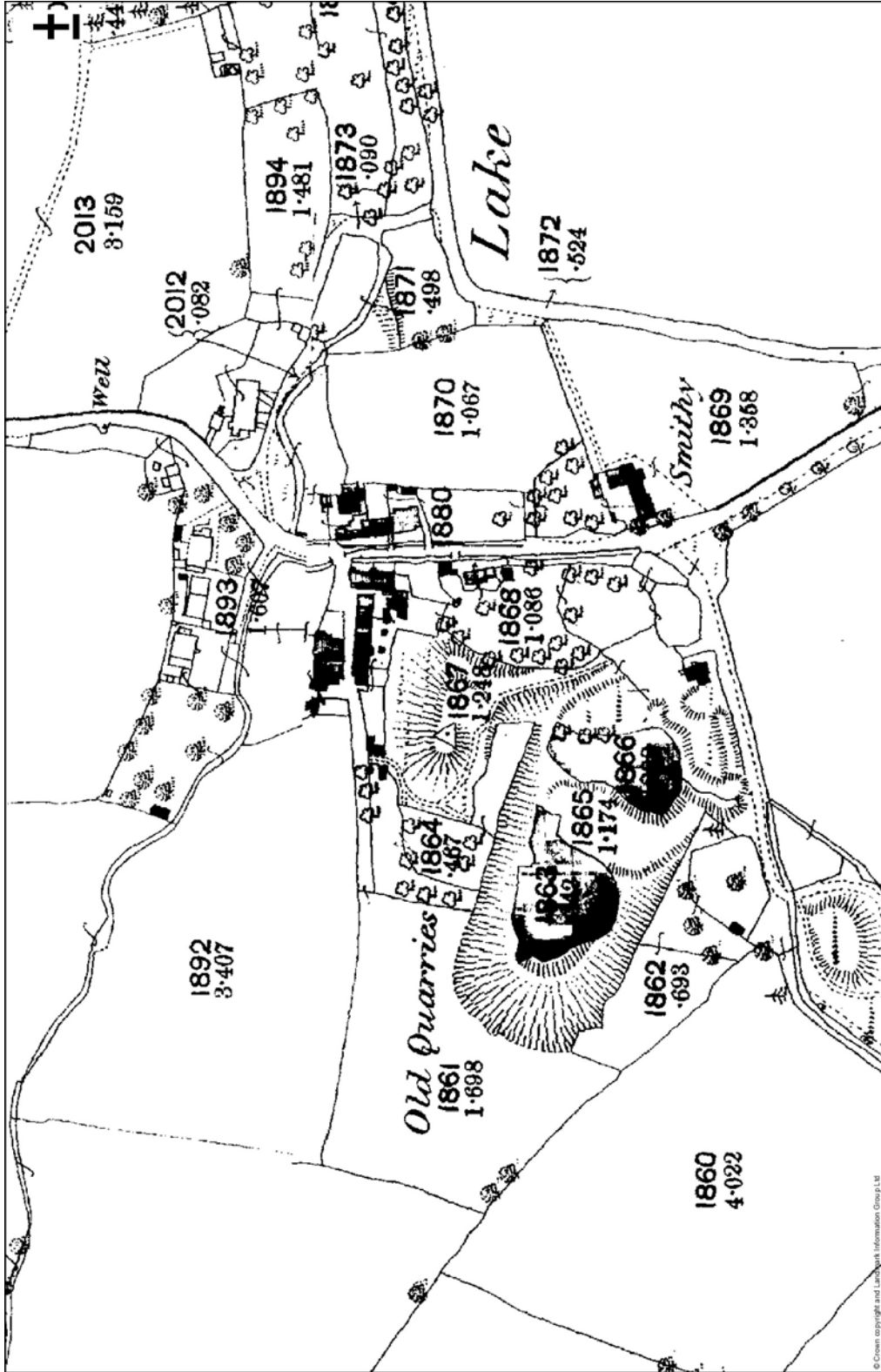
9.4 Despite the fact that Lake lacks grand, and high status buildings it does contain surviving examples of typical vernacular buildings from the 18th and early 19th centuries which have largely survived without significant additions, thus retaining their scale, and setting within their individual plots. The hamlet has escaped without major expansion and has thus kept the overall scale of the settlement and the buildings that it contains.

1 Appendix 1 - Historic Mapping

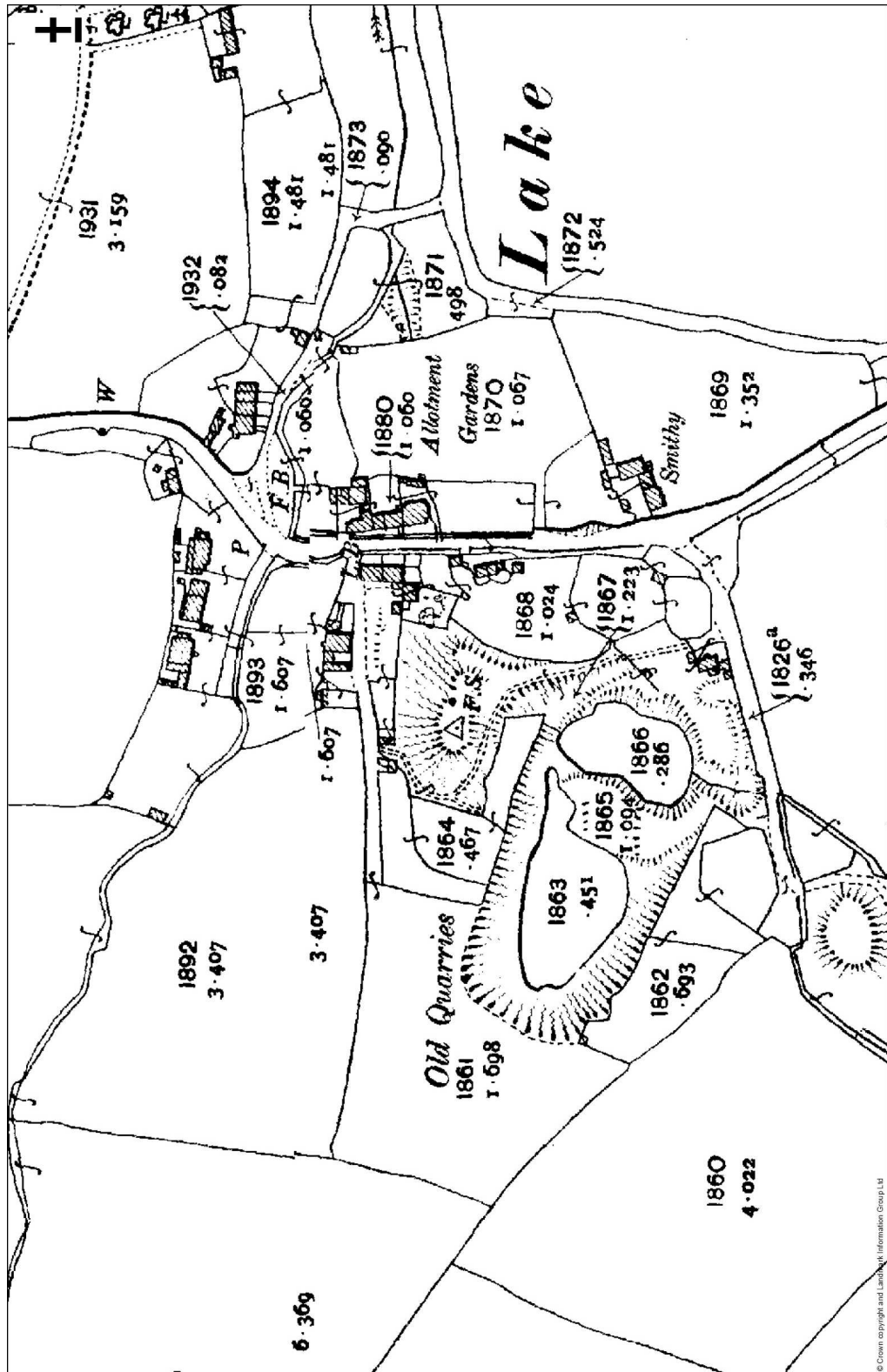
I – 1880's (1st Series) Ordinance Survey Map

II – 1904-06 Ordinance Survey Map

I - 1880's 1st Series OS Map



II - 1904/06 OS Map



2 Appendix 2 - Key To Maps

Key To Mapping

	Grade I Listed Building		Road & Building Plot Outline
	Grade II* Listed Building		Building Outline
	Grade II Listed Building		Existing Conservation Area Boundary
	Single Storey Building		Wall With Slate Hanging
	2 Storey Building		External Views
	3 Storey Building		Internal Views
	4+ Storey Building		Morte Slate Boundary Wall
	Area To Be Added To Conservation area		Morte Slate & White Spar Boundary Wall
	Area To Be Removed From Conservation Area		Focal Point Of Views
	Building With uPVC Windows		Prominent Bay Window
	Building With Timber Windows		Negative / Positive Public Seating
	Building With A Mix Of Windows		Positive / Negative Bollard
	Building With Rendered Walls		Decorated Barge Boards
	Building With Bare or Limewashed / Painted Walls		Negative / Positive Street Lighting
	Building With Slate Window Sills		Memorial - ie. War Memorial
	Public Green Space		Scheduled Ancient Monument
	Building In Poor Condition		Mosaic Feature
	Area For Potential Redevelopment		Important Tree / Tree With Tree Preservation Order
	Character Zone 1		Miscellaneous Feature (Labled)
	Character Zone 2		Miscellaneous Linear Feature (Labled)
	Character Zone 3		Railings As A Positive Streetscape Feature
	Character Zone 4		Railings As A Negative Streetscape Feature
	Character Zone 5		River / Aquatic Feature
			Focal Streetscape Feature
			Negative / Positive Signage Feature