

2018



## LEE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL





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## 1 - Introduction

- 1.1 Section 69 of the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990' states that "every local planning authority..."

(a) shall from time to time determine 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

(b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas

- 1.2 Section 69 of the Act also describes a Conservation Area as being:

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

- 1.3 Parts of the village of Lee were designated as a Conservation Area in July 1986. There has been no review of the adopted boundary since its initial designation. Therefore the adopted boundary is now 32 years old. Changes on the ground, as well as changes in understanding and appreciation of the historic environment have affected the degree to which the adopted boundary is now both relevant and appropriate.
- 1.4 In the early days of Conservation Area designation there was no requirement to publish documentation beyond a simple map showing the adopted boundary. The planning system has moved on, however, and it is now best practice to produce a Character Appraisal for each Conservation Area, which explains and describes the special character of the area which the designation seeks to protect. .
- 1.5 This appraisal has been undertaken following guidance issued by Historic England in their "Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management Advice Note 1" (2016). It is part of a long term programme to produce Appraisals for all of the Conservation Areas within North Devon District. The opportunity has also been taken to review the boundary of the Lee Conservation Area.
- 1.6 The purpose of this appraisal is to:
- Assess the character of Lee village and identify elements and features of special architectural and historic interest;
  - Assess the adopted boundary to determine whether it is appropriate for the best protection of that special character;
  - Outline the planning policies and controls which apply to a Conservation Area;

- Identify areas within the designation where enhancement would benefit the character of the Conservation Area.
- 1.7 As a result of the initial Appraisal process, a revised Conservation Area boundary was proposed, and this, together with the text of the draft Appraisal, went out for public consultation during September 2017. As a result of comments and feedback made during the consultation period, the boundary has been extended further, and various amendments to the text have been incorporated. The extended Conservation Area boundary was formally adopted by North Devon Council in xxxx

## 2 - Facts & Figures

- 2.1 The Conservation Area at Lee was formally adopted in July 1986 and as designated covered an area of 11 hectares (27.4 acres). The boundary review process has identified three areas for extension, and so the Adopted Conservation Area as of 2018 will cover an area of 20.8 hectares.
- 2.2 There are 8 buildings on the "List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest" (listed buildings) within the Lee Conservation Area, which are all listed at grade II.

Details of all Listed Buildings within the Lee Conservation Area and its revised boundaries are provided in Appendix 1 and Appendix 3.

- 2.3 The Conservation Area does not include any Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) within its boundaries, although there is a SAM located approximately 0.5km to the east, on the edge of the neighbouring hamlet of Lincombe. This is the standing stone to the south of Whitestone Farm which gives the farm its name. A further 3 standing stones, which are also Scheduled Ancient Monuments, are located nearby, to the west and south west of Damage Barton.
- 2.4 Most of Lee Conservation Area is situated within Ilfracombe Parish, though the southern part is located in neighbouring Mortehoe Parish.

### 3 - Why is the Lee Conservation Area Special?

- 3.1 Lee is a village which, more than most, is defined by its setting. The valley, or 'Combe', in which it is set descends from the east to the west towards the sea. The valley is narrow and steep at its head, becoming broader and shallower at the mouth of the bay. The surrounding coastline generally faces north, and so the sheltering landforms of the valley sides protect the village, creating a climate in which trees and plants flourish. Testament to this are the many fuchsia hedges which top the stone walls, giving rise to the name of 'Fuchsia Valley'.
- 3.2 The layout of the village is generally spacious, with an eclectic mix of interesting historic buildings set in individual and sometimes very large plots. Some of the older buildings display a strong vernacular character, but there are also good examples of prevailing national styles. The arts and crafts influence is particularly strong, and relates the village to other settlements further east, such as Lynton and Lynmouth, where the rugged and wild landscape would have had a similarly romantic appeal at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when this style became popular.
- 3.3 Although a sizeable village in area, the valley bottom particularly at its coastal end is sparsely developed, with a relatively small number of buildings set amongst rocks and trees. This gives the main road through the village a very rural appearance.
- 3.4 In Lee the sense of place is created almost as much by the natural green spaces of the valley, with its heavily wooded sides and the rocky outcrops, as it is by the built environment itself. The numerous open spaces – gardens, fields, woods and the beach - and scattered pattern of buildings create a typically low density of development, which gives Lee a special and distinctive character.



The use of local stone is most striking where buildings are seen in context with the rocks of the seaward cliffs. Here the colours and textures of the material used on the Old Mill help to blend the built with the natural environment

## 4 - Landscape, Geology & Setting

- 4.1 The settlement at Lee is both defined and confined by the steep natural valley which forms its setting. This runs east to west with the northern slopes forming a barrier between the valley and its parallel coastline to the north.
- 4.2 The village has its origins as a coastal fishing settlement, and like many other North Devon villages it has distinct harbour side and inland elements. Nearby Ilfracombe once followed this pattern, initially having an inland centre at the Parish Church and a fishing centre focused on the Harbour. The Conservation Area at Lee covers both areas, with the inland settlement focused around the Parish Church as in Ilfracombe.
- 4.3 The steep valley has had a turbulent geological past which is apparent at the beach, where great slabs of rock can be seen with their layers of sediment thrown upwards into near vertical bands in places. The bedrock is the same late Devonian slate and shale-stone as found elsewhere along the north coast of Devon.
- 4.4 As in neighbouring Ilfracombe, white spar occurs locally in bands within the bedrock, and is often found as small boulders on the beaches. It can be seen around the village used as an embellishment and decoration in copings on boundary walls and gate-piers.



Boundary and retaining walls constructed of vertical, horizontal or herringbone patterned local slate are a prominent feature seen throughout the valley; even the stream banks are lined with this work in places. This small but intricate example can be found at The Old Post Office and also includes decorative bands and copings of White Spar.

- 4.5 Historic landscape characterisation shows post-medieval field enclosures between the two areas of historic settlement centred on the church and the beach. The Conservation Area also encompasses a small area of re-planted ancient woodland and secondary woodland which extends to the south. To the north of the Conservation Area is a large area of medieval enclosures based on strip fields, while immediately to the east are modern enclosures. These may have been created by removing field boundaries from a system of medieval enclosures.
- 4.6 Water also makes a major contribution to the character of Lee; most notably the sea but also the stream which runs along the valley bottom. This is fed by the numerous springs and dripping wells which appear along the sides of the valley.
- 4.7 To the east of the village is a large area of former medieval strip fields referred to as Warcombe Lower Field and Warcombe Higher Field. These are shown on the 19th century Tithe map (See Appendix 2) and the lines of old field boundaries are still visible in modern aerial photos.
- 4.8 The whole of Lee is located within the boundaries of a number of landscape designations, including:
- North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
  - North Devon Heritage Coast.



There are a number of 'Dripping Wells' in and around the Conservation Area. They usually appear as small voids in retaining walls where water trickles and drips down a face of exposed bedrock



## 5 - Views & Vistas

- 5.1 The sides of the valley offer panoramic views across the village, visible from the network of lanes and paths to the north and south. From these routes there are many vantage points from which to look out over the roofs of the scattered houses, across the valley below and to the wooded slopes opposite. The houses of brick, render and stone are dotted around the slopes, half hidden by trees.
- 5.2 To the northwest the sea and the rocky outcrops which frame the stone and shingle beach become the focus of the view.



The view from the lane next to Drummets, out towards the western part of the Conservation Area.

- 5.3 Within the lower village a number of key buildings act as focal points in views across the valley. On the southern side, the rooftops and chimneys of Lee Manor stand out among the trees. This grand house was built in 1896 for the Squire, Charles Drake Cutcliffe, supposedly in jealousy of the newly built 'Southcliffe' opposite, which had been built in 1851 for the Reverend George Tugwell. Both of these substantial houses are prominent on opposing sides of the smaller valley which runs due south from the village, and their gardens and grounds blend into the surrounding woodland.



From the lower end of Home Lane both Southcliffe and Lee Manor can be seen together; Lee Manor is on the right with only its upper floor visible above trees, whilst Southcliffe is more prominent in its clearing to the lower left.

- 5.4 The former Lee Bay Hotel, at the seaward edge of the valley, is also prominent in views from the south. This is partly as a result of its comparatively large scale contrasting to surrounding smaller buildings, and partly due to the setting provided by its spacious gardens.
- 5.5 The open space between buildings is a strong characteristic of the village. Some of these spaces are gardens, some are fields, and the beach and sea also add to the sense of openness. Views of the northern extension to the Conservation Area, which are gained from the steep lane adjacent Cliffe, reveal the scattered pattern of development and the importance of trees and green spaces in shaping character.
- 5.6 In addition to this, human activity has had a significant impact upon the backdrop of the village. The farmed, and less densely wooded north side of the valley contrasts with the south side, where ornamental planting in gardens merges with the forestry beyond, giving the impression of an unbroken backdrop of trees.
- 5.7 The Parish Church is notable in close-range views within the upper valley. Although its lack of spire or tower limits its prominence in wider views, the small bell-cote makes it instantly recognisable as a place of worship. The Memorial Hall opposite is built in similar materials but in a different style. Together with the Old Schoolroom, the consistent materials used in these three buildings allow them to form a coherent group and focal point for the immediate area.



The character of Lee is dominated by open spaces, from the rocky beach, to open space running along the stream through the valley bottom, to the wooded and sparsely developed upper slopes which enclose it. Buildings typically appear as loose clusters scattered in the landscape.

## 6 - Historic Development

A series of Historic Maps showing the development of Lee over time is provided in Appendix 2.

- 6.1 The origins of Lee can be traced back to the medieval period, although prehistoric remains within the surrounding landscape and the attraction of a sheltered valley well populated with freshwater springs suggest that there is almost certainly a deeper history of human activity in the area.
- 6.2 There was no separate Manor of Lee at the time of Domesday Book in 1086. This mentions neighbouring Lincombe as the principal Manor in the area.
- 6.3 The first written reference to the village is in 1416 as 'Legh' where it was annotated to the "Exon", or Exeter, copy of Domesday Book. The village must have existed by this time to be included in what was essentially a tax registration document. The origin of the place-name is either a personal name or alternatively from 'Leigh' which is usually a place-name suffix indicating a forest clearing (such as in Chulmleigh or Umberleigh).
- 6.4 There are no buildings within the village today which date to the early medieval period, although some parts of the Grampus Inn are reputed locally to date to the 14th century. These older elements are not extensive, with the majority of the building having a late 16th or early 17th century character. The Grampus was a farmhouse (known as Warmcombe on the Tithe Map) until 1975 when it became a public house.
- 6.5 Owing to its later medieval origin Lee did not have a parish church, or even a parish of its own. Instead the area was split between the parishes of Ilfracombe and Mortehoe, with the major part being in Ilfracombe. In 1833 work began on the construction of a new church in the village as a 'chapel of ease' for some 200 people who lived in the wider area. Until this time, worship and religious ceremonies had to be practised at the church of the parish in which a family was resident. For the people of Lee, whether they found themselves in Mortehoe or in Ilfracombe, this involved a considerable journey. The construction of the chapel of ease gave an opportunity for people to worship together without having to travel to their parish church. The Church of St. Matthew was consecrated by the Bishop of Exeter in 1835 and the growth of the village eventually led to the creation of a new parish for Lee in 1869. Although an ecclesiastical parish was created for Lee, a civil one did not follow, and for this reason there is no Lee Parish Council.
- 6.6 The Church as it appears today was actually the result of a near total rebuilding in 1860 by architect John Hayward, who also designed the adjacent schoolroom (now the art centre). Despite its relatively recent origins, St. Matthew's Church actually contains much reused early 17th century woodwork which must have been salvaged from a substantial house, although it is not known exactly from where this historic joinery came.

- 6.7 The 19th century church was not the first in the village; Chapel Cottage occupies the site of a medieval chapel dedicated to St. Wardrede who was a Celtic saint. This earlier chapel was recorded at 'Legh' in 1416 and there is also a documentary reference to the Chapel of "St. Wardred" at Legh in 1439.
- 6.8 During the 18th and early 19th centuries Lee was a known landing place for smuggled spirits and other goods. The Gwythers, which is the large house by the footpath to the beach, was in its earlier life the village pub, and home to Hannibal Richards, an alleged smuggler who moved from Cornwall towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and is buried in Ilfracombe Churchyard.
- 6.9 Although surrounded by jagged cliffs, there is a safe route for boats into the bay. The ease of moving goods and materials by sea, compared with the difficulties caused (for both trade and the Revenue men) by the steep and winding roads and tracks was capitalised on for smuggling and for legitimate trade. The latter included the import of limestone and coal from South Wales. The limestone was burnt in the limekilns at the mouth of the bay, and the master lime burner (in the 1851 Census recorded as Phillip Richards, presumably the son of Hannibal (Ham)), lived in a large thatched house to the north, known as Drake's Cottage. This was demolished in 1870 when the original Manor House (later to become the Hotel) was built on the site by the Drake-Cutcliffe family. The lime kilns remained above ground to the south, until 1879 when they were largely demolished. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the remaining subterranean parts of the drying kilns were incorporated into a culvert. This takes the stream running through the valley bottom through the westernmost part of the gardens of the Lee Bay Hotel and under the road to the beach. The other import to be landed on the beach was coal, which gives Black Pit Cottage and Black Pit Gulley beneath their names.
- 6.10 The lime kilns and Drake's Cottage are both shown on the 1840 Tithe Map (see Appendix 2). The White House and Smugglers Cottage (which both originate in the 17<sup>th</sup> century) are also shown to the south of the Bay, whilst to the north the Mill is shown on the cliff edge. This would have been a very significant structure within the village, grinding the corn from surrounding farms such as Warmcombe (later The Grampus pub), Warcombe, and Manor Farm. These are the farms to which the medieval field systems referred to in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.7 relate, and which are clearly visible on the 1840 Tithe map. By the time of the 1880 OS map, the strips in Warcombe Lower Field have been amalgamated, and some of the other hedge boundaries removed. The water wheel which turned the mill stones was powered by a stream which ran along the valley bottom, feeding a mill pond just to the east of Drake's Cottage. From here the water went along the leat running to the north of the road, to the Mill. These features are shown on the 1880 OS Map in Appendix 2.
- 6.11 By the end of the 19th century tourism was becoming an increasingly important 'industry' in the area, with the picturesque Old Maids Cottage in the middle of the village becoming an early tourist attraction. The original Manor House (on the site of Drake's Cottage) at the mouth of the Bay stood in an enviable position in extensive landscaped grounds, but was not to suit the Drake Cutcliffe family for long. By 1897 it was being run as an Hotel, and had been extended to the east in a similar style. A further extension was added in the 1920s as the

popularity of the hotel grew - 'motor accommodation' was advertised for the newly mobile tourists. Part of the extension was carried out at the behest of Johnny Walker of whisky fame, who liked the hotel so much he had a suite of rooms built. He also funded the enlargement of the original golf course up on the hill to the south, above Damage Hue. The Hotel was extended again in the 1960s, when the new wing to the east was built, and remained popular until the late 1990s when its trade declined. The Hotel closed in 2005.

- 6.12 The Drake Cutcliffes did not move away, however, and in 1896 Charles Drake Cutcliffe selected a site for a new Manor, further up the valley, opposite Southcliffe (qv). The family were an important influence in the village in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and owned extensive lands and houses. These included the house known as Cliffe, just above Black Pit Gulley. In 1923 there was an auction of large parts of the Drake-Cutcliffe Estate, and Cliffe was Lot 16 (for Auction Map see Appendix 2). The house, and lots elsewhere in the village, were bought by the Pilley family who originated from Surrey. Cliffe stayed in that ownership until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Mrs Pilley died and much of her estate was left to the National Trust. The gardens at Cliffe are on the southern side of Warcombe Lane, and are terraced into the hillside. They include a croquet lawn, and many stone faced banks and walls built of the local slate in the arts and crafts style. A large Victorian glass house and potting shed stand to the west of the gardens.



Cliffe, with its half timbered gables, is prominent on the northern side of Warcombe Lane, overlooking the bay.



On the opposite side of the lane are the garden walls and gate, making good use of coursed local slate.

- 6.13 Looking at the 'inland' part of the village, the Tithe Map shows Old Maids Cottage, Rose Cottage, and a comparatively large building, possibly a barn, with a farmhouse adjacent, where The Grange and its Coach House now stand. The Grange was built for Robert Smith in around 1871, and was originally known as The Elms. An impressive gentleman's residence, it has bay windows on the garden front with a decorative verandah between. The Coach House to the rear is of a different style, and has recently been sensitively extended. Robert Smith was keen on encouraging tourists to the area, and carried out many enhancement works in the village including organising the construction of many of the herringbone slate walls, and their original planting with fuchsias. He also renovated the Old Post Office, and Old Maids Cottage, adding dormer windows serving first floor rooms and generally 'prettifying' the building. In 1888 Frederick Weatherley wrote a popular ballad called 'A Bird in the Hand' about the very choosy three old maids of Lee. The Cottage was filled with clothing and antiques that had reputedly been worn by them, and admission was charged to visit. Postcards of the picturesque building were produced and show a low thatched building, sheltered by the rock face behind. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Cottage had fallen into a poor condition, but was restored and extended around 2010.
- 6.14 The four terraced houses almost opposite Old Maids Cottage were built in pairs. The easternmost pair was first, then to the west, Fuchsia Valley House and Brookdale Villa were built together in the 1870s by two sisters. Their brother kept the land to the west in which he planted an orchard. Brookdale Villa is still owned by descendants of the original sisters.

- 6.15 The 19th century also saw the first of the houses on the hillside to the north-east of the bay being built, with Drummets and Fishermans Cottages appearing on the 1880 OS map. These were gradually joined in the 20th century by a scattering of other houses, the most recent of which have interesting designs using vernacular materials.
- 6.16 In the 1920s other houses were built in the village, such as Damage Hue, the bungalow at the far north of the extended Conservation Area, which was originally built as a holiday home. It later became the property of Mr White, of the R Whites Lemonade family.
- 6.17 The field adjacent the Memorial Hall is known as Pixie Meadow. This has been used for many years as a space for village celebrations and in 1952 two horse chestnut trees were planted there to mark the Coronation. Only one has survived. This field was originally owned by Mrs Pilley and it was left to the village on her death.
- 6.18 Today, many of the houses in the village are holiday homes and clearly tourism remains a significant factor in the character and life of the village, not least with the foot traffic brought to the village by the South West Coast Path.

## 7 - Archaeological Potential

- 7.1 Archaeological evidence indicating prehistoric activity is recorded in the wider landscape, principally in the form of the Scheduled standing stones to the east and west. Buried evidence for former buildings or structures is likely to be within the Conservation Area and these remains may be affected by any development within the historic core of the village.
- 7.2 A number of flint and stone tools have been found in and around Lee. Though unstratified surface finds, their character is consistent with Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age finds from other coastal sites in Devon and Cornwall, indicating that Lee was visited in prehistoric times after the last Ice Age.
- 7.3 There is also the potential for the survival of earlier historic building fabric hidden within apparently later structures. Alterations and extensions to existing properties may reveal evidence of this.



## 8 - Architectural Character

- 8.1 Lee possesses a great wealth of buildings and different architectural styles such as modest cottages dating back to the 17th century (Smugglers Cottage), Victorian gothic revival mansions (Southcliffe and Lee Manor), traditional farmsteads (The Grampus), late Georgian and early Victorian guesthouses, civic and memorial buildings (The Memorial Hall) and religious centres (the Parish Church and its former Schoolroom). This variety of styles and sizes is a defining aspect of the special character of the Conservation Area.
- 8.2 It is perhaps appropriate to start a consideration of the buildings in Lee Conservation Area with one of the first within the boundary which is encountered along the road into the village from the east; The Grange. The shallow pitched slate roofs and chimneys of the house are a prominent feature in views down towards the valley floor and mark the house out as having a distinct 'villa' style; the stables and coach house, although roofed in different materials, have a more traditional pitch and volume, and are easily read as ancillary buildings. The stone gate-piers and gates that lead to the main circular carriage drive to the front of the Grange are now almost hidden by vegetation on the roadside, nearly opposite the dripping well.
- 8.3 The houses to the north, in the extension to the Conservation Area, are typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The School house has a decorative timber porch and overhanging eaves, showing the influence of the arts and crafts style, whereas the houses further up the hill are of a more formal design, mainly symmetrical, with sash windows under slate roofs. This group of houses is unified by the presence of slate hanging on the walls – a traditional feature used in this locality to provide additional weather protection. Coursed local slate is also used to advantage to line the steep sides of the banks along the zig-zagging road.



Looking uphill towards The Haven, the coursed stone lining the bank is a strong and attractive feature



Slate hung walls are a distinctive and functional feature of the group of houses in the north-eastern part of the Conservation Area.



Looking uphill from Myrtle Cottage at slate hung walls and gables, and sash windows.

- 8.4 Moving back to the main road, 'Elmsgarth' may once have been a barn and stands at right angles to the road. This in itself is unusual, as most of the buildings in the village are aligned to follow the valley, east west rather than north south. Like so many of the modest houses of the valley it is built of the local shale stone in thin slabs. The corners are picked out with a few thicker blocks of the white spar stone commonly seen adorning garden walls. Its western extension follows the valley but is a newer addition. The west face of the older part is rendered, possibly as a protection against the prevailing wind, or equally possibly to present a more genteel and refined appearance to its main entrance. The render is inscribed with lines to mimic ashlar stonework of higher status.



Rose Cottage was probably more than one dwelling when first built, but today forms a single cottage at the eastern edge of the Conservation Area. The grey weathered thatch almost matches the colour of the local shale-stone used in its walls while timber cladding has been added at the west end for weather protection.

- 8.5 Next along the northern side of the road is Rose Cottage, which is the first thatched house to be encountered in the village today. The narrow gables and steep roof pitches seen on other houses, however, indicate that several more buildings around the village must have been thatched originally. Like its neighbour the house is built of the narrow local shale-stone, this time free of render adornment, although the western gable and a small section of the front wall adjoining have been timber clad, again possibly quite recently and as a protection against the weather. The garden walls here are of local stone, rendered in places, and also feature the first of the 'dripping wells' within the Conservation Area. This example is edged in blocks of white spar.

- 8.6 The Old Vicarage, just to the west, contrasts with the vernacular cottages. It was built at the end of the 19th century, next door to the Parish Church and shows the influence of the popular style of arts and crafts. It features contrasting red brick around the windows and corners, and extensive slate hanging on the front and side walls, incorporating decorative ‘fish scale’ slates. The slate roof is adorned with pierced red clay ridge tiles and crest finials at its gables. The windows also feature an unusual pattern of margin lights around every edge of the sashes, leaving a large plain glass pane in the centre of each. The house uses the topography well as, from directly in front, the slope of the valley sides hides the lower walls of the ground floor leaving only the slate hanging above visible.
- 8.7 Beyond the church the lane drops down to where, for the first time in the Conservation Area, development encloses the road on both sides. This cluster of buildings includes the Lee War Memorial Hall, which faces the Parish Church and the Old School on the opposite side of the road. All three are in exposed stone and form a striking group. The Church is designed in a gothic revival style often used for Victorian church buildings. The Schoolroom has a more domestic, tudoresque style, whilst the War Memorial Hall, built several decades later, shows the later arts and crafts style. The architectural adornments of these buildings, formed in imported lime and sandstone, give them a certain status, whilst the extensive use of local stone on the walls and arches of some windows, relates them well to other buildings and structures within the Conservation Area.



The Parish Church and art gallery in the former schoolroom to the left form a distinctive group, together with the Memorial Hall to the right.

- 8.8 The roofs of the Church and schoolroom are formed of two different colours of slate forming bands, which adds to the visual interest of the group. The central axial stack is a prominent feature on the schoolroom, and in the centre of the stack, the foundation stone is housed in a section of blind tracery. The Memorial Hall opposite also has dressed stone ornamentation around the windows, which have simple leaded lights. The roofs here are of plain slate, but interest is added by the slight 'kick' at the eaves, most noticeable on the bell-tower, which has lead hip rolls and a ball finial to the apex, echoing the ridge vent behind. The clock is provided in memory of Lieutenant Drake-Cutcliffe of the 1st Devon Regiment and the memorial slab on the hall is dedicated not just to the men of the village engaged in the First World War but "To Honour All Who Fought For Us". The village war memorial, in the form of a granite Celtic cross, stands between the church and the road. It commemorates the men of the parish and bears the names of the 16 men who did not return from the Great War, with a further 3 names added on the bottom plinth in memory of the men of the parish killed in the Second World War.
- 8.9 The aforementioned Old Maids Cottage is a good example of a vernacular stone and thatch building, and the recent alterations have been designed to respect and compliment the character of the house. The distinctive features such as the eyebrow dormers over leaded light windows, the decorative barge boards and the rustic timber framed porch have been retained. The herringbone pattern slate walling to the roadside has been re-instated, with some skill, and stands out as an attractive and distinctive roadside feature.



An historic photo of Old Maids Cottage, dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century before the building was extended upwards.



Old Maids Cottage, now repaired and refurbished. The decorative carved bargeboards have been retained and the whole building re-rendered and rethatched. In the garden attention has been paid to recreating the local tradition of herringbone slate walling.

- 8.10 Almost opposite Old Maids Cottage stands Tea Shop Cottage, probably dating from the late Victorian period. This building has, over time, been used as an hotel, a pub, and the village post office. It is distinguished by its decorative joinery, including a half timbered gable and ornamental porches. The gabled roofs have distinctive wide overhanging eaves. This area also includes good examples of street furniture such as the cast iron lampstands, some functioning as streetlights and one, probably older, bearing the fierce instruction 'No Standing Any Time'.
- 8.11 Beyond these buildings is the densest grouping of properties within the village, which includes the Old Post Office, the only terraced buildings in the village, and the Grampus Inn and former farmhouse buildings beyond.
- 8.12 The terraced houses are built in distinct pairs. To the west, Fuchsia Valley House and Brookdale Villa have two storey bays with hipped roofs and dormers above, and both are rendered. Their frontages are not identical, with Fuchsia Valley House having an extra set of windows, but they do both present a unified appearance which is unusual in Lee, and more typical of neighbouring urban Ilfracombe. The front garden of Brookdale Villa contains an old bore well that was sunk in the 1930s and was used until mains water came to the village just before the war.

- 8.13 The neighbouring attached pair to the east, which includes Cott Cottage, has a less restrained appearance, making good use of contrasting materials. The grey-blue local stone is used for the body of the walls, contained within red brick quoins and string courses. The central string course between the ground and first floor features additional shades of blue and buff tiles laid between two projecting red brick courses. This all frames a central dressed stone bay with further dressed stone featuring in the lintels of the windows and doors. The upper floor retains its timber sliding sashes, and each entrance door is again timber, four panelled with brass door furniture. The building has a small enclosed frontage which retains original cast iron railings.



The decorative Cott Cottage in the centre stands in contrast to the restrained appearance of its rendered neighbours on the right. The traditionally styled street lighting throughout the village is of generally good quality and has been selected sensitively.

- 8.14 The easternmost of this group (The Orchard) appears much older, with its gable facing the roadside. It is roughly finished local stone now heavily painted. This building appears on the 1840 Tithe Map of the village and was originally a barn, having been converted in the 1960s.

- 8.15 The Old Post Office stands at the fork between the main road through the village and the lane leading down to the Grampus. It was the village Post Office until about 1902, and closed shortly after Queen Victoria died. It provides a focal point, on a confined plot, and appears to have grown over the years to fill the space available. There was a building on the site in 1840, although this was probably smaller than that existing today. The rear part of the building features a date-stone inscribed 'P.F. 1706'. The building features a number of small lean-to extensions, and the dormer windows with Victorian mock-Tudor joinery in their small gables are probably later additions. There are many other Victorian features, such as the drop pendant in the apex of the barge boards and the joinery throughout. This consistent appearance helps to tie the various phases of the building together. The entire building is rendered, the majority with an attractive smooth render. The windows are a mixture of sashes and casements; the fine details of their joinery adding to the distinctive character of the building. The boundary walls at The Old Post Office are an outstanding feature, combining coursed local slate with decorative white spar copings.



The main road into the village forks with The Old Post Office occupying the corner plot between the two roads, and a focal position in views west along this part of the valley.

- 8.16 Further west we come to The Grampus Inn. Originally a farmhouse this building is now the village pub and has built a good reputation with tourists and hikers tackling the South West Coast Path. The building is reputed to date to the 14th century, and there may be some fragments of this date contained within the walls, but the outward appearance of the building is that of a modest 17th century dwelling. Built in local stone the building has since been covered over with paint, but the pattern of the stonework is visible beneath, giving the walls texture. The cat-slide roofs over the long lean-to rear extensions give an enclosed character to the lane, which becomes a footpath just to the west of The Grampus.



- 8.17 “Meadowside” is passed to the north, as the footpath approaches a small bridge and ford over the stream. This house appears once to have been at least two cottages, possibly more. The tall axial stacks on its frontage are relatively recent additions, lacking the bulk of more historic chimneys. This building does not appear on the 1840's Tithe Map, but does appear to be shown on the 1880's OS Map. There is an associated and partly derelict outbuilding by the narrow ford, a little further along the footpath, in exposed local stone with a rough slate roof laid in diminishing courses.
- 8.18 The ground opens out beyond the ford offering views over open fields to the north and south. Southcliffe and Lee Manor stand out through the trees on the valley slopes to the south, whilst a collection of altogether more modest rendered cottages and modern bungalows are aligned along the slopes to the north.
- 8.19 Southcliffe is a substantial gentleman's residence, built partly of local stone, with dressed stone mullion and transom windows and kneelers and quoins on the gables. It has bay windows topped with quatrefoil tracery, steeply pitched gabled dormers, and a small turret concealed at its southeast corner. The house overlooks the valley across its terraced gardens, making good use of local slate retaining walls in the arts and crafts tradition.



Southcliffe is one of the more architecturally ambitious properties in the Conservation Area, standing opposite the equally considered Lee Manor.

- 8.20 Lee Manor is of a similar style, on a perhaps slightly grander scale. The stonework appears to have been painted, which is unlikely to have been the original intention. This substantial house is less prominent than its neighbour across the valley, but its projecting gables, stacks and tower are visible against the surrounding woodland.

- 8.21 Moving further along the footpath towards the bay, Chapel Cottage appears within the open space to the north. The building has a double pile plan with a central valley gutter between parallel ranges of pitched roofs. The lower section of building nearest the footpath appears to be of an earlier date than the northern range, and features an enclosed central porch flanked by dressed stone windows with projecting hood moulds. Slate hanging protects the two eastern gables. The roof verges are raised, and the chimney stacks are brick, diagonally set. The porch has a decorative stone above the doorway featuring a lamb with flag, a symbol of Christianity. It is thought that the front part of the building at least was used as a Chapel of Ease during the 18th century if not many years before, and a Celtic headstone and possible holy well have been discovered in its grounds.



Chapel Cottage, with its distinctive diagonally set chimney stacks and slate hung gables, is an eye-catching historic building set within expanses of open space on the valley floor.

- 8.22 Almost opposite, just beyond a small stone footbridge over the stream, is The Gwythers, which fronts onto the path. This is a white rendered property of two storeys with cellars below. Its small private frontage is enclosed by tall slate walls capped in places with white spar. The oldest part of the building is the section which fronts its gable to the path (this is the only part of the building shown on the 1840 tithe map), while the ranges perpendicular to the path are later. The easternmost of these may have originally been used as stables and a coach-house.

- 8.23 Halfway between The Gwythers and the sea is a functional and utilitarian toilet block, in a somewhat unexpected location. The building does not appear on the early 1970's Ordnance Survey maps, but is perhaps only slightly more recent than their production. The building is rectangular and rendered with a slate roof and metal framed windows.
- 8.24 From here the footpath continues past the car park and on to the small cluster of dwellings around the bay. Wrinklewood, named after an area of woodland to the south side of the valley, is the first of these to appear to the right of the path. The house is a relatively modern dormer bungalow, with the upper floor entirely within the roof-space. The first floor windows on the bay side are a pair of shallow eyebrow dormers, incorporated into the shingle-clad roof slope. The frontage has a central bay formed of a forward facing gable which provides a focal feature. The walls are rendered, and the gardens terraced with local slate walls, although the boundary wall is of cut stone.
- 8.25 Beach House, Smugglers Cottage (Grade II Listed) and Shell Cottage (located between and slightly behind the other two houses) stand to the south of Wrinklewood, under the lee of the hillside. Beach House is a modern dormer bungalow, with rendered side walls and a main frontage in clad in random rubble stonework. The general colour of the stone is rather greener than the more muted grey of the local stone, and the block sizes are generally large. The general form of the house with its hipped gable roof reflects that of the two storey Shell Cottage behind.
- 8.26 Shell Cottage is a curiosity; a modest dwelling with a low slate roof and contrasting red clay ridge tiles. It is the walls, however, which stand out, appearing from a distance to be mottled grey render but resolving at close quarters into a multitude of seashells set into the front wall from which the property name derives. This decorative finish is framed between rusticated quoins to either side. The full-width enclosed veranda is a later addition, whilst the small balcony area cut into the roof is later still.

- 8.27 The last of the little group is Smugglers Cottage, the core of which dates to the 17th century. This building is grade II listed, and is noted to have been considerably enlarged in the 19th and 20th centuries – the front wing is Victorian. It has a date of 1627 over the central porch, which is flanked by a gabled dormer on either side. The massive stone chimney has two stone stacks set diagonally, reflecting those on Chapel Cottage. Attached to the west is an open fronted store, perhaps originally used for fishing equipment and boats, now used for selling ice-cream. The garden is enclosed with fine slate and white spar walls along its east side, with an eye-catching decorative archway standing at the boundary with Shell Cottage.



Smugglers Cottage dates, in part, to the 17th century.



The garden walls at Smugglers Cottage are an extravagant example of local stone walling, incorporating clay tile bands for reinforcement and decorative use of white spar.

8.28 The neighbouring property to the west is "White House", also grade II listed. It dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is constructed of local slate and spar stones, rendered and limewashed. The building was altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when its thatch was replaced by a slate roof of a shallower pitch. At the same time, the gabled range to the road, originally single storey, was increased in height to create an upper room. The area where the front yard meets the road is one of the few cobbled surfaces surviving in the village (another now lies beneath the concrete at the top of the south slipway). The house is also the only one in the village possessing horizontally sliding Yorkshire sash windows, an unusual feature in North Devon.



The Old Corn Mill stands at the edge of the bay overlooking the beach. Its oldest parts date to the 16th century, although there may be been an earlier mill on the same site.

8.29 Climbing the hill to the west, away from this group, is the last group of houses in the Conservation Area. These include Cliffe, the original part of which is at the eastern end of the site, and is another building to reflect the arts and crafts style, with its half timbered gables and bracketed porch roof, formed of unusually heavy slates. Cliffe has been extended to the rear in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and though the extension incorporates large areas of glazing on the seaward side, efforts have been made to tie the extension into the local vernacular on the land ward side. The walled gardens to Cliffe, on the opposite side of the road, show extensive and very characterful use of coursed local slate walling. Quarry Cottage and Damage Hue, to the west, are both single storey buildings dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, low under natural slate roofs and both surrounded by large gardens with mature trees.

- 8.30 At the northern end of the bay is the former corn mill, one of several watermills in Devon to occupy a coastal location. The building possibly dates to the late 16th century but it has been much altered. The waterwheel, which was removed more than 100 years ago was on the seaward side of the house. The walls are constructed of exposed local slate, but some of the arches over the ground floor windows have been rendered and set with sea-shells as a decorative feature. There is a massive axial chimney stack on its frontage indicating a 17th century date.
- 8.31 Just inland from the Old Mill stands the Lee Bay Hotel, which closed in 2005 and has been vacant ever since. The core of the Hotel has retained its arts and crafts style, with decorative fish scale slate hanging and projecting gables on the western end, overlooking the bay. The north elevation runs tight against the road edge, providing a strong sense of enclosure, with the decorative half timbered gables and stone mouldings around the windows and doors adding architectural interest. Local stone is used in the walling and this, together with the relatively low height of the roadside elevations, helps to root this large building within the village context. The eastern 1960's extension and the small flat roofed extension to the far west are less positive contributions to the building, jarring with the prevailing character of the Conservation Area. The Hotel is a focal point in views across the valley from the south; its extensive grounds providing a sense of space which matches the scale of the hotel. At the seaward end of the hotel, adjacent to the bay, an enclosed seating area has been provided. This is constructed of stone, which to a degree helps it to blend in with the rocks of the bay, and the stone walls of the Old Mill adjacent, despite the extensive use of crazy paving.
- 8.32 Returning inland, heading east, the main road has the character of a country lane, with a steep bank to the north, and the ground falling away to the south; both sides lined with hedges and gateways allowing occasional views over the narrowing valley. It is some distance before the next houses on the south side of the road become apparent. Broadlands is a simple, modest dormer bungalow, and Wayside, beyond, has a distinctive red clay tile hipped roof, incorporating decorative shaped tiles in patterned bands and a short ridge of decorative crest tiles. A terracotta plate gives the house name and the date 1889. Wayside has recently been extended, with the clay tiles being re-used and augmented, to great effect.
- 8.33 To the north of the main road the land slopes steeply upwards, with Home Lane running in a loop from the rear of the Lee Bay Hotel, straight up the hill, along the ridge and dropping down to the south to join the main road close to Wayside. The houses in this area are of mixed ages and styles, with Drummets and Fisherman's Cottage at the top being the oldest Victorian houses, relatively plain under slate roofs, both facing west. The other houses date from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and their eclectic mix of styles reflects the varying character of buildings within the main village.

## 9 – Street Furniture

9.1 Lee is a low density rural village, and as such, does not include a great deal of street furniture or municipal structures, but there are some distinctive elements which are worth mentioning. There are several cast iron lampstands sited at intervals along the main road, which add great character, and also the directional road signs have a similar design. The dripping wells, sited at intervals along the roadside add variety, sound, and a reminder of the importance and prevalence of running water, as does the bridge and little ford over the stream along the path by the Grampus. The sea wall is a solid and very necessary structure, offering protection to the road behind, but still low enough to allow views onto the beach.



Apparently a relatively recent addition, this sign nonetheless adds a touch of humour to the modern streetscape.

## 10 – Managing Change in the Conservation Area

- 10.1 Designation as a Conservation Area is intended to preserve or enhance the special architectural character or appearance of the village. This is achieved by considering any planning applications either in or affecting the setting of the Conservation Area in this light, and by additional planning controls. The latter include restrictions on permitted development rights, the need for consent for demolition of buildings over 115 cubic metres, and the need to give prior notice to the local authority before undertaking works to lop, top or fell trees.
- 10.2 Perhaps the biggest threat facing Conservation Areas nation-wide is that of alterations carried out to dwelling houses which do not need planning permission as a result of the General Permitted Development Order 2015. Such alterations may have only a minor impact on the character of a single building but the combined effect of them being undertaken to many properties can result in significant cumulative harm to the historic and architectural character of the Conservation Area. Recently the most prevalent threat has come from the removal of timber sashes and casements in favour of the installation of uPVC windows. Where control exists, the preference will be for the retention of traditional materials and styles of window on traditional buildings.
- 10.3 As of 2008 the provision of some renewable energy installations can be, under certain circumstances, permitted development, for which planning permission is not required. The rules which determine whether a renewable energy installation is permitted development depend on its position on a building, as well as the height and overall area of ground mounted installations. As such advice should be sought from the planning office where such installations are proposed. In Lee the elevated valley sides mean that the rear facing roof slopes of many properties are equally as prominent as the front facing ones, making the discreet and sensitive location of installations such as solar PV panels more challenging.
- 10.4 As with all coastal valleys the risk of flooding both from surface water run-off, fluvial and tidal flooding is a major issue. It is a risk that may well be exacerbated in future as a result of ongoing climate change. The need to maintain the character of the Conservation Area should be factored into any designs for future flood prevention works.
- 10.5 In common with many other coastal villages, property values in Lee are relatively high, and there is often pressure to extend buildings significantly, or build new dwellings in gardens or other open spaces, so as to maximise plot values. Whilst modest domestic extensions can often be acceptable (if they are subservient to the host dwelling in terms of size and massing, and reflect the existing materials and designs), the creation of completely new dwellings in gardens, and the addition of over-large extensions to houses can damage the character of the village. The open spaces and typically large undeveloped garden areas in Lee form a significant part of the special character of the village and are vulnerable to development pressures.



## Lee Bay Hotel

- 10.6 The Lee Bay Hotel has been disused since it ceased trading in 2005 and its present dilapidated condition, together with the overgrown gardens, do not reflect the former status of the Hotel, or the well maintained character of buildings elsewhere.
- 10.7 There have been various proposals to develop the site, some of which retained parts of the original hotel, and some which proposed complete demolition. The proposals have all included elements of new build within the grounds.
- 10.8 It is generally accepted that the eastern end of the existing hotel is not of sufficient architectural quality or interest to merit retention. The core building at the western end does, however, retain many significant arts and crafts features, and makes good use of local materials. Because of this, it complements and ties in well with the general character of the Lee Conservation Area. It is likely, therefore, that there is merit in retaining the western core of the building, whilst exploring the scope for new buildings to the east.
- 10.9 There are opportunities for enhancement in the areas immediately adjacent to the building, particularly the stone paved area close to the beach. Here the arts and crafts style use of local stone features could be used to enhance both the public realm and the hotel facilities. The opportunity to remove the crude flat roofed extension on the north-west end of the building could also be taken, which would again enhance both the building itself and the experience of the visitor as the panorama of Old Mill, beach and gabled end of the Hotel reveals itself on emerging from the lane.
- 10.10 The valley is relatively open and views across it are a key feature. Any new development within the grounds of the hotel should seek to retain the sense of open space, and follow the dispersed settlement pattern prevalent within the rest of the Conservation Area. The location of the current buildings on the site could provide a guide to the siting of new build, if part of the hotel is demolished.
- 10.11 In addition to maintaining the contribution made to character by open space, any new development should also seek to reinforce the character of the Conservation Area by use of local, traditional materials and appropriate detailing. It is particularly important to use building forms that reflect the eclectic and varied building styles present within the village. The density of development will need to reflect that of the rest of the village, which is typically low.

10.12 Given the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area, any development schemes for the Lee Bay Hotel should seek to:

- Maintain a robust sense of enclosure along the northeast side of the site along the main road;
- Maintain a varied roof-scape, as this will be prominent from elevated viewpoints around the village – mixtures of roof-forms and junctions including steps in both eaves and ridge could be used to add interest;
- Attain a high architectural standard which takes design cues from prevalent local styles where possible;
- Reflect the varied and eclectic forms of development within the village, avoiding standard urban designs with no local distinctiveness;
- Provide publically accessible, and appropriately landscaped open space overlooking the beach frontage;
- Enhance, through water and landscape design, the condition of the valley setting;
- Maintain open elements within the site to avoid harm to the significant contribution undeveloped spaces make to local character.

## Acknowledgements and Bibliography

During the public consultation that was carried out as part of the Appraisal process, many Lee residents came forwards with ideas and information. Among these, Alan Bannister's guidebook prepared for the holiday visitors to Brookdale House was very informative, and information provided by Dr Gwyn Humphries at Cliffe has also been useful. The Historic Buildings Reports prepared to support planning applications at the Lee Bay Hotel (McLaughlin Ross Ilp 2015) and Old Maids Cottage (R.W Parker and A. G. Collings 2009) also provided useful information on the respective buildings.

Useful information is also provided by Historic England in "Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management – Advice Note 1" 2016

## Appendix 1 - List of Listed Buildings Within Lee Conservation Area

<i>Building</i>	<i>Listing Grade</i>
<b>The Old Schoolroom</b>	II
<b>Church of St Matthew</b>	II
<b>Boundary Wall and Gate Piers to The Old Schoolroom and Church of St Matthew</b>	II
<b>The Old Mill</b>	II
<b>Smugglers Cottage</b>	II
<b>Old Maids Cottage</b>	II
<b>The White House</b>	II
<b>Highfield; including Wall with 3 Bee Boles to Front Garden</b>	II

## Appendix 2 - Historic Mapping

1 - Tithe Map c. 1840

2 - 1st Series Ordnance Survey Map c. 1880

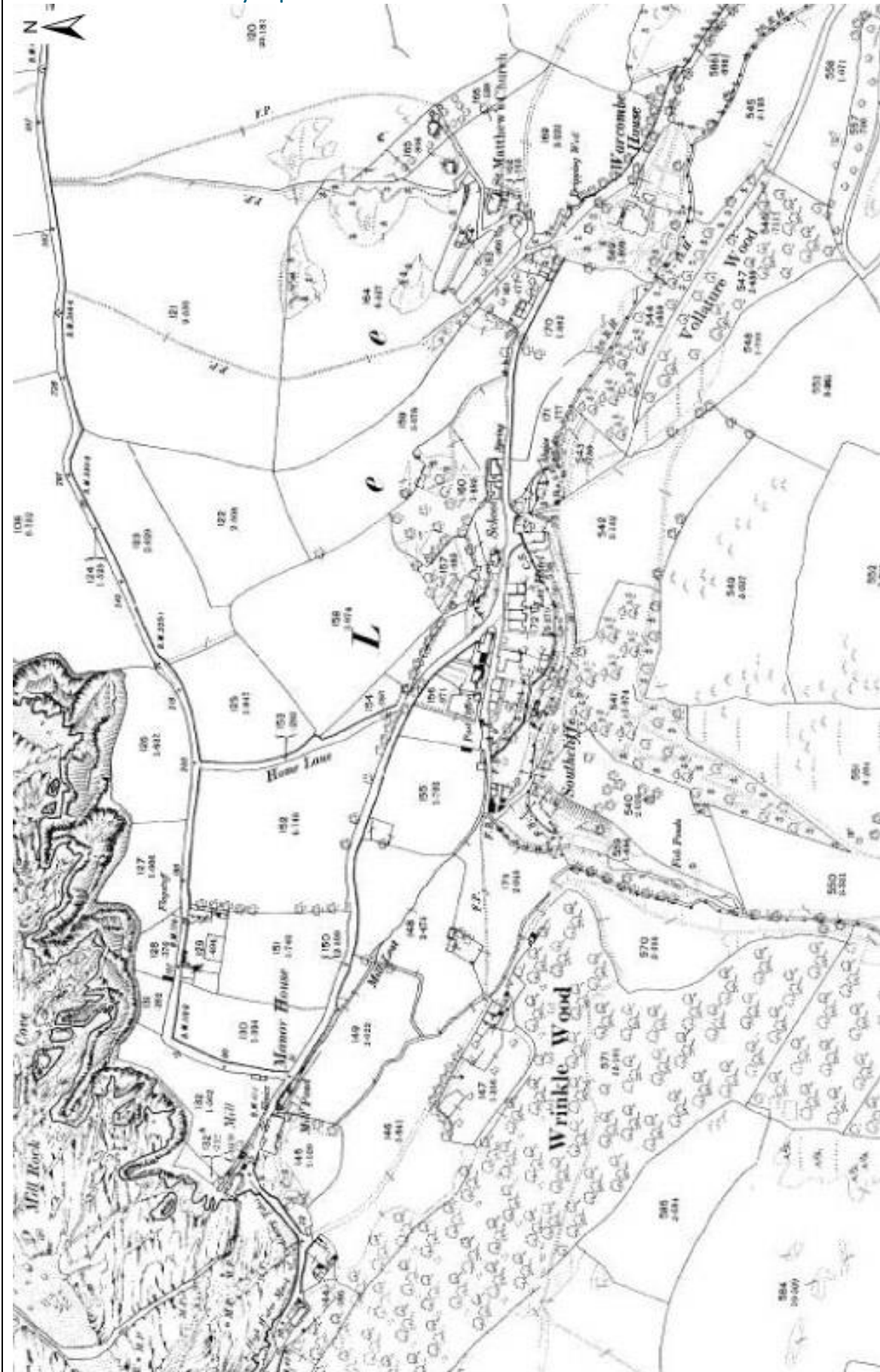
3 - 2nd Series Ordnance Survey Map c. 1915

4 – Extract from the Map of Lots from the Auction of Drake-Cutcliffe lands in Lee, held in 1923 (by kind permission of Dr Gwyn Humphries)

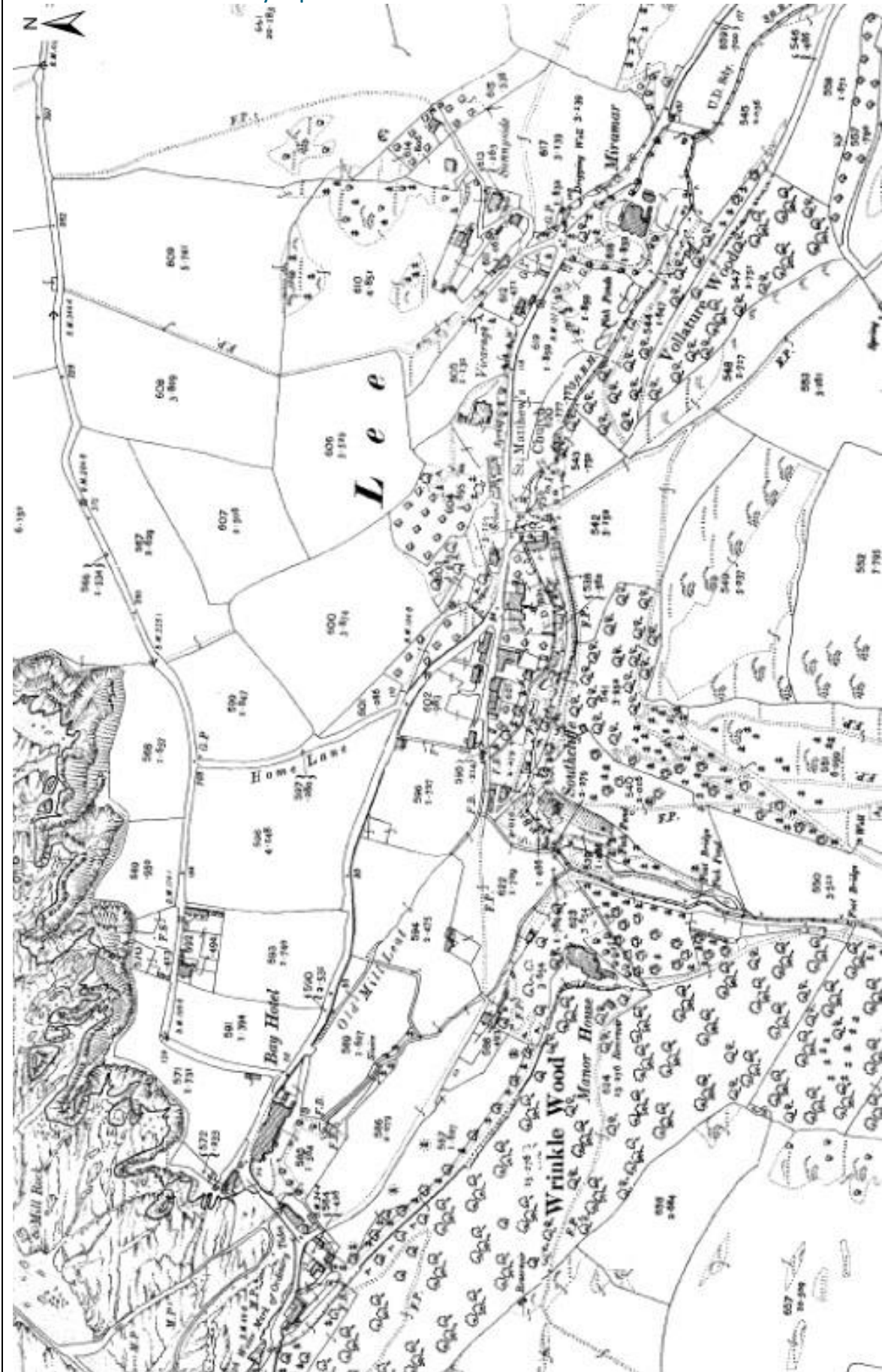
1 - Tithe Map c 1840



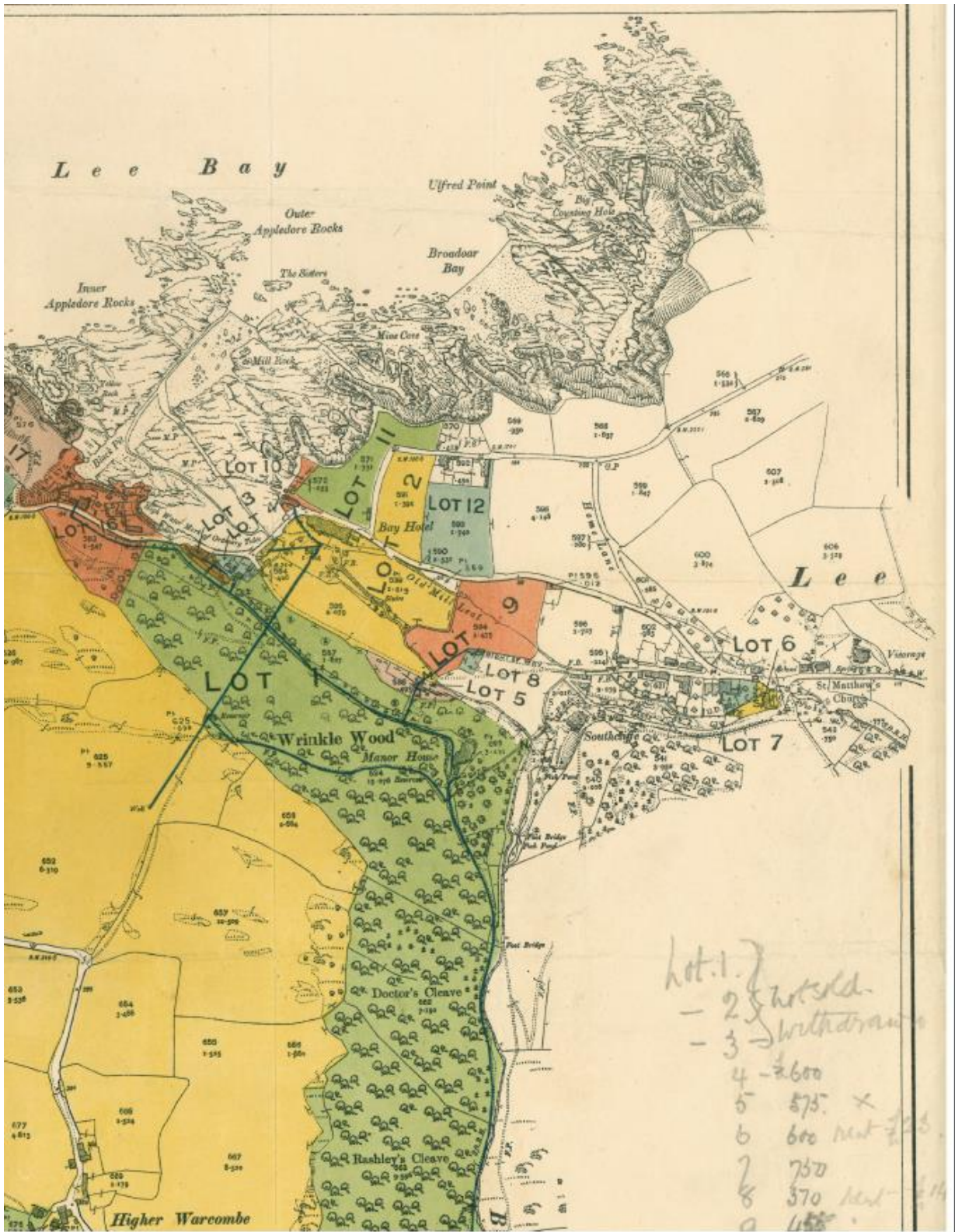
2 - First Series Ordnance Survey Map c. 1880



3 - Second Series Ordnance Survey Map c. 1915



Extract from Auction Map, 1923 (by kind permission of Dr G Humphries)





Appendix 3

1. Lee Conservation Area including extensions and listed buildings, adopted 2018
2. Lee Conservation Area as first designated in 1986



2 – Lee Conservation Area as first designated in 1986

