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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 41 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 Braunton 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.
- 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.
- Outline the planning policies and controls that apply to the Conservation Area.
- 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 Braunton Conservation Area was initiated in November 2010.
- The first designation of land found within the present conservation area boundary was in 1973.
- The boundary had its first changes since the 1973 designation in May 2011.
- Consultation revealed a desire to have the Great Field given official recognition through a possible future conservation area designation.

A Map showing the 1973 Designation can be found in Appendix 3(III)

3 Facts & Figures

3.1 The Braunton Conservation Area is the 3rd largest in the district with a total size of about 23 hectares, or 56.8 acres. This represents an increase in size of 380% from its original designation (6 hectares, 14.8 acres) in the early 1970's.

3.2 Of the buildings within the area there are 37 included on the List of buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Listed Buildings).

Listing Grade	Number of Listed Buildings (Prior to 2011 Extensions)	Number of Listed Buildings
I	1	1
II*	2	3
II	21	33

3.3 There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the conservation area, although The Castle at Knowle lies just 900 metres to the North of the conservation area.

The full list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest located within the current conservation area boundary can be found in Appendix 1 and these buildings are highlighted on a map in Appendix 3(II).

4 History

4.1 The early origins of Braunton are somewhat unclear and have become more legend than history over the years.

4.2 It is said that the village church of St. Brannock was actually founded by the saint himself after he left Wales and crossed the Bristol Channel to land near Saunton Sands. Unfortunately the exact date of this event is unclear and contested. Some historians suggest 581AD yet other sources suggest he lived '300 years after Christ'. Equally there is no reliable, explicit, written reference to a church in Braunton until the reign of King Henry I (1068-1135) although land at Braunton had been granted to the Abbot of Glastonbury in 857, presumably indicating that there was a religious community in Braunton at this time. In the late 900's the village and its manor found itself back in direct royal ownership.

4.3 Whenever its true origins, Braunton is certainly an ancient settlement dating back to the Saxon period at the very least. The village is mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) when it belonged to the Crown and was held by 'Baldwin the Sheriff'. At this point it had a population of around 75, including 40 villagers and 30 smallholders. Interestingly the manor is also recorded as having 100 sheep, demonstrating the significance of large scale farming even at this stage. Additionally a priest held some land in the village as alms from the King (to provide himself with an income and food), again demonstrating implicitly that there was a church in the village by 1066.

4.4 The oldest portions of St. Brannock's church as it stands today date to the Norman period, particularly parts of the south tower. Any earlier church in the village would be likely to have stood on the same site and would probably have been built of timber not stone. As such, little evidence is likely to survive and none has yet been found.

4.5 Throughout this early period most settlements in England operated local farming based on a three field system, with three vast fields outside the settlement, divided into strips, farmed by the inhabitants and with one field being left fallow in any one year. The system was inefficient but fair. Each villager would be given several small strips of land in different parts of the fields to ensure that everyone had some good land and some poor land to farm. However this meant much time was spent travelling between the various strips that a villager farmed.

4.6 The search for efficiency, as well as the temptation for landowners to enclose land for sheep farming that could raise more income than renting land to village farmers, led to the end of the three field system elsewhere. The Braunton Great Field is a remarkable relic of this age, its existence contributed to the pattern of farms within the core of the village, some of which were still active farms until very recently. Far fewer farmers use the field now, and many have amalgamated scattered strips into larger plots but the field retains many of the earthworks which separated the old strips.

4.7 The holding of the manor changed several times through the years, and in 1229 Henry III gave a significant part of the manor to the eastern side of the village (amounting to 2/3 of the parish) to the Abbot of Cleeve Abbey (nr. Minehead in Somerset). Through subdivision the manor eventually became three, known as Braunton Dean (which included the church and land north including Knowle), Braunton Abbots (equating to the land given to the Abbot of Cleeve Abbey in 1229), and Braunton Gorges (with Broadgate in East Street as its Manor House).

4.8 The early established layout of the village centred on two main streets, one to the east (made up of what is now Church Street, East Street and South Street) and another to the west (Chapel Street, North Street - possibly continuing on through The Butts and joining the eastern street to the north-west of the church). The western street is shown on older maps with the name '*West Street*'. The road connecting the village to Barnstaple followed roughly the route of Caen Street, Heanton Street and Lower Park Road. This route crossed the two main streets at West Cross (Caen Street / North Street junction) and The Square (or East Cross).

4.9 Throughout the middle ages the practice of archery was a legal requirement, with every able man supposedly required to practise on Sunday morning at the 'butts' in order to ensure a trained and able body of archers for the army. It is suggested that 'The Butts' as a lane refers to an area where archery practice was held, however the term has a second meaning referring to a strip of land between two sets of boundaries and the land here would fulfil that meaning also.

4.10 Above Braunton beyond the end of Frog Lane stands the remains of Braunton Beacon, part of a chain of beacon towers which would have been lit to signal major events, such as the arrival of the Spanish Armada. The next beacons in the chain were Codden Hill and Hewish Down.

4.11 Until the early 19th Century the village was bounded to the south and south-west by extensive salt marshes. In 1808 the area was assessed by the Board of Agriculture and the potential for draining the marsh was established. James Green, Canal Engineer, was appointed as engineer for the drainage scheme and an Act of Parliament for the project was granted in May 1811. Although the scheme called for the formation of a canal this element was omitted. Work on the Canal, and further drainage works, were eventually carried out in the 1850's and were financed chiefly by William Williams. He also had the area of Horsey Island enclosed and drained even though initial survey from 1808 had indicated it would be impractical; indeed storms in 1910 damaged the embankments and re-flooded the island. In this period the quay at Velator was also rebuilt, again financed by Mr. William Williams who had brought the Bassett Estate in 1852.

4.12 The quay at Velator is an old and established quay, however it has been shown that it is not old enough to have been granted as a result of action in repelling the Spanish Armada. The quay was busy with goods such as coal from Cardiff and bricks

from Bridgwater being brought in while local potatoes, apples and gravel ballast were shipped out. The quay went into decline following a brief resurgence during the First World War.

4.13 Other local industries included basket making, for which the village earned a reputation. Two basket factories existed in the village, the first was in East Street and operated by 'Blackwell & Son', which started operations in 1890. The former Cater Basket Factory building still stands at the top of East Street having avoided demolition for road widening in the 1980's.

4.14 Challoners School was built in 1854 and is now the village fire station. It was built through money raised by the Trustees of Braunton as a free school. Funds dwindled, however, and eventually a fee started to be charged. Local street names such as Cavie Road and Cavie Crescent remember the first headmaster of the school from 1890-1925, a Mr. J.L. 'Cavie' Ralph.

4.15 The opening of the Barnstaple to Ilfracombe railway line in 1874 brought the railway and a station to Braunton, with Braunton Station being the largest of the 3 stations between Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. This also led to the increase in the number of hotels in the village, for example the red brick corner building on Caen Street (now CJ's Cafe) was built as 'Lakes Private Hotel' and was ideally located for rail travellers. In 1889 the single track line was upgraded to double track due to its unexpected popularity. Following the Second World War passenger numbers fell as private car ownership rose, and as a result the line was eventually closed in 1970. A final inspection train ran the length of the line in 1975 with a view to possible reinstatement of some services, however this came to nothing. The line now forms part of the Tarka Trail footpath and cycle route which was established in 1987.

4.16 The most significant change to the appearance of the village in recent times was the widening of the main route from Barnstaple in the 1930's. The widening scheme gave the character of the main street that we see today. It also resulted in the string of development which flanks the road and relegated South Street to access and a delivery route. It also resulted in the buildings, many with art deco design elements, which front Exeter Road today.

4.17 The post war period has seen some substantial growth and expansion for Braunton. This expansion has mainly been to the east and west parallel to the estuary. The areas of Saunton Park and housing to the South of Lower Park Road are examples of this more recent growth.

4.18 With a population of about 7500 Braunton has a good claim to being the largest village within the UK. The population grew rapidly during the 20th century with just 2090 inhabitants in 1901.

5 Key Views

5.1 Many of Braunton's streets provide interesting and varied views along their length. Most are not perfectly straight; in many cases the street varies in width considerably, with short rows of semi-detached and terraced properties interspersed with gaps, detached properties, driveways and alleyways. This great variety within the streets of the village is part of the charm and character of Braunton and creates a rhythm to the streets.

The Church dominates the views over the village from Rock Hill, with the open green landscape of the hills to the north.



5.2 Perhaps the best views are those from the high ground. The top of Rock Hill provides splendid views down over almost the entire village, with the estuary and Braunton Burrows visible beyond to south and the banks of green hills to the North and North East. Between the edge of the village and the beginning of the Burrows the vast open expanse of the Great Field stands out, undivided by hedges and walls. The tower of St. Brannocks church stands over the surrounding houses but fails to break the horizon of the opposite side of the valley. Instead the tiny ruin of St. Michael's Chapel stands out at the crest of one of the green hills to the North East.

5.3 Although individual buildings around Rock Hill stand out, and some can be seen and identified from some distance away, such as Highcliff and Hillcrest, the most striking views are along the steep steps that give access to Rock Hill from The Skirs. The narrow flight of steep steps rises above the thatched roof of 47 North Street and makes a sharp turn before emerging onto Rock Hill at the rear of Pear Tree Cottage, which can be seen to have been built straight off the local bedrock.

5.4 The Butts offers similar views, funnelled between boundary walls of cottages, and the taller wall of the former walled garden to the south. The Butts opens onto the Tarka Trail and the route of the former rail line, with an interpretation board giving a flavour of the history of the line. The views along the trail are stunning as a wide strip

of green space separates the rows of cottages and houses on either side. Just to the North of the Butts on the East side of the trail are a pair of former railway cottages (Fernleat and Orchard Dean), with their main fronts facing out to where the line would have been, but equally stunning rears facing over gardens.

5.5 Where The Butts makes its sharp turn, an iron gate and a set of stone steps leads down to the river, while the channel of the old Mill Leat to Iron Mills passes under the lane and runs through rear gardens before crossing under the main road. The sound of running water along this section of The Butts is enough to mask much of the noise from the road and create a feeling of rural tranquillity.

A series of alleyways link various streets around Braunton, some as simple slopes, others with steps such as between Abbots Hill and East Street.



5.6 One last lane such as these joins East Street to Abbots Hill, again via a series of steps and slopes. The view along, from either end, is channelled and sheltered between walls and overhanging trees with teasing glimpses of whitewashed and rendered cottages visible beyond either end.

5.7 The Square provides another focus of many views. Although now intruded upon by traffic lights and signage, the Square remains an attractive centrepiece for the village. The Natwest Bank and George Hotel opposite both make full use of their prominent corner plots and present stunning facades to the road and the main cross,

particularly so when approached from the north where the apseid end, with its heavy mullioned windows, is most prominent. The crossroads itself was once dominated by a large tree, now celebrated in a stone plaque set into the pavement on the south side of Heanton Street, although the tree itself stood further out into the road. It is suggested that the tree replaced a tall stone cross, possibly of saxon origin, however no setting for such a cross has been found (probably destroyed by the roots of the tree if it ever did exist). An old engraving does show a cross standing here, but may simply be an example of artistic licence.

Later buildings often stand out amongst their neighbours only being taller, as seen here in a view at the North end of North Street.



5.8 St. Brannock's Churchyard and the adjoining graveyard provide some good views, both from the main road, over the river, and from Church Street and along Silver Street. Glimpses into the yard under an archway on Church Street are also attractive. The building above the archway is the old parish School Rooms. Through the archway and to the west is a memorial for cremations, a local stone wall in staggered sections, the central bay set back and taller, covered in small plaques with a large central cross set within a gabled projection pointing heavenward. From here to the east of the church the churchyard and graveyard appear to stretch out for a vast distance to the west and south.

5.9 North Street holds interesting views, appearing at first as a fairly typical village street lined with modest cottages of varying height and size, most whitewashed and rendered. Then there appears a farmstead, complete with agricultural outbuildings, barns, stables and sheds, opening out into a courtyard alongside the road. In North Street Town Farm, Gordons Farm and Skir Farm are the main examples, although other more modest agricultural holdings must have existed, evidenced by the barn attached to number 16 and the series of agricultural buildings in a courtyard arrangement around number 23. Immediately to the South of North Street in Chapel Street stands Cross Farm as another example of the thriving farms which were located in the heart of the community, farming communal land on the Great Field as well as other holdings.

5.10 Although Silver Street is much more residential in its character it too has examples of farms, such as the range and outbuildings at number 14 and has the same uneven rhythm as North Street. There is more variety here, particularly as the street continues down Church Street. The cluster of listed buildings including the Church House, The Black Horse Inn, Bakers Thatch and numbers 33, 35 and 37 provide an almost idyllic scene to the east of the parish church. Bowens (formerly Chapel Hill Farm, again demonstrating the farming link) with its band of recycled decorative stone carving adds to this group despite being set further back from the lane.

5.11 Views from the highest points along Hills View and Abbots Hill are good, but not equal to those from Rock Hill. The more gentle slopes here mean that adjacent buildings block much of the view back over the village, while the buildings higher on

the east side of the road block views in that direction also. What is left is a series of glimpses between houses through which the rooftops of the valley below, and the buildings on the opposite valley side, can be seen.

5.12 Views along Caen Street are again different. The character of this commercial street, together with the different period and style of many of the buildings gives Caen Street a different feel within the village. Although many buildings here are built of brick and are both larger and taller than the modest cottages elsewhere in the village, some of the buildings are older and more similar in height and size to those typical cottages, particularly on the north side of the street. Another feature, prominent particularly in views along the street, is the oriel windows on several properties here. These project from buildings at first floor level providing an extra dimension of depth into the frontages which is rare elsewhere in the village. Views into the rear of the London Inn show a building older than it appears from the street. Given the arrangement of rear wings, the name of the pub and its position on the former main road through the village, this was likely a coaching inn.

A map showing the most significant views, viewpoints and prominent features within the village can be found in Appendix 3(IV)

6 Landscape & Setting

6.1 Braunton stands a short distance inland on the northern side of the Taw Estuary within the wide valley of the river Caen. The river, a tributary of the Taw, runs through the village from North to South. It is unlikely that there was ever a port within the village itself, however the close proximity of the Taw would mean that villagers would probably have had fishing boats so as to benefit from the estuary. More formalised facilities did grow up closer to the main channel of the Taw, such as at nearby Velator Quay. Besides the River Caen runs the route of the former rail line from Barnstaple to Ilfracombe, now a part of the Tarka Trail cycle route. The close proximity of the river and the former rail line produce a strip of green space that runs through the heart of the village from North to South.

6.2 The route of the River Caen cuts through the downland ridge which runs from Saunton to Marwood, with higher land to the North West and North East of the village. A second ridge runs between Ashford and Heanton Punchardon on the north side of the Taw Estuary creating higher land on the South East beyond Knowl Water.

6.3 To the South West lies the Great Field, a relic of the medieval (and earlier) three field agricultural system. When first cultivated the field would have stood at the edge of woodland and salt marshes and was probably won for agriculture through many years of felling and assarting. Although there are no notable expanses of woodland within the area today the Domesday entry for the village describes a sizeable area of woodland (40 acres).

6.4 Further to the South and West is a large expanse of sand dunes. Braunton Burrows and Saunton Sands are visible from some of the more elevated portions of the village and stand out below the horizon as a mix of dunes and grass around the edges of the estuary. The shapes of the dune systems help the area stand out within its low lying surroundings.

6.5 Although the majority of Braunton stands within the low lying areas of the valley the village has grown up the valley sides, with areas such as Rock Hill being atop steep slopes. To the east of Silver Street and Abbots Hill the land also rises steeply, with many houses built into the cuttings or taking advantage of the natural contours.

6.6 Much of the low lying ground to the South and South West of the village, particularly around the course of the river, was once salt marshes. These areas were of limited agricultural value, but could just about be used for grazing hardy sheep. In 1808 the area was assessed by the Board of Agriculture and the potential for draining the marsh was established. James Green, Canal Engineer, was appointed as engineer for the drainage scheme and an Act of Parliament for the project was granted in May

1811. Although the scheme called for the formation of a canal this element was omitted, work on the Canal, and further drainage works, were eventually carried out in the 1850's.

6.7 The transformation of the salt marshes into usable agricultural land created the landscape setting of Braunton much as it appears today.

7 Streetscape Features

7.1 The majority of the character of Braunton's streets is created by the buildings which give a sense of scale and enclosure. In some areas, such as Silver Street and the east side of East Street beside Abbots Hill, this is reinforced by steep slopes and rocky cliffs which loom up between the buildings.

7.2 The additional features which contribute to the character of the village are often more specialised, being found in certain parts of the village and not in others. For example the exposed stone boundary walls found at the northern end of Church Street and along Silver Street are so abundant in these areas as to make a large contribution to the character of these streets, however they are completely absent in Heanton Street and when boundary walls appear in North Street they are as often rendered as of exposed stone.

Sections of cobbled surface survive around the village, often limited to drainage channels at the edge of roads.



7.3 Examples of other boundary wall styles can be found scattered around the village, such as the exposed stone walls topped with white spar pebbles at The Glen and The Butts. White Spar copings are a feature found throughout the coastal area of North Devon, the pebbles having been easy to find washed up on local beaches and producing an attractive decorative effect. Many examples can be seen in Ilfracombe, Combe Martin and Morteheo but very few examples appear in Braunton and it is not the typical style within the village. Brick boundary walls appear in only a few isolated cases; most often these are modern and probably replace older stone walls.

7.4 Cobbled street surfaces also survive, typically as drainage channels at the edges of roads and in short lengths only, but examples can be found along Rock Hill, North Street and a full width strip remains under the archway to the Church Yard off Church Street.

7.5 Along Heanton Street a short section of Marland Brick paving survives along the southern side pavement, protected by some heavy cast iron bollards. Marland Brick was produced from clay extracted at Peters Marland and is found extensively in North Devon as a building material. Many small sections of pavement survive around the region and must once have been reasonably common.

7.6 Church Street has few properties with any boundary walls, but the few that are present serve to add interest. Instead a notable feature of Church Street, and indeed Silver Street, is the steps or drops to access properties. The slope of the street means that few properties have their floors level with the road outside and many have a few steps up or even down to reach their doors, number 5 Church Street being a good example of a sunken entrance.

7.7 Throughout the streets that run along the slopes of the valley, large excavations have been made and retaining walls constructed to provide off road parking spaces. Often these spaces are poorly finished with painted concrete blockwork which does little to enhance the setting or appearance of the neighbouring properties, and while the parking spaces are clearly desirable it is unfortunate that where they have been created they are not often sensitively finished.

7.8 The vast majority of the buildings in the village have a rendered finish although there is more detail to be seen than is often initially apparent. A good number of buildings throughout the village, scattered around, feature incised ashlar markings. This was a practise, particularly popular in the Georgian period, of scoring lines into fresh render to mimic the appearance of finely jointed ashlar stonework. Dependent on the condition of the render and the care taken in the marking out, the effect can be highly convincing. Examples of properties with this feature are Scur House, The Elliot Gallery, Mallyan Cottage, number 37 Heanton Street, and a good many others.

The locations of buildings featuring this style of incised render can be found in Appendix 3(VI)

7.9 Railings also feature throughout the village. While many are modern replacements or modern creations, there are a number of sections of historic iron railings, the most striking being the cast iron examples at Fernleat and Orchard Dene visible from the route of the Tarka Trail. Other, less intricate examples can be found at the Junction of North Down Road and Church Street and along the front boundary of number 37 Church Street (beside Bakers Thatch) which features more intricate ironwork on its veranda. Several sets of elaborate wrought iron gates also survive around the churchyard, perhaps the best being those beneath the archway from Church Street.

7.10 The main focus for street furniture is clearly in two areas, The Square and the route of the Tarka Trail. The Square contains a number of cast iron litter bins and iron and timber benches. Were the main road not so busy this may be a pleasant place to sit, however the busyness detracts from any desire to linger long.

The Anchor stands at the crossing of Caen Street and the Tarka Trail as a memorial to Braunton mariners.



7.11 Instead it is the Tarka Trail which is better suited to sitting and relaxing. The enhancement along Caen Street with the old iron anchor memorial and low stone walls shielding wooden benches is a fitting addition to the village and takes cues from local features. More benches, as well as silver birch trees, stand along the length of the trail through Braunton. There are also a number of interpretation boards along the trail that give a general overview, as well as details of key buildings such as the Old Station House.

7.12 Signage is not a major feature within the conservation area and is mostly limited to the modern highways signage along Caen Street and around The Square. Elsewhere signage is low key, such as timber finger posts and the junction

of Abbots Hill and Church Street. Old cast iron street name signs survive for many of the residential streets including Rock Hill, Silver Street and Church Street and these help to add character to these historic streets. The modern equivalents have a much less substantial appearance and their high visibility reflective design makes them stand out as modern features, while the cast iron versions achieve the same purpose without appearing out of place or competing for attention in the streetscene.

8 Architectural Character

8.1 The broad character of Braunton can be given in a few lines, because the vast majority of its buildings conform to a fairly general style. Despite this there is a wealth of variety on this one theme as well as a good number of buildings which make a departure from that typical style whilst remaining an intrinsic part of the historic character of the place.

8.2 Outside of the commercial areas of Caen Street and the area around The Square the vast majority of the village's buildings are cottages built of either cob or local stone, or a mixture of the two, and rendered over. The render is then almost universally whitewashed providing a high degree of consistency amongst the streets. These buildings are almost exclusively two storeys in height.

8.3 Some of the cottages, on the more sloping streets, have steps up to their doors, or in a few cases steps down to their doors, adding yet more variety into their streets.

8.4 Despite this there is variety within these rendered cottages. Some have small front gardens bounded by walls, often of exposed local stone, a few have railings enclosing similar small plots. Some have chimneys of brick, others of stone rendered to match the buildings they form part of. Others still have exposed stone chimneys and these are often the lateral stacks which hint at some of the earlier examples of these little cottages. These axial stacks are particularly numerous along Church Street and Heanton Street.

Artificially 'distressed' or 'rusticated' render detracts from the character of a building and is not a traditional feature.



The scored render of Skir House added to mimic the appearance of ashlar stonework.



8.5 Even the style of the render varies, some having a very thin render, little more than a thick whitewash, through which the uneven stone construction can still be clearly seen. Others have very crisp render applied during the Georgian period with sharp

incised lines to replicate the appearance of expensive ashlar stonework. Other buildings have been re-rendered in modern cements or even pebble dashed, whilst some examples have unnecessary patterning created in the render, float swirls or deeply scored lines. These features are not traditional and have clearly been created in a misguided attempt to create a 'rustic' appearance, as if everything old was automatically crude.

8.6 Variety goes yet further in windows and doors. Windows feature as casements and sashes of almost every possible variety, both old and new, together with the modern uPVC replacements, all of which are incongruous and none of which fool the viewer into believing they are anything but the modern replacements that they are.

This view along a section of Heanton Street shows the survival of thatch as well as the way owners upgraded to sash windows for the rooms visitors might see while retaining casements on the upper floors.

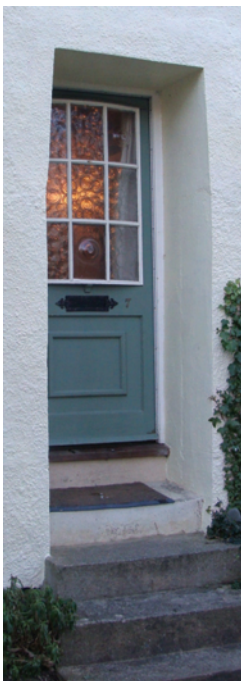


8.7 It is likely that the majority of the cottages once had only casement windows. The introduction of sashes, just like the scored ashlar render, was probably work of the Georgian and early Victorian period as owners attempted to show their wealth and

status by, wherever possible, adopting the latest and most fashionable building elements in their home. It is not unusual to find a house with a single sash amongst its casements; often the sash will be fitted in the front room or parlour, the best room in the house.

8.8 Some of the cottages, particularly a run along Church Street from number 11 to number 15, feature half dormer windows of the upper floor showing a line of miniature gables onto the street.

The bow window in the front door of 7 Silver Street.



8.9 Doors too appear in a wide variety of styles: 4 panel, 6 panel, glazed and unglazed and even examples of doors with bowed windows built in, such as at number 7 Silver Street.

8.10 Roof coverings are another source of variety, with examples retaining their thatch while many more have long since been re-roofed in natural slate. Of these some examples have been re-roofed in modern times with cement fibre tiles, or interlocking concrete tiles. These modern replacement tiles are often visually much bulkier than the natural slate which they replace. The cement fibre tiles also seem to attract moss to an extent that natural slate does not. A number of properties have clay tile roofs, particularly the more arts and crafts inspired buildings from the later Victorian period, or roman clay tiles which feature on some of the agricultural outbuildings of the village farms.

8.11 Between the older cottages can be found later examples, often also rendered and whitewashed, but typically a little taller than their neighbours, although still of two storeys. These buildings were likely built during the mid Victorian period and either represent houses entirely, or largely, rebuilt by their owners following damage or to keep up with fashions, or represent new building on gaps left empty between the older cottages. They usually have full sets of sash windows, or would have done before more recent replacements. Some even feature coloured glass as a decorative feature between the marginal glazing bars.

8.12 The old village farms stand out thanks to their courtyard layouts. The examples along North Street often have the farmhouse running at right angles away from the road, showing a gable end to the street, with the main facade overlooking the farmyard instead of the street. This difference in plan form and relationship to the street helps the farms stand out amongst the neighbouring cottages and makes it possible to identify other former farmhouses surviving within the streetscape of Braunton.

A map highlighting the location of the most prominent former farms is given in Appendix 4(VI)

Gordon's Farmhouse is typical of those around the village, with an axial chimney stack and the main facade facing into the courtyard, not onto the street.



8.13 The farmhouses are often similar to the modest cottages which surround them, although usually longer and a single room deep. They are built of cob or local stone, rendered and whitewashed. It is possible that at least some of the farmhouses evolved from cross passage houses, part of which may have been used for animals. Many of the farms have retained their courtyards and associated agricultural buildings, although an increasing number have now been converted to residential use. The majority of these conversions have been carried out in a sympathetic manner and the new homes retain the appearance and some of the character of agricultural

buildings. Several of the farmhouses also have axial stack chimneys. Examples of other houses along North Street with axial chimney stacks and the arrangement of facing end gables to the street include number 23 (Atina). This and other examples are likely all that remains of other courtyard farms along North Street.

8.14 Some of the smallholdings also survive, their associated barns and outbuildings would have been smaller than those of the barns, and some of these still exist such as the stone barn at 16 North Street and the group of cob outbuildings at number 27 North Street. As these buildings were smaller they are less often suitable for any conversion and as the houses they serve are no longer run as smallholdings they are often under-used and poorly maintained.

8.15 Although the courtyard farms and smallholdings have the greatest contribution to the character of North Street, there are examples elsewhere, such as the remnants of a courtyard and the surviving Grade II Listed farmhouse at 14 and 14a Silver Street. Given the unusual survival of communal farming on the Great Field and the centralisation of farmhouses within the village itself it is likely that a great number of farms of varying scale and wealth were once scattered throughout the village.

8.16 The coming of the railway brought with it a need for new buildings, cottages for the railway workers and buildings for stations. Braunton has fine examples of these buildings, with the old station standing along Caen Street and now in use as a newsagent and engine sheds having been converted for use as the youth centre.

8.17 Along the route of the Tarka Trail stand a group of impressive houses, Fern Leat and Orchard Dene, together with The Glen and The Butts of similar style. These houses have full sets of sliding sash windows with segmental upper sashes and large

panes of sheet glass in the lower panes. Large chimney stacks with multiple flues are also apparent demonstrating that almost every room in these buildings would have had its own fire and changing the character of chimneys from robust stone stacks to more elegant and proportioned elements of the building. The buildings were built around 1916 designed by the local architect E.A.C. Schwabe and built by local builder J.J. Huxtable. The site had formally been an orchard. These buildings also have cast iron railings enclosing their front gardens, probably brought in by rail from foundries in Barnstaple. Now that the village had a rail link materials could be brought in cheaply from further afield meaning that the local stone was no longer the only economical material for boundary features.

8.18 It was the late Victorian period and the early 20th century that also saw further expansion of the village to Rock Hill and Hills View. Stunning examples of new Victorian villas grew up, built of newly available materials brought into the area. These stunning brick built houses have elaborate features such as the wooden verandas and tall spacious dormer windows providing an extra floor within the roofspace. Clay tiles are used to add colour into roofs and different materials pick out features such as window openings and quoining. Highcliff and Hillcrest in Rock Hill demonstrate this new Victorian style. Although still built of local stone, window openings are picked out in Marland brick, as is the quoining at the corners. This mix of brick and stone is even carried as a decorative effect into the chimneys. The extra storey and the building's corner location mean that it stands out from a good distance, emphasised even more by virtue of it standing amongst older whitewashed cottages. Eastfield In East Hill is another similar example, as is The Terrace, with its grand facade executed in polychrome brickwork, with the other walls of rendered stone for economy.

The Terrace shows the arrival of Victorian style and brick as an affordable and decorative building material in Braunton.



8.19 There is also an element of industry within the conservation area, at Iron Mills, to the south west of the Parish Church. The mill here was water powered, with a short leat carrying water from the River Caen to the mill buildings. Today much of the old mill has been converted to residential occupation. Some outbuildings remain, including

a strange building which from one side would appear to have been a small stable, possibly for horses bringing in raw material and taking away finished goods, yet from the other side is a timber and glass conservatory, possibly for growing oranges. These two elements do not seem to fit well together and it is likely that the conservatory was a later addition once the site lost its industrial function. The modern car port takes the form of a timber open fronted cart shed, and if the adjacent building was ever used as a stable it would be reasonable to assume that there would also have been a cart shed on site, possibly even in this position.

8.20 Within the commercial centre of the village the type of buildings encountered is different. Here the streets are dominated by Victorian buildings of two and three storeys, many of which retain highly decorative and intricate traditional shopfronts which help contribute towards the character of the street. Several of the buildings are of brick, either red brick or the buff / cream Marland brick, although a good number are rendered. Some of the buildings closest to the Square along Caen Street are lower than their neighbours and similar to the cottages elsewhere in the village. These are likely the oldest examples within the shopping streets, although they have been adapted to provide large display windows for their shops. Other examples, such as Lloyds Bank have grasped the incised ashlar style of render found elsewhere in the town and taken it further with deep scoring to emphasise the appearance of stone blocks. Despite being initially so different from the other streets in the village, Caen Street, at a second glance, has a degree of continuity of style with other parts of the village, although obviously the development of the Victorian period has resulted in a greater degree of rebuilding and change here than in the more residential areas.

8.21 One feature which stands out in Caen Street and The Square that is not found elsewhere is oriel windows. These are bay windows which appear at first floor or above but do not continue down to ground level. They are a typical feature found in many shopping streets, with South Molton having a significant number of examples. As such these windows are a North Devon feature of shopping streets and not out of place within the more commercial hub of the village.

8.22 More recent buildings also stand out, such as the flat roofed additions to the front of number 10 and Caen Court, both of which are less successful at blending with the environment of the village as well as their immediate setting.

8.23 The village also has a wealth of individual examples of a feature, such as slate hanging, which although not typical of the village do not necessarily feel out of place on the buildings upon which they appear.

9 Boundary Changes Adopted 2011

9.1 The boundary of the Braunton Conservation Area as adopted in 1974 demonstrated tremendous restraint. The village has a wealth of traditional and historic buildings, enclosing attractive and visually interesting streets and lanes which were omitted from that designation and as such were given little official status or recognition of their value. In 2010 and 2011 a review was undertaken of the boundary and the following extensions were adopted

9.2 The possibility of a second conservation area in Braunton for North Street is discussed in the current North Devon Local Plan (1995-2011) however investigation on the ground identified the close parallels and links between the character of North Street and Church Street / Silver Street. As such the conservation area has been extended to include the area of North Street, rather than a separate new designation being made.

A map showing the extensions of the Conservation Area and its previous boundary is given in Appendix 3(III)

Extensions

9.3 A series of eight extensions were identified as having obvious historic and architectural quality sufficient to warrant inclusion as part of a conservation area and these are discussed individually. These areas share sufficient similarities in terms of their historic character and appearance, as well as their proximity and consistency, to be part of a single conservation area:

A map labelling the 8 extensions can be found in Appendix 3(III)

1. **Silver Street (North):** Beyond the former boundary Silver Street continues to the north for some distance and maintains a high degree of historic and architectural interest up to the fork in the street at Maynes Orchard. The only possible exception being the modern 'Small Change'. Eldershill is also a more modern building, however it retains features of the street such as local stone boundary walls with large gated access into a small courtyard.

2. **Bowens:** A small extension to include the Grade II Listed Bowens (Formerly Chapel Hill Farm). This building forms part of a group of listed buildings beside the parish church and it is unclear as to why it was not included within the original designation, given that its significance is so apparent.

Bowens is a grade II listed former farmhouse immediately outside of the former boundary.



3. **9,10 and 11 North Down Road:** A small extension to include this group of three buildings, the first of which (number 9) is a heavily whitewashed building of local stone. Numbers 10 and 11 are attached although apparently part of a later range running along the roadside while number 9 runs at a 90 degree angle to the road.

4. **Eastfield and The Terrace:** Eastfield stands on elevated ground immediately to the east of East Hill House; the building is a later Victorian Villa decorated with polychrome brickwork. The building also has corrugated iron coverings on its projecting verandas. The house is similar in style to Highcliff and Hillcrest on Rock Hill. The Terrace is also included within this proposed extension. The row is also decorated with structural polychromy, in buff brick with red brick string courses. Large bay windows run from the ground floor to the first floor, the second floor has no bays and is markedly plainer in its finish, the windows are also shorter on the top floor, demonstrating its lower status. Although the main frontage is of brick the side and rear elevations are rendered, probably to hide cheaper or poor quality materials.

5. **Church Street West and Iron Mills:** This extension continues west along Church Street beyond Deans Bridge. The extension includes the Fire Station (formerly a school) of a solid Victorian Gothic revival style using local stone. The Masonic Hall along the A361 marks the northern edge of this extension. The building features masonic insignia and a bold and simple art deco design. Numbers 1, 2 and 3 Challoners Road are also included, a modest row of whitewashed and rendered cottages with number 1 featuring slate hanging on the upper section of the facade. St Bertwyns is a large Georgian villa, similar to Pikkeston Court although less grand. The buildings of Iron Mills are also included within this area, including the Mill Leat and the surviving outbuildings and open fronted sheds and a glazed orangery. Rope Walk, another late Georgian Villa sits on a corner site sandwiched between the river and the mill leat

6. **Central Open Space:** This extension includes the route of the Tarka Trail and the River. The extension also includes formal open space in the form of the Bowling

Green and associated pavilion building. This green strip extends south to Caen Street and the iron anchor memorial to the sailors of the village who sailed from Velator Quay. The Butts and the pair of adjacent cottages (Fernleat and Orchard Dean) also form part of this extension as does the first section of the Mill Leat to Iron Mills (see 5).

7. **North Street, Chapel Street & Rock Hill:** The farms and smallholdings of North Street have been identified as having potential for designation as a conservation for several years. The character of the streets and their mix of residential cottages and farms gives a character similar to that of Silver Street. Linden Close and The Moorings are excluded from the proposed boundary. Rock Hill is also included, the linkages to North Street via a steep flight of steps provides an interesting connecting route, while the views from the higher parts of Rock Hill are excellent, allowing the village to be seen in its entirety as well as in its context, including the Great Field and the Burrows. The buildings of Rock Hill range from Victorian villas, such as Highcliff and Hillcrest, to older modest cottages, similar to those found throughout North and East Streets - such as Lavender Cottage which can be seen to have been built directly onto the bedrock. Beacon Cottage and Beacon House are also included, both were homes of James Mason (Novelist & Literary Critic) the latter having been built for him around 1900.
8. **Caen Street:** This proposed extension includes The Square and the more commercial centre of Braunton. The A361 is a relatively recent creation and the widening of the road has resulted in relatively modern development to either side. Caen Street retains the most traditional shop frontages within the village today, with excellent examples such as CJ's Cafe, At One and the long consistent frontage of Slee's Home Hardware. These commercial streets contain good examples of Georgian and Victorian buildings incorporating traditional shop fronts which create an attractive and effective shopping environment even today. The buildings here also feature orial windows, projecting bays at first floor level, which are peculiar to this part of the village.

Further west along Caen Street is an area of open space providing a pleasant break in development and a setting for the former railway station (now newsagents). This open space also sits along the route of the Tarka Trail, opposite the anchor memorial to Braunton mariners. The Countryside Centre stands to the south of the former railway station and is built in the style of a Devon open sided farm shed with its cylindrical stone piers supporting the roof. Despite being built in the late 1970's the building is in keeping with the agricultural traditions of the village and makes a welcome addition. The Youth Centre just south of the Countryside Centre utilises a much altered former goods shed from the railway complex. The Square is the main crossing point in the village overlooked by impressive and striking buildings on corner plots, such as the George Hotel and Natwest Bank.

This extension also includes the lower part of East Street which was excluded from the original designation. The buildings here are of the same type found further along East Street, mid-sized cottages with a rendered and whitewashed finish. The south side of Bias Lane is also outside the current conservation area, however views along the narrow lane fall into the same category as some of the passageways and narrow steps which link other streets in the village. The buildings here are also of good quality and similar to those at the north of East Street.

9. Heanton Street:

Heanton Street with its cottages, typical of those seen elsewhere in the village, but without the breaks in frontage seen in North Street and East Street.



Heanton Street contains cottages similar to those elsewhere in the conservation area, the main difference being the lack of gaps and passages between the buildings. Some examples were clearly once thatched, and a few still are, such as numbers 30 and 37. Cobb Cottage also has an axial chimney stack, possibly hinting at origins as early as the 17th century. Modern intrusions on the south side of Heanton Street, such as St. Johns House, are excluded from the proposed extension.

At the eastern end of Heanton Street, Little Close and the adjacent Elliot

Gallery are both included. Little Close is almost hidden behind its high stone walls with decorative shale copings, the small glimpses of the building's upper floor and roof hint at something between a Victorian villa and a Manor House. The art gallery is a stunning Arts and Crafts building complete with leaded coloured glass windows and a dramatic round arched, recessed, main entrance.

10 Development Pressures

10.1 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.

10.2 In Braunton widespread traditional rendering practises, such as the incised ashlar joints seen on many properties, provide an element of local character and identity which could also be under threat from the execution of permitted development rights.

10.3 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.

10.4 Some parts of the area, including the proposed extensions, have a more commercial character and are therefore subject to the changing trends in retail. The desirability of the area to the tourism industry and to surfers in particular has attracted, and likely will continue to attract, many businesses catering to the needs of tourists and surfers. At present this is not detrimental to the character of the area, however competition between businesses sharing one market could lead to increased advertising and signage which could have a detrimental impact in future.

10.5 Other issues such as the increase in numbers of holiday homes, both privately owned and rented, have the usual impact of either large numbers of homes often left vacant for protracted periods or buildings being occupied by large numbers of tourists with inadequate provision for their vehicles. Parking is a widespread issue, as will always be the case in a village largely laid out before the invention of the car, or even the notion of widespread private transport of any kind.

10.6 The valley position of the village, and the degree of surrounding reclaimed marsh will put some areas of the village and its surroundings at increased risk of flooding, both tidal and fluvial, over the coming years, with both regularity and severity of events likely to increase.

10.7 Traffic congestion within the village is a continual problem, more so during the summer season. Calls for a bypass have, in the past, led to investigations of where such a route could run. Early options to follow the former railway line and a 'Caen Street Link' were dismissed. Similarly options for running a route over the Great Field were dismissed, such a move would obviously be completely inappropriate. In 1993 a two phase scheme was considered which would intrude onto the Great Field by around 5%. Although the first phase (an industrial link) was delivered the Inspector rejected the second phase and the by-pass was never built. Traffic management improvements, to try and increase through flow of traffic and reduce congestion, are more likely, the 2004 Community Travel Plan is the most current document concerned with congestion and traffic issues in Braunton.

11 The Future

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

11.2 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.

11.3 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 Appendix 1 - Listed Buildings Within the Braunton Conservation Area

Caen Street

Building Address	Listing Grade
Caen Primary School	II

Church Street

Building Address	Listing Grade
1 & 1a	II
5 and 7	II
27	II
Length of cob wall and Bee-Boles 5 metres west of # 29	II
Numbers 33,35 and 27	II
House Adjoining Church House (Old School Rooms)	II
Church House	II*
Church of St. Brannock	I
Deans Bridge Over the River Caen	II
Pikkeston Court	II
Bakers Thatch	II
Numbers 36 and 36a	II
Black Horse Inn	II
Bowdens and gatepiers, railings and outbuildings	II

East Street

Building Address	Listing Grade
Broadgate	II*
Number 17 - Including Barn to South	II
Number 29 - Myrtle Farm Cottage	II

Heanton Street

Building Address	Listing Grade
Number 21	II
The Locks (# 30)	II

North Street

Building Address	Listing Grade
Number 45 (High Path)	II
Number 47 (High Path)	II
Gordons Farmhouse & Attached Barns	II
Stables with loft over approx. 5 metres South of Gordons Farmhouse	II
Town Farm, including wall adjoining South-East and railings adjoining East	II*
Range of farmbuildings, comprising stables, barn, lincay and pump house, forming courtyard to Town Farm	II

Silver Street

Building Address	Listing Grade
Numbers 3 and 4	II

Building Address	Listing Grade
Number 6	II
Numbers 14 and 14a	II

West Hill Lane

Building Address	Listing Grade
Beacon Cottage	II

2 Appendix 2 - Historic Mapping

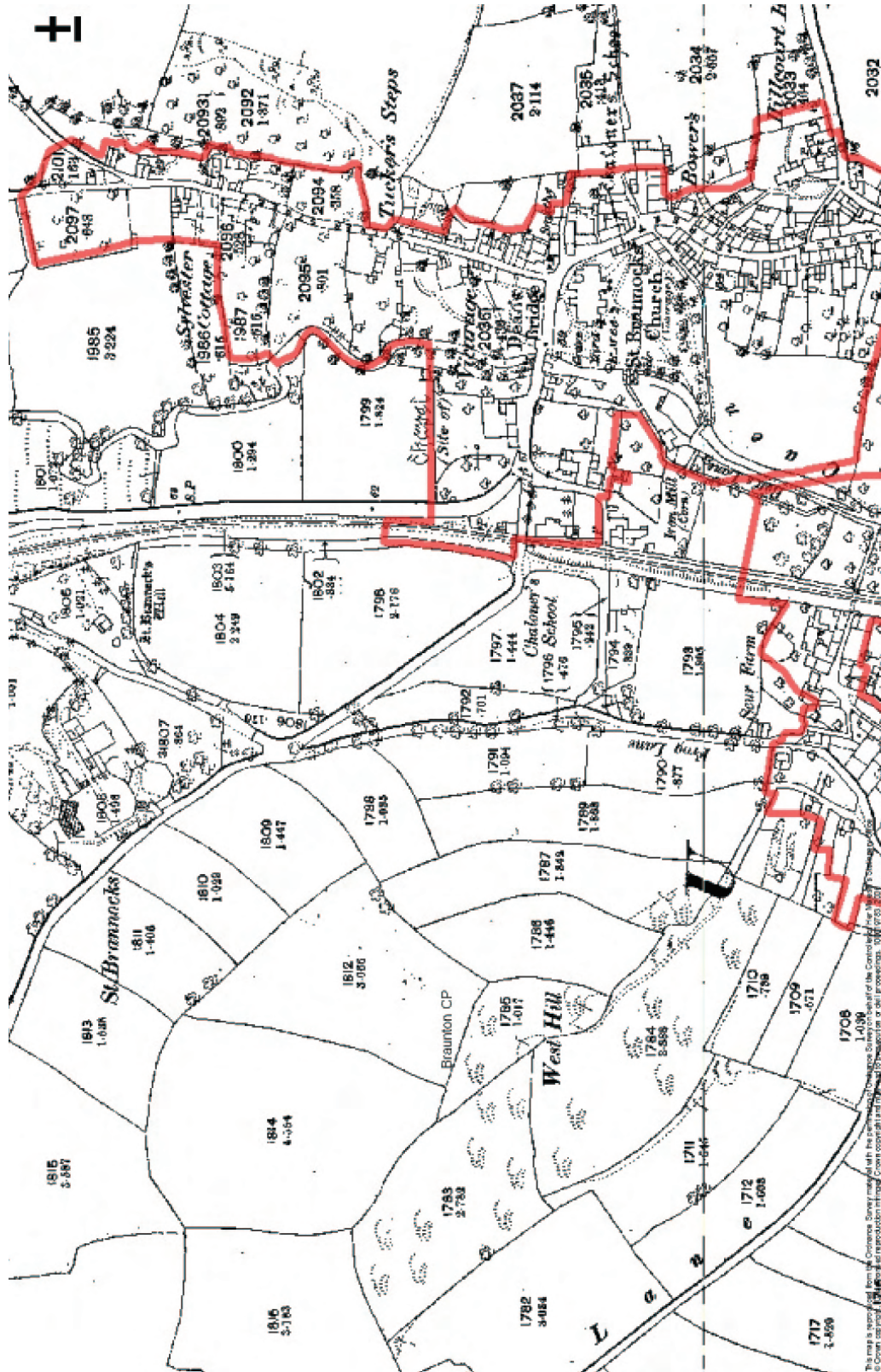
I - 1st Series Ordnance Survey Map c.1880, Northern Area

II - 1st Series Ordnance Survey Map c.1880, Southern Area

III - Revised Ordnance Survey Map c.1904, Northern Area

IV - Revised Ordnance Survey Map c.1904, Southern Area

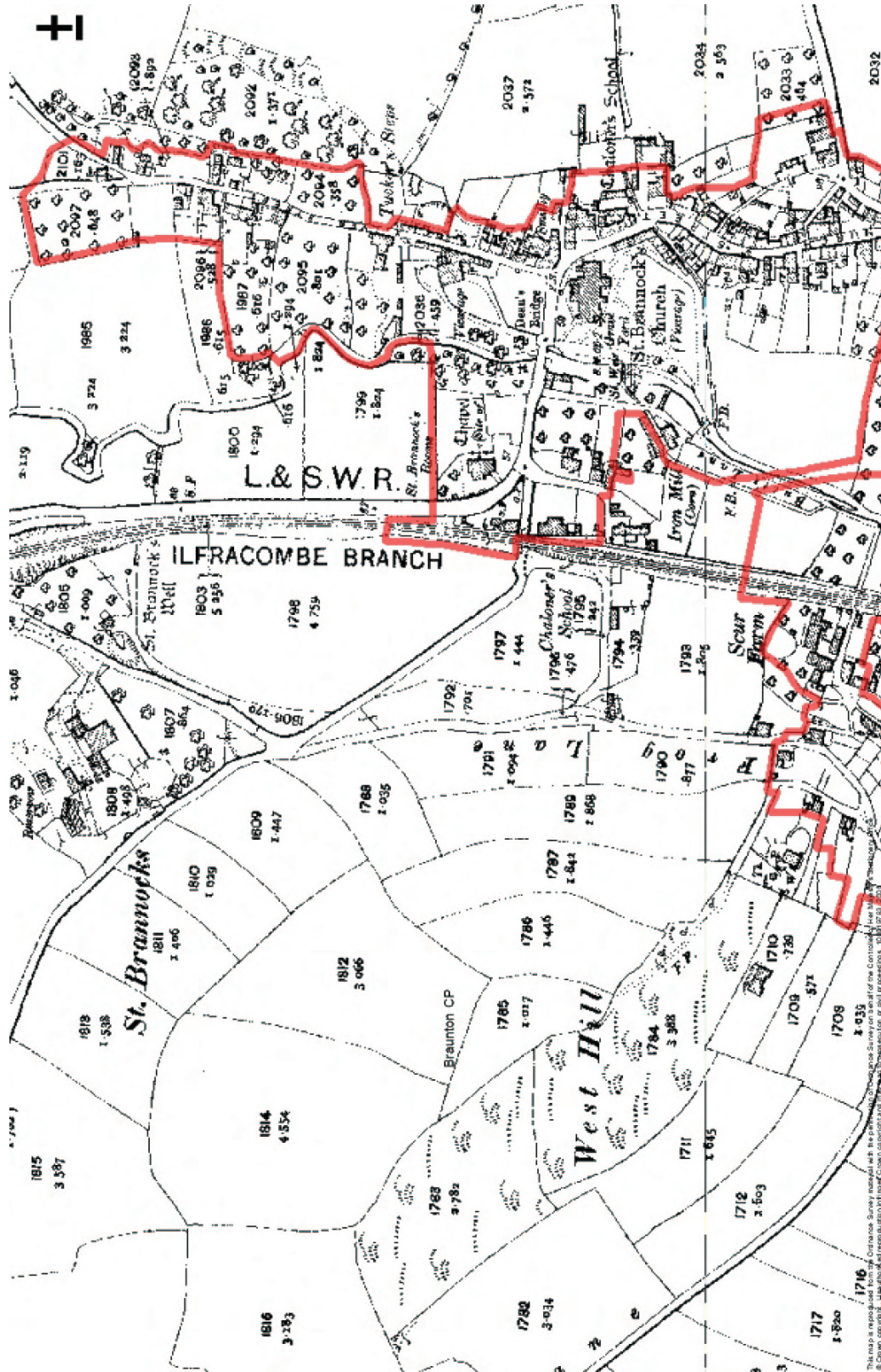
1st Series Ordnance Survey Map c.1880, Northern Area



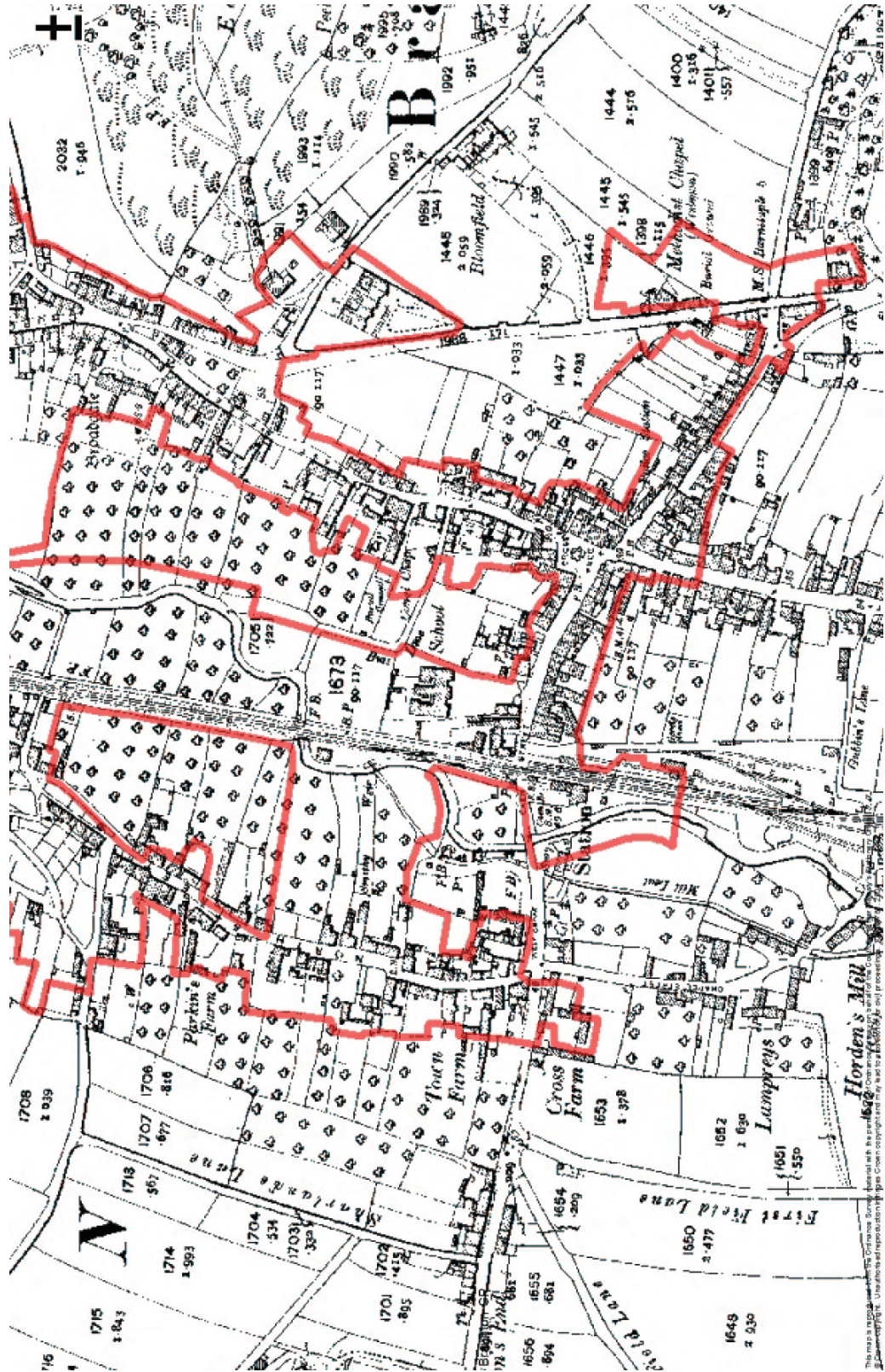
1st Series Ordnance Survey Map c.1880, Southern Area



Revised Ordnance Survey Map c.1904, Northern Area



Revised Ordnance Survey Map c.1904, Southern Area



3 Appendix 3 - Conservation Area Mapping

I - Key

II - Conservation Area Boundary & Listed Buildings

III - Boundary Extensions Adopted 2011

IV - Key Views, Viewpoints & Features

V - Main Historic Routes

VI - Locations of Former Farms and Architectural Features

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		Major Historic Street
	2 Storey Building		Major Historic Through Route
	3 Storey Building		External Views
	4+ Storey Building		Internal Views
	Area To Be Added To Conservation area		Focal Point Of Views
	Area To Be Removed From Conservation Area		Key Viewpoint
	Building Making a Neutral Contribution to Local Character		Prominent Oriel Window
	Building Making a Positive Contribution to Local Character		Prominent Bow Window
	Building Making an Outstanding Contribution to Local Character		Negative / Positive Public Seating
	Building With Rendered Walls		Positive / Negative Bollard
	Building With Bare or Limewashed / Painted Walls		Negative / Positive Street Lighting
	Public Green Space		Memorial - ie. War Memorial
	Building In Poor Condition		Mosaic Feature
	Area For Potential Enhancement		Important Tree / Tree With Tree Preservation Order
	Location of Former Farm		Miscellaneous Feature (Labled)
	Scheduled Ancient Monument		Miscellaneous Linear Feature (Labled)
	Historic Bridge		Railings As A Positive Streetscape Feature
	Historic Post Box		Railings As A Negative Streetscape Feature
	Public Right of Way		River / Aquatic Feature
	Focal Streetscape Feature		

