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1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.5 The purpose of this character appraisal is to:

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

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

2 Background

2.1 This appraisal of the Georgeham Conservation Area was initiated in January 2009.

2.2 The first designation of land within the present conservation area boundary was by North Devon Council in November 1975.

The existing boundary of the Georgeham Conservation Area, together with its listed buildings, is given in Appendix 4(II)

2.3 Georgeham's character is that of a rural village, with the majority of the historic development located to the east and southwest of the parish church, the tall and distinctive tower of which can be seen from many locations within the village.

2.4 The presence of thatched cottages in narrow lanes and the irregularity of their arrangement relative to the lanes also contributes to this village character. The Victorian village school, the medieval church, the 17th century 'The Rock' public house and the village shop provide the services typical of such a village.

Clare and Skirr Cottages are good examples of local vernacular architecture, with thatched roofs and small first floor windows tucked under the eaves



3 Facts and Figures about the Conservation Area

3.1 The conservation area covers an area of 6.4 hectares (15.8 acres). Of the buildings within the conservation area 15 are included on the 'List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' (Listed Buildings), 14 of which are grade II while the Parish Church is grade I listed.

A list of the Listed Buildings within the Georgeham Conservation Area is given in Appendix 1

3.2 There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the boundaries of the conservation area, or in the immediate vicinity.

4 Historic Development

4.1 The earliest documentary reference to Georgeham is in Domesday Book, where it is referred to as '*Hama*'. At the time it was held by Tetbald, having been the property of Edmer before 1066. The present name reflects the dedication of the parish church to St George, with the name Georgeham first appearing in 1535. Other names prior to 1535 include '*Ham St. George*' and '*George Ham*'.

Early Ordnance Survey maps of c.1880 and c.1914 are shown in Appendix 3.

4.2 The modern village of Georgeham has extended relatively little since the production of late 19th century OS mapping, when the historic core of the village is depicted. At the time, the village extended in a gentle arc along the stream valley, concentrated to the south-west of the church, between Chapel Street and Church Road. Although largely remodelled, the church of St George retains some medieval elements, and documentary evidence suggests a pre-conquest origin for the settlement.

4.3 Much of the expansion of the village since the end of the 1900s has taken place in the last two decades.

The archaeological background set out below is based on information currently held in Devon County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) to date. This knowledge is likely to evolve and be revised over time.

Prehistoric

4.4 A Neolithic flint axe was found within the northern end of the village. A second flint axe was discovered somewhere within or close to the village, although the exact location is not known. These, and other finds in the wider locality, demonstrate a prehistoric presence in the area, and suggest a possible settlement site in the vicinity.

Roman

4.5 There are no known Roman archaeological sites recorded within the Conservation Area or modern village, nor in the immediate vicinity.

Saxon

4.6 The recording of Georgeham in Domesday suggests that there was a pre-conquest settlement here, although its exact location and scale is not known.

Medieval

4.7 Georgeham almost certainly occupies the area of the medieval settlement - centred on the parish church of St George. Although largely rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries, the parish church retains a number of medieval elements, including the tower, a 13th-century tomb (Mauger de St Aubin, Lord of the Manor at Georgeham, d.1264), a 14th-century sculpted panel and a discarded 13th-century font (found in the churchyard). The exact date of the construction for the medieval church is unknown, however Robert de Edington was described as church patron in 1231 indicating that there was a church in Georgeham at this time, and the first recorded rector was Oliver de Tracey in 1261.

4.8 Little else from this period is known to survive, although Speedwell House is considered to date to the 16th century or earlier (English Heritage Listing Description).

4.9 It is possible, if not likely, that as yet unrecognised medieval elements survive within other houses and cottages in the village.

Post Medieval and Modern

4.10 The development of Georgeham since the middle of the 16th-century has probably been influenced by little other than agricultural trends. The large majority of the surviving historic houses and cottages in the village were built between 1600 and the end of the 19th century. The farm houses of Incedon to the north of the village, and the Conservation Area, is thought to have been built in the 17th century. St George's house, the former vicarage, is late 18th century in date.

4.11 The mildly gothic styled primary school and adjoining schoolmaster's house both date from the Victorian period, with a datestone of 1868 carried along the wall of the school building between the two doorways.

4.12 Two forges, one within the Conservation Area, almost certainly date from the 19th century, as does a quarry, situated just the west of Incedon House, and also outside the area.

4.13 A row of six bee boles (stone beehives) survive to the north-west of the village. The date of these features is not known, but they probably date to the post-medieval period.

4.14 Modern development has spread out from the village to the south and east, with 4 modern detached properties constructed as infill on land between Rock Hill and Incedon House being the only major modern structures within the historic core of the village.

Historic Landscape

4.15 The landscape around Georgeham comprises two distinct areas – that to the south of the village being the remains of medieval enclosures based on strip fields. The area to the north is represented by larger fields, created during the 15th to 18th centuries, in places retaining possible medieval elements.

Archaeological Potential

4.16 The highest potential for the exposure of medieval deposits within the conservation area is within the vicinity of the parish church of St George and land between and adjacent to Chapel Street and Church Road. Within the historic core of the village any development has the potential to disturb archaeological deposits associated with the development of the settlement.

Associations with Pickwell

4.17 From the 13th century onwards the Manors of Georgeham and Pickwell were almost always under the same ownership; the manor house at Pickwell still stands although there is no sign of a manor house at Georgeham, and there is no evidence to suggest there ever was one here, with both estates being run from Pickwell.

4.18 This creates an issue in that if the manor lord lived and administered the manor of Georgeham from Pickwell why was the parish church built at Georgeham? The most likely answer is that there was a Saxon church of some form already in existence at Georgeham and that the present church represents continuity of the site's use for worship.

4.19 It is known that the manor of Georgeham was very small early in its history, possibly even smaller than that of Pickwell until 1261 when Sir Mauger chose to make Georgeham the centre of his manorial possessions even though the holding remained smaller than that at Pickwell.

4.20 Pickwell Manor continued to patronise the church at Georgeham until the mid 18th Century and the side chapel of the church is known as Pickwell Chapel.

Henry Williamson

4.21 The author Henry Williamson moved to Georgeham in 1921 after the first world war, having previously visited his aunt who lived in the village. His first home in the village was Skirr Cottage and it was while living here that he wrote his first published work 'The Beautiful Years' later in 1921.

4.22 Other works such as 'life in...', and 'tales of...', 'a Devon Village' and 'Tarka the Otter', perhaps his most widely known work, were also written while he was living in Georgeham at Skirr, and later Crowberry, Cottage. After marrying and the birth of his first two children he and his family moved to Shallowford near South Molton (1929). His grave lies in the churchyard at Georgeham.

5 Landscape and Setting

5.1 The most prominent and visible feature within the village is the tower of the medieval parish church. With its protruding stair tower its appearance is distinctive and recognisable.

5.2 The village runs along the bottom of a shallow valley, hence its linear form, with hilltops to the west and southeast and a ridge of higher ground running to the north of the village. A tributary of the Crydda runs along the valley floor through the village from its source opposite 'The Courtyard' along the B3231.

5.3 Georgeham is located 3 kilometres inland to the east - northeast of Croyde Bay and 2 kilometres southeast of Putsborough Sand located at the southern end of Morte Bay. Despite this the surrounding landscape, with Pickwell Down to the north and west and Saunton Down to the south, means that no views of the sea and coastline are possible from the village.

5.4 The village is situated within the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a nationally important area of protected natural landscape.

5.5 The main route through the village leads from Croyde in the south to Willingcott and Morteheo in the north. Minor routes also connect Georgeham to the local area, Newberry Road leads to Braunton to the southeast while Putsborough Road leads northwest to Putsborough.

5.6 The existence of a quarry on early ordnance survey maps near Incledon House and the fact that the local slate and shale bedrock is never far below the surface in the area would indicate that local stone quarried on site has been the predominate building material within the village. The widespread use of render makes it difficult to tell how many buildings are constructed of this local stone, and whether the stone was used for entire buildings or just as bases for cob construction.

6 Key Views

6.1 Views from within the conservation area are limited by the surrounding topography and tree cover. The majority of the internal views are channelled along the village's various streets. The view along Netherhams Hill is particularly good as the roofs of several thatched cottages, with their projecting stone rubble chimneys are highly visible from either end of the street.

6.2 Other key views include that to the northeast along Church Road taking in the collection of thatched cottages (Skirr Cottage and Clare Cottage) and their neighbours together with the tower of the parish church protruding from behind them.

The view of Verbena Cottage from Church Street with the tower of the parish church in the background is a key view within the streetscape



conservation area and the village.

6.5 Overhead cables for services are very prominent within the streetscape, often interfering with key views of landmark buildings such as the church and important streetscene views along Church Road and Netherhams Hill.

The view along Netherhams Hill from the south highlights the natural slate roofs along the west end of Church Road



6.3 The view along the curve of Chapel Street slowly unravels as you move along its length. The narrowness of the street and the continual line of wall and hedge on the south side draw the view toward the distance and around the curve of the street.

6.4 Views along the public footpath to the north of Church Road invite further exploration, with the shady green lane bounded by Morte Slate walls leading off over the crest of the hill and into the distance. The view to the east along Rock Hill is also significant, taking in the line of historic development on the north side of the street before leading out of the

7 Architecture

7.1 The majority of the buildings within Georgeham are vernacular in their style, being a mix of modest cottages and terraces. However there are also examples of more formal architecture within the village, such as St George's House, Stable Close and the Primary School.

7.2 The predominant building form within the village is the vernacular cottage. This in turn leads to the very regular two storey building height found within the conservation area, with only the eastern end of Forge House having three storeys. The typical roof covering is either natural slate or thatch, although some buildings have red clay pantiles (such as The Haven) and others have been re-roofed with modern interlocking concrete tiles.

7.3 Within the vernacular cottages casement style windows are the most common, most often being of twin opening lights with each light being separated into two glazed panes by a horizontal glazing bar. Some of these cottages do have historic sliding sashes, such as Coral Cottage along Chapel Street, or Hill Park Cottage on Putsborough Road which has casements except for a single ground floor sash which may represent a later window inserted into the building. Others have had modern replacement windows in either uPVC or timber, highlighted by the use of top hung lights which are not traditional features. Examples at Hill Park and Windsor Cottage on Church Road, show where inconsistent use of false glazing bars highlights the inability of uPVC casements to adequately replicate timber sashes.

The former forge, now Forge House, represents an oddity within the village being the only building to have more than two storeys



Casement windows are most common within the village although sashes are present, occasionally with both present on a single building



7.4 Buildings would appear to be most often constructed of local stone then rendered over, with some outbuildings and Stable Close being good examples of buildings in local stone left unrendered. As the majority of the domestic buildings are rendered it is difficult to tell how many of them may be constructed of cob, however none appear to display the uneven wall finish which often betrays cob construction and it may be that most are constructed entirely of local stone. There are known cob buildings, the field barn at the northern end of the conservation area (within the proposed extension) being a clear example. Perrymans No. 1 on Netherhams Hill is certainly cob, as is the main facade of Orchard Dene, Speedwell on Church Road and Rosemary's Cottage on Chapel Street, while Kentisbury Cottage is another strong possibility for cob construction.

7.5 Dormer windows are not generally found in the conservation area, although they do appear on a few properties such as The Haven. Slate hanging is similarly uncommon but can be found on the west side of Hill Park on Church Road. This property was formerly thatched but this was replaced with the present slate roof following a fire.

7.6 **St George's House represents the most prominent piece of formal architecture within the village**

George's House is the most prominent piece of formal architecture within the village and was formerly the rectory for the neighbouring parish church. The principal facade of the building faces towards the church not the road, however the formal driveway, passing between a pair of gatepiers topped with classical style carved stone vases, does lead out to Chapel Street. Both the building and its walls and gatepiers are grade II listed. The principal facade is laid out according to the strict symmetry of classical and Georgian architecture, with two identical bays of 4 tall sashes arranged around a central doorway surrounded by classical columns and a single sash on the first floor directly above this doorway.



7.7 Springfields to the north stands within a former walled garden, of which some sections of the wall still stand and are visible from the roadside. Springfields itself is a modern building, probably dating to the 1940's, with attached garage and wide, low dormers inserted into the roof pitch. A forward projecting gable, as well as the tops of the side gable-ends, have tile hanging.

7.8 Further to the north of Springfields are a series of detached houses and conversions from former agricultural buildings, such as barns and stables. These buildings are larger and set in bigger plots than the buildings in the heart of the village. They are also more heavily shielded from view, often only visible in glimpses through trees. Incedon House is more formal in its architectural style, while other buildings which have been converted from agricultural buildings such as Incedon Mews still retain the character of their formal uses.

7.9 At the far north of the conservation area buildings take on a more rural appearance, with Kentisbury Cottage, Incedon Cottage and the 17th century former Incedon Farm (now Higher Ham House and associated conversions) all contributing to this. The conversion to residential use of the farm buildings of Incedon Farm has created a pleasant courtyard of buildings which still retain much of their agricultural and historic character.

8 Surface Treatment and Street Furniture

8.1 The majority of the surfaces within the village are modern tarmac finishes, although stretches of traditional cobbled surfaces do still survive. Along the east wall of the churchyard is a fine example, with a recessed drainage channel also surviving within the cobbled surface. Another stretch of cobbles survives along the eastern end of Church Road. It is likely that the cobbled surface remains to a good extent protected under the modern tarmac.

The surviving cobbles road surface to the east of the churchyard



8.2 Two elements of street furniture stand out within the village. The first is a finger-post sign at the corner of Newberry Road and Chapel Street, which is standing within overgrown bushes and has had modern highways signage attached in contrast to the traditional cast iron signage fingers higher up.

The traditional finger-post road sign adds some character at the junction of Newberry Road and Chapel Street



8.3 The other piece of street furniture is a wall mounted post box set into the wall of Churchsea Cottage along Church Road. The box is a modern example but its traditional appearance does complement the streetscene.

9 Boundary Changes May 2010

9.1 There are several areas where extensions to the original conservation area of 1975 have been made.

Locations of extensions to the conservation area boundary adopted in May 2010 are given in Appendix 4(III)

9.2 To the west of the original area a path runs to the south between 1 Putsborough Close and 1 Putsborough Road where it leads to several disused agricultural buildings, including a stable with round rough stone columns supporting the roof, the spaces between which have been subsequently infilled with stonework and window openings. These buildings were associated with Perryman's Farm, which in turn was part of the Pickwell estate. This extension also includes 1 Putsborough Road and 'The Old Orchard'.

The old stables to the south of Putsborough Close are survivals that reflect the village's past and should be retained



9.3 Another extension to the north brought Hill Park Cottage and the rear portions of several garden plots into the conservation area. This means that all buildings on the northern side of Church Road are included within the conservation area.

9.4 A small modification of the boundary brings the whole of Rock Haven and its plot within the boundary of the conservation area, as the boundary previously ran through the building.

9.5 An extension to the north west of the original conservation area includes the garden and associated walls of Incedon Cottage, as well as covering a strip of land which forms the setting of the road, stream and cob field barn in this area. The southern end of this extension includes the walls of the former walled garden and their setting.

9.6 A final extension covers the east side of the B3231 and the 4 modern villa buildings which currently occupy a gap along the main road through the original conservation area. These buildings fit in with the character of the northern part of the conservation area, being large detached buildings in generous garden plots. Despite being modern buildings they respect the character of the northern part of the conservation area and their exclusion from the conservation area left a large gap, for which they are included in an extension.

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 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.

10.3 The large plots of buildings at the northern end of the conservation area present the possibility of infill development. If carried out unsympathetically infill development could have a detrimental effect on the character of this part of the conservation area.

10.4 Traffic and tourism has a major impact on the village, being located on the main vehicular route between Croyde and Woolacombe. Relatively high levels of two way traffic attempt to navigate the narrow stretch of Chapel Street, often leading to congestion. The nature of the southern end of the conservation area with dwellings not possessing areas for off-road parking means that parked cars can add to the congestion of the streets, although this is by no means a simple problem to resolve.

11 The Future

11.1 The aim of this character appraisal has been to identify which buildings, open spaces, and features from Georgeham'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 Georgeham Conservation Area

Chapel Street

Address	Listing Grade
Rosemary Cottage	II
Millies Cottage	II
St. George's House	II
Gatepiers, Flanking walls & Railings 20m east of St. Georges House	II
Stable Close	II

Church Road

Address	Listing Grade
Church of St George	I
Skirr Cottage, Clare Cottage, Verbena Cottage	II
Vale Cottage	II

Higher Ham

Address	Listing Grade
Inclendon Cottage and Kentisbury Cottage	II
Inclendon Farm	II

Netherhams Hill

Address	Listing Grade
Perrymans One	II
Speedwell House and Adjoining Outbuilding to West	II

Rock Hill

Address	Listing Grade
Rock Hill Cottage & Sunnyside	II
The Hive	II
Rock House	II

2 Appendix 2 - Glossary

Facade : The principal elevation of a building, often being its grandest and most lavishly decorated. Sometimes a facade can be remodelled to give the impression of a more modern, or grander, building than that which relay lies behind it.

Formal Architecture : Architecture based on a set of stylistic rules, such as classical architecture which is driven by scale and symmetry, where the design and appearance of the building is ultimately more importance than its functionality. Such styles may require importing building materials or disguising unattractive local materials them through the use of renders.

Gothic : An Architectural style associated with the mediaeval period, incorporating windows with pointed heads and in some cases decorated tracery, the style became fashionable during the late Georgian and early Victorian periods and let to the Gothic Revival'

PPG15 / 16 : 'Planning Policy Guidance' 15 deals with 'Planning and the Historic Environment' and sets out national policy with regard to Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas etc within the planning system. PPG16 deals with Archaeology and Planning, often in terms of the need for archaeological investigation prior to development or re-development of a site or protection of known archaeological remains.

Revival Architecture : The Victorian era saw architects seeking inspiration from past architectural styles and developing techniques by which to replicate their grandeur to varying degrees of success, Classical, Gothic, and Egyptian architecture enjoyed revivals during this period.

Roofscape : The levels, pitches and variety of coverings and decorative elements, such as chimney stacks and barge-boards, which combine to create a view across a 'landscape' of building roofs.

Slate-Hanging : The practice of applying slates to a vertical surface, either directly or hung from applied timber batons, primarily to elevations facing prevailing winds but sometimes to several elevations, in order to provide additional weather protection to the wall of a building. Sometimes the slates used are shaped so as to produce a pattern when applied.

Street Clutter : Street Furniture which has a negative impact on the street scene, either through the generic nature of its appearance, its inappropriate positioning, the excessive use of similar items (such as excessive numbers of road signs) or its poor condition or initial design quality.

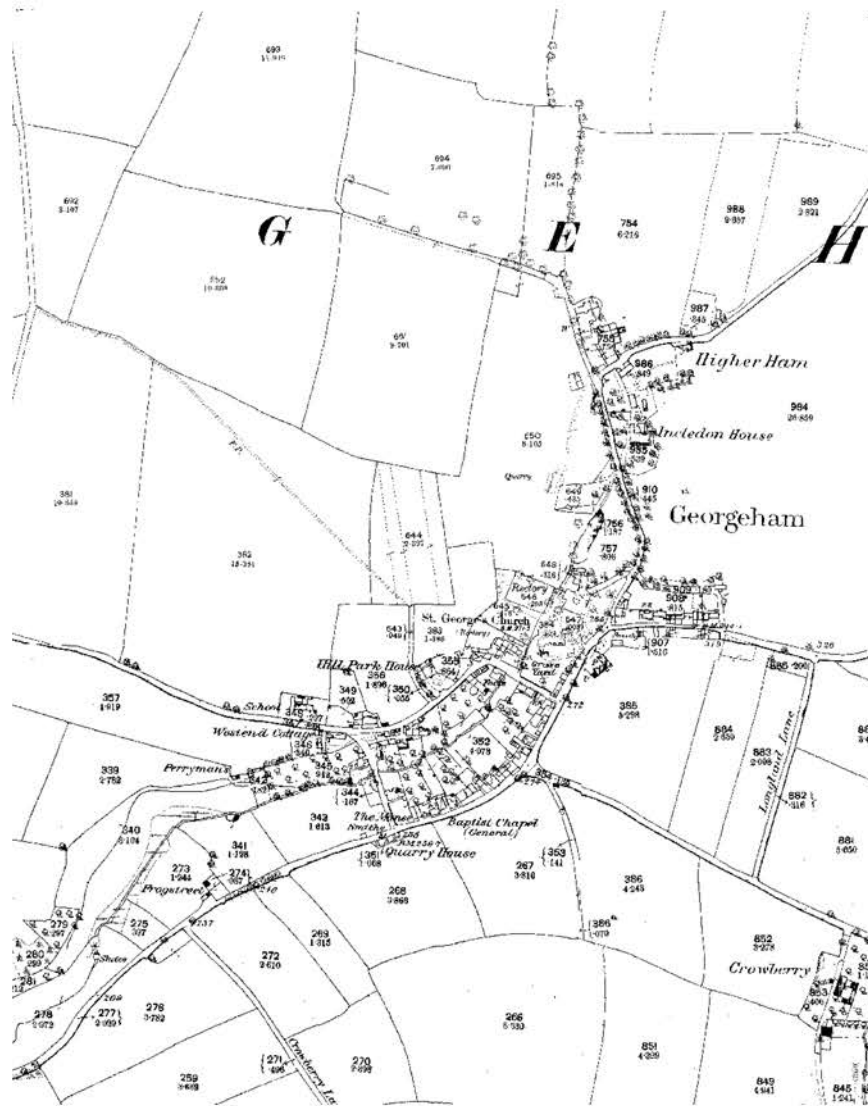
Street Furniture : Any object within the streetscape that is not a building, for example street-lamps, signs, benches, litter bins. The term is usually used in the manner that it excludes features which could be better described as 'Street Clutter'.

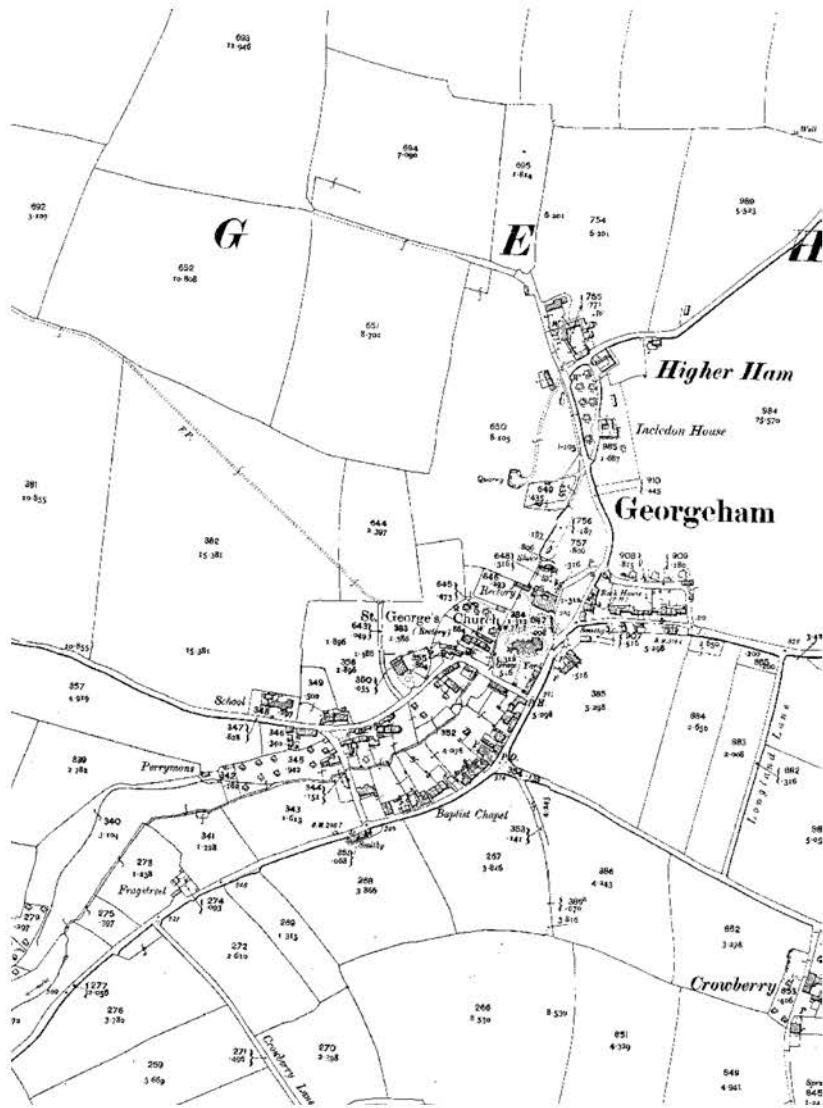
Vernacular Architecture : As opposed to 'Formal Architecture' Vernacular describes buildings designed by local builders or craftsmen often without the involvement of an architect and utilising whatever materials and skills were available locally. This led to distinctive local building styles growing up around the country where differing materials were available and different prevailing weather conditions existed.

3 Appendix 3 - Historic Mapping

I - 1st Series Ordnance Survey Map c.1880

II - Ordnance Survey Map c.1914





4 Appendix 4 - Conservation Area Mapping

I - Key

II - Existing Conservation Area Boundary & Listed Buildings

III - Changes to the Existing Boundary Made in May 2010

IV - Building Heights

V - Key Views

