

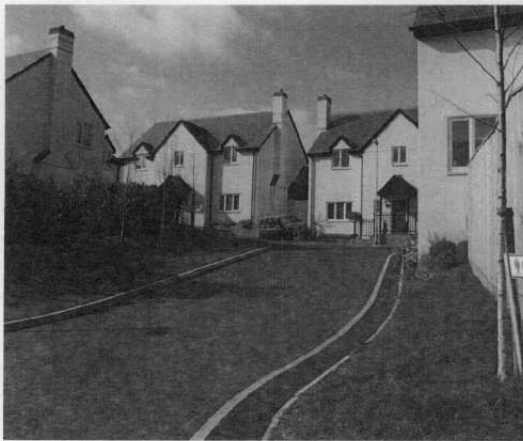
Sidbury Interim Conservation Area Review

Purpose of the Review

There is a requirement under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 of all local authorities to review their conservation areas and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Reviews must be carried out every five years as the character and appearance of a conservation area can change over even small periods of time. The purpose of this interim review is to identify the principal changes since the publication of the Conservation Area Appraisal and to outline potential changes to the conservation area boundary which will form part of a full consultation exercise when the draft Management Plan is produced.

Key recent changes in Sidbury Conservation Area.

- New housing built just outside the conservation area, to the north, with suburban-style landscaping, pavements and wide visibility splays to roads.
- UPVC windows have been installed on non-listed houses in the town centre that were originally on the local list.
- Several very modern new stainless steel streetlights have been installed in Church Street.
- Pressures from motor traffic have increased and a 20mph speed limit has been introduced through the historic part of the village. This has necessitated large new 20mph signs and road markings at each road into the centre of village.
- The listed Chapel in Chapel Street has been decommissioned and sold to a private owner.



New housing development just north of the conservation area.



Modern incongruous street lighting in Church Street.

Potential review of conservation area boundary.

There is a risk that future development within the built-up-area boundary could spoil some of the views out from the undulating main street of the conservation area. There is considerable amount of undeveloped land and at least one potential brownfield site within the built-up area boundary outside the conservation area. These are either visible from the conservation area or within the important approaches to it.

It is also recommended that consideration be given to extending the conservation area west of the Village Social Hall to include at least Vine Cottage but possibly also Little Farthings and the land to the rear of Fore Street, possibly following the line of the built up area boundary.

It would be advisable for the conservation area boundary to more closely follow the built-up area boundary to the south of Fore Street, at Long Close. This would help to ensure some further control over any future infill development in this important and highly visible area.

These aspects of conservation area review will be fully considered during the consultation process.



View across bridge to Vine Cottage, an area of Sidbury that continues the character of the adjacent conservation area.

Principle reasons for erosion or changes to conservation area character.

- There is some confusion over street lighting design which ranges from very modern to adaptations of old lamp standards. There needs to be a coordinated effort to ensure that future street lighting and other highway improvements are sympathetic to the character of the conservation area.
- There are some unfortunate examples of PVCu windows being installed in key historic buildings. While this is currently permitted development home owners need to be fully aware of the implications of installing inappropriate windows.
- The increase in very heavy traffic and large vehicles has caused some damage to roads, pavements, walls and trees. Traffic calming measures may well have limited effect, but the visual impact of signs and road paint has a detrimental impact upon the character of the area. There are more subtle ways to achieve the same traffic calming measures.

SIDBURY

Prepared for East Devon District Council by John Fisher BA, MA, MRTPI
with contributions from Town and Parish Councils and Amenity Societies in East Devon

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SIDBURY



View towards village centre from Buckley Hill.

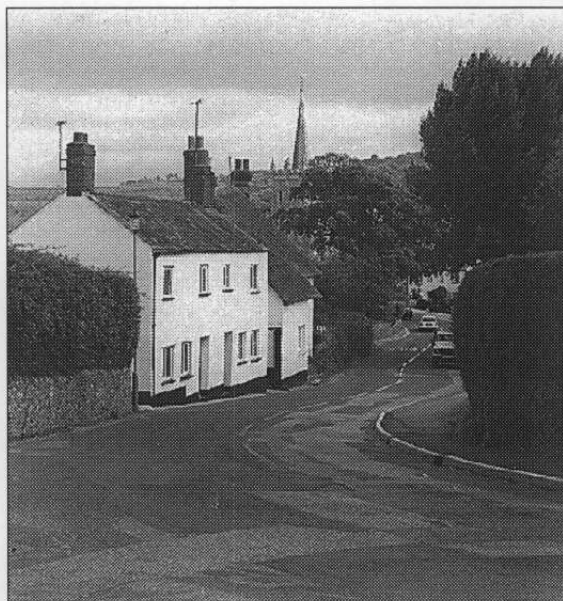
1 HISTORIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

1.1 Sidbury has a particularly fine setting in the deep valley of the River Sid among the Blackdown foothills with their characteristic tree-clad greensand escarpments. The village is at the heart of an extensive parish which also includes Sidford, one mile to the south. Dominating the centre is the Parish Church of St Giles which Hoskins considers to be one of the more interesting Devon churches. A Saxon crypt which can be entered was discovered in 1898 under the chancel. It is one of very few in Britain.

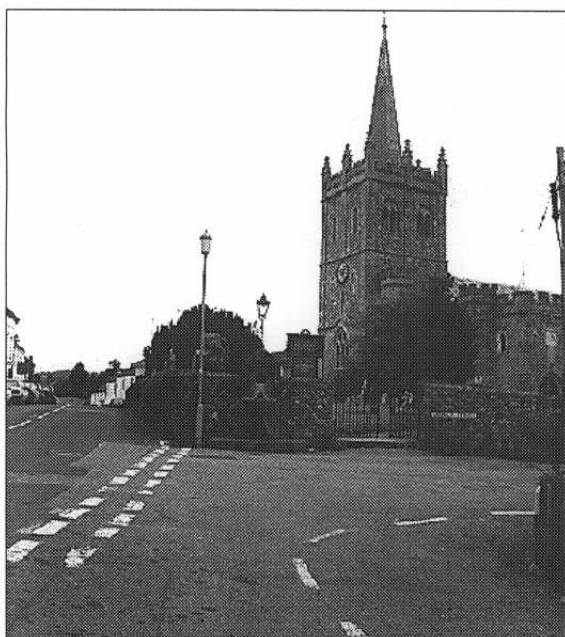
1.2 Court House is part Elizabethan although was largely reconstructed in the early 18th century. There is a pleasant walk along the riverside and mill leat. About three-quarters of a mile to the south west of the village is Sidbury Castle, an Iron Age hill fort; the pear shaped enclosure is 1300 feet in length and up to 400 feet in width, surrounded by a double rampart and ditch.

1.3 Scattered across the parish are several farms and large houses dating from the 16th century, for example, Sand about half a mile to the north-east, and Lincombe Farm, one and a half miles to the north-west. Sidbury Manor House northwest of the village is a large late 19th century house and replaces a much earlier building which was sited about 500 metres to the southwest of the present building. The house is set in a large

park with two lakes and several waterfalls formed by a small tributary of the River Sid which flows through the northern part of the village.



Approach to Fore Street from Chapel Street.



The Parish Church is a prominent feature both within the village centre and when glimpsed across the surrounding landscape.

2 SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 Sidbury Conservation Area includes most of the historic core of the village, which has managed to retain its character and rural atmosphere to a remarkable extent in view of how close the outer suburbs of Sidmouth have encroached to surround Sidford barely a mile to the south of the village.

2.2 The conservation area was originally designated by Devon County Council prior to the formation of the District Council in 1974. Following publication of the Sidmouth Conservation Study by Devon County Planning Department in August 1975, recommendations were made for some extensions, most notably the inclusion of much of Chapel Street, and the revisions were formally incorporated on January 1977.

2.3 Within the existing conservation area are about 85 individually listed buildings giving 46 separate list entries. There are also an additional 6 non-statutory local list entries covering a further 12 dwellings. Both types are shown on Map 1.

3 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Sidbury is a self-contained and quite large village with a close-knit almost urban quality, and is particularly characterised by the extent and uniformity of cottages in thatch and rendered cob or stone, mainly white painted with black tar band. The informal layout with several converging streets is probably medieval in layout. Many farms of 16th century origin and with names that go back centuries earlier suggest a locality of great antiquity.

3.2 Nevertheless the conservation area is sufficiently large for it to be conveniently subdivided into four separate identity areas.

1 Ridgeway/Cotford Road/Church Street/Fore Street (north)

3.2 At the centre of the village and attractively grouped in several short terraces mostly facing the church are a number of whitewashed cottages, some thatched, others slated. To the north of the stream a further V-shaped terrace provides a pleasant visual stop to this part of the village. Beyond there are loosely grouped cottages and farmhouses, a considerable number of which are listed. There is also some recent, but largely unobtrusive infilling or conversion of former outbuildings to residential use.

2 Bridge Street/Fore Street (south)

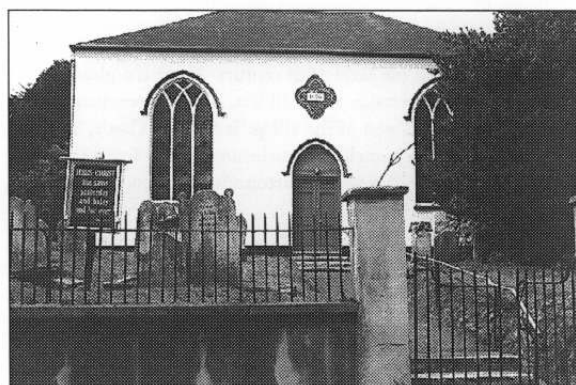
3.3 This area contains the two most attractive approaches into the village centre. Bridge Street has a remarkably complete range of thatched cottages on its north side. The gentle descending approach from Chapel Street into Fore Street has some of the pleasantest vistas and is still surprisingly open in character until reaching the village centre with the church never far from view.

3 Chapel Street area

3.4 Chapel Street also contains a very impressive range of cottages forming an almost continuous frontage and of important group value. These were mainly added to the statutory list in 1972 and constitute an important feature on entering the village. On the opposite side, the Chapel dated 1826 set back on rising ground within its own churchyard and enclosed by metal railings complements the attractive streetscape in what is a somewhat detached part of the village.

4 Buckley and area of Associated Landscape

3.5 Within the conservation area and east of the village centre is a considerable area of associated landscape forming the lower part of the valley of the River Sid which is fringed by many trees and forms an enclosed space within the wider landscape. It also forms a natural break between the village centre and the scattering of dwellings and agricultural buildings between Bonfire Cross and Buckley Road which are visually quite separate from the main village.



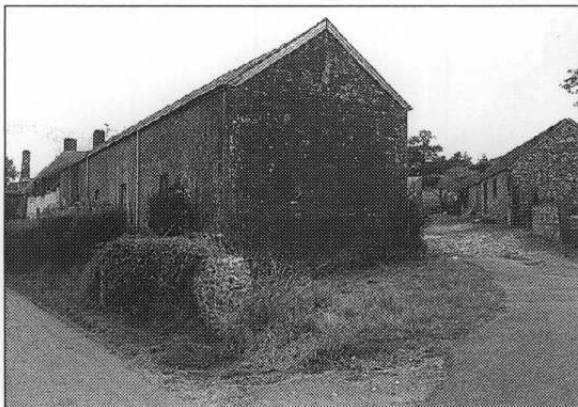
Chapel Street; Congregational Chapel dated 1820.



A fine group of thatch and cob cottages in Bridge Street. Almost all have thatched porches.



Church Street; open views south along river valley.



The small hamlet of Buckley is on higher ground across the valley. There is a good group of farm buildings at Long Barn House.

4 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

4.1 Sidbury enjoys a particularly fine setting within the well-defined valley of the River Sid about half-way along its course to the sea. Whilst the village is only 50 metres above sea level, hills rise to over 200 metres either side. This ensures that there is a backdrop of wooded slopes from many vantage points within the conservation area and also that the village can be appreciated in its fine setting from many vantage points within the surrounding countryside.

4.2 The many glimpses of the village seen as an entity in its rural setting with the church spire as focal point, and also marked by the sharp inter-relation between landscape and built environment is best appreciated at and beyond Stoney Bridge at the foot of Bridge Street.

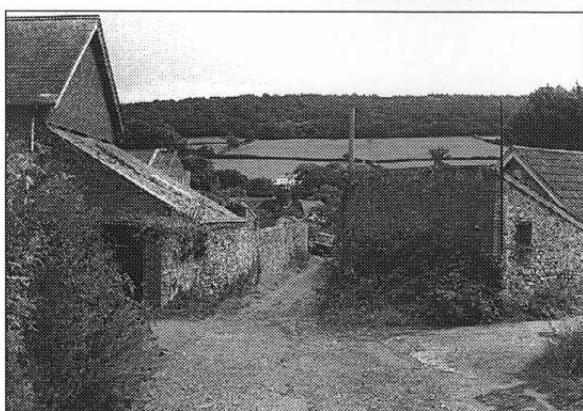
4.3 Within the village, there are no formally contrived landscapes, apart from the centrally positioned churchyard and the usual configuration of yew trees between paths, grassed areas and headstones. The retaining wall to the south and east is typical in being overgrown with rich vegetation including much valerian.

4.4 Trees within the village are often substantial and quite numerous, mainly within gardens and paddocks with several prominent specimens, including a particularly fine cork oak (*Quercus suber*) at Court House.

4.5 To the east of the conservation area is the start of the remains of the extensive area of parkland associated with the Manor House situated almost a mile to the northwest (1.3). This contains some fine specimens of mainly deciduous trees and forms an important landscape setting and backdrop to this part of the village.



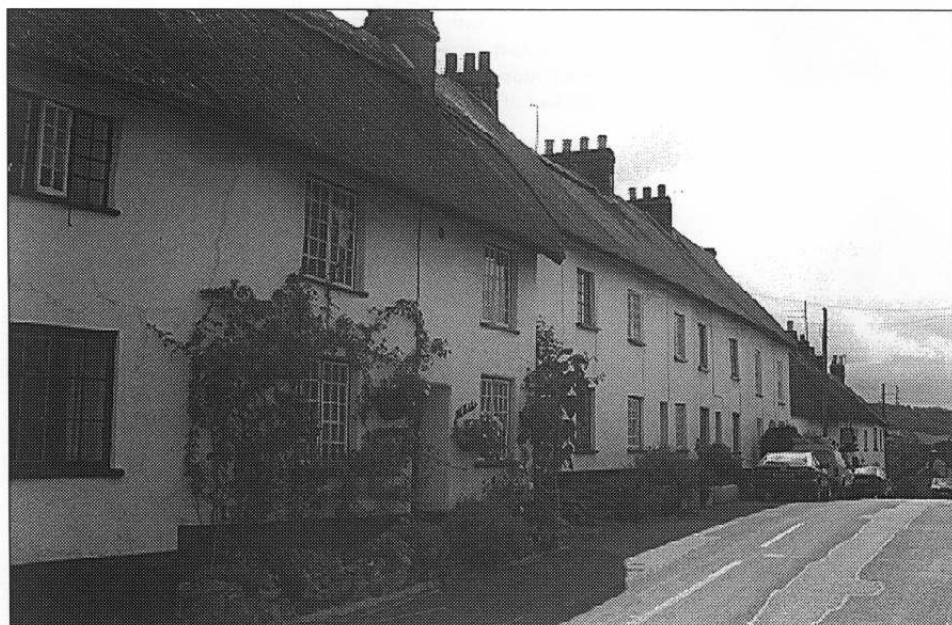
Fore Street, Court House; the mid 19c rebuilt wing.



Unmade track and farm building groups off Fore Street.



Lodge to Sidbury Manor, west of the village centre



Chapel Street has the largest group of thatched cottages. Several have early casement windows and plain recessed doorways giving an overall restraint which typifies good vernacular detail.



Other attractive cottage groups are to the north of the village centre in Ridgeway and Cotford Road.



of thatch with a plain ridge, and level or occasionally slightly swept eaves, but no dormers.

6.2 In other parts of the village slate is the predominant roofing material, for example in Fore Street and the east side of Church Street. In some locations natural slate has been patched or completely replaced with artificial substitutes to the detriment of the village where sharp differences in level can make roof-level views very prominent.

6.3 Exposed rubble-stone, mainly locally obtainable chert, provides a pleasant contrast to the prevailing whitewash. It is seen in several locations; perhaps most notably the Parish Church, with Beer Stone detailing and including recent restoration. Chert is also widely used in boundary walls and often combined with brick in 19th century agricultural buildings which tend to be roofed in slate or in variations of Bridgwater pantiles.

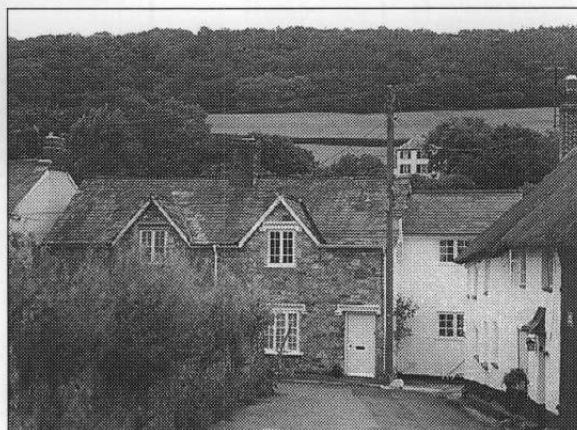
5 HARD SURFACES

5.1 In spite of its overall attractiveness Sidbury has retained almost no original traditional surface materials, such as setts or cobbled areas. Narrow verges fronting cottages often exhibit an appealing informality of broken edges.

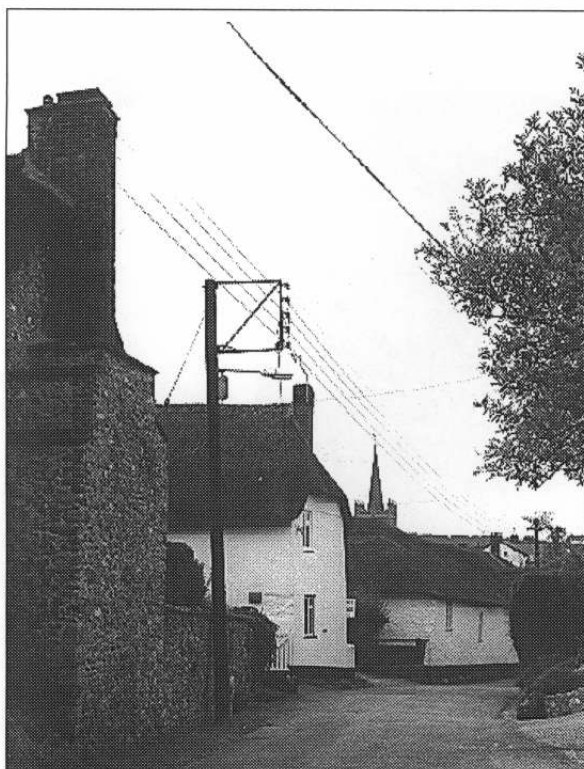
5.2 Some outlying parts of the village have unmade tracks and randomly surfaced farmyards which maintain a rural atmosphere. This could easily be lost if conversion to residential use were to occur and matters of design detail not given careful consideration.

6 BUILDING MATERIALS AND ORNAMENT

6.1 A large part of the attractiveness of Sidbury derives from the balance of traditional building materials and the overall sense of equilibrium in most of the village. There is much vernacular building, mainly 17th century onwards, of plastered and white-washed cob on a stone base with tar bands. Roofs are frequently



Stone and slate provides an occasional pleasing contrast.



Further groups of thatched cottages in Ridgeway and Church Street respectively. Overhead power lines are sometimes intrusive.



Fore Street contains a mixture of shops, inns and houses of up to three storeys with painted render and slate predominating. Insensitive replacements have damaged some frontages.



6.4 In common with many of the better preserved East Devon villages, Sidbury does seem for the most part to have maintained remarkably good taste in respect of retention or replacement of traditional doors and windows with wood or metal casements and double-hung sash windows. Glazing bars can allow up to 15 (5x3) lights; although 6 is more common. One or two examples of decorative fenestration with margin lights, reminiscent of Regency Sidmouth are to be seen. Nevertheless inappropriate doors, windows and facing materials are making gradual inroads. Vigilance and sensitivity is therefore vital to ensure that suitable design detail is maintained in its present form as far as possible.

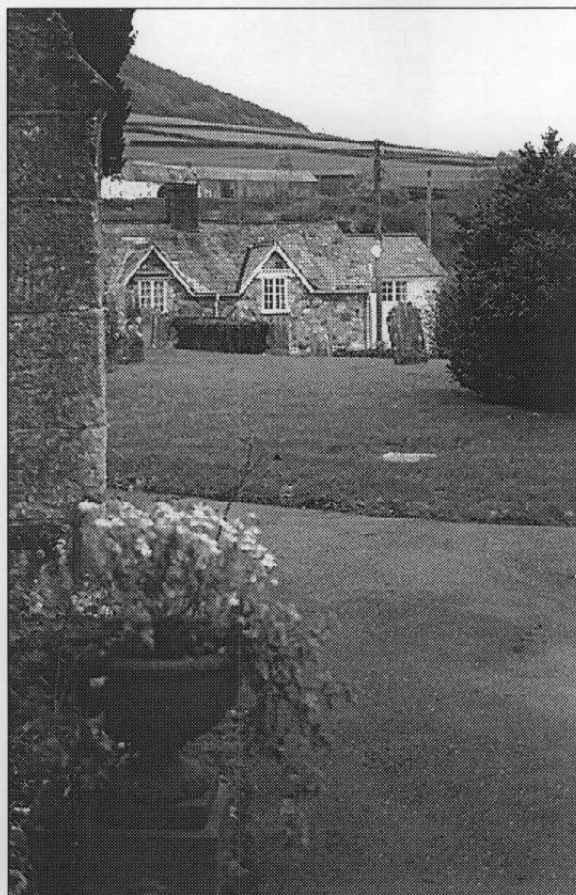
7 STREET FURNITURE AND SPECIAL FEATURES

7.1 Sidbury has a number of important spaces enclosed by stone walls or metal railings, most notably the churchyard where there are good footpath links. Attached to the southwest corner of the churchyard is a drinking fountain topped by a former gas lamp was provided in commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

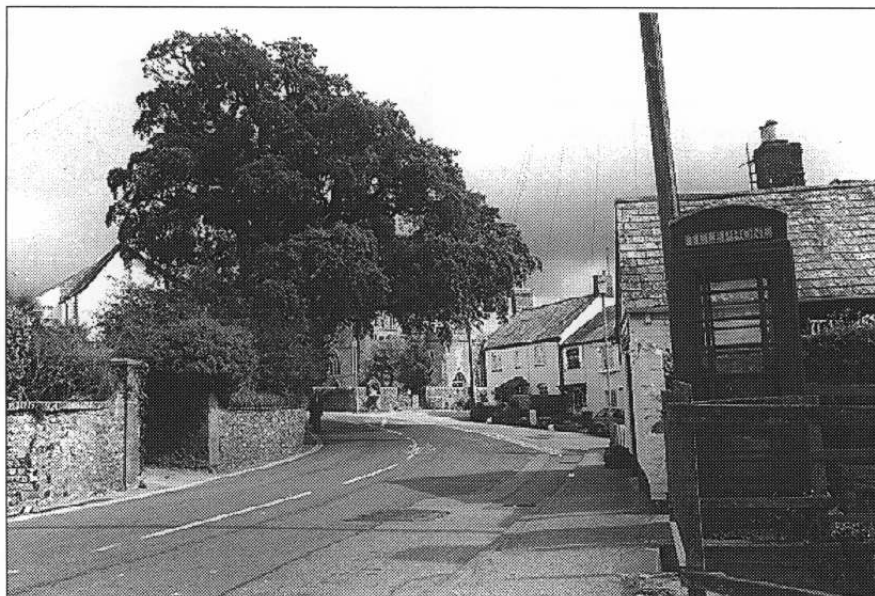
7.2 Streetlighting is of a fitting style in some important locations, but where attached to overhead power line posts is unattractive and the two together are a considerable eyesore as well as being badly positioned in places.



A useful footpath link runs alongside the church between Fore Street and Church Street.



The churchyard both faces towards the village centre and provides views towards the surrounding countryside. This relationship sometimes makes roofs appear particularly prominent.



Closer to the village centre a large Cork Oak dominates the street scene. The telephone kiosk is listed.

8 SYNOPSIS OF IMPORTANT BUILDINGS

8.1 The **Parish Church of St Giles** is described in Pevsner and Cherry as "unusual and rewarding...with medieval work of all periods". The tower and chancel are Norman and the nave Transitional. The two-storey vaulted porch is Perpendicular. There was originally a heavier stone spire which was replaced by a wooden one during restoration c.1845, and the present one added in 1895. The crypt is Saxon and not discovered until 1898.

8.2 The **Congregational Chapel** on a raised site, dates from 1820 and has a broad fairly plain frontage with arches, rendered gate piers, and an arched overthrow as an additional entrance feature.

8.3 Sidbury contains an unusually large number of listed cottages in attractive terraced groups. These are mainly in cob and thatch, but also with some pleasing contrasts in stone and slate with touches of vernacular detailing in porches and moulded labels.

8.4 **Court House** is in a dominant situation just south of the village centre. It is a large south and east facing essentially 16th-18th century house with plain mullioned windows and a central doorway on the south elevation and sash windows with narrow glazing bars forming a two-storey segmental bay on the north elevation which is part of the 18th century extension.

8.5 The **Village Hall** dating from 1924 is by Walter Cave and has modest Arts and Crafts touches.

Important Buildings outside the Conservation Area

8.6 As is typical of the southern outliers of the Blackdown Hills, there is a "warm and fertile"¹ vale containing long established farmsteads and small manors. Hoskins notes that **Buckton**

and **Harcombe Farms** are mentioned in the dean and chapter archives (c.1200) at Exeter, and that **Manstone Farm** has some considerable remains of medieval work. **Sand Barton**, half a mile northeast is first mentioned c.1175 and the present house is a beautiful example of small stone-built Tudor manor with mullioned windows and panelled interior built 1594-1600 by Rowland Huyshe, and still occupied by the Huyshe family.

8.7 **Sidbury Manor** as earlier described (1.3) was rebuilt on a new site in 1879 as a considerable mansion for Sir Stephen Cave a member of Disraeli's cabinet in an extensive parkland setting to the northwest of the village. There are several estate cottages, one example adjoining the village just beyond the conservation area. Between about 1890 and 1910 Walter Cave designed several interesting houses for the estate, most being influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement.²

9 FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

9.1 Among the qualities that contribute to the essential characteristics of the conservation area are the following:

- the fine setting of the village in the Sid valley on a slight prominence above the river
- a well-defined centre with important building groups often displaying attractive uniformity of use of building materials and texture yet displaying subtle differences of alignment and proportion and outline
- excellent groups of well maintained and carefully preserved vernacular buildings many retaining original features and attractive detailing; e.g. thatched porches, casement windows with narrow glazing bars, plain or panelled painted timber doors, some in deep recesses

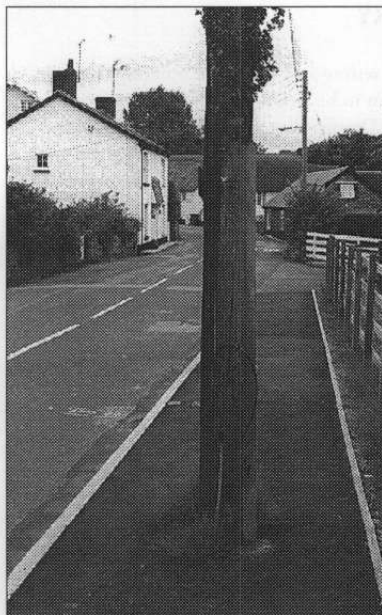
¹ see *Devon* by W.G. Hoskins p.476 ² See Pevsner and Cherry p.733-34 for details

- significant areas of associated landscape of special importance to the setting of the village
- significant changes in level and in frontage alignment provide constantly changing vistas and a pleasing combination of open and closed views at different points throughout the village
- several noteworthy groups of surviving farm buildings
- a rich combination of natural building materials; mainly cob and thatch; or brick, stone or stucco with slate
- attractive views into the village from its immediate and more distant surroundings, mainly set against a backdrop of wooded hills and dominated by the Parish Church tower and spire
- the almost urban dominance of the Parish Church within a large churchyard enclosed by walls and with cottages attractively grouped around it, especially to the south and east
- especially attractive and almost completely unspoilt approaches into the village along Church Street, Bridge Street, Ridgeway, and Chapel Street north of Pound Close
- a red K6 telephone kiosk
- several fine specimen trees, especially the cork oak at Court House

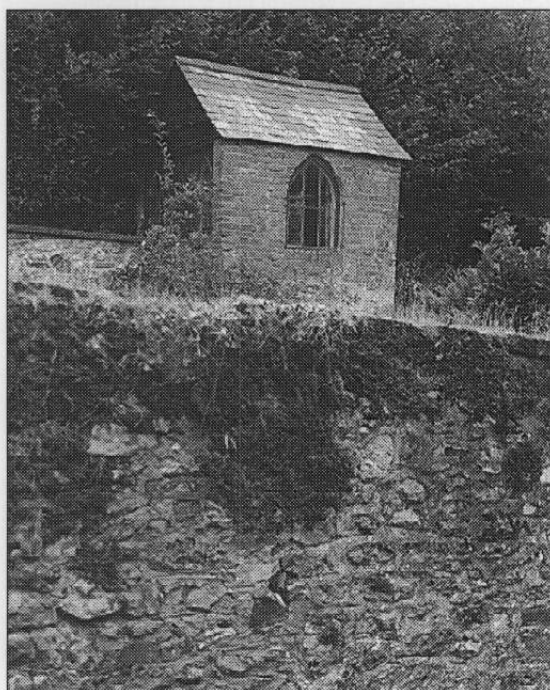
10 LOSS OF CHARACTER AND INTRUSION

10.1 The following elements are tending to lead to intrusion and loss of character within the conservation area:

- prominent overhead lines, especially on the northern and southern approaches to the village centre
- narrow lanes, sparse pavements and tight bends posing a potential traffic hazard at several points in the village
- loss of original detail, particularly to some ground floor commercial premises in the village centre, and replacement of natural slate with artificial substitutes



Cotford Road; badly positioned overhead power supply.



An attractive 19th century summerhouse at Buckley House.

11 SUMMARY

11.1 In terms of its setting and quality of building conservation, Sidbury can claim to be among the most attractive and well maintained of East Devon villages, although there is some slight loss of character at the village centre and streetlighting and prominent overhead power lines as well as TV aerials do tend to considerably detract from the overall character.

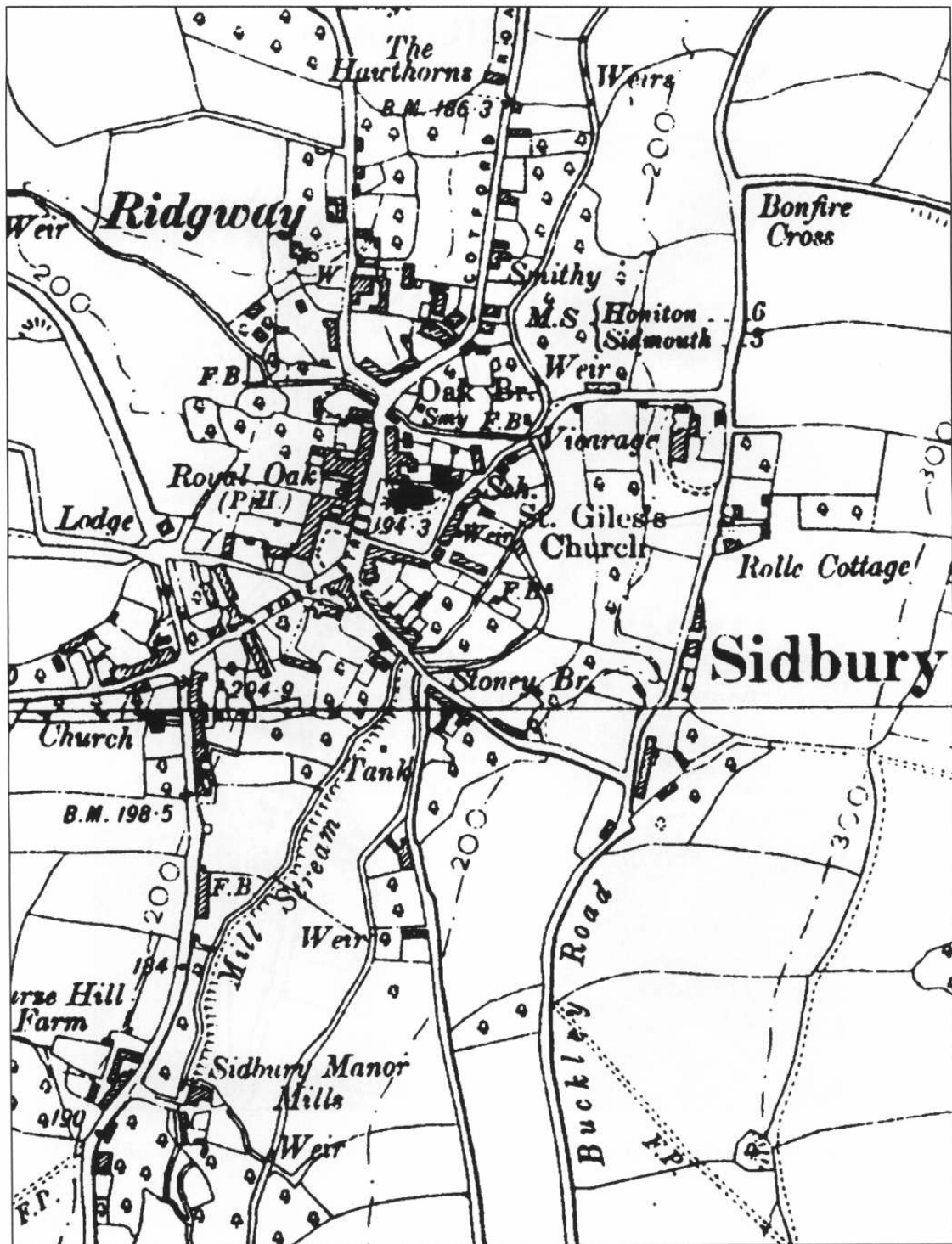
11.2 Sidbury is a village where as little change as possible should be anticipated and where appropriate conservation of existing features should be the major consideration with a programme of enhancement to eliminate unsightly features. There is a perceived threat to some agricultural buildings, currently unaltered but apparently under-used, and likewise their immediate surroundings if the prospect of conversion to residential use arises.

11.3 The importance of trees in this fine setting cannot be overemphasised, and the current boundary is possibly too tightly drawn to take account of all the good examples, for example towards the north and west of the village centre where those beyond the present boundary may not have adequate statutory protection. Nevertheless it is accepted that mature trees in historic landscape settings are often cherished and adequately managed or replaced by responsible landowners without the need for additional control. In such a context it is recommended that any proposals for an extension to the conservation area that would incorporate associated landscape should first form part of a local consultation exercise.

HISTORIC MAPS








1805 Devon County Survey: Scale: originally 3 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of the report)

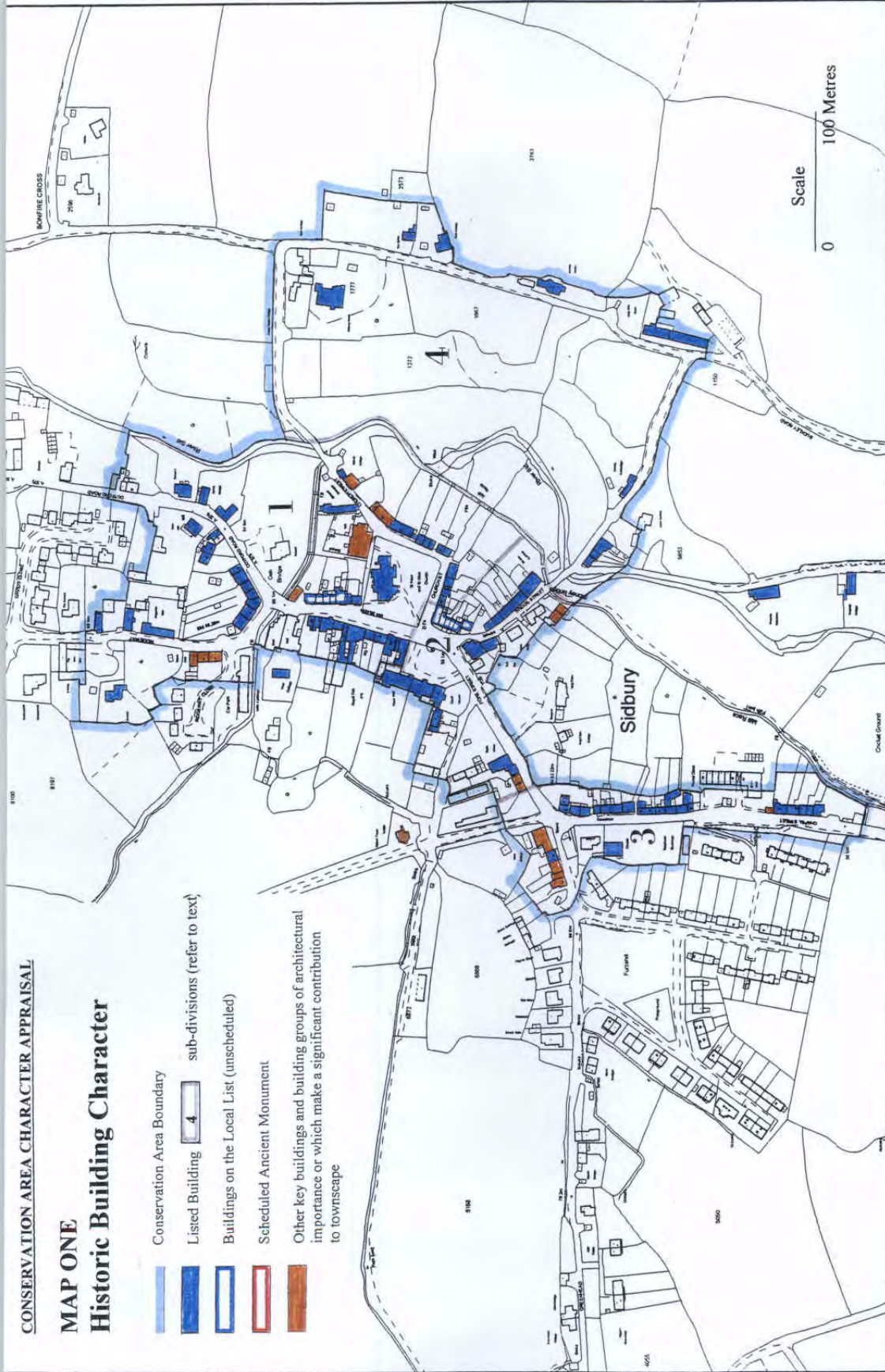


Early 20th Century Ordnance Survey Second Edition or Provisional Edition. Scale originally 6 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of fitting the report)

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP ONE Historic Building Character

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Building sub-divisions (refer to text)
-  Buildings on the Local List (unscheduled)
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument
-  Other key buildings and building groups of architectural importance or which make a significant contribution to townscape

















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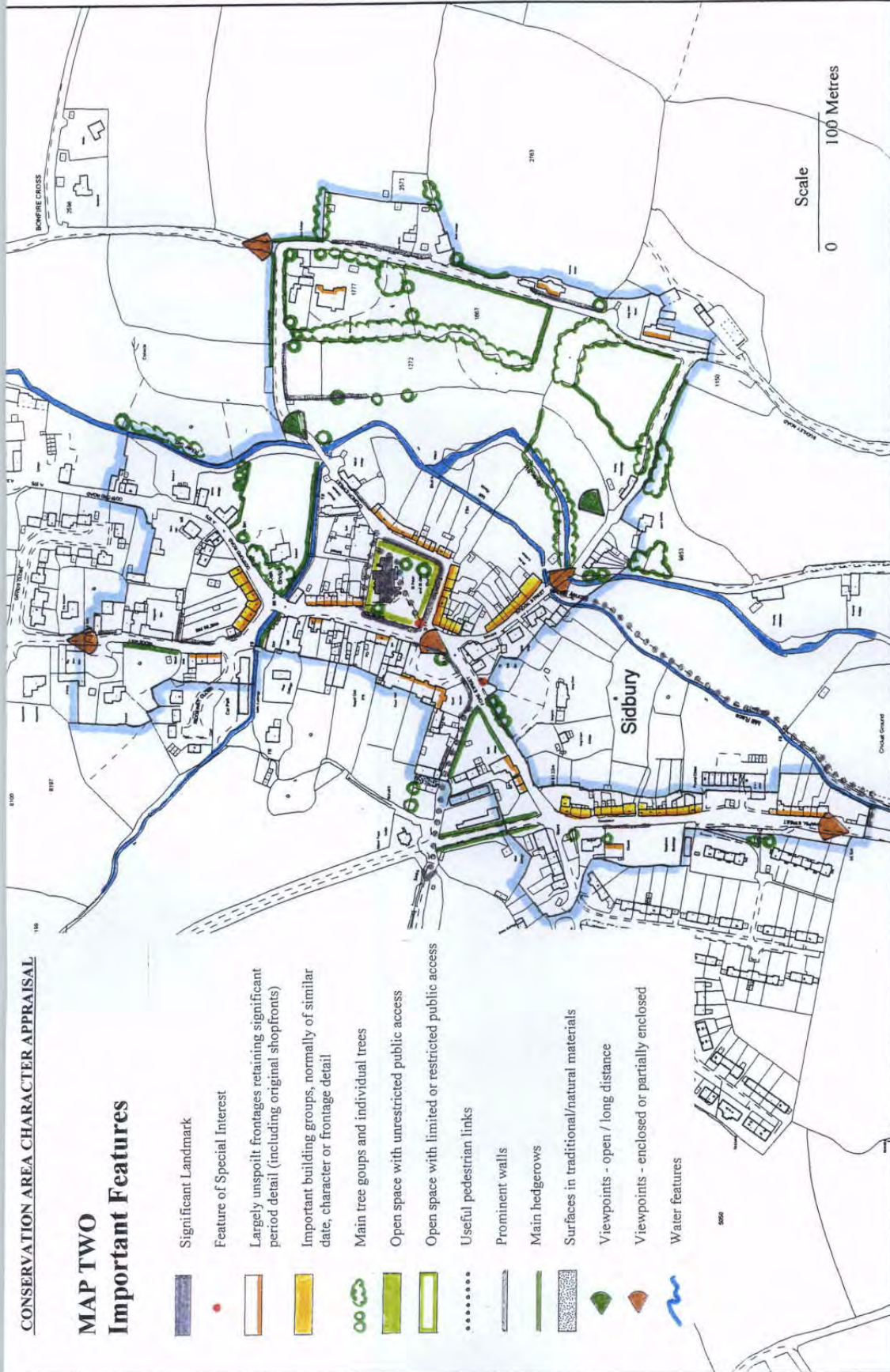
Sidbury Conservation Area
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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP TWO Important Features

-  Significant Landmark
-  Feature of Special Interest
-  Largely unspoilt frontages retaining significant period detail (including original shopfronts)
-  Important building groups, normally of similar date, character or frontage detail
-  Main tree groups and individual trees
-  Open space with unrestricted public access
-  Open space with limited or restricted public access
-  Useful pedestrian links
-  Prominent walls
-  Main hedgerows
-  Surfaces in traditional/natural materials
-  Viewpoints - open / long distance
-  Viewpoints - enclosed or partially enclosed
-  Water features



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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP THREE Detracting Features

- ***** Unsatisfactory or poorly integrated frontages
- Unsightly features or areas requiring enhancement
- ▭ Vacant or poorly maintained buildings
- ▨ Development which is poorly related to or particularly detracts from the character of the conservation area
- ▭ Areas where pedestrian surfaces are in need of significant improvement or restoration, preferably using traditional paving materials
- Location of overhead power lines
- ▨ Locations where overhead power lines are especially unsightly
- ▭ Mainly post-1945 development often of unsympathetic character











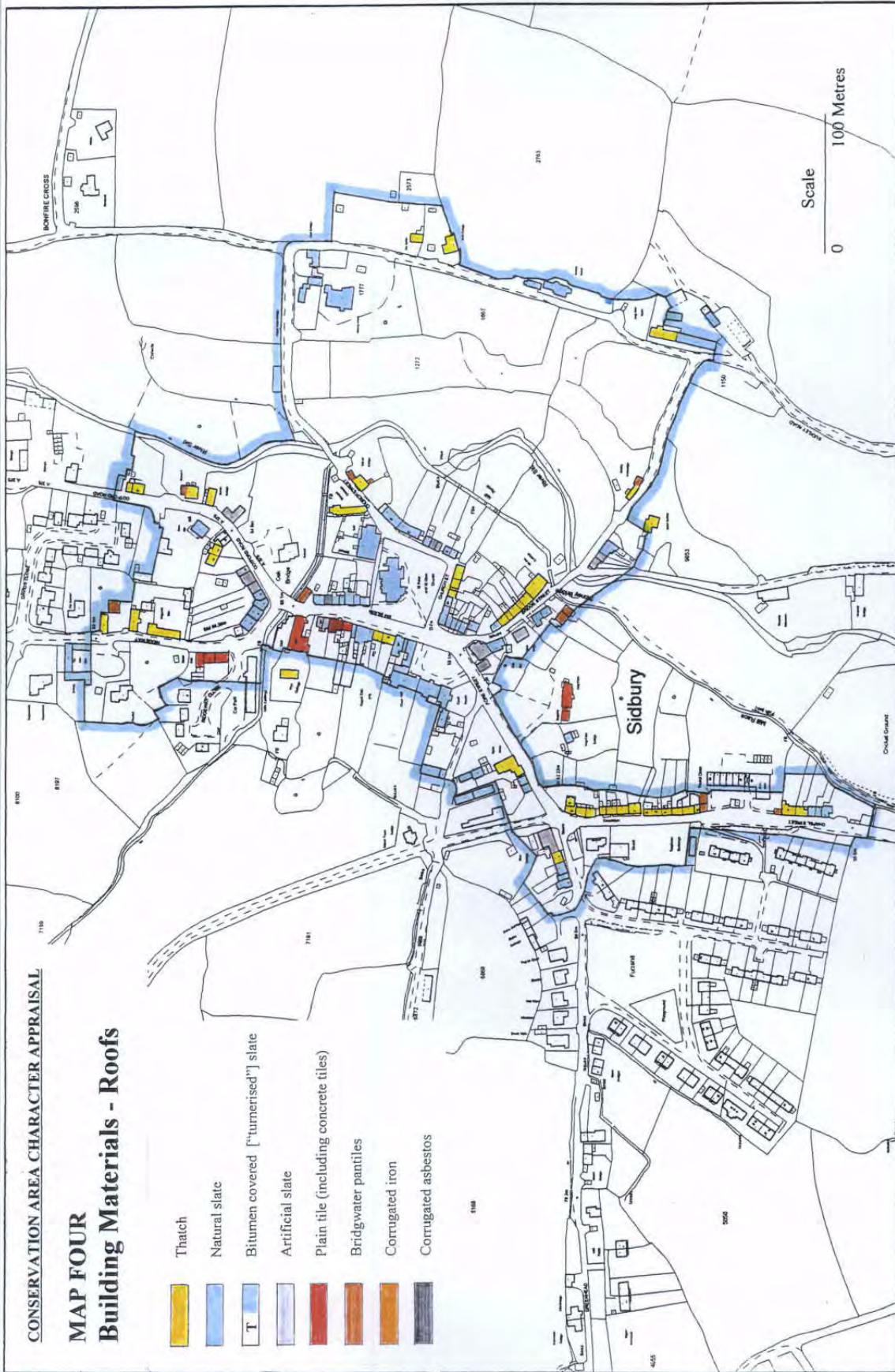
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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP FOUR Building Materials - Roofs

-  Thatch
-  Natural slate
-  Bitumen covered ["tumenised"] slate
-  Artificial slate
-  Plain tile (including concrete tiles)
-  Bridgewater pantiles
-  Corrugated iron
-  Corrugated asbestos










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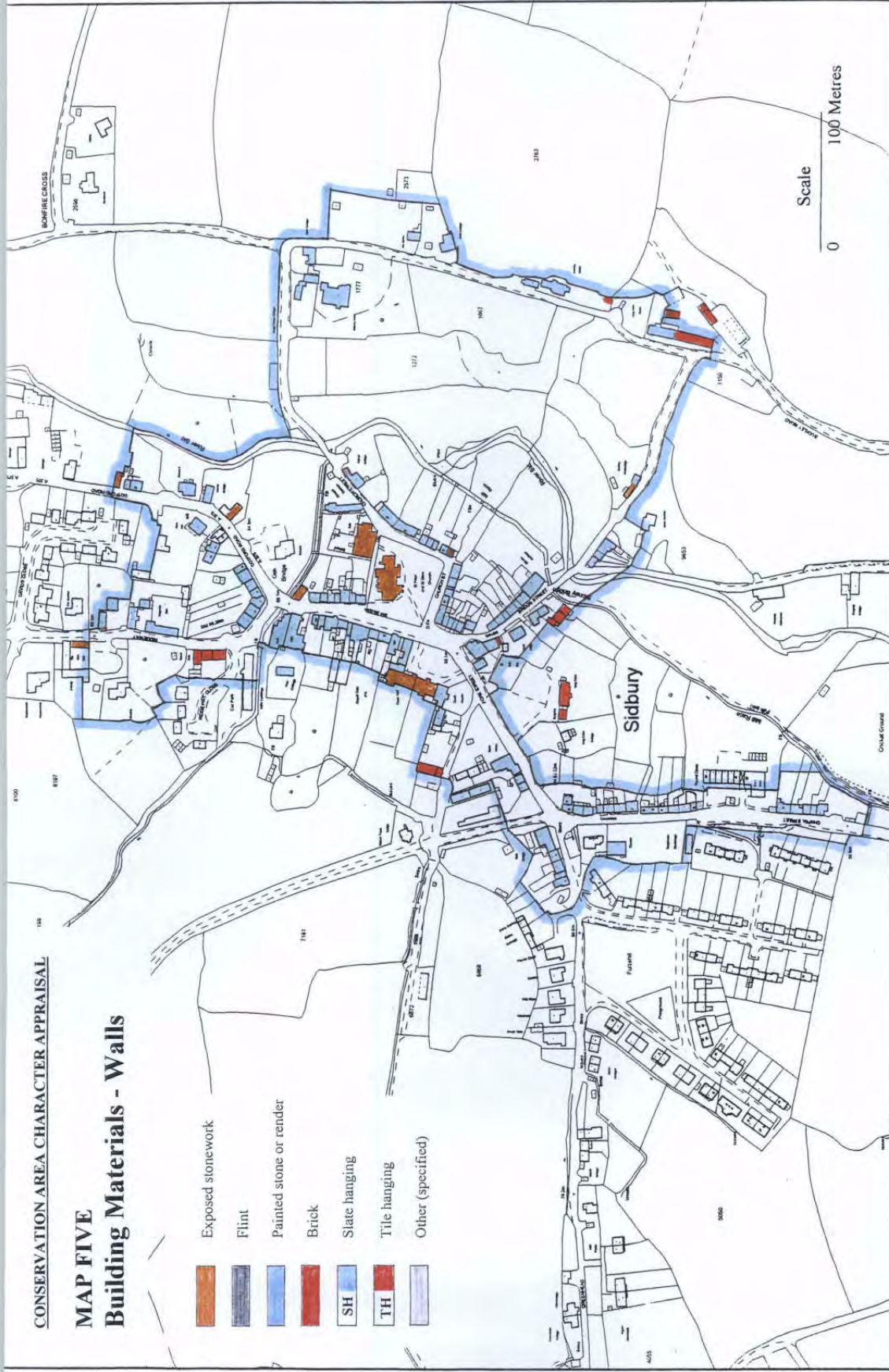
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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP FIVE Building Materials - Walls

	Exposed stonework		Flint		Painted stone or render		Brick		Slate hanging		Tile hanging		Other (specified)
								SH		TH			



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