

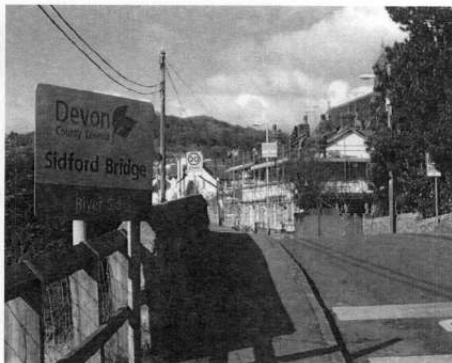
Sidford Interim Conservation Area Review

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 Sidford Conservation Area.

- Traffic volume is as much a problem as when the appraisal was first written. The village is at the junction of two busy A-roads and this has led to a large increase in road signage to meet modern standards. There has also been an attempt to slow traffic and reduce its impact by the use of a multitude of signs and road markings rather than by less obtrusive methods. The impact of this signage is very noticeable near the bridge over the Sid and also on the northern entry to the conservation area, but there is an increase in signage all over village. Historic School Street is particularly blighted by road markings; 'keep clear', 'slow' and '20mph' markings together with yellow lines have been painted along the entire length. A new solar powered lighted 'slow' sign has also been introduced as part of the extensive new signage and road marking associated with the 20mph speed limit through the village.
- The new County council bridge signs seem unnecessary and out of keeping with the ancient bridge. They appear to be advertisements for Devon CC which add nothing to the appearance and little to any understanding of the bridge.
- New bright plastic-faced street names in some instances are large and are placed in unnecessarily obtrusive locations.
- The problem of replacement PVCu windows in both listed and unlisted buildings is becoming worse. Some new timber replacement windows on both listed and unlisted buildings are inappropriately designed.
- Some thatches are in poor condition; this may be a reflection of the difficulty and cost of renewing thatch on a house on these very busy main roads.
- Overhead wires are still a problem and are made more obvious by the fact that many which span roads now have a protective yellow wrapping.
- The remnants of cobbled pavements in Church Street are still in place but there has been some encroachment of tarmac when the road was last re-surfaced.
- At the main junction just outside the CA boundary, a row of new houses has been constructed in place of a garage. The development of terraced properties follows the urban grain of the conservation area and utilises a palette of traditional building materials and finishes. There are other recently constructed residential developments and while these have been modest in scale to date the cumulative effect has impacted upon the open spaces in the village.



Large new sign at Sidford Bridge which does really achieve anything.



New housing at Sidford Cross is prominent within the centre of the conservation area.

Potential review of conservation area boundary.

The existing CA boundary covers the historic area of the village. Development outside the boundary is mainly modern and does not meet the criteria for inclusion. There appears to be no reason to extend the conservation area. It is considered that the character of no part of the existing conservation area has been eroded to the extent that it should be removed from the conservation area. This aspect of conservation area review will be fully considered during the consultation process.

Principle reasons for erosion or changes to conservation area character.

- 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 and walls. 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.

SIDFORD

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

Published by East Devon District Council 1999
© Copyright East Devon District Council

Contents

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | HISTORIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND | 3 |
| 2 | SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA | 3 |
| 3 | BUILT ENVIRONMENT | 4 |
| 4 | LANDSCAPE AND TREES | 4 |
| 5 | HARD SURFACES | 4 |
| 6 | BUILDING MATERIALS AND ORNAMENT | 4 |
| 7 | STREET FURNITURE AND OTHER FEATURES | 5 |
| 8 | SYNOPSIS OF LISTED BUILDINGS | 5 |
| 9 | FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE | 6 |
| 10 | LOSS OF CHARACTER AND INTRUSION | 6 |
| 11 | SUMMARY | 7 |
| | HISTORIC MAPS | 8 |
| | APPRAISAL MAPS | 11 |

SIDFORD



(Above & below) Church Street, the north side presents many attractive frontages with painted render and thatch or slate predominant

1 HISTORIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

1.1 Sidford is best described as a main road settlement, formerly a small L-shaped village, and now virtually a northern suburb of Sidmouth. Historically, as the name implies, the settlement developed around a convenient crossing point of the River Sid. The old bridge is thought to date from the 12th century, and the original parapets survive.

1.2 Sidford has an exceptionally fine group of early 17th century houses. These form a long row in School Street which is the northward spur of the village on the route to Sidbury. Although some have been altered, there is some very good detailing (3.1).

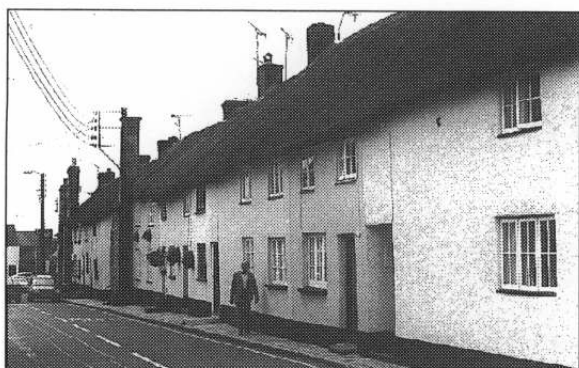
2 SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 The conservation area includes most of the early pre 20th century settlement which is now virtually enclosed by post 1945 development. Sidford is at the intersection of two major roads. Running east-west is the A 3052 Exeter to Lyme Regis and Dorchester road, and north-south the A 375 Sidmouth to Honiton road. The conservation area is therefore adversely affected by traffic congestion, particularly during the summer months.

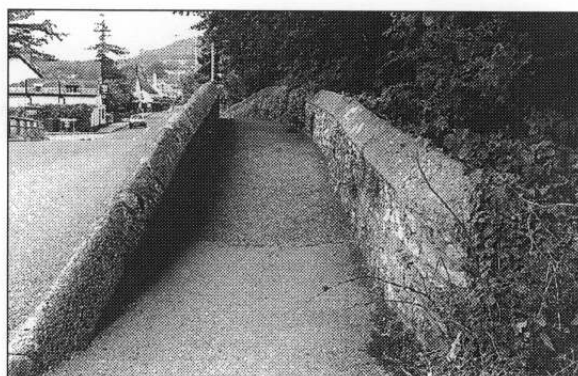


2.2 In spite of this detracting, the vernacular quality and group value of the 17th century houses in School Street is an exceptional feature (1.2), and Church Street contains several groups of 18th and early 19th century cottages that provide a potentially high quality street-scape.

2.3 Sidford Conservation Area was first designated in January 1977 and contains 39 statutorily listed buildings covered by 18 separate list entries. There are also a further 11 buildings on the non-statutory local list. Both types are shown on Map 1.



School Street; a long range of 17th century or earlier cottages is an outstanding survival, unrivalled elsewhere in east Devon. It is unfortunate that narrow pavements, heavy traffic flows, prominent overhead power lines and TV aerials make their special character harder to appreciate.



Sidford Bridge is a dual structure of former packhorse bridge which is said to date from the 12th century; the later bridge adjoining is mid 20th century. Recent housing adjoining the river is prominent.

3 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

3.1 The village is characterised by the several good examples of cottage groups in Church Street and School Street. The former are mainly smooth rendered with thatch or slate roofs; the latter mainly thatch, with prominent, partly external lateral stacks, constructed mostly in ashlar stone and flint, one of which is chequered, a feature only occasionally seen elsewhere in this part of Devon.

3.2 Later development has tended not to integrate successfully. The soundly built but somewhat incongruous late 19th century parish church, although typical of its genre, tends to emphasise that Sidford is now mainly a suburban outlier of Sidmouth, two miles to the south. This impression is given further weight by formerly important frontage gaps having been infilled by quite recent housing estates, and standardised shopfronts that have scant regard for their historic surroundings.

4 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

4.1 As a result of its heavily suburbanised surroundings, Sidford lacks any form of immediate landscape setting, apart from groups of trees, mainly willows, along the fringes of the River Sid forming an important visual break and providing the most attractive approach into the conservation area. Also at this point there are views towards surrounding hills, although even here recent development on the south side of the bridge is somewhat intrusive.

4.2 Elsewhere in the conservation area, there are scattered specimen trees, mainly to the side or rear of largely continuous street frontages. Within the particularly close-knit historic environment of mainly direct street frontages off narrow pavements, individual trees where they do occur, make a considerable contribution to the overall street scene. There are good examples at the Salty Monk (opposite the Parish Church) and immediately east of the main road junction. Some trees beyond the conservation area form an important visual backdrop. It is considered these should be accurately documented with a view to their being given adequate statutory protection if this is not already the case.

4.3 There is a small area of formally landscaped space and flower beds at the southeast corner of the main road intersection. The churchyard forms another quite formal and visually important open space towards the eastern end of Church Street.

5 HARD SURFACES

5.1 There is a small area of cobbled stone (mainly chert) fronting a range of mainly thatched cottages on the north side of Church Street. In School Street, steps protrude onto the pavement which appears partly to consist of natural stone slabs, randomly laid.

6 BUILDING MATERIALS AND ORNAMENT

6.1 The earliest houses appear to consist of rendered cob on stone footings, or stone only, either rendered or left exposed. The large external stacks in School Street with characteristic raked shoulders appear to be of Beer Stone, coursed and partly squared with larger quoins, or the characteristic chequer pattern using small squared blocks of chert, which is continued almost to the topmost part of the stack. Elsewhere, brick and slate predominate.

6.2 Whilst there has been some loss of original windows and doors even in the earlier listed properties, there is a considerable survival of plain casements with glazing bars, and solid planked entrance doors in flat arch recesses continuing the best vernacular tradition for unadorned dwellings of the 17th century and earlier. Where a large proportion do survive, it is important to ensure that there are no further unsuitable replacements.

6.3 Elsewhere there are 19th century houses where brick, plain render, slate and tiles predominate. There is a particularly good Victorian group at Sidford Cross, including Albert House, with original double-hung sash windows and ornamental porches with "fish-scale" slates. A few low boundary walls in sandstone and chert survive, across the conservation area often projecting rather inconveniently directly to the edge of the carriageway. Nevertheless in order to maintain the quality of the historic environment it is important that these should be retained and not replaced with modern substitute materials.

7 STREET FURNITURE AND OTHER FEATURES

7.1 By virtue of the heavy traffic flows on major intersecting routes, most street furniture is of a modern, intrusive nature; large traffic direction signs, utilitarian streetlighting, petrol filling station signs etc. Nothing of historic interest remains apart from a plaque attached to the bridge outlining its history and the date on which the present widened bridge was opened.



Church Street; recently improved frontages where inherent character has been respected



View west from Church Street at the junction with School Street. Traffic flows are especially heavy here and are considerable on all through routes within the conservation area.

8 SYNOPSIS OF LISTED BUILDINGS

St. Peter's Church (1867-73) by C.F. Edwards is of somewhat plain red brick with dark mortar. Dressings are in Bath stone. The nave is lofty with aisle and clerestory windows. There is a bellcote, and the stained glass windows are contemporary, except the east window which dates from 1901.

The Porch House in School Street is dated 1574. As previously described there are several other very fine houses, of this period or a little later forming an exceptionally large and impressive group on the road to Sidbury.

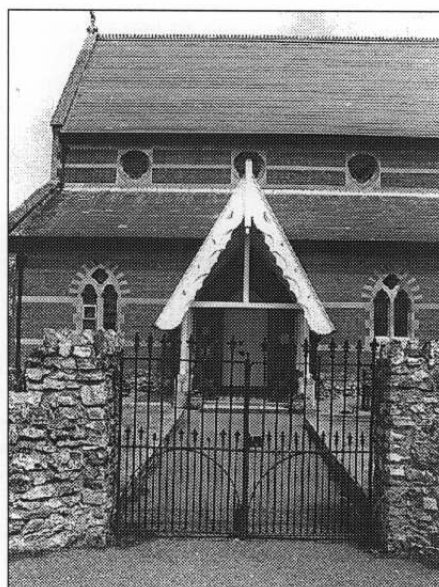
9 FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

9.1 The elements of Sidford conservation area which can be considered most worthy of emphasis are as follows:

- the vernacular cottage groups, especially the early 17th century row in School Street which is exceptional
- a rich variety of natural building materials, in local stone types and in attractive combinations, including the widespread use of thatch with traditionally unadorned ridges
- a localised good survival rate of carpentry respecting the vernacular tradition, and other original features (steps, porches, recessed doorways etc.), especially in the case of the statutorily listed buildings
- some good specimen trees and important tree groups, both within and beyond the conservation area with the latter also clearly visible in views from within
- the importance of the wider landscape setting with trees and the distant hills forming an important backdrop to the built environment



(Above and right) Church Street; the austere Victorian church c.1870 is somewhat incongruous and dominates the eastern part of the conservation area. The churchyard enclosed by chert stone walls and the entrance through wrought iron gates to the striking porch lessen the impact of extensive brickwork.



The massive forward projecting stacks with attractive stonework detail are a particular feature of the cottages in School Street as is some fenestration.

10 LOSS OF CHARACTER AND INTRUSION

10.1 The major elements within the conservation area which are considered to compromise its character are as follows:

- prominent overhead power lines and television aerials; the former in particularly close proximity to historic buildings
- streetlighting of poor visual quality, often attached to poles carrying OHP lines
- some poor frontage treatment and signage especially of commercial properties where there has been little respect for the historic environment
- a very busy traffic confluence with intrusive signage resulting in a noisy, restless environment where historic buildings are difficult to appreciate in their proper setting
- a large, rear of frontage car park with minimal landscaping where there are few trees providing shade or visual interest
- somewhat featureless modern housing and a car park entrance. Both have filled important gaps in historic frontages.



Church Street/Warrens Mead. 1970's infill destroyed several cottages and reduced the former rural quality. Loss of traditional stone walls and replacement with modern blockwork is particularly unfortunate

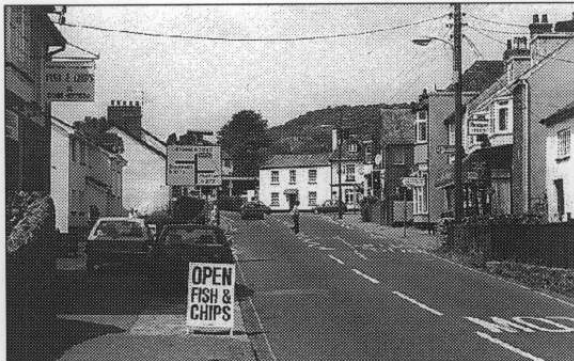


Church Street; removal of heavy vehicles and prominent road signs would greatly improve the quality of townscape

11 SUMMARY

11.1 Sidford undoubtedly suffers greatly from traffic congestion and proximity to Sidmouth which has put great pressure on the historic environment, particularly during the past 20 years. There has been clearance of some earlier buildings, even statutorily listed ones, which had apparently fallen into disrepair or become vacant. Infilling has been the inevitable result of development pressure during a time when conservation issues were less clearly defined or were harder to justify.

11.2 Removal of through traffic, on-street servicing, and of other clutter; for example prominent road signs, overhead electricity lines and television aerials would do much to restore character in what is one of the most complete early 17th century streets in this part of Devon, if not beyond.



Church Street looking west. Heavy traffic, commercial activity and associated signage together with frontages infilled with recent development have led to loss of character.

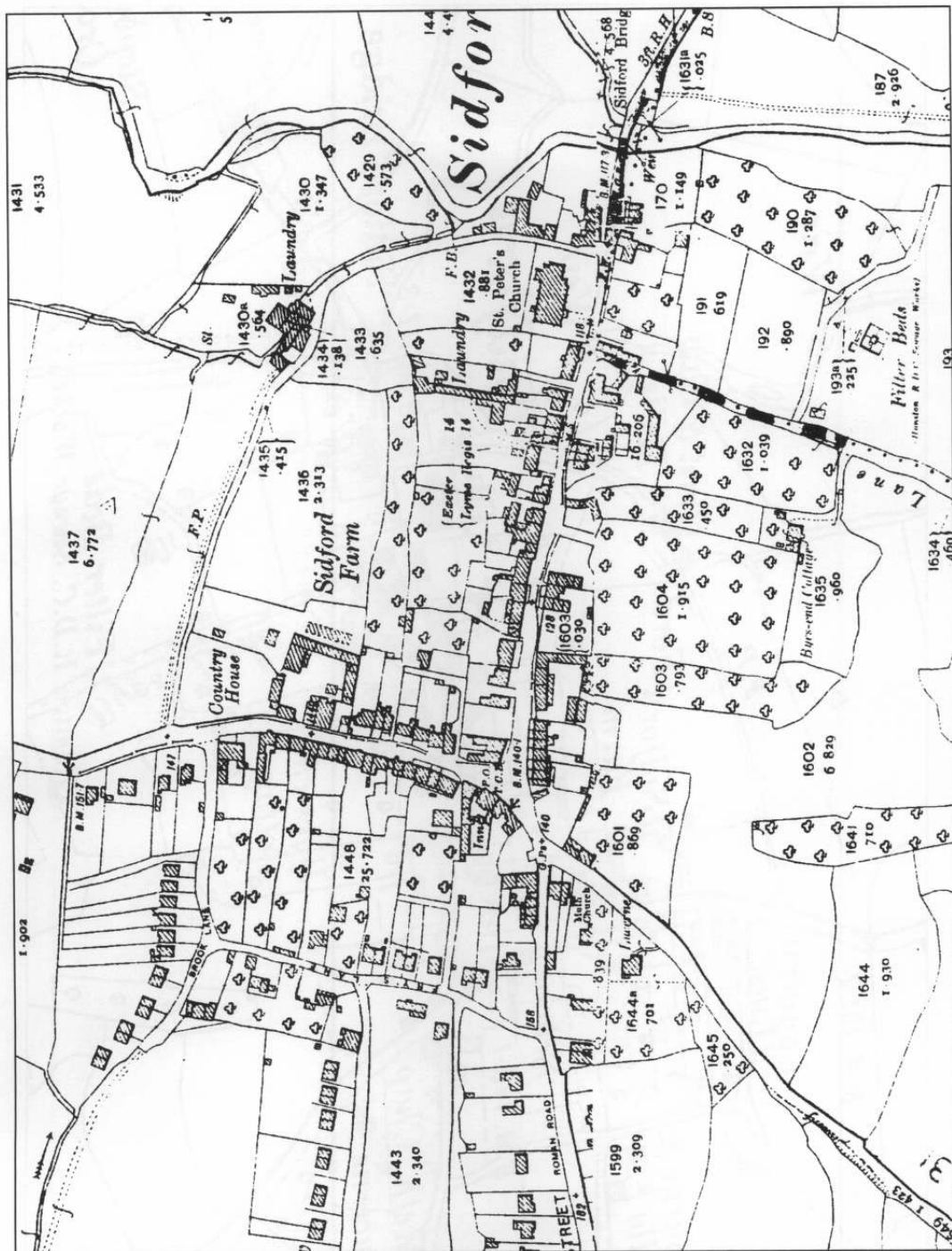


This particularly bad example of standardised modern toplit shopfront is entirely inappropriate within a conservation area

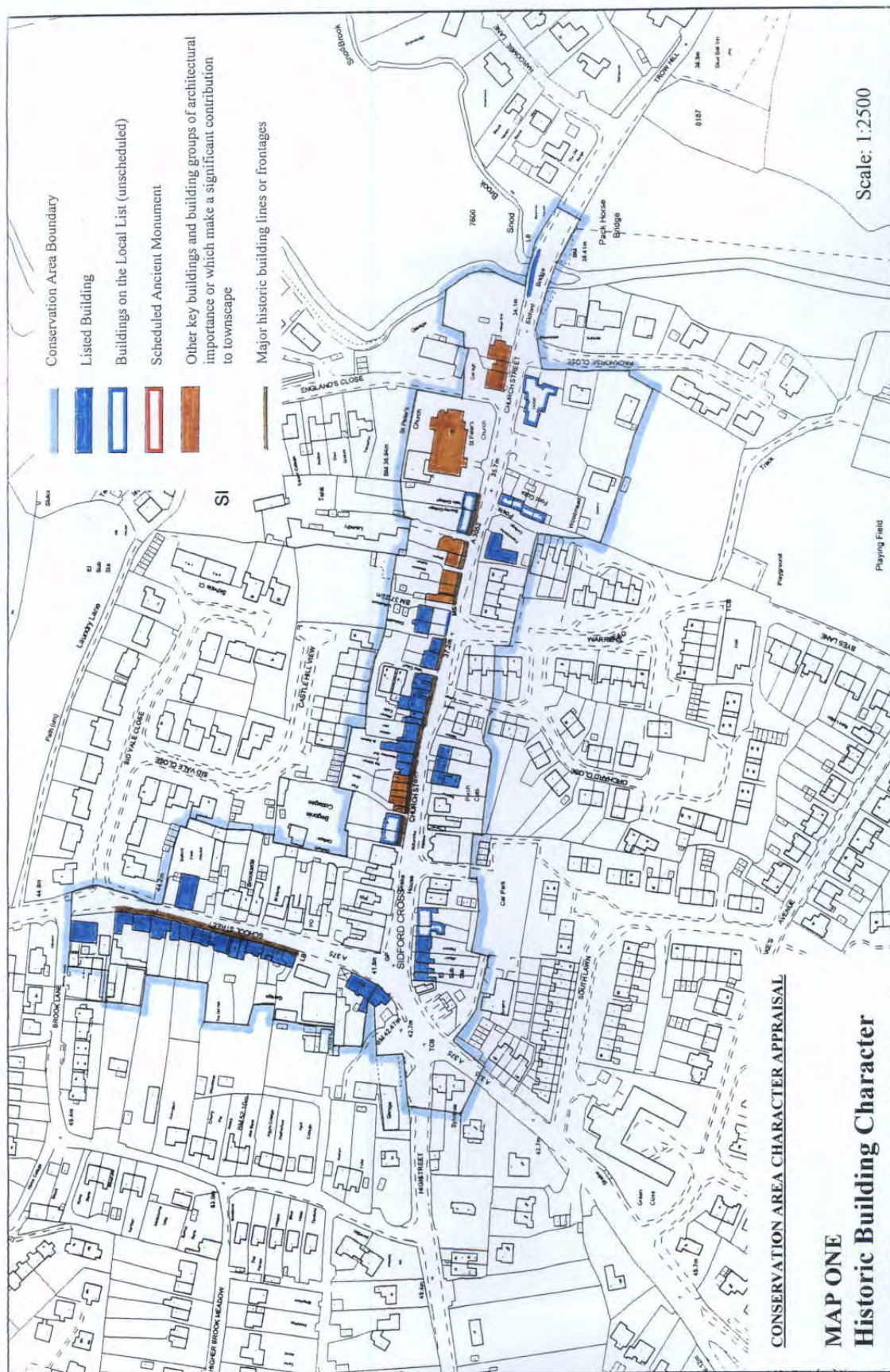
HISTORIC MAPS



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



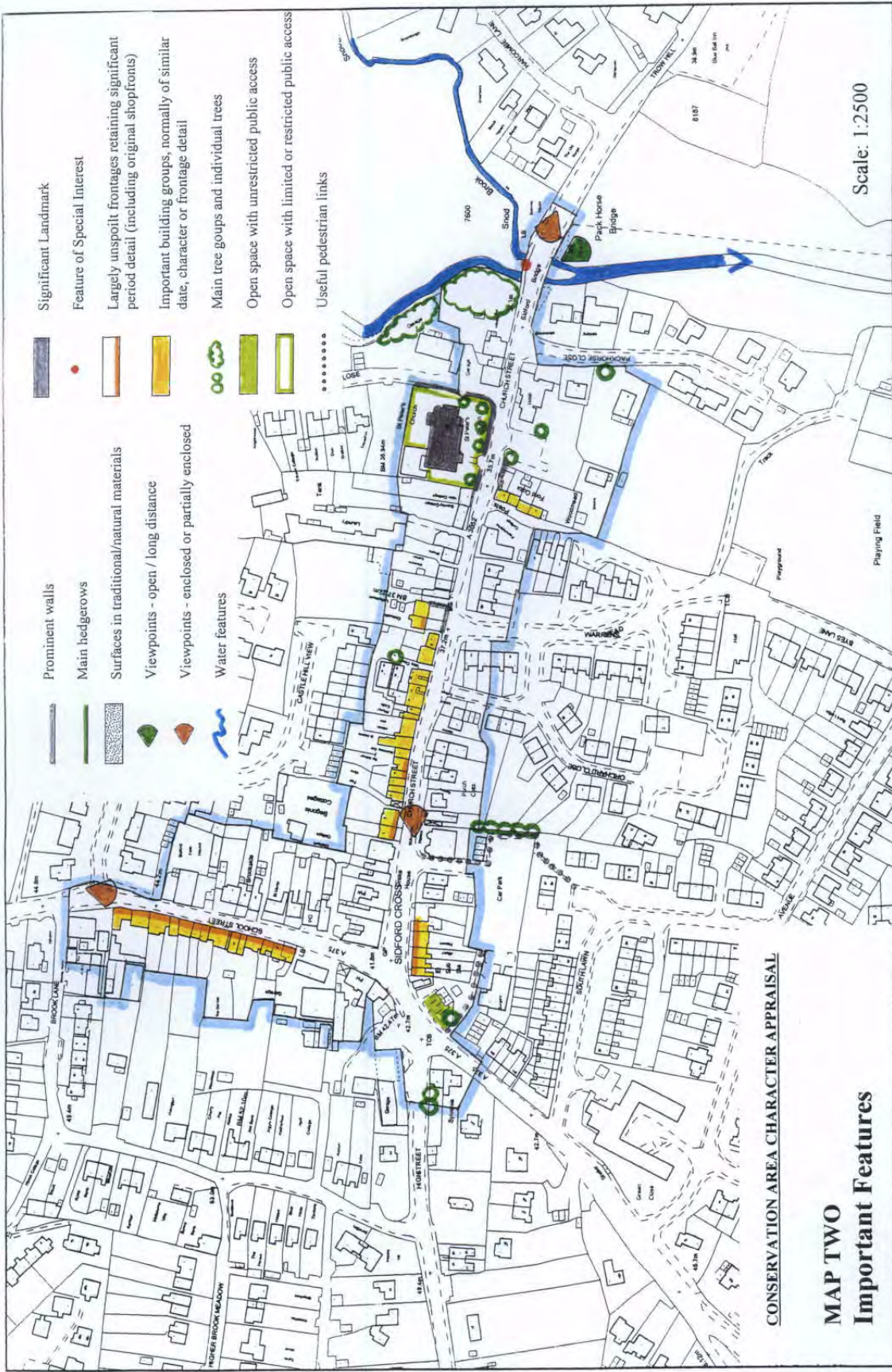
c.1905 Ordnance Survey Second Edition. Scale originally 25 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of fitting the report)



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to proceedings for civil and/or criminal offences. District Council Licence No. 1/0077844.

Sidford Conservation Area
East Devon District Council

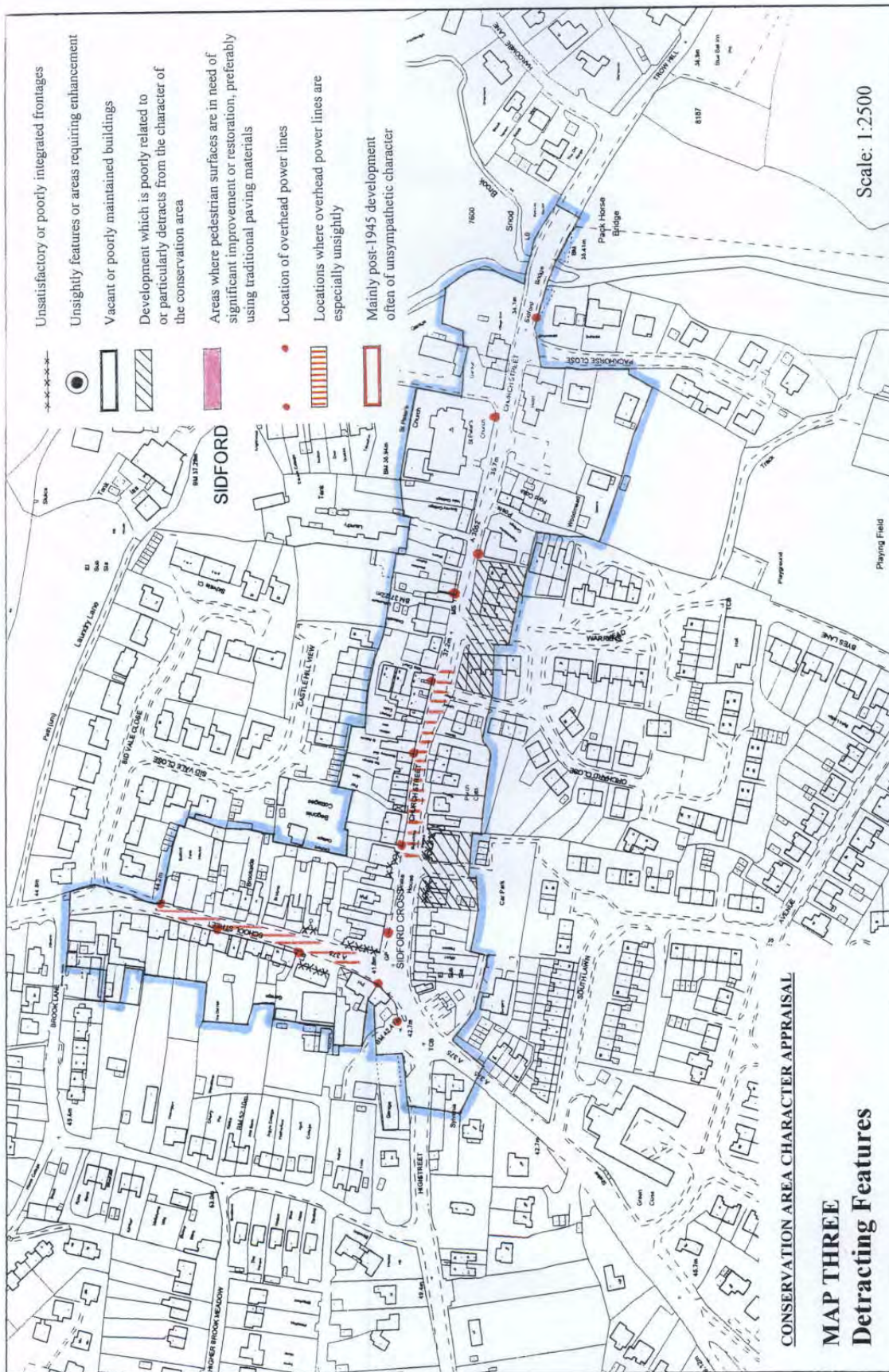




Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. East Devon District Council Licence No. 1 AM7784.

Sidford Conservation Area
East Devon District Council





Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. East Devon District Council Licence No. 1/AM77844

Sidford Conservation Area
East Devon District Council



