

# SALCOMBE REGIS

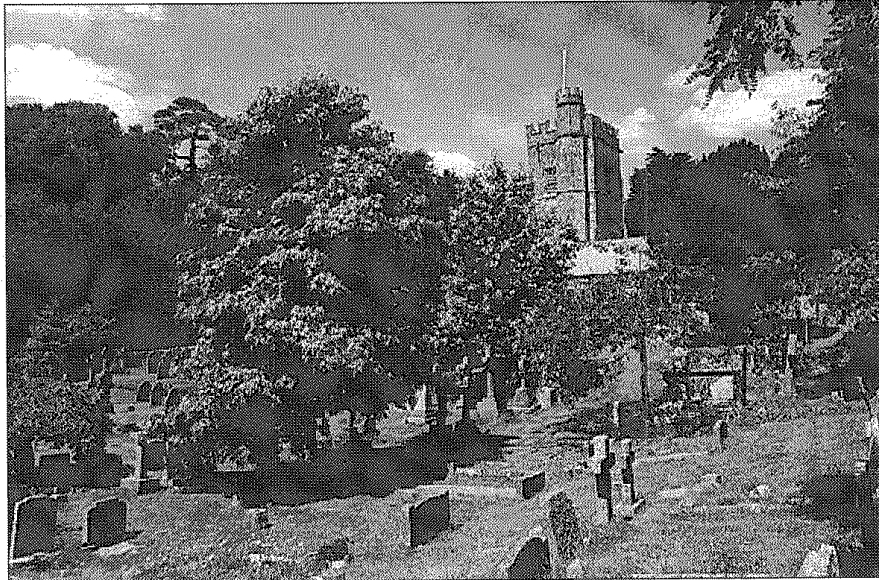
Prepared for East Devon District Council by John Fisher BA, MA, MRTPI  
with contributions from Town and Parish Councils and Amenity Societies in East Devon

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# SALCOMBE REGIS



*The Parish Church and churchyard which is surprisingly large, probably due to close links with Sidmouth.*

## 1 HISTORIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

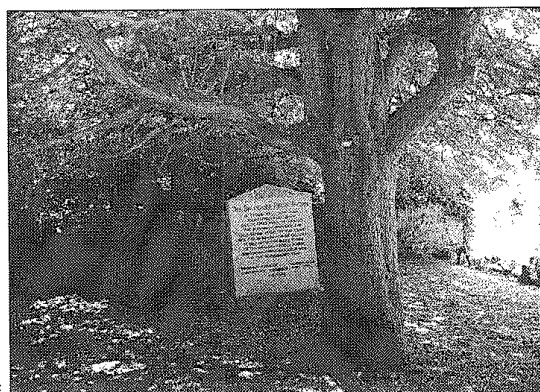
1.1 The village is situated two miles north-east of Sidmouth, and was appended "Regis" as a result of it having been owned by King Alfred in the 9th century. His grandson Athelstan then endowed the ownership to the monks of Exeter. Salcombe lies in a valley descending steeply towards a shingle beach which can only be reached on foot by a descent of 131 steps. Houses and the parish church of St Mary and St Peter are perched along the valley sides.

1.2 At its upper end a thorn bush is said to have grown there since Saxon times to mark the boundary between the cultivated land surrounding the village and common land on the hill beyond. Local tradition holds that the well-being of the village depends upon the thorn being there, and when one dies another is immediately planted.

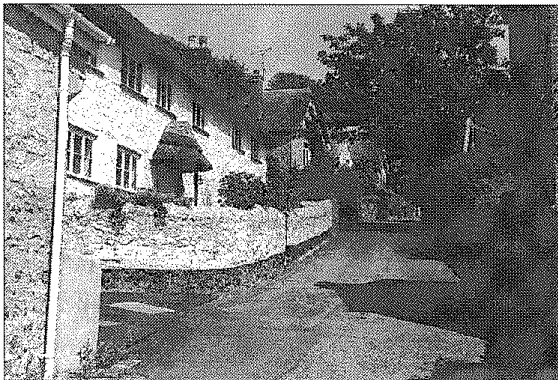
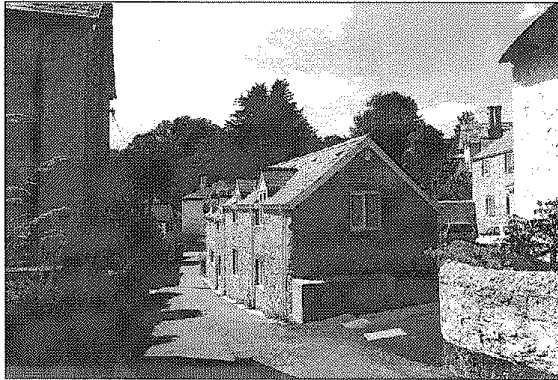
1.3 Some sources record that Salcombe Regis was the last Royalist settlement in Devon to surrender to the Parliamentarians.

1.4 In the churchyard are the graves of two important scientists; Sir Ambrose Fleming who invented the wireless valve in 1904, and the astronomer Sir Norman Lockyer who pioneered work on sunspots in the 1880's and whose observatory is still to be found on a hill above the village.

1.5 The 1905 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map indicates a former quarry immediately to the east of the conservation area and the quarries at Dunscombe three quarters of a mile further to the east, were an important source of stone in the Middle Ages. The latter have relatively recently been reopened (c.1970) to provide stone for the repair of Exeter Cathedral, having originally been used there in 14th and 15th century. Also at Dunscombe is the remains of a former mansion, occupied by a branch of the Drakes of Ashe.



*The Salcombe Regis Thorn at the northern entrance to the conservation area is an important local feature and has strong associations with local history and folklore.*



*(Top & above) Views looking west and east respectively along the main street. A recent conversion of redundant farm buildings has integrated successfully. Exposed or painted rubblestone and thatch or slate are the predominant building materials.*



*The former village school, now a private house retains its character and is built of local materials including ashlar and Beer stone.*

## 2 SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 Salcombe Regis is a very small village in a beautiful combe one mile inland from the sea where the coastal scenery is particularly dramatic with massive sandstone cliffs either side of the valley. Most buildings are small cottages of vernacular origin, except for the former Vicarage, Springcombe and an old school, all of which date from the mid 19th century. All buildings are scattered with not a hint of formal arrangement, and the only sense of enclosure provided by the valley setting, large numbers of trees, (particularly on the skyline above the village), and the extensive boundary walls constructed mainly of flint and its close relative, chert.

2.2 The conservation area which was designated in January 1977 covers virtually the whole village, apart from a group of agricultural buildings associated with Thorn Farm, some 50 metres to the east, and a few scattered dwellings some distance to the east of the centre.

2.3 Within the conservation area are 11 individually listed buildings, including boundary walls all of which are Grade II except the Parish Church which is Grade II\*. These are shown on Map 1

## 3 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

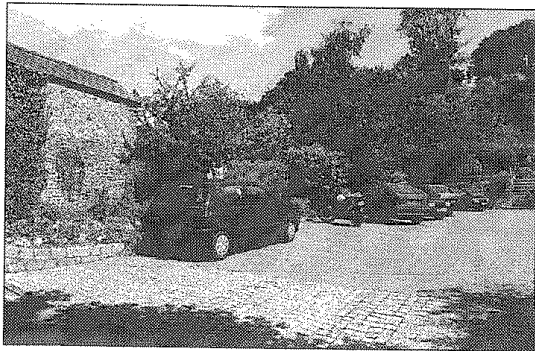
3.1 The settlement pattern of the village is scattered into two main groups; one immediately north and west of the Parish Church and containing the former school and vicarage, both now private houses. The other is about 100 metres south of the church and consists of several cottages and Springcome, the large 19th century house, enclosed by flint walls. It will be seen from the 1905 Ordnance Survey map that almost no new development has occurred within the village during the past 100 years, apart from a small group of local authority houses well to the east of the conservation area.

## 4 LANDSCAPE AND TREES

4.1 At the extreme north of the conservation area is the Salcombe Thorn with a plaque describing its origins (1.2). This sets the scene, since a large part of the character and setting of Salcombe Regis is its dramatic setting in a well-wooded steeply-sided valley, and trees, both within and adjoining the conservation area are of particular importance.

4.2 The three main approaches to the village, particularly those into the village from the north and southeast, are heavily wooded with trees overhanging the road. Almost all buildings within the village are framed by a backdrop of trees, both deciduous and coniferous. The churchyard and adjoining car park to the south are well-landscaped with trees of a more ornamental character.

4.3 To the south of the village the valley becomes more open with fields enclosed by hedgerows and trees more scattered and mainly in sheltered locations away from wind exposure.



*Car Park south of the Church which has been attractively laid out and landscaped largely as recommended in the Sidmouth Conservation Study of 1975.*

## 5 HARD SURFACES

5.1 There is a small cobbled area of round beach boulders by the church lych gate. The car park to the south, the result of an enhancement scheme dating from the late 1970's has an area of square setts, apparently of grey limestone, at its entrance.

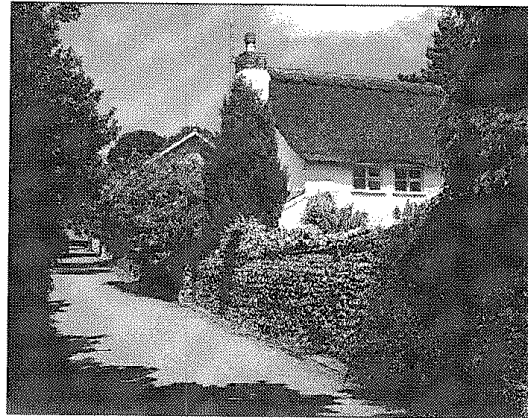
## 6 BUILDING MATERIALS AND ORNAMENT

6.1 The predominant building material for the earlier cottages is randomly coursed stone rubble, mainly chert, sometimes in quite large blocks. This is sometimes painted or combined with dressings of ashlar Beer stone, as at the former primary school. Brick dressings have also been used. The predominant roof material is slate, although there are several examples of thatch. Slate and stucco is the preferred combination in the larger Victorian buildings (e.g. the former vicarage, and Springcombe) and several examples of ornamental barge-board to gables also date from this period.

6.2 One particular feature of the village are the extensive rustic flint walls, with the best example, which is listed, surrounding Springcombe with square projecting piers and pyramidal caps.



*Springcombe, a mid 19th century detached house of slate and stucco, marks the southern boundary of the conservation area. The extensive flint walls with pyramid capped piers are also listed.*



*The lane between the Church and Springcombe with a scattering of cottages behind extensive flint walls.*

## 7 SYNOPSIS OF LISTED BUILDINGS

7.1 St. Mary and St. Peter's Church retains some original detail, with circular piers and scalloped capitals in the north arcade. There are the mangled remains of a Norman doorway in the south wall of the chancel. The south arcade is 13th century and chancel windows are c.1300. A dedication date of 1259 is recorded. The west tower is Perpendicular with a small two storey addition of similar date. The chancel was restored in 1869, with a tactful overall restoration in 1924. There is a fine 15th century lectern carved from a single piece of wood.

7.2 Thorn, a late medieval farmhouse, possibly 15th century, but much altered, was used for the Manor Court. It was known to have been farmed by the Hoopers for 400 years from 1355. There are good moulded beams in a ground floor room. Ilam House is a picturesque stucco villa c.1840 with decorative bracketed eaves and later 19th century extensions.

## 8 FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

8.1 Salcombe Regis is a very small settlement in a remote and unrivalled setting within a narrow steep vale sloping towards the sea. It is an almost complete entity of scattered cottages, a few larger 19th century smooth rendered houses, church and farm, with all buildings and some extensive boundary walls carefully maintained.

8.2 The flint walls on the lane leading towards the sea are especially striking. There is a thoughtfully sited and laid out public car park south of the large churchyard, with excellent use of space surrounding its curtilage and good use of changes of level, including the attractive steps up to the Garden of Remembrance.

## 9 LOSS OF CHARACTER AND INTRUSION

9.2 There are virtually no detracting features, with a minimum of minor alterations adversely affecting its character. There are few overhead lines but these are less prominent than elsewhere because they are not much seen against the skyline. A recent conversion to residential use of a small group of former agricultural buildings has been generally carefully handled.

9.2 For a small remote village where the overall quality of historic environment is so high, it is a matter of regret that apart from a small cobbled area close to the entrance to the churchyard there is a complete dearth of natural paving or equivalent surface apart from the granite setts added recently at the entrance to the car park.

## 10 SUMMARY

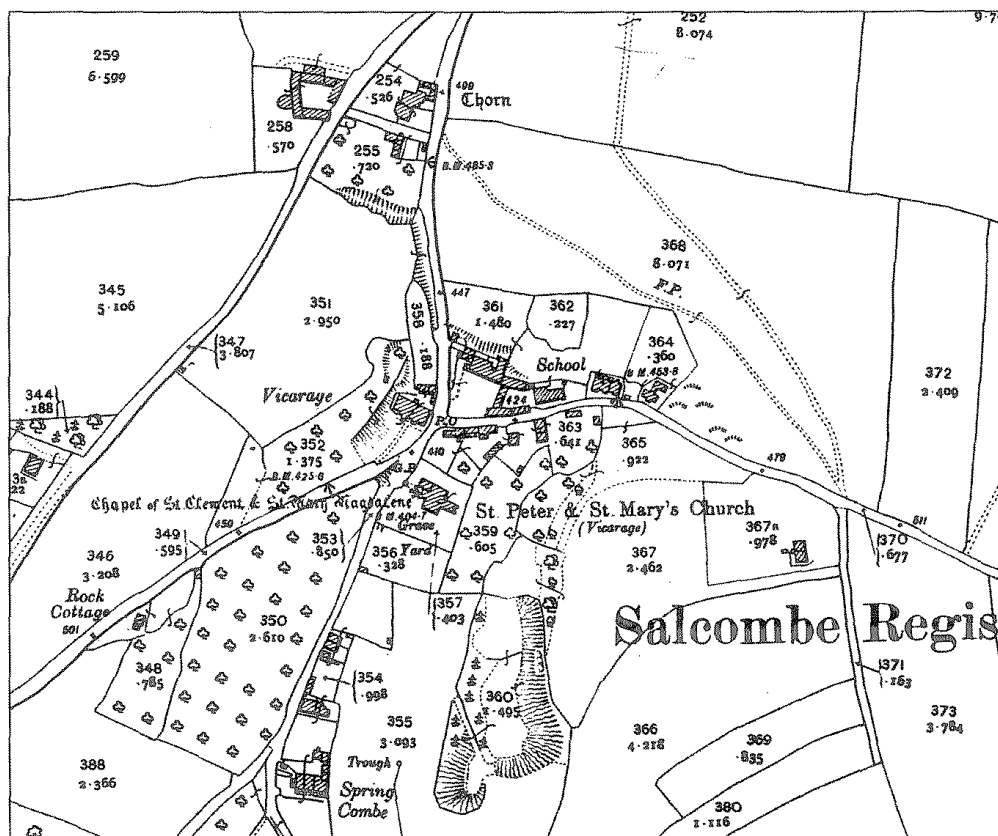
10.1 Salcombe Regis is a small village where the quality of environment is very high and strict development control has clearly contributed to maintaining its exceptional character. The remote setting, in a rich landscape and the extensive flint walls with distant glimpses of the sea only accessible on foot, have ensured that it is a place high on the agenda of discerning visitors to the area.

10.2 There does not appear to be any immediate threat to this quality which currently approved planning policies, including conservation area designation, appear adequate to maintain. The main consideration is to ensure that any minor alterations are not allowed to compromise the fine setting and character of this remotely situated village.

## HISTORIC MAPS

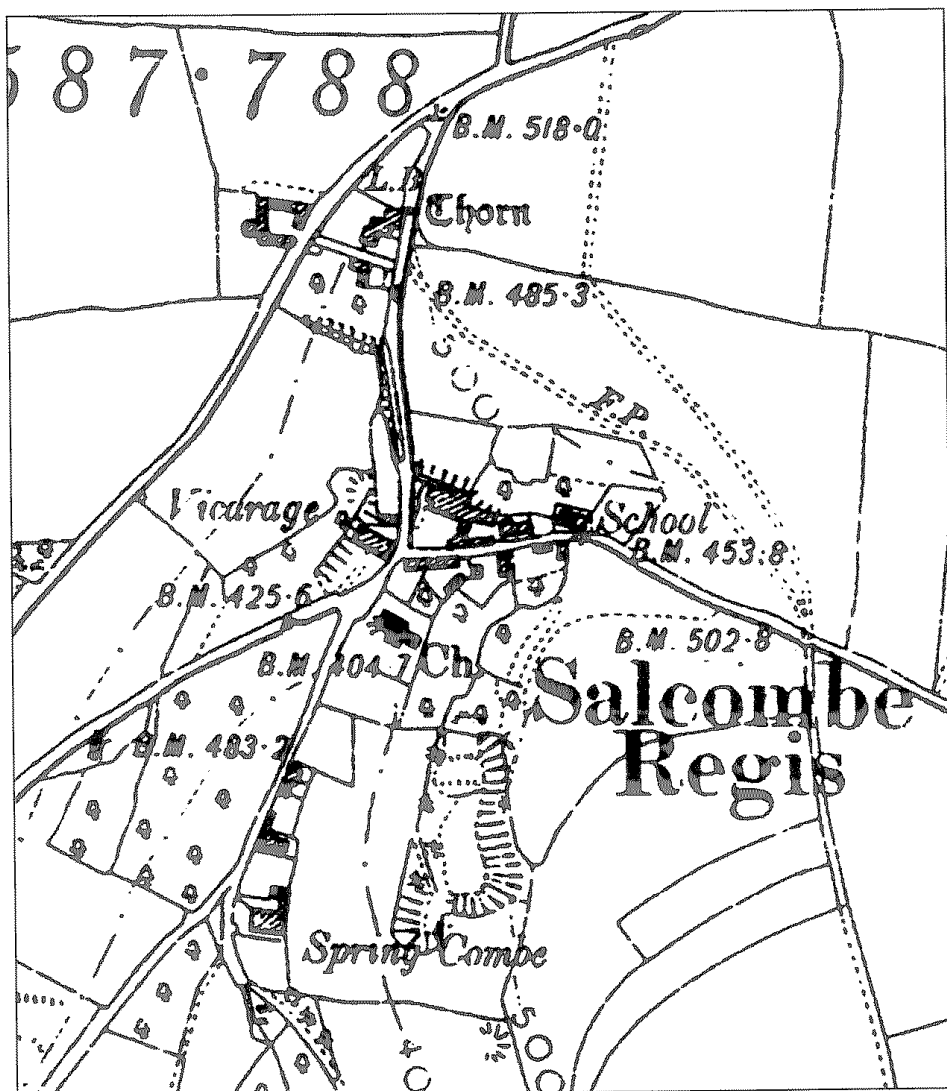


*1805 Devon County Survey: Scale: originally 3 inches to the mile (scale may be altered for the purpose of the report)*



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





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)

## MAP ONE

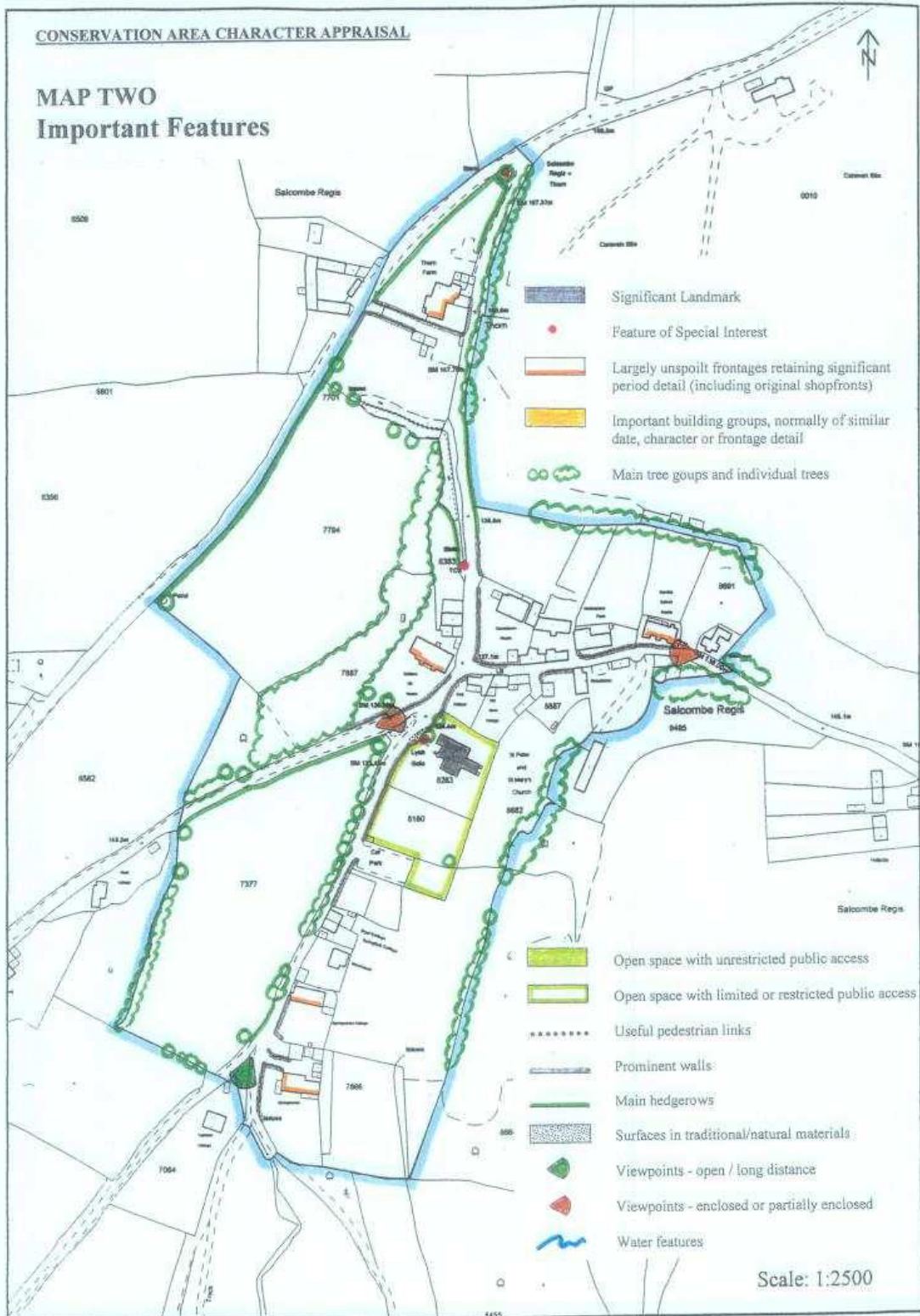
### Historic Building Character



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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP TWO  
Important Features



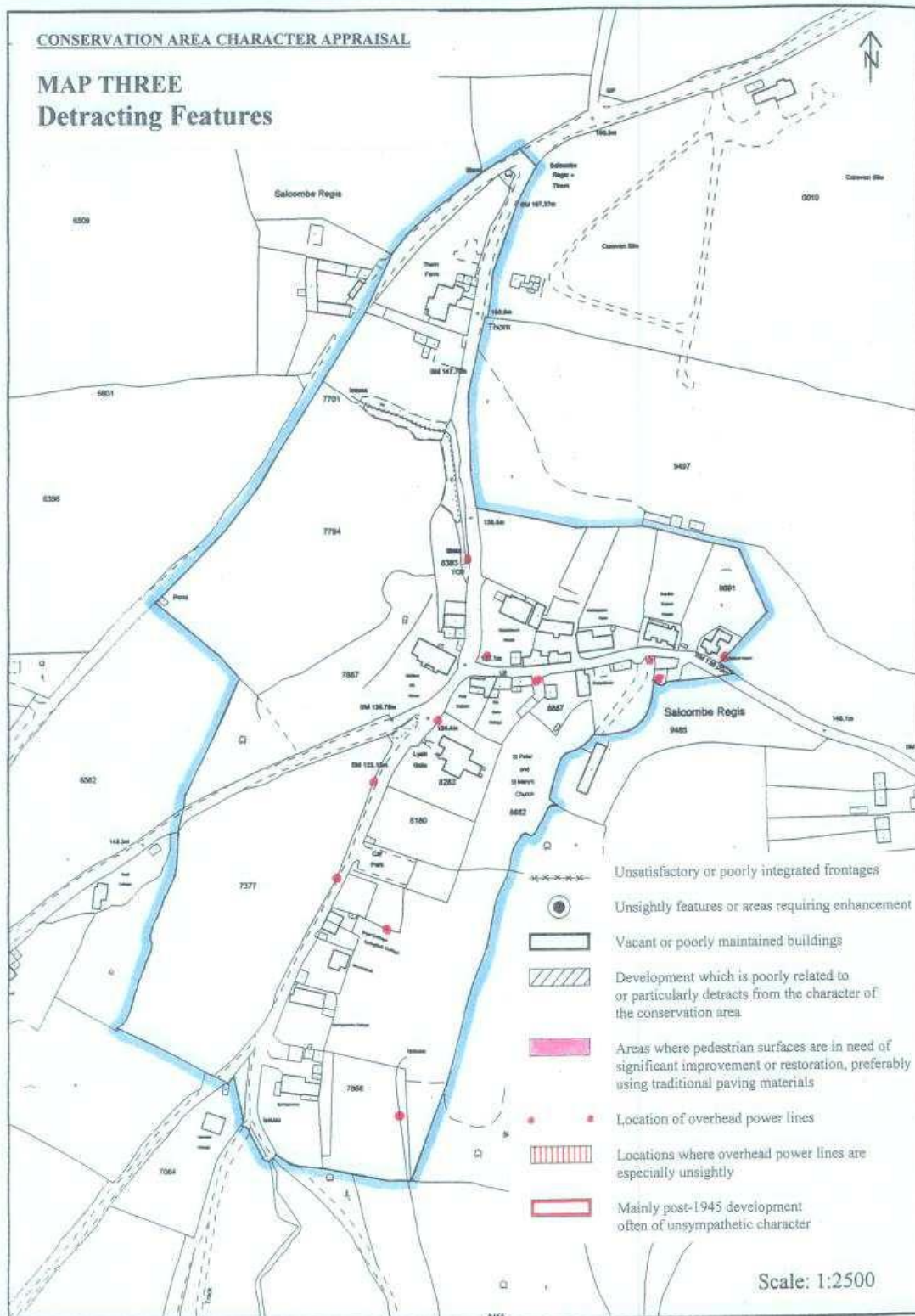
Salcombe Regis Conservation Area  
East Devon District Council

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CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

MAP THREE  
Detracting Features



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East Devon District Council

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### MAP FOUR

#### Building Materials - Roofs



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### MAP FIVE

#### Building Materials - Walls



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### 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 Salcombe Regis Conservation Area.

- Salcombe Regis is a very unspoilt village centred at the foot of a steeply sloping valley falling to the sea about a mile from its centre. Changes over the last few years have been limited to modest extensions and conversion of outbuildings associated with the larger Victorian villas. Springcombe Cottage at the lower end of the village has successfully remodelled a garden room on its eastern end and has thoroughly renovated the exterior.



*A recently renovated Springcombe Cottage enhancing the lower end of the conservation area.*

### Potential review of conservation area boundary.

The existing conservation area boundary covers the entire historic core of the settlement and there is very little development outside the present boundary. One discrepancy that ought to be considered as part of a future consultation process is a range of barns associated historically with Thorn Farm as this forms a characterful group of unlisted historic buildings.

### Principle reasons for erosion or changes to conservation area character.

- The character of the conservation has suffered very little indeed and although there has been no apparent improvement to the few overhead power cables in the village these have a far less significant impact than in other conservation areas.
- While there is no statutory control over replacement windows in many unlisted buildings the



pressure to replace traditional timber windows with PVCu alternatives remains. The removal of traditional windows is the single most apparent change to the conservation area in recent years. There is greater awareness of the environmental impact of PVCu production and waste and while it is hoped that timber replacement windows are seen as the more sustainable option the marketing drives of the major PVCu window companies continue. In the light of this it is anticipated that a proposal to serve an Article 4 Direction to control replacement windows would form part of a future public consultation exercise.



*A small number of PVCu windows have been installed over recent years in a prominent roadside property and overhead power lines remain an intrusive aspect of the conservation area.*