

Teignbridge District Conservation Area Character Appraisals

Lower Ashton



The conservation area boundary as indicated here is for illustrative purposes only, and is not intended to be a true representation of the conservation area as formally adopted. The accurate and definitive conservation area maps can instead be inspected at the main reception area of Teignbridge District Council offices, during normal office hours.

Not all important features of this conservation area are necessarily highlighted here, therefore no omissions that may have been made as part of this appraisal are intended to imply that omitted features that are found to be of interest from future reviews of the document are not of significance in their own right.

Acknowledgements

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Archive information and historic maps were obtained from the Westcountry Studies Library and Devon Records Office in Exeter. The archaeological analysis was informed by the Sites and Monuments Register, maintained by Devon County Council.

Consultations

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If you need this information in a different language or format phone 01626 361101 or e-mail info@teignbridge.gov.uk.

1:0 INTRODUCTION

The Conservation Area Character Statement for Lower Ashton was endorsed by the Planning Committee on 18 December 2000. Since that time it has been the subject of public consultation, with copies being distributed to the Parish Council and many individuals. It has also been available for download from the Teignbridge website - a facility that has proved very popular. The document was discussed at a public meeting in the village in December 2001.

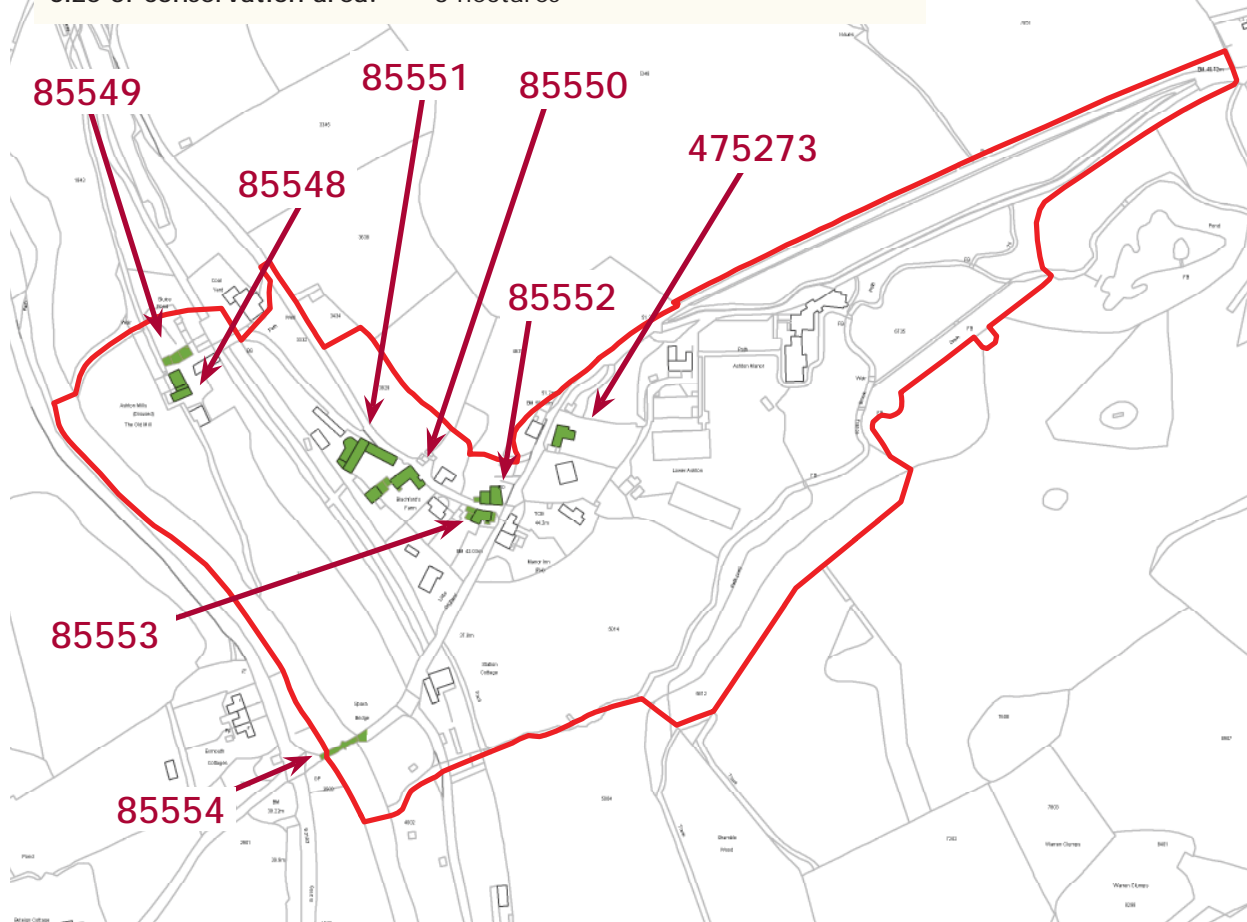
The feedback from the public and other interested bodies has been fully considered and a number of amendments have been made as a result.

This completed Character Appraisal has been adopted via the Development Plan Steering Group as a document to support current and future development plans. Consequently its contents are now a material consideration for any planning application which affects the conservation area or its setting. It will be distributed to the utility companies, Devon County Council and other interested parties such as English Heritage. Printed copies will be available for public viewing at Forde House and it may be downloaded from www.teignbridge.gov.uk as well.

A full review of this Character Appraisal was undertaken and its effectiveness was considered and necessary amendments made. Minor changes may be made with the agreement of the Parish meeting and the Ward member. The most up to date version will always be available on the website. Fieldwork was undertaken in September 2009. The revised Appraisal was approved on 22nd March 2010.

2:0 FACTS AND FIGURES

Date of designation:	05/02/90
Number of listed buildings:	Grade I = 0, Grade II* = 1, Grade II = 7.
Size of conservation area:	8 hectares



The green coloured areas of this map represent listed buildings that lie within the Lower Ashton conservation area. A summary of these listings may be found in Appendix four.

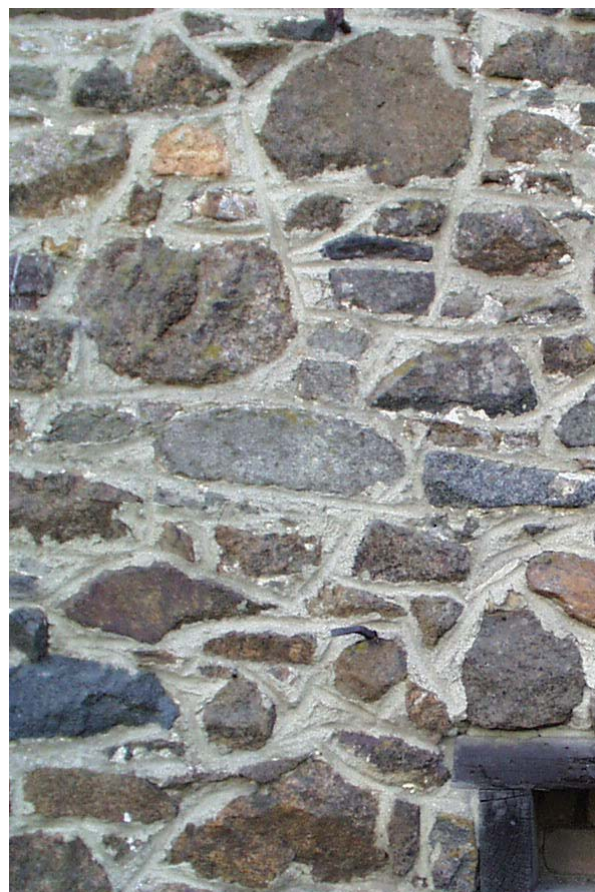
3.0 LOCATION & GEOLOGY

Lower Ashton is a small settlement with a strong agricultural emphasis. It lies on gently sloping ground above the confluence of the River Teign with the France Brook, flowing down from Higher Ashton, 1km to the north-east.

Outliers to the main settlement are at Ashton Mills to the north-west and a large late 19th century country house at Ashton Manor to the north-east. These are included in the Conservation Area. The steep valley sides with woods and fields make this a very enclosed and scenic location.

The settlement is accessed by narrow winding lanes from three directions, cutting it off to some extent from the outside world, although across the River Teign via the 16th century Spira Bridge, the B3193 connects Chudleigh with Exeter. The narrow and winding nature of this road however, makes it little used since the arrival of the A38. The course of the former GWR Newton Abbot-Exeter railway, closed in 1968, passes through the conservation area.

Carboniferous slates, shales and gritstones of the Culm Measures underlie Lower Ashton. Localised deposits of dolerite and spilitic lavas to the north and south of the hamlet have been favoured for building in the past, along with basalt from the Haldon hills.

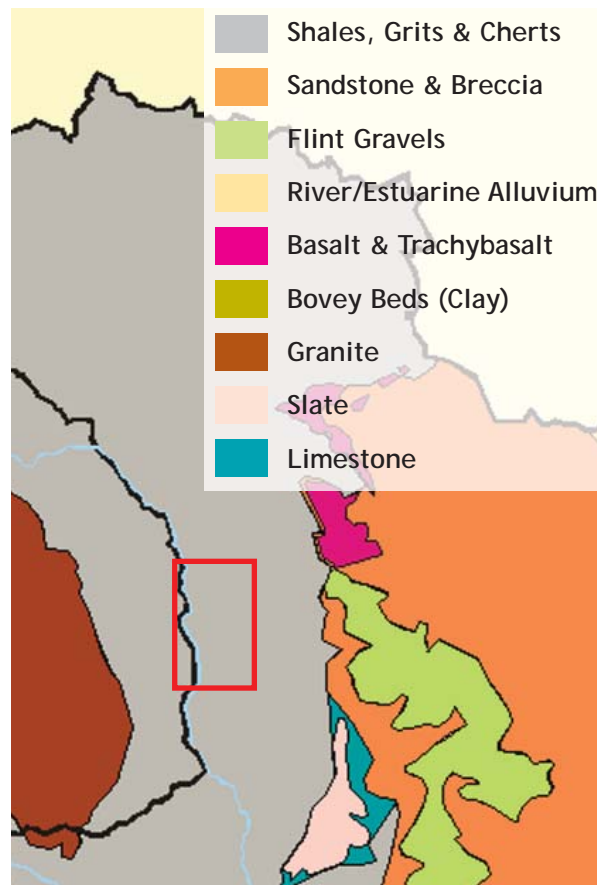


Igneous stones like dolerite and basalt are local to Lower Ashton



Location

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Geology

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4:0 VILLAGE MORPHOLOGY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Lower Ashton is essentially an outlying farming community to Higher Ashton, 1km to the north-east. It comprises a cluster of farm groups, some intact, others, (such as those grouped around the road junction with the smithy), have been split into smaller cottages. Since the 1889 OS map was made, several houses have been lost, suggesting rural depopulation in the early 20th century. In addition, the development of the Manor House between 1889 and 1905 from a small cottage to a large country mansion, has resulted in the loss of Skinner's Cottage to its west.

The dates of houses in Lower Ashton may indicate its origins. Manor Cottage, (formerly Pitt Cottage) was a two or three room cross-passage house of the mid-15th century. It preserves its smoke-blackened jointed cruck roof structure with a rare hip cruck at one end. 16th and 17th century alterations are identified by fine granite fireplaces, chamfered ceiling beams and a rare timber window frame. A mid-17th century wing on the rear has moulded plasterwork in its first floor room, suggesting a relatively high level of wealth at this time. Other houses in the hamlet are of 16th and 17th century date, while the miller's cottage at Ashton Mill is of 17th century date or earlier.

The arrival of the railway in 1882 made little impact on Lower Ashton, despite the provision of a station, but Exmouth Cottages across the river may have been built for railway workers and Ashton Manor was probably built as a result of the new transport link.

In the 20th century only a few new houses have been built, mostly as infill in the village centre, although the development of Ashton Manor has included the construction of several outbuildings. Lower Ashton remains essentially rural, with extensive fields surrounding and within the settlement.

- The historic plan of Lower Ashton is an intrinsic part of the settlement's charm. This character should not be eroded further by backland or infill development, as gardens and fields between the settlement areas were integral to the historic plan. Development opportunities within and around the village are thus strictly limited.



The settlement is dispersed and is characterised by the extent of green space between and around buildings. The mill leat and former railway line may be easily traced on this photo.

5:0 ARCHITECTURE



Lower Ashton's architecture is largely vernacular, with several thatched or formerly thatched properties in cob and stone. At least two houses have jointed cruck roof trusses at Ashton Mill Cottage and Manor Cottage, the latter smoke blackened. Several other houses in the village may have similar survivals, including moulded door frames and dressed granite fireplaces.

Later developments include the very attractive group of 18th and 19th century outbuildings to Blachford Farm and the 19th century Ashton Mill with its iron waterwheel made by Stenner & Gunn of Tiverton, surviving intact. The former smithy adjacent to the Manor Inn is a positive feature reflecting the everyday rural life of a farming village.

Spara bridge presents a charming and distinctive gateway to the village. The nearby Exmouth Cottages are attractive in their own right and have great group value with the bridge. Their present exclusion from the conservation area is due to them being within the Dartmoor National Park. They deserve to be treated as if they are within the conservation area.

- Any building which is allowed within, or affecting the setting of, the conservation area (including garages and other service buildings), must be of a demonstrably high design standard incorporating quality materials. Applicants must show how their proposal will contribute positively to the character of the area and the setting of nearby buildings.
- The results of an Architectural Character Survey and a brief summary of the criteria used can be found in Appendix two.



Devon vernacular is the dominant building character in Lower Ashton

6:0 BUILDING MATERIALS

The older buildings of Lower Ashton are built of rubble stone and cob with a protective coating of render and limewash. A few outbuildings such as those at Blachford's Farm have exposed stonework. Rubble stone and cob are common materials in boundary walls.

Prior to the 19th century, straw thatch was the traditional roof covering in the village. Where a building was originally thatched and there are real townscape benefits to be gained by its re-instatement, this should be encouraged. Suitable buildings in prominent positions are the outbuildings at Blachford's Farm and the house opposite Manor Cottage. The use of thatch on any new buildings would help them fit in with the prevailing character.

Natural slate has been a common roofing material for at least the last 150 years. Impetus for its use probably came with the Newton Abbot-Exeter railway in the 1860s, when Welsh slate became an affordable option.

For the most part, the buildings themselves provide enclosure to the streets. Elsewhere, basalt or dolerite rubble stone laid in lime mortar with a coarse textured aggregate is a feature. Older stone and cob walls are rendered with lime mortar and capped with clay tiles or natural roofing slates. Boundaries to the rear of properties are mostly Devon hedgebanks.

- The characteristic architectural features and building materials of Lower Ashton are summarized in Appendix one.



Blachford's Farm was most probably thatched in the past.



Distinctively agricultural materials



Hard Igneous rubble stone is prevalent

7:0 POSITIVE CHARACTER FEATURES



Trees are an element in most views

7:1 TREES: Occasional wild areas, such as along the river and stream, have naturally seeded mature trees and scrub. Many hedgerows around the edges of the settlement have survived and are extensively overgrown with many mature trees, making these areas particularly sensitive to change. Ashton Manor grounds have numerous specimen trees. One of these, a tall monkey-puzzle, is a prominent feature beside the Manor Inn.

7:2 ORCHARDS: The old maps show the extent of orchards in the past. Their relevance to the cultural history of the village cannot be overstated, nor can their vulnerability to modern decline. The remaining isolated trees must be retained and new ones should be planted.

7:3 GARDENS: Of many gardens shown on the 1889 OS map, several still survive, with their ancient plot boundaries. These must be jealously preserved as a link with the past. No new developments or subdivision should take place.

7:4 WATER: The sights and sounds of the River Teign which runs along the west side of the conservation area are a major feature on the edge of the conservation area. Where the France Brook winds through the meadows near Ashton Manor, it is very attractive, with alder and willow trees lining the banks.

7:5 SPARA BRIDGE: This 17th century granite bridge crosses the River Teign at the south west corner of the conservation area. Its mossy cutwaters and lichened parapets with the water rushing past contribute to the feeling of peace and tranquility here, despite the adjacent road.

7:6 VIEWS: From the B 3193 and Spara Bridge, views up the France Brook to the east are possible. Extensive panoramic views up and down the Teign Valley stress the very rural nature of the conservation area. An attractive backdrop of small fields with overgrown hedges in this steep-sided valley, is visible on its sides. The impact of developments such as farm buildings or expansion of the golf course must be considered in relation to the conservation area, even if they are some distance away.

7:7 THE MANOR INN AND POST OFFICE: The 19th century building now known as the Manor Inn, stands in a prominent position in the centre of the settlement and contributes to its social character. The Post Office is also an important amenity.

7:8 DARKNESS: The absence of street lighting means light pollution at night is minimal. Residents must also be considerate when installing garden or security lighting.



The individually styled signage at the Manor Inn is very distinctive and locally relevant.



Hopefully the Post Office will continue to survive

8:0 NEGATIVE CHARACTER FEATURES

8:1 CARAVANS & COALYARD: Several derelict caravans are dumped around Ashton Mill and along the disused railway track, detracting from the appearance of this part of the conservation area. The coalyard and associated buildings are also an unattractive area which it would be most desirable to enhance.

APPENDIX ONE

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF BUILDINGS IN LOWER ASHTON

BASICS

- Houses tight to the street frontages with cobbled strips along the edges. Climbing plants such as rambling roses and honeysuckle typically grew here.
- Steeply pitched thatch or slate roofs. Corrugated iron, painted in subdued colours (eg: matt green or black) is traditional for sheds, garages etc., depending on location and design.
- Thatch roofs: flush or straight block-cut ridges. Slate roofs: clay tile ridges in subdued orange-brown or glazed black with mitred hips.
- Limewashed walls in rubble stone and/or cob. The latter construction is often tapered from base to eaves, with corners rounded off.
- Chimneys, often massive, with tapered tops and rough slate drips, often rendered.
- Pre-19th century houses often have small windows set in deep reveals with a dominance of solid over void. 19th and early 20th century windows are of similar proportions, but larger.
- Traditional side-hung casements and vertical sliding sashes, with and without horns, in painted timber.
- Most buildings within the conservation area are conventional two-storey structures. Dormers are generally absent, especially on prominent roofslopes.



PALETTE OF MATERIALS

ROOFING: Thatch, occasionally natural slate and plain (or black/dark green painted) corrugated iron.

RAINWATER GOODS: Half-round or ogee gutters in cast iron.

WALLS: Render, often roughcast, but sometimes smooth (normally lime mortar on old stone/cob buildings) and natural local stone, either of which may be limewashed. Natural or black/grey stained timber weatherboarding may have limited uses on outbuildings and former farm buildings.



WINDOWS & DOORS: Painted softwood, (opaque stains are occasionally suitable for new build). Unpainted timber may occasionally be used, but only if it is oak.

ENCLOSURE: Local rubble stone walls, perhaps cob; bare or limewashed, occasionally rendered and limewashed. Devon hedgebanks.

SURFACING: Waterworn cobbles of Haldon flint/chert and dolerite, hoggin or blacktop (if used judiciously).

MATERIALS TO BE AVOIDED

ROOFING: Artificial slate, tiles (especially concrete) and man-made ridge/hip tiles. Industrial-type corrugated sheeting.

RAINWATER GOODS: Plastic, especially box-profile guttering in grey, white or brown.

WALLS: Brick, Non-local stone, reconstituted stone and textured renders (apart from roughcast). Stained timber or plastic weatherboarding.

WINDOWS AND DOORS: PVCu, stained timber and powder-coated metal frames are all incongruous.

ENCLOSURE: Reconstituted stone, brick or block walls, even if rendered, are not acceptable. Larch-lap or close-boarded fencing and evergreen hedges, especially conifers.

SURFACING: Large areas of blacktop, concrete or chippings should be avoided. Brick pavements have no place in a conservation area with the character of Lower Ashton.

APPENDIX TWO

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to identify which buildings within the conservation area contribute positively or negatively to townscape character. Three character bands are used (see map 1) and the criteria for each are summarised below.

In assessing individual buildings, it is their form, design and architectural potential which is most important. Ephemeral considerations like plastic windows or slight disrepair will not usually result in buildings being categorised lower. This does not imply that, for example, plastic windows in a building making a positive contribution to the area are in themselves a positive feature. They may, however, have prevented it from being classed as 'outstanding'. In addition, a quite modest but attractive building in a very prominent location may be rated as 'outstanding', even though it might only be judged as 'positive' if it were tucked away among other buildings.

Category 1 : Outstanding

These buildings may be of any age, but are most likely to be either ancient and unspoiled vernacular buildings or distinctive examples of a particular architectural style.

Buildings identified as outstanding are the highlights of any conservation area. Planning applications and other proposals which may effect their character, or that of their setting, should only be considered if they offer an enhancement. Harmful proposals must be rejected and demolition is very unlikely to be accepted under any circumstances.

Category 2 : Positive

Buildings in this category are the backbone of every conservation area. They will usually be unpretentious but attractive buildings of their type that do not necessarily demand individual attention, but possess considerable group value. Some may have been altered or extended in uncomplimentary ways, but the true character of these buildings could be restored.

The majority of structures in most conservation areas are likely to fall into this category. Alterations should only be made to positive items if they result in an enhancement of the building and the contribution it makes to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Demolition must

only be considered in exceptional circumstances where significant aesthetic enhancement and/or community benefits would be realised.

- Proposals which would detract from the special character of these buildings will be resisted.

Category 3 : Neutral or Negative

Most conservation areas have buildings that are neither positive nor negative in their contribution to overall character. These will often be twentieth century buildings which may be inoffensive in scale and location, but which lack quality in terms of detailing, materials and design. It must also be accepted that there are usually some buildings in conservation areas which cause actual harm to the character and appearance of that area. These will most commonly be twentieth century buildings which, by a combination of scale, form, location, materials or design, are harmful to the character of the area.

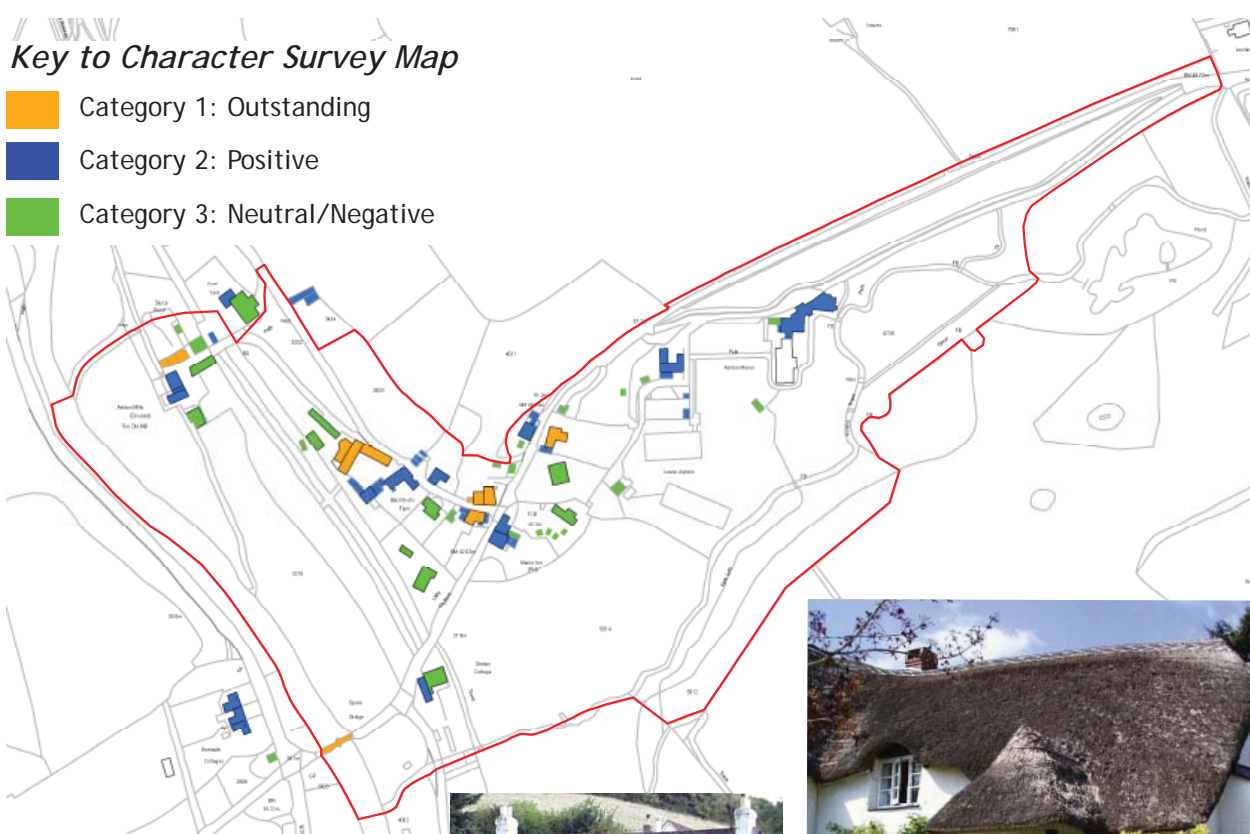
Judgements on these matters will always be open to criticism that they are subjective. Consequently the 'neutral' and 'negative' categories, (which featured in the draft Character Statement), have been combined in this Character Appraisal.

Planning applications for alteration, extension or replacement of buildings in this category will be expected to offer a significant enhancement of the conservation area. Where a building is clearly detrimental due to design, scale or location, its replacement will be encouraged. The use of planting, or other landscaping, to reduce the visual impact of less attractive buildings, may achieve considerable aesthetic benefits at relatively little cost.

- Proposals to enhance the conservation area by either re-modelling buildings, or re-developing sites in this category will be welcomed. Re-development will be expected to demonstrate a very high standard of contextual design and a thorough understanding of prevailing character.

Key to Character Survey Map

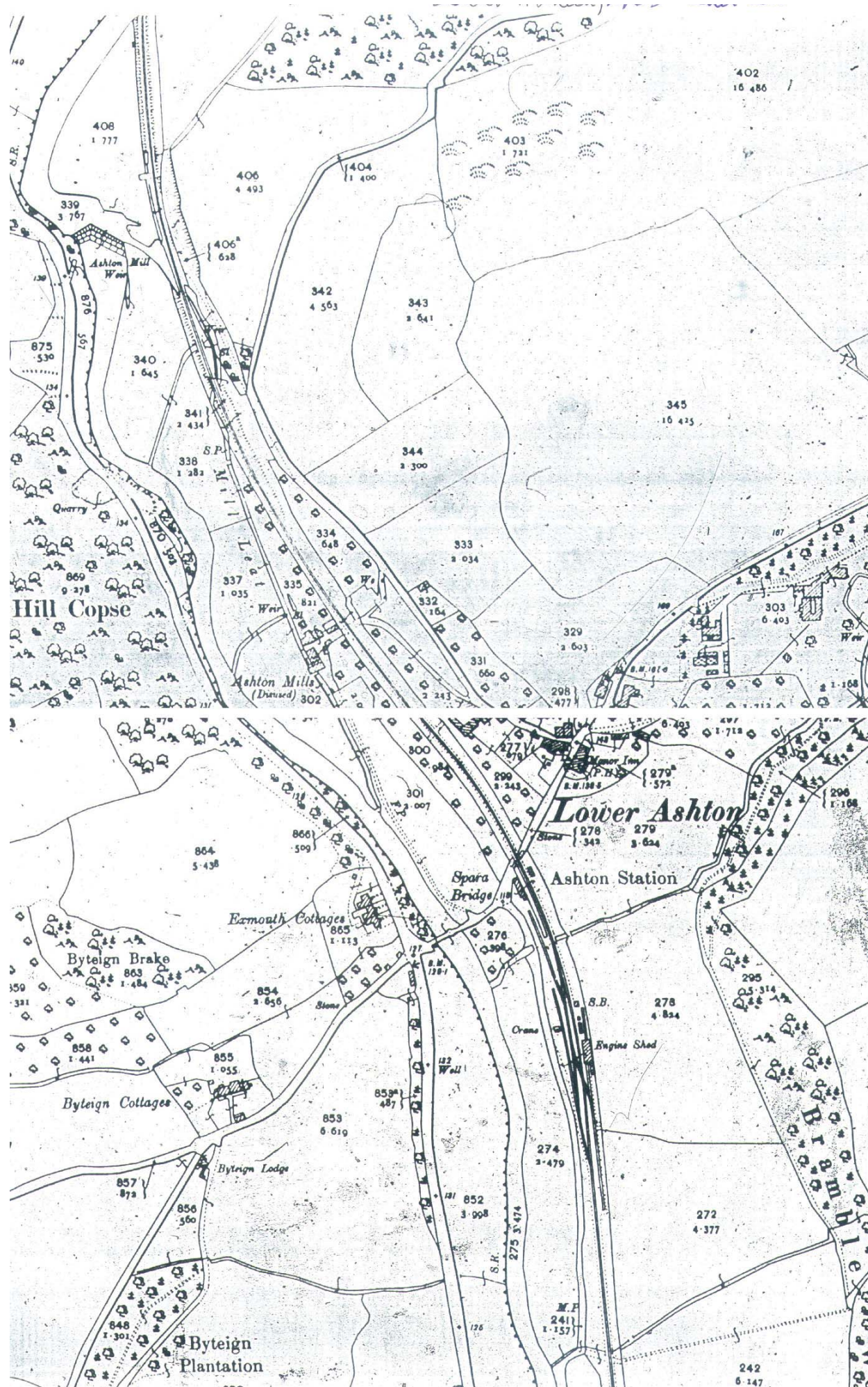
- Category 1: Outstanding
- Category 2: Positive
- Category 3: Neutral/Negative



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PARISH SUMMARY LIST OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORICAL INTEREST FOR:

LOWER ASHTON CONSERVATION AREA

Ref. No.	Grade	Date of Listing	Item
85548	II	1952	Ashton Mill
85549	II	1952	Miller's Cottage at Ashton Mill
85550	II	1988	Blatchford Farmhouse
85551	II	1988	4 ranges of farmbuilding forming farmyard north west of Blatchford Farmhouse
85552	II	1988	The Post Office
85553	II	1952	Forge Cottage
85554	II*	1952	Spara Bridge
475283	II	1999	Manor Cottage

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Basalt: Extrusive igneous rock deposited as lava flows.

Carboniferous: Geological period around 300 million years before present.

Chert: Flint-like stone found in profusion in the Haldon area and in watercourses around the higher ground.

Cob: Cob is made up of a mixture of mud, straw, dung and sometimes horse hair.

Cruck: Early (medieval) roof structure which rises from a basal point within the wall. May be a single piece of timber or two or more jointed together.

Culm Measures: Extensive geological formation deposited in the Devonian /Carboniferous periods.

Dolerite: Intrusive igneous rock, very hard and usually green in colour in Teignbridge.

Hoggin: Compressed aggregate of varied size and composition used as a surfacing material.

Intrusive igneous rocks: Stone formed by underground volcanic activity, eg granite and dolerite.

Lime: Binding agent in traditional mortars.

Limewash: Protective / decorative surface coating made using lime putty.

Ogee: Traditional decorative moulding profile, commonly used for guttering.

Plank and muntin: Timber partition screen made of posts with thinner planks set into grooves.

Smoke blackened thatch: Soot covering to underside of thatch and roof structure which indicates that the building was once an open hall, without a chimney or an upper floor.

Spilitic lavas: Extrusive igneous rock similar to basalt.

Vernacular: The traditional architecture of a locality which is functional and uses locally available materials.



Teignbridge District Conservation Area Character Appraisal