

Ilchester Conservation Area Appraisal



South Somerset
District Council

March 2012



This document was drafted
by Forum Heritage Services
for South Somerset District Council

March 2012

FORUM
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Part 1: Introduction

Purpose and Scope of study

The Ilchester Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan are seen as the first steps in a dynamic process, the aim of which is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area and to provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future management.

The appraisal and management plan aims to:

- Identify those elements of Ilchester which contribute to its character
- Identify elements which detract from the character
- Propose measures to maintain or improve the positive character, local distinctiveness and sense of place of Ilchester

Planning Policy Context:

Section 69 1(a) and 2 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') defines Conservation Areas as:

'Areas of special architectural and historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'

In addition, the Act puts particular emphasis on specific duties:

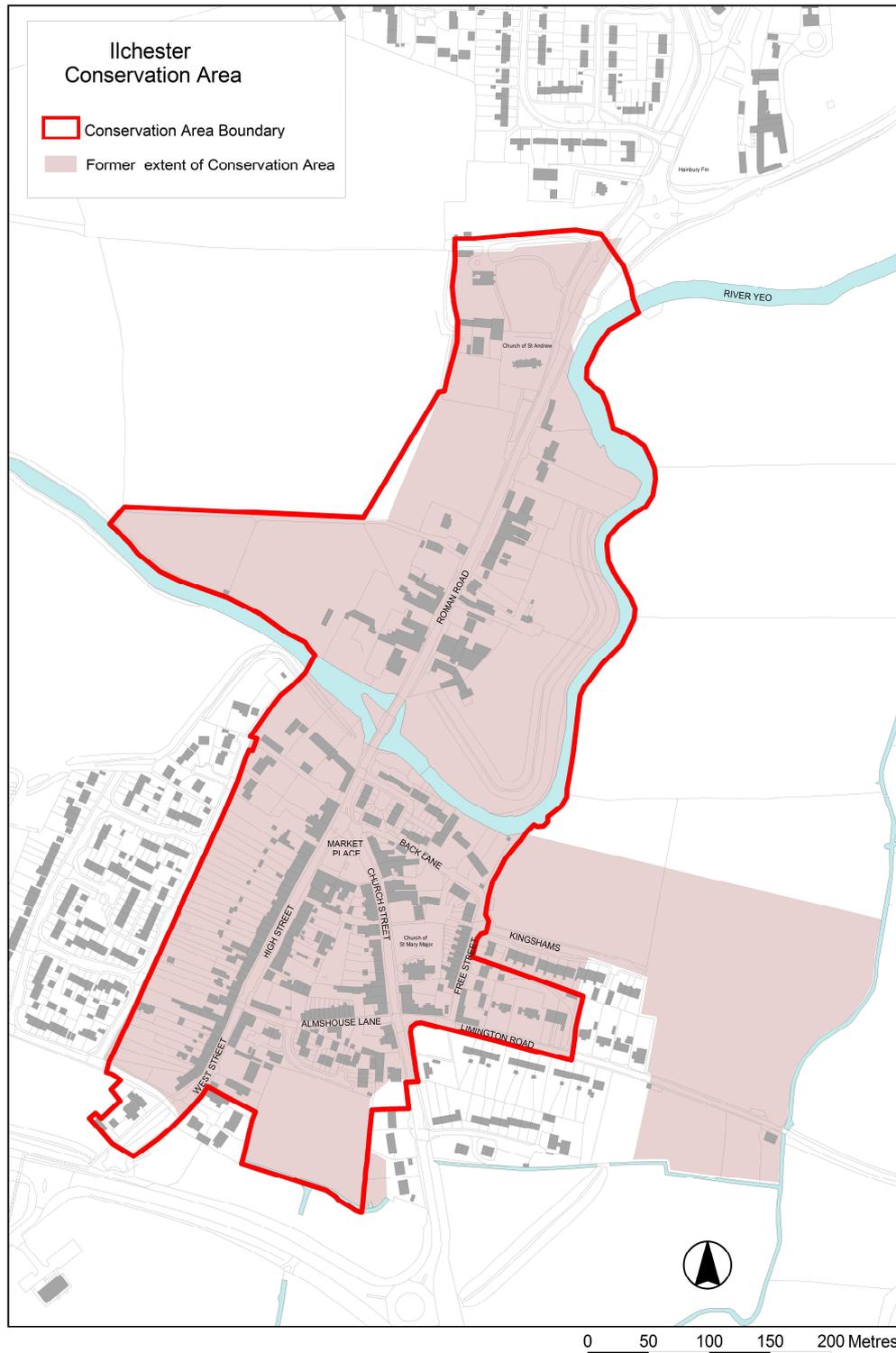
'It shall be the duty of the local authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area

should be designated as conservation areas...'

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011).

The South Somerset Local Development Framework and the saved policies from the South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted 2006) form the current (October 2011) context for the conservation area policies. Overarching national policy on the protection and management of conservation areas and the historic environment in general is contained in The National Planning Policy Framework.

Part 2: Appraisal



MAP 1: Ilchester Conservation Area

Summary of special interest

The well-defined and consistently high quality townscape, combined with a very high quality historic building stock and the relatively high number of listed buildings, are the key characteristics of the Ilchester Conservation Area. The conservation area is generally in a reasonable condition. Most of the buildings, both listed and unlisted, are in a reasonable condition and retain most or their early fabric or have been sympathetically altered or refurbished.

Material use and specification will be an important part of maintaining and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area particularly in relation to new development.

Trees, where found form a very important part of the character and appearance of the conservation area and sit in important open semi-public or private spaces (gardens). They form a dynamic part of the townscape, with its mix of built frontages interspersed with greenery, particularly Church Street. Key open spaces to the edges of the conservation area are vital to the sense of the town sitting within an open landscape setting of gently rolling countryside.

The commercial core to the town is understated but essential to the vitality and vibrancy of the conservation area. The presence of independent cafes, specialist shops, restaurants and public houses should be maintained, supported and encouraged if Ilchester is to retain its charm and essential town role and scale.

In summary, the character of a conservation area stems from: the landscape setting of the area; the grouping of traditional buildings and the

resultant spaces and sense of enclosure; the scale, design, type and materials of the buildings; boundaries and the public realm; landmarks, views and vistas, and the interaction with natural features and the present and former pattern of activities and land uses. It is the particular mix of these elements which gives Ilchester its character, namely:

- The historic street plan, layered through with historic interventions and influences from the Roman period onwards
- The open rural landscape setting, particularly full and glimpsed views from the conservation area
- The well-defined townscape with strong building lines throughout
- The use of Blue Lias stone for walling material and boundary walls (often with Ham stone dressings)
- The rich and varied use of roof materials, particularly the presence of a number of different styles of red/orange clay tile
- The consistent scale within streets and maintaining of historic plot boundaries
- The understated but important mix of uses to the central core
- The views to the river from the historic bridge
- The unusual octagonal tower of the church of St Mary Major and its townscape significance on glimpsed views within the conservation area
- The mix of sash and casement windows often providing some indication of the status and importance of the host building
- The Market Place and the survival of an early weigh-bridge and the classically inspired market cross which act as focal points within the town

- The open character of the gardens to the rear of High Street backing onto Priory Road
- The presence of stone boundary walls throughout the conservation area, a reflection of the true vernacular characteristics of locally distinctive materials
- The use of colour in places to enliven and enrich the townscape character and define architectural elements of some buildings

Location and setting

Ilchester lies five miles north of Yeovil, in south-east Somerset. The town is situated on the flood plain of the River Yeo (also known as the Ivel) where the B3151, which lies on the line of the Roman road the Foss Way, crosses the river. Another former Roman road from Dorchester and leading north-west towards the Mendips joins the Foss Way at Ilchester for a short distance northwards before forking off to the north-west beyond Northover. The Foss Way, the former main road through Ilchester has been superseded by the A303 dual carriageway which by-passes the town to the west with a link to the Dorchester road to the south of the town. Several historic droeways running between Ilchester and the levels around Muchelney to the west leave from the western edge of the settlement. Both the Leland Trail and Monarch's Way footpaths are routed through the village.

The town itself is divided into two with the main historic core and market on the south side of the River Yeo and the hamlet of Northover, with its own church, to the north of the river.

Landscape setting

The landscape setting of Ilchester Conservation Area is defined by the edge of the open moors to south and

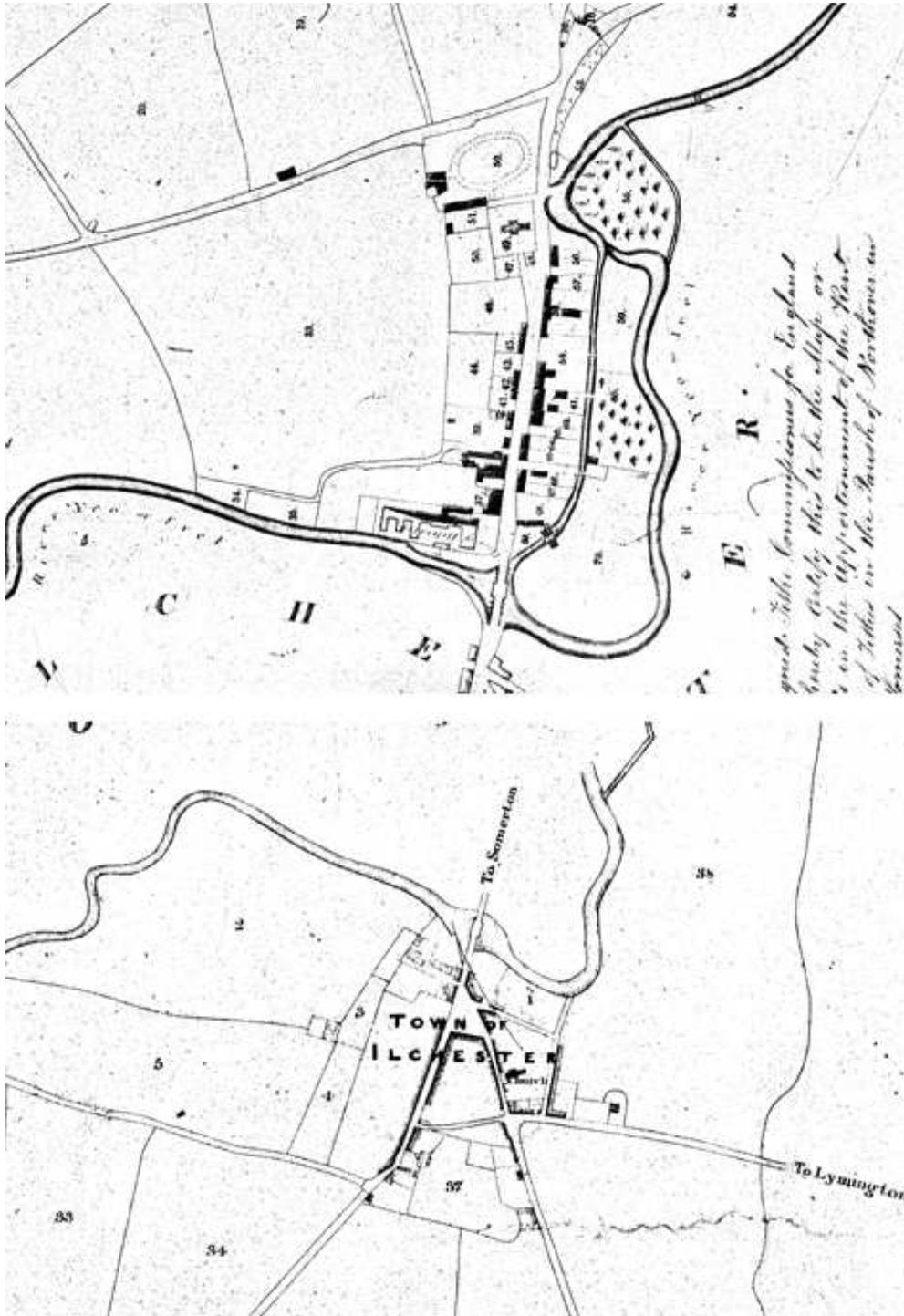
west of the town (forming part of the *Yeo valley floodplain*), whilst a low shoulder of land that defines the southern side of the Yeo river valley lies to the east, rising toward Limington (*Limington Hill*). The landscape features of this abrupt and immediate rural edge form the wider context of the conservation area and form part of views out of the conservation area. To the north the setting is less well-defined and comprises the low rise of ground above Northover (*North low hills*), leaving the raised section of the A303 road and Puddi Moor to provide a wider setting to the north.

The North low hills comprise an intricate landscape in terms of scale, containing small fields and copse plantings, whilst the course of the mill stream remains in place. To the south of Hainbury, the fields are open and primarily pasture, with hedgerows trimmed low, allowing a sense of open moorland to sweep up close to the edge of the town's conservation area.

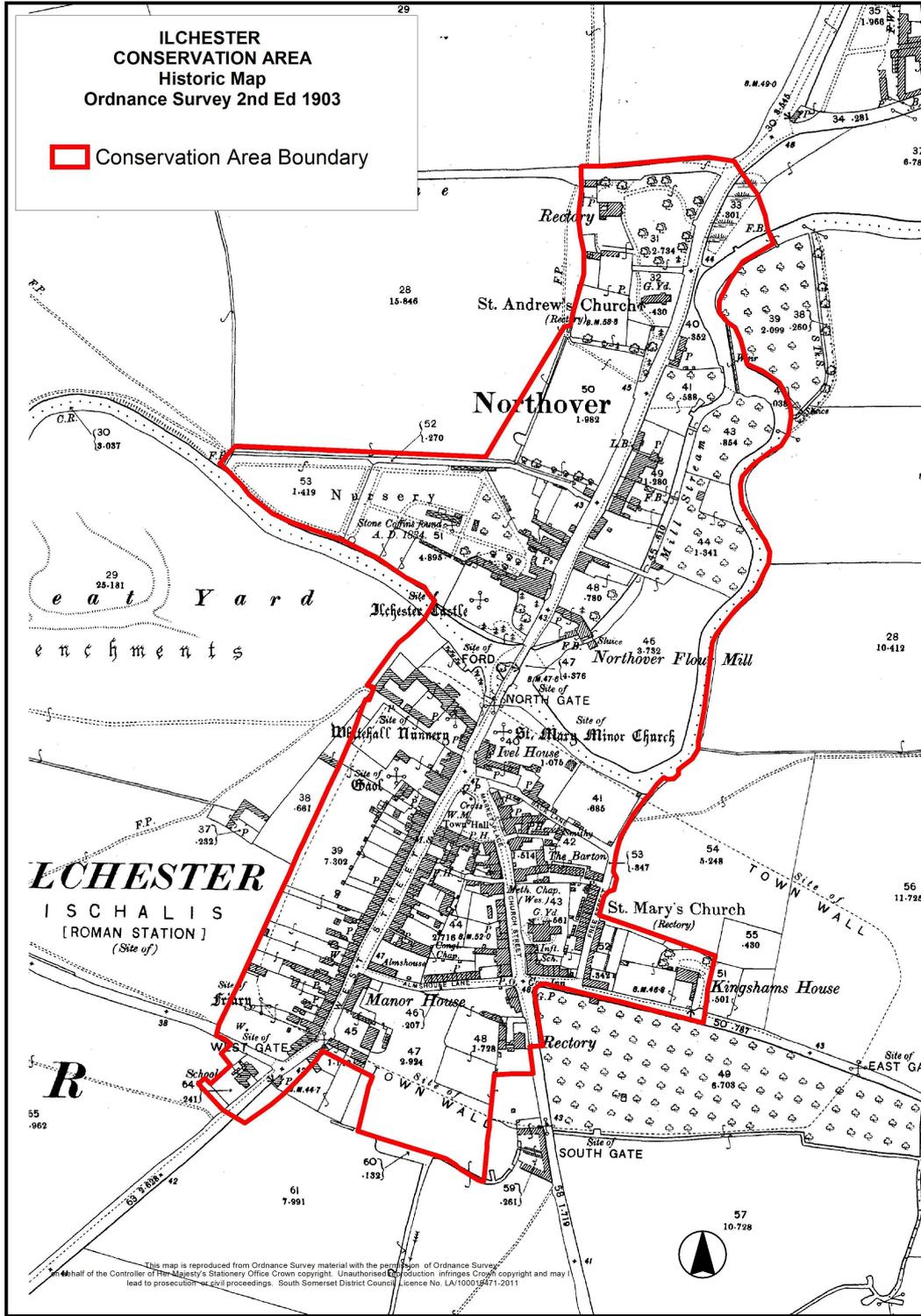
The conservation area's historic open aspect to the south is now severed by the A37 link, leaving a narrow strip of land between road and urban edge that is dominated by the edge of the built settlement and transport infrastructure.

Over rising ground to the east of Ilchester Conservation Area, Limington Hill marks the transition from the open moor to the west, toward the gently undulating vale of Ilchester. The hill is overlain by small-scale enclosure hedgerow pattern, which is robust and well-expressed, and contains a mix of small arable fields; pasture paddocks; and a remnant orchard¹.

¹ *Peripheral Landscape Study – Ilchester* (South Somerset District Council February 2010)



MAP 2: Ilchester (Bottom) and Northover (top) tithe map 1839



Historic Development and Archaeology

Historic development

There has been a major settlement site at Ilchester since the late Iron Age with an *oppidum*, a defended trading centre, located to the south of the present town. Evidence for Iron Age occupation within the area of the town has also been recovered.

After the Roman invasion Ilchester developed as a military base near the oppidum where the Foss Way, the main Roman road into the south-west, crossed the river. The road from Dorchester to the Mendips also passed through Ilchester. A *vicus*, a civilian settlement, developed outside the fort. The early defences were abandoned in the 1st century and built over during the expansion of the settlement which developed into a regional centre and at one stage possibly a regional capital. Its importance as a regional centre may be reflected in the number of villas that have been found within the hinterland of the town. As with most Roman towns, Ilchester had a regular, planned grid of streets with the east-west road and Foss Way dictating the orientation of the grid.

The grid of streets defined blocks of land known as *insulae* within which remains of stone buildings of 3rd and 4th century date, some with tessellated floors, have been excavated. New defences consisting of a bank and a ditch were built in the late 2nd to early 3rd century AD and refurbished in the early 4th century. Straightening of the river in this period suggests that the river was navigable to this point but there is no archaeological evidence for a Roman quay. There was a large cemetery in Northover and possible cemeteries along other roads leaving the town. Records from the 17th and early 18th

century suggest that Roman remains along the Foss Way were still visible at that time but all that can be seen of Roman Ilchester today is as a low bank around the town which is the remains of the town's defences. Ilchester is one of only three Roman towns within the modern county of Somerset and is, by far, the most important of these but it was not especially large or significant compared to some other Roman towns in Britain.

As with most Roman towns, there is little evidence for the period after the departure of the Roman legions in 410AD. By the late Saxon period Ilchester was part of the royal estate of Somerton. Despite the presence of the Roman defences, Ilchester does not appear in the *Burghal Hidage* which lists the places that are known as 'burhs'; defended settlements where the local population could take refuge during the time of the Viking raids across southern England in the 9th and 10th centuries. It is believed that St Andrew's church in Northover was a minster from where priests would travel out to the surrounding area to preach before the development of the parish system. The position of the church, on a small area of raised ground within the flood plain, is typical of minster church locations. The church of St. Mary Major is also thought to have had Saxon origins, although the building now dates largely to the 13th and 15th centuries and another church, St Olave's, is thought to be pre-Conquest on the basis of the dedication. The town had a mint and it was almost certainly a market centre as well although the presence of a market is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. This records Ilchester as a borough with over a hundred burgesses and its market, one of only seven in the county, was three times more valuable than its nearest rival, Milborne Port. Despite the size and wealth of Ilchester

at this time, excavations within the town have failed to reveal evidence of the Saxon town.

Ilchester remained an important urban centre after the Norman Conquest and served as the county town from the mid-12th to the late 13th century. It was the location of the county gaol (which was moved to Somerton in 1281) and retained town walls which were in part built of stone robbed from the Roman defences with a number of gates controlling access to the town. In 1180 the burgesses of the town were granted a borough charter. Quays indicate that the town was accessible by boat and five mills dating from the 12th to 14th centuries have been recorded. Northover was a separate manor documented from the 13th century with its manor house located to the north-west of St Andrew's church, but functioned as a suburb of the town.

The number of religious establishments recorded within Ilchester is a testament to the importance of the town in the medieval period; there were six parishes and up to eight churches and chapels, a Dominican Friary founded by 1261 on a plot of land within the south-west corner of the walled town, a hospital that became a nunnery in 1281 at Whitehall and a leper hospital, founded by 1212 located to the south-west of the town. Not all the locations of these sites are now known.

Apart from the market and a fair there is little evidence for the commercial activities or industries of the town; other than four goldsmiths and two dyers there are only records of stalls and shops in the 13th century. The fortunes of the town were certainly in decline in the late 13th century when there were complaints against neighbouring markets suggesting that local competition was impacting on the town, and there was further decline in the 14th

century probably due to the impact of plague; two mass graves which are believed to be plague pits have been found in the town, one within the market place and the second on the site of the Town Hall. In 1377 there were more taxpayers in Northover than in Ilchester itself suggesting an impoverished, if not small, community in the town.

The shire and circuit courts, together with the county gaol returned to Ilchester between 1366 and 1371 in an attempt to aid the town's flagging economy but the economy of the town does not appear to have been revived. The prison was probably located within the triangle formed by the Foss and Dorchester Roads, near to the market place but by the mid-16th century it had been moved to the west side of Ilchester Bridge, sharing the central island with St. Leonard's church. A new prison was built in about 1599 on the north side of the river which was extended in 1789. In the 1820s it became notorious as an antiquated, poorly designed and poorly run gaol with high levels of disease and depravation. It continued to be used until 1843 when it was replaced by Wilton Gaol, Taunton.

Ilchester remained a market centre and was still regarded as a town although it had lost its earlier prosperity and status, losing its parliamentary representation in 1361. The six parishes had been reduced to three before 1501 which were then amalgamated into one. At this time there were 86 burgages and one or two cottages in the town. Leland, in the mid-16th century, remarked upon the 'wonderful decay'. A silk mill in the remains of the friary chapel's north transept, and breweries were important employers in the town in the 17th century and the town played host to Charles I in 1644 during the Civil War. The Foss Way remained one of the main routes into the south-west and so was an

important coaching route; there were at least seven inns in the town.

Ilchester remained a chartered borough until it was disfranchised in the 1832. The attempts to manage the results of the elections led to the demolition of housing to reduce the number of the electorate, making it cheaper to buy the necessary votes, and the development of new housing including Cleveland Buildings/Lower Barton, Waterloo Court, Castle Rookery and Ilchester Mead in the period around 1800 by 'parliamentary patrons' of the borough as part of the gerrymandering tactics of the Whig, Lord Darlington. Changes to the street pattern were also made; Almshouse Lane was realigned between 1736 and 1808 and in the later 19th century the Dorchester Road was realigned where it joins with the Foss Way, probably to accommodate encroachment onto the market area. By 1886 the Whitehall nunnery site had been built over with expansion to the west, overlying the line of both the Roman and the medieval town wall. There was also suburban expansion along the Foss Way and Dorchester roads and new building within the Northover suburb.

The Ilchester bypass was constructed in 1975 taking through traffic to the west of the town. A link road was also constructed to the south of the town from the Dorchester Road, across the Foss Way to the new road. The road also caused the construction of new bridge over the Yeo and a further bridge taking Pill Bridge Lane over the new road. The construction of flood defences around the town of Ilchester took place in 1980 and 1981.

Large housing estates have been built to the north of Northover, Great Orchard, Tarranto Hill and Troubridge Park, the latter covering Iron Age and Roman sites at Troubridge. New estate building

within the town core itself includes Kingshams, Pillbridge Lane Estate, Lyster Road and the Paddocks although the historic street frontages of the core of the town have seen relatively little modern development.

Settlement plan

The plan of the town is dominated by two streets; West Street on the line of the Roman road, the Foss Way, and Church Street, the road to Dorchester which have a junction at a triangular market place. On the west side of West Street there is a long block of deep, narrow burgage plots which were bounded by the town wall. The nunnery, Whitehall, was located at the northern end of this block of plots and the friary at the south end. On the east side of West Street is another, smaller block of regular plots; these plots are shorter than those on the west side due to the angle between West Street and Church Street. The plots along Church Street do not display the regularity of West Street and the arrangement of the two streets does not suggest a high degree of planning in the overall layout of the settlement as is sometimes seen in Saxon urban settlements. However, Back Lane and Free Street do form something like a grid with West Street, Church Street cutting almost diagonally across the block framed by the three streets.

Northover is a simple linear settlement with plots of varying widths along both sides of the street.

Archaeological Potential

Ilchester is a town of considerable archaeological interest due to its long history as a regional and market centre and has been subject to a high level of archaeological investigation and recording although smaller interventions have restricted the opportunity to identify

and record evidence of the Saxon town, the remains of which are likely to be more ephemeral than masonry buildings of the Roman period. Five Scheduled Monuments within and around the town reflect the presence of the Roman town and its defences and the Iron Age *oppidum* to the south of the town. These areas are regarded as nationally important and as such there is a presumption against development that would cause physical damage to a monument or negatively impact on its setting.

An Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP) has been designated across the core of the town reflecting the importance of the archaeological resource relating to the prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval development of the settlement. Additionally, the historic buildings of the town are an important archaeological resource in their own right. Any proposed development within the AHAP will need to include appropriate measures to assess and, if necessary, protect or record the archaeological interest of the site or building. Advice from the Somerset County Archaeologist should be sought at an early stage.

Key historic influences

The key historic influences and characteristics of Ilchester are:

- Iron Age oppidum – a defended trading centre located to the south of the present town
- Roman vexillation fort develops into Roman town
- Important defended Anglo-Saxon urban centre with a mint, market and minster
- Medieval borough, serving for a time as the county town, with numerous churches, a friary and hospitals

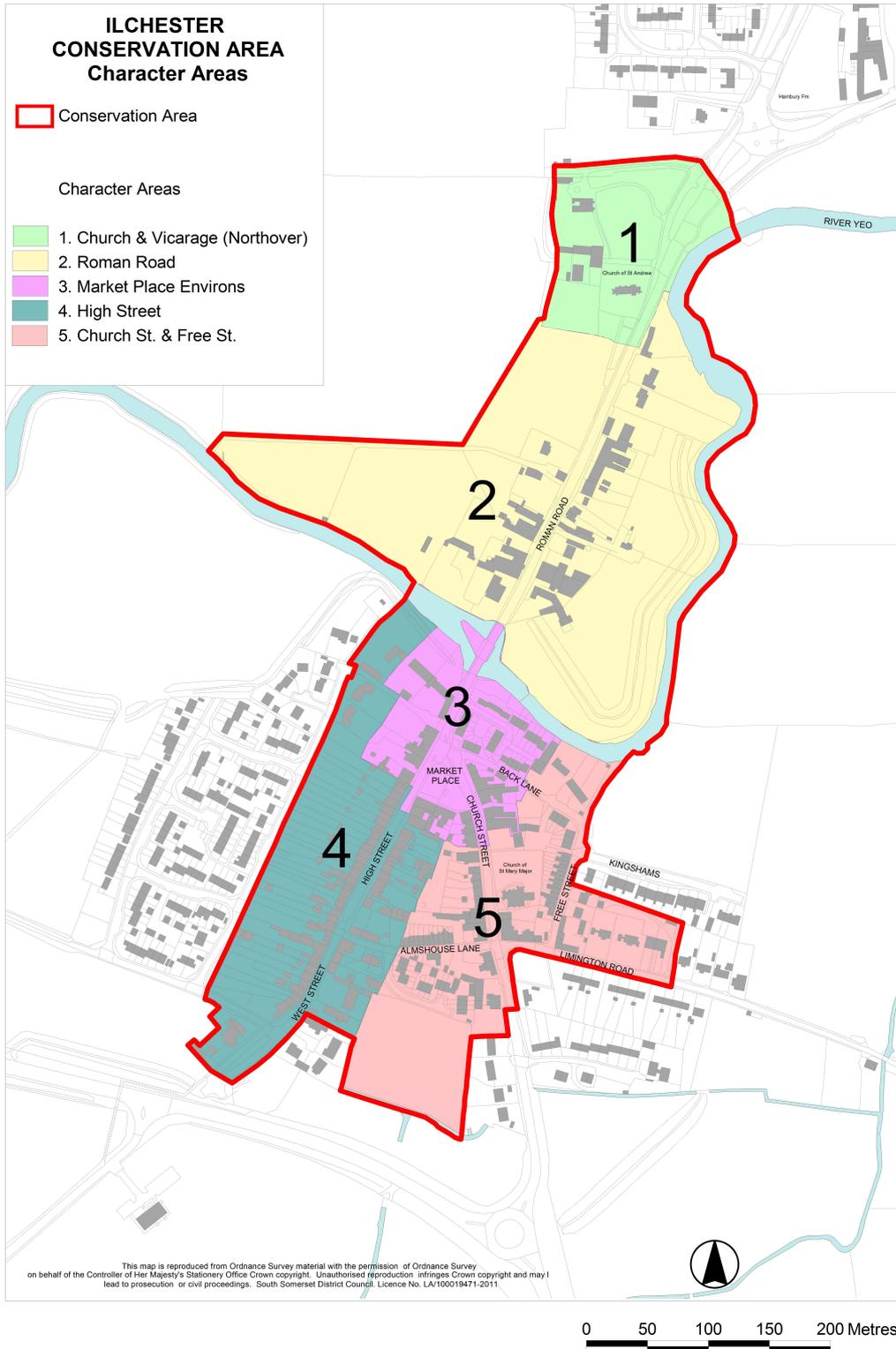
- Late 12th/early 13th century construction of stone town walls
- 14th century county gaol returns to the town, rebuilt on a new site on the north bank of the river in the late 16th century
- 18th-19th century realignment of some roads within the town
- Early 1800s construction of terraces associated with its status as a chartered borough
- Late 19th century – early 20th century suburban expansion
- 20th century large estates built and bypass constructed

Spatial Analysis

Character Areas

Conservation Areas are designated for their special character, but within the area there will be zones which express character variations but contribute to the whole. The definition of these 'sub areas' and the elements making up their character leads to a more useful and comprehensive document in development control terms.

When using this document it should be noted that in all cases the transitional area between defined character areas is important and is exactly this – an area which does not easily fit into the defined character areas but can often be essential to both though not necessarily sharing the same characteristics as one or the other. It should be noted that whilst five sub-areas have been identified, there must be an appreciation of the cohesion to the whole conservation area, which should always be considered when addressing the character of the Ilchester Conservation Area.



MAP 4: Character areas within the Ilchester Conservation Area

Character Areas:

1. Church and Vicarage (Northover)

Form

This part of the conservation area comprises remnant parts of a much earlier and larger area of historic settlement. In the 14th century, this area had more recorded taxpayers than Ilchester giving some indication of its former importance. The Grade II* listed Church of St Andrew lies to the west of the road. A minster church of Saxon origin, it may have originally been the Ilchester parish church. It is now one of only two surviving of at least eight medieval churches in the town². Presently, it forms a small part to the northern-most tip of the conservation area. The area's significance lies in the survival of important historic buildings and their open setting but interspersed with significant groups of mature trees.

Scale, height and building line

Buildings are informally placed in the townscape with the church set slightly back from the roadside but still seen in short (**Figure 1**) and longer views along the road. The remaining buildings are of a varied scale with the grand two storeys of the vicarage, seen between trees and the modest scale of traditional farm buildings mixed with larger scale modern farm buildings (**Figure 2**).

Significant buildings and groups

The grouping of the farm buildings to the north-west of the church is a mix of traditional and modern buildings set loosely in an informal cluster. These buildings are largely obscured from public view with older structures appearing to relate to the vicarage as

stables and outbuildings rather than as a separate farm group.

Materials

There is a varied mix of materials to this part of the conservation area but they generally conform to the overall palette seen throughout. The church, vicarage and farm buildings all comprise Blue Lias stone, generally cut and squared and set to courses with Ham stone dressings. These are particularly prominent to the stone tower of the church and to the stone band between ground and first floor to the vicarage (**Figure 3**). The vicarage is notable for its red clay 'Bridgwater' type roof tiles making the roof a very distinctive feature within its wooded grounds. The stable building to the farm group is coursed Blue Lias with a fairly steep natural slate roof (possibly replacing thatch or clay tile).

Views

There are good glimpsed views of the tower of the church from the south on approach along the road. There are also well-defined views of the tower in its wooded setting from the north (**Figure 4**), extending to beyond the conservation area boundary. These views are marred in places by the presence of street lighting to the roundabout to the north (See **Figure 71**). There are glimpsed views to Northover Vicarage and to the farm group but these are semi-obscured by trees. To the northern edge of this sub-area there are good open views towards Hainbury Farm and Hainbury Mill with the roofs and grouping of these historic buildings playing a particularly important role in these open rural views. The presence of large street lights in these open views (see **Figure 72**) is very regrettable and significantly impacts upon the open character of the

² Pevsner N, *Buildings of England, South and West Somerset*, 1958; VCH, Vol III, 1974) p260

countryside at this important edge to the conservation area.

Local features/typical details

There are some important monuments to the churchyard, including the Grade II listed Ham stone chest tomb, the Fowler Monument, commemorating John Fowler who died in 1714. (**Figure 5**)

Key colour characteristics

Buildings and boundary walls comprise natural materials – stone and brick and natural slate and tile. Church and Vicarage contrast the grey-blue Lias with honey coloured Ham stone or red/orange brick dressings. There is very little paintwork other than timber joinery.

Key unlisted buildings

Northover Vicarage

A four-square late Victorian detached house, with canted bays to the roadside elevation set in its own grounds but nonetheless imposing within its setting. Cut, squared and tooled Blue Lias stone in well-defined courses with Ham stone string course and window arches. There is a low Bridgwater type clay tile roof, probably replacing natural slate and dominant brick ridge stacks in contrasting bands of red and gault brickwork. The house is glimpsed through trees and sits well within its landscaped setting.

Stable south of Northover Vicarage

Small stone stable with single central door with fanlight. Slate roof. Now forms part of a modern range of farm buildings but is a remnant farm building of some quality and character.

Boundary wall west of Church of St Andrew

Low stone boundary wall enclosure with cement capping (**Figure 6**) to field to the west of the church. Forms part of the setting to the Grade II* listed church.



Figure 1 View from Roman Road to the tower of the church of St Andrew



Figure 2 Traditional farm building set within group to the north-west of the church



Figure 3 *Northover Vicarage seen through trees to the north of the church*



Figure 4 *view looking south along Roman Road towards the tower of St Andrew's*



Figure 5 *The Fowler Monument, one of a number of monuments to the churchyard*



Figure 6 *Stone enclosure to the west of the church of St Andrew*

2. Roman Road

Form

This character area comprises the important section of Roman Road which links Northover to Ilchester. It is defined in the wider sense by the open countryside views to the west and to a lesser extent east between development and by the River Yeo (Ivel) which forms its eastern boundary (although glimpsed views east take in open countryside way beyond the river boundary) (**Figure 7**). In townscape terms this character area is well-defined and comprises almost consistent development which is set parallel to the road and slightly set back (with some notable exceptions). This includes the presence of stone boundary walls which continue the strongly defined roadside where built form is absent (**Figure 8**). Part of this open setting is formed by the former Roman cemetery to the north-west of the river bridge which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Scale, height and building line

Buildings are almost consistently two storey, with the exception of the Grade II listed Mill House which is three storey but set perpendicular to the roadside so that its gable is a strong element in the streetscene. There is some variation in

eaves height to houses but they are generally set with the eaves parallel to the roadside with pitch roofs running back to a strongly defined ridgeline usually punctuated by brick chimney stacks (**Figure 9**). The building line varies slightly but is generally buildings set onto the roadside or slightly back from the roadside. Where this is the case, the pavement edge is usually defined by railings and/or a low stone boundary wall (**Figure 10**). This is let down somewhat by the two garage forecourts to this part of the conservation area which contribute to a break-down in the continuity of the townscape to these sections of the conservation area.

Significant buildings and groups

There are two significant groups of Grade II listed buildings to this part of the conservation area. Liongate House and Darlington House form a very attractive group of 18th century houses to the west side of Roman Road, particularly notable for their projecting classical porches, use of the vertical sliding sash and symmetrical plan set around the centrally placed entrances (**Figure 11**). To the east side of the road, the group containing Northover Manor Hotel, all Grade II listed form a more vernacular collection of houses with a mix of casement and sash windows and more variation to the form and eaves line of the roofs (**Figure 12**). Also included within this group but set back from the roadside is Mill House, Grade II listed. A mill was first recorded in 1155 and became 'New Mill' from 1275, and continued until c1816. The dry course of the mill stream is still identifiable (July 1985). The house is presumed to have been remodelled soon after the mill closed, however the house and its group of outbuildings may contain earlier structures of significance. There is also a further remnant of a mill

building to the north-east of the river bridge.

It should be noted that the unlisted stone outbuildings, to both sides of the road and strongly defining the back of pavement, form part of this group (**Figure 13**)

Materials

Materials to this part of the conservation area are consistent with the dominant local materials for the conservation area as a whole; Blue Lias rubble stonework laid to courses with Ham stone or brick dressings. An exception is Liongate House which is Ham stone ashlar and very striking as a result. The enclosed porch flanked by Doric columns with entablature above is a particularly attractive and dominant feature in the streetscene (**Figure 14**). Roofs vary in pitch and material with low pitched natural slate roofs (for example Darlington House) and steeper pitches of clay tile seen to the east side of the road. There is one rare and attractive survival of thatch to the Old Vicarage (**Figure 15**) to the far northern section of the developed part of Roman Road before it meets Northover.

Views

There are some important views to open countryside both between built form, particularly to the east side of the road (*see Figure 7*) and across open fields to the edge of the roadside enclosed by stone boundary walls to the west (**Figure 16**) The side elevation of Liongate House with its stone mullion windows partially closes the view north along Roman Road from the bridge as the building line steps back at this point to the garage forecourt (**Figure 17**). These punctuations in the townscape are important to the structure of this part of the conservation area providing comfortable enclosure and a well-

defined route into and out of the town. These views and their partial closure with built form are an important part of the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area. Glimpsed views towards the tower of the Church of St Andrew are an important wayfinding feature of the townscape and give a sense of the compact nature of the town and its historic northern suburb of Northover.

Local features/typical details

A significant local feature of this part of the conservation area is the survival of a building which is thought to have formed part of the former gaols on the site of what is now Somerset Carriage Company. The modest stone buildings are very well built of coursed and squared Blue Lias (almost to form ashlar work) and the Ham stone ashlar quoins and dressings (**Figure 18**). These buildings are 'at risk' from collapse but are considered to form part of the significance of the Ilchester Conservation Area, particularly their historic relationship with the former gaols on the site which at one time formed an important part of Ilchester's history as a town (*see Section 5 Historic Development*)

The survival of decorative cast and wrought iron railings to this part of the conservation area is notable and these types of boundary treatment greatly adds to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area (**Figure 19**)

Key colour characteristics

Attractive light grey and the pale yellow/beige colour of the weathered Ham stone (still honey coloured under the eaves) used in ashlar work is seen to great effect on Liongate House. Otherwise painted brickwork in white and Blue Lias stone with honey coloured

Ham stone dressings. Roofs comprise grey natural slate interspersed with the orange/ brown of the clay tiles; plain and pantiles.

Key unlisted buildings

Barn at Northover Manor (east side) Roman Road

Barn, probably early 19th century. The barn to the roadside makes an important contribution to the enclosure of the road with a two storey expanse of historic stonework; Blue Lias with very large long and short quoins of Ham Stone with a low natural slate roof and simple square plan brick chimney. The building forms an important punctuation on the roadside and one of a number of buildings that define the back of pavement to parts of the street.

Boundary wall, west side Roman Road

Probably late 19th century in origin but rebuilt in places. Long low section of Blue Lias stone wall with cock and hen coping.



Figure 7 *Glimpsed views east to the open countryside setting of this part of the conservation area to the north of Northover Hotel, Roman Road*



Figure 8 *The line of the stone boundary wall defines the edge of the roadside in the absence of houses*



Figure 11 *Liongate House and Darlington House form a group of exceptional architectural quality to the west side of Roman Road*



Figure 9 *There is a consistency to the townscape to this part of the conservation area with houses (and ridge lines) set parallel to the roadside*



Figure 12 *Ivy Cottage, Roman Road – its mansard clay tile roof and painted brick is at odds with its neighbours but it forms part of the more vernacular character of the east side of the road*



Figure 10 *The boundaries are well-defined by railings, stone boundary walls and/or buildings set to the back of pavement*



Figure 13 *The stone outbuildings to both sides of the road form an important part of the group of listed buildings to the east side of the road (Roman Road)*



Figure 14 *The Doric porch to Liongate House is a particularly striking architectural feature in the streetscene*



Figure 15 *A rare survival of thatch within the conservation area*



Figure 16 *View looking west across open countryside from Roman Road*



Figure 17 *The hipped end of Liongate House with its stone mullion windows partially closes the view north along Roman Road.*

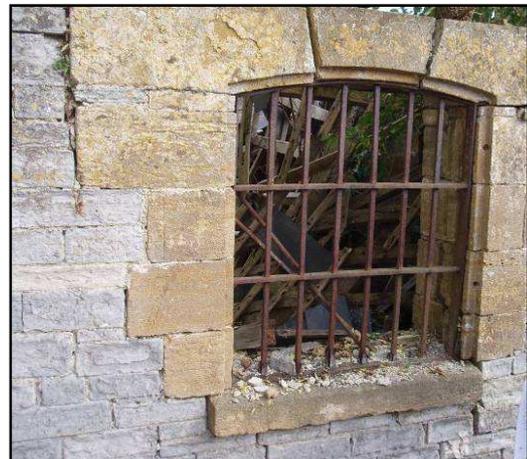


Figure 18 *The high quality finish of materials to the buildings to the north side of the Somerset Carriage Company's plot are reflective of the historic importance of these buildings*



Figure 19 *Front cast iron railings to The Laurels, Roman Road*

3. Market Place environs

Form

The character area is centred on Market Place, the meeting of two former principal routes into the town before crossing the River Yeo (Ivel). The bridge and river section is included within this sub-area although in reality it is very much a shared space between Market Place and Roman Road (Northover) to the north of the river. The roughly triangular space that makes up Market Place is the best defined and most memorable space within the conservation area in townscape terms. It has a fine collection of historic buildings enclosing the space, many of which are listed. (Figure 20).

Scale, height and building line

Buildings are two and three storey. These tend to be on a grand scale with the common use of the vertical sliding sash window adding a verticality to the scale of the townscape. This is seen to particularly good effect to Castle Farm to the northern end of the Market Place (Figure 21). Roofs are generally at a lower pitch or behind parapets. The building line is important to this part of the conservation area with all buildings set to the back of pavement providing comfortable and positive enclosure to this central space.

Significant buildings and groups

All buildings which front the Market Place form a group of considerable historic and architectural significance and make a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area. Those to the west side; The Elms, Little Elms and Castle Farm form a particularly attractive group and form a key part of the incidental views and closed views on passing through the

conservation area. The Town Hall is notable for its strong presence and solidity in the group but limited integration due to the lack of openings to ground floor. (Figure 22)

Materials

There is a very attractive mix of traditional materials to this part of the conservation area including the relatively rare use of unpainted red brick to the Ilchester Arms. Here seen in Flemish bond (please note that this building was formerly painted or rendered and this finish was removed without authorisation in the 1980s) (Figure 23). Elsewhere there is the more usual mix of Blue Lias stone, squared and laid to courses with Ham stone dressings (Figure 24). There is also Ham stone used as the principal material (The Elms and Little Elms) denoting a considerable wealth of the owners who built or remodelled this house (now two houses). Roofs are consistently a grey natural slate, generally at a relatively low pitch with some set behind parapets.

Views

The strongly defined building line accentuates the access points to the Market Place from High Street and Church Street creating pinch points and focused views into and out of the Market Place to, amongst other townscape features, the distinctive tower of St Mary Major (Figure 25). The classical façade to Castle Farm terminates the view successfully along Back Lane into Market Place. This house is also prominent in views on approaching from the south along Church Street.

Local features/typical details

Of particular note are two features which sit as focal points to the Market Place; the weighbridge of 1870-80 with it

former timber shed (rebuilt) to the west. The Weighbridge was installed soon after 1870 by the Ilchester Corporation and by 1888 the weighbridge and town hall lettings provided the bulk of the Corporation's income. The second is the strikingly elegant and tall Market Cross of 1795 which replaced an earlier cross and sits on the junction of Market Place and High Street. The cross was rebuilt in the 1990s after significant damage sustained in a storm. (**Figure 26**)

Key colour characteristics

Most buildings within this part of the conservation area are stone and vary from the light and dark grey of the Lias through to the honey colour of the Ham Stone perhaps best illustrated by the double front of The Elms and Little Elms (west side of the Market Place). Elsewhere is warm red brick and painted render. Painted walls are generally plain in colour; white or pale cream. Colour is often used in contrast to plain stone or rendered facades for the front doors with gloss black, strong reds and deep greens highlighting panelled doors to good effect.

Key unlisted buildings

14-15 Market Place

A 19th century pair of Blue Lias stone cottages (Ham stone date stone set centrally with initials J&B 1867) with Ham stone dressings to windows and doors and plinth. They retain their timber framed casements with glazing bars. There are deep eaves to a low natural slate roof. Large central chimney truncated but rebuilt as a narrower double flue probably serving one of the pair. Modern door to No.14, single storey side extensions probably later. The pair are important buildings in terms of the Market Place group and

their contribution to the quality of the townscape of this space.

16 Market Place

A double fronted house which appears 19th century but with earlier origins. Painted render façade, with stone returns, steeply pitched natural slate roof (probably replacing thatch) with Ham stone copings and brick ridge stacks (rebuilt). Windows are timber (modern replacements) with tri-partite sash windows to the ground floor flanking a raised and fielded six panel door painted red. Two small gabled dormers with timber casements to the front roof slope. This is an important building in terms of the Market Place group making a valuable contribution to the quality of the townscape of this space.

Surfaces and street furniture

The stone pavement comprising square section flag stones with stone sett dressings forms an important part of the setting to the Town Hall and the Grade II listed Weighbridge to the Market Place.

The replica Victorian cast iron lamp posts adjacent to the Grade II listed Market Cross (1795 by Thomas Trask) and crested bollards form a group and complement the modern shelter (replacing an earlier structure) to the weighbridge. A modern telephone kiosk below the shelter is an unfortunate addition to this attractive group of street furniture.



Figure 20 One (now two; The Elms and Little Elms) of a number of high status houses fronting the Market Place; Grade II listed



Figure 23 The Ilchester Arms, to the east side of Market Place; rare use of exposed red brick in Flemish bond with Ham stone dressings



Figure 21 The use of vertical sliding sashes to Castle Farm (Grade II listed) accentuate its scale and reflect its higher status

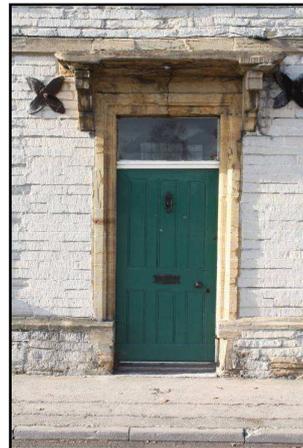


Figure 24 Doorcase to Castle Farm a good example of the Ham stone carved ashlar stonework for dressings offset against the grey/white of the Lias stone



Figure 22 The strong presence of the Town Hall to the Market Place group but with limited active frontage onto this important space



Figure 25 The octagonal tower of St Mary Major as seen from the Market Place looking south along Church Street



Figure 26 *The elegant classically inspired stone Market Cross at the junction of Market Place and High Street is an important landmark in the conservation area*

4. High Street

Form

The High Street section of the conservation area is perhaps the most easily defined as it has a strong planned element to its layout. This is very well-defined to the west side of the street and less well so to the east. It largely comprises an almost continuous built frontage to both sides of the street giving good enclosure and a strong sense of being an urban section of the town (**Figure 27**) slightly detached from the open countryside and with very regular, long deep plots to the west side of the street, running to Priory Road, with those to the east less regular (due to their relationship with those to Church Street which back onto a central private space) but still defined and likely to be at least medieval in origin.

Scale, height and building line

Most of the houses to this part of the conservation area are two storey with the exception of The Manor to the southern section of the street and 32

High Street (Ilchester Museum) which are both three storey. Notably, none of the houses to the west or east side of the street have dormers or rooflights making the uninterrupted roof-plane of these houses an important positive part of the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area (**Figure 28**). This continuous sweep of roofs not only ensures a consistent scale but accentuates the chimneys providing a dynamic rhythm to the roofscape not seen to such a degree elsewhere in the conservation area.

The building line is an important factor in terms of townscape character with the almost continuous frontage of the street (continued by high walls where there are no houses) to the back of the pavement. This provides important consistent enclosure which feels safe due to principal windows facing onto the street and comfortable as the scale of buildings is consistent and not overpowering for the relatively narrow section of carriageway which passes through this part of the conservation area. (**Figure 29**)

Significant buildings and groups

All of the buildings to High Street form a large group of great historic and architectural significance. They are unified by their shared building line, generally shared scale and use of materials. What is particularly notable about the group is the use of colour for the painting of brick and in some cases stone. These are mostly subtle tones and changes in colour to emphasise features such as windows cills or quoins. This is a distinctive characteristic of the group. (**Figure 30**)

The Old School House and Old School at the very southern end of the character area have been converted to private dwelling houses with the former having been carefully extended to the west.

This small group is an important survival of buildings which have an historic association with the town, being the 19th century school and school house and retaining much of their architectural and historic interest. The buildings are still readable as a school group and form an important part of the gateway to the town along West Street (which is only pedestrian but nonetheless important) despite the intervention of the by-pass to the south effectively truncating this approach to the town.

In addition to the main school buildings, there is a very attractive and well-built Ham stone wall to the rear of the School House running north-south. There are very few Ham stone walls in Ilchester and this is a good example of its type.

Materials

The houses are either stone or brick but there is very little of either exposed to the roadside elevations with most having been painted various colours. Stone is occasionally painted, as seen in some cases along High Street. This is generally not a traditional appearance for this part of the District and has probably developed from a colour lime wash which has over the years been replaced with masonry paint. Roofs are more mixed than other parts of the conservation area with plain clay tiles, 'Bridgwater' types, pantiles and natural slate, sometimes seen adjacent to each other. There are also examples of modern concrete interlocking tiles to some houses in the group. A notable feature to the roofs is the consistency of size and materials used for chimneys; these are substantial and all red brick. Their punctuation of the skyline is a particularly attractive part of the character of the conservation area (**Figure 31**). Some houses have lost their original windows. Where these survive they are mix of sliding sashes

and multi-pane casements. Some are horizontal sliding casements (sometimes known as 'Yorkshire casements'). (**Figure 32**)

Views

Views north and south along High Street are funnelled by the strongly defined townscape and accentuated by the rhythm of plot widths, chimneys, doors and windows. The prominent gables to both No.32 High Street (the museum) and The Manor are important townscape elements in these views being taller than surrounding development they are well defined features on the skyline in these important views. (**Figure 33**) The view from Almshouse Lane is terminated successfully by No.22 High Street adding to the strong sense of a planned historic townscape to this part of the conservation area.

Local features/typical details

The use of colour, the palette of materials and features such as horizontal sliding casement windows and carriageway arches all contribute to a highly locally distinctive townscape to this part of the conservation area (**Figure 34**). Where they survive, the rear and side boundary walls to houses to both sides of the street, but particularly the west side at the end of gardens which back onto Priory Road are of significant local importance (and some may be listed by virtue of their curtilage relationship with statutory listed buildings). (**Figure 35**)

Key colour characteristics

Colour forms a significant part of the character of this part of the conservation area. Individual houses to High Street and West Street comprise painted brickwork. The colour varies from subtle pastel shades of greens, yellows and creams through to stronger blue, lilac

and crimson colours. The walling colour is often contrasted with the painting of lintels, cills and door surrounds. These are generally more subtle in greys, soft greens, cream and white. The variation between houses is a very attractive characteristic of the townscape, however some paint schemes and colour choices are more successful than others. Some are strongly contrasting and have moved away from the pastel shades. (see **Figure 30**)

Key unlisted buildings

Nos.1-20 (excluding the Grade II listed No.7) High Street and Nos. 1 to 3 & 5 to 8 West Street

Long terrace, mostly early 19th century but with some alteration. Painted brick, various colours with mix of clay (plain and pantiles), natural slate and modern concrete interlocking tiles. A mix of casements and sliding sashes with some modern replacements. Tall large section brick chimney stacks throughout. This is a key group of very high historic, architectural and townscape significance.

Nos. 28 to 31 High Street

Early 19th century row of houses which form a significant townscape group with the adjacent Grade II listed buildings. Mostly sash windows, some modern replacements, steeply pitched but varied rooflines of clay tiles, tall brick stacks. Simple door hoods to Nos. 28 and 30 and a timber-boarded door to a carriageway opening to No.30.



Figure 27 *High Street looking north – strong sense of the urban character of the town*



Figure 28 *The consistent uninterrupted roof-plane of the houses to High Street is an important part of the character of the street*



Figure 29 *The consistent building line to both sides of the street makes for dynamic and strongly defined townscape to this part of the conservation area (looking north along High Street)*



Figure 30 A notable characteristic of the houses to High Street is the use of colour



Figure 33 The distinctive gables of The Manor and No.32 High Street (the museum) beyond are important elements in the views along High Street



Figure 31 Chimneys form a particularly important part of the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area



Figure 32 An example of a horizontal sliding casement window to High Street – a notable architectural feature to some of the houses



Figure 34: Carriageway openings are a distinctive feature of this part of the conservation area



Figure 35 Stone boundary walls fronting Priory Road; important local features making a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area

5. Church Street and Free Street

Form

This is one of the larger character areas of the conservation area although presently much of the area is open countryside to the east of the town which is included within the town's scheduled monument which is largely but not exclusively concerned with the Roman remains of the former settlement of this period. The present built-up section of this part of the conservation area comprises Church Street, a main route into and through the town from the south and a series of lanes; Almshouse Lane, Free Street, Back Lane and Limington Road, some of which are thought to make up part of the planned Saxon settlement of Ilchester but presently form an attractive and often intimate series of developed sections of the town often well-defined by built form and/or stone boundary walls. (**Figure 36**)

Scale, height and building line

Buildings are rarely more than two storey to this part of the conservation area with some variation to roof form.

This accentuates the non and former non-residential uses, such as the church of St Mary Major with its prominent octagonal tower and the former Wesleyan chapel (date stone - built 1850 and enlarged 1861) now part commercial and residential to the west side of Church Street (**Figure 37**). The building line is consistent almost throughout with only limited exception. Buildings are set to the back of pavement. Where this is not the case, stone boundary walls often continue the strong line of the back of pavement. (**Figure 38**)

Significant buildings and groups

There is one strongly defined group to Church Street which centres upon the church of St Mary Major and those buildings to the north and south. This largely comprises unlisted buildings which nonetheless individually and collectively make a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area and the setting of listed buildings (**Figure 39**). Equally well-defined groups include the two terraces to Almshouse Lane and Free Street. Neither have the survival of historic fabric, the retention of original windows and doors or quality of terraces seen to High Street, but they are nonetheless important groups in the townscape and make a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area (**Figure 40**).

Materials

The predominant material to this part of the conservation area is grey Lias stone, laid to uneven courses and usually squared. This is complemented by either Ham stone or brick dressings to windows and doors. Some buildings have simple doorcases (not as grand as those seen to High Street or Market Place) (**Figure 41**) and there is also the presence of stone mullion windows (to

the school building to the south of the church) and moulded door and window surrounds (to the former Wesleyan Chapel). These are features which distinguish buildings to this part of the conservation area, but are not exclusive to this character area). Roofs are mostly clay tile with some natural slate. The clay tile varies in form with some examples of 'Bridgwater type' tiles, pantiles and plain clay tiles. This combination and evolution of varied roofing materials is a very attractive part of the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area.

Views

There are significant townscape views from Market Place towards the tower of St Mary Major, within its green setting (**Figure 42**). It should be noted that due to the slight kink in the road and the presence of the tree immediately south of the church, the tower is only glimpsed and the rest of the church obscured from view on travelling north along Church Street into the town (**see Figure 39**). There are constant attractive glimpses of the church throughout this sub-area and a long glimpsed view from Limington Road over the uncluttered roofscape and tree and hedge boundaries which line this road. (**Figure 43**)

There are important views from the junction of Free Street and Back Lane out across open countryside. These views are town defining in that they firmly place the town and its edges in its open landscape setting.

Local features/typical details

The Blue Lias stone boundary walls to this part of the conservation area are consistently of a high quality and strongly define parts of the sub-area; for example parts of Limington Road and Back Lane in particular. They form

continuous, often unbroken sweeps of stone walling enclosing streets and lanes and continuing to define the back of pavement where buildings are set back. Individually and collectively they make an important contribution towards the local distinctiveness of the conservation area. (**Figure 44**)

Key colour characteristics

The painting of render does form part of the character of the terrace of houses to Free Street. However, this is not as successful or carefully handled as that seen to High Street. Elsewhere in this character area painted stone or brickwork does not form part of the character or appearance of this part of the Ilchester Conservation Area.

Key unlisted buildings

1 to 12 (inclusive) Church Street

Row of houses and shops which includes the Grade II listed former Methodist Chapel with which they form a group of some considerable historic and architectural significance. Blue Lias stone with some varied brick dressings but mostly plain. Nos 3 and 4 have 20th century timber shopfronts. Roofs are a mix of plain clay tiles, some natural slate and modern concrete interlocking tiles. The importance of this group is their collective townscape contribution to the character of Church Street and their grouping with listed buildings to both sides of the street.

1 to 12 Free Street

Terrace of houses and outbuilding (south end), late 19th century. Rendered stone with steeply pitched clay tile roofs. Narrow houses of single sash window to ground and first floor. Large square plan brick chimney stacks. An attractive terrace in townscape terms but with some unfortunate replacement windows.

The use of colour is not as successful as that seen to High Street but nonetheless adds a vibrancy to the houses.

1 to 10 Almshouse Lane

Terrace of mid to late 19th century houses. Ham stone ashlar walls with low slate roofs and large prominent brick chimney stacks. This group strongly defines the roadside and makes a very important contribution to the townscape quality of this part of the conservation area. Mostly replacement windows and doors.

Boundary wall, north side Limington Road

Mid 19th century. High stone boundary wall to the north side of Limington Road, formerly enclosing the gardens of Kingshams House (Nos. 18-21 Limington Road) presently enclosing gardens to modern houses built within the grounds. A key historic townscape feature on approaching the town from Limington.



Figure 36 *A view along Back Lane defining some of the more intimate and complex sequences of built form, spaces and boundary treatments to this part of the conservation area*



Figure 37 *The former Wesleyan Chapel, notable for its heightened scale in a fairly consistently scaled townscape*



Figure 38 *High stone boundary walls continue the line of the roadside with houses set back behind – Limington Road (north side)*

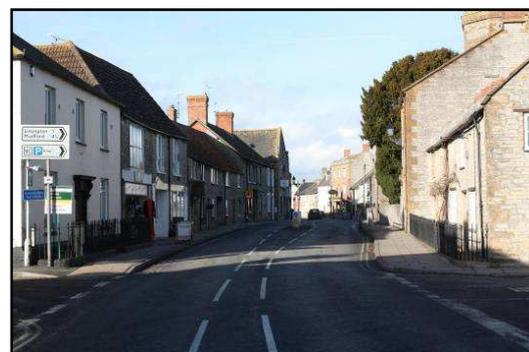


Figure 39 *An important group to the west side of Church Street*

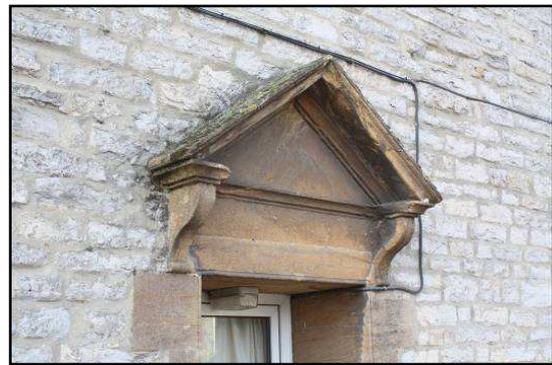
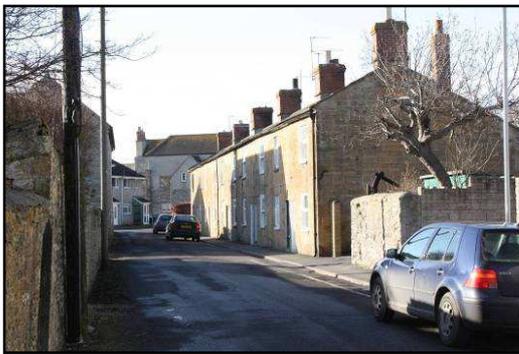
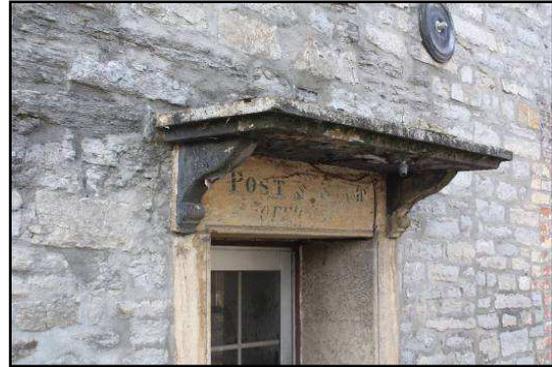


Figure 40 (top and bottom); Terraced houses to Free Street and Almshouse Lane – houses individually and as part of their groups make a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area

Figure 41 simple Ham stone doorcases and hoods are a notable feature of this part of the conservation area



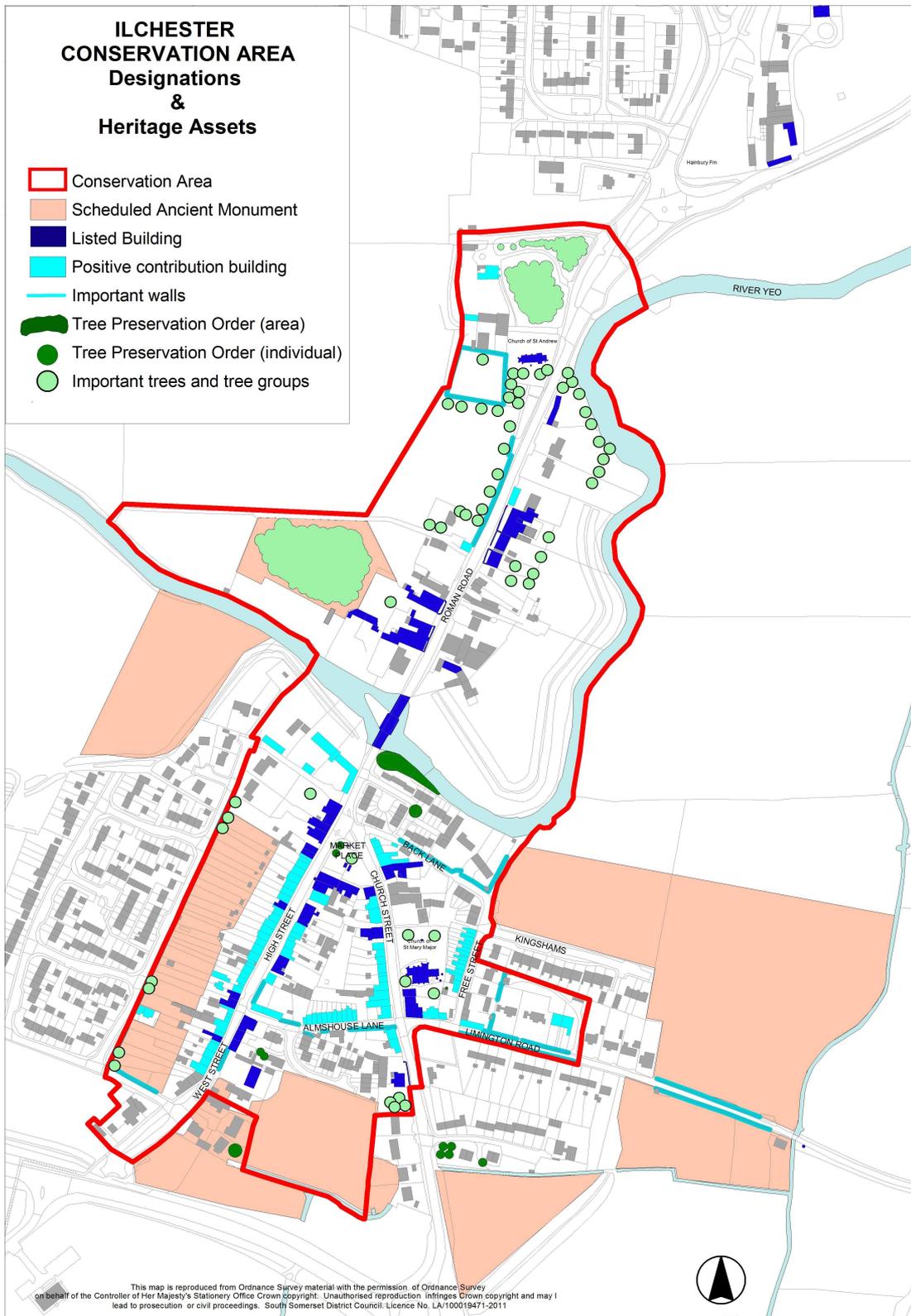
Figure 42 The church tower of St Mary Major from Church Street



Figure 43 *Glimpsed views to the church from Limington Road*



Figure 44 *Stone boundary walls make a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of this part of the Ilchester Conservation Area*



MAP 5: Designations and Heritage Assets

Architectural and historic qualities of buildings

The architectural and historic qualities of the buildings of the conservation area lies individually in houses and churches of particularly important special interest and in groups of buildings which define key spaces such as the Market Place where some of the most important individual buildings of the conservation area are to be found. Their status and quality is generally reflected in their materials. Materials include stone ashlar work for facades and prominent window details; seen in mullion windows to the former school (now Church Hall) (**Figure 45**) to the south of the church of St Mary Major and Liongate House (flank elevation). Stone is also used for doorcases and doorhoods. These are perhaps the most notable architectural feature of the conservation area and there are a number of very fine examples throughout (**Figure 46**).

The two churches are the oldest buildings within the conservation area. Originally two of eight in the medieval period, the Grade II* listed church of St Mary Major (13th century) with its octagonal tower being perhaps the most notable and memorable given the massive plan form of the tower, its shape and its relationship with the rest of the building and the wider townscape. This feature is prominent in glimpsed views to the southern section of the conservation area with its Blue Lias roughly coursed stone and Ham stone quoins and dressings setting the scene in materials terms for the rest of the buildings within the conservation area.

Of secular buildings the 17th century profile of Manor House to the east side of West Street as it joins High Street is its most striking architectural feature

with the series of gabled dormers at roof level and massing of the double roof plan dominating its corner site (**Figure 47**).

Within the 18th century a series of houses are built or remodelled to conform to the Georgian idiom with the advent of tall sash windows, architraves to windows, doorcases, doorhoods, string courses and parapets. The Elms and Little Elms, Ilchester Arms, Castle Farm are particularly good examples south of the river with Liongate House, Darlington House and The Laurels to the north. It is notable that most houses of this period or earlier underwent some form of gentrification and this continued through to the early and mid 19th centuries. This has meant that, other than outbuildings, industrial buildings and to a lesser extent civic buildings there is nothing that could be considered truly vernacular in character other than possibly The Old Vicarage (Roman Road) to the far north of the conservation area which retains its thatch and simple plan form and has casements (although these appear to be later) rather than sashes (**See Figure 15**).

There is little in the way of high Victorian architecture, with the Church Hall and the former Wesleyan Chapel perhaps the best examples. These are characterised by a use of the arched window and hoodmoulds above windows to accentuate their gothic identity. (**Figure 48**)

Much of the conservation area in architectural terms comprises the fairly humble terrace house. There are early examples to High Street and West Street, some of which are Grade II listed. They are characterised by a simplicity of form, a general lack of significant architectural ornamentation, casement windows and boarded or plain

panelled doors and steeply pitched roofs with large prominent chimneys usually with later brick corbelling to the heads and some with decorative chimney pots. A notable architectural feature is the carriageway arch (*see Figure 34*). Some of these are decorated with keystones and imposts but most are plain openings. Later terraces, seen to Almshouse Lane and Free Street have sash windows but are equally simple in architectural form. Their key characteristics are those that are shared such as the window and door configuration and the chimney. Together these create a rhythm to these terraces which makes up an important part of their architectural character.



Figure 45 *Stone mullion windows with hoodmoulds and tracery to the Church Hall*



Figure 46 *Examples of doorcases throughout the conservation area*



Figure 47; *The strong definition of the roof form of Manor House is an important architectural characteristic*

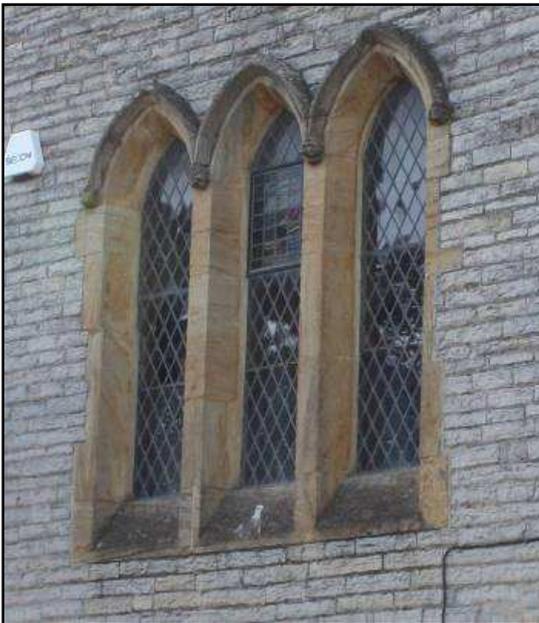


Figure 48 *The arched window with hoodmoulds to the Wesleyan Chapel, Church Street – a distinctive but uncommon feature in the conservation area*

Activity: prevailing and former uses

Historically much of the settlement of Ilchester and Northover would have been given over to agriculture and the farming of the local region and the servicing of the various religious establishments which moved to the town in the 13th century. In more recent history (18th and 19th centuries) the servicing of the Gaol in particular within

the town would have pre-occupied at least some parts of the town. These patterns of use survive indirectly within the town plan and a handful of buildings, most notably the sections of building forming part of the former Gaol to the north of Somerset Carriage Company, the Northover Lodge and Northover Cottage part of the Gaol complex (**Figure 49**), the churches; St Andrew's to the north set within the suburb of Northover and St Mary Major to the east side of Church Street and the former agricultural buildings to the south of the River Yeo and west of Market Place, now converted to residential accommodation – their scale being indicative of the importance of these buildings to the agricultural livelihood of the owners. (**Figure 50**)

The survival of a number of public houses within the core of the conservation area is indicative of the towns' role as a staging post and stopping point for travellers although this was never a well-defined role reflected in certain building types such as large coaching inns. Their presence today provides a welcome mix of uses to the town centre adding to the vitality and vibrancy of the conservation area. This is also true of the cafes and restaurants which are present in the town.

Of most significance in terms of the present character and appearance of the conservation area is the generally understated uses which have not dominated the town or destroyed the historic character through excessive or inappropriate signage. The only exception to this is the presence of two garages and their associated infrastructure which includes open forecourts dominated by cars, poorly integrated buildings, large and intrusive signage and a general lack of strong townscape qualities (such as the continuation of the building line and

sympathetic use of materials). (Figure 51).



Figure 49 *Northover Lodge and Northover Cottage seen from the road – their chimneys are particularly prominent in the views*



Figure 50 *Converted barn; Trinity Barn and College Barn – indicative of former uses which had a significant impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area*



Figure 51 *The two garages to Roman Road*

Overview of prevalent local and traditional materials

In general terms the grey shale-like Blue Lias of the underlying geology can be said to dominate the town but it is enlivened and enriched by the use of Ham stone for dressings to windows and doors primarily. And to a lesser extent, red brick also used in the same way (Figure 52). The stone is generally a pale grey and almost white in places. It is usually tooled and squared and laid to courses but these courses often vary in width giving a very attractive vernacular informality to their finish. Some stone has been re-used and is seen to walling and boundary walls (Figure 53).

Ham stone is mostly used as dressings to windows, doors and for architectural detailing being a freestone which takes decoration well. There are notable exceptions such as The Elms and Little Elms, Market Place (see Figure 20) and the terrace of houses to Almshouse Lane.

Brick is also seen as a walling material but in relatively few numbers and is mostly painted (various colours but mostly soft tones and pastels) (Figure 54). This is particularly the case to High Street but is also seen most notably to the Ilchester Arms on Market Place unpainted but this is the exception rather than the predominant use of this material. Where seen, it is invariably Flemish bond.

There are occasional examples of the use of painted render, such as seen to the terrace of houses to Free Street and to the Bull Inn (although the latter is more of a harling or pebbledash which has been rendered). This type of finish especially when seen in modern renders (which are generally smooth and undistinguished) is not a traditional finish in this part of the District.

The roofing materials vary throughout the conservation area and different types are often seen adjacent to each other. This adds to the special character of the roofscape to streets and important groups of buildings (see character area descriptions). It is generally the case that the lower pitches are natural slate, laid to regular sized components and usually with a matching ridge tile so that they are not seen to strongly define the ridge (**Figure 55**). To steeper pitches there are a number of types of clay tile used. These are plain clay tiles, pantiles, 'Bridgwater' tiles (**Figure 56**), and double Roman interlocking tiles. These are generally a red/orange colour with some having a very deep orange hue which is emphasised by direct sunlight.

Both tile and slate roofs are often terminated with stone copings to verges, generally Ham stone (**Figure 57**). These are a particular feature of the town and form attractive terminations to gables and between houses in rows.

Chimneys throughout the conservation area are generally red/orange brick even to stone properties. Stone chimneys are rare but where found are generally in similar materials to the host building, in other words, that of rubble stone Blue Lias. Chimneys vary in size but are often prominent features in the street scene even where properties are modest terrace houses (such as those to High Street, Almshouse Lane and Free Street). Chimneys will often be corbelled at the top with several courses of brickwork projecting from the main face of the stack (**Figure 58**).

There is a notable absence of dormers within the conservation area. There are also very few prominent rooflights with most roofs unrelieved by punctuations other than chimneys. This makes for very attractive and traditional roofscape which forms an important part of the

character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area. The very few dormers that are found tend to be small timber casement windows with leaded cheeks and various roof forms from hipped slate to catslide lead roofs. They are not a typical feature and therefore do not have a typical palette of materials within the Ilchester Conservation Area.

Boundary walls

The boundary walls of Ilchester Conservation Area deserve separate consideration and are exceptional in terms of their extent and their quality. They are almost all Blue Lias stone laid to squared courses, mostly mortared but sometimes laid dry. Traditionally these would be finished with flat stone coping. (**Figure 59**). Wherever these walls are found they form a very important part of the positive character and appearance of the conservation area and are often a true reflection of the vernacular character of the town.



Figure 52 The carved ashlar work in Ham stone set against the Blue Lias, also seen with brick dressings to the windows, here at the porch of Darlington House



Figure 54 Painted stonework to High Street.



Figure 55 Natural slate roofs are common at the lower pitches with matching ridge tiles

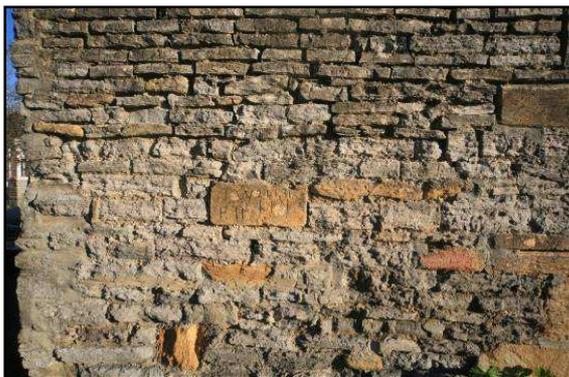


Figure 53 An attractive mix of stonework to a boundary wall – Back Lane



Figure 56 The distinctive profile of Bridgwater tiles with a triple roll which overlaps the next tile



Figure 57 Stone copings to the verge is an important feature of the roofs of the Ilchester Conservation Area



Figure 59 A good example of the stone boundary walls seen throughout Ilchester (Limington Road)



Figure 58 cropped to chimneys; Chimneys form an important part of the character of most domestic buildings in the conservation area

Contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges and natural boundaries

Ilchester is not strongly characterised by public open green spaces within its urban core with the only space that partially fulfils this role being the green to the Market Place often compromised by traffic noise and pollution and the churchyards of the church of St Andrew (Northover) and St Mary Major (Church Street). All of these spaces are therefore important to the character of the town as they principally provide areas for trees which make a valuable contribution towards the townscape quality of the conservation area. This is particularly the case in relation to the two churchyards. (see **Figure 43**). The presence of trees gives some relief to what can be the hard edges of the roadsides, defined as they are by built form for much of the main core of the town. This is more variable to the north of the River Yeo with more tree cover being present as a backdrop to houses. (**Figure 60**).

In terms of private green spaces, perhaps the most important of these are to the rear gardens of the High Street backing on to Priory Road. The key characteristics of these spaces are that they are generally visible in part from Priory Road above and between stone walls and trees and that they are for the most part open in character. There are exceptions where stone walls, mature trees and some buildings hinder views across these spaces but their general character particularly in relation to Priory Road is of an open aspect to private greens spaces, usually laid to lawn with ornamental trees. (**Figure 61**). In this respect, despite being private green spaces they make a valuable contribution to the open and generally green and uncluttered character of the Priory Road edge of the conservation area.

Natural hedge boundaries are not generally characteristic of the conservation area although vegetation is often seen behind stone boundaries and is often complementary to these hard edges. A good example of this is to the north side of Limington Road (see **Figure 44**)

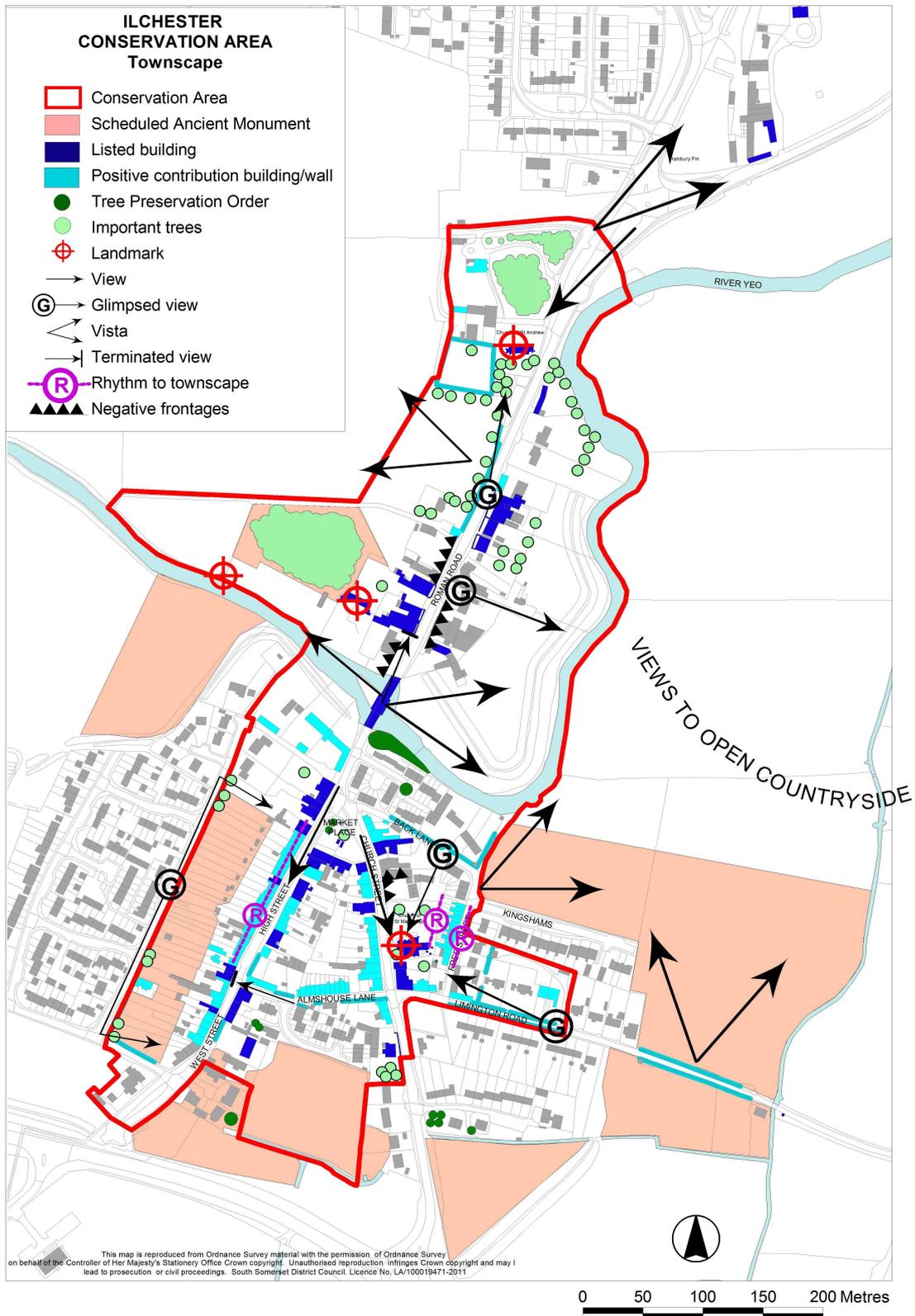
What is very important to the character and appearance of the Ilchester Conservation Area is its open green landscape setting. This is far more apparent to the north of the river than to the south, where the landscape setting is often glimpsed between development. Some of this forms part of the conservation area; land to the south of the church of St Andrew for example but most lies outside the conservation area boundary. It is nonetheless highly sensitive to change in relation to the character and appearance and setting of the conservation area. This is also the case in views east from Free Street and north from Limington Road which look out across parts of the conservation area and on to open countryside beyond.



Figure 60 A backdrop of trees is seen to some parts of the conservation area to the north of the river



Figure 61 Gardens are generally glimpsed from Priory Road over or between walls and are generally open in character



MAP 6: Townscape appraisal of Ilchester Conservation Area

Key views, vistas and panoramas (see Townscape Map)

There are no planned vistas or highly designed views within the conservation area although some development and remodelling was clearly mindful of the advantages to closing and terminating a view along a lane or road with an attractive and in some cases symmetrical façade. However, the townscape lends itself to long funnelled views along streets often enlivened by gentle curves or kinks in the street plan. This is particularly the case to Church Street (**Figure 62**) where the gentle curve of the street plan creates a partial closing of the view north along Church Street by buildings to Market Place.

The other 'group' of views are the glimpses and incidental views to both the church of St Andrew, these are more landscape orientated views and the church of St Mary Major, these are urban dominated views and often involve roofscape and skylines and gaps between with parts of the church seen rather than its entire form. These views are important to both the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of listed buildings. (**Figure 63**)

There are more general views of townscape interest throughout the conservation area. More notable and sensitive views are identified on the Townscape map. These include glimpses to the rear of houses fronting High Street across their gardens from Priory Road and a particularly attractive and interesting view across the churchyard of St Mary Major towards the rear of the terrace of houses to Free Street. Here, the rhythm of the rear extensions to the terrace forms an attractive and distinctive view adjacent to the church. (**Figure 64**)

Views out of the conservation area are generally characterised by open countryside. This landscape setting is an important part of the character of the conservation area. Some of these views are full open vistas such as those enjoyed from Free Street and Back Lane junction, the bridge over the River Yeo and from Limington Road looking north. To Northover, gaps between built form give rise to glimpsed views to the green open fields beyond. This juxtaposition between built form and open green space is a particularly characteristic of the views experienced to the north of the river. (**See Figures 06, 07 and 16**)

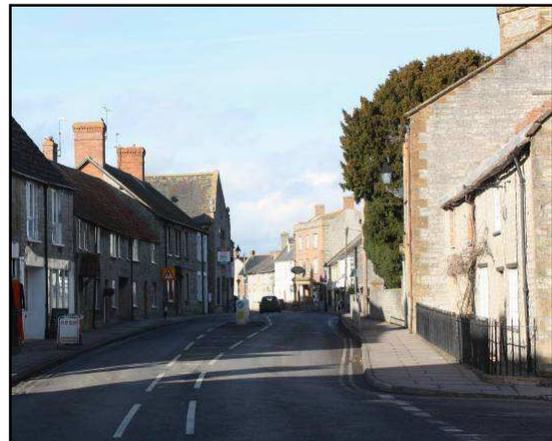


Figure 62 *The view north along Church Street is partially closed by buildings to Market Place due to the curve in the street plan*



Figure 63 *The church of St Mary Major is often glimpsed in views within the conservation area*



Figure 64 *The rear of Free Street is seen across the churchyard of St Mary Major with the rhythm of pitched roofs forming an interesting townscape feature to this part of the conservation area*

Degree of loss of architectural and/or historic elements

There is some loss of historic windows, doors, roof coverings and chimneys. This is seen throughout the conservation area. Windows and roof coverings are the most significant and consistent change to historic buildings within the Ilchester Conservation Area. It is also evident that there has been some changes to stone boundary walls which includes the insertion of gates and the partial demolition of walls (particularly to Priory Road).

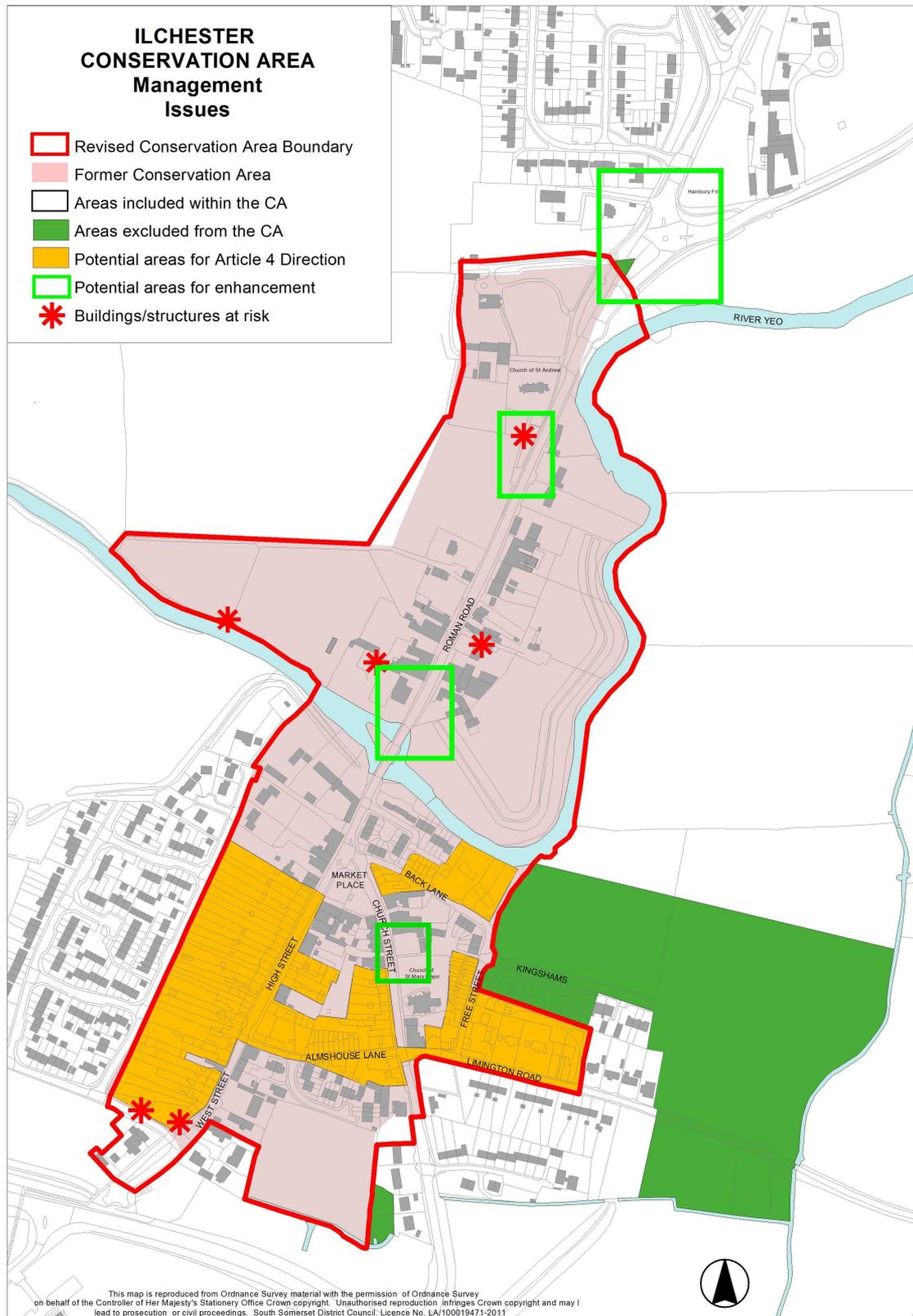
Negative elements

- Excessive lighting to the roundabout to the north of the conservation area has had a significant negative impact on the setting of the conservation area and listed buildings (including important views in and out of the conservation area)
- The lighting to parts of the conservation area, most notably Northover and Church Street is unnecessarily large and over-engineered and has remained since these roads were principal routes through the town prior to the bypass
- The garage forecourts to the garage sites within the conservation area detract from the special character of their immediate and wider settings
- Tuson's Summer House is an important building in the conservation area and is in a very poor condition
- The neglected and under-used garden space to the south of St Andrew's church detracts from the setting of the church
- The car park to Church Street is visually weak and could benefit from carefully designed development to tighten the townscape and still retain some parking facilities
- The open space to the north of the churchyard of St Mary Major is weak in townscape terms and could benefit from carefully designed development to enhance the streetscene to Church Street
- The volume and speed of traffic through the centre of the town is, on occasions, excessive and disruptive to the historic character of Ilchester Conservation Area particularly the Market Place

Part 3: Management Plan

Summary of recommendations

- There are six unlisted buildings that are considered to be vulnerable or at risk from decay or collapse
- There are three suggested areas for exclusion which are covered by scheduled ancient monument designations
- There is one area for suggested inclusion within the conservation area; the former school and school house to West Street
- There are four areas for potential enhancement which would need significant partnership and negotiation with other parties
- There are two areas suggested which may benefit from selective Article 4 Directions; principally relating to painting, boundary walls and chimneys



MAP 7: Management Issues

Vulnerable buildings and Buildings at Risk

Listed Buildings:

There are no separately statutory listed buildings at risk within the Ilchester Conservation Area. However some of the buildings listed below may be considered as curtilage buildings to statutory listed buildings.

Unlisted Buildings:

Building (possibly part of the former Gaol) to the north of the Somerset Carriage Company (**Figure 65**)

- Barn to the north of Auto Capozzoli Garage (east side of) Roman Road
- Boundary wall to the south of St Andrew's Church, Northover (**Figure 66**)
- Tuson's Summer House, north of the River Yeo (Ivel) (**Figure 67**)
- Attached outbuilding to the south of 11 West Street (**Figure 68**)
- Boundary wall of 11 West Street to Pill Bridge Lane



Figure 65 (top and bottom) Former Gaol, north of Somerset Carriage Company

Article 4 Directions

Within the Ilchester Conservation Area there is a focused area comprising a number of key groups of important unlisted buildings which would benefit from the protection afforded by additional planning controls in order to retain elements of particular historic or architectural interest.

The Management Issues Map identifies the area for potential designation.



Figure 66 Boundary wall to the south of St Andrew’s Church, Northover



Figure 68 Attached outbuilding to the south of 11 West Street

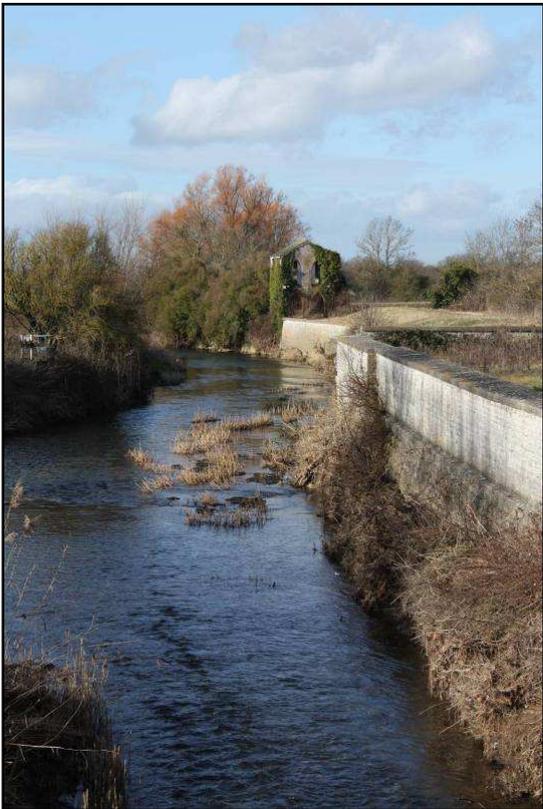


Figure 67 Tuson’s Summer House, north of the River Yeo (Ivel)

Boundary revisions

As a result of analysis undertaken, the following boundary revisions were undertaken to reflect ownership changes, recent development and local and national policy designations and changes.

Remove:

Area to the east and north of Kingshams (including the bungalows to the south side of Kingshams)

Include:

The Old School House and the Old School (Figure 69)

Area to the north and north-east of Northover Vicarage



Figure 69 *The Old School House and the Old School*

Proposals for enhancement (including possible Traffic management/ Street Improvements)

Roundabout to the north of Ilchester (B3151 and Costello Hill)

The roundabout is to the edge of the conservation area and forms a significant part of views looking out of the conservation area particularly towards Hainbury Farm (**Figure 70**). The roundabout is 'over-engineered' with the lamp columns in particular having a dramatic and negative impact on the setting of the conservation area and views to a Grade II* listed building; The church of St Andrew (also within the conservation area) (**Figure 71**). The setting to the conservation area and the listed buildings would be dramatically improved by the removal or reduction of these lamp columns and more careful siting of a limited number of columns in discussion with the Local Authority's Conservation Officer.

Street lighting to Northover and Church Street

Consideration should be given to the replacement of unnecessarily large and over engineered lighting to Church Street and Northover which have not

been replaced since these roads were the main routes north through the town (rather than using the bypass). These can be much reduced in size, number and a more appropriate design of lamp column and the degree and type of light emission should all be considered in terms of replacement.

Boundary wall and small park to the south of the Church of St Andrew

The relatively recent construction of the small paved area with planters adjacent to the roadside and entrance to the St Andrew's church (**Figure 72**) appears to have been neglected in the recent past with broken benches, litter, damaged walls and walls which are partially collapsed (see buildings at risk section). Replacement of the wall along the roadside with a traditional stone wall as seen to adjacent areas would improve the appearance of this area from the roadside. This could be combined with some careful planting behind the wall provide a screen from the road. The area could, in part, be used to provide roadside parking for the church with a more formal and attractive approach to the church leading from the roadside. This could include the creation of a traditional stone and/or timber-framed lych-gate at roadside.

Somerset Carriage Company (including building to the north boundary of this site)

There is an important building at risk to the north boundary of this site and the use as a car showroom is not one which would be encouraged. It may be appropriate, subject to other planning considerations (such as flooding issues) to seek an alternative use on this site which could include redevelopment of the site and which included repair and re-use of the historic buildings to the northern boundary.

An appropriate scheme would vastly improve the character and appearance of this important part of the conservation area and could have significant benefits in terms of saving an historic building from potential destruction.

Land to the north of the church of St Mary Major, Church Street

A car park is presently located to the north of the churchyard of the church of St Mary Major. At this point the townscape is less well-defined and with a loss in the building line to the street frontage. Subject to the relevant planning issues, this site may be an opportunity for change.



Figure 72 *The entrance to the church of St Andrew – a potential area for enhancement*



Figure 70 View looking north out of the conservation area towards the Grade II listed outbuildings of Hainbury Farm



Figure 71 View looking south into the conservation area at Northover

Bibliography and References

References:

Brodie, A. et al., 2002 *English Prisons; An Architectural History* English Heritage

Burrow, I. et al., (1982) Somerset Archaeology 1981 *PSANHS* **126** p.61-73

Dunning, R. W. (ed.), (1974) 'Ilchester', *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 3*

Pevsner N (1958) *Buildings of England South and West Somerset*

Richardson, M., (2002) *English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey. An archaeological assessment of Ilchester* Somerset County Council

Maps:

1723 Stukeley's map illustrating his *Itinerium Curiosum*.

Appendix A: Proposal for new development

Policies/recommendations for new buildings (generally smaller infill sites)

This guidance provides generic advice for smaller developments up to approximately 5 - 8 housing units. Sites of a larger number will require considerable pre-application negotiation and may be the subject of design briefs. Some small developments may be in such sensitive locations that they may require a concise brief from the Local Authority. In all cases a Design Statement will be required to accompany the application drawings. Where a Character Appraisal exists for a Conservation Area, this must be consulted by the applicant's agent, the developer and the planning officer, as it will assist in setting the context of the development.

It is strongly advised that all parties visit the site and its setting. The setting will vary in virtually every case, but as a guide it should be taken as the area from which the site can be seen and the surroundings seen from the site. The setting can also be defined as the general pattern of uses in the vicinity. These may vary on each side of the site.

It is important to consider specifically: surrounding skylines, rooflines and landmarks (e.g. church towers etc), or if the development will have an impact on cherished views of the landscape or "signature" skylines.

The surrounding built form should be appraised:

- What are the typical sizes and shapes of building plots? Are these uniform or varied? If varied, consider largest and smallest types.
- How do buildings relate to the back edge of the footpath or carriageway?

This factor alone can help to assimilate new buildings into the street scene.

- Are the buildings in the street freestanding, or are they in small informal groups or more regular terraces?
 - Are buildings linked in a particular way, for example with boundary walls?
 - Do the buildings generally have their main ridgeline parallel to the street or at right angles?
 - Are the buildings generally "grand" or modestly proportioned and styled?
 - The character of the front boundary walls or fences is an integral part of the character of the area.
 - Identify the predominant materials and colour of material in the area and if any are unique.
- The character of the site should be considered. The boundaries should be noted, especially if they comprise hedgerows, mature trees, vernacular walls, fences or railings.
 - The access point to the site will have to be agreed. Generally, care should be taken to minimise any damage to front boundaries through the uncritical imposition of sight lines which may have the effect of removing most of a boundary.
 - Consider potential assets on-site, such as the lie of the land, areas of shelter and sunny aspect, existing structures such as buildings or walls, trees or hedgerows which might be incorporated into the scheme.

- Develop a Design Concept. This should include: What is the role of this development within the setting?
 - Is this a gateway or other edge development on the approach or periphery of the site?
 - Is it a focal point development terminating a view or providing a skyline?
 - Is the site at a pivotal point in the townscape, turning a corner from one type of development to another?
- The frontage part of the development should in virtually every case face outward to the streetscape, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.
- The character of the development should be determined by layout and providing an appropriate sense of identity and enclosure. A sequence of spaces and places should be considered – from major to minor space, from formal/symmetrical or informal?
- The design should avoid any inappropriate suburbanising of the proposals through deep or irregular house plan, fussy elevations, spacious set backs from the building line, dwarf wall boundaries and inappropriate spacing between buildings.
- Design considerations such as window proportions, subservience of elements such as garages, roof type (gable end or hipped), roof pitch, projection or recession and choice of materials, which should derive from the character of surrounding buildings forming the setting.
- Contemporary solutions may be appropriate if it can be demonstrated that they derive from a comprehensive appraisal of the setting and site

Appendix B: Consultation process

The document has been produced through collaborative work with the local community of Ilchester. The group included residents, members of the Parish Council and representatives from a variety of historical, amenity and conservation societies. Forum Heritage Services were appointed as heritage consultants to facilitate the project, organize workshops and co-ordinate and produce the appraisal and management proposals.

The fieldwork, research and analysis for appraisal and management plan were undertaken in Jan-March 2011. Whilst every attempt has been made to consider all aspects of the character of the conservation area there may be elements that have been omitted due to lack of space or inaccessibility (private land or restricted access). Applications which affect the conservation area should be considered on their own merits and in accordance with the policies of the Local Plan (and the Local development Framework). The appraisal and management plan should be used to guide and inform this process.

The designation, review, protection and management of conservation areas are part of the statutory duties of South Somerset District Council as the local planning authority. However, community involvement is essential in understanding the special nature and different issues for each individual conservation area. Early consultation with local residents identified many

aspects and issues and these were incorporated into the document at its initial draft stages. This document has been the subject of wider public consultation for a six-week period which concluded on 27th January 2012 and comments received have informed the final document.

Appendix C: Glossary

Article 4(2) Direction	An Article 4 Direction may be issued by the Council in circumstances where the danger of the erosion of the character of the areas is such that specific control over development is required. The effect of such a Direction is to remove the usual permitted development rights, thereby necessitating a planning application to be made. It can include for example any proposals to replace windows, doors, roof and can restrict the construction of a porch or extension, the painting of the external surfaces or the removal of chimney stacks.
Building Line	The common alignment of building frontages in relation to the back edge of the carriageway, footpath or waterfront. The building line might also refer to a common alignment of the backs of buildings.
Building at Risk	A phrase used to describe a building which is in poor repair (eg, leaking/blocked gutters, broken slates, structural problems) and often vacant with no use. The combination of these two factors and the severity of the repair issues determine the degree of risk and the need for action.
‘Buildings making a positive contribution’	A building of local importance which is considered to make a positive contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area, but does not meet the criteria for it to be added to the statutory list of buildings of special architectural and historic interest. It may, for instance, be part of a group which by its scale, alignment, materials or style contribute to the quality of the townscape.
Double Pile	A deeper plan, usually late 17 th – 18 th century domestic building having two pitched roofs spanning its depth, parallel to the main elevation. This arrangement was necessary as timber and slate or tile roofs were limited in span or pitch. Double pile arrangements were superseded by mansard roofs using lead or zinc on their low pitched elements.
Enclosure	The arrangement of buildings, walls, trees etc. to provide different levels of containment of space.
Encroachment	The process of infilling a market place in the later medieval period with compact buildings erected on the sites of stalls. The encroachments took the form of rows of buildings creating narrow lanes, or built against the boundary of a churchyard facing the market place. In some towns these rows were called shambles and the lanes named after the trades of the original stalls e.g. Mercer or Fish Row.
Landmark	This can be a major or minor feature in a townscape, which contributes to the image of a place or to its legibility. A landmark has to possess ‘meaning’ for people: it does not necessarily have to be visually attractive. A major landmark may be a church tower or spire – visible from a considerable distance. A minor landmark, such as a war memorial, is a memorable feature within a particular streetscape.

Polite	Designs developed by architects and architectural pattern books usually incorporating classical concepts of symmetry, proportion and scale in both plan and elevation.
Public Realm	The spaces between buildings accessible to the public, including the highway, green areas, squares etc.
Refronting	The practice (usually in the 18 th century) of replacing the street frontage elevation of an older (usually medieval timber framed) building with a new front in a more fashionable contemporary (usually Georgian, in brick) style. The original building remained, behind the thin 'skin' wall. Most High Streets in market towns are lined with refronted buildings of this period.
Scale	This can have two meanings: It can be used to define the mass or bulk of a building often in comparison to other buildings or spaces or (the more strictly correct) meaning appertaining to the subdivision of a building to create different effects for example the architectural expression of structural bays, intervals of windows, proportions etc.
Setting / Context	The physical (built and landscape), community and economic setting in which the development takes place.
Streetscape	The character of the street environment, existing or proposed.
Townscape	The urban equivalent of landscape: the overall effect of the combination of buildings, changes of level, green spaces, boundary walls, colours and textures, street surfaces, street furniture, uses, scale, enclosure, views etc.
Vernacular	Traditional buildings of a region, frequently developed by local builders in response to the regional requirements, climate, site conditions and available locally sourced materials.
Views	<p><i>Panorama:</i> A 'wide angle' view encompassing a broad sweep of landscape, or the view of a town from some distance, from a vantage point.</p> <p><i>Vista:</i> A long view down a street, constricted by buildings on either side, or a view down an avenue of trees.</p> <p><i>Terminated View:</i> A view along a street which is 'stopped' by a building (or other feature) often designed as a focal point, to emphasise its role.</p> <p><i>Deflected View:</i> A view usually along a street, which is partially obscured by the curvature of the street, which 'invites' further exploration.</p> <p><i>Glimpse:</i> An incidental view seen in passing, perhaps through an archway or down an alleyway.</p>