

2024

# Totnes

## Conservation Area

The Appraisal and Management Plan



South Hams  
District Council



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# Part One – The Appraisal





# 1. Summary of Special Interest

The historic settlement of Totnes became established due to its strategic location, being at the lowest crossing place of the river Dart (now by bridge) and just within the tidal limit of its navigable estuary. The valley of the Dart, from Dartmoor to Dartmouth, is a major landscape feature that cuts through a countryside of rolling hills. Around Totnes the valley sides create an enclosing natural backdrop, helping to characterise the town as 'small' and one still dominated by its landscape setting.

Street layouts and property boundaries throughout the Conservation Area are exceptional by virtue of the preservation of the pattern of the town's settlement and rapid periods of growth and investment over centuries. This is further evidenced in the architecture, materials and archaeology. It is indicative of the communal interest of the area and the quality of craftsmanship displayed.

**Eastgate, High Street. Medieval origin**

## 2. Introduction

This Conservation Area Appraisal (Part I) and its combined Management Plan (Part II), support South Hams District Council's recently adopted Council Plan.

This is a revision from the previous version of the Conservation Area Appraisal adopted on 8 February 2007. It honours some of the content from the previous version, but now brings it up to date. The previous appraisal made recommendations for amendments to the Conservation Area boundary, which were made at the time of adoption.

History of the area's designation and subsequent boundary changes:

- Designated by Devon County Council on 11th July 1969.
- Boundary first extension 3rd October 1985
- Boundary second extension 8th May 1992
- Boundary third extension 3rd September 1992
- Boundary fourth extension 8th February 2007



Fore Street

# 3. Planning Policy Context

## National & local policy framework

The provision for conservation areas and their management are set out in government planning policy;

- Conservation Area requirements under the; Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 69 (2).
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 196 (D).
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023, 19 December and Glossary. Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that;

*“When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that special interest”.*

- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Paragraph 025 Reference ID. 18a-025-20140306.

## Local Policy

- South Hams Local Development Framework
- Joint Local Plan (JLP) – SPT11 Strategic approach to the historic environment
- Joint Local Plan (JLP) – TTV22 other sites allocations in the Totnes area.
- Joint Local Plan (JLP) – SP6 Spatial priorities for development in Totnes.
- JLP Dev 21 – development affecting the historic environment.
- JLP SPD – New work in Conservation Areas
- Neighbourhood Plan, (made) – Policy En3: Historic and Built Character, En4: landscape Setting of Totnes, En5: The River Dart.

## What a Conservation Area is, how and why it's designated

The statutory definition of a Conservation Area is;

*“an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.*

Designation of an area seeks to manage change in ways that maintain or strengthen the area's special qualities. The appraisal sets out what makes the Totnes Conservation Area special and makes recommendations for what needs to be conserved and what needs to be improved.

### Summary of implications through designation;

- The requirement in legislation and national planning policies to preserve and/or enhance (as discussed further on the NPPF and the PPG)
- Local planning policies which pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

- Control over demolition of unlisted buildings
- Control over works to trees
- Limitations on the types of advertisements which can be displayed with deemed consent
- Restriction on the types of development which can be carried out without the need for planning permission (permitted development rights)
- Support the use of article 4 directions to remove permitted development rights where avoidable damage is occurring
- Clarification of archaeological interest, thereby assisting its protection

It is important to note that in the absence of any particular reference to any building, feature, view or space, it should not be taken to imply that it is of no significance and therefore has no relevance to any planning consideration.



Historic buildings and the spaces between them

## 4. General character, locations and uses

The town is strategic in its location, being at the lowest crossing place of the river Dart (by ford at first, and then by bridge) and just within the tidal limit of its navigable estuary.

The valley of the Dart, from Dartmoor to Dartmouth, is a major landscape feature that cuts through a countryside of rolling hills. Around Totnes the valley sides create an enclosing natural backdrop, helping to characterise the town dominated by its landscape setting.

The older parts of Totnes occupy a ridge that projects out into the Dart Valley and descends to the river's crossing point (The '-nes' in Totnes actually refers to this distinctive feature). An ancient trackway followed the line of the ridge up from the crossing to avoid the tidal marshes on either side.

Street layouts and property boundaries throughout the Area (including building frontage lines) are exceptional in the way they preserve and define the pattern of the town's beginnings and early growth. The most distinctive feature is the oval 'drawn' by North Street, Rampart Walk and South Street which fossilises the circuit of

the main 'ditch and rampart' defences. The most striking landmark feature is, of course, the castle keep, which is visible from around the town and along its approaches.

The narrow tenements (known as 'burgage' plots) running off the main thoroughfares are very significant too. Their 18th or 19th century boundary walls are often well preserved and closely, if not precisely, follow the pattern of property divisions laid down in Saxon and Medieval times. Most of the plots were divided along their length, with domestic uses at front and subsistence behind. Some on the fringes were subsistence only, but whatever their original use, where they survive today they characterise the street scene with a distinctive pattern of mostly narrow frontages.

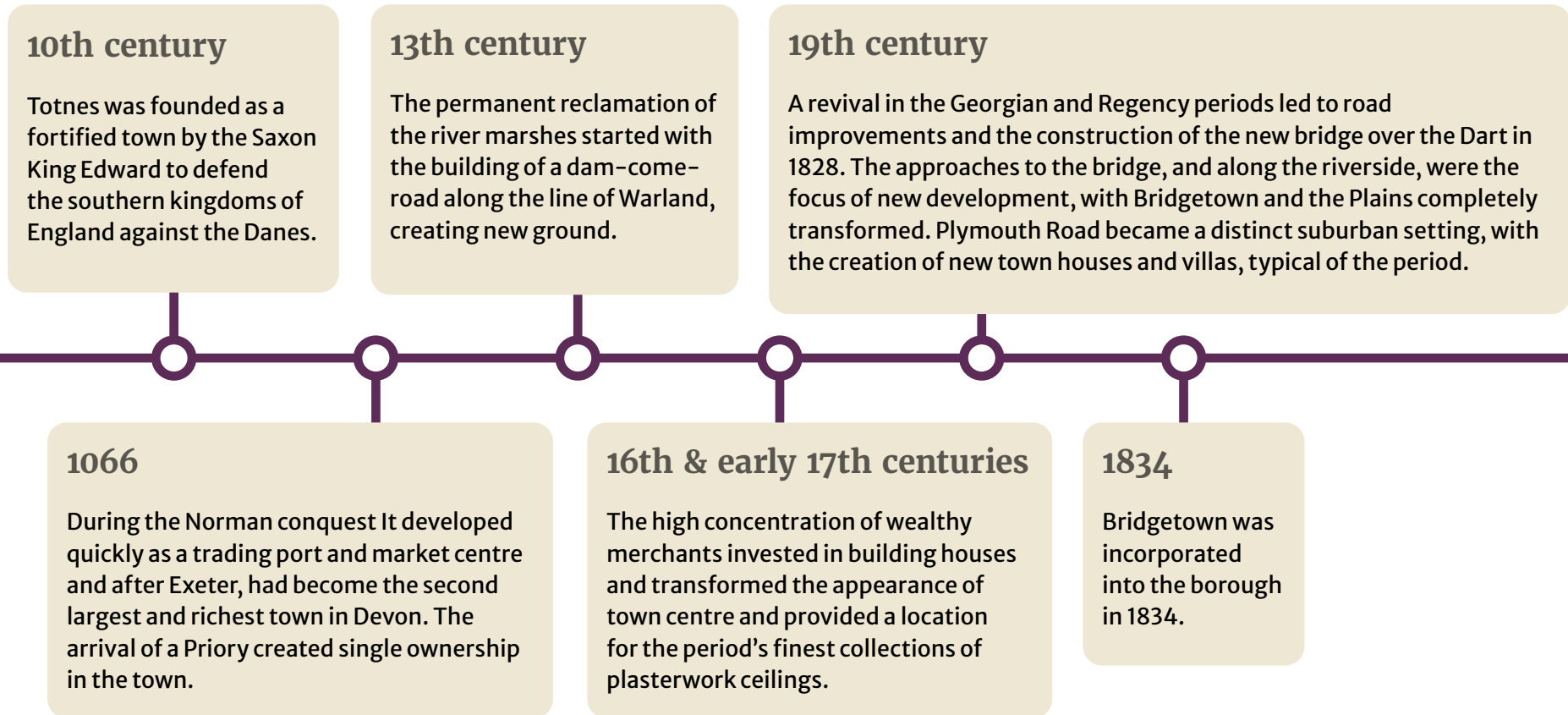


**Dartmouth Close, The Plains**

The original Anglo-Saxon defensive boundary is still followed by North Street, Rampart Walk and South Street. The town's most significant monument, the motte and bailey castle, is a focal feature, along with the walls, ditches and gateways are as prominent today, as too are the Parish Church and Guildhall nearby that occupy the site of a former Priory.



# 5. Historic interest



## 6. Architectural interest and built form

The passing of the centuries and the influence of the industries that have come to this town have shaped it into what it is today. This process continues in a cumulative manner with the passage of time.

The ancient layout of the town relates to the Saxon and Medieval eras. This ancient plan form remains today. It has been described as;

*“An ancient town plan (Saxon and Medieval) that is well preserved in the pattern of the town’s streets, buildings and boundaries. The approaches and remains of an ancient bridge crossing, together with its Georgian replacement. A historic waterfront. A ‘motte and bailey’ castle precinct. Walls, ditches, and gateways associated with the town’s historic development. Many buildings of 16th or 17th century origin worthy of preservation, and many others too from the later Georgian and Regency periods.”*

During the economic expansion of the 16th and 17th centuries, the town centre buildings were transformed to reflect the wealth of the merchants. This was evidenced by 3 storey buildings, that displayed high quality wall panelling, chimney pieces and staircases, and

some magnificent plaster ceilings. Together these houses still survive to make Totnes one of the most complete, and finest, towns of the Elizabethan–Jacobean age in England.

Only one historic house in the Area has more than 3–storeys plus an attic, and only a very few other old buildings are as tall or taller (like one of the converted warehouses on the Plains). The vast majority are 2- or 3–storeys, and their roof slopes, although modern rooflights and dormer windows are beginning to creep in for the first time in some of these buildings. The roofscape is dominated by the towers of its two parish churches and the elevated castle keep from many view points, but restrained from within the town centre in places.

The majority of these earlier high status buildings were “re-fronted” with new facades reflecting the fashions of the 18th and 19th centuries. They combine the form, scale and proportions of the earlier era with polite, classical style and detailing. It is important to note that there remains many of the earlier timber frames hidden underneath. The Georgian architecture changed features such as gable roofs to hipped roofs, exposed timber framing



Different roof styles altered through the centuries



Cottages curving around base of castle

gave way to lime render or slate, while vertical sliding sashes replaced leaded mullioned windows.

Despite the change to the principal elevations of the buildings, there were few new buildings at this time. It is for this reason that so much original fabric of many buildings in the centre, can still be accredited to come from the 16th and 17th centuries.

An interesting feature that is found rarely elsewhere, are houses built in the form of a main block on the street, with a first floor corridor or gallery link to at least one detached block behind. Probably an idea influenced from northern France. Most examples date from the 16th and 17th centuries. Examples still survive



and are to be valued for their exceeding rarity. On the ground floor of their narrow, one-room wide, frontages an extra side passage entrance leading to the courtyards and buildings behind is usually an essential characteristic of this too.

The pattern of historic ground floor frontages along the main shopping streets is generally broken, not just by thick party walls and side-passage doorways that separate one building from another, but also by the fusion of other passage openings such as; Atherton Lane, Ticklemore Street and Church Passage and other 'non-shop' fronts (including houses, inns, bank and church). As well as creating tremendous variety in the street scene, it adds to the overall special interest of the character of Totnes.

There are often particular features and materials that reflect the local vernacular of a place. For Totnes, past centuries have also left there architectural "mark of time". Overall, natural materials, together with good quality craftsmanship have proven the test of time.

**Left: Historic plaque. Top right: Gothic House, Fore Street  
Bottom right: Totnes Museum, Fore Street**



## Roofs

The change in roof style along with close access to slate quarries, remains the dominant roof covering and in some cases, used as a wall hanging on buildings (a method used to protect the substrate). The local slate can be recognised by the distinctive silverygrey colour. Quarry closures in the early 1900's meant matching replacements were no longer available, so repairs have long resulted in a patchy appearance. Combined with the traditional technique for extending the life of slates, using mortar. The practice of painting slatework was started in the town may have come about due to the desire to hide the patchy appearance, now it has become a distinctive characteristic.

## Walls

Render (using traditional lime), is the most prevalent wall finish in the Conservation Area. This was usually over stone or timber frame construction. On occasion it is replaced with slate or exposed natural stone. There are some more 'rustic' treatments like rough-cast and a 20th century phase for pebble-dash, however the majority of render coatings are smooth. The majority of these are painted and some given the appearance of dressed stone. This was achieved by inscribing lines into the render to imitate coursed stonework.

## Timber

Used extensively for the main structural component in the mediaeval period and later associated for the construction of more historical industrial buildings, such as Baltic Wharf warehouses. Besides its use for windows, doors and fine architectural decoration, it can also be found as a cladding for gable elevations. This more rustic finish is not expected to be found in any of the more urban settings.

## Stone

Natural stone is used to such an extent that few buildings don't have it in at least part of their structure. Most domestic buildings made of this material tend to be rendered over. It can be observed that exposed stone is mainly divided between the non-domestic buildings such as (the high status); churches, bridge, Castle Keep and Guildhall and the (lower status) warehouses, mills and factories.

The most local stone is a volcanic tuff which is generally thin-bedded, dark in hue and in various shades of brown. By around the middle of the 19th century some other limestones were introduced. They have a more rounded form and a light grey-blue or grey-pink colour. Transported red sandstone (maybe from the Paignton area) and granites were also used in the more prominent buildings.

## Brick

Building in brick was never extensive and was usually limited to the construction of chimney stacks, the dressing of window and door openings, and the forming of quoins in stonework.

## Archaeology

Opportunities for archaeological investigation can be created when new development occurs. Instances such as when a project in North Street revealed the original Saxon defences. There may be very limited occasions for any below ground investigation in the densely built areas within the Conservation Area besides the traditional burgage plots, however much can also be gained from better understanding the historic buildings too.

## Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs)

There are four in the Conservation Area. They are Totnes Castle, the site of Totnes Priory, the Leechwell and the remains of the Medieval Chapel at Warland.

## 7. Locally important buildings

In addition to the historic buildings and structures that are listed, many others are considered to contribute positively towards creating the special interest and character of the area. In particular are the houses and cottages of the late 19th or early 20th centuries that are locally distinctive and possess many of the features of their listed neighbours.

Some amongst them could have their positive contributions enhanced by the replacement of incongruous features (like aluminium, Upvc or unsympathetic modern windows and door styles), the reinstatement of lost features or finishes (like cast-iron rainwater goods and natural slate roofs), or greater consideration for the repair of characterful features before they are lost forever.

The structures with a positive impact are so numerous, however, it is practical only to describe what the more significant of them are, including stone boundary (especially burgage-plot) walls, the surviving stone walls of the quays, ironwork railings, gates and gate piers, granite roadside kerbs and gutters, stone, brick and cobbled pavements, free-standing and wall-mounted letter boxes, the particular walls that line Leechwell Lane and the railway bridge at Malt Mill.



Views to the river, The Plains



Historic ironwork



## 8. Spatial analysis

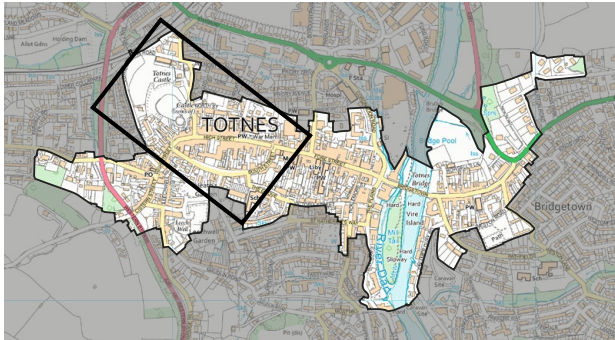
It is the extra special features, man-made and natural, that are located within or near the Conservation Area that add to its special distinctiveness.

The basis of this begins with its origins with an ancient town plan (Saxon and Medieval) that is well preserved in the pattern of the town's streets, buildings and boundaries. The approaches and remains of an ancient bridge crossing, together with its Georgian replacement. The numerous buildings of 16th or 17th century origin that are still in use today. The reclaimed land by the river and the natural elements of the river valley and steep verdant hills.



Left: Church Close off High Street. Above: Atherton Lane off Fore Street

## Town Centre



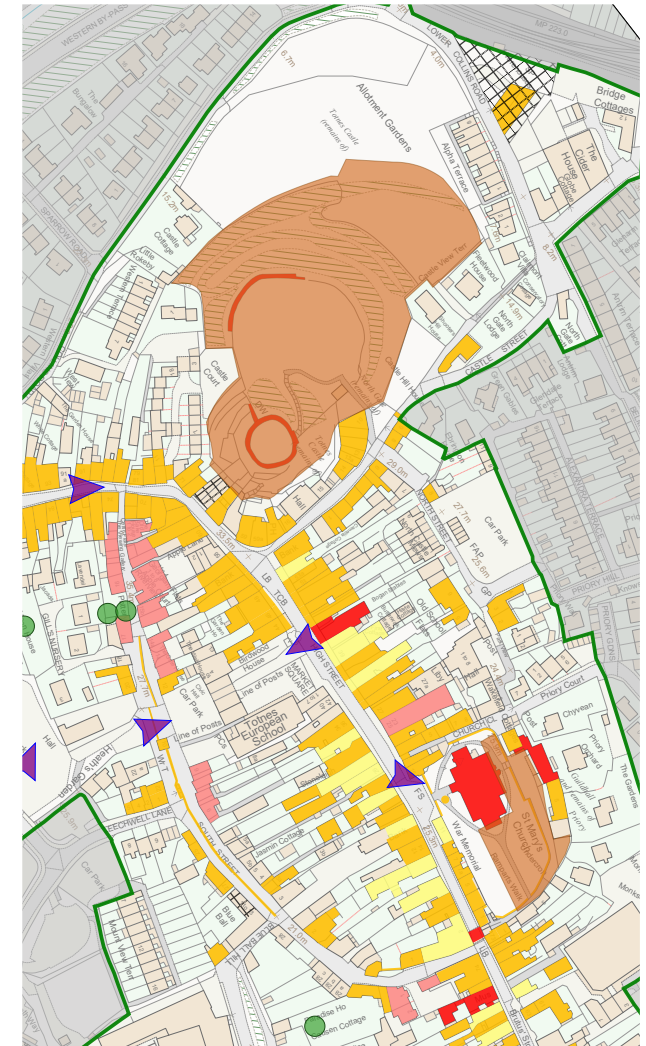
Includes these key streets;

- High Street
- Castle Street
- South Street

This area is usually approached via Fore Street and follows the steep topography of the valley side in an eastern direction. It is framed by the magnificent East Gate. This defines the line of the Saxon defences where the two streets change. Like many other buildings in Totnes it has had several guises, the current one dating from 1835 (with the clock faces and bell tower added later). Its embattled ‘fortress-like’ appearance, was restored after a devastating fire in September 1990. It adds high drama to the street scene, creating visual enclosure and the sense of entering one space and leaving another even though it spans a continuous route.

The streetscene becomes more intimate compared to the areas closer to the river. The pavements each side, are much narrower, however there are some open public spaces that provide relief to the introverted sense of space the tall 2 and often 3 storey terraced buildings create. The absence of kerbed

**Lost and loved shopfronts, High Street**



See Appendix 1.

pavements and front garden areas are essential aspects of South Street's character, tending to authenticate its origins as a boundary and its evolution as a secondary access route. In stark contrast is the modern Civic Hall that is framed by the market space in front and a small car park to the rear. Due to its elevated design and street level square, it provides a public permeability to this densely built part of town.

The winding road encourages the through traffic to slow, which creates a slightly safer environment for pedestrians, however there can be greater conflict depending on the number of visitors to the area. There is active commercial use of ground floor spaces. Many



**Civic Hall**



**A characterful streetscene**

local shops retaining authentic shopfront features. The buildings with their original side passages provide access for life to live on the upper floors too. They are often a sign of an existing historic plan form. This is further enhanced by the traditional burgage plots at the rear to both sides of the street.

On the whole the castle remains out of view from here, it can be identified in part, by the terrace of small cottages following the bottom line of the curving motte behind. They are small in scale

and have less architectural ornamentation in contrast to the former merchants houses in the main streets. It is more residential in character, however there are some modest (in scale) hidden workshops woven in too.

The most prestigious houses were 3-storeys in height, and the restored, 'timber-framed' parts of 27 High street give an idea of what their outsides looked like. Some retain the remaining loggias (covered walkways), although not continuous, provide a temporary, but protective





**Guildhall Cottage, rear St. Mary's Church**

shelter to the pedestrian. They are formed where the upper floors have been carried over the pavement. The best known is “the Butterwalk,” another distinctive and distinguishing feature of the town. It took more than a hundred years to reach the continuous length it is today, as its creation was a gradual process with one owner taking the lead and others following suit. The rubble–stone columns date between the 18th and 19th centuries. They can be found in smaller sections elsewhere in the town too.

The architectural features clearly evidence the range of historic fabric that has survived over many centuries. They also represent the extent of the use of natural materials and skill

of craftsmanship involved. It is the windows (and doors) that can be considered to be one of the more defining features. Vertical sliding sash windows dominate the area and bring a sense of visual balance. They replaced much earlier mullioned windows that included early leaded panes, during the Georgian period of enhancement. They are used in what appears to be every conceivable pattern (mostly multi-paned), arrangement (singly, in pairs, in threes, and in tripartite or venetian fashion) and form (flush or recessed in the wall, or in projecting bays or bows). The three at 10 High Street are among the earliest, and best presented in the town. Many of the principal elevations can be attributed to this polite architectural style and finish.

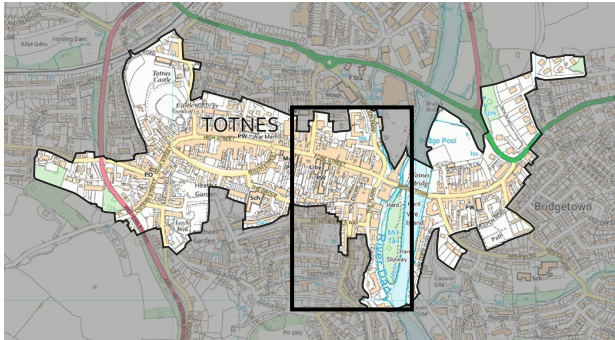
As viewed from the castle keep or from a drone’s eye view, the roofscape adds to the interest and character of this part of the Conservation Area. Although mostly in continuous rows along the highway, frontage buildings tend to be roofed individually and follow the ‘grain’ of the plots they occupy. This includes the chimneys and their chimney pots, with two tent like slates on top, were traditionally made from earthenware.

Whether applied to solid–masonry or timber-framed walls, render is the most common finish to buildings in this part of the Area and dominates street scenes that exclude the Butterwalk. Most is smooth textured, however the few examples of ‘rough–cast,’ in South Street in particular, produce a more robust appearance that appears appropriate to a street where many of the houses were former outbuildings at the end of High Street burgage plots.



**The Butterwalk loggia, High Street**

## By the river



Includes these key streets;

- Fore Street
- The Plains
- Vire Island
- New Walk

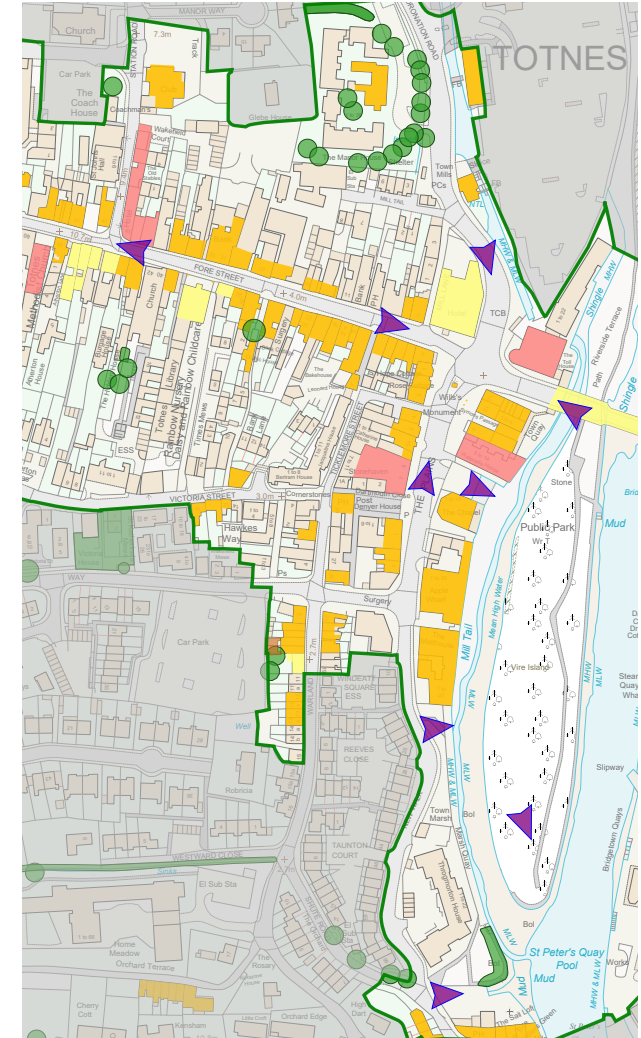
This extrovert area is framed by large scale buildings and terraces of cottages. It retains a mix of retail and residential, however the former wharfside buildings have long been converted to residential use. The external finishes of the buildings provide a historic context to their former use such as the rendered merchants houses and the timber, simpler style of the industrial buildings.

The wide streets create pleasing views out to the countryside and river. Each corner is enhanced by a tall and imposing historic building and frame the entrance to the Georgian style Totnes Bridge.

The historic reclaimed land remains under pressure from modern surfacing, new developments and car parking. It retains a green edge to the bottom of the town centre, particularly with the verdant backdrop of Vire Island.

Fore Street follows the rising topography that leads into the shopping area. It is wide enough to appreciate the architectural form and is punctuated by the grand East Gate that towers over the road where it turns into High Street.

**Wharf buildings looking towards Marsh Quay**



See Appendix 2.

Shopfronts tend to be more modern in style and larger in scale at this lower end, however the ancient passageways remain in good use, providing active use to the upper floors and rear buildings. These are becoming vulnerable to cumulative loss and permanent damage by virtue of unsympathetic modern fittings, which can often start with small but incremental unsympathetic fixings.

There remains some remarkable historic buildings throughout this central area, the best of which are listed. One of the most striking is the grade I listed museum that offers a glimpse back to what visitors would have first experienced centuries ago. It's use today makes it the most accessible of all the Totnes buildings that have the distinctive 'front- and back- block' plan form. In the courtyard at the rear, the timber-framed gallery connection at first floor has also been restored.

The way buildings are arranged along the streets differs to the upper streets, with more in Fore Street set back from the pavement and many more with gaps between them leading off to private sites and public ways. In Fore Street too, there are more buildings of 2-storey height of group value, providing a more open view down the street, to the east.

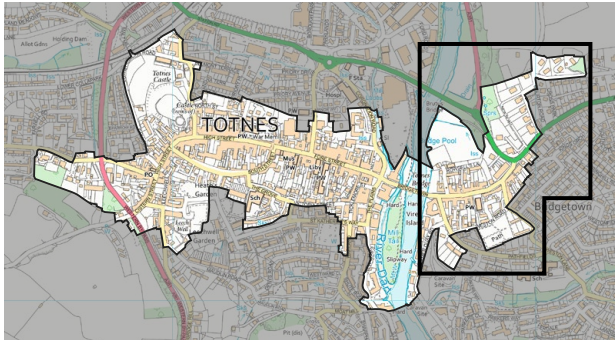


**Journey over Totnes Bridge to edge of town centre**

On The Plains and New Walk, there is a different treatment of the eaves, where most are hidden behind parapets. This architectural device lends height and refinement to a building's façade, and indeed the space it faces. It also creates a visual link to the buildings on the Bridgetown side of the bridge since parapets are characteristic there too.

It has to be noted that the public spaces are punctuated by sculptural forms such as the obelisk (dedicated to John Wills), however care should be taken not to clutter or distract from the setting by modern road design solutions. This tradition continues to this day with modern additions that have been subtly considered in their siting. They add a cultural and positive interest to the area.

# Bridgetown



Includes these key streets;

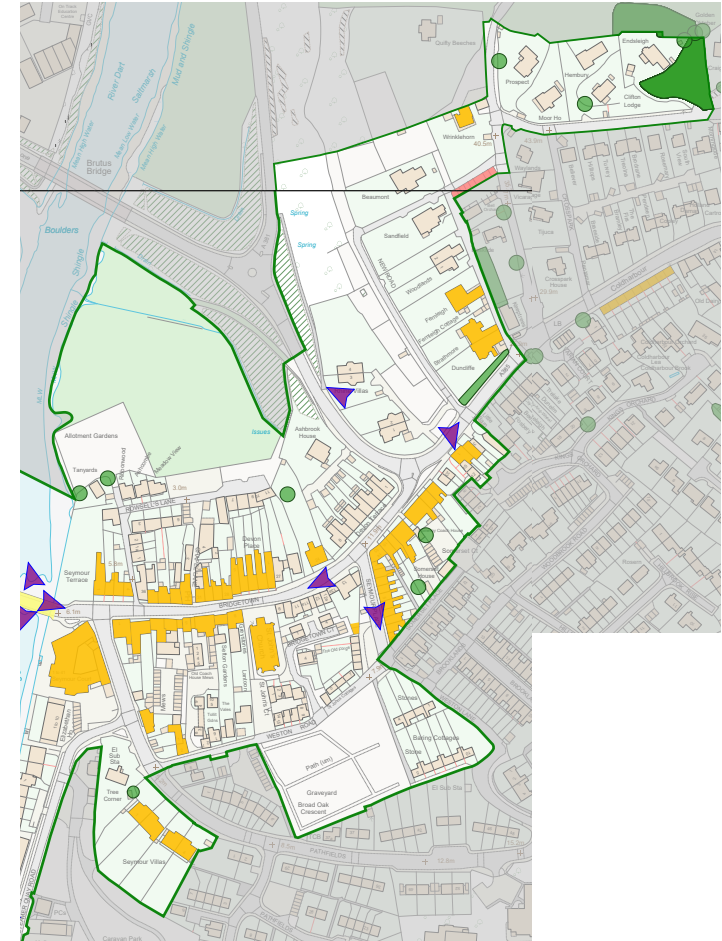
- Western Road
- Steamer Quay Road
- Seymour Place
- Jubilee Road
- Paignton Road

Bridgetown is the part of Totnes that is east of the River Dart, occupying the rising valley slopes that face west towards the rest of the town. At first glance it looks to be a 19th century suburb (that expanded a great deal during the 20th due to the construction of the bridge), but its origins are very much older, as it was a small borough created to rival Totnes, some time between 1232 and 1247.

The open meadows to the north continue to define its linear form, as does its relationship with its riverside setting. They compete with the busy main routes leading through the town. These are offset by tall stone boundary walls that rise with the gradient of the hill.

The buildings are large in scale, such as the villas providing imposing corner markers at key points such as each side of the bridge. They denote the change from the retail/

**Traditional corner store**



See Appendix 2 and 3.



**Devon Place, Bridgetown**

commercial centre to the suburban character. The former shopfronts still survive within the principle elevations, but remain vulnerable to unsympathetic materials and permanent loss of features due to continual residential conversions.

Although the main routes appear in a continual built form, they are providing interest by virtue of the staggered elevations. The higher status villas and former commercial buildings are enhanced by a small forecourt. The strong architectural features such as parapets are enhanced by the quality of materials such as decorative iron railings.

The Secondary access routes have more modest but well-proportioned terraced houses. Some



**High walls border the steep A385**

are more rustic in character due to the absence of the commonly used, smooth lime render finish, leaving the stonework exposed. They are strong forms that frame the distant views to the countryside. They are also defined by the stone boundary walls. There is evidence of negative changes to the roofscape through the modern introduction of dormer windows, (although there may be a few that are original), particularly where they are disproportionate to the size of the roof, the relationship to the chimney and the context of the terrace as a whole.

The historic and modern buildings that face onto the river have been divided into smaller residences, therefore the pressures to accommodate additional parking spaces and



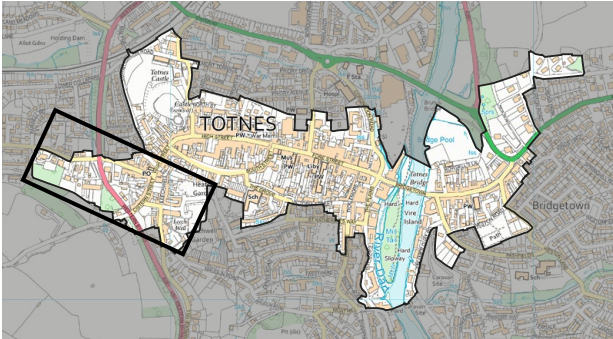
**St. John's Cottages, Weston Road**

utility spaces need to be carefully considered in order that they do not distract from the historic buildings and the ordered setting that they create.

The streetscene retains much character though the retention of the traditional materials and finishes, however, modern pavements, wayfinding signs and standard road traffic solutions are incongruous to this setting.

It has to be noted the interesting and unusual display of sculptures, most of which follow an Egyptian theme. They provide interest and colour, whilst establishing a new layer of modern culture to this special area. This can be well appreciated from the raised area in front of Seymour Terrace and the private spaces opposite.

## Western suburbs



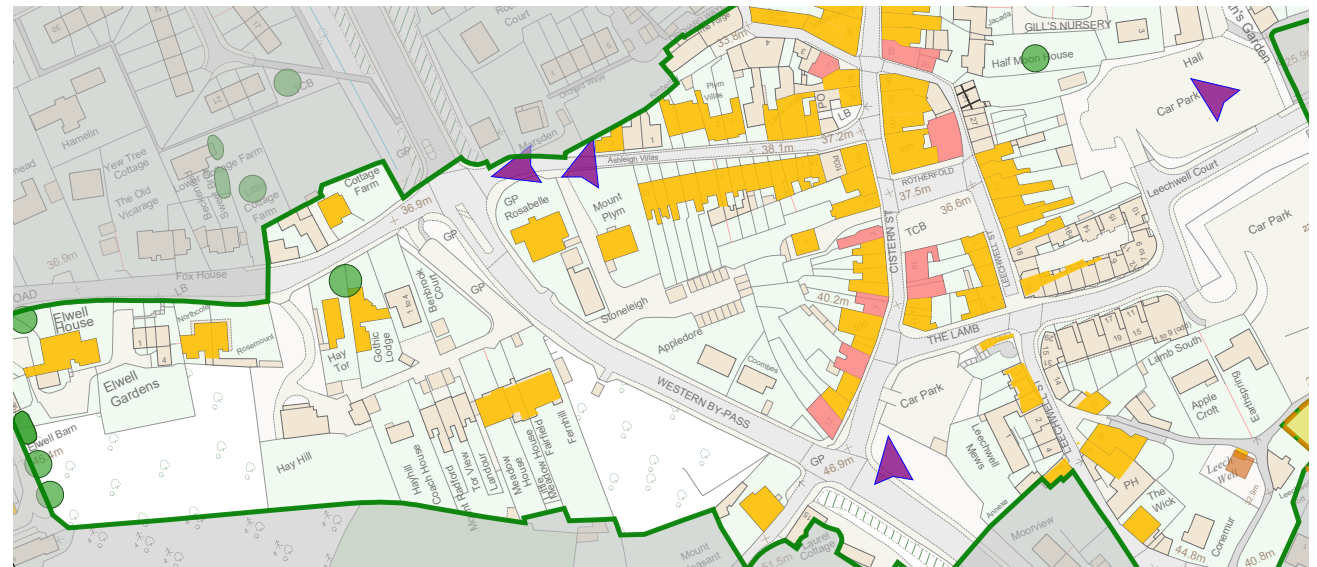
Includes these key streets;

- Plymouth Road
- Western bypass
- Cistern Street
- Rutherford

This western side of the Conservation Area retains a close relationship with the countryside. The elevated contour of this steep valley provides distant views to Dartmoor, which is enjoyed by detached villa style houses set in large gardens. This is cut by the busy bypass. At a slightly lower level is the perceived edge of town, with its mixture of commercial and residential buildings. The building density of these streets provide a contrast to the out of town detached houses.



Modern development creep towards The Lamb



See Appendix 1.



**Plymouth Road**

Overall they retain a similar ridge height and are modest in size and scale. The roads are narrow and limit the space for pedestrians to enjoy. The building line is tight to the edge of the street and offers little break between the terraces, nonetheless there are tantalising glimpses into hidden green courtyards.

The Rutherford square provides a unifying link between Cistern Street and Leechwell Street. It is a fairly level space that encourages social interaction, however, it remains in part, a space shared for car parking. It is clearly well supported by the local community due to the luscious planting and colourful artworks.



**Plymouth Road meets Western Bypass**

The busy roads and encroaching modern developments within this edge of the town are encroaching onto the historic settlement plan. The setting should not be compromised by any permanent loss of historic fabric.

Leechwell Street is also within the ancient core of the town and the Conservation Area, but it too is soon 'closed' by a rural backdrop in which the by-pass is now well concealed.



**Rotherfold square**

## 9. Streets and open spaces, parks, gardens and trees

As far as trees are concerned, there are a good many in the Area that have a positive impact on visual amenities, especially those in groups or in hedges that help define boundaries, enclose spaces or frame and direct views. Of particular value too are those that form an integral feature of the space or area they occupy and help characterise an important aspect of Totnes' historic development.



Above: Leafy gap, Fore Street. Left: Courtyard corner of Fore Street and Station Road

The maps show where the more significant groupings in and adjacent to the Conservation area are, including those on Vire Island and the several in and around public and private gardens. They have a positive impact on the setting for the town's 18th and 19th century suburban villas in Bridgetown and along Plymouth Road in particular.

A more recent tree planting in the castle's inner bailey and moat, has created a parkland setting that combines with the open meadow of the outer bailey to draw the countryside into the heart of the town. It does, however, mask the town's greatest monument to a considerable extent for much of the year.





**Above: Rotherfold Square invites nature in**

Gardens are to be found as managed public spaces and as glimpsed views of overflowing planting from private gardens, many of which are bounded by tall walls. They may be secondary to the architectural significance of the area, however they add great communal

and historic value to the town. They are well used and are further enhanced by various forms of artwork, be it mosaic or sculpture. They are the urban verdant link to the surrounding countryside.

**Top: Former market gardens now for the community.  
Bottom: A place to pause, Fore Street**



# 10. Setting and views

Heritage assets can gain significance from their associations with their setting, whilst views within or outside the Conservation Area can form an important way in which its significance is experienced and appreciated. It is worth noting that that setting may not be limited by specific measured distances or natural barriers, such as hedges.



View East behind St. Mary's Church

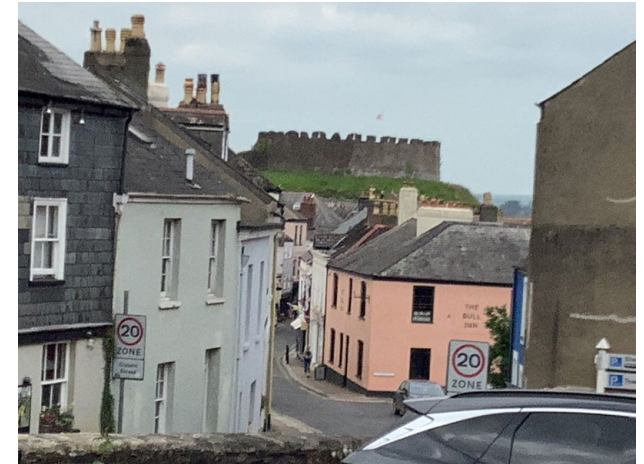
It is the topography of the river valley that determines the extent and setting of the visibility of this area. It is from the higher levels of the town be that the Eastern side or Western side and the linear

There are many views that are worthy of note, however the best example is obviously to be experienced from the Castle Keep's battlements. This offers far reaching views and an appreciation of the plan form of this historic settlement.

St. Mary's Church, High Street, set just below the castle, but still on an elevated level is not only a landmark building by virtue of the four pinnacles of the tower but its immediate setting allows access around it and to the distant views that reveal themselves at the rear.

Through the main thoroughfare of the town, views are mainly limited to perfectly framed glimpses down side passages, each one a delightful and unique setting.

The river Dart provides a marine setting that flows through this dense urban form and framed by the countryside. Views are much more open along this river valley, however there are many more attractive kinetic views experienced from the main transport routes, be that road, rail or river that wrap around and through this town.



Top of town view to castle



Views to Vire Island

# 11. Boundary Review

There is one small extension proposed, that is Leechwell Garden, off Leechwell lane, that lies on the Southern edge of the Conservation Area. It is almost hidden from view and is evidence of historic orchards, most of which have been lost to adjacent car parks and this remains as an exemplar of the former use of these open spaces.

Its significance is by virtue of its communal, historic and evidential values. The Scheduled Ancient Monument that can be found within the tall stone garden walls, is associated to the ancient Leechwell holy well and spring and an immersion bath. It is also formally associated with a medieval leper hospital.

Its continual use as a much loved, public green space for play and relaxation adds to the positive experience of not only the local resident, but to visitors too. It retains a mature verdant space that is an important characteristic of this Conservation Area and surrounding countryside.



**Lushious Leechwell Garden**



**Gateway from Heath Way car park**



Heath's Garden off South Street

# Part Two – The Management Plan



# 1. Introduction to The Management Plan

The management plan sets out to review the condition by surveying of the conservation area and identifying threats and opportunities that can be developed into a management plan that is specific to the area's needs.

In turn, this can channel development to conserve the conservation area's special qualities. The proposals can benefit both economic challenges and pressures from development to promote positive change.

This has been further illustrated in the detailed maps of Totnes Conservation Area in Appendix 1.

Proposals will take the form of mid to long term strategies. Aspects of control will be addressed from monitoring change to formulating strategies, buildings at risk, Article 4 directions, trees, biodiversity, the public realm, energy efficiency in historic buildings including retrofitting, mitigating the effects of climate change in the historic environment, renewable energy generation, traditional shop design, use of colour.



Jolly Egyptomania, Bridgetown

## 2. SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

Location. Architectural styles. Motte and bailey castle. Good condition of buildings. Vernacular materials and craftsmanship. Marine environment. Views. Wayfinding and information boards. Public spaces. Public art. Building at Risk Register

- **Architecture** – there are distinct architectural styles. Each retain characterful features, that are reflected in the quality of their sympathetic materials and craftsmanship. They also have a positive impact on their setting.
- **Building condition** – in general a high level of building maintenance and repair throughout the Conservation Area. This not only adds value to the properties but contributes to their energy performance.
- **Vernacular materials and good quality craftsmanship.**
- **Marine environment** – the conservation area is inclusive of this riverside setting and its bridges. It continues its interdependence with the town, such as through connecting travel routes, commercial use, tourism etc.
- **Views** – as experienced from within the town or from the river. They vary from far reaching distant views to intimately framed.
- **Wayfinding and information boards.**
- **A variety of public spaces**, some of which include mature landscaping.
- **Public and private art installations.**
- **Buildings at Risk Register** – provides information on neglected listed buildings in the district and actively seeks to secure the building's future.

**Top right: Traditional craftsmanship and materials. Middle right: Private space, Bridgetown. Bottom right: Private art can contribute to public spaces.**



Entrance to library, Fore Street





## Weaknesses

Car parks. Modern surfaces. Loss of traditional shopfronts. Lack of weed control on pavements. Signage clutter.

- **Car Parks** – the pressure of vehicles in a town with historic paths established over centuries, remains at odds in this historic context.
- The cumulative impact of modern surface treatments against the vernacular materials, adds to loss of character.
- **Shopfronts** – loss of traditional features, unsympathetic materials and signage create a negative impact on the character of the area.
- **Weeds** – regular maintenance of public and private areas to suppress weed growth is good practice and more cost effective. It also slows deterioration and encourages civic pride.
- **Signage** – greater consideration should be for the immediate and greater context when displaying any signs. It can soon become too cluttered.

Left: Necessity for regular maintenance  
Right: Traffic and pedestrians in a narrow space

## Opportunities

Traffic through town. Cooling buildings. Enforcement.

- **Town Traffic** – changes to road/pavement designs to slow traffic through the town & offer pedestrian priority in more areas.
- **Public realm** – cohesive and good design of fixtures such as parking meters, litter bins etc.
- **Overheating & cooling of buildings** – economic and quick fix solutions for shading overheating buildings e.g. tinted or reflective films, traditional awnings to shops, considered planting, lighter colour external walls.
- **Enforcement** – a published comprehensive and proactive strategy for unauthorised works to designated heritage assets.





## Threats

Incremental loss. Archaeology loss and damage. Environmental climate change. Green spaces between buildings. Painted buildings. Vulnerable buildings. Empty shops. Historic quay walls. Building maintenance. External retrofitting of services.

- **Incremental loss** – heritage features and traditional materials are often irreplaceable. This creates a negative cumulative impact on the character of the historic built environment. Re-using materials are good practice. This includes loss of vernacular and traditional materials. Loss of features e.g. historic ironwork, gateways, steps. Unsympathetic materials e.g. Upvc, cement mortars & tarmac etc.
- **Archaeology** – the potential for permanent loss of any buried archaeology. Consideration for any impact and methodology for investigations should be set at the very beginning of any project.
- **Environmental Climate Change** – mitigating the effects of flooding, lightening strikes, overheating, through practical measures to improve building performance, such as flood gates to doors & vents, non return valves, using traditional materials e.g. hydraulic lime mortars.
- **Green Spaces between buildings** – greater value to be placed for the retention of all green spaces either public or private to all the pressures of development. This would also include traditional boundaries, gateways, surfaces and other historic features.
- **Masonry Colours** – despite the vast range of building colours, consideration should be given against the use of overly bold, stronger colours, as they are more likely to distract within key views and all the more difficult to decorate over.
- **Vulnerable Buildings** – a proactive and joint working approach, where possible, to the repair and maintenance of identified failing buildings. Any retrofit measures would also be a well timed and economical approach.
- **Empty Shops** – where shops are empty for any period, a creative, but temporary display would contribute to an active street scene. This could be incorporated into promoting the town's broader offerings and working with local schools.
- **Quay walls** – greater awareness and promotion of historic water's edge features including the bridges. An illustrated survey could provide a baseline for the prevention



A necessity for regular high level maintenance

- of any permanent loss of features and inform appropriate maintenance solutions.
- **Annual Building Maintenance** – no building is maintenance free. Building condition and its energy performance are inter-related. Basic tasks such as clearing gutters and downpipes can have huge benefits.
- **Trees** – the retention of mature trees and the succession planting of new trees, is crucial to retaining the character of the area. Regular inspection of the trees and permanent protection of the root growth area is paramount. This also applies to the condition of any surrounding surfaces e.g. lifting pavements due to root growth.
- **External retrofitting of services** e.g. heating pipes on building elevations. Each project should be reviewed by its own early assessment on heritage impact, prior to any commencement of works.

Negative cumulative impact



## Managing Change Recommendations

Conservation Areas are not immune from change but it is important that change preserves and enhances them.

The following management actions set out the required considerations for planning in the Conservation Area. This should also be the approach that all custodians should take.

### Materials

In the first instance the original, historic fabric should be retained or at least securely stored for re-used. Natural construction materials such as stone, slate, timber and lime mortars are actively encouraged, where man made alternatives such as Upvc and man made roof coverings, are not supported. Traditional ironwork can be found throughout e.g. hanging signs.

Where there is a requirement for natural stone, it is recommended that where possible, it is sourced from local quarries or from reclamation. It should match the local coursing.

Note: Upvc windows. Their aesthetic character and operational differences make them unsuitable for historic buildings. The weaker components in their frames tend to make them thicker than timber frames. This along with the strips of plastic used for glazing bars that imitate those on traditional windows, can have a significant negative impact on the appearance and character of not only the buildings, but the area too. They are difficult to repair and recycle.

### Public Realm

Any changes or additional should consider the historic context, the vernacular materials and quality of craftsmanship. Any replacement should not be with modern alternatives. Re-use of materials, including approved lime mortars, would be a best practice solution.

### External lighting

Careful consideration of the impact of lighting designs on the natural environment. Fixing through mortar joints is advised rather than causing permanent damage by fixing holes to historic built fabric.

### Changes of use

The impacts of changes of use have significant external impacts, new uses should retain the integrity of the building and its appearance. Waste and recycling should be discreetly located as should parking (if appropriate). Windows and other fenestration treatments to be appropriate in the size, style and design.

## Shop fronts

Changes to shop front must retain the traditional layout, features and fenestration. Signage should retain any historic panels, with any illumination fixed externally. Care should be taken to hide any cabling. This could be colour matched to the elevation.

## Alterations and extensions to buildings

Need to be well designed and retain the historic interests of the building and its setting. It should be sympathetic and subservient in design in order to minimise the impact.

The choice of materials will be critically important and make a positive contribution to not only the host building but also its setting. Such changes should seek to remove or improve previous additions such as the replacement unsympathetic Upvc windows and porches. The impact of the wider conservation area and the street scape must be considered.

Some of the character area may be more susceptible to change than others. Where there are front gardens or historic boundary

treatments, their loss for parking spaces would be discouraged. Principle elevations and roofs should be retained without modern additions such as roof lanterns, balconies, decks and any other external fixings such as satellite dishes, utility/ charging boxes, etc.

## Enforcement

The impact of poorly considered changes to properties and their settings that happen without planning or listed building consent, can be significant.

A proactive and proportionate approach is required through joint working with heritage and compliance officers in order to establish key actions to be investigated.

## Vulnerable Buildings (for list refer to Appendix 3)

These are buildings that are found to be either failing through long term lack of maintenance or could be long term renovation projects that have stalled. There are many reasons why, but the concern is for the building itself and its potential for harm to the public realm.

**Top: Good modern design with traditional materials**  
**Bottom: Long term plans and short term temporary solutions**



## Technology and Innovation

### Electric Vehicle Charge Points

- **Car parks** – where charging points are introduced they should be sensitively sited, designed to preserve or enhance the area, be well and appropriately designed and discrete.
- **On street parking** – they should be located in less sensitive areas and away from key features, area and thoroughfares. To be discrete, be sensitively sited and designed to preserve or enhance the area.
- **Residential properties** – they should be located away from front and prominent elevations, concealed from view, be sensitively sited and not fixed to any historic fabric. To be designed to preserve the Conservation Area and appropriately designed.

Note: hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles can offer alternative zero emission transport solutions.

### Boat chargers and battery storage

should be well designed and limited in their scale, located away from and on key historic features. To be discrete, sensitively sited and designed to preserve the Conservation Area.

### Solar Panels

panels may well not be appropriate in many parts of the area due to their impact on the setting of the wider character area. Where they are proposed, they should be sympathetic to its setting and limited in scale away from key vantage points. Opportunities should be explored for these on secondary buildings and ground mounted to reduce their impact. Panel design will be important to reduce their impact and stop glare.

### Air source heat pumps

these should be discreetly located away from principle and key elevations and spaces which are viewed from wider vantage points.

### 3. Management Plan Strategy

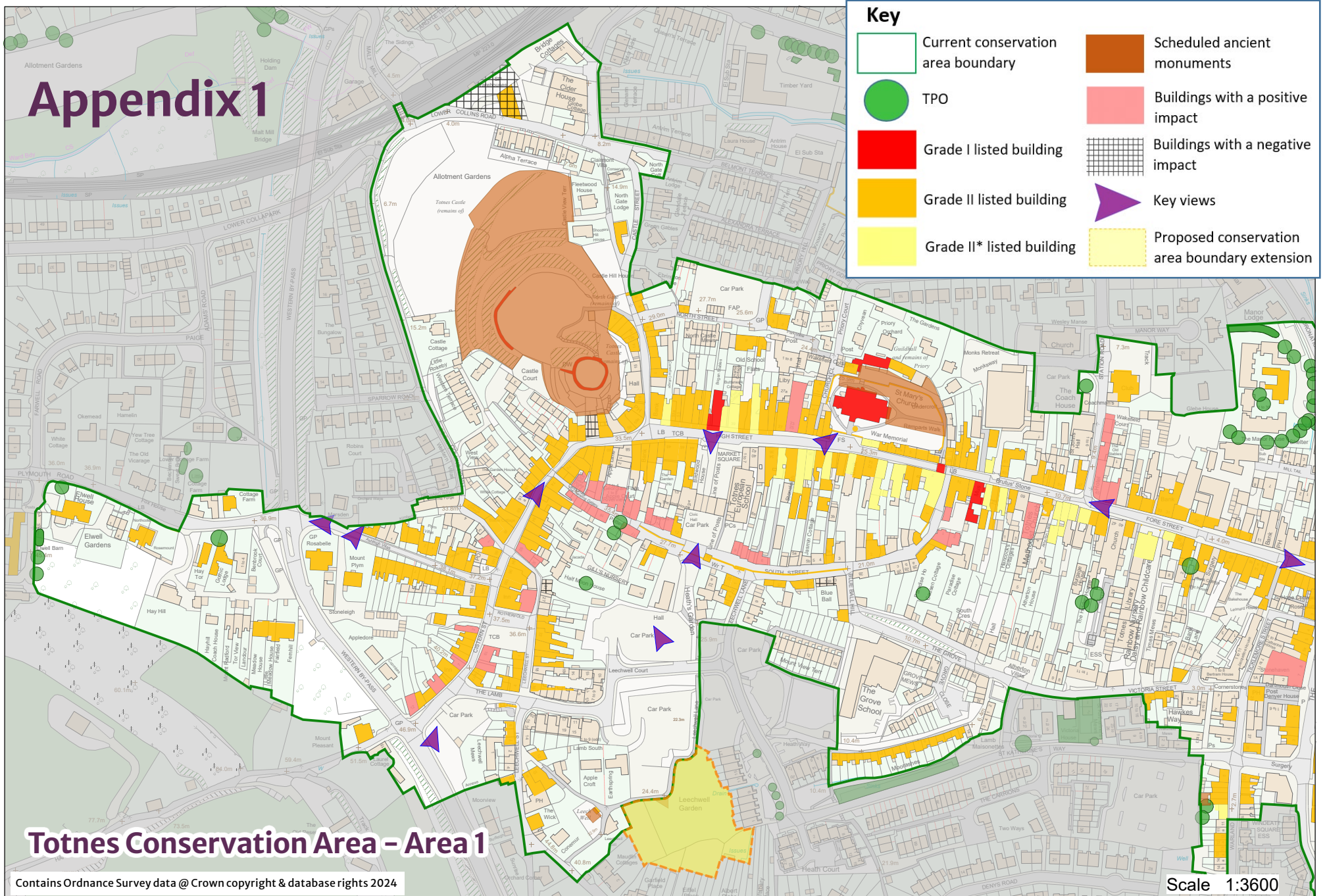
Recommendation	Task	Resources	Timescale - Short / Medium / Long	Notes	Monitoring
<b>Conservation Area</b>	Undertake full review of Conservation Area	SH	Long	Alternate every 5 years	Updated Appraisal & Management Plan
	Undertake interim review of Conservation Area	SH	Long	Every every 5 years	Survey & interim report.
	Develop process for communities to help deliver reviews, including training & monitoring.	SH	Long		Training events. Monitoring reports.
	Produce Shopfront guidance	SH	Short/Medium	Also as supporting document for any new JLP or including in Local Design Code.	Completed guidance document.
<b>Vulnerable Buildings</b> (See Appendix 3)	Monitor failing buildings & seek to bring back to full use.	SH. Stakeholder proactive working group	Short/Medium	Case officer as main point of contact.	Case monitoring Report with sensitive data security.
<b>Buildings at Risk Register</b>	Review list and include key ones identified through appraisal	SH	Medium	Annual review	Updated list on council website
<b>Retrofit</b>	Produce guidance notes & signpost to Historic England	SH	Short/Medium	Opportunities for training/sharing knowledge. Exemplars.	Publish on Council website

Recommendation	Task	Resources	Timescale - Short / Medium / Long	Notes	Monitoring
<b>Climate Change</b>	Produce guidance notes & signpost to Historic England	SH	Short/Medium	Opportunities for training/sharing knowledge. Exemplars	Publish on Council website
<b>Renewable Energy Historic Buildings</b>	Produce guidance notes & signpost to Historic England	SH	Short/Medium	Opportunities for training/sharing knowledge. Exemplars.	Publish on Council website
<b>Trees</b>	Regular health check review of all mature trees & shrubs.  Recommendations to add more TPOs	SH	Medium	Opportunities for training/sharing knowledge, internally or with external groups.	Publish on Council website
<b>Article 4 Directions</b>	Assess scope of protection to principle roofs and elevations.	SH	Medium	Recommendations to limit renewable energy equipment and boundary removal.	Monitor and review reports. Make guidance available for homeowners.
<b>Enforcement</b>	Strategy & process	SH various teams	Medium	A proactive and proportionate approach is required through joint working with heritage and compliance officers in order to establish key actions to be investigated.	Publish on Council website, subject to date security. Make available to Exec.

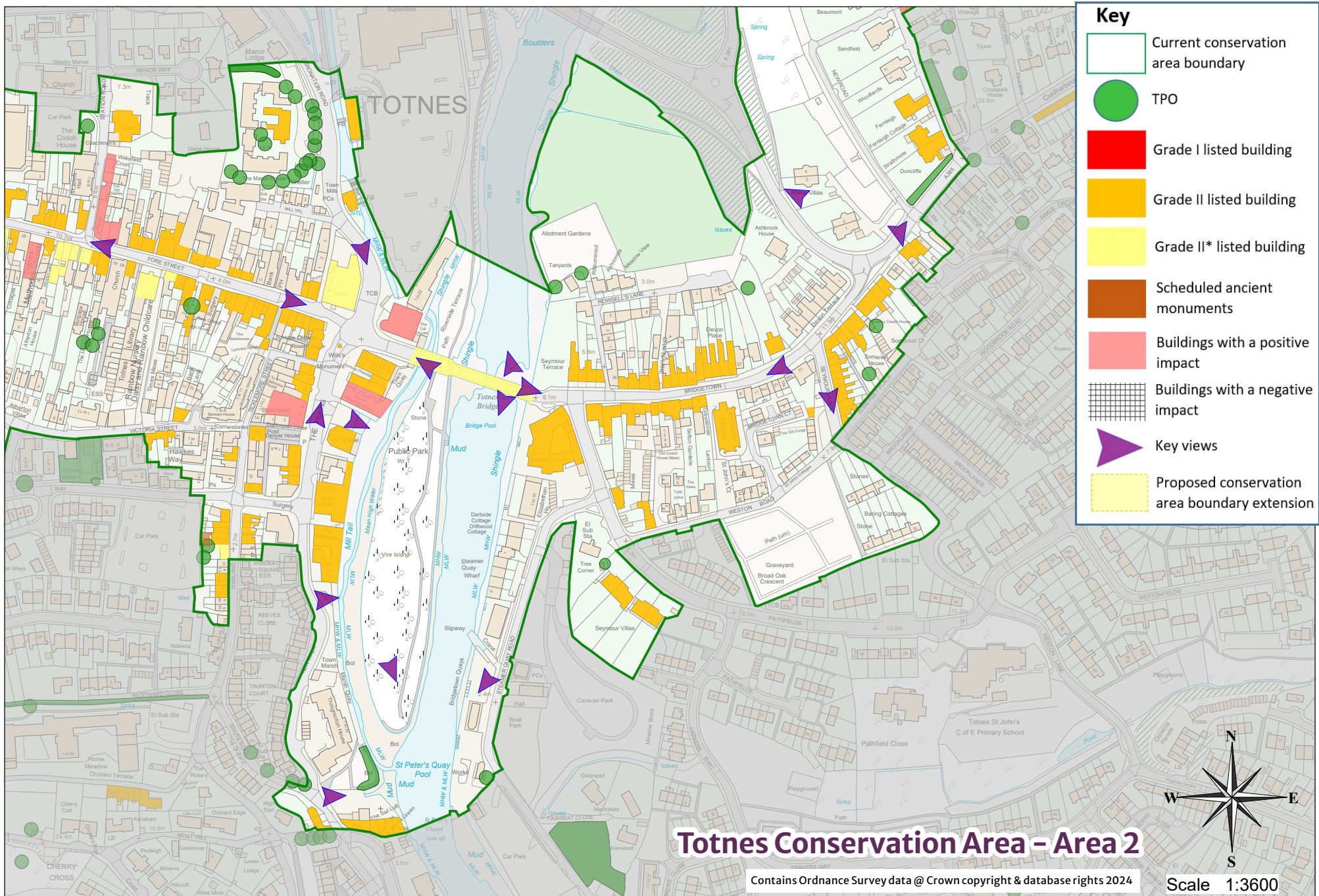
## External Partners

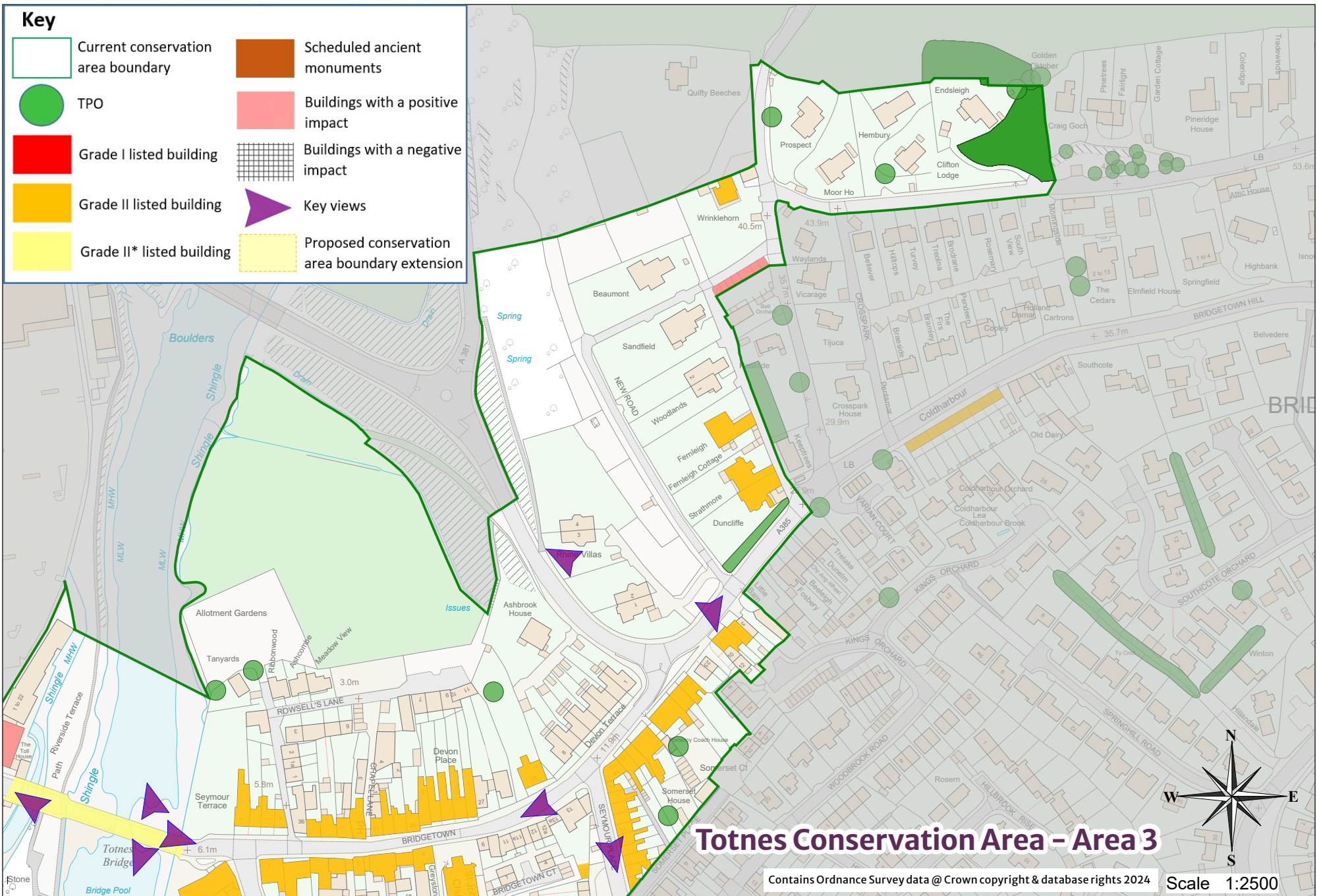
Recommendation	Task	Resources	Timescale - Short / Medium / Long	Notes	Monitoring
<b>Conservation Area</b>	Maintenance of buildings	Local. Group. Chamber of commerce.	Short	Annual – Set specific week & community engagement	Photographic record & report.
	Maintenance of public realm	Town/parish councils	Short	Annual – Log and audit of assets	Maintenance log book.
	Refresh Heritage trails & plaques	Town/parish councils	Long	Every 5 years & condition survey	Maintenance record.
<b>Ecclesiastical</b>	Liaison with all exemption faiths	SH, Diocese of Exeter, Methodist, others.	Medium/Long	Positive & proactive continual liaison.	Feedback through team meetings.
<b>Utility Companies</b>	Liaison with utilities. Recommendations for buried cables as opposed to overhead installations & elec generation.	SH various teams. Devon County Highways. County Archaeology.	Short/Medium	Seek support from all and to create a standard best practice.	Report to councillors. Publish on council website. County wide comms.
<b>Communications Companies</b>	Liaison for recommendations for siting of comms equipment.	SH various teams. Devon County Highways. County Archaeology.	Short/Medium	Seek support from all and to create a standard best practice.	Report to councillors. Publish on council website. County wide comms.

# Appendix 1









## Appendix 2

### Locally Important historic buildings

Below is a table of notable unlisted, historic buildings within the Conservation Area. There are buildings or structures which fall below the designation of national context, however are nevertheless of local interest by virtue of their date, architectural design, traditional materials, historical association.

It is not a statutory designation and applies no additional protection, however it highlights the importance of these special buildings.

They are;

- 1907' carved in stone set into the wall Corner of Kellock Drive and Plymouth Road
- Stone trough outside the Guildhall Yard Date in the cobbles Guildhall Yard Stone Wall and Railings Broomborough, Plymouth Road (below work house/hospital building)
- Mile Stone on Plymouth Road between Follaton Farm entrance and Follaton Lodge
- Jubilee Fountain Outside Dartmouth Inn, The Plains

## Appendix 3

### Vulnerable Buildings

- 65 & 67 High Street.
- Warehouses, Lower Collins Road
- 31 Leechwell Street
- 1 – 13 South Street

## Appendix 4

### References

- Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast.
- SH JLP Climate change/energy efficiency.
- SH Guidance docs– Design & Barn Conversions.
- Colours guidance.
- Retro fit.
- Devon Historic Environment Record (Devon HER).
- Historic England Advice Notes and Guidance documents.
- Totnes Conservation Area Appraisal 2007.
- Totnes Neighbourhood Plan, made.
- HMSO Revised Schedule of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, Secretary of State for the Environment.
- Devon Historic Coastal and Market Towns Survey.

# Appendix 5

## Consultation

Information to be captured after formal public consultation.





South Hams  
District Council

[www.southhams.gov.uk](http://www.southhams.gov.uk)