



■ Natural slate is the traditional roofing material, which is locally grey or grey-blue in colour, not dark. Roofs themselves are mostly gabled, but because the few that are hipped occupy prominent locations they tend to give an impression of being more common than they actually are. Typically the verges of end gables are plain (left), although a significant number still survive with slates to protect them in the traditional manner (as are the three in the photo below). Dormer windows, however, are almost entirely absent from the Area and therefore not characteristic of the roofscape.



■ Although examples of slate-hung elevations are relatively few, this terrace of six certainly announces its existence! Already unusual because of its 3-storey height, the use of slate on the top floors only tends to heighten its interest as well as reduce its apparent scale.



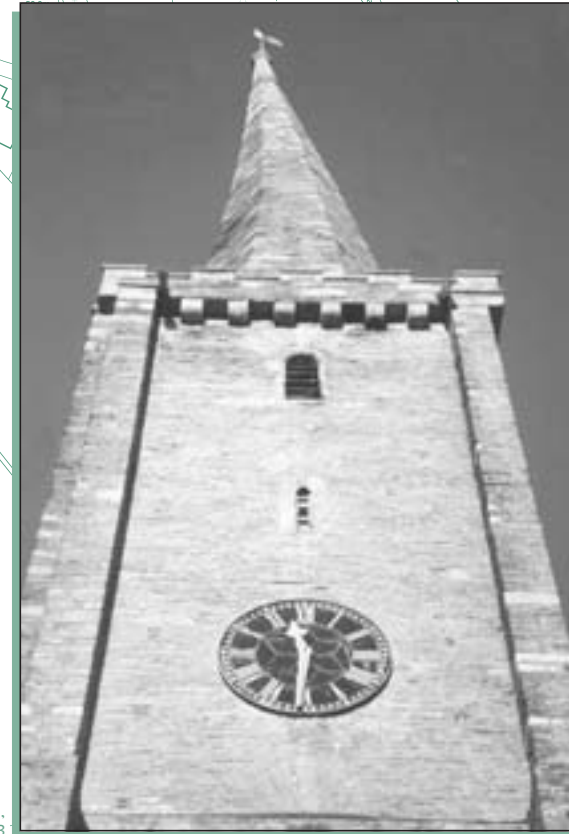
■ The majority of roof ridges follow the line of the street so that the eaves of roofs, not their gables, face forward. This tends to bring visual order and cohesion to the street scene, particularly where neighbouring building heights are similar – as is the case along the ‘post office’ side of the Square shown left. In most other locations, however, this cohesive quality is somewhat lessened by the variations in building lines, building heights and the siting of buildings ‘sideways’ onto the street so that their gables face forward – each of which tend to punctuate the ‘flow’ and create a visually ‘busy’ street scene. (above).



Ermington Conservation Area Appraisal

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Conservation Areas are special places

In the **South Hams** they cover the older parts of our towns and villages which actually look their age, and it's the survival of their **authentic architectural and historic qualities** that makes them so special.

A sense of history as well as identity prevails and by designating Conservation Areas the District Council is sharing its belief that these ought to be **preserved and reinforced**

The policies the District Council follows when assessing the suitability of proposals affecting Conservation Areas are set out in the South Hams Local Plan, while a guidance note called ‘New Work in Conservation Areas’ explains how to achieve compliance with them. This is essential because the Council has a statutory duty to approve proposals only if they “preserve or enhance the character or appearance” of the Area’s features of “special architectural or historic interest”.

The purpose of this Appraisal, therefore, is to describe the key features within the Conservation Area at Ermington that create its special interest and characterise its most distinctive appearance.



South Hams District Council

Ermington

Setting the Scene

Ermington is a small rural village a mile or so closer to Dartmoor in the north than the sea 4 miles to its south; and very close indeed to the river Erme that links the two. The highway alongside the river is, in fact, the shortest route between them, and was probably used by travellers between the Moor and the Erme Estuary in prehistoric times. It is still a busy north-south route between Ermington and Ivybridge, although the new turnpikes of the 18th and 19th centuries were built to serve the heavier, east-west, passage of traffic.

The village occupies a steeply sloping site on the south-east facing side of the Erme valley, which is here characterised by an open alluvial plain. Its location, next to a small tributary valley, accounts for the 'Y' configuration of its historic street pattern. The upright stem (Town Hill) continues to rise along the left arm to follow the tributary valley, while the right arm turns to follow the contours of the Erme valley past the church and on to Ivybridge and the moor.



■ Although Ermington's earliest development doubtless focussed on the church, in probably late medieval times the alignment of Town Hill and Chapel Street, some distance away, was chosen as more suited to establishing the main body of the village – focussing, as it still does, on a small square. As this view from across the Erme shows, an open field forms a wedge of green that helps preserve this historical detachment and the more rural than urban setting of the church – characteristics that would have been far more obvious only a few decades ago when only the small congregation of buildings on Church Street occupied its foreground.



■ The wide sweep of the Erme's alluvial plain characterises Ermington's landscape setting in a most distinctive and distinguishing way. It has never been a place to build any permanent structure other than a bridge and causeway crossing.



■ On the west side of the village, the relationship with the landscape that was probably established in late medieval times is still preserved. This view shows how little encroachment of the tributary valley has occurred, with the buildings associated with development of Town Hill and Chapel Street barely visible.



■ Occupying neighbouring sites on one of the more rural fringes of the village, it is perhaps appropriate that 'Ring of Bells Cottage' (above) and two of the three 'Rectory Cottages' (left) should preserve Ermington's last surviving thatched roofs. The latter pair clearly show their ridge to be flush with the roof slope in true South Hams fashion.



■ The complex geology around Ermington is clearly reflected in its stone walls, which display a considerable range of colour and type. Some are thin-bedded while others are more rounded; none more so, perhaps, than the boulders 'quarried' from the Erme. These were often halved to double their value, and as this photo of one of the church walls shows, no building was too grand to receive them.



■ Only a handful of historic buildings reveal the use of brick, either in the construction of 'slim-line' chimney stacks or, as here, to arch either window or door openings in a rubble-stone wall.



■ While the majority of buildings are constructed of stone, their elevations are mostly colour washed, either directly onto the stone to preserve its undulating, rustic charm (above) or over a render coat to present what many an 18th or 19th century owner thought a more dignified and 'proper' appearance (below).



■ In historical terms, pebbledash is not a traditional finish for walls in this part of the South Hams so the two examples in the square appeared out of place (above). Now painted, however, they relate much more agreeably with their neighbours.

The Conservation Area

A Conservation Area was first designated in Ermington by the District Council on the 4th November 1976. It was later extended on the 3rd September 1992 to include the L-shaped field north and west of the church that forms an integral part of its setting. The Map identifies the new boundary as adopted by the District Council on the 19th of June 2003 based on the up-dated versions of the Ordnance Survey Plans and taking account of the findings of this Appraisal. It supersedes all previous boundary designations.

The Listed Buildings

Of the 37 Listed Buildings in Ermington Parish, which include the Bridge over the Erme just east of the village and Lower Keaton Bridge further upstream, only 6 are in the village itself and all are within the Conservation Area. The Church is Grade I and the others Grade II, and while all are special in their own right, their architectural and historic qualities make a considerable contribution towards the Area's interest and character. The Map identifies each of the list items, one of which includes more than one property.

- 1 Church of St Peter and St Paul** C13 tower is the oldest part although some of the Norman Church may survive in its fabric or that of the later C14 or C15 parts. The stone needle-spire is early C14, its conspicuous twist being retained when rebuilt in the 1850's. J D Sedding restored the church 1889



One of the least interrupted views of the church from the village street

- 2 Lychgate approx 30m SSE of Church** Large, early C20 granite structure in the form of a free-standing loggia. Italianate style, approached by 2 flights of steps



The scale and proportions of the Lychgate are quite remarkable in such a village location and serve to emphasise the significant change in level between the churchyard and the highway that skirts part of its ancient boundary.

- 3 Freehamlet** C16 farmhouse with circa C17/C18 wing giving L-shaped plan. Earliest roof trusses are jointed crucks. Some fine early C18 panelling

- 4 No's 1 and 2 (Rectory Cottages)** Thatched, circa late C18 or early C19. Leaded casement windows and glazed doors are C20

- 5 Ring of Bells Cottage** Thatched, circa late C17 or early C18. Small C19/C20 casement windows



In the Square and on its approaches, the majority of buildings are 'politely' designed with quite formal window arrangements and some architectural embellishments too, like the rusticated quoins on the 'Crooked Spire' public house (above) and the Egyptian-style motifs around the door and window openings of the post office building (below). Visually this tends to strengthen the significance of the Square as the village focus, since the more informal characteristics of the vernacular style are more in evidence elsewhere (below right.)



In combination, the sloping ground and the variations in storey heights tends to create rooflines that are very varied, stepping from one neighbour or two to the next. The most obvious exception, however, is Ermington Terrace on Chapel Street where the cottage row was built as a self-contained architectural unit. Its length, straightness, siting and pattern-book regularity probably suit it more to a town setting than the village one it's in, but nevertheless its attractiveness and interest make it a positive asset



Domestic buildings of 3-storey height rarely occur in South Hams villages, so its unusual to find several at Ermington, mainly just off the Square. Rather than dominating the scene, however, their stature seems to assimilate well into the rise and fall of the village streets. This particular example appears to have started life with 2 storeys but had a third added in the 19th century when its characteristic timber sashes would have been inserted.

Other Buildings and Structures of Special Interest

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 Conservation Area. The Map identifies the buildings that have this impact, although some amongst them could have their positive contributions enhanced by the replacement of uncharacteristic features (like aluminium and plastic windows and doors), the reinstatement of lost finishes and features (like original rendered surfaces, natural slate roofs and timber casement or sash windows) or the repair of characterful features before they fail (like historic windows and doors, cast iron rainwater goods and ironwork railings).

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 and retaining walls, gates, gate piers, ironwork railings and entrance steps, cobbled thresholds, the well next to the church gate, drinking troughs, the war memorial and a K6 telephone kiosk



(above) The ironwork railings and gates in and near the churchyard are most attractive features that lend dignity to the setting with their qualities of stately...or 'estately'...ownership.

Stone walls are nearly always characterful, but they can add a great deal of interest too if, like the roadside retaining wall in Church Street, they have features in them that have a storey to tell about former times (as in the 2 photos below).



Few other hard surface treatments can be as enduring, and endearing, as cobbles. This area, in front of Cob Cottage, is one of the few remaining examples still in a good repair and contributing immensely to the interest and character of the Area



Other Features of Special Interest

While buildings and other man-made structures are dominant in creating the special interest and character of the Conservation Area, other features are important too, not least the undeveloped spaces and the trees that comprise and share their setting. On the Map the more significant spaces are identified in such a way as to explain their particular importance.

As far as trees are concerned, these have a particularly significant impact upon the nature of Ermington's landscape setting, especially the afforestation along the opposite side of the Erme valley. This transforms the appearance of what was once an open, exposed and somewhat receding hillside into a backdrop that more definitely encloses views south. In this direction too, but closer to hand, mature trees along the Erme's banks help define its course as it meanders across the alluvial plain. They help define too, in the valley to the west, the surviving medieval burghage plot boundaries and the disused quarries that doubtless supplied some of the village's building stone. However, within the Conservation Area, along the three main streets, trees do not figure with any prominence, except, that is, near their meetings with the open countryside. Here, next to Freehamlet; around Ring of Bells Cottage; and above Parkhill Cottages, mature specimens help contain views and give definition to the village edge. The Map shows where the more significant groupings are in and near the Conservation Area.



Although not listed the K6 Telephone Kiosk next to 3 Chapel Place contributes towards the historic character of the area.

Areas of Archaeological Potential

The antiquity and continuity of Ermington's occupation as a settlement is an aspect of its special interest. This is particularly represented in its standing buildings and structures, partly through the dateable features they possess, but more so, perhaps, through their alignment and arrangement and the pattern of the sites they occupy. The Map identifies the parts of the village where these features are particularly noteworthy and where also the below ground archaeology has the greatest potential for recording the earlier phases of Ermington's development. The signs are that the earliest permanent settlement here occupied an enclosure where the church and Freehamlet now stand. This was probably in late Saxon times when, it seems, the ancient Dartmoor route ran through the enclosure on the line of the path across the churchyard and across the field in the direction of what are now the Square and Town Hill beyond. It was some time later, in medieval times, that the current plan of the village was established, shifting the main body of its built-up area away to the west of the church.



The path through this 'kissing' gate continues to the churchyard past the ancient well that's recently been carefully restored. In actual fact the path probably preserves the line of the earliest route long the Erme towards the moor, which is thought to have passed right beside the church and not below the churchyard as now.



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- Key**
- Conservation Area Boundary
 - Listed Buildings
 - Other buildings with a Positive impact
 - views in which the undeveloped spaces characterise an important aspect of Ermington historic development pattern and its relationship with its landscape setting
 - views in which the undeveloped spaces permit the prospect of a particularly significant building or building group
 - Important individual or groups of trees (diagrammatic)



The tree group above Parkhill Cottages contains the view and defines the village edge on this side of the road



Although not entirely as originally built, the form and style of the Toll House at the bottom of Town Hill is still true to its type and a source of particular interest

Cautionary Note

The formal designation of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Tree Preservation Orders and Scheduled Ancient Monuments is a continuous process so if you need to be certain that the designations shown on the Map are still correct, please check with the Environment and Development Services Group at the District Council.