



Rendered elevations like this one (above) dominate the main streets and contribute immensely towards creating the town's 'polite urban' as opposed to 'rustic rural' character – which is strengthened here by the very elegant, and very well preserved, entrance. It couldn't, and still can't, fail to impress!



The painting of stonework so that its undulating surface is still visible is not a common practice. In the rare case shown here (above), the treatment explains that this is not one of the building's principle elevations.....which are on the garden side and 'properly' rendered.



Natural slate is the dominant roofing material, with many roofs still proudly displaying their ornamental ridge tiles. This one also illustrates the most attractive and traditional approach to finishing off hips, using mitted slates.



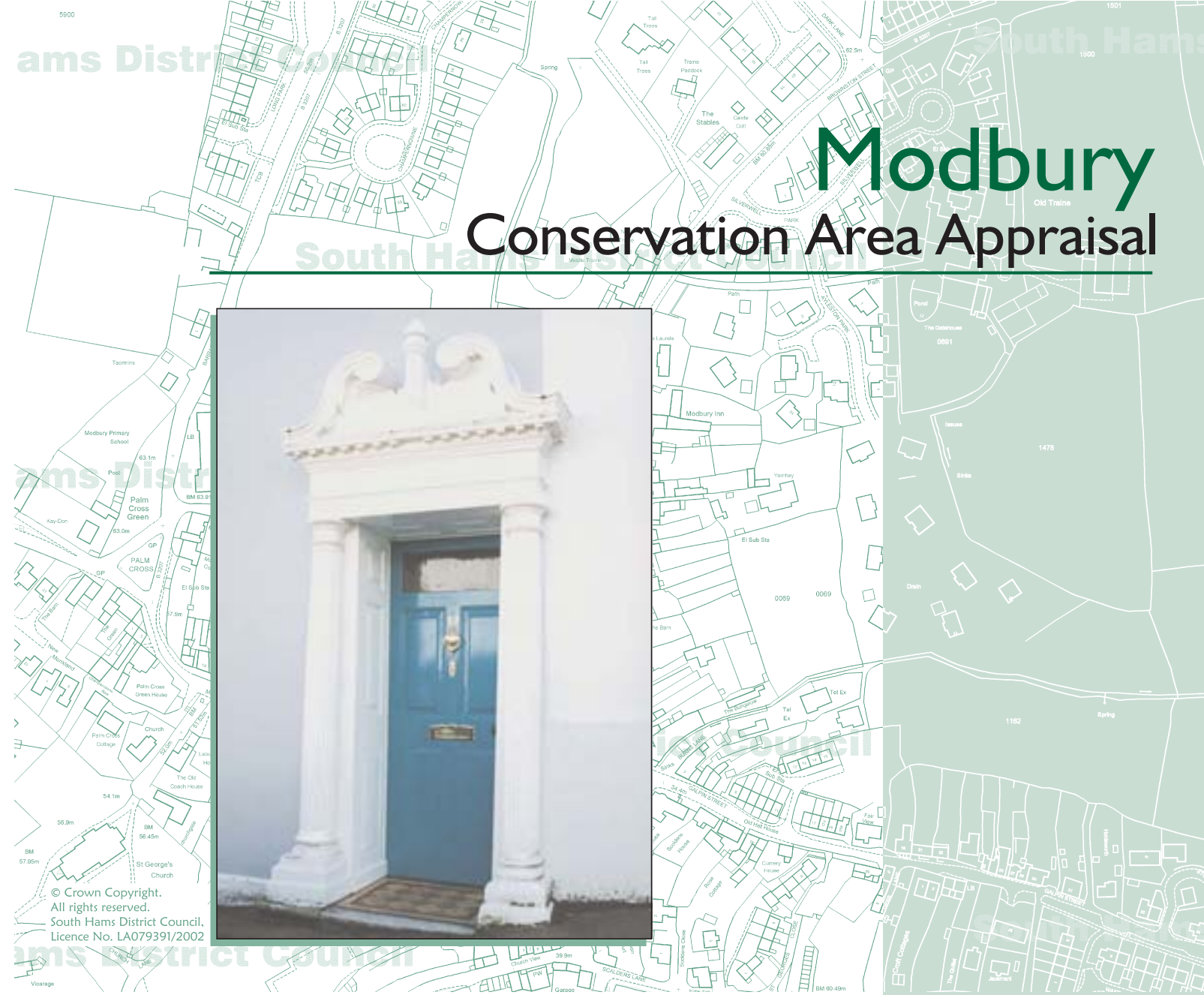
The majority of rendered surfaces are smooth and plain, but few still have their original unpainted (or simply lime-washed) finish. This house in Brownston Street is one that does, along with the original 'ashlar-lining' intended to give the appearance of finely-jointed, 'up-market' masonry.



Slate hung elevations are indeed dispersed throughout the Area, but their number isn't especially great. Their prominent locations do, however, give the opposite impression. The most significant grouping, perhaps, is the row of five in Church Street, one of which – like at least two others in the Area - is preserved beneath a coating of paint. This one (above), however, is of particular note, both for the silver-grey colour of the slates and for the way they're fixed using random widths in diminishing courses (from bottom to top) – a traditional technique that's been carefully respected next door.

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## Modbury Conservation Area Appraisal



## 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 Modbury that create its special interest and characterise its most distinctive appearance.





## Setting the Scene

Modbury is the first market town to be encountered eastwards from Plymouth. This is after journeying about 7 miles along the road which skirts the coastal plateau, links the lowest crossing points of the Yealm, Erme and Avon rivers, and leads onwards to Kingsbridge, a further 7 miles south-east. This 'mid-way' location between the two major settlements in the area is true also of the town's relationship with the two major natural features; Dartmoor to the north and the sea to the south. These are both 4 miles distant, with Modbury convenient to the network of ancient ridge roads connecting the two. In geographic terms the town is altogether well placed, so perhaps its not surprising that one of the roots of its Saxon name identifies it as being an important meeting place.



Most of the town's historic buildings occupy the bottom and steeply rising slopes of a narrow-necked hollow that cuts into the plateau-like setting from the south. Mostly too they're neatly set out on continuous building lines along the lengths of its principle highways - Church Street, Brownston Street and Galpin Street - which descend from the enclosing high ground, west, north and east, to meet at Broad Street on its level plain. Significant aspects of the town's historic development pattern, and its long established relationship with the landscape setting, are captured in views from each of the 'descending' streets. From Galpin Street (above) the commanding position of the ancient church site is clear, somewhat divorced from the town and dominant in the landscape.



From Church Street, and also from here next to the Memorial Hall in Back Street, the open fields that fall away from the properties along Galpin Street help define the original, linear, outline of this part of the town and the relationship it has long had with its landscape setting.



From Brownston Street the hillside in the middle distance still confines the town to its enclosing hollow, while beyond it the coastal plateau raises up to dominate the scene and emphasise, with some drama, the contrast between the 'comfort' of the town's enclosure and the exposed nature of the countryside around.



Nearly all street frontage buildings have roof ridges (and therefore eaves) running parallel to the street, so forward-facing gables are very nearly absent. Even at corners, or at sites next to gaps, hips are often used to turn the angle with a continuous eaves line. The White Hart and Assembly Rooms (above), and the Institution (now Kingsland) with its adjoining 'endowment' houses, are the most notable exceptions, although the way the gables assert their presence in the street scene seems entirely appropriate in view of the significance of their original 'community' uses.

Although the vast majority of buildings along the main streets are constructed of locally quarried stone, this tends to be revealed only in views like the one to the right, of their rears and associated outbuildings. Along the main streets themselves, stonework elevations are made conspicuous by their rarity, and of the very few that do exist, one at least appears to have been previously rendered. This doesn't appear so at Chain House, nor at Brooke House (below right), since both have cut faces seeming to demand display.



Along with the almost total absence of front garden areas, it's probably the 'stature' of the thirty or so 3-storey buildings in Modbury that do most to pronounce it as being a town. Combined with the fact that most of them, and most of their 2-storey neighbours too, are politely designed in an 'urban-looking' classical style, the appearance of Modbury today is overwhelmingly of a town created in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries - albeit superimposed on a more ancient plan.



The steepness of the main streets means that roof ridges are rarely continuous for more than 2 or 3 buildings in a row. Instead they're stepped, and from the lower side the exposed tops of gabled ends are, as here, a characteristic feature. The mixing of 2- and 3-storey heights adds to this effect, so that, even along level stretches, the roofscape is full of variety - especially so when the full compliment of chimney stacks still survive.



The first permanent settlement at Modbury could well be evidenced by the high banks encircling the churchyard along Church Lane. These appear to be part of the boundary of an ancient enclosure whose siting above a steep slope is suggestive of a small Iron Age hill fort. The field shown left, in the foreground of the church and Church Lane, preserves and characterises the commanding nature of the site and the singular importance it may have in recording Modbury's earliest origins.



The church is a landmark in the landscape, as this view from the Kingsbridge approach clearly shows. With the main body of the town out of sight within its hollow, travellers might be forgiven for thinking the church belongs to a village. There's an element of surprise, therefore, when the main streets are finally reached to reveal Modbury's market town stature and characteristics.



## The Conservation Area

A Conservation Area was first designated in Modbury by Devon County Council on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1969. Its boundary was drawn tightly around the churchyard and the historic buildings that face the main streets where the town's character and appearance is at its most urban and distinctive. The ancient plots associated with the frontage buildings, and the historic properties on Back Street and New Road, were later included in the Area by the District Council on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1985, while on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1992 further extensions were made at the top end of Brownston Street (including the grounds of Traine House) and along New Road, in recognition of their importance to the Area's setting. The Map identifies the boundary adopted by the Council on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2002 based on up-dated versions of the Ordnance Survey Plans and taking account of the findings of this Appraisal

## The Listed Buildings

Of the 131 Listed Buildings in Modbury Parish, which include no less than 5 milestones on the A379 and B3207, 106 are in the town and 98 of these are within the Conservation Area. The Church is Grade I, Chain House and Old Traine (East and West) are Grade II\*(two-star), and those remaining are Grade II. While all are special in their own right, their architectural and historic qualities make a tremendous contribution towards the Area's interest and character. The Map identifies the Listed Buildings within the Area, and their addresses are summarised below in alphabetical order:

**Back Street** - on its south side, **Billington House** and next to it, the **Stable to Manor House**

**Broad Street** - on its north side, **1A and B, 2, 3 and 4**, and on its south side **9, 10, 11 with 12, 14** (See photo below) and **14a and 14b** with **15** the Post Office



**Brownston Street** - on its west side, between 4 and the Gateway just beyond North Traine, only number 12 isn't listed. They therefore include **4, 5, 6 and 7, Chain House 8, York House 9 and The Tannery 10**. Next is **13**, and then **14, 15, 16 and 17** each with their steps and ironwork balusters. **18 and 19 include the boundary railings and gate** between them, then follows **19A, 20, 21, 22, 23 with 24**, continuing with **25 with South Traine, Middle Traine** (see photo below) and finally **North Traine with its adjacent Gateway, wall and railings**. On the east side, in the opposite, downhill direction, are the **Gateway to Old Traine** and the drinking water **Conduit with its containing walls and railings**. The **Modbury Inn** is the first building, followed by **43 and 45 with its garden boundary wall**. **53** is next, then **Imdina with Home Croft** its neighbour, and **Kingsland** alongside, each with their associated **railings, gates and piers**. **59** follows, and to complete the street is the row that includes **62, 63, 64, 65 and 66**.



**Church Lane** - Two items have this address; the **Church of St George** and the **Gateway and steps** at the south entry to the churchyard. The **Gateway** entry at the north side is also listed, but addressed as being 'off the north end of Church Street'

**Church Street** - on its south side next to the junction with Poundwell Street is **No. 1** (The former **White Hart Hotel and the Assembly Rooms**). **4 and 5** are the next pair, then **7, 8, 9**, the **Baptist Chapel and the railings, piers and gates** in front, and **11 and 12**. Finally, between Moon Lane and the drive to the Church are **15, 16, 17 and 18**.

On the north side, in the reverse direction, the first is number **19** (the former **Rose and Crown**), then **22, 23** set back from the pavement, but including its **boundary wall, railings and gate**, and then the pair **24 and 25**. **27 (Moonsmead) and Sybils** are next, followed by **28, 29, 30, 31 and The Exeter Inn** (but not including 32). Also included is the **Conduit, retaining wall and pavement steps** in front of 27, Sybils, 28 and 29.

**Galpin Street** - only number **2** on its north side, while on its south side **38 and 38a, 45, Conduit House, Scolden's House and Brooke House**

**New Road** - on its east side, the **Methodist Church and the attached Schoolroom with its gates and piers**, and on the west side, the **Gateway in the wall adjacent to the Woodturners**

**Palm Cross Green** - on its south side **Palm Cross Green House**, and on the east **Manor House and Manor Cottage**. The listed Stable behind Manor House is on Back Street

**Poundwell Street** - **Poundwell House**, off the south end of the street, is the only listed building although it's in 6 dwellings (see photo below)



Other than for the construction of chimney stacks and openings in stone walls, brick has rarely found favour. Complete elevations number only two, while one of these, in Church Street, has long been painted over as if to mask its incongruity. And while the pseudo-Elizabethan timbered front of the Exeter Inn attempts to say otherwise, it is the classical style of the Georgian, Regency and early Victorian periods that characterise the architecture of the town, and give it exceptional charm. Most remarkable is the number and variety of door-hoods and -cases that adorn so many houses, large and small (top left and right). Finely proportioned and detailed bay windows are common too (above), while at the top of Brownston Street the noble façade of Traine House does much to enhance the architectural standing of the town.



**Key**

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Listed Buildings
- Other buildings with a Positive impact
- An area whose special interest is characterised particularly by the low density development within it, namely the gardens and grounds of the 'Traines'
- views in which the undeveloped spaces characterise an important aspect of Modbury's historic development pattern and its relationship with its landscape setting
- Important individual or groups of trees (diagrammatic)
- Area with Archaeological Potential

## Other Buildings and Structures of Special Interest

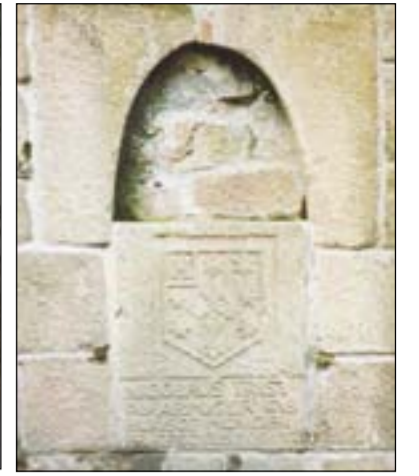
In addition to the historic buildings and structures that are listed, many others are considered to contribute positively towards creating the special interest and character of the Area including, in particular, the houses and cottages of the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that possess many of the features of their listed neighbours, such as sash windows, bay windows and projecting canopies or cornices over entrance doors. The Map identifies the buildings that have this impact, although some amongst them could have their positive contributions enhanced by the replacement of incongruous features (like aluminium, plastic or obviously modern windows and doors), the reinstatement of lost features or finishes (like cast-iron rainwater goods and natural slate roofs), or the repair of characterful features before they fail (like historic windows and doors)

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, ironwork railings and gates, gate piers and granite steps, raised and cobbled pavements, a wall mounted 'GR' letter box, granite kerbstones, a K6 Telephone kiosk, and Victorian style lamp-posts.

Historic ironwork railings and staircase balustrading are dispersed throughout the Area and, as here (right), add a certain refinement and elegance to its overall character.



Stone walls are nearly always characterful but they can add a great deal of interest too if, like the two in New Road (above left), they have features that tell something of former times. The conduit (above right) in the wall retaining the unusual raised pavement in Church Street, and the doorway also in New Road (right) are perhaps exceptional in their quality and interest.



As early photographs of the town show, cobbled pavements were indeed extensive throughout the town. This small section by the White Hart survives to illustrate just how attractive, timeless and characterful the surface treatment remains.



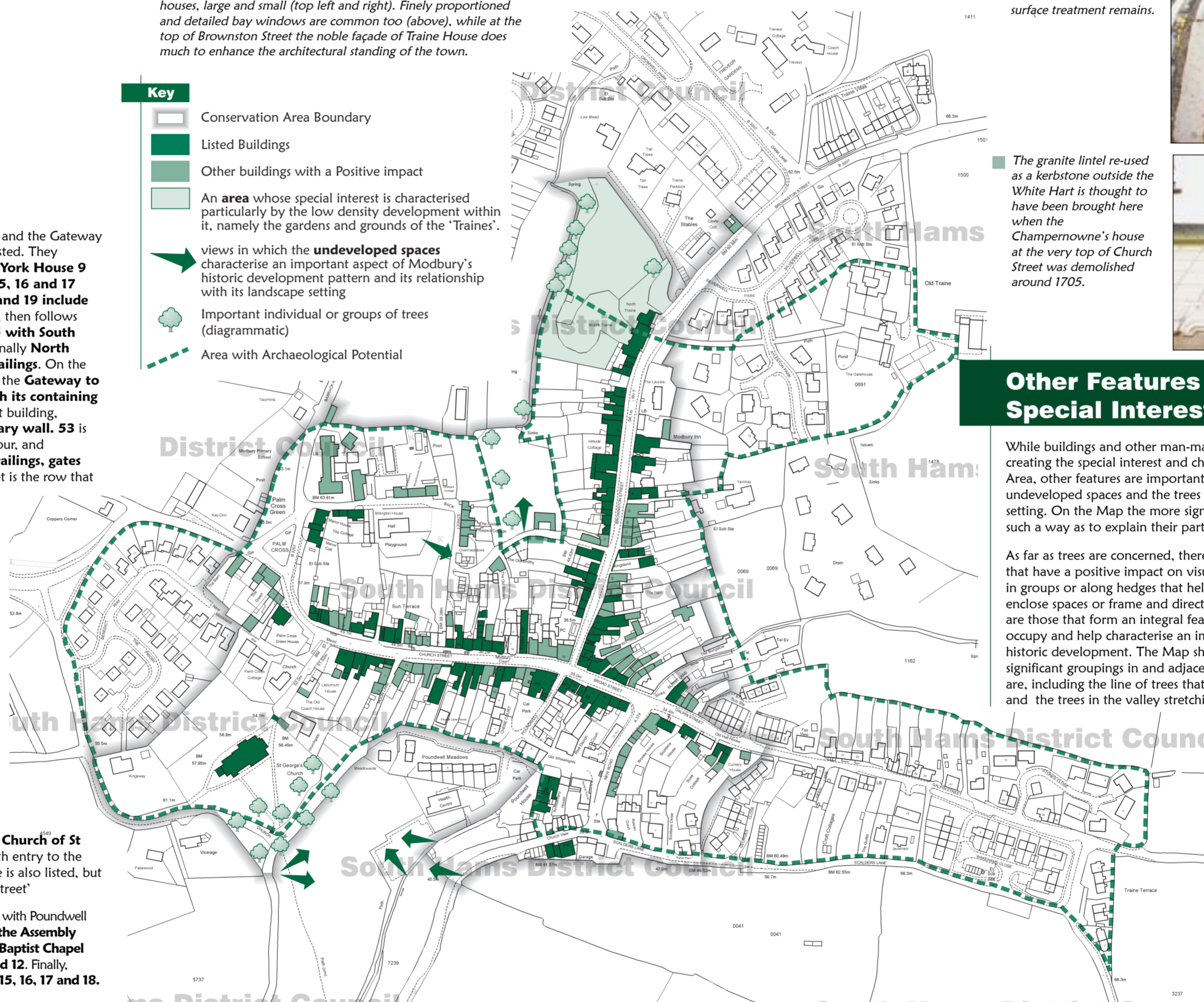
The granite lintel re-used as a kerbstone outside the White Hart is thought to have been brought here when the Champenowne's house at the very top of Church Street was demolished around 1705.



## 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, there are a good many in the Area that have a positive impact on visual amenities, especially those in groups or along hedges that help define boundaries and enclose spaces or frame 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 Modbury's historic development. The Map shows where the more significant groupings in and adjacent to the Conservation Area are, including the line of trees that bound the church enclosure and the trees in the valley stretching from Back Street to the



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The informal appearance and vernacular style of the Manor House at Palm Cross Green is the exception not the rule. Like many other houses in the Area it was modified in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but in this case its basic form has survived to clearly evidence its earlier origins.



Although dormer windows exist in the Area, they are few in number and aren't characteristic of the way Modbury townfolk have, in the past, gained extra accommodation. Most commonly this was achieved by the addition of a third storey.



At the rear of the burgage plots of 'main street' properties a more industrial, less domestic, appearance prevails, which is a typical characteristic of larger historic settlements where 'back roads' have become established over the centuries. The zigzag in Back Street, and the change in character that goes with it, suggests the higher half of its length served property fronts, not backs, from the time it was added to the town's 'highway network'. This includes the cottage above, whose 'side hung casements' explain its not located on one of the main streets where 'sliding sashes' prevail.

## 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.