

Blisland

Conservation Area Character Statement



(front cover)

Blisland Post Office Stores. This building has housed the Post Office for over 100 years. Painted stone, a carved granite door portal, the single slate canopy on iron brackets, simple casement windows, the rag slate roof and granite cobbling at the front entrance encapsulate many of the traditional styles and materials of Blisland.

INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas are designated by local planning authorities under the Planning Acts. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a Conservation Area as *an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*. North Cornwall District Council, as the local planning authority, has a duty to designate appropriate parts of its area as Conservation Areas. At present there are some 8,500 Conservation Areas in England of which 29 are in the district of North Cornwall. During the preparation of the North Cornwall District Local Plan the centre of Blisland was identified as a potential Conservation Area. Following public consultation it was designated as a Conservation Area by North Cornwall District Council on 3 February 1997.

Blisland Village

Blisland is situated on the western edge of Bodmin Moor, about 8 km (5 miles) to the north-east of Bodmin. It lies in a secluded position on the north side of a valley above one of the tributaries of the River Camel, and is served by a network of narrow country lanes. The attractions of Blisland's setting, combined with the convenience of its proximity to the A30 and Bodmin, have made it a popular place in which to settle. In recent years Blisland has grown into a medium sized village. There is a strong sense of community and a range of amenities including the Parish Church, Village Hall, Post Office/General Store, a pub and a bus service to Bodmin.

Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary reflects the extent of the historic settlement core of Blisland around the Green together with the Church and Rectory. It also includes the immediate setting of the core area, approaches



The triangular green in front of Church Town, the Blisland Inn and the converted 19th century coach-house is simply defined with granite boulders.



The 15th century church tower is built of granite ashlar, placed to the north of the church. In contrast to the village green, there are few trees in the quiet churchyard.

to it, and modern development which is intimately related to the historic features. The bus garage is therefore also included in the Conservation Area.

The purpose of this statement is threefold:

- to analyse the special character and appearance of Blisland
- to outline the planning policies and controls applying to the Conservation Area
- to identify opportunities for enhancement

THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Historical Context

The Blisland area is rich in prehistoric remains including the Stripple Stones Henge on Hawkstor Downs (a late Neolithic circle) and the Trippet Stone circle. Nearby, at Carwen, is the site of a Celtic hamlet. Blisland village was in existence by the time of the Norman Conquest and is registered in the Domesday Book of 1086 under the name of Grustone. Its characteristic arrangement around a village green is typical of Saxon planning, but this is a relatively rare feature in Cornwall - the 'green village' layout is more usually found in eastern England.

Blisland Parish Church dates from the Norman period and is unique in England for its dedication to St. Protus and St. Hyacinth, two brothers who were martyred in Rome in the 3rd century. Like many other Cornish churches, it was significantly extended in the 15th century by the addition of the tower, transepts, south aisle and porch. Other surviving medieval structures are Lavethan Manor, just off the Merry Meeting road, and the seven wayside crosses in and around the village. St. Protus' Cross is situated beside the main approach routes from Bodmin, near to one of several historic bridges in the parish. Two other crosses are located in the churchyard and another is set in the small triangular green outside the Post Office.

Within the village the oldest residential buildings date back to the mid- to late 16th century. Manor Cottage, believed to be a former Manor House, is situated just off the green at the start of Tregenna Road. On the east side of the green are the Mansion House and its neighbour, Newton House, which are also of this period. Most of the other cottages were constructed in the 17th century or later; many of their names reflect the historic and functional nature of the centre of the village such as The Smithy, the Coach House and Church Town Cottages. An early 17th century cottage, Denham House, has been occupied by the Post Office for over 100 years. Several houses, especially on the north side of the green, were remodelled in Georgian times. These include Lyndale, formerly the Police Station. Mid-19th century buildings include Pope Cottage (1833) and the Old School - the Village Hall - which is dated 1842.

Growth during the 20th century has mainly occurred over the last thirty years, commencing in the 1960's with expansion north and east of the village core, followed by development in the 1980's west along Tregenna Road.

The village green is the focus of Blisland and is a feature which makes it distinct from many other villages in the area. In recent years substantial replanting has been carried out to replace mature trees lost as a result of Dutch elm disease.



The Present Character and Appearance of the Village

Blisland sits above the valley of a tributary to the River Camel at a point where the open moorland above gives way to the wooded valley side below. The village is situated on gently sloping ground and from Pentor estate, on the north side, there is a fine view southward over the roofs of the Mansion House and Newton House towards the church tower. Beyond the church and the Rectory, the land drops away more steeply towards the woodlands on the southern margins of the village. The woodland, and in particular the trees on the green, play a vital part in providing shelter for what is a very open village, contributing significantly to its character. As an aid to understanding, the village green is described and analysed first, and then its surroundings, in the following order:

- *The Village Green*
- *Village Green - south side*
- *Village Green - west end*
- *Village Green - north side*
- *Village Green - east side*

The Village Green:

The large, tree covered green is the focus of the settlement and is the point where five lanes meet. It is almost entirely surrounded by historic buildings, the only exception being the more modern complex of Webbers Garage to the south-east at the point where the Bodmin road enters the village. The green lends the village an informal appearance and a feeling of spaciousness at its centre.

The village green is one of very few in Cornwall and in the Buildings of England series (1970), Nikolaus Pevsner described it as having old tall trees. Subsequently many older specimens were destroyed by Dutch Elm disease but fortunately replanting has occurred in recent years and the stock is being regenerated. New planting of now semi-mature as well as immature trees include ash, oak, elm, chestnut and rowan. The children's play area, the Silver Jubilee wrought iron seats and the hitching post all contribute to the well-used nature of this green. Urban style litter bins and the bus shelter are less sympathetic elements. On the north-west corner of the green is the former Methodist Chapel, now converted to "The Cottage on the Green".

Village Green - south side:

Set slightly back from the green, the Parish Church is Blisland's most important historic building, described by John Betjeman as 'the most beautiful of all the country churches of the West'. It is a building of nationally recognised interest. The three stage granite ashlar tower is the principal landmark in the village and in the surrounding countryside. Inside the church is a wealth of furnishings and memorials dating back as far as Norman times. In the late 19th century it was sensitively restored by Frederick Eden.

Next to the church, the former Rectory is hidden from general view behind tall ancient walls, granite posts and trees bordering the village green. A footpath leads from the churchyard to the Rectory garden. Between the entrance to the Rectory main driveway and the church is the small rubble stone and granite Victorian Schoolhouse, attached to an early 17th century painted stone cottage. These buildings occupy a prominent position facing



Churchgate Cottage and Old School House on the south side of the green. Their construction illustrates the use of local materials - roofs of rag slate and walls of local stone with granite dressings. The cottage has a single slate door canopy on iron brackets. The Schoolhouse is now the village community centre.

directly onto the green. The school is now the Village Institute, the centre of local community activity.

At the south west corner of the village the Horsepit field is separated from the green by a belt of trees, but over its gate is a fine prospect towards the River Camel.

Below the slate hung gable wall of Beech Tree Cottage, the Merry Meeting road ascends into the village through a steep cut lane, flanked on the south by an embanked Cornish hedge. The lane forms a narrow, enclosed wooded approach to Blisland up from the valley. At the top of the hill the view opens out across the village green.

Beech Cottage and The Post Office Stores overlook the west end of the village green. Since this picture was taken, the exposed southern gable end of Beech Cottage has been slate hung, a traditional form of weather protection in this area.



Village Green - west end:

The form of development changes to a more intimate nature at the west end of the green where the Post Office and Beech Tree Cottage line one side of a small additional triangular green space. A narrow lane winds up past Manor Cottage into Tregenna Road. On the south side is a hedge and modern houses; opposite are small walled front gardens to Ivy and Lemon Cottages. This area contains the oldest surviving dwellings in Blisland. Dating from the late 16th century onwards they are typical Cornish low two storey cottages, with stone walls, often painted, small pane casement windows, rag slate roofs, and low chimneys. From the St Breward road, they form a picturesque approach into the village. The Post Office is the focal point of the group. Its massive granite portal and painted granite facade lend a strong presence to this corner of the village.

Village Green - north side:

The buildings along the north side of the green have 17th century origins although they appear to be of later build. They are quite tall and large stone cottages, with sash windows and rag slate roofs sometimes hipped - a number having been remodelled in the late Georgian period during the early 19th century. Church Town has bay windows on the ground floor and a slate canopy over the entrance, and Pope Cottage has a pair of round headed

entrances with glazed fanlights over glazed doors. Adjacent to Pope Cottage is an old piggery, which is an important feature of former village life. Further along The Blisland Inn is a later two storey stone building with granite mullioned casement windows, one formed into a square bay on the ground floor. Next door is the 19th century Coach House with its gothic arched brick window surrounds, a single storey building with two storey central portion. The Blisland Inn is fronted by its own small green where tables are laid out, forming a further focal point in the village for both local people and visitors.

Village Green - east side:

This area is dominated by the 16th century buildings of Mansion House and Newton House whose high walls create a sense of enclosure along the east side of the green. Mansion House is a robust U-shaped two storey stone building with its entrance on the south side. It has low moulded granite chimneys and gables with scroll kneelers, and a mixture of sash and granite mullioned casement windows. Its north elevation flanks the road to Manor Common and is of single storey granite construction with an ancient round headed door, opening out above the present ground level. Adjacent to Mansion House is Newton House, another substantial two storey, originally 16th century building, but largely remodelled in the 19th century. It has sash windows, hipped slate roofs and slate hanging on some elevations. Its granite stable building with dressed granite lintels also abuts onto the Manor Common road and the containing wall has large granite boulders set within.

At the south-east corner of the green, Webber's Garage introduces modern and somewhat inharmonious elements into the historic scene, although its open site is partially screened by trees.

Building Materials

Blisland has been appropriately described by the historian A. L. Rowse as a 'grey granite village around a green' with 'not one ugly building in it'. Much of the granite probably came from local quarries in the nearby De Lank valley. Indeed, granite and painted stone is the first impression of Blisland



Tregenna Road is one of the oldest parts of Blisland with two storey cottages dating back to the 16th century. Single storey outhouses of local rubble with dressed granite quoins and rag slate roofs are a feature of the village.

with granite and rubble stonework, granite quoins and granite lintels being the prevalent wall construction. External walls on many older buildings are entirely of granite. The Post Office door surround is of dressed granite and there is surface of granite cobbles at its front entrance.

The other main material is local slate. Large rag slates are the usual roofing material in the Conservation Area, with slate hung verges. Slate drip courses are usual on massive stone or granite chimneys which are sometimes rendered or painted. Single slate canopies supported on iron brackets are a feature over a number of entrance doors such as the Post Office and Beech Cottage.

Windows are timber sashes or casements, generally painted white, with single slab slate sills. Early granite mullioned windows can be seen at the Mansion House with later styles at The Blisland Inn.

Boundary walls are a prevalent feature built in rubble masonry or granite, or as drystone walling. Huge granite boulders are sometimes set within high garden walls. A vertical slate slab forms the boundary division between Ivy and Lemon Cottages - this was a common feature of early cottage gardens.

PLANNING POLICIES AND CONTROLS

All planning authorities are required by Sections 71 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to *pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas*. Local planning authorities - in this case North Cornwall District Council - have a duty to *formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas*. This statement seeks to respond to that statutory duty.

Guidance on planning policies in Conservation Areas is provided at a variety of levels. Government guidelines are given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG15). English Heritage also publishes advisory leaflets. At county level, the Cornwall Structure Plan provides a strategic policy framework in its Countryside and Built Environment chapter. At local level the North Cornwall District Local Plan



The narrow curving approach towards the village centre from Tregenna Road - the lane edge is sharply defined by stone hedging and walls built hard onto the roadside.

On the north side of the village green, Pope Cottage has a high, hipped roof and early 19th century glazing. The building is dated 1833.



forms the basis for planning decisions. The policies contained in the *The Historic Environment* section of its Environment chapter are particularly relevant. Supplementary planning guidance is provided by this Character Statement and by the North Cornwall Design Guide.

Blisland is also subject to particular policies which are described in more detail in the North Cornwall District Local Plan. It has been identified as a main village capable in principle of absorbing some further residential development on its north side, but this is subject to considerable constraints imposed by (a) deficiencies in the local sewage disposal system and (b) its location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also within an Area of Great Scientific Value and abuts an Area of Great Historic Value which highlights the archaeological potential of the area.

Owners of property within the Conservation Area should be aware that the designation of a Conservation Area automatically brings into effect additional planning controls and considerations which include:

- The demolition of buildings is not permitted except with the prior consent of the District Council.
- Tighter limits on 'permitted development' allowances.
- Restrictions on felling and other tree work. Owners must give 6 weeks notice to the District Council of proposed work to trees. Important hedges and trees are shown on the accompanying character map.
- The District Council must publicise development proposals.
- A presumption that new development should preserve or enhance the character of the area.
- Outline planning applications will not be accepted.

The pace of change to private property has so far been relatively slow and the provision of substitute windows, doors and materials to walls and roofs has been minimal. The future use of PVCu, or other inappropriate window, door or wall styles or materials is discouraged. This includes the use of manufactured slates or tiles on roofs or as cladding. As a general rule repair rather than replacement is preferred. Where repairs are necessary the use of traditional materials and styles which maintain the architectural detailing of

the Conservation Area is recommended. The North Cornwall Design Guide gives further details.

Listed Buildings

Some buildings are listed by the Secretary of State as being of special architectural or historic interest in their own right. The interiors and exteriors of these buildings are protected by law and prior listed building consent is usually necessary from the District Council before any works of alteration, demolition or extension can be carried out. Such works could include re-roofing, rendering or painting walls, the alteration of doors and windows, replacing rainwater goods, the removal of internal fixtures or structural changes. Permission is also required for the erection of small buildings such as garden sheds within the grounds of a listed building, or for changes to gates, fences or walls enclosing it.

Buildings in Blisland which are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest are shown on the accompanying character map, as are scheduled ancient monuments.

The north wall of the Mansion House contains a round-headed granite doorway and a window from the Norman period, re-used from an unknown source.



AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ENHANCEMENT WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

There are some features of Blisland Conservation Area where there is scope for enhancement work. Responsibility rests with both private owners and public bodies. The suggestions below have been identified in conjunction with local people and are set out for consideration as opportunities arise. The District Council will take the lead in encouraging their implementation.

- The poor state of the Rectory garden wall, gate, coach house detracts from the appearance of the south side of the green and the District Council will seek co-operation from the owners to effect improvements here.

- Aspects of Webbers Bus garage are physically and visually disruptive to the character of the Conservation Area and the owners will be encouraged to take steps to ameliorate this situation.
- The enclosure of the grassed triangle outside Beech Tree Cottage by urban style highway kerbs is not very compatible with the character of the area and tends to detract from the mediaeval granite cross set on it. More sympathetic treatment would be desirable.
- The entrance to the Public Toilets to the west of the Village Hall is an untidy and intimidating area where litter collects. In addition the concrete litter bin of urban style and the bus shelter on the south side of the green are of poor appearance and do not enhance the character. The District Council intends to seek improvements to street furniture and its own buildings in all Conservation Areas over a period of time.
- The co-operation of statutory undertakers will be sought to reduce the impact of overhead lines.

FURTHER INFORMATION

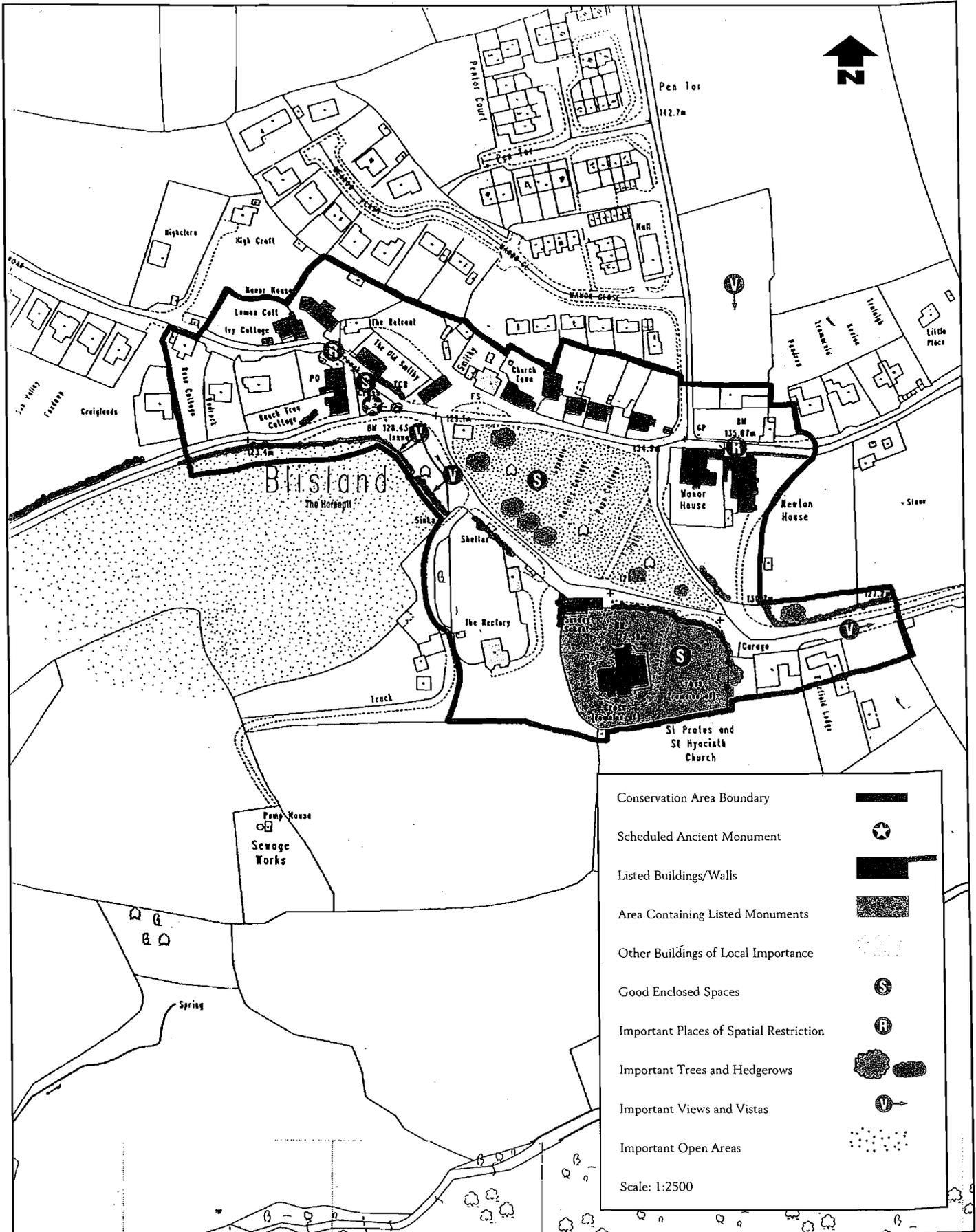
Documents and policies referred to above include:

Department of the Environment/Department of National Heritage,
 PPG 15 : *Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment*, HMSO 1994
 English Heritage, *Conservation Area Practice*, October 1995
 English Heritage, *Development in the Historic Environment*, June 1995
 Cornwall County Council, *Cornwall Structure Plan*
 North Cornwall District Council, *North Cornwall District Local Plan*
 North Cornwall District Council, *North Cornwall Design Guide*
 Lake's *Parochial History of the County of Cornwall*, Vols. 1-4, 1867-72
 O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place Names*, 1988
 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England - Cornwall*, Penguin 1970

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BLISLAND CONSERVATION AREA



- Conservation Area Boundary [Thick black line]
 - Scheduled Ancient Monument [Star symbol]
 - Listed Buildings/Walls [Solid black shape]
 - Area Containing Listed Monuments [Dotted pattern]
 - Other Buildings of Local Importance [Stippled pattern]
 - Good Enclosed Spaces [Circle with 'S' symbol]
 - Important Places of Spatial Restriction [Circle with 'R' symbol]
 - Important Trees and Hedgerows [Tree symbols]
 - Important Views and Vistas [Circle with 'V' symbol]
 - Important Open Areas [Dotted pattern]
- Scale: 1:2500

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