



Bradford Abbas Conservation Area Appraisal - part 1

West Dorset District Council: Bradford Abbas Conservation Area Appraisal – part 1

Distribution List

As part of the public consultation, the document was also distributed to the following:

Bradford Abbas Parish Council, Bradford Abbas History Society, Dorset County Council, Dorset Gardens Trust, Dorset Industrial Archaeology Society, English Heritage and Network Rail

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Introduction

The Bradford Abbas Conservation Area was designated in February 1972. Conservation areas have special architectural or historic interest and it is desirable to preserve or enhance their character or appearance. West Dorset has 79 conservation areas, for which there is an ongoing programme of appraisal that includes Bradford Abbas.

Planning decisions must be based on a thorough understanding of the conservation area's character in order to effectively conserve the area's special interest. Conservation area appraisals are therefore essential tools for the planning process. They are also of prime importance for informing any enhancement works and may provide a longer-term basis for effective management of conservation areas.

This appraisal document is prepared following current advice from English Heritage. Included are summaries of the planning policy context, landscape setting, historic development and archaeology. There is also a more detailed description of the character of the village's buildings, groups, building materials and architectural details, green elements and detrimental features. All of these are brought together into a definition of the special interest of the conservation area. There are recommendations for management action and development. The boundary of the conservation area has been reviewed.

For local information, the Bradford Abbas History Society is helpful, as is the reference *Bradford Abbas, The History of a Dorset Village* by Eric Garrett (1989).

The appraisal was subject to public consultation (May-June 2013), during which an information event, manned by district council officers, was held in the village. Following consultation, officers recommended amendments and the district council adopted the appraisal on 10 December 2013, as a technical document supporting policies in the Local Plan.

Executive Summary

The key characteristics of the Bradford Abbas conservation area are:

- Outstanding Parish Church with its past connection to Sherborne Abbey;
- A distinct and intricate road and plot layout;
- Spaciousness of land plots in Church St;
- The Cross, former market place;
- Vernacular cottages – detached and terraced;
- The use of stone, particularly local limestone;
- Railway legacy – main line through the village and the over and under bridges;
- Farming legacy - former farmhouses, yards and farm buildings; hedgerows and green banks; fields and former fields/orchards;
- Freestanding and retaining walls;
- The River Yeo with its bridge crossings and former mills;
- Important Local Buildings, which comprise a large number, and important buildings groups;
- Significant open spaces, gardens, trees and hedgerows.

The Planning Policy Context

Contained within the **West Dorset District Local Plan (Adopted 2006)**, there are a number of planning policies relevant to the settlement:

- *Safeguarding Assets*: Development must be in keeping with the landscape character of the area (Policy SA3); Policy SA6 refers to land designated as Land of Local Landscape Importance; SA15 Groundwater Source Protection Zones; Policies SA18, 19 and 20 cover the demolition, alterations to, and the settings of Listed Buildings; SA21 seeks to protect the character or appearance of Conservation Areas; SA22 is concerned with demolition within a Conservation Area; SA23 relates to the protection of sites of national archaeological significance; and SA24 to sites of regional or county archaeological significance;
- *Settlement Policy*: Policy SS1 relates to development inside Defined Development Boundaries (DDBs) and SS3 relates to development outside the DDBs;
- *Avoiding Hazards*: Policy AH1 relates to Flood Risk Zones;
- *Housing, Employment and Tourism and Transport and Infrastructure*: there are a number of general policies relating to these issues and associated land use;
- *Community Issues*: Policy C6 relates to the retention of local community facilities;
- *Design and Amenity*: a specific chapter contains several policies regarding design and amenity considerations, including Policy DA1, relating to retention of woodland, trees and hedgerows and other important landscape features;

A new Local Plan for West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland was submitted to an independent Planning Inspector in July 2013 and if found sound could be adopted in early 2014. Guidance on what policy may be applicable at this stage and the weight to be accorded a policy is available at <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/newlocalplan/west/weymouth>

National Planning Policy and Legislation protects sites of international and national importance for nature conservation. The **National Planning Policy Framework** [online] is available from <https://www.gov.uk/government>

The Supplementary Planning Document **Design and Sustainable Development Planning Guidelines** was adopted by the district council in February 2009. This contains 10 design policies that apply to different types and scales of development. Accompanying this is the **West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment** adopted February 2009, which addresses the 35 landscape areas of the District.

The West Dorset District Local Plan, Design and Sustainable Development Planning Guidelines and Landscape Character Assessment are available at district council offices. The documents can be viewed on www.dorsetforyou.com and main libraries will hold relevant printed copies. Information on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is also available on www.dorsetforyou.com

Location and Setting

The Parish of Bradford Abbas partly abuts the neighbouring county of Somerset. The parish's limits are not only defined by the county boundary but by the River Yeo, the Yeovil to Sherborne road (A30), the Bristol to Weymouth main line (originally Wilts, Somerset and Weymouth Railway), as well as by adjoining West Dorset parishes such as Clifton Maybank and Sherborne.

Situated about four miles west of Sherborne, the village of Bradford Abbas mainly lies on the south facing slope of the Yeo valley in a landscape area called the Sherborne Hills, which has a complex geology of limestone and a smooth to gently undulating profile incised by small-scale steep sided valleys and coombes. The southern end of the village is on the River Yeo floodplain, a landscape type called Yeo Valley Pasture, comprising fluvial deposits and deep clay soils that historically were managed as floodplain meadows. The main London to Exeter railway line (originally Salisbury and Yeovil Railway) runs east-west through the village.

Historic Development and Archaeology

Just NE of Bradford Abbas at East Hill, which is part of a hilltop settlement, Roman kilns and other finds were found in the late C19 and the area is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. In June 2010, NW of the village, dry conditions revealed a first century AD Roman military camp that would have provided basic protection.

In the Anglo-Saxon period, Bradford Abbas (meaning broad ford plus a religious adjunct) was part of the kingdom of Wessex. The Bradford Abbas History Society believes that it was prior to 705 (when King Ine divided the Diocese of Wessex and appointed Aldhelm Bishop of Sherborne, upon which, Bradford came under his ecclesiastical care) that the village moved from a hilltop settlement down to the "broad-ford" and along what is now Church St.

A charter of King Ethelwulf (839-58) gave farmland around Bradford Abbas to the church at Sherborne and in 933 another charter by King Athelstan granted land to the monastery of Sherborne. In 1075, the Bishop of Salisbury became owner of the parish; an ownership that is recorded in the Domesday Book. A mill is mentioned but the site referred to is unclear. Then in 1145, the parish returned to the Bishop of Sherborne and there followed the first written reference (1163) to the parish church. The association with Sherborne Abbey continued for almost four hundred years, until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539. A year later, Henry VIII sold the manor of Bradford Abbas to the Horsey family of Clifton Maybank in whose hands it remained until 1639.

The Isaac Taylor map of 1765 shows a mill (flax) in Mill Lane and a mill (grist now demolished) at today's Mill Farm. A limekiln near the grist mill is mentioned in the 1839 Tithe Apportionment.

The same Taylor map implies by width drawn that The Cross (cross roads of North Street, Bakehouse Lane, Higher Westbury and Churchwell St) was an important meeting place. According to the Bradford Abbas History Society, The Cross has C14-C15 origins because properties were originally open hall houses with a byre end. This early village centre is appreciable today and once accommodated a market cross (destroyed by the Bradford Estate's overseer) and the village horse pond.

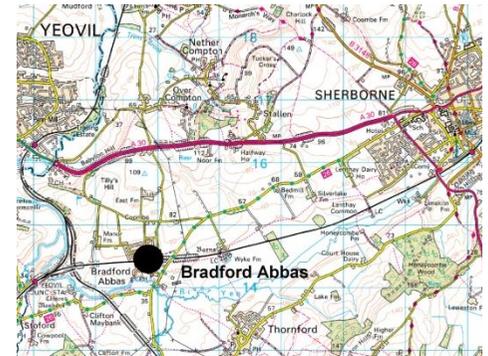


Fig 1 Location Map

It is clear on maps dating back to 1765 that from Church St and The Cross, the choice of E/W routes, especially to and from Sherborne, gradually diminished. In fact for a while, the change was in The Cross' favour at the expense of Church St, reflecting perhaps a shift in importance, as one would expect the latter to have been the main thoroughfare and was wide enough for any trading. The village's severance from Sherborne Abbey and other changes of land ownership east of Back Lane may have inhibited E/W travel and certainly the arrival of the railway had an effect on the road layout.

The 1839 Tithe Map (fig 2) shows that there is a difference in the layout of the tofts (land on which houses were built) and crofts (adjoining plots of land) in Church St and those in North St, which were particularly regular compared to the more irregular ones of Church St, which has the circa C12 Parish Church and C15 churchyard cross (Ancient Scheduled Monument). Church Rd was part of a medieval road (via Lenthay Common) that once connected the village to its owner Sherborne Abbey. Either side of Bradford Abbas, this road met existing and former N/S roads (Back Lane, Westbury, right of way N10/1) with their crossing points – Smith's Bridge is C16 and a Scheduled Monument - over the river and access to mills, and then continued on westwards towards Clifton Maybank and Somerset.

After other ownerships, the manor was sold by the second Marquis of Anglesey to William Clayton Clayton in 1852. In 1851, there were 13 farms in the village and by 1860 there were three. This change was due to Clayton who established larger farm holdings and built three farmhouses outside the village – Coombe House (Coombe), Manor Farm and North Farm. The Sherborne/Yeovil section of the London to Exeter railway line opened in 1860, bisecting the village and comprising an embankment built with spoil that arose from a cutting on the east side. On the west side of the parish, the Yeovil/Weymouth section of the Bristol to Weymouth line opened in 1857.

By 1861, the number of dwellings reached 139 but with depopulation had fallen (aggravated by thatched house fires caused by sparks from passing steam trains) to 78 by 1901.

From 1914 to 1954, the estate was owned by Walter Wyatt Paul. During this period the population increased along with the demand for extra housing. From the early 1930s, rural council houses were built at Emet and Queen's Rd and in North St. Being an estate village meant there was modest growth until the sale of the Bradford Estate 1954, after which, housing development on farmland and within plots of existing properties increased the size of the village substantially.

Archaeological issues:

- Greater understanding and appreciation of the layout of the village in terms of tofts and crofts and roads;
- Greater understanding of the village's connection with Sherborne and Clifton Maybank;
- Greater appreciation of The Cross and horse pond;
- Greater appreciation of the farming legacy;
- Greater appreciation of the limekiln near Mill Farm
- Greater understanding and appreciation of the mill site and associated features at Mill Farm
- Greater appreciation of the village well in Churchwell St
- Greater understanding of the earthworks in the fields around Mill Farm

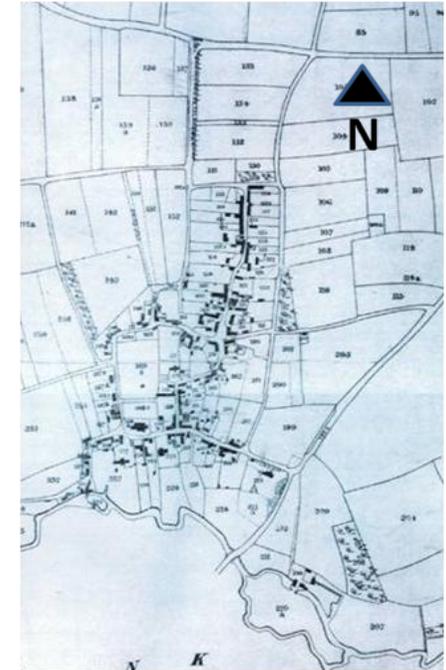


Fig 2 Extract from the Bradford Abbas Tithe map 1839 with N point added

Spatial Analysis

(Also refer to the Assets Maps on pages 12 & 13)

Church Rd/Mill Lane & Grants Hill

Church Rd is broad and runs parallel on the north side of the river. This allowed tofts and crofts on both sides of the road, and in the case of the south side, meant that behind the crofts, pasture and meads (hay meadows) could stretch down to the river. C20 development left land plots on the south side more intact than the on north, where besides the parish churchyard, the garden of the Rose and Crown is a rare survivor. The sizeable plots varied in size and shape (fig 2), established spaciousness, a characteristic in this part of the village, and did not have such regularity as those once established either side of North St. In early C19, the Rose and Crown car park had properties that had disappeared by the late C19. Within land plots buildings tend to face and define the edge of the road or else stand away from it (particularly due to status). Tudor Cottage is an exception as its gable end wall defines the road, as is the late C19 Ruskin Cottage which was built behind Rose Cottage.

At the west end of Church Rd, there is the important junction of Church Rd/Westbury/Mill Lane with the earliest known building, the Parish Church on the NE corner. From Mill Lane, rights of way and a river crossing reflect old roads to Barwick and Clifton Maybank, whereas Mill Lane itself led to the flax mill. At the east end is the junction with Back Lane, at which point, the road, becomes locally known as Grant's Hill. Here village settlement stopped due to land ownership and only recommenced on the south side in the form of a C19 rectory (The Old Rectory), which was built on glebe land to meet a specific need, well back from the road. At the centre of Church Rd is the junction with Churchwell St with had the church well and pump (removed on safely grounds) nearby.

The width of Church Rd is impressive, as is the landmark church, which the raises question, "Is this not the earlier part of the settlement and was a market held here?"

Grants Hill meets a narrow and sunken road, which travels SW over the C16 Smith's Bridge towards Thornford/Yetminster and NE towards the Yeovil/Sherborne Rd, a route that is likely to have been important in the medieval period. During previous centuries, the Grants Hill junction was joined by a road that travelled parallel to the river to Sherborne via Wyke and Lenthay and allowed access to and from the limekiln and grist mill situated at Mill Farm.

Back Lane/Fanny Brooks Lane

Back Lane runs N/S from Church Rd forming a crossroads with Bakerhouse Lane (west arm) and Fanny Brooks Lane (east arm) a third way along, establishing a junction with Cross Rds (old name Dole Lane) two thirds along and finally joining the crossroads on the medieval Yeovil/Sherborne Rd. Fanny Brooks Lane, which is now a track, would have provided, via Bakerhouse Lane, a straight route to the market place (The Cross) from the east, possibly, as indicated on the 1765 Isaac Taylor Map, all the way from Sherborne (likely via Lenthay Common and Wyke Farm, a former manor), which suggests that there was a greater choice of routes to this town.

The narrow, relatively straight Back Lane formed the eastern limits of the village, as land ownership deterred expansion on the east side of the lane. In the C20, these limits were breached by the construction of two houses on a plot of land formerly owned by the Bradford Abbas estate. On the west side of the lane were tofts (property plots of land) belonging to properties



Fig 3 Church Rd with the Rose & Crown on the right



Fig 4 Smith's Bridge

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in Church Rd, Churchwell St and North St, which were developed in the C20 with one such scheme accessed from an uncharacteristic cul-de-sac. Beyond Cross Rds, land on the west of the lane remained farmland until Coombe was built in the C19, set in large grounds. In 1860, the railway imposed an over bridge on the lane.

The Cross/Churchwell St/Bakehouse Lane/North St/Higher Westbury /Cross Rd

The Cross is a crossroads where North St, Churchwell St, Bakehouse Lane and Higher Westbury converge and was probably a planned market area, well defined by C17 and C18 properties, as today. A railway under bridge maintains The Cross' connection with Churchwell St.

Bakehouse Lane is straight and narrow (cart width), possibly underlining the role of easy access to market, and is sunken, suggesting long use. Fitting between and forming the longitudinal boundaries of two crofts/tofts fronting The Cross, the lane now provides access to C20 housing built in the south toft.

Higher Westbury joins the market place, The Cross, to Westbury and also connects to Churchwell St via a right of way and railway underpass. Prior to land encroachment, Higher Westbury was wider and more meandering. Before the railway, on the south side, the lane had irregular crofts and/or tofts stretching back to Churchwell St. The railway truncated them and in the C20, west of Nos 1 & 2 The Cross land plots were subdivided for new housing. On the north side, an irregularly shaped croft and toft fronting The Cross lined most of the north side but was shortened for garden allotments and then mostly became part of C20 development in North St and Westbury.

Churchwell St travels northwards up a shallow coombe, providing a short cut between Church Rd and The Cross. The first half of Churchwell St is N/S and straight, slipping it seems between ancient croft/tofts on Church Rd and forming their longitudinal boundaries, that is, until there was E/W subdivision, particularly on the east side, which allowed for additional properties that lined the street. Churchwell St then turns eastwards (locally called Grope Lane), forming prior to the railway, the rear boundaries of crofts/tofts on High Westbury with further subdivision, especially on the south side. Plots of land were generally small and varied, becoming more so in the late C20, after development behind the Rose and Crown and north and south of Grope Lane.

Narrow North St bends gently whilst following the shallow coombe from The Cross to Cross Rd and runs parallel with Back Lane and Westbury, which mainly formed the rear boundaries of the tofts and crofts on North St. On the Tithe Map, (fig 2) these plots are rectangular and regular (an historic planned expansion?). By the late C19, the regularity was reduced by the loss of properties and the amalgamation of plots, a situation that remained static until the mid C20. There then followed extensive development that either fragmented remaining plots or removed them altogether through the insertion of uncharacteristic N/S cul-de-sacs. Older properties, often in terraces, mainly face and define the street, although there are two instances of cottages at right angles to the street (Orchard Close, Dove Cottage).

Cross Rd (known locally as Dole Lane) joins North St to Back Lane and the junction of Westbury/Coombe Ditch Lane. The lane continues as the northern boundary of land plots on North St, although it now provides access to a cul-de-sac behind the street.



Fig 5 View up North St from The Cross



Fig 6 View northwards from outside Heartsease Cottage, North St

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Westbury/Bishop's Lane/Queen's Rd

The Westbury/Bishop's Lane junction had a third road that travelled directly westwards but it was overlain by the railway embankment, leaving the acute bend between Bishop's Lane and Westbury. Possibly around the same time, a dog leg was removed at the northern end of Bishop's Lane, which travelled straight through farmland until the mid C20, after which, it was developed on either side. Queen's Rd was built in the late 1950s and connected Bishop's Lane with Westbury at a higher level. It is possible to discern old field boundaries amongst the housing, for example, behind Ridgeway to Walnut House and Nos 14 – 26 Ambrose Close inclusive. Right of way N6/1 represents an old lane that travelled northwards from Westbury from a point identified by a triangle of worn verge.

In the north, at the junction with Coombe Ditch Lane/Cross Road (Dole Lane) Westbury travels in a straight line, gently downhill, passing the C20 housing in Queen's Rd, South View, Emllet (where it bends sharply) and on either side, until arriving at a cluster of older properties around the junction with Higher Westbury. Hedgerows and banks hint of a time when Westbury had farmland to the west and generally formed the rear boundary of the tofts and crofts on North St before reaching the cluster of properties, which define the road. Further on around a hedged bend, the narrow lane suddenly widens and ahead is the Bishop's Lane junction and the high railway embankment with its under bridge. On the east side, the railway created a parcel of land that belonged to an orchard north of the churchyard and this fragmentation led to C20 development that also reduced the garden sizes of the older properties nearby. On the west side, the more characteristic generous gardens of older properties are represented by those of Westbury House and The Forge.

In the south, Westbury starts at the junction with Church Rd and Mill Lane. Here, the Parish Church, together with the churchyard, comprises a pivotal place that has a grand sense of arrival. On the NW corner of the junction was once the forerunner (fire destroyed and replaced much later by a bungalow) of the Rose and Crown, north of which were built two pairs of C19 Estate cottages, set back from the lane and introducing smaller, regular land plots that were repeated in the C20. Opposite was orchard, which despite loses to the railway, remained hedged open space (playing field today) adjacent to the churchyard.

Bradford Abbas has a distinct and intricate road and plot layout.

Gateways

There are a number of historic gateways or entrances that contribute to the conservation area, for example:

The Railway

The railway passes through the centre of Bradford Abbas without stopping. It is an unusual gateway for a village but one nevertheless. On the Salisbury to Yeovil Junction section, passengers enjoy a succession of important views of the parish church with its foreground of playing field and churchyard and its background of treed boundaries and riverbank, pasture, playing field and open countryside.



Fig 7 The Westbury and Bishop's Lane junction as seen from the under bridge

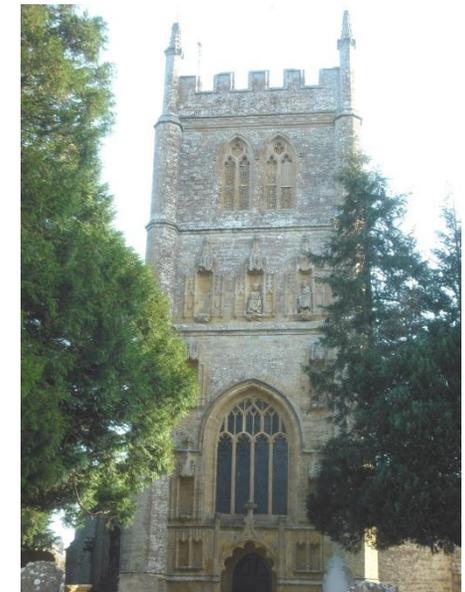


Fig 7 The church tower as seen from the Westbury, Church Rd and Mill Lane junction

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Right of Ways N6/5 & N10/1

The right of way N6/5 (Mill Lane) once continued as a road on the north side of the river, connecting the village with Clifton Maybank. Today, it still bridges the river to join up with another former road, now right of way N10/1, that allowed travel to places such as Ryme Intrinseca.

From right of way N10/1, there are attractive views across pasture towards the treed river bank with the bridge and church tower visible. The interesting iron bridge (right of way N6/5) allows unhindered views of the river and glimpses of the Old Mill House and leads to a narrow way that partly cuts into the river bank with a tall wall on the right and hedgerow/iron railings on the left. At the top, are a number of important views: back towards the bridge, over farmland in the direction of Clifton Maybank, and down the unfinished section of Mill Lane with boundary wall, the impressive Old Mill House, and garden on the right-hand side.

Smith's Bridge/Hollow/Grant's Hill

Approaching the parish boundary (River Yeo) along the hedged, narrow, road, there is a view across pasture towards the treed riverbank with a glimpse of the parish church. The actual entry point is the C16, arched stone bridge, a crossing over the river that is inferred in the name *Bradford* and provides attractive views of the river and the countryside around. Beyond the bridge, the rural scene continues uphill with tall hedgerows either side of a characteristic hollow way which on the left has a small quarry and a stone retaining wall belonging to the Old Rectory. A right turn at the junction leads into Grant's Hill with an attractive view downhill, comprising stone boundary wall, mature garden, trees and a glimpse of the old rectory on the left and steep hedge on the right.

Back Lane/Cross Road

From the crossroads on the Yeovil/Sherborne Road, the sunken Back Lane travels downhill, lined by hedges, trees, farmland and the garden of Coombe until it joins Cross Road (formerly Dole Lane). Turning right, into Cross Roads, the rural boundary of Coombe continues, becoming stone wall in places, whilst opposite is modern infilling. Part way along is the junction with North St which travels down a very shallow coombe. On the east corner of North St are the interesting East Farm Cottages, which are shown on the 1839 Tithe Map.

Coombe Ditch Lane/Cross Road

On and near the junction between Coombe Ditch Lane and Yeovil/Sherborne Rd is the imposing building group of Coombe, together with high boundary walls, entrances, outbuildings and former stables. The former stables define the east side of narrow Coombe Ditch Lane, whilst a steep bank topped with intermittent hedgerow the west side. This bank continues into the distance, whereas opposite for a short way, there is high wall and fence before becoming steep bank and hedgerow. The long, rural view downhill towards the village is characteristic and inviting and at Cross Road, Coombe Ditch Lane becomes known as Westbury (a livestock pound once stood at this spot), where the view continues for some distance. Turning into Cross Roads rural character struggles and is dependent on existing verge, hedge, trees, stone boundary wall, Coombe garden, a distant view of farmland and finally at the junction with North St, East Farm Cottages.

Westbury starting at the junction with Higher Westbury

The Tithe Map (fig 2) shows that at this junction Westbury ceased to travel through only farmland and instead passed small clusters of village properties, as evident by the focal Westbury House and the cottages opposite, all of which define the edge of the narrow road, along with characteristic stone boundary walls. In contrast, the bend ahead is lined by former



Fig 8 The hollow as seen from the Grant's Hill junction



Fig 9 The gable wall of Westbury House as seen from Higher Westbury

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orchard/field hedge and verge, before widening at the junction with Bishop's Lane, which on the NW corner has the interesting focal point of The Forge (house and forge) group in its large, treed garden and with a stone wall and wide, sloping verge in front. The view along Westbury is then framed by the railway bridge, benefited by verge and hedge with the church tower showing above. Under the bridge, a view back benefits from The Forge, its trees and those belonging to Westbury House.

Right of Way N6/4

Near the river crossing on right of way N6/4 (likely to be near a former mill leat), there is a key rural view towards Bradford Abbas, comprising the treed river, undulating (earthworks) pasture (Mill Mead), the Mill Farm group, trees lining relic leat and the church tower visible in a gap amongst trees that create the backdrop to the whole scene. Continuing along, the site of the village grist mill is indicated by a veteran willow next to a relic mill pond, a stone culvert and small humpback bridge. Over the bridge, the way is defined by hedgerow and boundary wall, above which, stands the farmhouse. At the end are attractive farm buildings that deflect the way down a farm track that crosses pasture. On the right is an intriguing, treed mound (old limekiln) inset with a ruined building, on the left a hidden leat, riverside trees and ahead the road. The way crosses the road and continues across pasture (former glebe), offering a long attractive view of the church tower above trees.

Key Views

Examples of key views (see also *Gateways*, and *Gardens, Hedgerows, Trees and Open Spaces*) that highlight the significance of the character and country setting of the conservation area are as follows:

- In Church St, the multiple views when travelling between Greystones and the old school and vice versa;
- In North St, looking north from Heartsease Cottage;
- In North St, looking north and south from outside Chantry Cottage;

Landmarks

The landmark is the Parish Church.



Fig 10 View from right of way N6/4 with Mill Farm on the right in the distance



Bradford Abbas Assets Map North side of railway line

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Continued in part 2