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# Belgravia

## Conservation Area

### *Character Appraisal*

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# **BELGRAVIA**

## **CONSERVATION AREA**

### **CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

#### **Revised**

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#### **TORBAY COUNCIL**

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

### EARLY EDITION ORDNANCE SURVEY 1: 2500 MAPS (not to scale)

- Ordnance Survey County Series First Edition surveyed 1862
- Ordnance Survey County Series Second Edition surveyed 1904
- Ordnance Survey County Series Third Edition surveyed 1933

### APPRAISAL MAPS

- Map One: Historic Buildings
- Map Two: Age of Buildings
- Map Three: Building Materials – Roofs
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- Map Five: Important Features

## 1 LOCATION AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- 1.1 The Belgravia conservation area is situated close to the south and west of the town centre – Torre Abbey lies only 800m as the crow flies from the Town Hall – although the local topography is such that there is a sense that this part of Torquay is a largely separate enclave. This arises because Torre Abbey and Belgravia face south across a small sandy bay separated from Torquay harbour by the bulk of Waldon Hill, while to the west Corbyn’s Head closes the view. Belgravia is part of the interlocking and largely contiguous Torquay group of ten conservation areas; Chelston lies to the west, Torre and Tormohun to the north, and Abbey Road and Torquay Harbour to the east. The late twelfth century Premonstratensian foundation of Torre Abbey is Torquay’s earliest building and its premier historic site; its extensive grounds lie in the heart of the area. To the east where Waldon Hill dominates the skyline, hotels and flats liberally occupy the tree-covered rock-faced slopes which tower above Princess Parade and the Pier.
- 1.2 The conservation area contains both quiet residential suburbs and a significant proportion of the major hotel accommodation in the resort. A large proportion of the conservation area consists of open space. This includes coastline, parks, recreation grounds, the walled gardens of Torre Abbey, the rock-faced Royal Terrace Gardens and the private gardens and terraces of numerous hotels. Many of the major buildings are set against a backdrop of mature trees. Some uncompromising mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings have resulted from development on the demolished sites of a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century villas, nowhere more obvious than where the Riviera Centre now stands, but also upon the reclaimed land along the southwestern edge of Waldon Hill.

## 2 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The dominant historic and topographic influence on the area during the 12<sup>th</sup>- 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was Torre Abbey, a house of Premonstratensian canons, founded in 1196 by William de Brewer, the lord of the manor of Torre. The canons’s site was situated between the two Saxon manorial villages of Torre and Cockington. The original abbey grant included all land south of Mill Lane and west of Belgrave Road, as far as what is now The King’s Drive; additionally the land either side of Croft Road (*Lez Croft*), and Waldon Hill itself remained within the demesne of the manor. All the land within the conservation area now was part of de Brewer’s manor of Torre. Further land grants and purchases followed so that by 1370 the canons had acquired all the remaining manorial land in Torre (now known as Tormohun after the Mohuns who were successor overlords) and held them until the dissolution in 1539.
- 2.2 At its dissolution in 1539, the abbey was the richest house of its order and a significant possession to fall to the crown. The abbey and the manorial lands were sold off separately; between 1540 and 1571 the Ridgeway family had acquired all the former abbey’s lands in the area except for the abbey site itself. The tenure of the abbey site itself can be followed through grants from the Court of Augmentations and *Inquisitions*

*Post Mortems* until 1598 when, after the fifth conveyance since the dissolution, it too was acquired by the Ridgeways, who thus reunited the manor and the abbey demesne. In 1649 the Ridgeway heirs sold off all the old abbey domain itself, including Waldon Hill, other lands west of the Flete brook, and the western side of the harbour to John Stowell of Bovey Tracey. He in turn sold the estate to the Cary family (who had held St Marychurch since 1595, but had lately been dispossessed of the neighbouring manor of Cockington) in 1662. The Abbey and its lands remained with the Carys until their piecemeal assignments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to the final sale of the Abbey and its precincts in 1930.

- 2.3 In the 1649 sale the cottages on the Flete Brook and the slopes above the Strand were excepted – they remained with the Ridgeways Torwood estate until this was purchased by the Palks in 1768. The harbour from whence modern Torquay has sprung therefore had two estates, and two families, the Carys and the Palks to initiate and compete in its development. The boundaries on the west, south and east side of the conservation area reflect almost exactly those of Cary property as it existed after this time.
- 2.4 The Carys entirely remodelled the conventual buildings of the abbey in the 1740s, resulting in the Georgian frontage facing the sea, and the predominantly late medieval frontage facing west that is still evident today. An estate map of 1808 shows the area of what would become Belgravia as almost devoid of any other settlement other than Torre Abbey itself. As elsewhere in Torquay the impetus for the growth of the Victorian suburbs was the provision of arterial infrastructure. For Belgravia it began with the opening of the new coast route, New Road now Torbay Road, by the Torquay Turnpike trust in 1842. The first houses on Waldon Hill had already been established by 1841, when the Cary estates recommenced the development which had been largely dormant for the 12 years of H G Cary's tenure. New Warren Road can be seen on John Wood's *Plan of Torquay and Environs* published in 1841 with the planned seaward arm of Warren Road linking back to Abbey Road, pecked in through the wooded slopes and fields the present. This was followed by the conversion of the medieval Sand Lane into the thoroughfare of Belgrave Road (renamed in 1856). A new approach over Waldon Hill was made where these two joined now Sheddon Hill Road. The Newton Abbot to Torre rail branch was opened in 1848 although this was on Palk, not Cary land.
- 2.5 The Cary family's holding of the residual abbey and manorial estates was pivotal in the later pattern of development. However, while they encouraged the development of Waldon Hill, they opposed it where it encroached upon Torre Abbey's own grounds: delaying the opening of the New Road along the shore directly in front of the Abbey, and closing up Sand Lane until ordered to keep it open by judicial review. They also used their influence to postpone the extension of the railway south from Torre, not because, as was popularly supposed, that they opposed the railway *per se* but because the original line of the extension passed over land they had already earmarked and surveyed for development. Eventually the Carys prevailed and the railway extension was built over the estate of the neighbouring landowners, the Mallocks of Cockington; Torquay Station

- being opened in August 1859, where it was linked to New/Torbay Road. The railway allowed the easy mass transport of industrially produced bulk building materials.
- 2.6 During the 1850s the Carys released land in response to financial need, enabling a number of villas on Waldon Hill to be built. The development of the seaward side of the hill was largely complete by 1860 with the house plots on Cary Road and St Luke's Road South built and Blomfield's St Luke's under construction. The imaginatively designed Abbey Crescent (later the Palm Court Hotel) between the angle of Sheddon Hill Road and Torbay Road, and ten villas in large gardens south of Croft Road also date from this decade.
- 2.7 The development of Belgravia proper (named after a fashionable London suburb), that is to say, the flat land around Torre Abbey really begins in the 1860s. An estate map of 1858, though little changed from that 50 years earlier, reveals superimposed upon it the lines for the layout of roads and the development of villas in the fields to the north. The first edition OS County Series 1:2500 map surveyed in 1860-2 shows a few large villas, either newly built or still under construction in spacious surroundings immediately east of the abbey: three in Chestnut Avenue, four smaller ones on the west side of Belgrave Road, and four larger ones on the east side. All were richly ornamented stucco types, highly detailed, and in a predominantly Italianate style. Ehrenberg Hall on Chestnut Avenue, built 1860 by the Harvey brothers, was the apotheosis of this building type. It was demolished in the 1980s with the two others of its type to make room for the English Riviera Centre.
- 2.8 With Torquay's major transport infrastructure in place, and Belgravia's urban layout of roads largely established in the 1860s, and the rapid growth of Torquay as a fashionable Victorian watering place, this part of the town developed within a relatively short time-span between 1860 and 1880s.
- 2.9 Between them the two 19<sup>th</sup> century land-owning families of Cary and Palk were responsible for the bulk of mid-late Victorian development of Torquay. Following the early villa developments of the 1840s and 1850s – and the extension of the railway – changes in plan type are noticeable:
- the Carys were content to develop their estate in a more condensed manner [than the Palks] – probably because they were catering for quantity of, rather than a quality, of housing sites ... Palk had laid out all his crescents and villas in spacious style among the superior hillsides of the town, leaving the majority of the flat sites to be developed by the Cary family (Wilson 1957).*
- 2.10 While this is true of the adjoining Torre and Tormohun conservation areas, which are characterised by the much more compact terrace and semi-detached villa types, Belgravia exhibits a spaciousness if not the equal to the Palk types in the Warberries and Lincombes conservation areas something very far from mean. This is reflected in the society that was attracted here. The Belgrave Hotel built as Belgrave House in 1859 was

- the first private hotel in Torquay. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton (created Baron Lytton of Knebworth in 1866), lived at Argyle Hall, now the Roseland Hotel, in Warren Road from 1867 until his death in 1873. Ehrenberg Hall was the home of Angela Burdett-Coutts between 1862 and 1877; as well as the town's leading socialite she was the richest woman in England and renowned as a philanthropist. Her ennoblement by Queen Victoria in 1871 was seen as a particular honour to Torquay also.
- 2.11 Much of the character of the conservation area hinges upon the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century development that took place in this part of Torquay when its status as a fashionable English watering-place was at its height. This is manifest in the size and lavish ornament of many of the original villas. Belgravia, being close to Torquay station and one of the few parts of the town with level access to the beach, rapidly became the main focal point of hotel development and, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was catering for large numbers of holiday makers.
- 2.12 Below the villas of Warren Road and the carriageway of Torbay Road are the grade II registered Royal Terrace Gardens, with Rock Walk above. The terraces were laid out at the same time as Princess Gardens were being constructed on reclaimed land in the early 1890s; they are in many ways much more part of the character of Torquay Harbour conservation area but lie within the designated area of Belgravia. The serpentine raised walks wind between an extensive rockery and sub-tropical plants to give access to Torbay Road while Rock Walk allows the pedestrian to cross 600m from the harbour above Cary Parade to Sheddon Hill.
- 2.13 While rising debts had forced the sale of the Palks leasehold interests in 1885 and the remaining freehold and manorial interests in 1894, the Carys clung onto their estates into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1924 they sold Belgrave Gardens, the area of the tennis courts and greens which front the Riviera centre today, to the Corporation of Torquay, and in 1930 the Abbey itself and its immediate grounds (but not the whole domain) for £40,000 – it had cost them £800 in 1662. The abbey houses a museum display of the Cary's domestic contents and an impressive art collection, including paintings by Turner and Holman Hunt, and works by William Blake. A room here is also set out as in tribute to Agatha Christie who was born in Torquay and spent her childhood in the town. The abbey will be closed between 2006 and 2008 to allow a Heritage Lottery Fund scheme to be implemented. This will sweep away some of the lesser 19<sup>th</sup> century accretions, complete the medieval cloister excavations, erect a new roofed cloister walk on the west side, and redisplay the house and the museum collection.
- 2.14 Although profound social changes have long since led to more fashionable lifestyles being sought elsewhere, the many large hotels testify to Torquay's continued importance and the still intense pressure for visitor accommodation,. Torbay as a whole – the English Riviera – is still the premier long-stay major resort in Britain: the largest resort in the UK in terms of visitor bed-nights, with over nine million each year, and one of the few seaside towns to attract substantial numbers of overseas visitors – the English Riviera Conference Centre is marketed nationally and internationally. The hotels within

the Belgravia conservation area meet a major demand for visitor accommodation in Torquay.

### **3 CHARACTER AREAS**

3.1 The conservation area consists of three distinct sub-areas, each with its own separate character. These are indicated on Map One and can be summarised as follows:

3.2 (1) *Torre Abbey and Surroundings*

Torre Abbey and the neighbouring Tithe Barn are both grade I listed buildings, these and the abbey grounds are all included within the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, comprising a major archaeological site of almost 9 hectares set within the remains of once extensive parkland. The evolution of the site can be traced through the surviving medieval and later Georgian buildings from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century monastic foundation to an important county seat spanning nearly three hundred years up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including later ancillary additions such as the walled gardens and lodge cottages. Since 1930 the abbey has been a major visitor attraction as a municipal museum and art gallery, with formal gardens and informal recreation for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

3.3 (2) *Belgrave Road area*

Between Torre Abbey and Waldon Hill, on land which slopes gently towards the sea, are four main streets; Chestnut Avenue, Belgrave, Croft, and Scarborough Roads. These were laid out between the 1850s and 1860s; the first two within what was at the time part of the landscaped grounds of Torre Abbey. This part of the conservation area now has the greatest concentration of Torquay's hotel accommodation. Belgrave House, Mauldslee and Sherwood all built in 1859 are now the Belgrave, Kistor and Sherwood Hotels.

3.4 Many hotels were subsequently greatly enlarged or conjoined, and much of this part of the conservation area is given over entirely to the holiday and conference trade. The latter was much expanded by the construction of the Riviera Centre which opened in May 1987 with accommodation for up to 1,500 delegates and extensive leisure facilities. Its design is uncompromisingly modern and makes no concessions to the adjoining 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings or the neighbouring Torre Abbey, barely 50 metres distant. However, its spacious surroundings, including the leisure facilities of Abbey Park, the intervening mature trees and an alignment with the Abbey, enables it to merge into a broader townscape setting relatively unobtrusively.

3.5 (3) *St Luke's and Waldon Hill area*

On Waldon Hill, the first roads were laid out in the 1840s, largely following the contours. These then became the focus of the early villa development, although it is probable that where, for example, Warren Road faces across the bay from an elevated position, some villas undoubtedly soon started to adapt their accommodation to the



visitor trade. The hill is now a mixture of small to medium-sized hotels and retirement homes, and also a number of surviving 19<sup>th</sup> century villas in private, individual or multiple ownership. On the crown of the hill, are extensive blocks of flats dating from the 1960s to the 1980s, most notably Lytton House, which dominate the skyline.

- 3.6 The buildings are interspersed with street trees which are largely deciduous, whilst the trees within the landscaped grounds of the villas remain the planted evergreens. At Rock Walk there are some fine individual specimens providing a luxuriant landscape setting to the prominent hotels and villas on the skyline above.

## 4 ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITIES

### 4.1 LISTED & OTHER KEY BUILDINGS

- 4.1.1 The conservation area includes 13 listed entries, mainly buildings, but also 5 other entries covering such features as boundary walls, entrances and several items of street furniture, all are denoted here in bold. All listed buildings are grade II except where indicated.

#### 4.1.2 (1) *Torre Abbey and environs*

The whole of the abbey site is a scheduled ancient monument, the highest conservation designation, which extends to almost 9ha down to the mean low waterline on the abbey sands. The standing buildings of **Torre Abbey** and the so-called **Spanish Barn** are additionally both listed (grade I). The scheduling dates from November 1930, shortly after the abbey sale to the Corporation of Torquay; the most recent, and extensive, revision was in January 1997, which in assessing the importance of the site commented that of the 700 or so monasteries founded in medieval England 45 were Premonstratensian and that:

*Torre Abbey was the wealthiest Premonstratensian Abbey in England ... its history is well documented and excavation has shown that the abbey church had a complex development. Study of the siting of the abbey on the shoreline of Torbay will contribute to a greater understanding of a monastic settlement placed to exploit the resources of both land and sea, and the association with the causeway provides archaeological evidence for pre-monastic land use. The abbey ruins are the most complete surviving example of a medieval monastic complex in Devon or Cornwall.*

- 4.1.2 The principal visible remains of the medieval abbey comprise the tithe barn, the gatehouse, earthworks marking the site of a fishpond and the southern precinct walls, and the remains of the conventual buildings. Parts of all four ranges may be seen around the site of the former cloister. The northern and eastern ranges survive as ruins while the southern and western ranges were incorporated into the later mansion, making it a basic L-plan building.

- 4.1.3 The Abbey was converted to domestic use after being acquired by Thomas Ridgway in 1598; the west range was remodelled, without altering its essentially medieval aspect. The early 13<sup>th</sup> century undercroft of the west range is centrally divided by a through passage which allows access to both north and south vaults as well as linking the cloister with the outer court by passing beneath the west, or Abbot's, tower. The almost unchanged medieval undercroft supports the medieval guest hall over the northern part of the west range; this was converted into a Roman catholic chapel by the recusant Carys probably shortly before the statutory extension of toleration granted by the Catholic Relief act of 1778 and incorporates the original plastered wagon roof with its medieval ceiling bosses. The recently restored (1996-7) west tower is essentially 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.1.4 The remodelling of the south range was much more extensive and dates from the 1740s: a three-storied central range is flanked by two narrow but protruding side wings of two stories. The central entrance, a Doric porch, is reached by a flight of steps leading up to a raised terrace. The terrace completely blocks all the openings of the former medieval south undercroft, entirely masking its early character.
- 4.1.5 The north and east sides comprising the church, and the chapter and dorter range remain ruinous. Although lead was stripped from the roof of the church immediately after the dissolution in 1539 the shell of the building survived for another 200 hundred years. However around 1770 George Cary III cleared away much of the masonry that had fallen, *filling up the hollows in the park between the abbey and the sea*. The massive fallen masonry blocks remain *in situ* and are thought to be the collapsed remains of the crossing piers. Pevsner recorded that the entrance to the Chapter House was *the most architecturally worthwhile part of the medieval abbey to survive*. Excavations of 1986-89 revealed the layout of the nave of the church, the north aisle and the northern transept and allowed a more accurate interpretation of earlier forms, including the position of screens, chapels and choir stalls.
- 4.1.6 Archaeological excavations in 2004/05 in advance of the the Heritage Lottery Fund supported project have already revealed two phases of cloister build; the early and later roof lines being visible on the east wall of the west range after removal of the 19<sup>th</sup> century cementitious render. A number of undisturbed burials have also been uncovered within the west, north and east cloister walks. Limited excavation inside the east range has allowed a proper understanding of the differences in level within the range and how different these were from the east cloister walk. Further limited excavation and internal alterations in 2006/07 will allow much more of the standing building to be archaeologically examined.
- 4.1.7 The almost complete 14<sup>th</sup> century red sandstone gatehouse stands at the southwest angle of the complex; the wooden doors, lime-ash floors and garde-robe are all original, the medieval stable block was attached to its south side. The abbey's tithe barn was first built during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which makes it the earliest surviving example in Devon; 12

- ribs of its original oak roof are reputed to survive with a further five added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It has been popularly known as the Spanish Barn since 1588 when 800 soldiers and sailors from the Spanish Armada were briefly held captive here.
- 4.1.8 Today the main aspect of the house from the south is Georgian, the materials being the local grey limestone and red sandstone, with some Ham Hill stone dressings, inserted in the 1870s. The gatehouse is almost completely as built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. There have been progressive remodellings of the house in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; the HLF project will be the first phase of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's. The barn is also built of the same lime- and sandstones; it is of a typical medieval plan form with two opposing doors centrally placed, closely spaced buttresses and gabled ends. Some of the structure is of uncertain date reflecting its continuous use and repair, although undoubtedly a major proportion of medieval fabric remains. The roof was extensively restored in the 1930s. Sited immediately to the west of the Abbey is the granite **cross shaft** of a former medieval cross.
- 4.1.10 On the north west side of Torre Abbey's grounds the **entrance gates and gate piers** make up an attractive combination of dressed limestone piers surmounted by a pair of swan statues (the swan is the Cary crest) with ornate gates in cast- and wrought-iron. Close by is a group of three listed lodge cottages, all of which date from c.1900. Most picturesque is **The Cottage**, built of red breccia and limestone with terracotta dressings, which formerly housed the estate gardener. The slate roof is gabled with deep eaves and ornately cusped barge-boards. It is a very late example of Victorian 'Gothick'. On the eastern side of Avenue Road is **The Lodge**, a small detached brick house with some tile-hung walls. The listing regards the architectural style as *south-eastern Vernacular Revival*, the implication being that it looks somewhat out of place in Torquay – far from it – as part of the eclectic group of four here, at the six-way junction, it is a bonus. The third in this small group of estate buildings is the **former estate manager's house**, now the Ocean Drive restaurant; the style is Swiss-Chalet, brick built in Flemish-bond with terracotta dressings and partial slate-hanging to the first floor. The similar but larger Swiss Chalet **Abbey Dene** on the north side of the junction lies in Torre conservation area.
- 4.1.11 On the far side of The King's Drive, and therefore beyond the western limit of the abbey demesne, lies the Torquay Recreation Ground first opened in 1889. Its present **Entrance Pavilions and Gates** were built at the junction of Torbay Road and Rathmore Road in 1910 facing the sea and closer to it than now. The pavilions are octagonal in plan and built of local grey ashlar limestone, with lead coated timber canopies; they were designed as ticket offices with gates for both pedestrians and vehicles.
- 4.1.12 (2) *Belgrave Road area*  
 Few of the large number of 19<sup>th</sup> century villas have been statutorily listed; this is probably a reflection of the extent of later alterations and additions. However there are a large number of buildings or building groups which, while unlisted, retain significant historic detail of high merit. These are the conservation area's key buildings; whose

intrinsic character must be given greater recognition and consideration when controlling development if the character of the conservation area as a whole is to be maintained; they also offer considerable potential for enhancement.

- 4.1.13 The **Cavendish Hotel** at the junction of Belgrave and Scarborough Roads is a former small Italianate villa of the 1860s, extended in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the north and south. Stucco-rendered, today it is of three storeys, with a four-storey entrance tower above a Roman Doric porch. The roofs are slated at a low pitch with deep eaves on moulded brackets; the semi-circular southern turret with a conical roof is one of the later additions. At the Croft Road junction with Scarborough Road is **Mulberry House, 1 Scarborough Road** a two-storey house of the late 1860s; this is stucco rendered with a slate roof having rendered stacks with platbands and cornices, a typical period feature, as are the deep eaves over ornamental brackets. The four-panel doors and sash windows with horizontal glazing bars are probably original. The interior contains original chimney-pieces and joinery, including a stair with turned balusters. This important corner site begins the series of similar frontage detail which continues along both streets, **9 Croft Road** adjoining to the west shows the same 4-panel door, sash windows, and window openings with the prominent keystone rising out of the window architraves.
- 4.1.14 In Scarborough Road there have been several unfortunate later alterations which has led to the complete terrace of 14 on the north side of the road, mostly small hotels and guest houses, being removed from the statutory list *en bloc*. The delisting follows the insertion of some quite unsuitable modern replacement doors and windows, even though the majority remain *in situ*, especially at the western end. Some front boundary features, walls, gate-piers and railings have also been removed, and there is a plethora of unsympathetic signage. Nevertheless this terrace, though modest when compared with some historic frontage detail in Torquay, still represents good late 19<sup>th</sup> century townscape in a style that is undoubtedly coastal in emphasis. All the houses remain key buildings for the conservation area – as few of the changes are irreversible, the de-listing looks like collective punishment.
- 4.1.15 Two former detached 1850s villas in Croft Road, Agincourt and Valletta, are now neighbouring hotels, **Allerdale Hotel** and **Howden Croft Hotel** and are built in an almost identical Italianate style. They exhibit many ornate period features such as prominent rusticated quoins and corncicing, hoodmoulds on brackets, and deep-bracketed eaves above, but as a manifestation of their status it also includes Doric porches with double columns, projecting centre bays under pedimented gables, attached shafts at first-floor level, and most distinctively, a three-storey belvedere in the same style with triple round-headed windows having moulded architraves with keyblocks, and balustraded balconies. Each belvedere is topped by a pyramid roof and has four narrow-shafted corner stacks with moulded cornices above a dentil course. Elsewhere the former villas of Croft Road, have had some of their frontage features compromised by later additions, although the group to the south and east of the Croft Road's junction with Croft Hill remains least altered, all are key buildings.

- 4.1.16 Where Belgrave Road crosses the northern edge of the conservation area, there are further examples of largely unaltered frontages, even where separate terraced dwellings have been incorporated into extended hotel frontages; these terraces form a natural link with the terraces in the Tormohun conservation area. On the south side of Falkland Road where the surviving villas have been converted into hotels, they have nevertheless retained much of their original frontage detail. By contrast in Chestnut Avenue three detached villas have been linked together to form one large hotel on the west side, and one detached villa and a purpose-built hotel have been linked to form another on the east, yet enough historic frontage detail remains so that the predominant Victorian character is preserved.
- 4.1.17 At the south end of Belgrave Road at its junction with Torbay Road are the **Gates to Abbey Park**. These date from c.1900 and are of highly decorative cast-iron including the square-section piers and finial globes housing street-lighting, as with the entrance gates and pavilions to the recreation ground these were once nearer the seafront than they are now.
- 4.1.18 (3) *St Luke's and Waldon Hill area*  
East of Shedden Hill Road lies the St Luke's and Waldon Hill character area; here on the slopes of the Hill a good concentration of well preserved 19<sup>th</sup> century villa development is found, especially towards its western end. Those in St Luke's Road North preserve in the main much more authentic period detail, including their doors and windows, in a setting of street trees and characteristic local limestone rubble walls, which still conveys the atmosphere of a Victorian inner suburb.
- 4.1.19 The **Parish Church of St. Luke** is situated at the western edge of Waldon Hill, between St Luke's Road and Warren Road – the two form in effect upper and lower concentric routes round the hill. The church is a significant landmark prominently visible from Belgravia and Chelston, as well as closing the vista from Croft Road. It is an early design by Blomfield, completed in 1863 it is built from randomly-coursed local grey limestone with Bath stone dressings. The exterior is described as being in of a *Geometric Decorated style ... robust and uncoventional*; the north-west tower incorporates a polygonal porch and narthex, from which there are magnificent views. The interior was damaged in a fire of 1964 but has been restored and is considered very complete with painted wagon roof of 1870, stained glass (some by Kempe), good floor tiling and the wide use of both local and Italian marble, as in the chancel screen. Further restoration is being undertaken. The (northern) **retaining wall and west end boundary wall** are contemporary and an important part of the design of the church, though separately listed. The Church Hall is on two levels, one accessed from the level of the church itself, and a late Arts-and Crafts type of extension below the retaining wall accessed from Warren Road.
- 4.1.20 In Warren Road, most surviving original frontage detail faces the road; those frontages facing the sea have been all been altered to a greater or lesser degree, and several have added large lower floor extensions, their prominence exaggerated by the steep contours. Only the south-facing portion of Warren Road lies within the Belgravia conservation

area, that facing east and north lies with the Abbey Road conservation area – a quite different character area of long terraces. Among the best of the the south-facing converted villas are Bay Fort Mansions and Marina Court. A wholly new development was being constructed in the autumn of 2005 on the site of the Royal Seahorse. The retaining wall to the gardens on the St Luke’s Road side is often massive attaining 3-4 metres in height; where it has been repaired with anything other than the original limestone the eyesore is clearly evident. Cary Road which uniquely links St Luke’s and Warren Roads, on the south side of the hill, has particularly impressive terracing either side.

- 4.1.21 At the bottom of St Luke’s Road Nos 7-9 is an attractive Tudor Gothick terrace of three; it is located immediately above the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption and is very similar to Matlock Terrace, 1-3 St Luke’s Road (both in the Abbey Road conservation area) but slightly later, in the mid-1860s. The detailing is subtly different taking into account the topographical differences, both have suffered the indignity of the removal of mullions and the replacement by inappropriate PVCu, as well as inappropriate attic glazing.
- 4.1.22 Between the terrace and St Luke’s Church lies The Ferns, an eccentric 1850s group of three, whose high-sided gables and angled entrance porch across the L-shaped outer pair pre-dates what was later to become a typical Arts-and-Craft style set piece. The window glazing is a mixture of casements on the outer two and sashes on the inner one, inevitably some PVCu replacements have appeared, as have a number of unattractive dormers. The group’s shared stable block has been converted for residential occupation and has been rendered in the uncoloured, roughcast ‘Cary Park’ style.
- 4.1.23 At the hairpin angle of the road a steep flight of steps leads down to Warren Road with the Catholic complex to the northwest, and the brutal massifs of Cotswold and Roebuck Houses to the south and east. Towering above the Ferns is the Mapleton Hotel, after the villa of the same name and largely unspoilt; it sits as if on a crag the gabled bay projecting yet further out between prominent rusticated quoins. The main block has ground floor oriels beneath the gables and bracketed eaves, a platband and long narrow window openings with each half-sash divided by a single horizontal glazing bar; the service wing shows 12-pane sashes in a squarer opening, and lacks the ornament of the main side. The good and diverse grouping of early-to-mid Victorian buildings takes full advantage of the topography of the hill, visually interesting it is let down only by the sheer bulk of the modern office buildings and the commercial garage on the east side of the hairpin.
- 4.1.24 A good group of 5 villas on St Luke’s Road South lies south and east of the church: The Vicarage, Harold Court, Ellington Court Hotel, Villa Rosa and The Grange – formerly St Malo, Gnatton, Ellington, Cheriton and Bemerton. All show compromises where they have been adapted for occupation as more than one unit with the gardens giving way to tarmac parking spaces with the part-removal of boundary walls. Harold Court is otherwise highly ornamented, with distinct two-light windows in a variety of openings:

round-headed, round shouldered or flat and has recently been restored as flats. Ellington suffers from flat roof extensions and a profusion of pipage on its frontage. Villa Rosa similarly in conversion has extraneous pipes and a prominent fire escape. The Grange has some PVCu glazing on the Cary Road side, some loss of garden, and a poor secondary entrance at the rear. Across Cary Road the former Torbay Clinic was the large and once magnificent villa Hendersyde, it is now in a state of disrepair. Beyond all is soulless on the seaward side, large blocks of flats Lytton House, Waldon Court, Waldon Hall, and Kingslake Court occupy the former villa sites, the last that of the 1840s gothic pile Waldon Castle. The gardens to the road are now mere car parks. The trees of the Victorian layout are now quite mature and when in full leaf do much to mask the visual dullness.

- 4.1.25 On St Luke's Road North the villas, and semi-detached villas, were built smaller because the precipitous cliff face above Warren Road allowed little room, and later because they were less in demand than those facing out to sea. However, this has led to their better survival with a good group of 5 and 2 semi-detached pairs running back to Cary Road, albeit with minor extensions and some PVCu replacement windows.
- 4.1.26 At the top of the hill between the two arms of St Luke's Road the east side is dominated by indifferent late 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings: the two blocks of Waldon Point and some lesser small terrace types. On St Luke's Park, which connects the encircling road as a chord, four 'mansion' blocks were put up in 1859-60 – unusual for Torquay, but obviously appealing at this location. The northernmost was bombed in June 1942 and subsequently demolished; the three remaining mansions are, Waldon Hall, Walliscote and Chase Court. In the autumn of 2005 it was evident that while Waldon Hall was being maintained, Walliscote was fast falling into a state of disrepair.
- 4.1.27 At the west end of St Luke's Road the former semi-detached 1850s villa pair of Wanbro was restored as one in the 1990s as the Abbey Hall Hotel using the original type of sash windows with narrow horizontal glazing bars, and four-panelled doors. There is a symmetrical frontage with projecting two-storey bays under angled hipped roofs; either side are recessed wings with round-headed windows and doors, the former having moulded architraves with keyblocks, the latter with plain fanlights above. It is a good illustration of what sensitive conservation and restoration work can achieve, and an example to the other villa owners. Very recently the building has returned to its original use as two semis: Abbey Hall, and on the west side Brimley Park; unfortunately the latter has an unattractive corner addition, while to the rear there is an ugly post-war rear separate extension as Unity House. Similarly Court Prior and Newcourt preserve much of their villa character, but both also have unattractive rear extensions. Sorrento (the former Linden across the road, and next to Mapleton belongs to this villa type) preserves its sash windows despite being converted to flats; the upper ones in round-shouldered openings above a platband and ground-floor bays. An attractive Edwardian semi-detached pair fills in the adjoining plot above Warren Road to the east.

- 4.1.28 Below Waldon Hill on the seafront is the prominently situated former Abbey Crescent (recently partly occupied by the Palm Court Hotel) ingeniously squeezed between the curve of Torbay Road, Shedden Hill and the western end of Rock Walk; completed by 1858 it is one of the earlier developments in Belgravia. Although the character of the two- to three-storey crescent has been somewhat compromised by later modifications, it retains significant period detail, especially at first and second floor level, and remains a prominent feature set against the wooded slopes of Waldon Hill.
- 4.1.29 Beyond lies the **Old Toll House**, built at the same time as New/Torbay Road in 1841, the main block forms a single-storey three-bay elevation to Torbay Road constructed of rock-faced local grey limestone with smoothed chamfered dressings, under a gabled slate roof with a lead ridge and stone stacks. It has coped gables with kneelers and a corbelled parapet raised above the roof, there is also gabled projection on the north-west end elevation. However as early as 1848 the collection of tolls was transferred to a toll-house at the end of the King's Drive, to avoid the irritation of an interrupted drive along this picturesque road, many of the hotels paying a lump sum to avoid annoyance to their visitors. It then became for many years the house of the gardener in charge of the parks; it was last in used as public conveniences. It is currently disused and sealed awaiting sympathetic conversion.

## 4.2 BUILDING FORM & ORNAMENT

- 4.2.1 The many villas, built to the north and east of Torre Abbey have mostly been converted to hotels. The earlier from the late 1840s/1850s were built on Waldon Hill, and in the late 1850s off Croft Road and Belgrave Road. The later ones with the terraces were built in Belgravia proper in a consistent style within the period c.1860-1875. Their scale and form essentially gives the conservation area its special character. It is remarkable that so much original detail has managed to survive for nearly a century and a half; though it is also true that some villas are now almost unrecognisable in their original form. Subsequent extensions sometimes dominate the original building, especially where large, mainly flat-roof ground floor extensions have been added. This is the case in many of the seaward-facing extensions to villas in Warren Road. Elsewhere, upper floor extensions have led to a complete remodelling of the roof-space and alteration to the historic roof profile – somewhere between a mansard and a flat roof. Such types can be seen in both Scarborough and Belgrave Roads.
- 4.2.2 Of considerable merit, and in the case of unlisted buildings, afforded little statutory protection, is the wealth of period detail. The many examples of timber detailing include doors and windows with distinctive panels and glazing bars. The extensive stucco detailing on walls and openings often uses classical ornament and is also applied to eaves brackets, and chimney and eaves cornices. Its apogee comes in those villas where it is elaborated into a high confection such as the top storey belvederes of the Allerdale and Howden Croft hotels in Croft Road.



### 4.3 USE OF MATERIALS

- 4.3.1 Apart from the use of exposed stone in the Georgian building at Torre Abbey, the 1840s Toll House, and later at St Luke's Church in the 1860s, the overwhelmingly predominant building material is white or colour-washed stucco or render. It is not always certain what is the underlying material used in the construction of the villas, but the local grey limestone, because it was formerly quarried in such abundance, must be the major component, especially in the earlier villas. After the arrival of the railway in 1848 and the opening of Torquay's own brick works at Old Woods Hill, barely a mile to the north, this would have become more readily available.
- 4.3.2 Whilst limestone is the most widely used local material and is also ubiquitous as randomly coursed rubble in most boundary walls, there is also some use of Permian New Red Sandstone; this has been used quite extensively at Torre Abbey. There are also small quantities of imported stone evident: Bath stone at St Luke's Church, and Ham Hill stone as the 1870s dressed reveals at Torre Abbey. As has been noted St Luke's, like other examples of High Victorian church architecture in Torquay, contains local polished marbles; some of the villas will have retained fireplaces made of this material.
- 4.3.3 Slate was easily the most dominant 19<sup>th</sup> century roofing material. This was mainly imported, by sea and later by rail, from North Wales; Cornish slate is also in evidence, again as at Torre Abbey. A fair proportion of original 19<sup>th</sup> century slate survives, but is increasingly being replaced by artificial substitutes; some examples more obviously so than others. Most recently recognised is at least one example of an introduced natural slate with a greenish hue, probably imported from Spain.

### 4.4 CONDITION OF BUILDINGS

- 4.4.1 Many buildings in the conservation area are structurally sound and, for the most part, are well maintained. However even in some obviously well maintained buildings, such as some of the hotels in Belgrave Road, and adjoining streets, poorer quality materials than those used originally, and in later extensions, are very much in evidence.
- 4.4.2 Where buildings have become vacant or are under-used, there is the constant threat of deterioration. Observation suggests that there are a handful of buildings at some risk as a result of neglect or under-investment. These are mainly in the Warren Road and St. Luke's Road area. While scaffolding attached to buildings suggests a programme of improvement in progress, it may only be part of a holding operation. The loss of 19<sup>th</sup> century villas has now been largely stemmed. Some poorly maintained examples, whose present use may not be able to be sustained indefinitely, will inevitably come under pressure for demolition and redevelopment although, with sufficient determination, there are normally adequate statutory controls to prevent this.
- 4.4.3 Wholesale dilapidation is not the greatest threat, much more insidious is the steady erosion of authentic historic detail: original doors and windows remain most at risk,

closely followed by changes to, and the removal of, elevational and boundary features. The considerable number of unlisted but key buildings that make up so much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century townscape, and whose presence is the *raison d'être* of the conservation area are especially vulnerable. Even listed buildings can be put at risk, statutory development control measures were unable to prevent the loss of architectural features and changes to plan forms of the long Scarborough Road terraces: so much so that they were delisted.

- 4.4.4 There is an ongoing need for repair and maintenance of the current historic building stock; fortunately in some enlightened instances, such as at the Abbey Hall Hotel, the style and integrity of the building has been well respected. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to ensure that appropriate conservation of the spatial and architectural features, that are major features of the original 19<sup>th</sup> century townscape, is undertaken. The townscape is at particular risk and the individual building character particularly vulnerable to inappropriate frontage alterations, poorly designed extensions, often with aesthetically unpleasing flat roofs, or the linking together of previously detached villas.

## 5 CHARACTER AND RELATIONSHIP OF SPACES

- 5.1 The monastic demesne of Torre Abbey and its immediate meadows became by the beginning of seventeenth century a country estate; it had been owned for over 270 years by the same family when it was finally sold to the town corporation in 1924 and 1930. Fortunately the park land was given over to recreational use not housing development. Together with the playing pitches to the west, on Mallock land, it forms a very large enclave within the conservation area and the single largest open space in the central urban area.
- 5.2 Thus the conservation area is one of contrasts both in natural and built form; the three character areas have distinct identities though linked. Torre Abbey itself with its enclosed grounds south of Chestnut Avenue and west of the English Riviera Centre forms a secluded historic enclave within the larger open space. Of the surrounding streets Sand Lane (Belgrave Road) and Rock Walk are of some antiquity; Chestnut Avenue and Falkland Road follow the earlier laying out of the tree-lined drives in the once much more extensive Cary park land in the 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; and New/Torbay Road and the The King's Drive are new roads of the Victorian expansion.
- 5.3 The character of the original 19<sup>th</sup> century built environment has been greatly affected by the large concentration of hotels. Although some were purpose built: the original Belgrave, and the Victoria and Albert, many more have subsequently evolved from villas or terraced houses into much larger establishments. In some the later extensions can be larger than the original Victorian buildings and can incorporate up to four former detached villas into a single agglomeration, as at the Toorak Hotel. In historic building terms, this has greatly compromised the once prevalent architectural profile of detached villas in their own grounds and, in some cases, the fine 19<sup>th</sup> century elevations are almost obscured behind later facades or extended frontages which are often unsuitable single

storeys with flat roofs. The larger amalgamations have also developed a particular roof style: a mansarded side wall with a flat top.

- 5.4 However despite the demolition of several significant 19<sup>th</sup> century villas, or their alteration and amalgamation, a proportion of those that remain have largely retained their original profile and historic detail, whether or not this has been a conscious intention. Croft Road and St Luke's Road retain the best of the villas, while the terraces in the upper part of Belgrave Road, which are visually contiguous with the adjoining Tormohun conservation area, are a good example of urban townscape of the 1860-70s.

## 6 GREEN LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS AND TREES

- 6.1 Trees are a very important element of the conservation area, with few species adversely affected by close proximity to the sea because of the relatively sheltered aspect. The historic landscape around Torre Abbey combines the outer court of the medieval abbey to the south with a pitch-and-putt course, and is grassed down to the sea front. On the northeast side of the Abbey and either side of The King's Drive there are some fine, mainly deciduous specimen trees of the later Cary period. Closer to the sea in Torre Abbey Meadows some mature tree groups remain; these were severely reduced by Dutch Elm disease in the 1970s and the great storm of January 1990. In recent years the Council has embarked upon a considerable replanting scheme.
- 6.2 In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century a further area of open space occupied the area between those houses on the east side of Belgrave Road, the south side of Scarborough Road, and the west side of Croft Road. It is now occupied by tennis courts at the north end, and a large public car park has replaced the allotment gardens at the south end. A footpath on the south side of the car park, which emerges onto Belgrave Road at Kistor Place, is all that remains of the historic link between Rock Walk and Torre Abbey broken by the building of Sheddon Hill Road, and the properties on the west side of Belgrave Road. The tennis courts are still edged by a variety of mature trees, including a number of pines, but the former perimeter walkway has decayed and public access is discouraged. Further west the tennis courts, putting- and bowling greens in front of the English Riviera Centre were laid out as formal gardens by the Torquay Corporation after the 1924 purchase from the Carys.
- 6.3 The dominant landscape feature is Waldon Hill with the picturesque Rock Walk on its southwestern flank. As noted this long predates New/Torbay Road and is the oldest link between the early harbour area of Tor Key and the Abbey lands, providing some dramatic outward views. Immediately below it the Royal Terrace Gardens were created in 1892-4, at the same time as Princess Gardens were being established on reclaimed land on the seaward side of Torbay Road. A series of terraces were cut into the exposed limestone crags above the road; new species, mainly evergreens, were introduced amongst naturalised trees and a considerable network of paths and steps were created: a good example of Victorian Romanticism. The unstable rock face which has forced the

closure of the road at periods has not been kind to the terrace garden and areas have fallen into disuse. Both, as the **Princess Gardens and Royal Terrace Gardens**, have been registered as a single park of historic interest (grade II); the former lies within the Torquay Harbour Conservation areas. The latter is to be the subject of an HLF bid under the public parks initiative.

- 6.4 Outside the open spaces a considerable number of street trees may be found. Many date from the time of the original street layout, or in the case of Chestnut Avenue earlier park embellishment. These are most evident in St. Luke's Road, Croft Road, and Croft Hill. Almost all are deciduous, either horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) or lime (*Tilia x europaea*). Lime is often considered a poor choice for a street tree because the consequent and necessary lopping is often done so inexpertly, or the exigencies of the highways departments are such that a hideous mutilation results in the older larger examples. Fortunately in Torquay's streets the villas are well set back so that there is more space for the development of the crown. However the root boles can cause uneven surfaces to develop around the base of the trees and a number are now over-mature. Other important species in the conservation area include oak, sycamore and beech and, in addition to a range of conifers, mainly pines of Mediterranean origin, considerable numbers of evergreen oaks, mainly *Quercus Ilex* and *Quercus x hispanica*.

## 7. THE SETTING AND FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

- 7.1 The monastic site located within the founder's manor of Torre was situated between the neighbouring settlements of St Marychurch and Cockington, all pre-Conquest Saxon manors. The coastal site surrounded by hills though unusual proved ideal and remote for it was on no through route. Even now, although the conservation area is in close proximity to the commercial heart of the town as the crow flies, there is still a surprising sense of isolation, largely topographical, defined by the high slopes of Waldon Hill, and the lack of any visual link between them. The siting of the Abbey on level ground close to a sandy cove is now more significant as a public amenity in an open setting, within in an otherwise highly developed urban environment.
- 7.2 The history of Torre Abbey notwithstanding, Belgravia is a part of the Torquay that is highly appreciated for its favourable aspect, its accessible open spaces and its fine trees. In spite of significant demolitions and some visually displeasing modifications and extensions to the original 1850s-1875 architecture, there is still much attractive and original townscape in a mature landscape setting.
- 7.3 It is possible to summarise the features that give the conservation area its special character as follows:

- ❖ the large extent of the open space with public access and linking footpaths;

- ❖ the pleasing contrasts within the conservation area – the medieval monastic site combined with a significant Georgian mansion, the secluded 19<sup>th</sup> century villas (largely unaltered in the St. Luke’s Road area), and several well-proportioned 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces;
- ❖ the architectural survival of much fine Italianate detail of the villas – stuccoed walls, rustication, cornices, deep eaves, usually with decorative bracketing, round-headed and other openings, and ornamental gate piers;
- ❖ the survival of a considerable proportion of period timber detail, on doors and windows, especially in the upper part of Belgrave Road and St. Luke’s Road;
- ❖ the sequential rhythm of the building line backing on to Warren Road where narrow gaps, and vistas, between each villa have been largely maintained in spite of severe site restrictions arising from the steep topography;
- ❖ on Waldon Hill, streets that have significant enclosed and outward views and the dramatic landscaped features of Rock Walk and the Royal Terrace Gardens with their linking paths and steps;
- ❖ the large number of visually important mature trees, as street features, and those which act as a foil to historic buildings, either as background or foreground landscape features;
- ❖ prominent limestone boundary walls which greatly enhance the townscape.

## **8. EXTENT OF LOSS, DAMAGE AND INTRUSION**

8.1 The character of the conservation area largely hinges on its significance as a discrete and distinctive entity within Torquay, whose open spaces and 19<sup>th</sup> century villas contain much original character. Some of the specific conservation problems that the area is subject to have been covered in earlier sections; those elements which are detrimental to the character or appearance of the conservation area can be briefly summarised as follows:

- ◆ inappropriate extensions, or additions, to the original mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings where little regard has been taken of the original architectural style, the scale, or proportion of the original, in particular to the height, openings and roof profiles;
- ◆ the amalgamation or linking together of detached villas, mainly in the Belgrave Road and Chestnut Avenue area;
- ◆ the loss of authentic or traditional roofing materials, especially the bitumen coating of natural slate, or its partial or complete replacement by artificial substitutes, mostly very poor imitations of the original;

- ◆ the loss, or overbuilding of, original elevational detail, especially on the larger hotels where the intrusion of large plate-glass entrances and horizontal fascias undermines the relationship between the fine detailing and vertical emphasis of the upper floors;
- ◆ the replacement of original sash windows and panelled doors with PVCu double-glazed units, having little regard for historic precedent or aesthetic sensibilities;
- ◆ a number of less well-maintained villas where long-term neglect may give rise to eventual pressure for demolition and redevelopment;
- ◆ the loss and poor repair of some limestone retaining and boundary walls;
- ◆ the extent of competing and disparate accommodation advertising and signage, as in Belgrave and Scarborough Roads – pre-determined design criteria could lessen the impact without diminishing the function;
- ◆ areas of open space which are suffering from neglect, or lack of maintenance, and where suitability for public access is now in question.

## 9 SUMMARY

9.1 The conservation area consists of a number of contrasting elements: the large green enclave of Torre Abbey and its park, which is well-protected and forms an important leisure and recreational open space at the heart of the coastal resort; the Belgrave and Croft Road, and Waldon Hill areas of detached villas reflecting the original fashionable status of Torquay. Many have been converted for holiday accommodation comprising one of the greatest concentrations of hotels anywhere in Britain. This has resulted in profound changes to much of the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century fabric, sometimes with poor results. Pevsner and Cherry commented in 1989 that while the urban terraces were quite handsome they were often *too altered or cluttered with signs to be enjoyable*. Nevertheless, as is illustrated above and below, there is a considerable proportion of surviving 19<sup>th</sup> century detail, some of which is clearly cherished.

9.2 Post-war development has resulted in the demolition of a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century villas and their replacement by seriously unsympathetic flat developments; most notable and most prominent are those on Waldon Hill such as Lytton House, an eight-storey monstrosity of the 1960s. As conservation area consent is required for demolition, it is unlikely that justification can continue to be made for the further redevelopment of villa sites. To ensure that the case for demolition cannot be substantiated in future, there needs to be a greater emphasis on proper maintenance and repair using traditional methods, especially on those key buildings which form an integral part of the historic built environment but do not yet have statutory protection.

- 9.3 It will require determination to ensure that the incremental erosion of historic detail does not continue. This will require the implementation of Article 4(2) Directions in order to protect historic frontage and boundary detail, which is not statutorily protected by listing. In parallel with the increased regulation it will be important, given the increasing number of all-year round hotel nights, to assist owners in minimising heat loss from doors and windows without resorting to PVCu replacements – English Heritage has addressed this most recently in an interim guidance note *Building Regulations – Balancing the needs for energy conservation with those of building conservation: an Interim Guidance Note on the application of Part L* (March 2004). Not only are such alterations detrimental to the historic character of individual buildings, they also create discordant elements to the street scene as a whole.

## 10 CONSERVATION AREA POLICIES

- 10.1 Conservation Area policies are addressed in the adopted local plan:

***Policy BE5 - Development within or affecting a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of that area.***

*The Policy outlines the Council's strategy for Conservation Areas. It includes issues such as the control of demolition, alterations and extensions, boundary features and design aspects, as well as the control of development in adjacent areas which could impact significantly on the townscape and environmental qualities within Conservation Areas. (The Built Environment 14.9)*

further it is recognised that:

*Roof materials, chimneys, cornices and mouldings, original windows and shopfronts, railings and boundary walls can all make an important contribution to the character of a Conservation Area. The Council will introduce Article 4(2) Directions to bring such items under normal development control. (The Built Environment 14.56)*

- 10.2 To frame specific policies within the Belgravia conservation area:

- (1) All unlisted buildings identified as key buildings or groups of buildings that contribute to the historic built environment should be included within Article 4(2) Directions to control inappropriate changes to the principal elevations.
- (2) Protect from detrimental loss all those key local features of special importance, which need to be safeguarded or enhanced, when determining development

proposals within the conservation area; and where in future, Conservation Area, or Article 4 consent may be required.

- (3) In tandem with Local Plan Policies, and other guidance issued by Torbay Council Give due consideration to other key local factors which make up the features of special importance, as set out in Section 7 when determining development proposals within the conservation area.



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## PHOTOGRAPHS

### **Torre Abbey: Medieval and Georgian**

- 1 Torre Abbey from the south west; the medieval 'Spanish' Barn is on the left and the the medieval Mohun Gate in the centre. However the main building (right) is overwhelmingly Georgian in character; the 3-storeys of the 18th century south front sits on the medieval vaults of the refectory undercroft. The pitch-and putt course lies within the former outer court of the abbey.
  
- 2 The west front of the Abbey is by contrast entirely medieval in character, with the exception of the dwarf crenellated walls which are early 19th century. The Abbot's Tower is early 13th century, with 14th century additions; the former Abbot's Hall, converted to a Roman Catholic chapel in the late-18th century is on the left.
  
- 3 The 14th century Mohun Gate from the west; the interior is medieval with very little later improvement.
  
- 4 The Spanish Barn (from the south) dates in part from the 13th century; replacement timbers in the roof certainly date from the late 15th century. The low bank on the left, and the one parallel to the barn's alignment are remnants of former service buildings within the monastic outer court.



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## **The Abbey Grounds**

- 5 The Abbey grounds are entered via a drive from the north east off the six-way junction of Falkland, Chestnut, Walnut, and Avenue Roads, and The King's Drive. The Gates were erected at the end of the 19th century after the pond which occupied this space and that of the two cottages (6 & 7) was drained. The limestone gate piers are topped by a pair of swan statues (the swan is the Cary crest); the gates are ornately wrought- and cast-iron. Close by are three listed estate cottages, all contemporary with the gates around 1900.
  
- 6 Behind the gates and the most picturesque of the group is The Cottage built for the Cary's abbey gardener in red breccia and limestone with terracotta dressings. With its deep eaves and ornately cusped barge-boards it is a very late example of Victorian 'Gothick'.
  
- 7 In front of the gates The Lodge sits on the road junction, a brick house with some tile-hung walls; its long tiled roof is in contrast to the slate one of The Cottage, seen behind on the left. The low limestone wall surrounds Torre Abbey on the north and west. The two buildings are not well supported by the accumulation of street furniture at this prominent location.
  
- 8 At the extreme south west corner of the conservation area, close to Torquay Station, the Recreation Ground's Entrance Pavilions and Gates date from 1910. The ornate octagonal pavilions with their complex lead-coated timber canopies were designed as ticket offices with gates for both pedestrians and vehicles.





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### **The Belgrave Road Area**

- 9 The façades of three later Victorian villas are subsumed into the Toorak Hotel on Chestnut Avenue.
  
- 10 Belgrave Road Hotels: No. 48 is central, flanked by parts of No 46 and 50. The modern projecting dormers above the cornice are much inferior in aesthetic to the earlier round-headed ones which have not altered the roof on either side.
  
- 11 The Cavendish Hotel is a former small stuccoed Italianate villa of the 1860s, facing west it was extended in the late-19th/early-20th century on both the north and south sides; a four-storey entrance tower rises above a Roman Doric porch. The semi-circular southern turret with its conical roof is one of the later additions. The modern single-storey grey building which is projected forward to align with the curtilage walls of the hotel does nothing to enhance the conservation area.
  
- 12 Mulberry House at the Scarborough/Croft Road junction is late 1860s; the rendered stacks with cornices are typical for the period, as are the deep eaves over ornamental brackets. This important corner site begins the series of similar frontage detail which continues along both streets.





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13-14 Adjoining to the west 9 Croft Road (13) has the same 4-panel door, sash windows, and window openings with the prominent keystone rising out of the ground floor window architraves. The colourful Scarborough Road terraces (14) preserve many attractive features but have been superficially marred by some inappropriate replacement doors and windows, the removal of some boundary features and excessive signage, yet the block of 15 remains a key group.

15-16 In Croft Road 13 villas were built between the late 1850s and 1870. All have survived, though a few have had unfortunate additions; nevertheless all are key buildings and two are listed: 21 Croft Road, The Allerdale Hotel (15) built as the villa Agincourt, and 23 Croft Road, Howden Croft Hotel (16) built as Valletta in 1859, both in an almost identical Italianate style. The many ornate period features include rusticated quoins and cornicing, hoodmoulds on brackets, and deep-bracketed eaves, Doric porches with double columns, projecting centre bays under pedimented gables, etc., and most distinctively, three-storey belvederes.



13.



14.



15.



16.

- 17 At the south end of Belgrave Road facing Vane Hill and Torquay harbour are the decorative cast-iron gates to Abbey Park; dating from around 1900 the globe finials house street-lighting.
- 18 Behind the gates lie the greens of Abbey Park; Waldon Hill with the over prominent flats of Lytton House is to the left.

#### **The St Luke's and the Waldon Hill Area**

- 19 On Waldon Hill most buildings on the south side of Warren Road show large modern extensions. The 1858 Abbey Crescent, part-occupied by the Palm Court Hotel, lies below the hill with the Toll House beyond, in the same stone as the cliff itself; Rock Walk lies above.
- 20 The rock-faced limestone Toll House of 1841 is contemporary with the building of Torbay Road below Waldon Hill. It has undergone various uses since collecting tolls here was discontinued in 1848, most recently as public conveniences. Now disused it has permission for a sympathetic conversion.





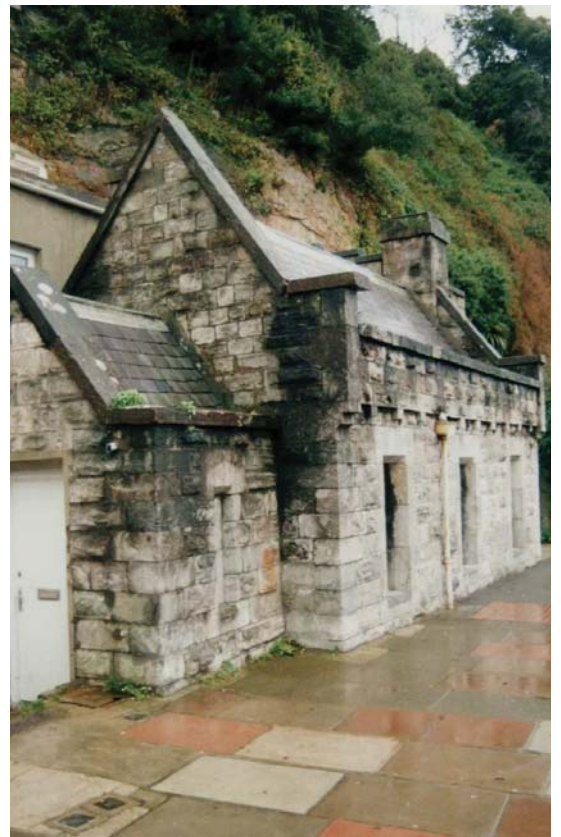
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- 21 Blomfield's St Luke's church is a significant landmark prominently visible from Belgravia and Chelston; completed in 1863 the design is unconventional, the north-west tower incorporates a polygonal porch and narthex, from which there are magnificent views. After fire damage in 1964 the interior was fully restored and is highly decorative.
- 22 The view westwards from Warren Road across Abbey Park and Torre Abbey Meadow to Chelston. The English Riviera Centre lies on the right edge, Torre Abbey is all but obscured by the trees beyond.
- 23-24 Among the best of the the south-facing converted villas on Warren Road are Bay Fort Mansions (23) and Marina Court (24).





21.



22.



23.



24.

- 25 The retaining wall between Warren Road and the gardens on the St Luke's Road side is often massive, attaining 3-4 metres in height; Cary Road which uniquely links both Roads, on the south side of the hill, has particularly impressive terracing on either side. Here the removal of cast-iron GPO letter box has left a forlorn scar.
- 26 At the bottom of St Luke's Road Nos 7-9 are an attractive Tudor Gothick terrace group; it is very similar to Matlock Terrace, Nos 1-3 in the Abbey Road conservation area, but is slightly later in the mid-1860s. Both have suffered the indignity of the removal of mullions, inappropriate PVCu replacement glazing and attic openings.
- 27-28 Between Nos 7-9 and St Luke's Church lies The Ferns, an eccentric 1850s group of three, whose high-sided gables and angled entrance porch across the L-shaped outer pair pre-dates what was later to become a typical Arts-and-Craft style set piece. The window glazing is a mixture of casements and sashes, inevitably some PVCu replacements have appeared, as have a number of unattractive dormers. The group's shared stable block has been converted for residential occupation as Shamba (28). It has been rendered in the uncoloured, roughcast 'Cary Park' style, but the treatment of the openings is very uninspired.





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28.

29-30 Towering above the Ferns is the Mapleton Hotel, after the villa of the same name; it is largely unspoilt; the gabled bay projecting yet further out between prominent rusticated quoins. The main block to the right has greater ornamentation than that of the smaller service wing to the left. The good and diverse grouping of early-to-mid Victorian buildings here takes full advantage of the topography of the hill and is of high visual and architectural interest.



29.



30.

31-37 Near the top of Waldon Hill there is a good group of five late 1850s villas on the south side of the St Luke's Road South: The Vicarage, Harold Court, Ellington Court Hotel, Villa Rosa and The Grange. All are compromised in some degree by the conversion for split occupation; gardens inevitably sacrificed to tarmac for hard-standing parking, and the part-removal of boundary walls to ease entry. Harold Court (31) is otherwise highly ornamented, with distinct two-light windows in a variety of openings: round-headed, round-shouldered or flat. Ellington (32, 33) suffers from flat roof extensions and a profusion of pipage on its frontage. Villa Rosa (34) similarly in conversion has extraneous pipes and a prominent fire escape. The Grange (35, 36) has some PVCu glazing on the Cary Road side, some loss of garden, the loss of chimney pots, and a poor secondary entrance at the rear. The trees flanking the villas along this stretch are magnificent when in full leaf adding much to the street scene (37). (Photos 35 -37 overleaf).





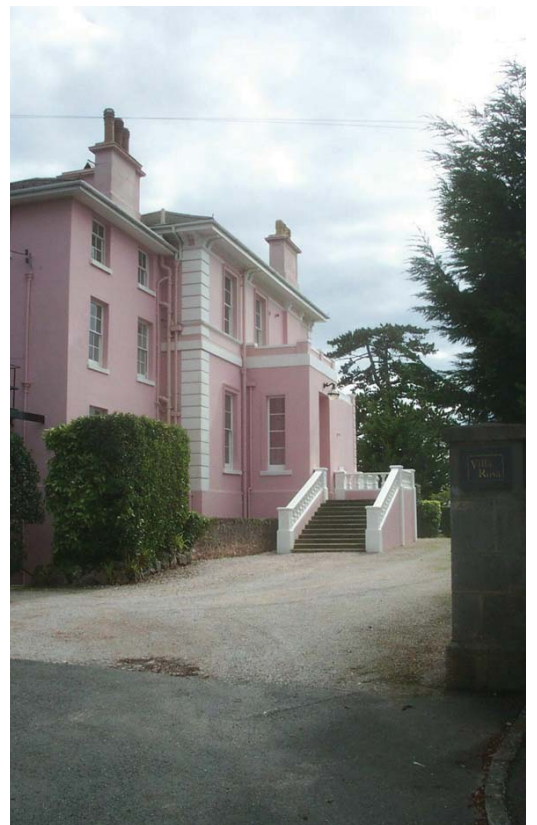
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36.



37.

38 Across Cary Road the former Torbay Clinic was the large and once magnificent villa Hendersyde, it is now in a state of disrepair.

39-40 Beyond the former clinic all is soulless on the seaward side, large blocks of flats: Lytton House, Waldon Court, Waldon House, and Kingslake Court occupy the former villa sites, the gardens to the road are now mere car parks. The trees of the Victorian layout are now quite mature and when in full leaf do much to mask the visual dullness.





38.



39.



40.

- 41 On St Luke's Road North the villas, and semi-detached villas, were built smaller because the precipitous cliff faces above Warren Road allowed little room, and later because they were less in demand than those facing out to sea. Five of these small villas and two semi-detached pairs between the eastern road-turn and Cary Road survive well, albeit with minor extensions and some PVCu replacement windows.
- 42-43 St Luke's Park sits at the apex of Waldon Hill connecting the two arms of St Luke's Road. Three mansion blocks of the four built in 1859-60 survive. Waldon Hall is the southernmost one (42) its bulk distinctive and denser than its contemporary neighbouring villas. When compared with its neighbour Walliscote the difference maintenance makes can be seen: Walliscote is on the left (43).



41.



42.



43.

- 44 In the 1990s the former semi-detached 1850s villa pair of Wanbro was restored as one as the Abbey Hall Hotel, using the original type of sash windows with narrow horizontal glazing bars, and four-panelled doors. The building is now re-divided again as a pair. Abbey Hall remains a very good illustration of what sensitive conservation and restoration work can achieve on houses of this type and period, and an example to the other villas.
- 45 Adjoining Mapleton (29-30), Sorrento preserves many of its original features including its sash windows despite being converted to flats; the upper windows sit in unusual round-shouldered openings.
- 46 Opposite Sorrento the original pedestrian entrance to Newcourt, the former villa of Shedden Cote, is blocked between the solid gate piers. Above utilitarian panel fencing is an unhappy addition to the fine boundary walls.





44.



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46.

- 47 The view from the top over Bay Fort Mansions (23) towards Livermead and Paignton.
- 48 Victorian Ceramic tiling and the natural limestone walls make a happy conjunction.



47.



48.

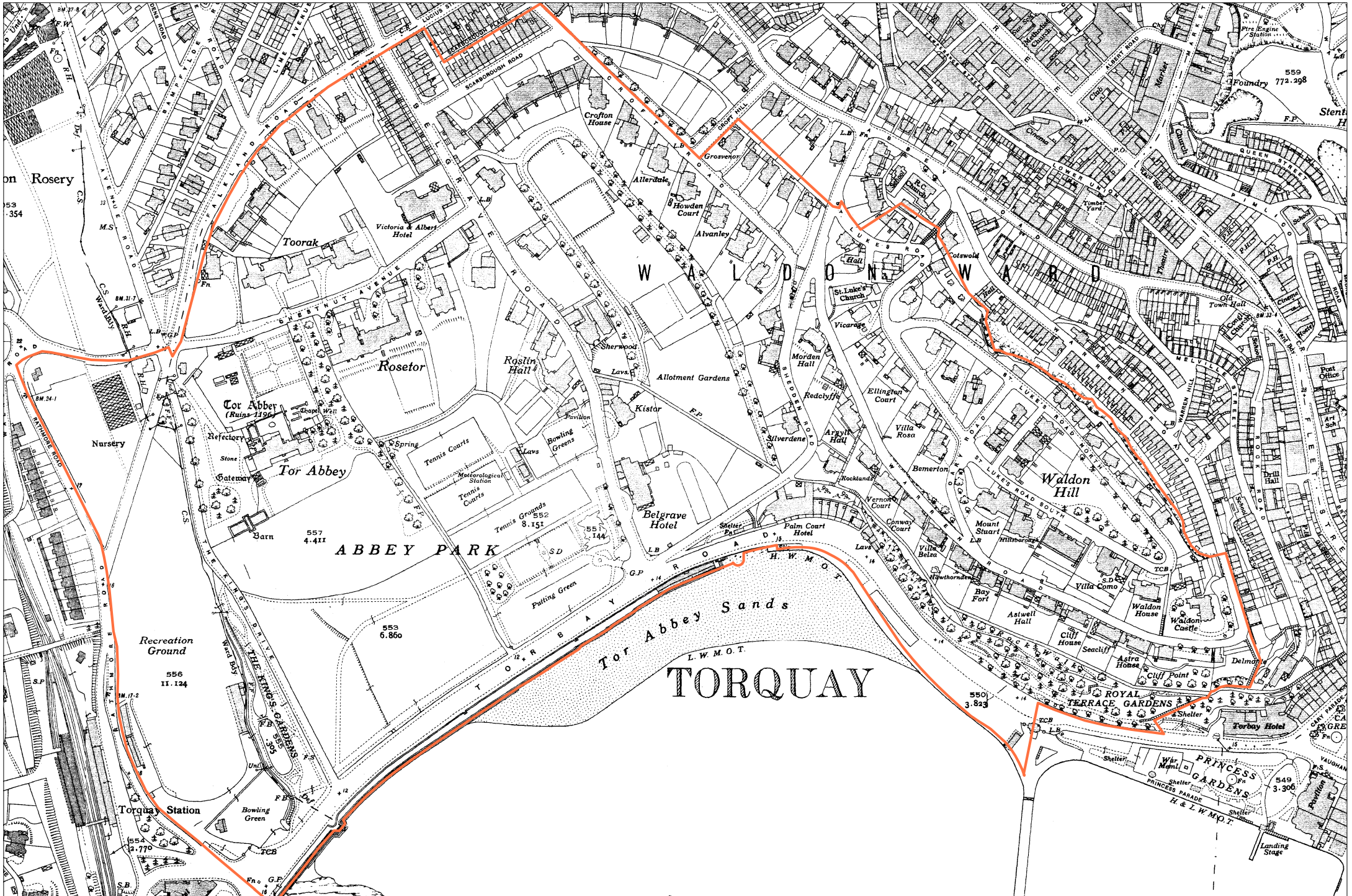




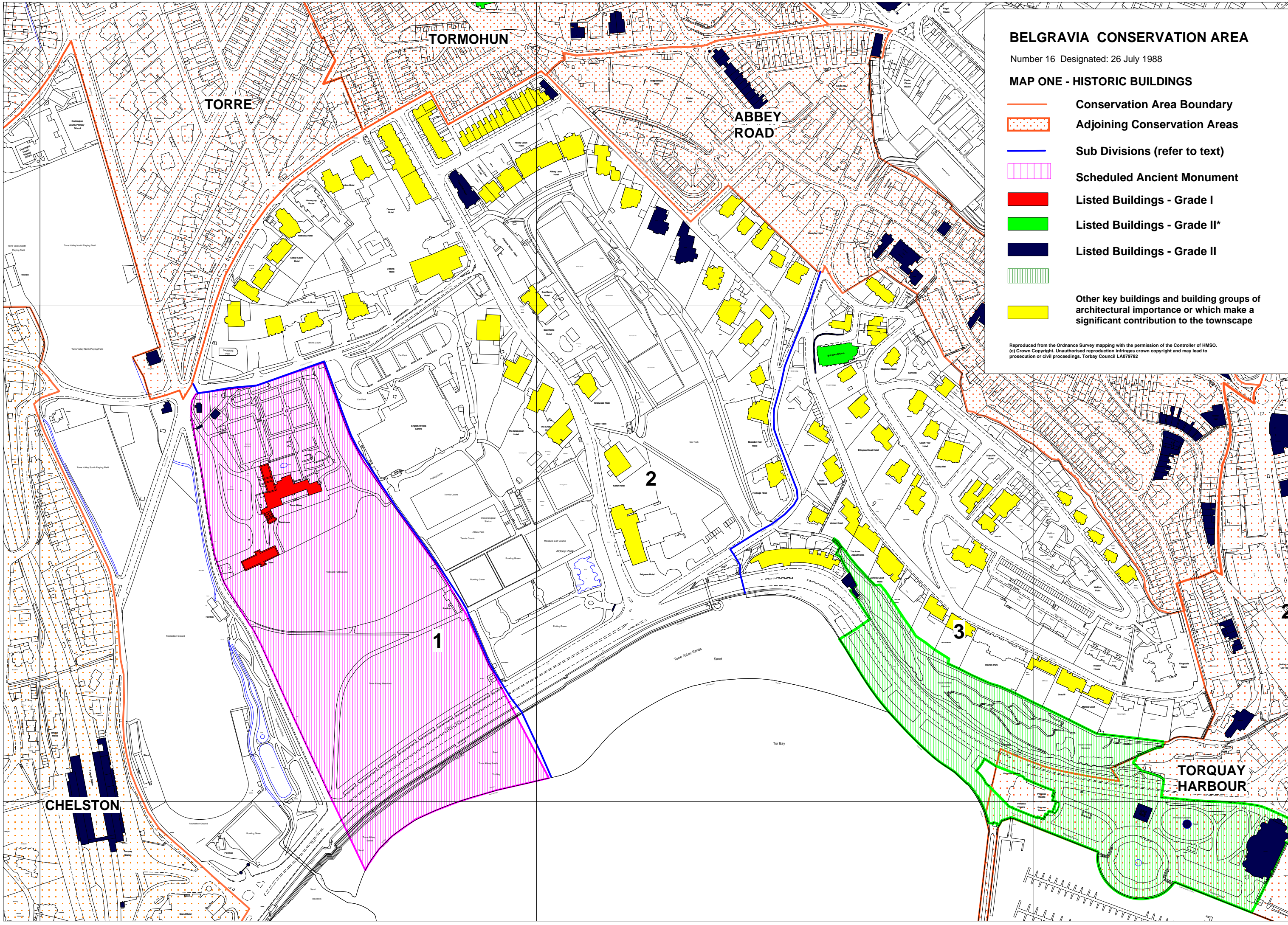












**BELGRAVIA CONSERVATION AREA**

Number 16 Designated: 26 July 1988

**MAP ONE - HISTORIC BUILDINGS**

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Adjoining Conservation Areas
- Sub Divisions (refer to text)
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Listed Buildings - Grade I
- Listed Buildings - Grade II\*
- Listed Buildings - Grade II
- Other key buildings and building groups of architectural importance or which make a significant contribution to the townscape

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TORMOHUN

TORREY

ABBEY ROAD

2

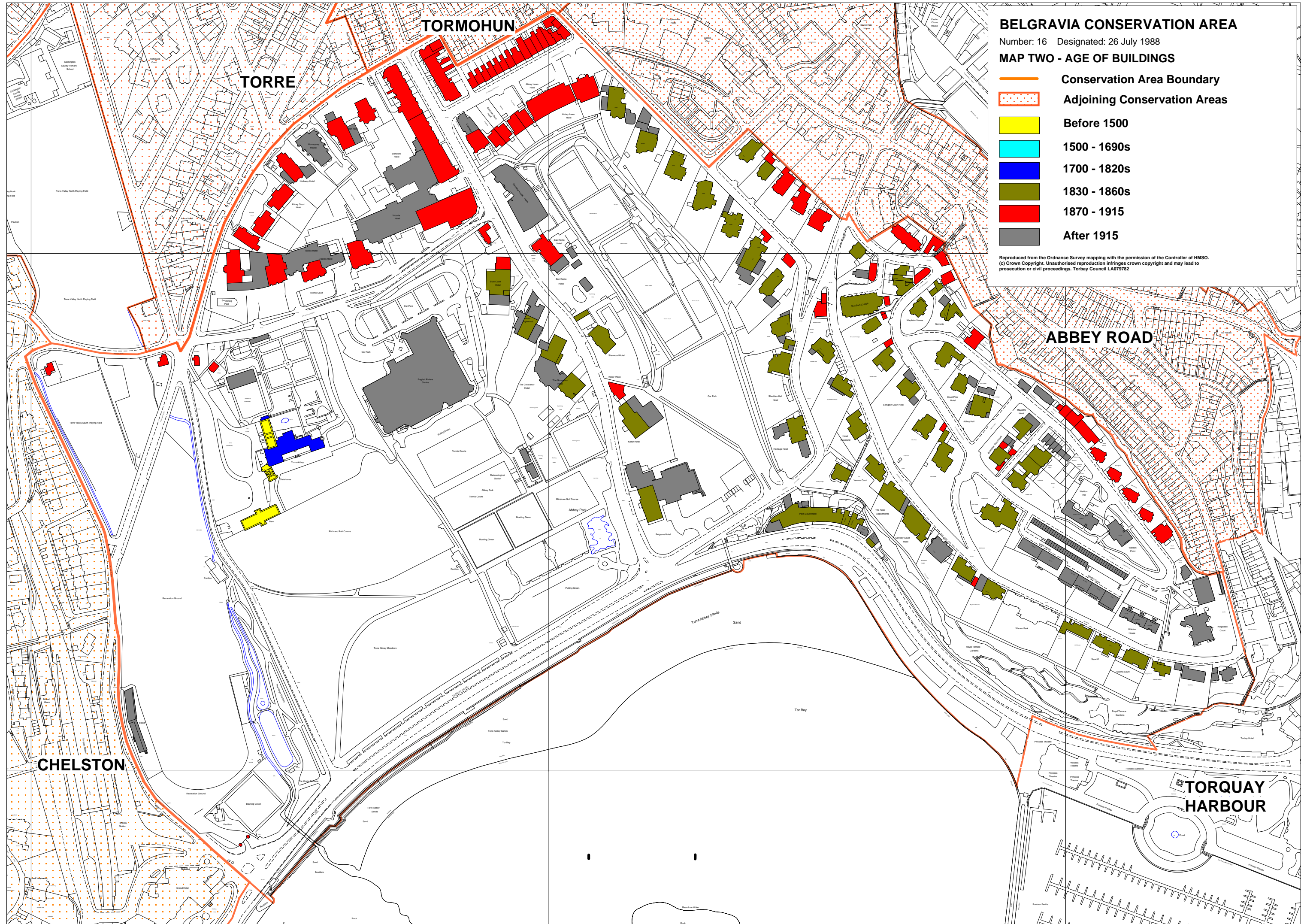
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CHELSTON

TORQUAY HARBOUR













# BELGRAVIA CONSERVATION AREA

Number: 16 Designated: 26 July 1988

## MAP TWO - AGE OF BUILDINGS

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Adjoining Conservation Areas
-  Before 1500
-  1500 - 1690s
-  1700 - 1820s
-  1830 - 1860s
-  1870 - 1915
-  After 1915

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CHELSTON

TORRE

TORMOHUN

ABBAY ROAD











TORQUAY HARBOUR



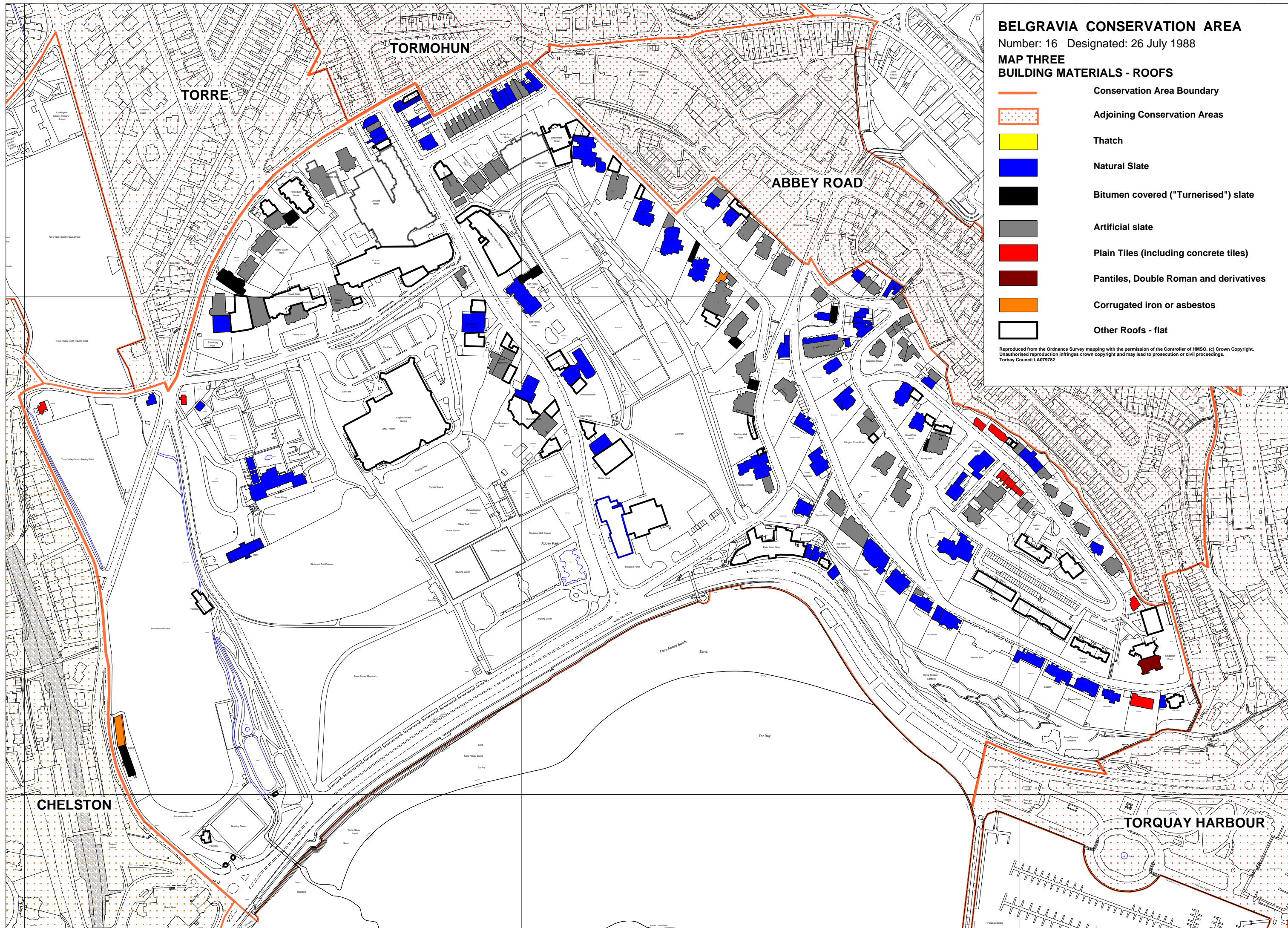
# BELGRAVIA CONSERVATION AREA

Number: 16 Designated: 26 July 1988

## MAP THREE BUILDING MATERIALS - ROOFS

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Adjoining Conservation Areas
-  Thatch
-  Natural Slate
-  Bitumen covered ("Turnerised") slate
-  Artificial slate
-  Plain Tiles (including concrete tiles)
-  Pantiles, Double Roman and derivatives
-  Corrugated iron or asbestos
-  Other Roofs - flat

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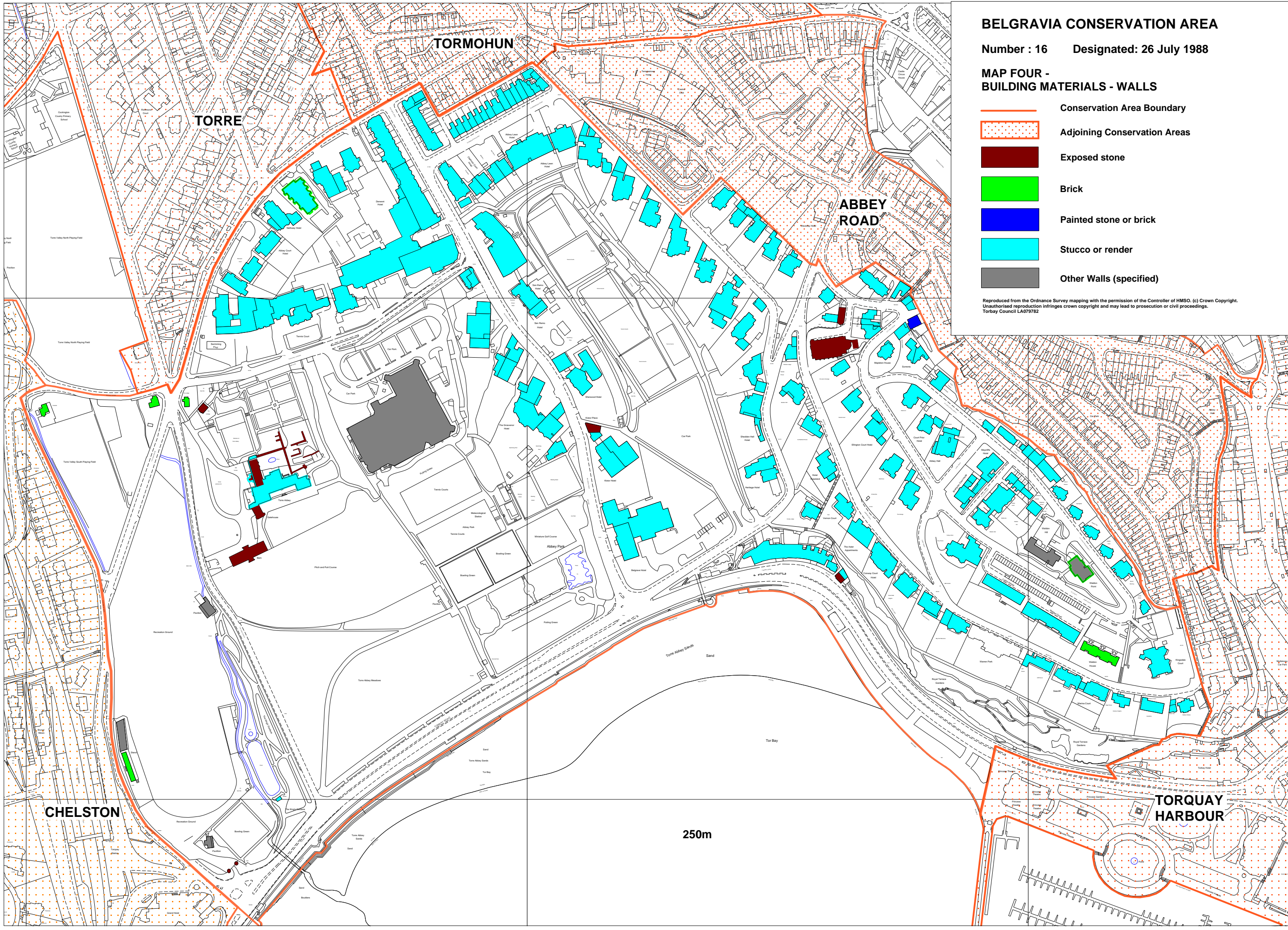
# BELGRAVIA CONSERVATION AREA

Number : 16    Designated: 26 July 1988

## MAP FOUR - BUILDING MATERIALS - WALLS

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Adjoining Conservation Areas
-  Exposed stone
-  Brick
-  Painted stone or brick
-  Stucco or render
-  Other Walls (specified)

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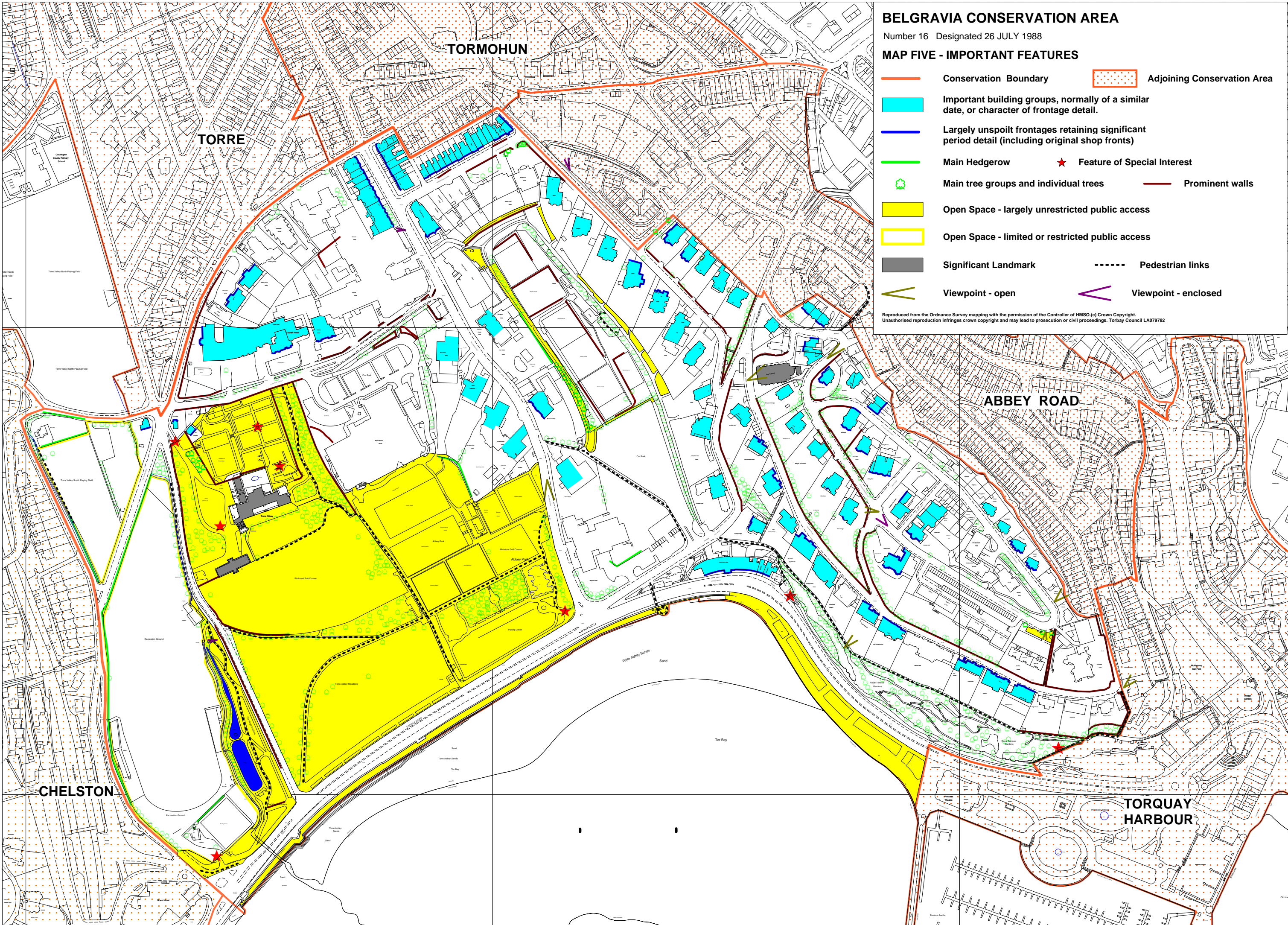
**BELGRAVIA CONSERVATION AREA**

Number 16 Designated 26 JULY 1988

**MAP FIVE - IMPORTANT FEATURES**

- Conservation Boundary
- Important building groups, normally of a similar date, or character of frontage detail.
- Largely unspoilt frontages retaining significant period detail (including original shop fronts)
- Main Hedgerow
- Main tree groups and individual trees
- Open Space - largely unrestricted public access
- Open Space - limited or restricted public access
- Significant Landmark
- Prominent walls
- Pedestrian links
- Viewpoint - open
- Viewpoint - enclosed
- Feature of Special Interest
- Adjoining Conservation Area

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TORRE

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