





Cary Park Conservation Area Character Appraisal





CARY PARK

CONSERVATION AREA

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Revised

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TORBAY COUNCIL

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CONTENTS

GOIVI		PAGE
1.	Location and Essential Characteristics	2
2	Historic Environment, Origins and Development	2
3	Character Areas 3.2 The Early Development 3.3 The Villas 3.4 Cary Park 3.5 The Later Development	4
4.	Architectural and Historic Qualities 4.1 Listed & Other Key Buildings 4.2 Building Form, Ornament & Use of Materials 4.3 Condition of Buildings & Boundary Walls	4 4 5 6
5.	Character and Relationship of Spaces	6
6	Green Landscape and Trees	7
7	The Setting and Features of Special Importance	7
8	Extent of Loss, Damage and Intrusion	8
9	Summary	8
10	Conservation Area Policies	9
	Bibliography	11
РНОТ	OGRAPHS	
EARL' - -	Y EDITION ORDNANCE SURVEY1: 2500 SCALE MAPS (not to scale) Ordnance Survey County Series First Edition surveyed 1862-1887 Ordnance Survey County Series Second Edition surveyed 1904 Ordnance Survey County Series Third Edition surveyed 1933	
APPR	AISAL MAPS	
- - -	Map One: Historic Buildings Map Two: Age of Buildings Map Three: Building Materials - Roofs Map Four Building Materials - Walls Map Five Important Features	

1 LOCATION AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- 1.1 Cary Park, lies some 2 km (1½ miles) north of the centre of Torquay, and is one of the smaller conservation areas of Torbay; its northwest boundaries adjoin the St. Marychurch conservation area on the west side of Cary Park, to the south of Tessier Gradens, and between York and Palermo Roads. Two isolated undesignated pockets lie between the conservation areas. At its northeast corner Cary Park is separated from the Babbacombe Downs conservation area by only 65m at its closest point on St Albans Road; another larger undesignated pocket lies between the three conservation areas these undesignated pockets detract from the coherence of this St Marychurch group as a whole. Cary Park, which gives its name to the conservation area, was laid out in the 1890s as a public park, become the focal point of development which took place largely between 1890 and 1915, but also with some inter-war infill certainly later than that of St Marychurch itself.
- 1.2 The main landmark is the prominent Parish Church of All Saints' built 1868-1874 for the newly formed parish of Babbacombe to the designs of William Butterfield. Cary Avenue and Cary Park were subsequently laid out in alignment with an earlier avenue of trees apparently designed to provide landscaped vistas towards the church.
- 1.3 Detached or semi-detached villas now predominate in a mature landscaped setting. The development of a substantial proportion as hotels and residential care homes has led to a number of former villas being considerably extended or merged together. The massive block of the Trecarn and Oswalds Hotel which lies in one of the pockets between the Cary Park and St Marychurch conservation areas is perhaps the most obvious and unfortunate example it occupies the sites of 4 former villas and 5 curtilages all such outsize developments date from the latter half of the 20th century. Within the conservation area itself there have been similar changes: demolition has occured on the south side of Cary Park: the Anchorage Hotel has subsumed two villas; and the single apartment block of Castle Court has replaced two demolished villas, though here the earlier form of development is reflected to an extent in the type of materials used.

2 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Historically the land area comprising Cary Park belonged to both the parish and manor of St Marychurch. There has been human activity and settlement in the St. Marychurch area since prehistoric times. Within the parish and no more than 750m southeast of the conservation area boundary at All Saints' Church is the remarkably well preserved prehistoric field system of Walls Hills. The series of individual fields and their boundary banks are survivals of what will have been a very much larger field system dating from the Late Bronze- and Early Iron Ages c.1200-800 BC. The urban centre of St Marychurch has its origins in the Saxon settlement from the 8th century onwards; the pre-Conquest manorial structure, recorded in Domesday, was probably established here by the 10th century. In 1086 the Domesday Book recorded two manors at St Marychurch;

the area of Cary Park is entirely contained in that of *SCÆ MARIÆ cerce* which can be identifieed as St Marychurch proper.

- 2.2 The present urban topography reflects an entirely 19th century pattern of settlement. An estate map compiled in 1775 for the Carys, who had been manorial overlords since 1595, shows the whole area of what is now Cary Park as part of what was then still a wholly medieval field pattern. Almost all land north of Warbro Road was divided into narrow north-south aligned strip fields, with some larger east-west fields, which may have included later enclosures, west of Reddenhill Road. Interestingly the house plots and curtilages of York Crescent one of the undesignated pockets which lie between the two conservation areas of St Marychurch and Cary Park actually occupy medieval strips which were not even divided into fields but simply separated by narrow baulks.
- 2.3 Before 1880 the only buildings in the conservation area were All Saint's Church and the three stuccoed villas of Elmcourt, St. Margaret's and Clevelands immediately to the south; the group occupying the whole of one of the fields shown in 1775. The three villas have all since been re-named Choice, Southborne and Cary Tower and much extended. A long avenue of trees, some of which survives in part, extended westwards, from the west end and towerering spire of Butterfield's new church, to join Manor Road, St. Marychurch.
- 2.4 The spine of the conservation area now consists of three separate areas of public open space linked by Cary Avenue. This part of Torquay developed on land owned by the manorial family, the Carys, who lived at Torre Abbey 1660-1930. The Carys were, with the Palks of Torwood Grange and the Mallocks of Cockington the influential local landowners. Between them the two families of Cary and Palk were responsible, after the initial reluctance of the former, for the bulk of mid-and-late Victorian development of Torquay. The origin of Cary Park for public use is recorded on a block of Petitor Marble:

This Park, the generous gift of Robert S. S. Cary Esq., was dedicated to the public for ever, in the 60th year of the reign of Queen Victoria 1897.

An oak tree was planted in the park in August 1901 to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII; and in March 1904 a fountain was erected as a memorial to R S S Cary by his widow.

2.5 Although the scale of building is more modest, and less elaborate, than some of the earlier villa developments in Torquay, such as those in the Lincombes or Warberries, the conservation area is a very well laid out example of late Victorian town planning in a spaciously designed landscaped setting.

3 CHARACTER AREAS

3.1 The conservation area contains discrete areas that are either largely residential, or consist entirely of public open space. Four sub-areas may be considered to have a distinct identity, although within a relatively small conservation area each is visually closely interrelated. These are indicated on Appraisal Map One and are:

3.2 (1) The Early Development

The Parish Church and three stuccoed villas of c.1870 at the east end of Cary Avenue – one, Clevelands now Cary Tower, was formerly the Vicarage.

3.3 (2) The Villas

The detached and semi-detached villas fronting the western part of Cary Park, and those in Cary Avenue, Guestland, Palermo, Aveland and St. Alban's Roads.

3.4 (3) *Cary Park*

The areas of public open space, including the Bowling green, Tennis Courts and Children's Playground.

3.5 (4) Later Development

An enclave which includes a fine Edwardian terrace of 14 houses at Churchway and three semi-detached pairs of c.1930 opposite which front onto St Anne's Road. Again the group occupies most of one of the 1775 fields.

4 ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITIES

4.1 LISTED & OTHER KEY BUILDINGS

- 4.1.1 The only listed building in the conservation area is William Butterfield's (grade I) All Saints' Church built of snecked local grey limestone with yellow sandstone dressings between 1865 and 1874. Pevsner describes the church as one of the architect's most important churches but adds that the exterior is 'disappointingly reticent'. Without doubt then its most important quality is the richness of the interior detail, especially the polychromatic use of stone, brick, tiles and local marbles.
- 4.1.2 The pattern of uniform developments provides the area with a strong sense of unity with no individual building other than All Saints' especially dominant. The best buildings are generally those whose original elevations have been least affected by subsequent adaptation or enlargement. Of the earlier stucco villas Southbourne (St Margarets) and Cary Tower (Clevelands) in Cary Avenue largely retain their original 1870s frontages, as does the late 1880s Glen Devon in St. Alban's Road; all have their sash windows with a characteristic single horizontal glazing bar.

- 4.1.3 Elsewhere in the conservation area most of the remaining original elevational detail is concentrated in those villas fronting the eastern end of Cary Park, and four along Aveland Road: a semi-detached pair, Holmbury and Yarboro; and the two detached villas to the north, Avonwick, and Aveland Court. On the north side of Palermo Road only the villa of Westhome, and Wrenwood one half of a semi-detached pair, retains their original scale and detail, and in St. Alban's Road the former Zephyrs Hotel, originally a semi-detached pair of c.1900 is almost entirely original.
- 4.1.4 Along the south side of Palermo Road the 5 original villas well display the characteristic reddish rough-cast finish and raised render bands of this area. All have their principal façade facing south across the Park; unfortunately all have also been greatly enlarged with extensions the equal of the original block added as lateral wings: two have doubled with a single wing, while the three others have trebled in size with wing blocks either side. Fortunately the finish is generally sympathetic to the original build.
- 4.1.5 At the eastern end of the conservation area is a block bounded by St Albans, St Anne's and Reddenhill Roads, and Viscount Mews. Here an eclectic and interseting group of houses has grown up between 1880 and the 1930s. The mix includes the single detached villa of Glen Devon; two semi-detached pairs including Zephyrs of c.1900; a very attractive terrace group of 14 houses of around 1910 on Churchway, characterised by long front gardens divided by hedges and front boundary walls of stone, with brick-and-stone gate piers; and three 1930s semi-detached pairs facing All Saints', all subtly different in detail and ornamentation. All architecturally and visually rewarding.

4.2 BUILDING FORM, ORNAMENT & USE OF MATERIALS

- 4.2.1. The conservation area displays a range of building styles and materials which include not only the traditional mid-Victorian use of stucco, but the somewhat later and more ornate High Victorian styles using a wider range of materials. These include brick, and a natural reddish coloured rough-cast finish to the walls with smooth render bands around the openings which is largely peculiar to this part of Torquay.
- 4.2.2 Most villas are two-storey whose original features include both roof hips and gables under slate, with rendered stacks with cornices; the few brick examples have oversailing courses. There is generally an absence of dormers, but the area has acquired some unsatisfactory later flat roof additions. Large double-hung sash windows, some forming bays, predominate, and these are most at risk of replacement. Ornamental detail is considerable and, in addition to the local render detail, variously includes early features such as rusticated quoins, deep eaves with cornices and semi-circular openings; and later features such as crested ridge tiles, cast-iron ornament and decorative brick dressings to some openings.
- 4.2.3 The extensive use of the locally quarried Devonian grey limestone rubble is used almost exclusively for the many boundary walls, contrasting with the villas. The original gate

piers are usually, in contrast to the walls, mainly of brick and red sandstone topped by over-sailing courses and pyramidal caps.

4.3 CONDITION OF BUILDINGS & BOUNDARY WALLS

- 4.3.1 A large majority of buildings are well cared for and maintained, and a encouraging proportion of the dwellings retain their original sash windows, although many doors have been replaced. Nevertheless PVCu double-glazing is starting to make inroads, which if not checked will cumulatively damage a significant element of the conservation area character. The former semi-detached pair of Zephyrs in St. Alban's Road, after a long period of vacancy and deterioration is being restored and its original detail retained; by maintaining the original architectural character the conservation area as a whole is being conserved.
- 4.3.2 Some sections of boundary walls are in poor condition, and in places have been lowered, broken back or removed completely to permit vehicular access. Where sandstone is combined with brick, as in some gate piers, unfortunate patching with a hard cementitious mortar is becoming increasingly common. All such actions are deleterious.

5 LOCAL CHARACTER AND RELATIONSHIP OF SPACES

- 5.1 The most locally distinctive feature is the strong sense of unity provided by the extensive limestone boundary walls, and the distinctive finish of red rough-cast contrasting strongly with the smooth white render around openings. The formal street layout on level ground in a rich landscape setting, which incorporates extensive public open space, is a particular local feature and highly prized by local residents. There is an especially attractive relationship between buildings and the many mature trees, where neither tends to dominate and each complements the other.
- 5.2 The overall character of the conservation area depends upon the interplay between public open spaces and private gardens, and the generally extensive cover of trees and shrubs. The formal park setting contrasts with the pleasantly informal arrangement of many of the villas, some have been designed to take advantage of significant south-facing aspects, such as those on the south side of Palermo Road where the frontages face Cary Park.
- 5.3 The generous provision of open space and the lack of through traffic with several off-road footpath links, often between streets and through or bordering Cary Park, provide the pedestrian with a variety of options in a largely traffic-free environment. What the area lacks in topographical variety, found elsewhere in much of Torquay, is more than compensated for by a landscaped setting which is an integral part of the character of the conservation area.

6 GREEN LANDSCAPE AND TREES

- 6.1 In arboricultural terms the conservation area differs from much of Torquay in the high proportion of deciduous trees, especially in the areas of public open space. Within the western loop of Cary Park there are some especially fine specimen trees, for example horse chestnut (aesculus hippocastanum), lime (tiliaceae) and beech (fagus sylvatica). These probably date from the original late 19th century planting. There are also a considerable number of street trees, especially in Devons' Road and Cary Avenue. These include more recent plantings; close to All Saints' church are several planes (platanus hispanica) which are perhaps becoming over large, although the species is known to remain healthy for up to 300 years.
- 6.2 The area is not without evergreens: there are, for example, pines to the rear of Castle Court, two large cypress (cypressus macrocarpa) fronting Aveland Road, and several yews (taxus baccata) close to the Palermo Road entrance to Cary Park; clipped hedges are also a distinctive feature bordering much of Cary Park.

7. THE SETTING AND FEATURES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

- 7.1 The conservation area forms an extension to similar, if somewhat earlier villa developments within the St. Marychurch conservation area. Immediately to the north and east is the centre of Babbacombe which grew rapidly in the closing two decades of the 19th century; this is now the local commercial centre largely based on Babbacombe Road and Reddenhill Road, the rear of the latter forming the eastern boundary of the conservation area. To the south and west is Plainmoor, an extensive area of late-19th to early-20th century artisan terraced housing, built to a relatively high density and typical of the period.
- 7.2 The special character of Cary Park, and the elements which make an essential contribution to the conservation area can be summarised as follows:
 - the rich almost parkland setting, and several areas of attractive open space;
 - the relationship of the 19th century villas to the many landscape features which provide the quality of a late Victorian garden suburb, with the unusually large amount of public open space;
 - an attractive, well integrated and complementary 20th century collection of terraces and semi-detached pairs;
 - the high survival of original detail and finish to historic buildings, which is an important reflection of the style and layout of the late 19th century development;

- the retention of most original boundary features, including gate-piers and some surviving ironwork, including early street lamps;
- the network of connecting footpaths, many well-segregated from traffic which provide a relatively safe environment for informal recreation;
- the variety of mature trees and shrubs able to flourish in a sheltered location.

8 EXTENT OF LOSS, DAMAGE AND INTRUSION

- 8.1 The damage to the high visual quality of the conservation area is mainly to the over-large extensions to original existing villas, where the original scale, proportions and architectural detailing have not been adequately taken into account, and the conversions to hotels. There are a several other factors that are also further eroding the character within the conservation area:
 - ♦ the tendency for an increasing commercial use, or the adaptation of former residential units, resulting in a greater risk of loss of original character;
 - ♦ the threat to the character and setting of the buildings through the loss of their original features, such as windows, doors, boundary walls and entrance features;
 - the deteriorating condition of some boundary walls; unsatisfactory repair methods not in accordance with traditional techniques, and the use of inappropriate replacement materials – such as the use of unsuitable hard cementitious mortars in instances where red sandstone is in evidence;
 - the predominant use of artificial materials when carrying out roof repairs;
 - the apparent lack of available local stone for repairs and replacements;
 - the use of non-porous and non-traditional materials for replacing stucco or render;
 - indications that some trees in public places may be nearing the end of their natural life span, or are becoming over-mature in relation to their surroundings. Consideration should be given to the under-planting of mature trees in order to maintain the landscape character of the area.

9. SUMMARY

9.1 Cary Park is one of the more noteworthy late Victorian suburbs of Torquay. It has strong associations with the Cary family, one of the two great landowning families who were instrumental in the successful development of the town and helped to bring about its

importance as a leading holiday resort. Cary Park was developed some two to three decades later than most of the 19th century suburbs to the north and east of the town centre developed by the Palk family.

- 9.2 The villas are of a size and density that places them somewhere towards the lower end of the genre in terms of their social status at the time of their development. Few villas entirely retain their original profile, although some appear little altered from certain angles and there is still much noteworthy historic detail in evidence. The historic integrity of the conservation area is delicately balanced and further erosion of original features can only be prevented by special development control measures that restrict permitted development rights in the case of any alterations to elevational and boundary features.
- 9.3 In the case of more recent development greater care has been taken to ensure that new extensions retain the height, scale, roof profile and elevational detail of the original villas, for example along the south side of Palermo Road. Likewise the flats at Castle Court, although these are more dominant in terms of mass and height than the villas they replaced, do have regard to the original wall coverings, and have preserved most boundary walls while utilising new brick gate piers similar to the original designs.
- 9.4 The conservation area is typified by freedom from heavy traffic, and a generous provision of open spaces on level ground, much used for recreation and by pedestrians as a through walk. This has enabled the area to retain an atmosphere of seclusion offering public enjoyment that was clearly intended to be a special feature of the original layout.
- 9.5 In 1950 Pevsner could write 'much of Torquay retains that feeling of garden city which had been an English ideal ever since Nash's original plans for Regent's Park'. In much of the town that feeling has since been compromised by later large-scale and intrusive development. While a number of villas have suffered visually damaging alterations, Cary Park has avoided widespread demolition and redevelopment. With its strong landscape features, and the striking landmark feature of All Saints' Church, the garden city concept still holds true in Cary Park to a considerable extent. It should be maintained now, and enhanced as opportunities arises in the future.

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 Cary Park conservation area:

- (1) All unlisted buildings identified as key buildings or groups of buildings that contribute to the historic built environment (see Map One) should be included within Article 4(2) Directions to control inappropriate changes to the principal elevations.
- (2) Protect from detrimental loss all the significant features, identified in sections 7 and 9 as contributing to the local character and special importance, which need to be safeguarded or enhanced, and where in future, Conservation Area or Article 4 consent may be required.
- (3) Give due consideration to other key local factors which make up the features of special importance, such as the building groups of merit just outside the periphery of the conservation area and the extension of the existing boundary.

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The Church

1, 2 The focal point of the conservation area, at the east end of a long tree-lined vista (1) is All Saints', the parish church of Babbacombe which is one of the most important churches of the eminent Victorian architect, William Butterfield. The nave dates from 1865-7, the east end and tower from 1872-4; the view from the southeast shows the elaborate porch (2).

Building Forms

Most of the conservation area is a late-19th century planned development of large villas within extensive gardens, many of which contain mature trees. There is a distinctive Cary Park type, characterised by a natural reddish coloured rough-cast finish, sometimes with pebble-dash, with smooth render bands around the openings. Other unifying features are the slate roofs with crested ridge tiles; sash windows with characteristic one-over-one glazing panes. The ubiquitous brick, or brick-and-stone, gate piers, combined with the local grey rubble-limestone boundary walls enhance the conservation area's distinctive character.

- 3 Cary Tower on the south side of the church is the former vicarage and one of the three earliest residential buildings within the conservation area.
- Glen Devon, a late 1880s villa in St.Albans Road which exhibits attractive rusticated quoins, bands, string courses, and moulded cornices, also retains most of its original features including doors and sash windows. The glazed conservatory while not ideal makes an attempt to fit with its parent building.
- At the east end of Cary Park the villa of Walderlea has been relatively little altered; however the replacement stone gate entrance and wall skirting the driveway in modern moulded materials not only erodes historic character but is ugly to boot.
- On the south side of Palermo Road there are 5 villas with the characteristic reddish rough cast finish, they all have their principal façade facing south across the Park. Unfortunately all have been greatly enlarged: two have doubled, the others have trebled in size, yet the finish is not entirely antipathetic to the original. The barbed-wire topped wall which replaces the hedge in front of Haven Court is an affront to the sensibilities of any park user.





2.





3. 4.





5. 6.

- Now 12 flats the villa of Rathlin has equal sized extensions on either wing, the original build being marked out by the rusticated quoins; the linking balconies are a distinct failure in design.
- 8 Parkside villa is sub-divided into 11 flats, its western extension is less dominant than Rathlin's.
- At the corner of St Albans and St Anne's Roads are two semi-detached pairs of c.1900; the northernmost of the pair has been turned into one and run as a hotel, Zephyrs, which retains much original detail. Both pairs after some years of neglect were being restored in the spring of 2005, the southernmost pair being converted to flats.
- Contained within the block of St Albans, St Anne's and Reddenhill Roads, and Viscount Mews is Churchway, a very attractive terrace group of 14 houses of around 1910. All are characterised by long front gardens divided by hedges and front boundary walls of stone, with brick-and-stone gate piers. One plot has breached its wall to utilise the garden space for parking. Any subdivision of the properties into flats would doubtless lead to further breaches; this would be highly damaging to the character of the conservation area.
- 11-12 With their rears to Churchway and frontages to St Anne's Road and All Saints' three 1930s semi-detached pairs add much to the interest of this mixed block. Each pair has quite individual decoration and ornament. Nos 37 & 39 show raised escutcheon panels, bands and small canted bays (11), 37 has replacement windows; Nos 45 & 47 have rounded bays and attractive Dutch gables, No 43 to the far right, has a pedimented timbered front gable (12).





7. 8.









11.

Castle Court, a 1980s block of flats on the south side of Cary Park occupies the site of two former villas. The design closely reflects the use of materials in the adjoining original villas; the retention of the stone walls and the building of new brick entrance piers of a similar scale and style lessens the impact of the new building, allowing it to fit within the historic context.

Details

- The cast-iron ornamental elements of a balcony at the rear of a villa in Cary Park, taking advantage of a south-facing elevation.
- 15 A fine glazed double-porch, with multi-coloured and differential-sized panes, at 13 & 14 Churchway.

Street Furniture and Landscaping

The central part of the conservation area consists of a spacious avenue including two oval areas of open space; the avenue pre-dates all development with the exception of the church itself. The landscaping was complete by 1897 when Cary Park was dedicated for public use in commemoration of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee.

- 16-17 Throughout the conservation area are some fine specimen trees: a beech tree in Cary Avenue (16); a maple and a lime at Palermo Road near its corner with St Albans Road (17).
- 18-20 Street furniture is as much an integral part of the quality of the conservation area as are the buildings and landscaping. Some good examples of blue ceramic-tile street names survive, although this example in Stanley Road is somewhat faded and chipped (18). A cast-iron public bench in Cary Park, which is in need of some restoration, is an original feature (19). This typical cast-iron base of a street lamp from a local foundry embossed *T L Harding & Sons Torquay* is in Aveland Road (20).







16.





Threats

- 21-22 Flat roof extensions to the villas that have not been converted into flats, but function as hotels are always a detraction and diminution in overall architectural quality: here at the Cary Avenue frontage of the Anchorage Hotel the raised storey under a flat roof is both dominant and ugly (21); the ground floor projection at Stamford House in Palermo Road is wrong from any point of view and degrades its mirrored twin, Wrenwood (22).
- 23-24 The grey limestone rubble walls (23) tend to lose mortar especially towards their base; the use of cement is far less damaging here than when applied to sandstone walls, but soft lime-based mortars are always preferable. The deterioration of the sandstone used in this gate pier is probably due to the use of hard cementitious mortar (24). Restoration using matching replacement stone and a softer lime-based mortar, is a much more satisfactory option than demolition and reconstruction in unsuitable modern materials, (5).





20.





21. 22.





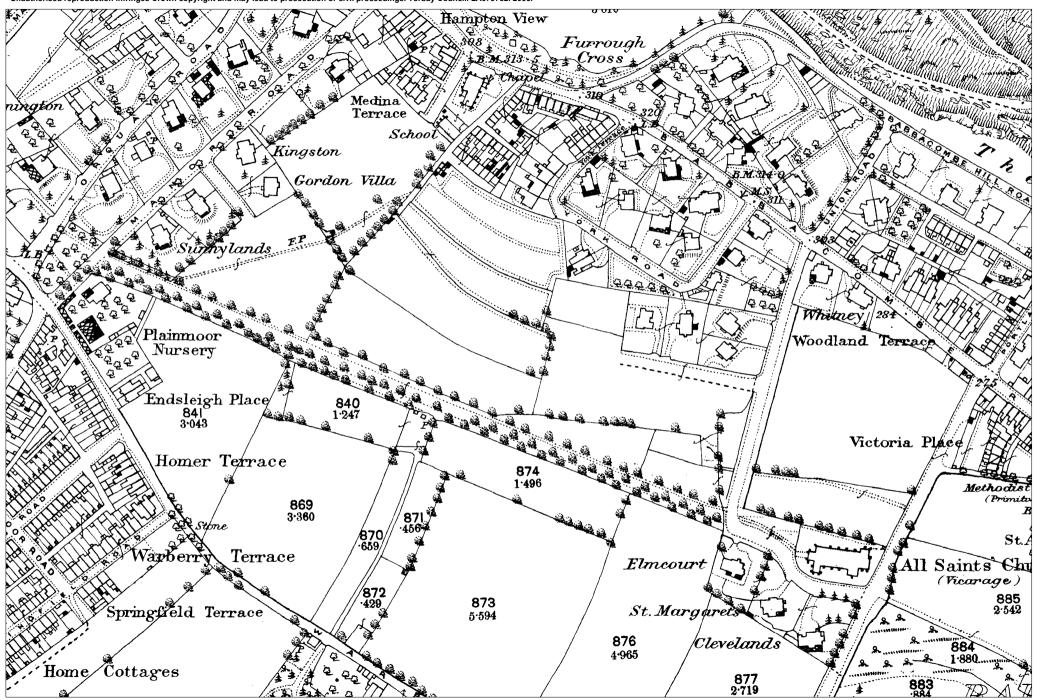
23. 24.

Potential

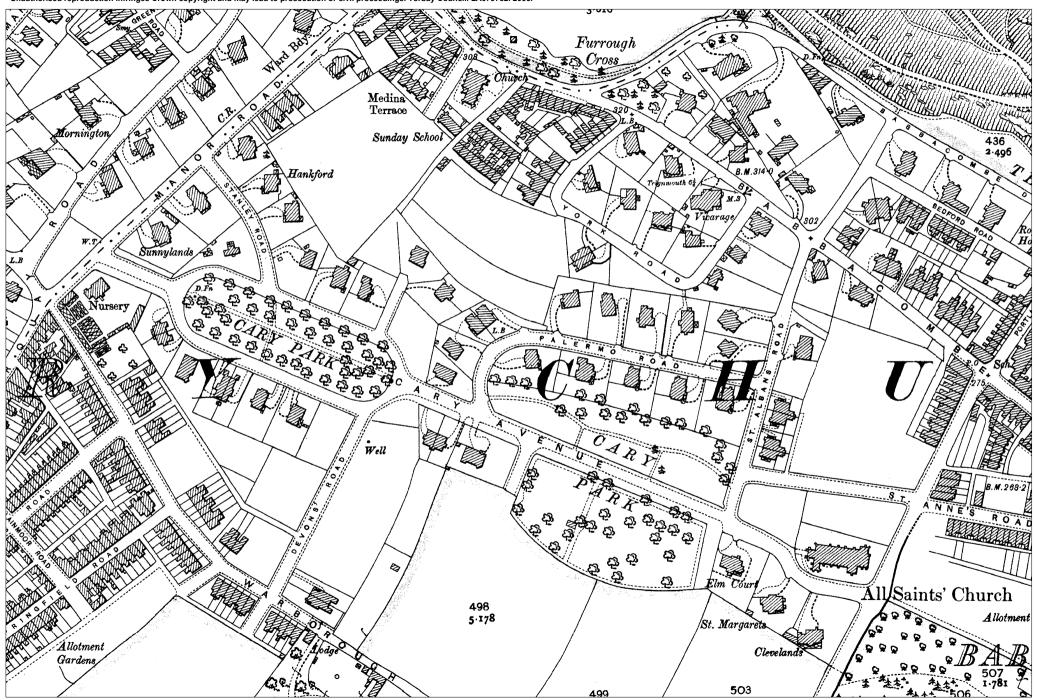
These four 1880s 3-storey shops with accomodation over, lie on the east side of Reddenhill Road, the commercial centre for Cary Park. These with the 2-storey shops on the west side of the road and the 1880s/1890s stone-faced cottages on the south side of St Anne's Road could be considered for inclusion within the conservation area. The boundarys of both Cary Park and Babbacombe Downs conservation areas are somewhat arbitary where they lie closest to each other; both would benefit by the drawing of a contiguous boundary in the St Anne's Road area.



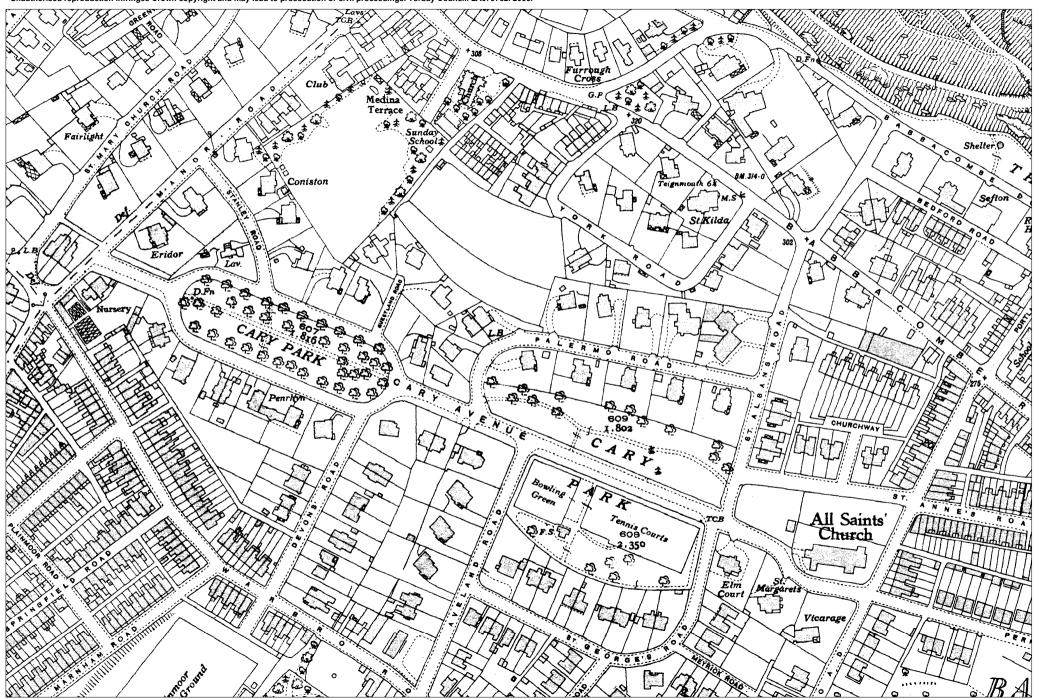
25.



CARY PARKOrdnance Survey County Series 1:2500surveyed 1862-87



CARY PARKOrdnance Survey County Series 1:2500surveyed1904



CARY PARKOrdnance Survey County Series 1:2500surveyed 1933

