19 Mill Street

Exploring Abergavenny

EXPLORING ABERGAVENNY

For several years the Abergavenny and District Civic Society has been studying the streets, spaces and buildings of Abergavenny and Mardy outside the town centre. This process is known as 'characterisation', defined by the Welsh Government as 'capturing the local distinctiveness by identifying how places have been shaped over time.'

This record of what makes each part of the town distinctive, and often rather special, increases our awareness of the qualities that need to be considered and respected when new development is proposed. We hope that the planning authority will share our impressions and take account of our views. We also hope that our studies will increase residents' understanding and appreciation of their town, encouraging them to take an active interest in how change is managed in the future, or to conduct more research into aspects of the town's development.

The survey started in partnership with the Civic Trust for Wales as a pilot project to test whether community groups could carry out urban characterisation. The outcome was the Trust's *Exploring your town* manual and toolkit (2013). A County Council conservation area appraisal adopted in 2016 has also been taken into account, and this also covers the town's commercial centre[1].

We have divided the town into thirty-six character areas. This report presents the history and character of one of those areas.

Now we would like *your* contribution:

- *Have we made any mistakes?*
- *Can you add to the history of the area?*
- *Do you agree with our impressions of the area?*
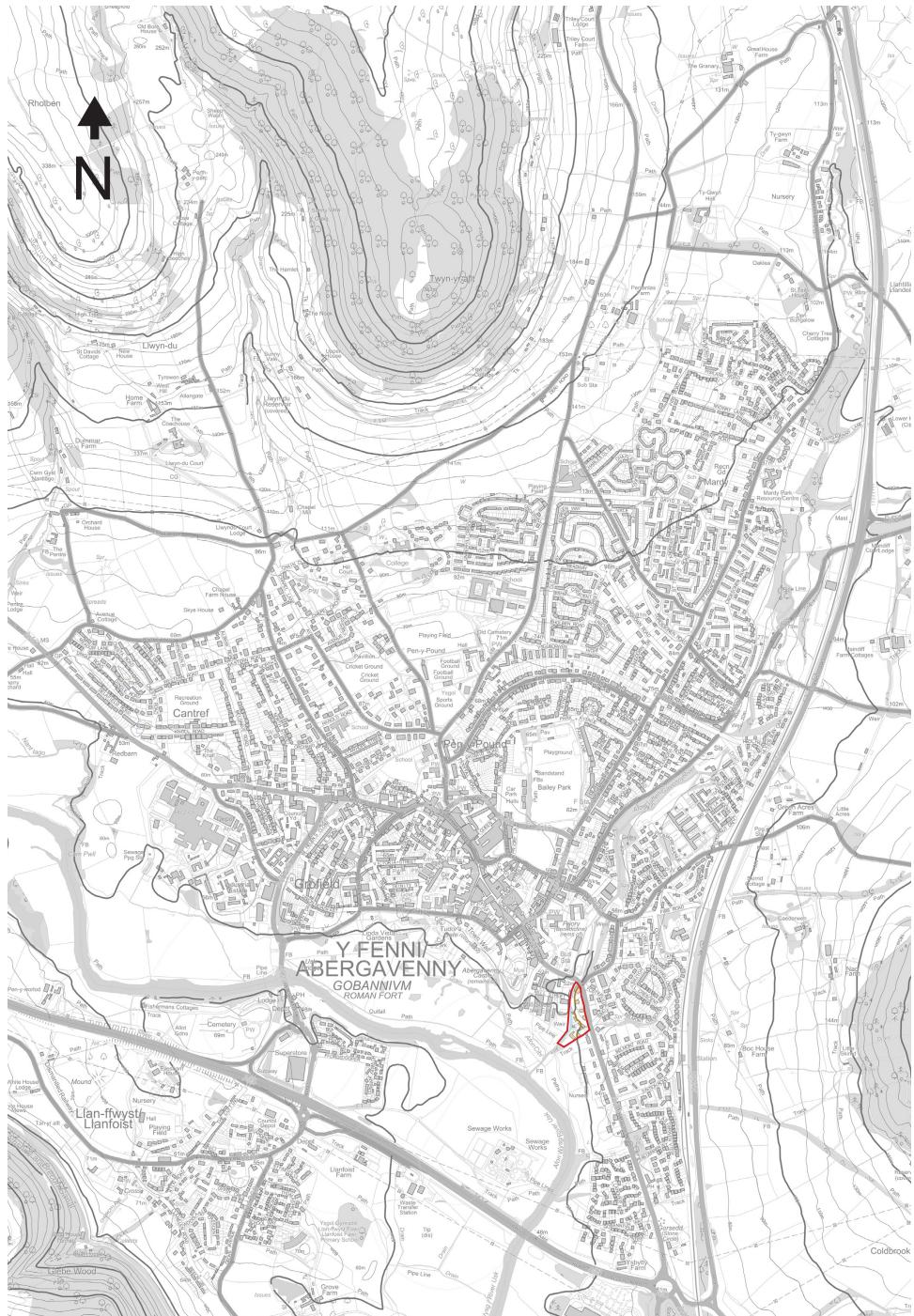- *What have we missed that should have been recorded?*

All the reports are available at https://abercivsoc.com and comments may be sent to abercivsoc@gmail.com or recorded when the reports are exhibited.

Acknowledgements and copyright information

Cover: Mill Street from Monmouth Road

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1   http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/abergavenny-conservation-area-appraisal

Figure 1: location plan and aerial

MILL STREET

THIS CHARACTER AREA is the smallest in the town. For historical reasons it is distinctly different from other areas on the Monmouth Road side of Abergavenny. Following slum clearance in the 1950s and 60s, the other part of Mill Street, west of the Gavenny, is a late-20th-century industrial quarter; this residential part survives as a remnant of the old entry to the town. The postal address is now Monmouth Road.
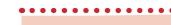
Figure 2: Uphill View

This is one of the town's minor gems. Away from the trunk road it is an attractive and quiet village-like fragment of the town's history, albeit much altered. The houses appear well-maintained; the retaining wall which they face less so, though still with character. There is scope for improvement of the space between the Abergavenny Hotel and the old bridge and views of the nearby industrial building might be masked. Unfortunately the river is little evident here, though known to be capable of flooding.

Historical Background

This was originally the main route into Abergavenny from the south. For centuries Mill Street west of the river was an extra-mural industrial and housing quarter of town, extending up to Cross Street and the South Gate. An 1801 map shows only one building east of the river, perhaps no 43 which has been dated to the early 19th century by Cadw. There was a tollgate where Mill Street intersected with Holywell Lane just east of the old bridge. In 1847 Mill Street was

Key to map

Conservation area boundary	
Listed Building	
Building of special local interest	
Building of local interest	
Metal railings	
Local landmark building	
Good sense of place	
Terminated street view	
Deflected street view	
Vista, long view	
Visual pinch point	
Building rhythm	
Important walling	
Important trees or shrubs	
Important hedges	
Footpath	
Improvement opportunity	

Figure 3: character analysis

51.5m
N
LB
20
1
18
19
8
CILGANT FOSTERVILLE /
Abergavenny Hotel
21
61
21
47
8
43
10
Surgery
17
16
49
51
25
54.2m
51a
27
12
14
Post
26
33
River Gavenny / Afon Gafenni
Weir
16
El Sub
Belr
Resi
Mill
7
8
9
Mill Close
2
1
5
4
3
18
20
65
MONMOUTH ROAD
FOSTERVILLE CRESC
Track
63
PH
22
Posts
ot

by-passed by a new road and bridge that linked Cross Street with the straight section now known as Monmouth Road. The tollgate was subsequently relocated to no 38 Monmouth Road, just beyond Station Road, which was built in about 1850.

On map evidence industry developed east of the river (named the Kenvy Brook on an 1854 map) in the first half of the 19th century. An 1881 map shows a corn mill (Philpotts) and weir that remain today and an adjoining skin yard. Neither was named as such on maps after the First World War, and the premises have been adapted for their present residential use. The mill retains its character while the skin yard buildings have been adapted or rebuilt to appear as late 19th century cottages.

By 1901 a pair of houses had been built facing the 'new' Monmouth Road, contemporary with the beginning of the Fosterville development opposite. Much more recently the Mill Close apartments and a bungalow on Monmouth Road have been added.

Setting, Streets and Spaces

The narrow street rises quite steeply from the Gavenny towards its southern end, with an enclosed feeling except where there is a brief view of the river wall and a glimpse between houses to the former mill. From the northern end there is a view of the copper-roofed Town Hall with the Sugar Loaf beyond, and the castle may be glimpsed to the left. The Blorenge is clearly visible from the Abergavenny Hotel entry to the area.

The course of the river is marked by trees on the western bank, and there are trees around the old mill and at the top of the road. Front gardens have low fences and railings, with shrubs and flowers behind. The east side of the road has an old overgrown retaining wall, the rear boundary of houses fronting Monmouth Road.

In recent years some trees that screened industrial buildings from the hotel direction have been sacrificed for car parking, but the space between the old bridge and the main road, including the hotel car park, has improvement potential.

Vehicles can only reach the area from the junction at the Abergavenny Hotel; there are bollards on the bridge and at the southern end. Access to Mill Close apartments near the river at the southern end is gained from Monmouth Road beyond the bollards.

Figure 4: Restored hotel

Figure 5: Mid Victorian and late Georgian

Building Character

Nineteenth century maps show the area as part of Mill Street, but its postal address is now Monmouth Road though the numbering of properties is confusing. Some refer to it as Mill Close though this name applies only to the modern apartments at the southern end.

Entering the area from Monmouth Road, the recently refurbished hip-roofed Abergavenny Hotel acts as an impressive gateway into Mill Street as well as to the town's shopping centre. The age of this building seems uncertain; a building is shown here on the 1834 map and the 1847 new road avoided this, but the front elevation seems likely to be later. Red brick has recently been exposed, highlighting door and window surrounds, quoins and a string line in Bath stone. The south side of the hotel has an incongruous flat-roofed 'period' extension. On the north side are nos 17/19 Monmouth Road, rendered houses of about 1850, no 17 the less altered, both perhaps now part of the hotel complex.

Opposite the hotel, at nos 45/47, is an attractive two-storey pair of rendered

houses from the mid Victorian period, oddly with three dormers in the roof. No 43 is a rather severe listed three-storey early 19th-century house, possibly of a miller, in roughcast render with delicate iron supports to an off-centre gabled door canopy.

No 25 appears to be an early 20th-century rebuilding of an earlier building. It is white rendered, double fronted but with little depth, with two-storey bays and a possibly earlier door porch. No 27 (Norfolk House) is a well-proportioned simple modernised and rendered early 19th-century two-storey house with attic dormers, also perhaps once the home of the owner of the nearby mill. The mill itself, built of random rubble stonework, is now an attractive private house.

A short terrace of painted rendered houses, nos 29-33, could be a late Victorian adaptation of the skin yard buildings on the site until the 1880s. Mill Close, behind these houses, is a group of two-storey apartments built in the late 20th century.

On the main road nos 49/51 are a little-altered pair of late Victorian sandstone houses, with a half-hipped roof and angled bays front and side (one oriel).

Figure 6: Former Philpott's Corn Mill

No 51 has partly painted or rendered brickwork in cream and has a first floor bay on the side elevation. No 51a is a harmonious modern bungalow faced in random rubble Pennant stone.

Heritage Assets

Entirely within the Conservation Area, the area has only one listed building, No 43. Alteration may rule out the listing of the Abergavenny Hotel, Norfolk House or Philpotts corn mill, but the group value of these, together with all the intervening buildings and those facing Monmouth Road is considerable and important to safeguard.