



35 Ysbytty Fields

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 centre¹.

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.

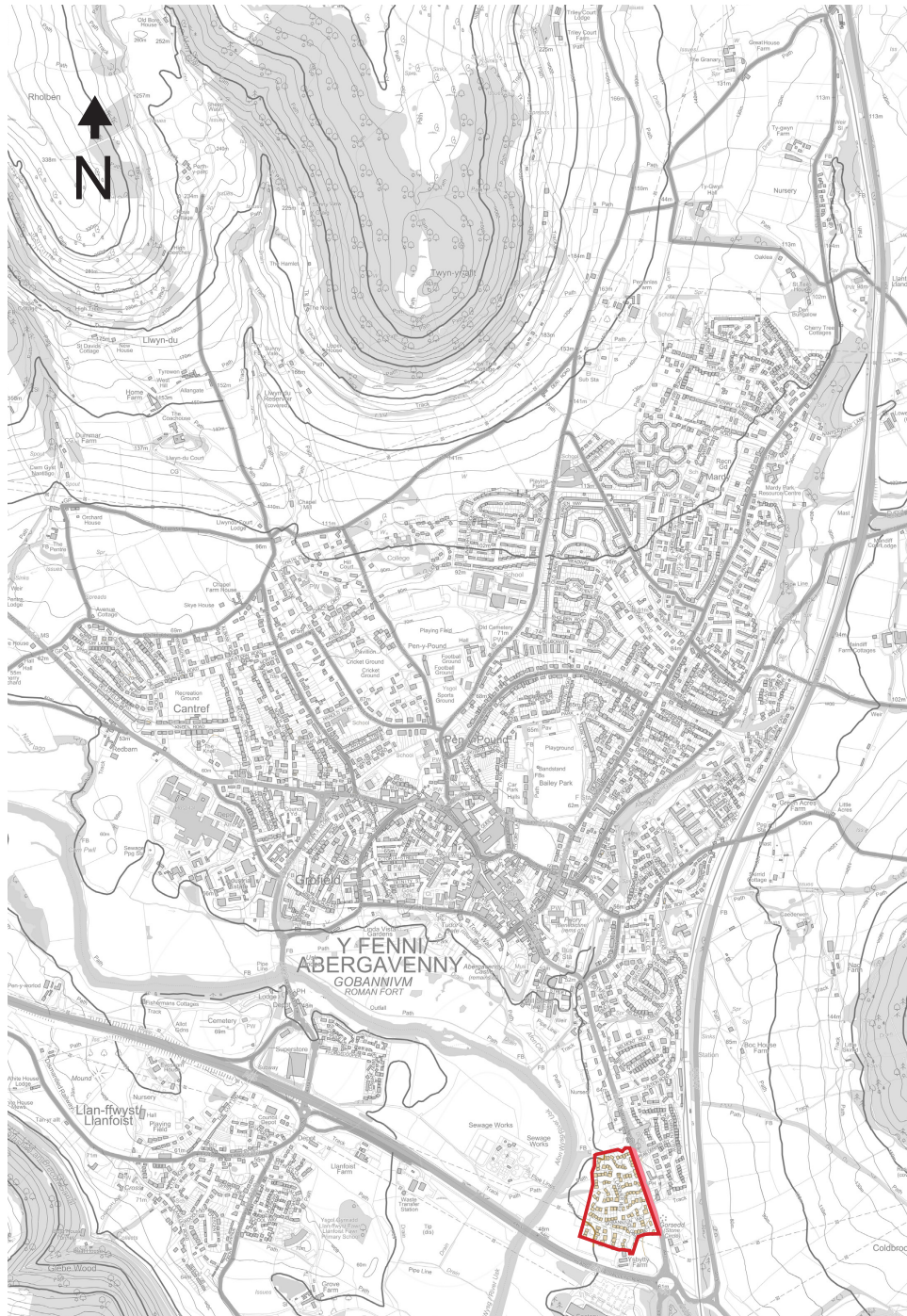
Acknowledgements and copyright information

The Society is especially grateful for the survey contributions of Clive Bransom, Dick Cole, Tony Konieczny, Nigel Patterson, Anna Petts, Duncan Rogers and Jay Shipley. Dick Cole has carried out much of the research and final report writing, and accepts responsibility for any errors. None of the team had prior experience of heritage studies; all have learned much from the project.

We also thank Anna Leron and Dr Matthew Griffiths of the Civic Trust for Wales for their early support. Matthew Griffiths, now of the Open University, has also helped to present the project for the education and participation of residents, including the design of these character area reports.

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



YSBYTTY FIELDS

THIS IS A HOUSING ESTATE of about 140 houses on the western side of Monmouth Road, marking the beginning of the town on this approach.

The nearby Plas Derwen estate is similar in age, building materials and low boundary walls but Ysbytty Fields has a less clearly defined structure and a significantly more congested feel. The layout and variety of house designs is such that the rhythm is continually broken, and it feels as if every opportunity has





Figure 2: Beauchamp Close

been taken to maximise the number of plots. The curving and interlocking cul-de-sacs, together with a relaxed approach to building lines, sometimes appears to create a cluttered random arrangement of homes. Nevertheless the variety will appeal to many, and the owners' pride in their homes and gardens is very evident.

Historical Background

Like Plas Derwen, this was once part of the Coldbrook estate. The development of the housing estate followed that at Plas Derwen on the opposite side of Monmouth Road. The southern part was substantially complete by 1991 and the field between this and Cae Kenfy followed. Earlier maps show orchards and farmland with today's Ysbytty Farm labelled 'Kennels'. Nearby Plas Derwen was at that time marked as 'Ysbytty'.

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



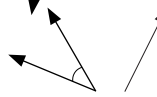
Terminated street view



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

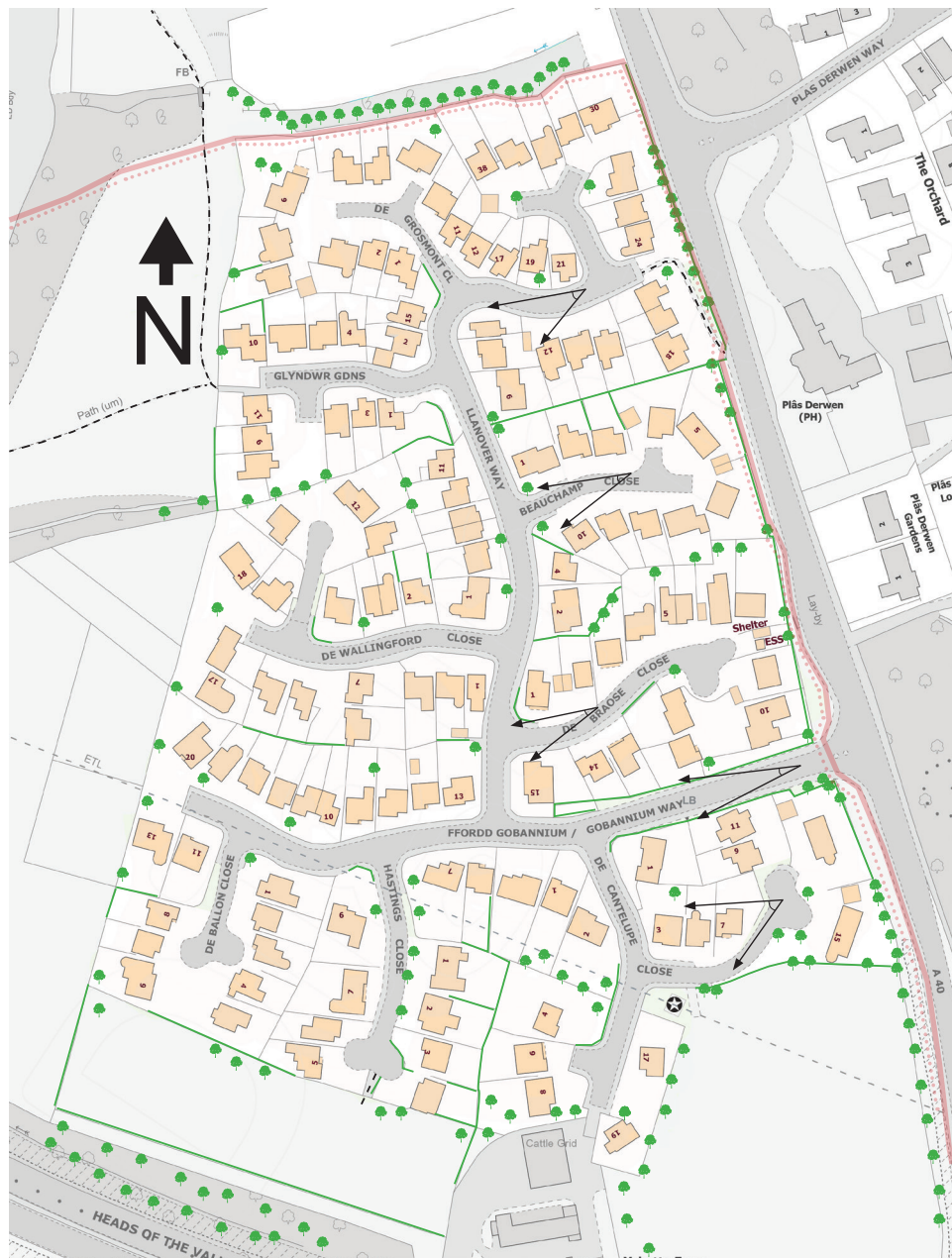


Figure 4: De Grosmont Close

Setting, Streets and Spaces

The ground slopes down from about 60m above sea level at Monmouth Road to below 50m near the River Usk flood plain. Here there is an area of open ground of unclear ownership (some parts apparently enclosed by the owners of adjacent homes). Looking down Gobannium Way, the main entry road into the estate, there are views of the Bloreng. The use of bungalows at the upper parts of the estate has enabled the retention of wide westward views from Monmouth Road where vegetation allows.

The main access roads, Gobannium Way and Llanover Way, link a series of cul-de-sacs, only one of which has a footpath link to Monmouth Road, though another has a link into the adjoining fields and paths to Castle Meadows and the town centre. The roadways and spacing of houses appear to become narrower further into the estate and footways cease in some cul-de-sacs, giving greater frontage to properties but restricted off-carriageway access to the properties by foot. There is a noticeable absence of street furniture and road markings around

the estate, but closes have simple, possibly ineffective, traffic calming strips at their entrances.

Ysbytty Fields has been laid out mostly with low brick boundary walls but fully open plan in the shortest cul-de-sacs. There are some *ca* 2m brick rear/side walls in the north-east part of the estate but vertical boarded fencing predominates, particularly evident at the entrance to some cul-de-sacs.

Off-street parking provision was included for all the houses and bungalows, but the estate still suffers from significant on-street parking. The illusion of space, which the wider roads and pavements confer, has been affected by this and by the tall fences and walls bounding properties.

The Bloreng and the upland running south from this summit can often be viewed from within the area. Tall pylons, and the cables running from pylon to pylon above the streets or gardens, intrude at the southern end.

Overgrown remnants of a field hedgerow survive between De Wallingford Close and Glyndwr Gardens and the estate now has a significant number of garden trees that soften its appearance. Gardens vary greatly in size but none are large and many are very small.

Some residents have made other changes to their property. These include converting front gardens into hard standing areas, planting small shrubs and trees, and adding fences and hedges.

The northern and north-eastern boundaries of Ysbytty Fields are marked by mature trees and a fence line bordering the grounds of Cae Kenfy, an older property. Monmouth Road, the A40, is well screened from the densely packed houses by hedges, trees and fences. Properties to the south and western boundaries are below the elevated A465 Heads of the Valleys Road. The A465 is to some extent screened by trees and farm buildings (Ysbytty Farm). Nearby there is also an extensive green play area (and noise buffer) between the end of Hastings Close and the A465.

Building Character

As noted above, the Monmouth Road edge of the southern part of the estate has white-rendered bungalows, and entering the estate at Gobannium Way there are double garages with roof lantern-like features to each side. The estate mixes numerous house types including four semi-detached pairs. Brick, in varying shades, mostly red, predominates, but white or cream rendering is common. Roofs are grey or dark brown tiles; there are many gables and a few chimneys. Some

designs nod towards the Edwardian Tudor Revival by the inclusion of projecting first floor gables, panels of herringbone nogging and diamond-patterned faux-leaded windows. Brown uPVC window frames and doors are the norm.

The later, northerly part of the estate extends the range of house types and details. Here there are often string courses and vertical 'soldier' brickwork is used above and below windows, which are no longer faux-leaded. Several houses have interesting ground-floor oriel angled bay windows with tented roofing.

To give a sense of variety the properties mirror each other viewed across the roadway and the design is often reversed when side by side. But the design variety interrupts the flow of buildings and adds to the feeling of congestion as space between houses is limited, rear gardens are often short, and building lines are not consistently followed.

There has been a little change to the housing stock. Several properties have converted the integral garage space into living space and many have added conservatories. Only a few have been extended more ambitiously. Several properties have photovoltaic panel arrays over their concrete tile roofs.

Heritage Assets

None.

