

23 Ostringen

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.

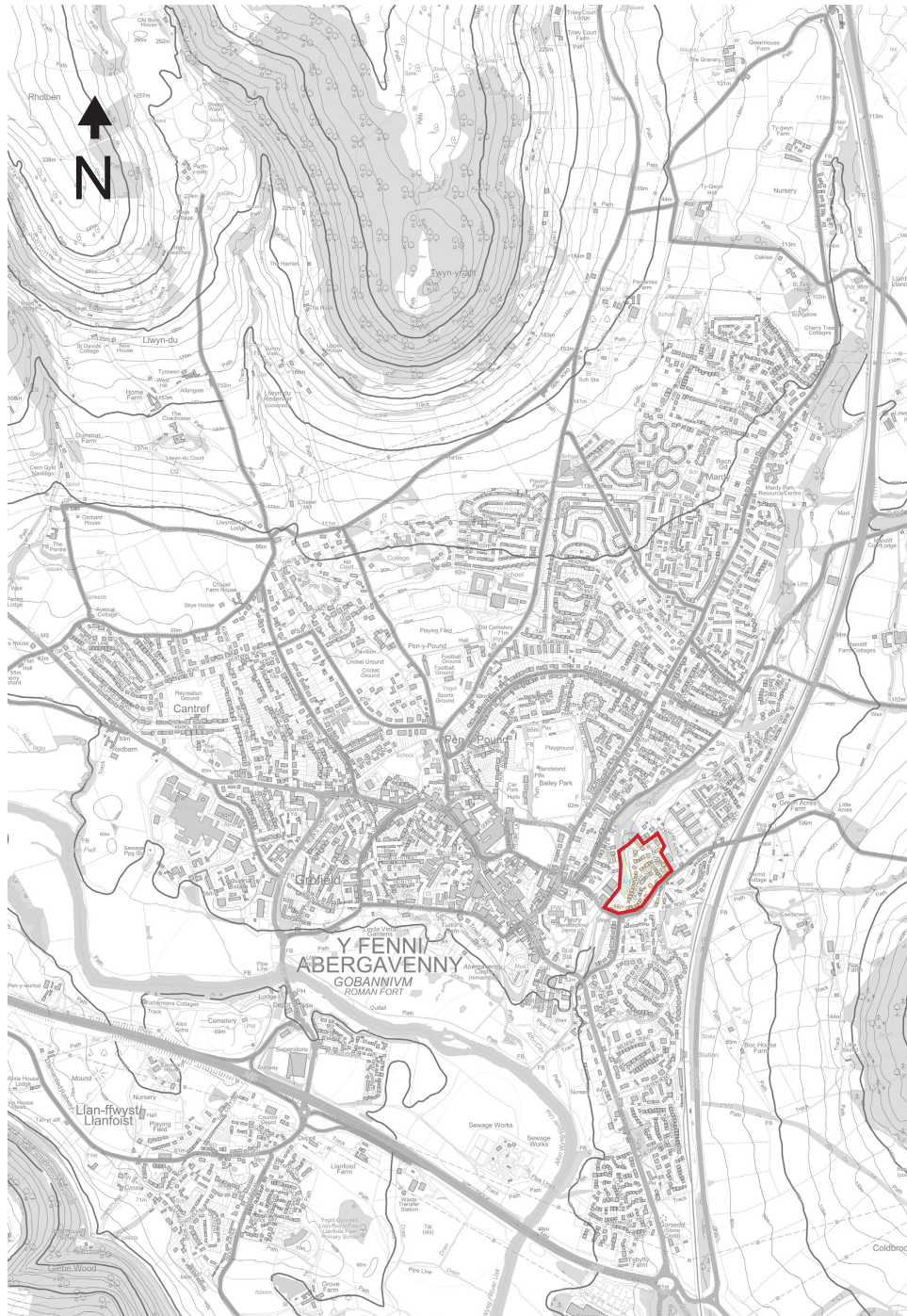
Acknowledgements and copyright information

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>



OSTRINGEN

WE HAVE NAMED this area after one of its three estate roads that commemorates the German town with which Abergavenny is twinned in friendship. Beaupreau Place commemorates the town's French twin.

This 1990s estate is a pleasant well-maintained development, typical of others in the town and nationally at that time. The layout is dictated by the shape of the site and an aim to make the greatest use of it, rather than giving it any special





Figure 2: Gavenny Way and the Deri

sense of place. The arrangement of houses is occasionally unusual but overall conventional. The terraces at the end of Gavenny Way are used to create a pleasant space. The footpath along the river is a good feature, but the houses turn their backs to it. While the houses have some retrospective features, they have little distinctive quality and fall short of the attempt to reproduce Victorian and Edwardian styles adopted by most mass house builders ten years later.

Historical Background

The 1844 tithe map shows cottages on the eastern side of the Gavenny on Lower Monk Street, the last buildings in the town on this old route to Monmouth. Another building appears east of the cottages by the time of the 1881 map, but all were replaced by the turn of the century with two terraces of four houses. These survive today apart from the house nearest the river, swept away by the flood of 1931 that also demolished the old bridge.

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



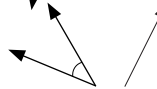
Terminated street view



Deflected street view



Vista, long view



Visual pinch point



Building rhythm



Important walling



Important trees or shrubs



Important hedges



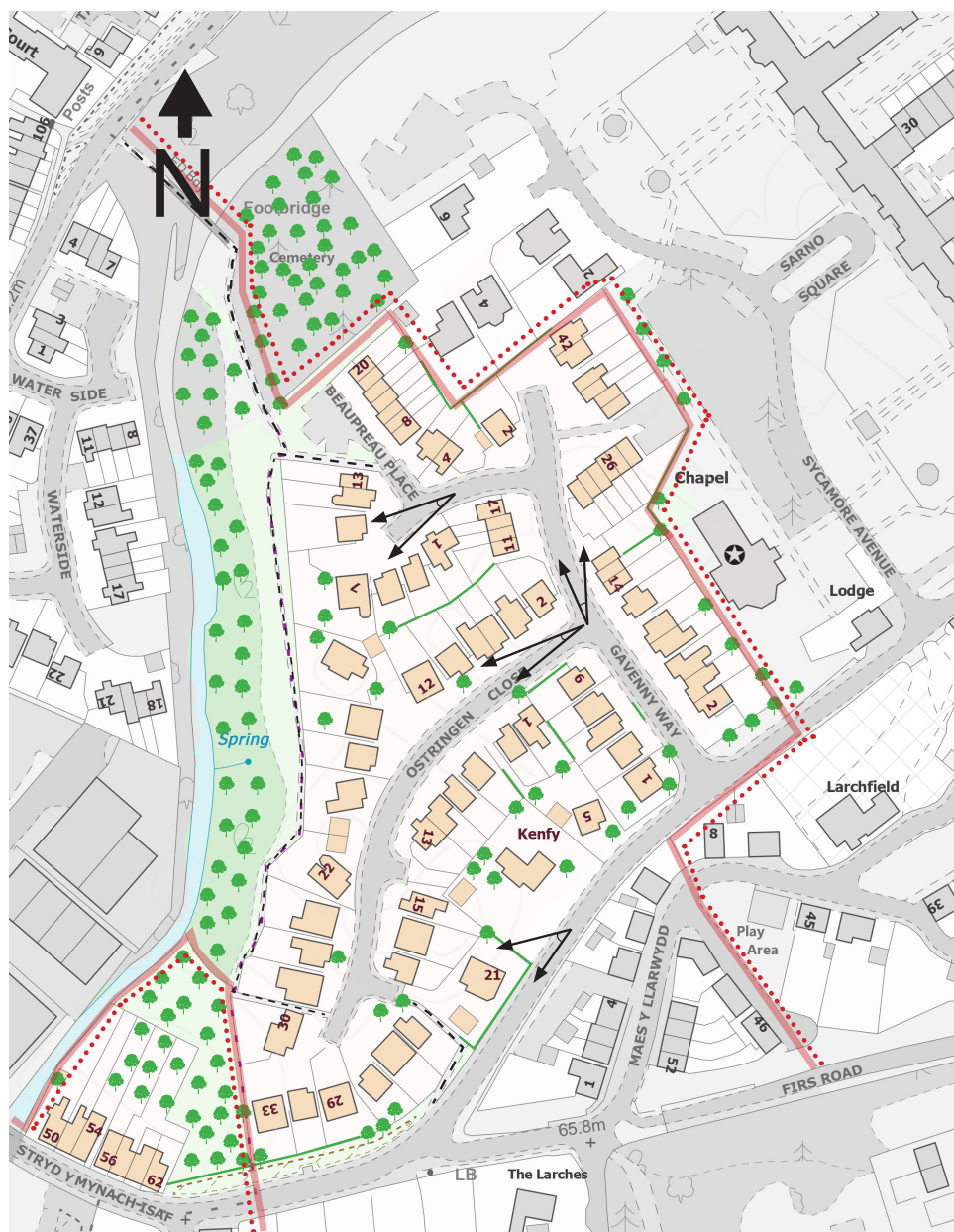
Footpath



Improvement opportunity



Figure 3: character analysis



A large isolated house, Kenfy (an alternative to Gavenny, now named Keeper's Lodge), was built 100m to the east in the 1930s, possibly related to Pen y Fal Hospital. The housing estate that occupies most of the rest of the area was built in the 1990s. Before its development the northern part of the area was a sports field with a pavilion sited near today's entrance to Gavenny Way, probably also related to the hospital.

Setting, Streets and Spaces

The area is set east of the Gavenny rising from the river which is at about 55m above sea level, initially sharply then at about 1 in 15 to the 70m contour. The steep slope to the river is scrub woodland.

The housing estate is accessed via Gavenny Way, which is about 6m wide with footways on each side. Ostringen Close is the main side cul-de-sac and Beaupreau Place at the end of Gavenny Way is short – both are about 5m wide plus two footways. Part of Beaupreau Place and the lower section of Ostringen Close are brick paved.

The houses are generally set back from the footway by 4-5m but there is no consistent building line. The curving roads and arrangement of buildings provide some townscape interest, but there is no evident aim other than to maximise the density in line with the mix of house types required. The short front gardens are open plan, with a few trees and varying amounts of lawn, hedges, shrubs and car spaces. Back gardens are generally about 10m long. There are 2m brick side walls facing the road and timber fences elsewhere, notably along the footpath above the river. After a steep grass bank at the lowest end, boundaries to B4233 are mostly hedges, but Keeper's Lodge has close-boarded fencing.

The riverside footpath runs behind the houses, connecting with Beaupreau Place and paths in the former hospital grounds and, awkwardly between houses, to the B4233. A small fenced play area is beside the path at Beaupreau Place.

Gavenny Way gives a good view of the Deri; B4233, Ostringen Close and Beaupreau Place of the Blorenge. The opportunity to use the spire of the former hospital chapel as a focal point was missed.

Building Character

The houses on the estate are mostly detached with a variety of somewhat 'cottagey' styles generally using dull red brick and white or cream render, gables and



Heritage Assets

None.

Figure 4: Beaupreau Place

brown tiling with a few chimneys. Most have integral garages (often projecting forward) and latticed uPVC windows and doors framed in brown or white. Some garages are now living rooms. Nos 20 and 22 Ostringen Close are unusually splayed in relation to the road with four garages between them. Several houses on the close are squeezed into backland with longer drives. Beyond Ostringen Close on Gavenny Way and in Beaupreau Place the mixture includes terraces of up to seven houses with parking areas, perhaps an early 'affordable housing' contribution.

Keeper's Lodge, on the main road (but provided with an unused rear access from the Close), is a large house of *ca* 1930 in dark red/brown brick with red clay tiles, and with flush windows. Nos 50-62 Lower Monk Street, before the bridge, are two, short, late-Victorian terraces in squared rock-faced sandstone with cream brick around openings, including arched doorways. Matching stone and brick walls and railings enclose short forecourts.