

Beauchief Abbey
CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL
March 2007



A P P R A I S A L

After a period of public consultation Sheffield City Council adopted this Conservation Area Appraisal and the accompanying Management Proposals for Beauchief Abbey on 19th March 2007, which means that they are now a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications in the area.

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BEAUCHIEF ABBEY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1.0 Introduction

Purpose of the appraisal

1.1 This appraisal seeks to record and analyse the various features that give the Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area its special architectural and historical interest. The area's buildings and spaces are noted and described, and marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map along with significant trees, surviving historic paving, and important views into and out of the conservation area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by the legislation.

1.2 This appraisal builds upon national policy, as set out in PPG15, and local policy, as set out in the Local Plan, and provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area can be assessed.



Beauchief Abbey Farm

1.3 To be concise and readable, the appraisal does not record all features. The omission of any feature from the text or accompanying maps does not, therefore, mean that it is not of interest or value.

Summary of special interest

1.4 The Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area was designated on 18 December 1969. The special interest that justifies the designation of the Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Remains of Beauchief Abbey (Scheduled Monument);
 - Church of St Thomas a Beckett (grade II*);
 - Ponds;
 - Abbey Brook;
 - Views to the Peak District;
 - Collection of listed historic buildings around former abbey;
 - Collection of historic buildings beside Abbey Lane;
 - Route of ancient causeway over Abbey Brook;
 - Stone kerbs, paving and gate piers along Beauchief Abbey Lane;
 - Prevalent use of stone;
 - Trees.
-



Three stone piers at north end of 'causeway' (Beauchief Abbey Lane)



Natural stone paving and grassed area at south end of Beauchief Abbey Lane

2.0 The planning policy context

2.1 Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. It is the quality and interest of an *area*, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

2.2 Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are designated as conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

2.3 This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) – Planning and the Historic Environment. The layout and content follows guidance produced by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the English Historic Towns Forum.

Local planning policy.

2.4 This appraisal provides a firm basis on which applications for development within Sheffield City can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework produced by Sheffield City Council. That framework is set out in a number of documents, notably:

2.5 The *Unitary Development Plan (UDP)* which is the statutory development plan for Sheffield, adopted in March 1998.

2.6 The *Sheffield Development Framework (SDF)* will be the City's portfolio of local development documents, collectively delivering the spatial planning strategy for the whole of the Sheffield District except for the area in the Peak Park. Once adopted, the SDF will replace the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

2.7 The *Sheffield Urban Design Compendium*, a design guide for the whole of the City Centre providing guidance on how the on-going regeneration of the City Centre can be design led and sets a standard for architectural design and the quality of the public realm.



Interpretation board at Beauchief Abbey

3.0 Location and setting

Location and context

3.1 The Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area is situated on an eastern tributary of the River Sheaf in what is now the south eastern outskirts of the City of Sheffield about 5 km from the city centre.

3.2 Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area is composed of two distinct sub-areas on either side of Beauchief Abbey Lane. The primary part, on the east side, contains the grade II* listed Church of St Thomas a Beckett (confusingly known as Beauchief Abbey although it is a 17th century addition to a tower surviving from the 12th century abbey) together with a pair of stone cottages (grade II), farmhouse (grade II), farm buildings (grade II) and the inner precinct of the former abbey, now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. A smaller sub-area, beside the junction of Beauchief Abbey Lane and Abbey Lane, contains a small cluster of historic and modern houses with gardens that stretch down to Abbey Brook.

Boundaries

3.3 The boundary of the conservation area has been drawn to enclose the whole of the Scheduled Ancient Monument which includes the Church of St Thomas a Beckett and abbey remains to the south and east together with ponds which may be partly those which gave the monks their fish. Open space which is vital to the setting of the church and abbey remains is included to the north and south of the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

3.4 Beside the Abbey Lane junction the boundary encloses a collection of 18th century and modern buildings. The whole of the former causeway from Abbey Lane to Beauchief Abbey (today's Beauchief Abbey Lane) is also included in the conservation area.

4.0 Landscape setting

Topography and relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings

4.1 Beauchief Abbey and environs have a semi-rural setting close to Sheffield's suburbs although in reality the area is in the middle of a golf course (marked as such on the 1923 OS map). The collection of 18th century buildings around the abbey stand in open green space in which there are many mature trees but the mown grass and well tended appearance of the golf course dispel what would otherwise be a much more rural atmosphere.



Site of remains of Beauchief Abbey

4.2 The land rises from Abbey Brook southwards and, to the south, steep wooded which runs from east to west along the boundary of the conservation area. To the north, on the far side of Abbey Lane, is a suburban housing development.

5.0 Historic development and archaeology

5.1 Origins and historic development

1. Brief history of Beauchief monastic estate

5.1.1 The Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area is located close to a separate conservation area known as the Beauchief Hall Conservation Area. The two conservation areas have distinctively different characters but are historically linked, both having formed part of the medieval monastic estate of Beauchief Abbey.

5.1.2 Beauchief Abbey was founded c1175 for Premonstratensian or White Canons by Robert Fitzranulph. The abbey land amounted to c 800 acres (324 ha) with the Abbey set in a park of 200 acres (81 ha) with several fish ponds fed by a small stream.

5.1.3 Beauchief was surrendered, as part of the dissolution of the monasteries, and in 1537 granted by Henry VIII to Sir Nicholas Strelley for the sum of £223. The property granted included gardens, orchards, ponds and parks.

5.1.4 The estate descended, through marriage, to Edward Pegge who in 1671 built a new mansion, today's Beauchief Hall, on a site to the south west of the Abbey which is thought to be the site of the Grange where the monks formerly made their butter and cheese. Beauchief Hall and grounds are the focus of the Beauchief Hall Conservation Area which is appraised in a separate document.

5.1.5 Stone from the Abbey, ruinous by the 17th century, was used not only for the new mansion but also for the construction of a church incorporated into the Abbey's west tower. After the death of Edward Pegge in 1679 the estate remained in the ownership of the family, by direct descent, until the death of Edward's great grandson Peter in 1836. Peter Pegge's sister's son, Broughton Benjamin Steade, assumed the surname Pegge-Burnell on inheriting the estate in 1836 and completed the building of Beauchief Hall.



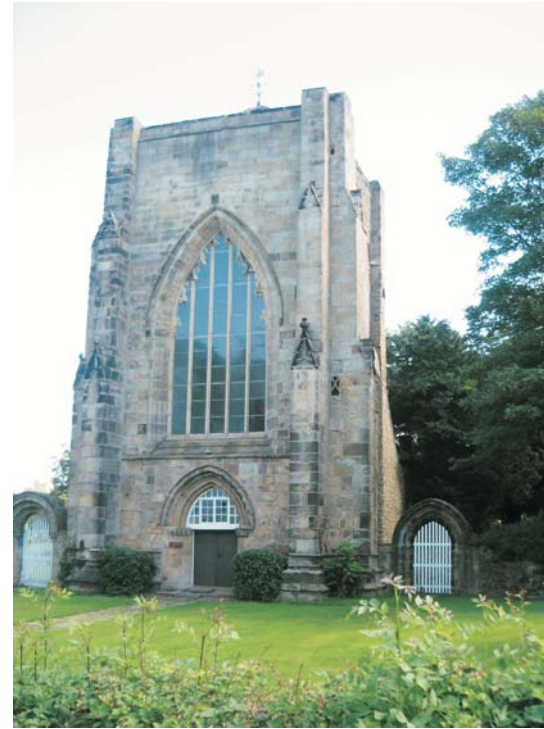
Abbey Brook (part of the northern boundary of the conservation area)

5.1.6 Beauchief Abbey was bought by Mr. Frank Crawshaw in 1923. In 1931 he presented the abbey buildings with the adjoining cottages to the City of Sheffield. The remains of the former abbey, the Church of St Thomas a Beckett and nearby farm and cottages form the focus of the Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area.

5.1.7 Beauchief Hall and environs was purchased by the Wilson family of Sheffield, manufacturers who had been leasing the Hall since the mid 19th century.

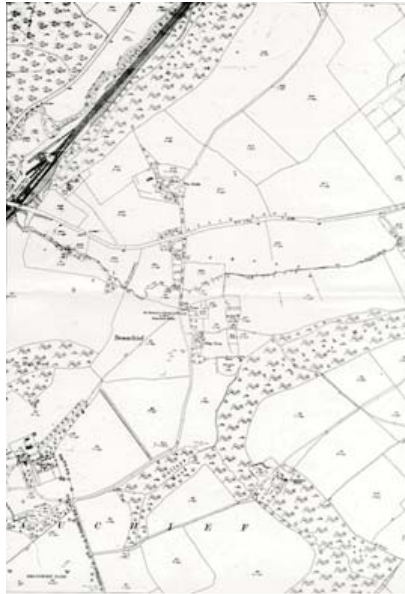
2. History of Beauchief Abbey

5.2 The church tower, which is only two thirds of its original height, is thought to be mainly 11th and 14th century work; its south wall shows the lines of the roof of the monks' domestic quarters, and its east wall shows those of the original nave.



St Thomas a Beckett's Church

5.3 Beauchief Abbey was dissolved in 1537 and the Crown sold the estate to Sir Nicholas Strelley. The Strelleys allowed the monastery buildings to decay, and today the cloister, refectory, chapter house and living quarters can only be traced in excavations. However, most of the west tower of the abbey church survived and in the 17th century Edward Pegge used much of the stone from the abbey to add a small church on this tower. His descendants owned the estate until 1923. The history of the abbey appears largely uneventful. It was a small house of twelve to fifteen canons and their abbot and a small number of lay brethren. This can be compared with large foundations such as Fountains or Riveaulx Abbeys which had communities of 150 monks and 500 lay brothers.



5.4 Abbey Lane is an ancient track along the valley bottom and Beauchief Abbey Lane (c1800) follows the course of an ancient causeway that led to Beauchief Abbey. This lane was probably extended to Beauchief Hall in the mid 19th century.

Extract from the 1923 OS map showing the layout of Beauchief Abbey

Archaeology

5.6 The Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area contains the Scheduled Monument named 'Beauchief Abbey Premonstratensian monastery: inner precinct and three fishponds'. The extent of the Scheduled Monument is shown on the attached plan.

5.7 Features of the inner precinct which may survive in unexcavated areas are the infirmary, cemetery, gardens and ancillary buildings such as a brewhouse and a bakehouse. Important to monastic life was the control and diversion of a local water supply not only to provide drinking and household water but to flush the kitchens and latrine. This was usually accomplished by running channels to and from a nearby river or stream and so monastic drains are another feature that will survive at Beauchief. Water management also included the creation of fishponds by damming local streams. East of the abbey are three monastic fishponds created for the monks by William de Grenlyf who died in 1411.



Abbey Cottages

5.8 Monasteries were inextricably woven into the fabric of medieval society. Beauchief Abbey is an important example of a small Premonstratensian house founded for a small group of men.

5.9 Although its standing remains do not survive well, having been systematically quarried after the dissolution of the monasteries, the foundations of a wide variety of monastic buildings are still in place and provide a good illustration of the layout of this type of monastery. The buried remains of further buildings and features survive in Beauchief Park which has suffered very little disturbance or development in the centuries since the Dissolution. Together, these provide important evidence of the economy and way of life peculiar to Premonstratensian canons. In addition, organic and environmental materials will survive in the waterlogged deposits of the three fishponds.

5.10 The whole of the conservation area therefore has archaeological potential above and below the ground, and it is likely that further consideration will need to be given to the effect of applications for substantial new development.

6.0 Spatial analysis

Key views and vistas

6.1 The focus of the conservation area is the tall square tower of the former abbey. From the northern approach along Beauchief Abbey Lane there are good long views of the tower against a wooded backdrop. There are also good views looking northwards from the track beside Abbey Farm.

6.2 Views to the south and west are stopped by the escarpment of Parkbank Wood and High Wood. However, looking west from the abbey there are distant views of the Peak District.



Looking north along Beauchief Drive

The character of spaces within the area

6.3 Open space in the southern part of the conservation area, part of which is used as a golf course, is important to the setting of the fine group of historic buildings around the abbey. The central part of this space is the Scheduled Ancient Monument. Open space to the rear (south) of the buildings beside Abbey Lane is laid out as private landscaped gardens. A small grassy area backed by shrubs on the east side of the Abbey Lane junction helps to define a green entrance to the start of Beauchief Abbey Lane.



Church tower from the south east

7.0 Definition of the special interest of the conservation area

Uses and activities

7.1 Beauchief Abbey i.e. the Church of St Thomas a Beckett still remains in use as a church and is a local tourist attraction. The surrounding area is recreational open space part of which is a golf course. The nearby cottages and farmhouse are residential. The farm buildings are no longer in agricultural use but are used for storage.

7.2 The northern quarter of the conservation area alongside Abbey Lane is residential. Its proximity to a busy road, Abbey Lane, gives this area a suburban character where the noise of traffic is prominent.



Outbuildings at Beauchief Abbey Farm

Architectural and historic character

7.3 The former west tower of Beauchief Abbey is thought to be mainly 13th or 14th century work; its south wall shows the lines of the roof of the monks' domestic quarters, and its east wall shows the line of the original nave. To the left of the tower is a re-set doorway used as an archway, probably dating from c 1200; to the right of the doorway is a 14th century, probably also re-set. The Church of St Thomas a Beckett dates from the 17th century and still has its complete furnishings including box pews, family pews for the squire and rector, pulpit and reading desk.



Makeshift stile in wall around the abbey grounds



One of three ponds east of Beauchief Abbey

7.4 With the exception of the abbey tower and single storey farm buildings, buildings are two storey with pitched, gabled roofs. Stone is used both as a walling material and a roofing material. All the pre-20th century buildings are constructed with stone and stone slates are, for example, present on Abbey Cottages, Abbey Farmhouse and the farm outbuildings. Part of the farm buildings are roofed with slate.

7.5 The cottages, farmhouse and farm buildings beside Beauchief Abbey date from the 18th century and have little architectural pretension. They are built with coursed rubble and/or coursed squared stone.

Buildings of Townscape Merit

7.6 In addition to the area's listed buildings, a number of unlisted buildings have been noted on the Townscape Appraisal map as being 'Buildings of Townscape Merit' which make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area.

7.7 With listed buildings, Buildings of Townscape Merit help create the conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape. As recommended in Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.



Golfers' path between two ponds



Natural stone slates and natural stone walls, Beauchief Abbey Farm outbuildings.

Trees and other natural features

7.8 Trees, hedges and, in the vicinity of Abbey Farmhouse, dry-stone walls are a feature of the conservation area.

7.9 A length of Abbey Brook and three ponds east of the abbey are key features of the area. The ponds are likely to be three monastic ponds created for the monks by William de Grenlyf who died in 1411. There are three irregular large ponds in a north-south alignment descending northwards with sloping ground. Only the lower pond is indicated on the 1875 OS map with two ponds shown on the 1898 OS map and all three on the 1923 OS.

Floorscape

7.10 Beauchief Abbey Lane (c1800) has wide stone kerbs on either side and, on its east side only, a pavement of stone slabs which extends as far as Abbey Cottage. The road narrows outside Abbey Cottage to pass between stone gate piers marking a former carriage and pedestrian entrance. The cottages are marked as a lodge on the 1875 OS map. Dry-stone walls are also a feature of the area making stone the most prevalent building material in the conservation area.



Natural stone paving leading to the church



Trees beside Beauchief Abbey Farm outbuildings

8.0 Issues

8.1 This section contains a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area together with recommendation, if any, for changes to the current conservation area boundary. Strengths and weaknesses, together with other more specific 'positives' and 'negatives' that were identified during the appraisal process, form the basis of a separate document, known as the *Beauchief Abbey Conservation Area Management Proposals*.

8.2 The *Management Proposals* set objectives for addressing the issues arising from this appraisal and make recommendations for possible improvements and the avoidance of harmful change.

Strengths

- Special historic environment (see introductory summary);
- Trees, ponds and wildlife;
- Rural ambience.

Weaknesses

- Loss of original architectural details such as doors, windows and roof material;
- Location in the midst of a golf course;
- Lighting columns dispel the rural character of the area;
- Signage is in need of updating;
- Unsightly appearance of the rear of Abbey Cottage (lean-to garage, inappropriate windows);

- Short lengths of stone wall in need of repair;
- Loss of historic character at north end;
- Tomb stones in need of repair;
- Poor state of repair of farm buildings.

Conservation area boundary review

8.3 The modern bungalow, no. 283 Abbey Lane, is out of keeping with the historic character of the conservation area and should be omitted from the conservation area. There is new development currently taking place in this locality and an up-to-date map will be needed to fully identify a proposed new boundary line.



Drystone wall beside abbey grounds



Beauchief Abbey Farm and outbuildings from the south



Path used by golfers passing Beauchief Abbey Farm

Bibliography

Pevsner, N *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire The West Riding* (Penguin 1967);

English Heritage Register of *Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* – *Beauchief Hall* (2003);

Thirtieth List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (DNH 1995);

Beauchief Abbey leaflet (Sheffield City Council 2003);
Ordnance Survey 1875, 1898, 1923.

List of photographs

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Path used by golfers passing Beauchief Abbey Farm



Useful contacts and addresses

For information on listed buildings and conservation areas:

Urban Design and Conservation Team
Sheffield City Council,
Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH.
Tel: 0114 273 5804

www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/planning-and-city-development/urban-design--conservation

For information on the status and interpretation of the statutory Development Plan and supplementary planning guidance:

Forward and Area Planning Team
Sheffield City Council,
Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH.
Tel: 0114 273 4157

For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas:

English Heritage
37 Tanner Row
York YO1 6WP
Tel: 01904 601901

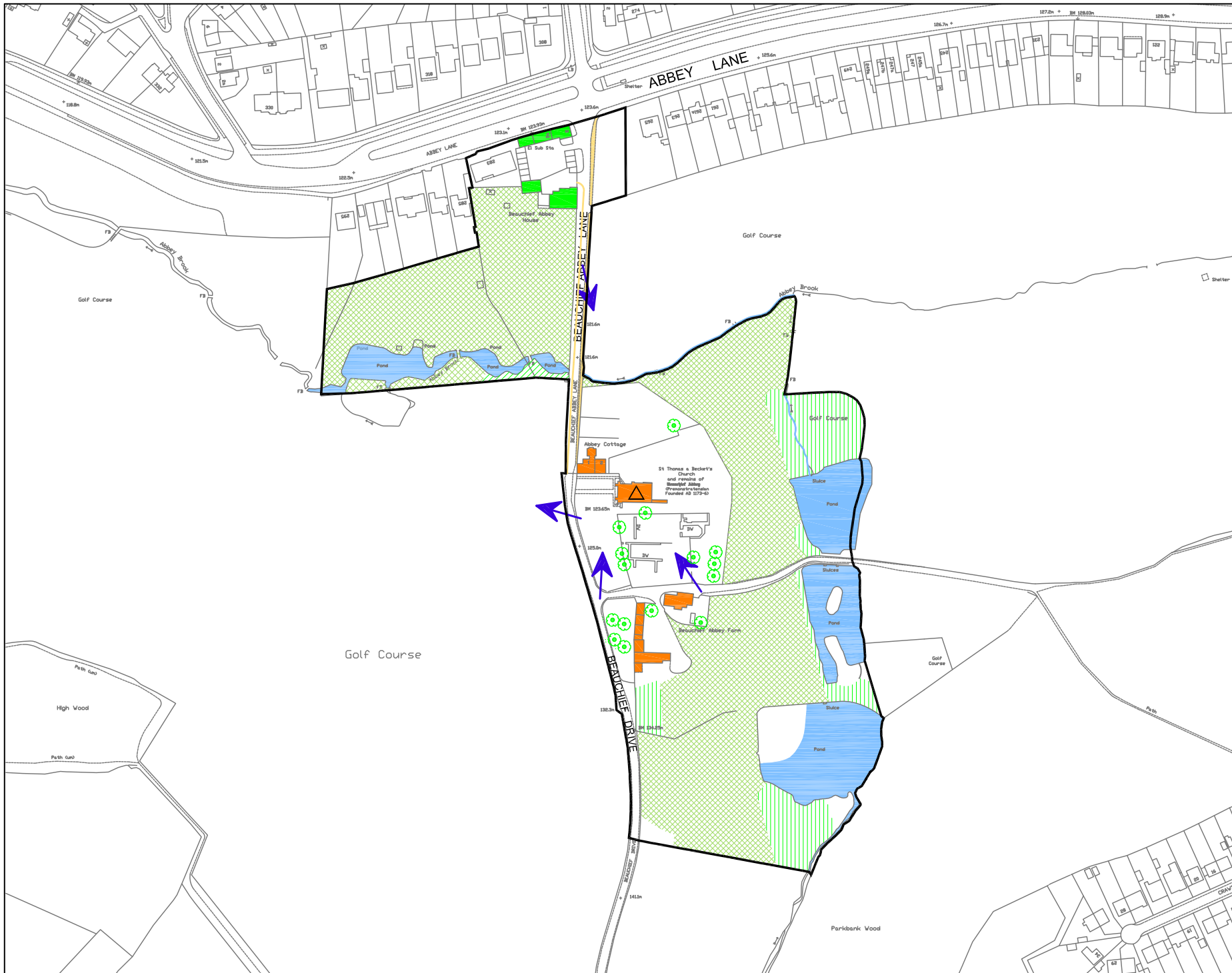
For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB),
37 Spital Square,
LONDON E1 6DY
Tel: 020 7377 1644

The Georgian Group,
6 Fitzroy Square,
LONDON W1T 5DX
Tel: 0207529 8920

The Victorian Society,
1 Priory Gardens,
Bedford Park,
LONDON W4 1TT
Tel: 0208994 1019

The Twentieth Century Society,
70 Cowcross Street,
LONDON EC1M 6EJ
Tel: 020 7250 3857



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- Current Conservation Area boundary
- Listed Building
- Building of Townscape Merit
- Focal building
- Historic Street surface
- Prominent tree
- Stream or pond
- Important open space
- Prominent tree group
- Significant view

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL
**DIRECTORATE OF DEVELOPMENT
 ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE**
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: JOHN MOTHERSOLE

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
 DIRECTOR
 D CURTIS BA, DIP.TP, MRTPI, FIHT

SCHEME:

TITLE: **BEAUCHIEFF ABBEY
 CONSERVATION AREA**

COMMITTEE:

SCALE:

DR: TR: O/S: DATE: **March 2007** YORK:

DRAWING NO:

CAD FILE NAME:

Summary of Consultation Undertaken

A consultation draft of this document was subject to a period of consultation between 22nd January and 16th February 2007. All local residents in the conservation area were sent copies of the document along with a survey form asking for their comments. Residents were also invited to contact the Urban Design and Conservation Team if they wished to discuss the Appraisal or Management Proposals further. Local members and local community groups were also consulted as part of the process.

