

# Eynsford

## Conservation Area Appraisal



**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**



**December 2003**

# Eynsford

## Conservation Area Appraisal

**The historic environment is a social asset of immense value and one of the keys to the continuing prosperity of Sevenoaks District. Conservation Area Appraisals are part of the process of ensuring that we make the best use of our historic environment. They are tools for the positive management of change, not a means of preventing development. Conservation is focused on the entire historic environment, not just listed buildings. Trees, open spaces, buildings, uses, roads and streets all contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the District's conservation areas.**

**The man-made environment of our conservation areas has used energy and materials moulded by people both past and present. The District Council will creatively manage the fabric of these areas in a sustainable way as a legacy for future generations.**

**It is intended that this appraisal will inform the activities of the Council, the public and other bodies where these impact on the conservation area. The appraisal was approved by the District Council in December 2003 and adopted as supplementary planning guidance.**

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Published by Sevenoaks District Council  
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## **1.00 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas**

Conservation Areas first came into being as a result of the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 and are intended to identify any valuable visual or historic characteristics in a locality that may warrant special measures in order to protect and preserve them.

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 recognises that there are particular areas of 'architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and charges planning authorities with a duty to designate any such locations within their jurisdiction as Conservation Areas. This designation then empowers the local authority to pay particular attention to planning considerations and development within them and gives greater control over such matters as demolitions, landscaping and trees, and the display of advertisements.

Designation also raises the awareness of local residents and businesses to the quality of their surroundings and is intended to encourage an active interest in the care and maintenance of their properties and surrounding land, thereby fostering a sense of communal pride.

It has been recognised that designation, because of the responsibilities and obligations it places on both owners and the local authority, should only be imposed on areas that are demonstrably suitable. Where the criteria have been met, the area should then benefit from the additional control and protection that designation confers, and from official recognition of the special architectural and historic character of the locality.

The management of our national cultural and historic inheritance is of paramount importance and Conservation Areas are a vital 'grass roots' starting point from which to safeguard the continuing care of our environment.

## 1.2 Purpose of Appraisals

As their number grows, it has become even more important for local authorities to include a well-defined and considered policy for their designated Conservation Areas in their Local Plans.

Planning pressures are such that any designation is likely to be subjected to detailed scrutiny and must be readily and demonstrably defensible against adverse criticism. The criteria for designation should be kept as uniform as possible and the public should be kept fully aware of the reasons for any proposed changes in their area.

The 1990 Act charges local authorities with the responsibility of undertaking a review of their Conservation Areas from time to time, both to consider the possibility of revising their extent, and to identify any past changes or future pressures which may affect the original reasons for their designation.

English Heritage published an advisory leaflet on the subject in March 1997, which outlines the preferred approach to these appraisals and gives examples of the type of content that it would be useful to include.

The appraisals should define the key elements that together give the area its character, and objectively analyse how they interact to enhance their individual impact.

They can then provide suggestions for future policies and improvements based on a clear understanding of the special architectural and historic qualities that highlight the area and give it its local distinctiveness.

These appraisals can also be used as a valuable means by which the impact of planning policies and the implementation of enhancement measures can be assessed.

### 1.3 Local Conservation Area Policies

The Sevenoaks District Local Plan (adopted March 2000) lists the following policies which relate to conservation areas:

**EN21 In the designation and review of Conservation Areas the Local Planning Authority will assess all the following matters:**

- 1) The special architectural, or historic interest of the area.**
- 2) The cohesive character and integrity of the area including spaces round buildings their settings and trees.**
- 3) The desirability of preserving, or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.**
- 4) The pressures for change which may encourage piecemeal development, which would threaten the character of the area.**
- 5) The need to promote economic prosperity, through schemes of environmental enhancement, to overcome vacancy, neglect, decay or dereliction.**

**EN22 Proposals to demolish buildings, which contribute to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, will not be permitted in the absence of overriding justification. Preference will be given to conversion and/or refurbishment as opposed to outright demolition of a building. Proposals to demolish extensions to original buildings or outbuildings will be judged on their contribution to the overall character of the area.**

**EN23 Proposals for development or redevelopment within or affecting Conservation Areas should be of positive architectural benefit by paying special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area and of its setting. The design of new buildings and alterations to existing buildings should respect local character, whilst the treatment of external spaces including hard and soft landscaping, boundary walls, street furniture and signs should be compatible with and enhance the appearance of the area.**

Buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area are identified on the character appraisal plan at the end of this document . English Heritage national guidance on conservation areas sets out the criteria used to identify these buildings.

The Sevenoaks District Local Plan states that the local planning authority will undertake detailed assessments of designated Conservation Areas and will prepare proposals for their preservation. Development proposals will be judged against their overall contribution to the enhancement of the character and appearance of the area as set out in any scheme, which may have been prepared. This assessment and the detailed analysis of the area contained in the report is intended to fulfil this commitment and provide the background for enhancement schemes.

## 1.4 Other Local Plan Policies

The Local Plan also identifies specific policies designed to protect the natural environment and historic buildings.

Policy EN6 places restrictions on development within the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and EN7 gives priority to the enhancement of natural beauty, landscape, open space, geographical features and wildlife over other planning considerations within the North Downs and Greensand Ridge Special Landscape Areas. Other Areas of Local Landscape Importance where development may be restricted are noted in policy EN8.

Landscape features and wildlife habitats beyond the confines of the urban areas, towns and villages are also protected by policy EN11.

Important areas of green space within the built confines are safeguarded under policy EN9 and EN10 protects important areas of urban fringe.

Listed building policy is defined in sections EN18 and EN19, and the re-use rather than the demolition of unlisted buildings of local interest is promoted by policy EN20.

Trees over a certain size are automatically protected within Conservation Areas, with any proposed work to them having to be notified to the local authority in writing six weeks in advance.

Transport strategy for the District is summarised by the following section.

### **T1 A co-ordinated transport strategy will be implemented including:**

- 1) Encouragement of the provision of appropriate public transport services and facilities.**
- 2) Use of traffic management to achieve a safer and more efficient use of existing roads.**
- 3) An integrated car parking strategy involving residents' parking, local enforcement and consideration of the need for park and ride facilities.**
- 4) New highway construction and improvements to the existing network.**
- 5) Encouragement of walking, and cycling.**

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA**

### **2.1 General Description**

Eynsford Conservation Area covers some 12.0 hectares and contains 36 Listed Buildings, the Listed remains of a castle and a Listed bridge. It was designated in April 1973 and has not been extended since. It includes the historic centre of the village including the Church of St Martin, the ford and associated buildings, together with Eynsford Castle, which is owned and managed by English Heritage. The area extends both sides of the river although the main concentration is on the south eastern bank.

Eynsford is a bustling village in an attractive and popular location. It has several pubs, a restaurant and small village shops and is well known and popular with tourists visiting Eynsford Castle and nearby Lullingstone Roman Villa and Lullingstone Castle.

A further tourist attraction that encourages visitors to the village is the Eagle Heights Bird of Prey centre.

The main housing estates for the village have developed to the south east of the Conservation area.

The countryside around the village is designated as Green Belt and Special Landscape Area, which extend into the boundaries of the Conservation Area to the north and east. The area also lies entirely within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

## 2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Eynsford is dissected by the A225, which runs north/south through the village and intersects with the A20 and A25 respectively. Sevenoaks lies to the south with Orpington to the west and Dartford to the north.

A triangle of motorways surrounds the village. The M25 provides links to the north and west, the M26 to the south, linking the M20 with the M25, and the M20, which runs to the Kent coast. The closest junction to both motorways is at the Swanley interchange via the A20.



**Map 1 Geographical location showing major routes**

The surrounding countryside is Green Belt, with agricultural land and wooded parkland to the north and south-east.

Eynsford railway station is on the line from Ashford International and Maidstone to London and is connected to the Sevenoaks/Victoria route. These services provide connections to the capital, the coast and beyond.

The nearest towns are Swanley, Sevenoaks, Dartford, and Orpington, which have more shopping and entertainment facilities. The major retail parks at Lakeside and Bluewater are accessible from the M25 motorway.



### 2.3 Historical Development

The village of Eynsford lies on the River Darent on the side of the North Downs. The village derives its name from Aegen, a well-established Anglo-Saxon name – hence Aegensford, contracted to Eynsford, the ford of Aegen. The river name Darent contains a much older element, representing the British *derventio* or oak river.

To the south of Eynsford, on the high ground of Lullingstone Park are the remains of what is reputed to have been an extensive Iron Age Fort.

To the north of the village is one of the earliest Norman stonework defences in the country, Eynsford Castle, the lower two thirds of the wall dating back to 1088. The additional height to the walls and the buildings, the ruins of which can be seen today, are of a much later date. The castle was built on a man-made site, which had been in use since the Saxon period and formerly surrounded by a moat.

After a fire in the early 1200's some reconstruction of the castle took place, but 100 years later the buildings were derelict. It was brought back into use in the mid 1700's as hunting kennels and in 1835 after the removal of all newer buildings, the remains of the ancient flintwork was revealed.

The Church of St Martin is constructed of flint and in the styles of Norman and Early English. The original building dates back to late 11<sup>th</sup> Century, the chapel to Saint Katherine and the South Transept were added in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and the exterior has been greatly restored.

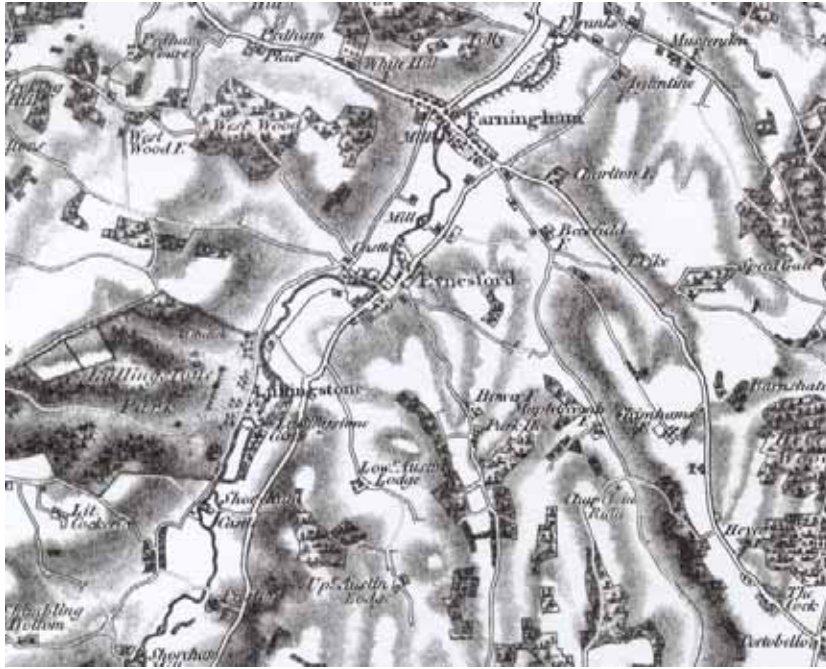
The bridge over the River Darent is a fine example of medieval craftsmanship and is still in use today.



Fig. 1 Eynsford bridge across ford looking north west



Fig. 2 Eynsford bridge and ford looking south east from Riverside



Map 3 Muges Map of Eynsford 1801



Map 4 Old Series Ordnance Survey Map of Eynsford 1816-19

Throughout its history Eynsford has attracted many well known residents including the composer Peter Warlock who lived in the village for four years in the 1920's, Arthur Mee (1875-1943) editor of the Children's Newspaper, prolific author and compiler of the County Survey who lived at Eynsford Hill, and Elliot Downs Till founder of Arbor Day, an American custom to allocate a day a year to plant trees.



**Fig. 3 Elliot Downs Till**

Arbor Day was first carried out in this country in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Elliot Downs Till commissioned a village hall to be built at his own expense and in 1904 bought the Harrow Inn and renamed it Castle Hotel.



**Fig.4 War Memorial Eynsford High Street**

In the mid 1930's it was announced that Eynsford would be the site for a new London Airport but it was never built.

## 2.4 Architectural Description

Eynsford has a great range of listed buildings, many of which line the A225 as it passes through the village.

The architecture of the village is, in the most part, typical of the Kentish vernacular and includes brick walls, painted or undecorated, and steeply pitched clay tiled roofs. In some buildings the first floor timber frame remains exposed with rendered panels between the structural members, in others the frame is clad with white painted weather-boarding or lime plaster.

The Church of St Martin, the ruins of Eynsford Castle and Bay Tree Cottages are constructed from the local building material, flint. Flint is also used in combination with stone rubble and brickwork in the construction of the bridge.



**Fig. 5 Church of St. Martin, High Street**



**Fig. 6 Eynsford Castle**

The Old Mill is one building that is individual in both its style and building materials. Whilst the white painted weather-boarding to the walls is fairly common the curved metal sheet roof and gable ends set the building apart and provides a very dramatic backdrop to the medieval bridge.



**Fig. 7 Old Mill and bridge, Riverside**



**Fig. 8 View looking northwest across ford**

In the village houses, dormer windows are often inserted into the roof slopes, giving light to attic spaces, which can then be utilised as additional accommodation.



**Fig. 8 Boyne House High Street**



**Fig. 10 The Cottage & Avenue Cottage**

Some gables have deep decoratively carved bargeboards, while others display close studding on the primary elevations.



**Fig. 11 14, 16 & 20 Riverside**

Cat slide roofs, which sweep down from the ridge to ground floor ceiling level have long been a popular way of covering a single storey extension to the side or rear of a building.



**Fig. 12 Restaurant and Post Office**

As the pitches of tiled roofs tend to be steep, central valley gutters between two ridges are used in order to keep the heights manageable on the wider buildings. A similar detail has also been adopted where the property has been extended along the entire length of the rear elevation.



**Fig. 13 Side elevation of Bridge House**

Brick is the most popular building material and is usually fairfaced. Further variety is added by the use of both local red and yellow stocks.



**Fig. 14 Bridge House, High Street**



**Fig. 15 Home Farm, Riverside**

Usually the buildings are monocolour; although there are examples where either banding has been accentuated by the use of red brickwork, or the first floor is weatherboarded above a brick ground floor.



**Fig. 16 Willow Terrace, High Street**



**Fig. 17 Avenue Cottage**

There is one example where brick infill has been inserted into timber-framed building and painted white to replicate the traditional black / white façade associated with timber frames.



**Fig. 18 No 5 Riverside**



**Fig. 19 Vine Cottage & Rose Cottage**

In certain examples, such as Elizabeth Cottages, an older structure has been masked by later detailing. In this case a Wealden timber framed house has been concealed behind white painted weatherboarding.



**Fig. 20 Elizabeth Cottages**

Windows are either timber casements or sliding sashes. There are a few examples of leaded lights but not as many as are sometimes found in similar villages.



**Fig. 21 Public House adjacent to Malt Shovel Cottages High Street**

### 3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

#### 3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

Eynsford's location allows some far-reaching views along the River Darent. From the Ford in particular, the views upstream to the west show the extent of the valley with a dramatic brick railway viaduct that not only spans the width of the valley, but also rises to the height of the surrounding hills and dominates the horizon.



Fig. 22 Railway viaduct to the south west of Eynsford



Fig. 23 River Darent at Riverside

To the north, the view downstream is of a mixture of agricultural land along the west bank and private residential gardens to the east.



Fig. 24 View south-east from Common Meadow recreation ground

The Harrow Meadow recreation ground to the east offers alternative views across the undulating hills of the North Downs.



Fig. 25 View south-east from recreation ground (east of Bower House)

From the west, the High Street visually unfolds from surrounding hills and as the road approaches the village centre a series of bends obscures the rural setting of the village. From the east there is a long vista up the High Street to the junction where the war memorial stands.

There are several public footpaths connecting the modern housing estates to the south east of the Conservation Area to Station Road and High Street.

There is great variety of architectural design and age within the Conservation Area. Eynsford is compact and easily accessible ; the close proximity of the buildings accentuating their individual contrasting characters.

All historic properties whether detached or terraced are in close proximity to the road and as a result there is a strong sense of visual enclosure. Modern housing has been set back from the kerbline to the detriment of the visual appearance of the village.

Boundary walls are a prominent feature in the village. Many are built in brick with a flint base, brick and shaped tile cappings and in some instances with small brick piers.

There are some additional features that contribute to the scenic qualities of the village. Historic town signs are evident outside some of the traditional public houses and adjacent to the War Memorial. A small glazed brick water fountain stands on the corner of Bower Lane opposite Bower Cottage



**Fig. 23 Glazed brick water fountain, Bower Lane**

### 3.2 The Impact of Individual Elements/Features/Groups of Building

The junction outside St. Martin's Church is very imposing dominating the ford, rural landscape and timber framed building beyond. This side of the river is different to the main road. Whilst it still remains relatively busy in terms of vehicular traffic, the sound of the weir and the open countryside give it an air of tranquillity and space. This is also reflected in the design of the buildings, which are mainly close to the road but are larger detached properties.

The war memorial situated in the middle of the road junction with Bower Lane further down the High Street also acts as a focal point with the recreation ground to the east and the High Street continuing north. Bower, Windmill and Elizabeth Cottages are an important grouping. All are clad in white painted weatherboarding, although it would appear that the properties are older than they look; Elizabeth Cottages are a sub-divided Wealden timber framed hall house of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Due to their positioning it is apparent that this junction was defined when these properties were constructed providing a route south east to the villages of Kemsing and Heaverham. It is likely that this formed one of the routes to the market town of Sevenoaks.



Fig. 24 1 & 2 Fountain Cottages



Fig. 25 Elizabeth, Windmill & Bower Cottages

New Place is located behind the High Street and remains largely obscured from view. It is accessed via a footpath to Eynsford Castle and has superb detailing. It is timber framed construction with deeply carved bargeboards to the gable end and dormer windows.

Willow Terrace is a row of cottages in yellow stock bricks with red stock banding. They are uncomplicated and pleasing to the eye, although the lack of off street parking detracts from the overall picture. There is a further example of this type of construction, but it falls outside the Conservation Area and wooden sash windows have been replaced with new plastic. Where the original sash windows remain, steps should be taken to ensure their retention.



**Fig. 26 Willow Terrace, High Street**

Malt Shovel Cottages are another row of terraced cottages within the Conservation Area, but they have not retained their uniform appearance. Various styles of porches have been added. Some retain a white painted render whilst others have been painted alternative colours and pebble dashed render has been applied to some. The original timber sash windows in most instances have been removed and replaced with modern plastic.

Home Farm and its associated outbuildings has been divided to provide small commercial premises in converted cattle sheds, while the house retains a domestic purpose. The conversion of the cattle shed, with central courtyard providing off street parking has secured a future for these buildings.

The farmhouse at Home Farm is historically important and appears to be suffering from a lack of maintenance, ivy growth has caused deleterious scarring to the brickwork and mortar joints on the front elevation.



**Fig. 27 Home Farm, Riverside**

Properties in the centre of the village suffer from their proximity to the main road and although they are well maintained, the constant traffic and noise has an adverse affect upon the area. There is kerb-side parking along the whole of the High Street with little provision for off-road parking, which exacerbates congestion within the village centre.

There is very little soft landscaping along the High Street most being concentrated within the grounds of the Churches, which are set back from the kerb and partly obscured by conifers. Most of the other buildings set back from the kerblines are modern developments.

The scale of historic properties along the High Street is compromised by a large white painted single storey commercial property, opposite Willow Terrace, that at present is vacant and for sale. The building itself is rather obtrusive with a grass bank and steps down to the road.

The bus shelter and garage forecourt, to the north of the war memorial, show little sympathy to the visual qualities of the conservation area or the setting of adjacent buildings. Some buildings adjacent to the garage are in a state of neglect.

Fences to High Street properties, where they exist, are open and brick walls are low, reinforcing the closeness of the buildings to the pavements.



**Fig. 28 Plough Inn car park, Riverside**

There are few private front gardens and none of any significant size.

Away from the central areas and to the north west and south west, larger detached houses sit on more substantial plots, although many are positioned close to the road.



**Fig. 29 Nos. 32 & 34 Riverside**

Unfortunately both Riverside and the High Street are festooned with road signage, which is not only invasive but also unattractive and has a negative effect on the character of the conservation area.



**Fig 30 Willow Terrace, High Street**

Other detractors are telegraph poles, which accentuate the lack of frontage and kerbs outside properties, and television aerials mounted on extended poles.



**Fig 31 Plough Inn & 18, 20 & 22 Riverside**



**Fig 32 Malt Shovel Cottages, High Street**

A modern telephone box also adds little to the visual amenity of the area.



**Fig 33 Ford House, High Street**

The buildings of Furlongs Farm are ugly and detrimental to the conservation area, and are seen from many rural vantage points from the north west.

To a lesser degree this is true of the commercial greenhouse at Eynsford Nursery, which is partly obscured from view by detached properties along Sparepenny Lane.

## **4.0 FUTURE TRENDS**

### **4.1 Current and Future Pressures on the Area**

The need to find residential development sites in this popular region within easy reach of London puts any village in the spotlight in the search for suitable building land. Whilst new development within a conservation area is not necessarily unwelcome, the impact that this can have on the traditional form of the village has to be carefully considered before consent is granted.

The Green Belt status afforded to the open countryside beyond the village may come under pressure in future years, in response to any need for new housing in the South East, particularly where development is already encroaching into agricultural land.

The village has a local store and post office but the proximity of larger towns and retail outlets has an adverse effect on the profitability of small shops. The numbers of tourists visiting the area has however ensured the survival of the public houses and other facilities.

The village lies on an important north-south road link running parallel to the M25 motorway; any problems on that road can cause a build-up of traffic through the centre of the Conservation Area.

Planning policies should ensure that vital details are not lost as each historic building contained within the area has individual features that contribute to the street scene. The necessity for this restriction is evident when looking at previous conversions and shop fronts. The brickwork arches above the original openings to the Post Office are clearly visible above the new shop front, which has not respected the character and appearance of the building.

## **4.2 Potential for Enhancement**

The area would benefit from some tighter controls or enforcement of existing regulations on temporary signs and shop blinds, as some of those in use at present are not in keeping with the buildings on which they are placed.

Street furniture would also benefit from upgrading to a standard more fitting for a conservation area.

Overhead power and telephone wires always detract from the street scene although it is acknowledged that they are difficult to relocate. Encouragement of the replacement of these within the Conservation Area would be beneficial.

There are some buildings that are, at present, detracting from the character of the area. Should redevelopment of any of these be considered at any time, the applicants might be encouraged to seek a more sensitive solution.

Whilst modern properties contained within the designated area cannot be excluded it would be beneficial to assess their failings so that future development is more sympathetic.

### **4.3 Future Policy Recommendations**

The architecture outside the conservation area is in most instances modern and does not appear to be suitable for inclusion. There are older properties further north along the High Street, which, whilst similar to buildings included are some distance away, segregated by modern housing, and therefore difficult to include.

New Place is a striking example of a decorative timber framed building. Whilst it is already included within the Conservation Area, it may be advantageous to consider its suitability for listing.

The recreation grounds situated to the east, accessed via Bower Lane and opposite the Eynsford nursery could be included in the conservation area as important areas of open space that contribute to the character and setting of the area. This would also offer further protection to the trees that adorn the western riverbank.

The modern single storey “Works” building detracts from the area but there are plans to redevelop the site. The proposed housing scheme should be more in character with the conservation area.

**Acknowledgements:**

The draft appraisal was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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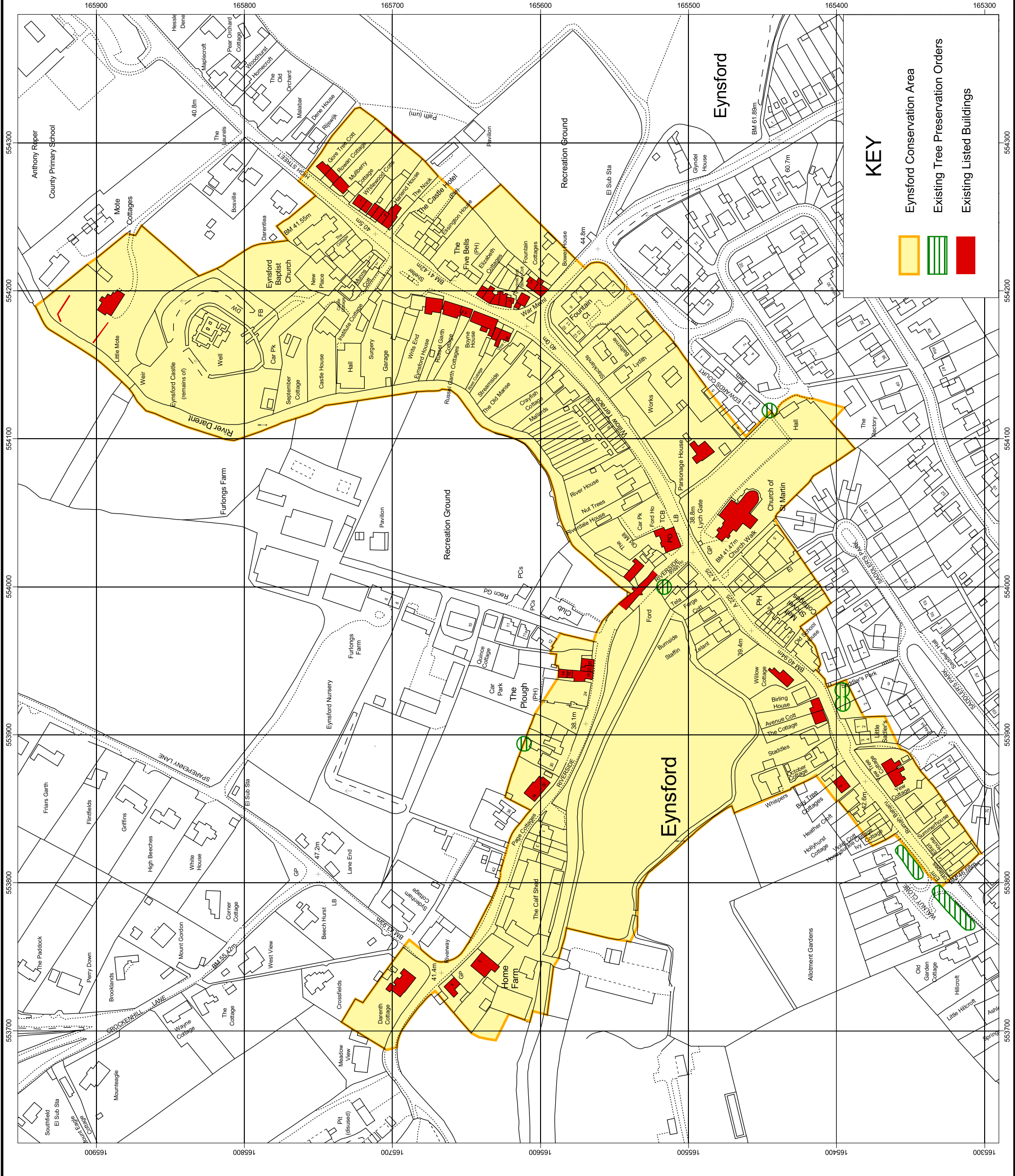


# MAP 3 Eynsford Conservation Area Designations




Scale 1:2500  
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Date November 2002



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## KEY

-  Eynsford Conservation Area
-  Existing Tree Preservation Orders
-  Existing Listed Buildings



# MAP 4 Eynsford Conservation Area Character Appraisal

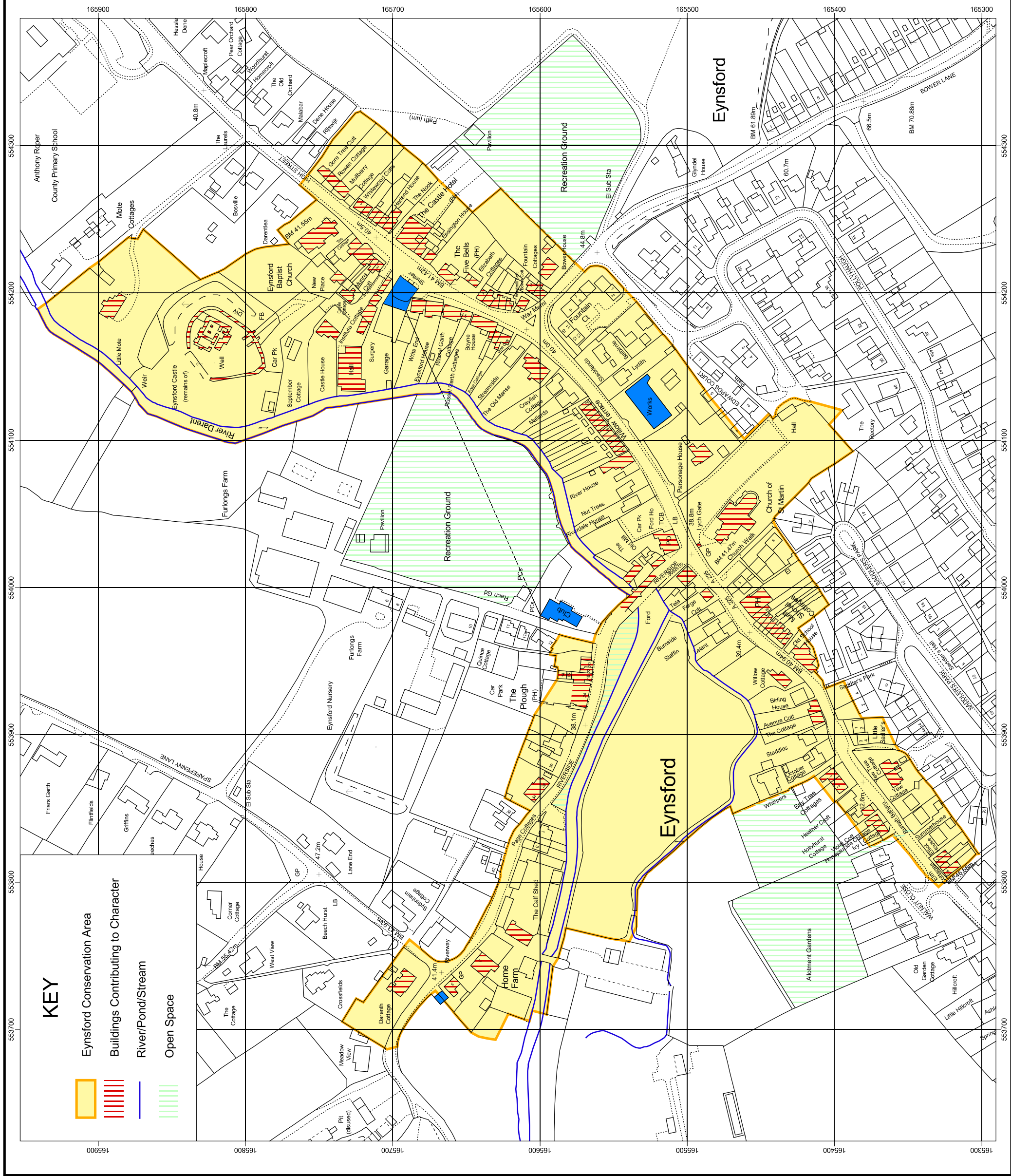
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**MAP 5**  
**Eynsford**  
**Conservation Area**  
**Recommendations for**  
**Future Policy Changes**

Scale 1:2500

Drawn By SNIM

Date November 2002



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