

HALSTEAD

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



December 2003

Halstead

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 Council in December 2003 and adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

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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 also 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.

This assessment and the detailed analysis of the area contained in the report are 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 greenspace 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

Halstead Conservation Area covers 3.5 hectares and contains 6 listed buildings together with listed flint boundary walls. It was designated in 1973 and has not been reappraised since then. Outside the conservation area, but still within the confines of the village there are a further 9 listed buildings.

The village nestles in woodlands on top of the North Downs and within the Special Landscape Area.

The conservation area is centred around the old core of the village extending along Church Road and encompassing the main road junction. The Parish Church is located at the far end of Church Road and thus falls outside the boundaries of the conservation area.

The conservation area comprises mainly residential properties with some dwellings converted into commercial premises. The dwellings are generally two storeys in height with the exception of the Village House, which is significantly larger in terms of scale and mass than any other building.

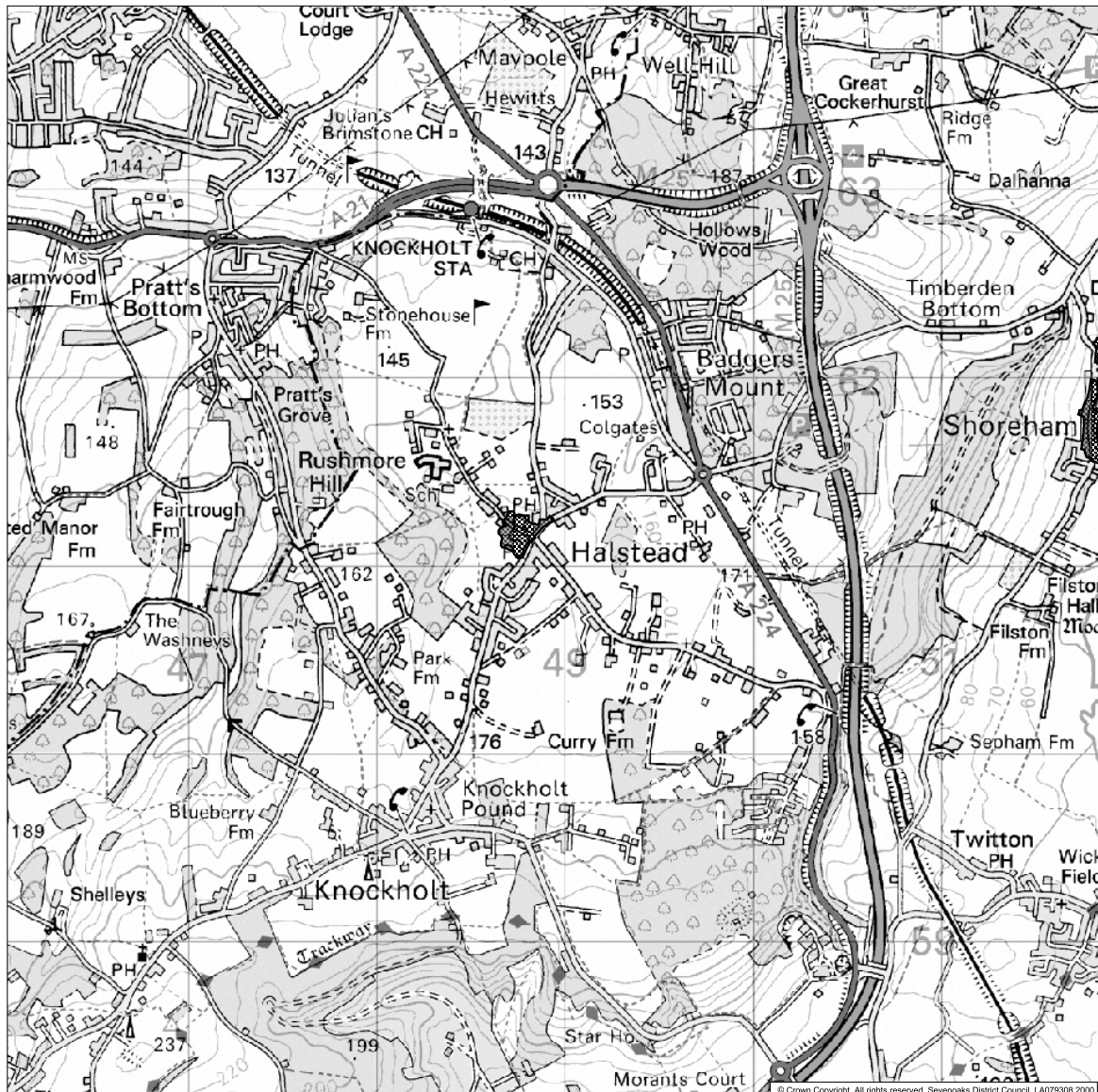
The local use of flint is evident in the boundary walls that segregate the properties and the elevations to the cottages adjacent to Church Road junction.

2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Halstead is a short distance south from where the A21 meets the M25 and lies at the junction of a number of roads leading to the A21, A21 / M25 junction and the A224, the main road to Sevenoaks.

The village is situated south of Knockholt station, which is on the main railway line from Tonbridge to London via Orpington. To the east lies Otford station which is on the line from Ashford International and Maidstone to London and is connected to the Sevenoaks/Victoria route. These services provide wide connections to the capital, the coast and beyond.

The nearest major towns are Sevenoaks and Orpington, which has the greater shopping and entertainment facilities.



Map1: Geographical Location

2.3 Historical Development

Halstead's history is centred around the Church and the Manor. The Manor has long since been demolished. Only the boundary wall, gate lodge, a flint coach house and stable block remain. Documented records date a Church within the parish as far back as 1120 although the first record of a rector was not until 1282.



Map 2 Historical Map dated 1801

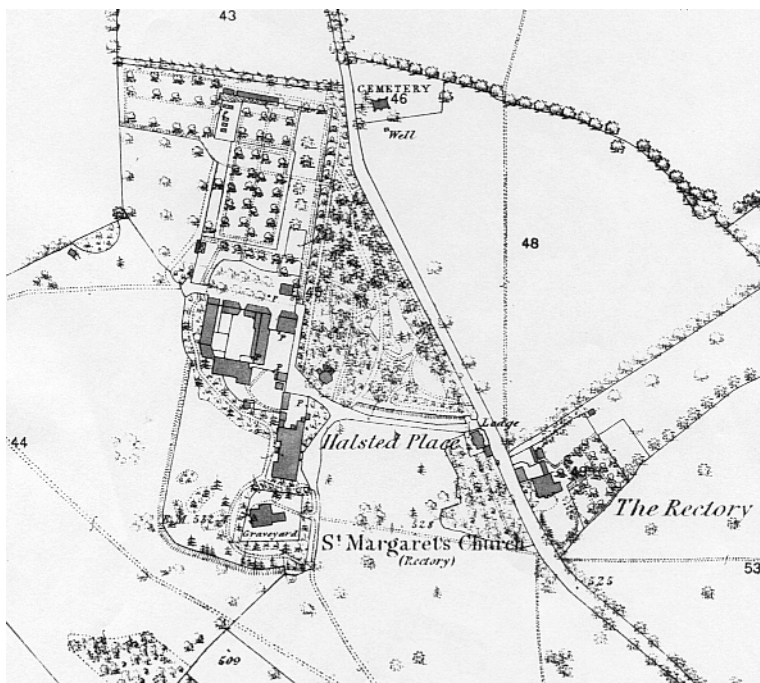
The Manor of Halstead was larger than the parish and first records show that it was owned by the Norman family Malavil.

In the reign of Edward IV, the Manor was owned by Thomas Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury who crowned Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VIII. He died in 1486 and is buried at Canterbury Cathedral.



Map 3 Historical Map dated 1816-19

The old Church, which is now in the grounds of the special needs school was decommissioned, and fell into disrepair. The new church, on the site of the cemetery grounds and in the style of a 13th Century building with arcade columns of green sandstone, was opened by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1881.



Map 4 Historical Map dated 1869

In the early 1890s Fort Halstead was occupied by the military and a government store mobilization centre was established. After the First World War the Fort consisting of a moated area containing two cottages and a few other buildings, was auctioned off and used as a weekend cottage, but as the threat of war became evident in the late 1930's the value of the site for defence purposes was realised and this use was revived and the present research establishment founded.

In 1927 Halstead Place was used as a school and was subsequently occupied by the Home Office in the early part of the 2nd World War prior to becoming a prisoner of war camp. It remained neglected after the departure of the prisoners in 1946 and, as a result of dry rot and serious dilapidation, it was demolished in June 1952.

2.4 Architectural Description

Halstead is a small village with an interesting past and although its origins are obscure, it is believed that its prosperity is a result of the abundance of orchards within the area. Consequently, a few of the older properties are rather grand and originally Halstead Place had a large Estate partly enclosed by flint and brick boundary walls.



Fig 1: Village House and associated boundary walls, Church Road

The Conservation Area contains mainly large detached buildings of the 18th and early 19th Century and splendid examples of early 19th century cottages, built in the traditional material of flint with brickwork quoins and a rounded chamfer at the corner of the building to facilitate construction.



Fig 2: Vernacular architecture using local flint as building material, Church Road

Roofs are either slated, with lead hip and ridge rolls or clay ridge tiles, or covered with clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs. The use of full or half hips to one side of the roof with a gable end on the other is evident. White painted wooden windows predominate and are an important part of the character of the conservation area.



Fig 3: Widmore House Farm, Church Road

The pitches of tiled roofs tend to be steep, whilst those that are slated are shallower, and the contrasting heights of the ridge lines lends variety and interest to the street scene.

Chimney stacks tend to be fairly short and simple in design and dormer windows are often inserted into the roof slopes, giving light to attic spaces, which can then be utilised as additional accommodation.

Some timber-framing is evident locally however only one 1930's example at present is included within the designated area.



Fig 4: Kent Acre, Church Road

Brick is the most popular building material and the local red stock bricks can be seen in many buildings. Patterns formed by the inclusion of blue headers or bands of a different colour brick are evident, together with decorative arches above doors and windows.

The modern elevation imposed on the Old School Room has little aesthetic value and the use of two-tone brickwork to depict detail, although a traditional feature, has not been carried out successfully.



Fig 5: The Old School Room, Church Road

The use of local flint either on its own or combined with brickwork, adds another colour and texture to the built environment.

Traditionally windows were either timber casements or sliding sashes although there are a significant number of replacement windows in varying styles within and adjacent to the Conservation Area. Leaded lights can be found in the timber-framed buildings and stained glass has been used with flair in the Church windows.



Fig 6: North room extension to St Margaret's Church, Church Road

3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

The conservation area is centered around the core of the old village with the majority of buildings located within Church Road with the kerbline of Shoreham Lane and Knockholt Road forming part of the boundary.

The crossroads where Otford Lane, Church Road, Knockholt Road and Shoreham Lane meet appears to be historically significant, with Otford Lane being one of the main roads that in the past linked the community with other villages.



Fig 7: Church Road junction early 20th Century



Fig 8: Church Road junction 21st Century

Whilst the roads are relatively narrow and enclosed, the centre of the village has an air of spaciousness. The buildings are detached, separated by large green frontages and boundary walls. Generous areas of open land also contribute to the feeling of space.

To the north The Cock public house provides a physical barrier where the road forks north and north-east.



Fig 9 & 10: The Cock on the junction between Station Road and Shoreham Lane

This junction at the centre of the village also serves as a visual stop, whilst there are views down each of the alternative roads.

The appearance of Knockholt Road is, in comparison; busy with smaller, modern detached properties constructed in close proximity to each other. Although much open land remains on the western side of the road, the large housing estate to the south is the most prominent feature.

The recreation ground is located to the north of Halstead Hall with access from Station Road whilst the playing fields linked to Halstead Place School are accessed via Church Road.



Fig 11: Open Space bordering Dearleap wood.

There are several important footpaths that link the playing fields with Dearleap wood to the west and the recreation ground with Church Road across the field known as Walnut Tree Meadow associated with Kent Acre , Church Road.



Fig 12: From Church Road looking east.

The setting of the village is very rural with spacious areas of grass and well established trees that soften the horizon. The most picturesque views are those facing west across Deerleap Wood.



Fig 13: Dearleap Wood south of Village House

Where boundary walls exist, they are generally of flint although additional details such as quoins and vertical bands in brickwork are evident. The majority of boundary walls are located along Church Road from the cross roads to St Margaret’s Church and much actually falls outside the designated area.



Fig 14 & 15: Flint boundary wall defining boundary of Halstead Place and Cemetery

Another feature that contributes to the character of the area and may be suitable for inclusion is the decorative iron railings found adjacent to The Cock public house in Station Road.



Fig 16: Decorative railings 14 – 20 Station Road

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

Whilst the Church lies outside of the Conservation Area, it has a significant link to the village historically and is therefore worthy of consideration within the report. It was built to replicate 13th Century detailing with arcade columns of green sandstone, arches composed of moulded bricks and internal beams supported on stone corbels. The windows are of Cathedral Glass and inside are most of the memorials associated with the original Church.



Fig 17: St Margaret's Church, Church Lane

The Church is in very good condition, however the use of chicken wire as a deterrent to stop nesting pigeons has caused rust staining to the window sills etc.

This is part of an important grouping that is largely associated with the old Manor of Halstead Place although only a few buildings and boundary walls still remain intact. The majority of the structures fall within the boundaries of Halstead Place School a modern building complex on the former site of the Manor.

Village House (see fig1) an early 19th century former Dower house of Halstead Place is an important building within the conservation area surrounded by magnificent grounds that border Deerleap Woods and Knockholt Road.



Fig 18: Halstead Hall, Station Road

Opposite the Village House are Widmore House Farm and Halstead Hall, the two properties being separated by a brick boundary wall. Both houses and the wall are listed.



Fig 19 & 20: Properties adjacent to Halstead Hall, Station Road

The two properties above are contained within the conservation area and are architecturally undistinguished. It would appear therefore that their inclusion is directly linked to the positioning of the listed garden wall that encompasses the properties.

Three examples of vernacular housing design with their own unique features are Avebury, Holly Cottage and Tudor Cottage, and are all worthy of inclusion in any revised conservation area.



Fig 21: Avebury, Church Road



Fig 22: Holly Cottage, Church Road



Fig 23: Tudor Cottage, Church Road

All three of these houses have plain clay tiled hipped roofs and first floor decorative timber framing reflecting Kentish vernacular design .

The Old Post Office, like all the other properties on the west side of Knockholt Road approaching the junction with Church Road, is constructed on the kerbline of the road. These properties form an enclosed, picturesque rural scene bounded by the superb flint cottages, flint rubble walls, hedges and trees. It is this that particularly typifies the character of this conservation area – a place of small scale, vernacular building in a farming community, which has remained untouched and unspoilt by modern intervention.



Fig 24 Building to the rear of the Old Post Office, Knockholt Road

The group of mature Scots pines in Station Road are a predominant feature within the conservation area. In adjoining areas of architectural importance along Church Road the abundance of trees and hedgerows gives a sense of tranquility, which is assisted by a low volume of traffic.



Fig 25: The outbuilding to The Cock, Station Road

Whilst the public house and outbuilding are within the conservation area, the dwellings to the north of the Cock Inn are excluded. Some of the properties up to and including 36 Station Road should be considered for inclusion.



Fig 26: House 22, Station Road

As a result of their omission from the conservation area, a porch has been added to 22 Station Road and a rear extension built that affects the ridge line. Although it is apparent that an effort has been made to replicate the original character these modifications have adversely affected the appearance of the property.



Fig 27 and 28: The Spinney Cottage, Knockholt Road

The Spinney Cottage, is an unusual example of domestic architecture and eye catching due to the unusual design of the chimneys but is visually out of context with the rest of the conservation area. A recent extension has adopted a completely different style of build but the frontage flint rubble and brick walling is typical of the area whilst the extension is obscured from view by a well-established hedge.



Fig 29: Telegraph pole, Knockholt Road

Within the conservation area, unsightly telegraph poles have made little impact due to the large frontages of the houses and abundance of trees. There are however a couple of examples where the street scene would be improved by the re-siting of poles and cables

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.

Backland development is often proposed by owners of properties with large gardens, and whilst such development may be suitable in certain locations, in a conservation area it can lead to the deterioration of the historic form of the built environment.

The Green Belt status afforded to the open countryside beyond the village may come under pressure in future years, in response to a need for new housing in the south east. This, however, is outside the present conservation area and will be subject to the political climate of the day.

The village also has a local store and post office but the proximity of a large town has an adverse effect on the profitability of small outlets.

4.2 Potential for Enhancement and Future Policy Recommendations

The tarmacadam to the frontages of both pubs provides off the road parking but does little to enhance the entrances to the buildings. A different finish would re-establish the frontage of the buildings and provide a visual break between the road and the car parks.



Fig 30: The Rose and Crown Otford Lane about 1900



Fig 31: Otford Lane in 2000

Whilst not public open space it may be advantageous to incorporate the land to the east of Halstead Hall which provides part of the setting of the conservation area and would also enable the Rose and Crown to be incorporated within the area. The land contributes to the feeling of space at the main focal point of the conservation area, the crossroads.

There is a large piece of land just outside the conservation area, adjacent to The Spinney Cottage, that would appear to form part of the estate associated with Village House. This open land forms an important part of the setting to the conservation area and could be included in a redesignated area.

The recreation ground and green field could be included in the conservation area as important areas of open space that contribute to the character and setting of the area.

The Rose and Crown and associated outbuildings, all of which are listed, are at present on the fringes of the conservation area, and it might now be appropriate to include them within the boundaries.



Fig 32: The Rose and Crown, Otford Lane

To the north, 14 to 36 Station Road are mid 19th to early 20th Century properties, which would benefit from inclusion within the area to limit further loss of detail to the buildings and their curtilages. Some houses with inappropriate alterations tend to detract from the character of the area, but the buildings are of sufficient importance to warrant restrictions on future external adaptations to ensure that they are more in keeping with the original and adjacent properties.



Fig 33: 14 to 20 Station Road



Fig 34: Alma Cottages, Station Road

Crossways, to the west of the conservation area, is a house of substance and some style with proprietary metal windows, fairfaced brick plinth detailing and tile-hung gables behind the rendered frontage set in beautifully landscaped grounds; it also contributes to the architectural character of the area, and should be considered for inclusion.



Fig 35: Crossways, Church Road

Finally, the stable building, walls, gate lodge and remains of the original church to Halstead Place are an important reminder of the history of the village. Although the site now has a plethora of modern development connected with the school complex, and is a considerable distance from the existing conservation area it is worth considering whether these buildings warrant a separate conservation area or individual listings to ensure their survival.

If a separate conservation area were designated then it would be prudent to include St Margaret's Church and associated grounds and extend the boundaries along Church Road to include the Old Rectory and outbuildings within the curtilage of the property.



Fig 36: St Margaret's Church, Church Road



Fig 37: Outbuildings to The Old Rectory



Fig 38: The Old Rectory, Church Road

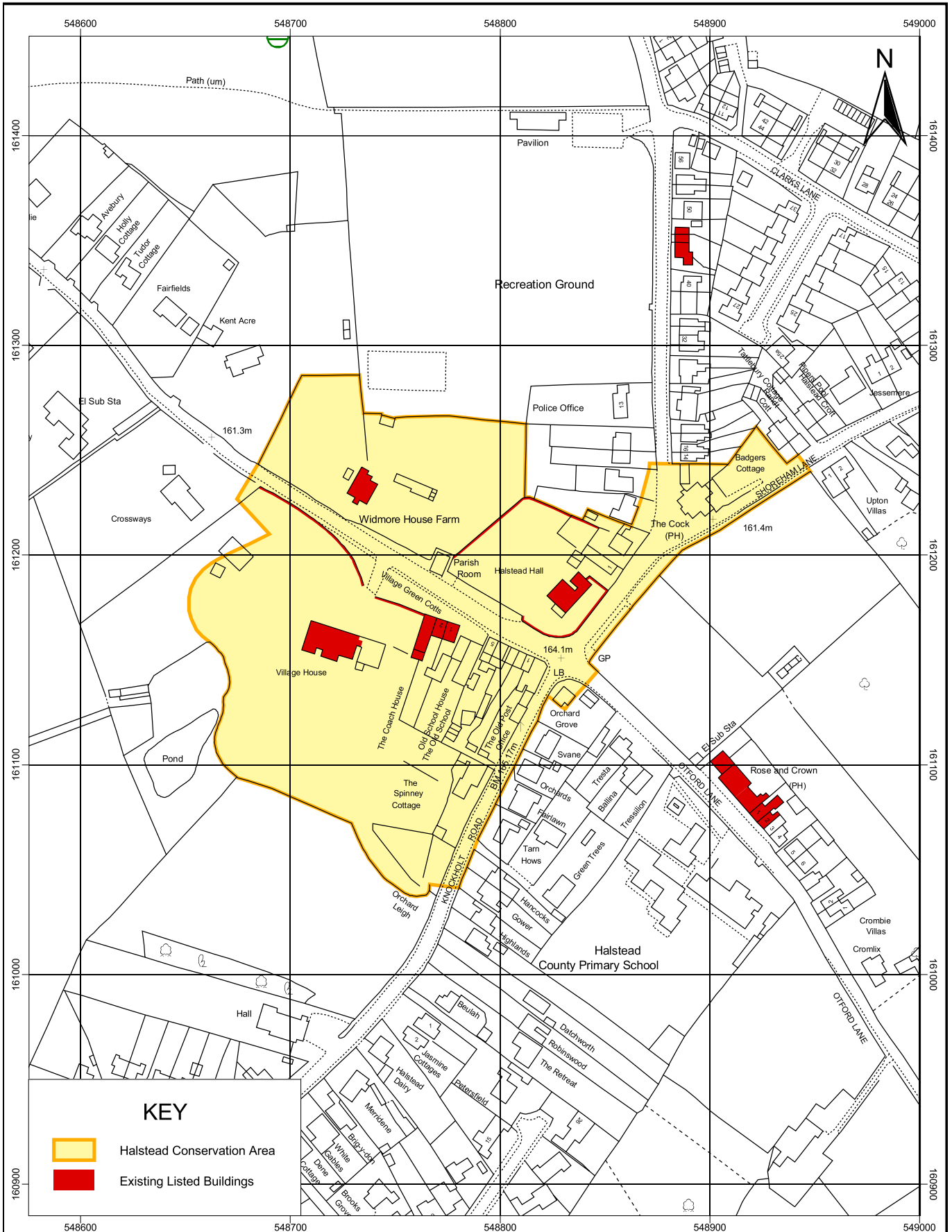
Consideration should be given to enlarging the conservation area to include the open space adjacent to Widmore House Farm which provides part of the setting to the area.

Acknowledgements

The draft appraisal was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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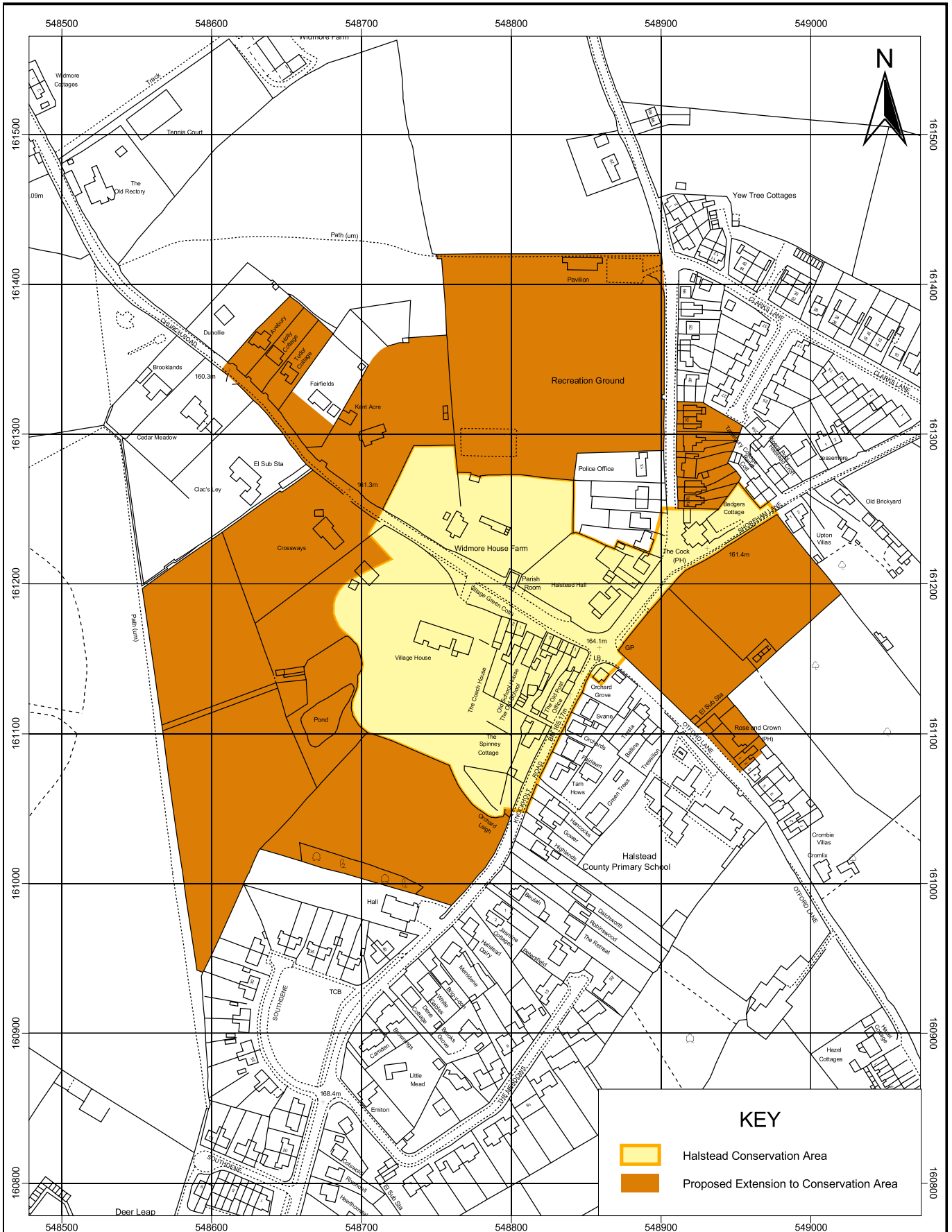
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MAP 5
Halstead
Conservation Area
Designations

Scale	1:2500
Date	December 2002
Drawn By	SNM

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MAP 7
Halstead
Conservation Area
Recommendations for
Future Policy Changes

Scale	1:3500
Date	December 2002
Drawn By	SNM

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