

# **HORTON KIRBY AND SOUTH DARENTH**



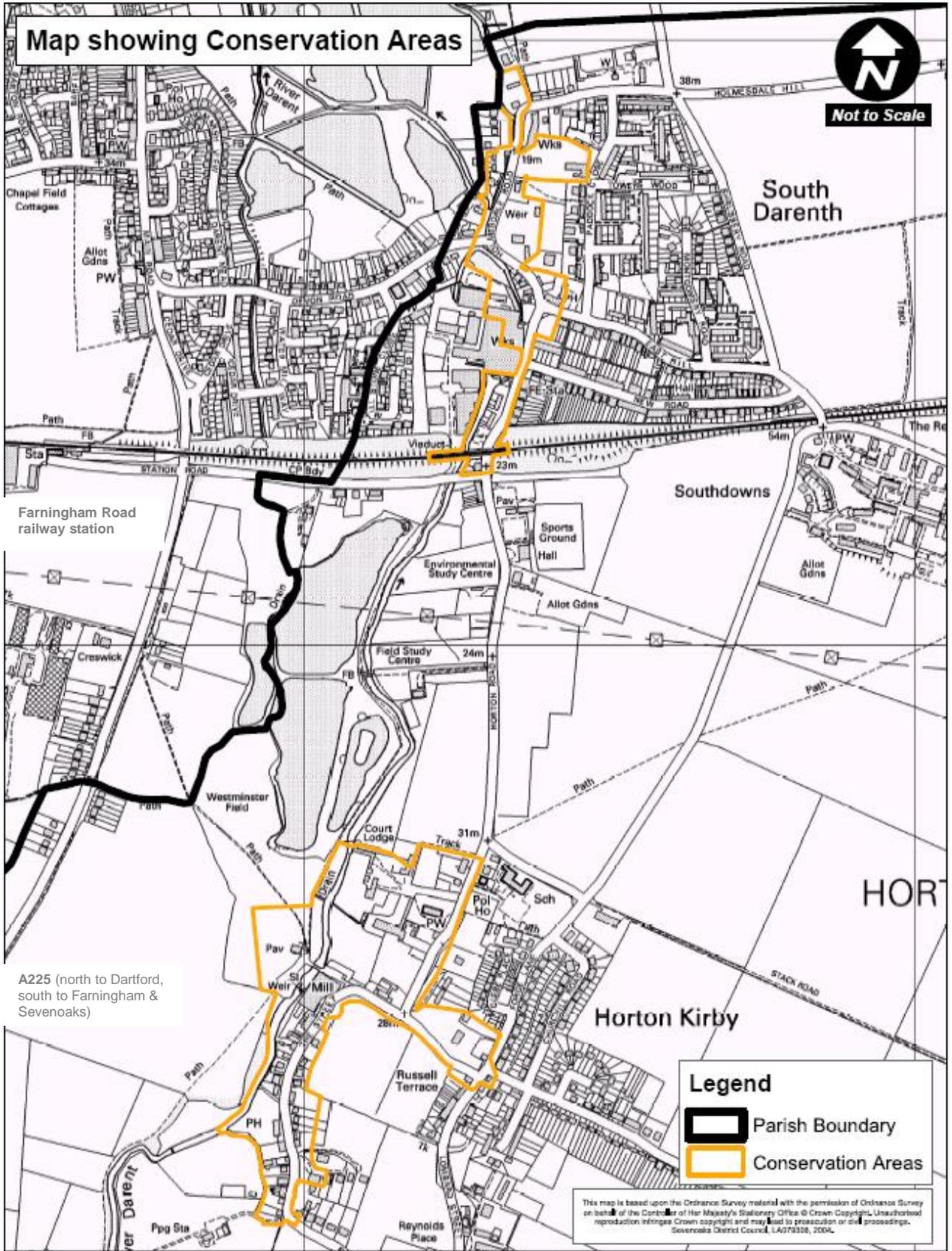
*A view of Horton Kirby from the church tower*

## **VILLAGES DESIGN STATEMENT**

**Published in 2005**



*South Darenth railway viaduct and Paper Mill chimney (from the A225 Sevenoaks - Dartford road)*



## INTRODUCTION

1. A **Village Design Statement (VDS)** is a document designed as guidance for everyone concerned with the appearance of their local environment. It is produced by members of the local community for use by planners, developers, local councils and individuals submitting planning applications. Village Design Statements provide a way of ensuring that any new development is designed in sympathy with the local characteristics valued by people who live in the area covered by the Statement.

2. Village Design Statements are the outcome of an initiative taken in 1996 by the Countryside Commission. Page 4 of their advisory booklet *Village Design* sets out the purpose and objectives of Design Statements. These are:

- a) to describe the distinctive character of the village and its surrounding countryside
- b) to show how character can be defined at three levels, namely:
  - i the landscape setting of the village
  - ii the shape of the settlement
  - iii the nature of the buildings themselves
- c) to draw up design principles based on the distinctive local character
- d) to work in partnership with the local planning authority in the context of existing local planning policy, and to influence future policies.

3. Producing a VDS enables us to say what makes Horton Kirby and South Darenth the villages they are, and why we like living here. We have produced design guidelines which will help planning decisions to be sympathetic to the two villages and outlying areas of the parish. As Parish Council is consulted by District Council on planning matters, the information in the VDS should be useful in supporting their recommendations. Now that the VDS has been adopted by District Council, this information will be taken into account when considering planning applications and other proposals put before Parish Council.

4. Change is brought about not only by new building developments, both commercial and residential, but also by smaller day-to-day alterations to homes and gardens, workplaces, open spaces, paths, walls and hedges; alterations which can affect the look and feel of each village.

5. This Design Statement therefore provides guidance for anyone considering such development, however large or small, in the Parish. It is a source of ideas to help form an awareness of local building styles and other visual elements which will be sympathetic to our two villages. The Statement is not intended to stifle innovative and imaginative proposals tailored to the needs of the area. We are not hostile to new development; rather, we hope to instigate an awareness of, and an interest in, managing change.

6. It is intended for:
- basically, everyone who lives in the Parish
  - local householders, businesses and farmers
  - statutory bodies and providers of services and utilities
  - the Parish and District Councils
  - developers and builders
  - architects, designers, planners and engineers.
7. The Design Statement was produced by a team of local residents, comprising:
- two representatives from the Parish Council
  - an architect
  - a farmer
  - a senior citizen
  - a representative from the Villagers' Gardening Club
  - representatives from the Horton Kirby and the South Darent Village Societies.

with valuable assistance from:

- representatives from Sevenoaks Planning Department
- a representative from the Kent Crime Reduction Unit
- the local youth club
- the Horton Kirby and South Darent Local History Society.

also with financial aid from:

- Horton Kirby and South Darent Parish Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Kent Rural Community Council.

8. The VDS is the result of public consultation involving the parish, including:
- a questionnaire distributed to every household
  - a project undertaken by local school children
  - walking round the parish, observing it and photographing it.
9. This Village Design Statement contains two elements:
- a description of the villages of Horton Kirby and South Darent and outlying areas as they are today, augmented by relevant photographs, highlighting the positive and negative aspects of each area
  - a number of recommendations (based on this description of the Parish), called Planning Guidelines. These Guidelines contain design proposals, which, with the descriptive text, will provide a clear set of principles useful to the consideration of development issues.

## THE PARISH OF HORTON KIRBY AND SOUTH DARENTH: HISTORY AND LANDSCAPE.



*Drays Cottages, Horton Kirby*



*The Mill & Chimney from New Road, South Darent*

10. The Parish of Horton Kirby and South Darenth contains two distinct settlements, each with a well defined core character and modern residential infill. The parish is set in the gently sloping valley of the River Darent - one of a number of valleys running roughly north-south through a system of low hills which run along north Kent. There are also outlying settlements and buildings. Views from the centre of the parish are limited by riverside vegetation and by buildings, but there are long views of the valley from higher ground, such as that from the A225 Dartford to Sevenoaks road. Areas of mature tree and scrub vegetation follow the river banks and the narrow lanes which cross the valley. The river runs through the centre of both villages, providing a link between them, an element in local views - and occasional floods. To the north, between Horton Kirby and the railway viaduct, former gravel workings are enclosed, in places, by substantial vegetation. These workings are now fishing lakes owned and managed by the Dartford and District Angling and Preservation Society. Other areas used for recreation include Westminster Field and the extensive riverside footpaths. Small-scale paddocks, also situated between Horton Kirby and the railway viaduct, are associated with the recreational use of horses.

11. The valley itself still retains its rural character, despite modern additions, or intrusions, such as the railway line in the nineteenth century which gives the area the imposing landmarks of the railway embankment and viaduct, as well as the site of the former paper mill. This is now a diversified industrial area which is due to be redeveloped. The paper mill chimney, a listed building, is a prominent landmark, often glimpsed from some miles outside the parish. The twentieth century brought electricity supply pylons, some street lighting, and further small-scale industrial development.

12. Nevertheless, the two villages are in a valley which is still attractive, away from main arterial routes, and separated by open fields and farmland. Some larger fields are claimed to be of Roman origin: all but obliterated remains of Roman villas have been found north of South Darent and south of Horton Kirby; remnants of a Roman granary and a second building, assumed to be the main villa house, were uncovered under Westminster Field. (The most spectacular Roman villa discovered in the Darent Valley lies at Lullingstone, south of Eynsford). Archaeological evidence suggests that settlement in the valley dates back some thousands of years.

13. A plantation of trees - the Hundred Year Wood - was planted in 1994 to commemorate one hundred years of the Parish Council's existence. It is situated immediately east of the A225 Dartford to Sevenoaks road.

14. A rich variety of wildlife is found in the area because of the diversity of habitats, including the river, lakes, fields and woods.

15. The two villages share some facilities, such as the primary school, village hall, parish church and local shops.

## **HORTON KIRBY**



*Horton Kirby from Skinney Lane, looking towards Farningham Woods*

16. The most obvious difference between Horton Kirby and South Darent is the relative isolation of Horton Kirby village, surrounded as it is by open fields, whereas South Darent nestles close to the railway viaduct and merges with Sutton-at-Hone to the west.

17. Several approach roads to Horton Kirby add to the country feel of the area. The village appears in the distance, surrounded by fields, as one approaches along Eglantine Lane, Skinney Lane, or Horton Road. Coming through the arch of the railway bridge and turning into Station Road gives the traveller a pleasant

introduction to the Darent Valley and Horton Kirby village, and footpaths leading from the A225 also give good views. The edges of the village are still well defined, despite some modern developments.

18. Horton Kirby is a village of great antiquity, containing Roman remains, Saxon burial grounds, and the remains of a Norman castle now incorporated into the farmhouse of Court Lodge Farm (itself of mainly eighteenth-century construction). The village is listed in the Domesday Book.

19. One major historic building in Horton Kirby is Franks Hall. Rebuilt during the late Tudor period on its present site on the west bank of the River Darent, south of the village, by one Lancelot Bathurst, it replaces an earlier mediaeval building on the east bank. Remains of this earlier establishment can be seen in bumps and dips in Franks Field. A Grade 1 listed building, Franks Hall was purchased in 1980 by Findlay Publications, a publishing firm, and after a major restoration programme it serves as their offices. The grounds surrounding the Hall have the status of listed gardens.



*St Mary's Church*

20. The parish church of St. Mary's was built about 1200. It is a cruciform flint building with an over-large brick tower built in the early nineteenth-century to replace a previous broach spire. Roman tiles appear in the walls. St. Mary's church is surrounded by a classic country-style churchyard and is situated north of the centre

of the village. The main village street, simply called The Street, lies north-south, close to the River Darent. The Street contains a heterogeneous but agreeable collection of buildings ranging from humble terraces of cottages to substantial houses such as the weatherboard clad White House, and Kirby Hall, its walls faced with mathematical tiles masquerading as bricks. The area demonstrates that sympathetic development does not mean conformity and regimentation of building styles, a point that the Villages Design Team wishes to

emphasise.



*The Street, showing a period dwelling during refurbishment*

21. What is noticeable about Horton Kirby is the lack of any shops. A little supermarket, a post office, a hairdresser's and a butcher's shop all closed many years ago, leaving no retail facility to serve as a social focus for the village. Old photographs show several shops, including one that sold furniture. Changes in retailing during the twentieth century saw these shops disappear one by one. In spite of this lack of facilities, Horton Kirby is popular as a residential area; and its centre has gone decidedly up-market in recent years. Some older houses have undergone major refurbishments, and one modern house, Old Garden Cottage, has been built in keeping with earlier styles. In addition, a new development of prestige dwellings, Millen Court, has replaced the former Westminster Mill. (This mill was in times past the major industrial unit in Horton Kirby, but after closure as a working factory in 1991 it became increasingly derelict.)

22. Some modern roads, such as Churchill Road, have more in common with suburban areas, with their array of open-plan front gardens (some paved over for parking of cars), numerous extensions and windows of standardised dimensions which give a generally urban feel. Slightly older developments, such as Glebe Place and Saxon Place, were originally Local Authority housing and are grouped around central grassed areas.



*Saxon Place*

23. The construction of Saxon Place in the 1930s led to the discovery of extensive Saxon burial grounds. Although part of Horton Kirby, it is an outlying settlement separated from the main village by open land. Saxon Place is behind Eglantine Villa, an elegant nineteenth-century building which is now a residential home for elderly people.



*Eglantine Farm*

24. There has been conversion of farm buildings to residential use, notably Eglantine Farm in Eglantine Lane. Some original farm workers' dwellings still remain, such as Court Lodge Cottages in Horton Road.

25. Horton Kirby still retains working farm buildings, most notably in Court Lodge Farm, although some of them now contain workshops and industrial units. The barns at the junction of Skinney Lane and Forge Lane are still used to dry the hops from Court Lodge Farm's nearby hop gardens. Farm buildings in Lombard Street accommodate a variety of small businesses.



*Court Lodge Farm and buildings*

26. A legacy from Horton Kirby's agricultural past is the number of fields within the confines of the village itself. The village is almost bisected by these fields on the south side of Bull Hill and the north side of The Street, in Court Lodge Farm. These provide a valuable encroachment of rurality in the surrounding residential development.

27. One field in particular, Westminster Field, is a valuable communal asset. Access from the village centre is across a bridge over the River Darent at Millen Court. It is used for various activities ranging from football matches to village fetes, and is part of the network of footpaths that exist in the village. These footpaths are a positive asset, and provide pleasant walks around the locality. An inventory of rights of way is maintained at the Parish Office.

28. Building styles are varied, and include steep-pitched roofs of Kent peg and slate construction over red or brown brickwork, timber framing, flint, weatherboard cladding or pebbledash. Dwelling boundaries, where fenced, are wooden picket fences, brick walls, or flint.

29. Horton Kirby contains the primary school which serves both villages. It includes a substantial school playing field which has, in one corner, a small public access playground for children. The buildings were designed by John Poulton in the 1960s.



*Horton Kirby Church of England Primary School*

30. There are two public houses in Horton Kirby: The Fighting Cocks which is in The Street and has a garden leading down to the river; and the other public house, The Bull, in Lombard Street, which is situated on the eastern side of the village and has a rear garden with a view west across the valley. Both buildings are mature and accepted as compatible with their immediate surroundings.



*The Fighting Cocks, in The Street*

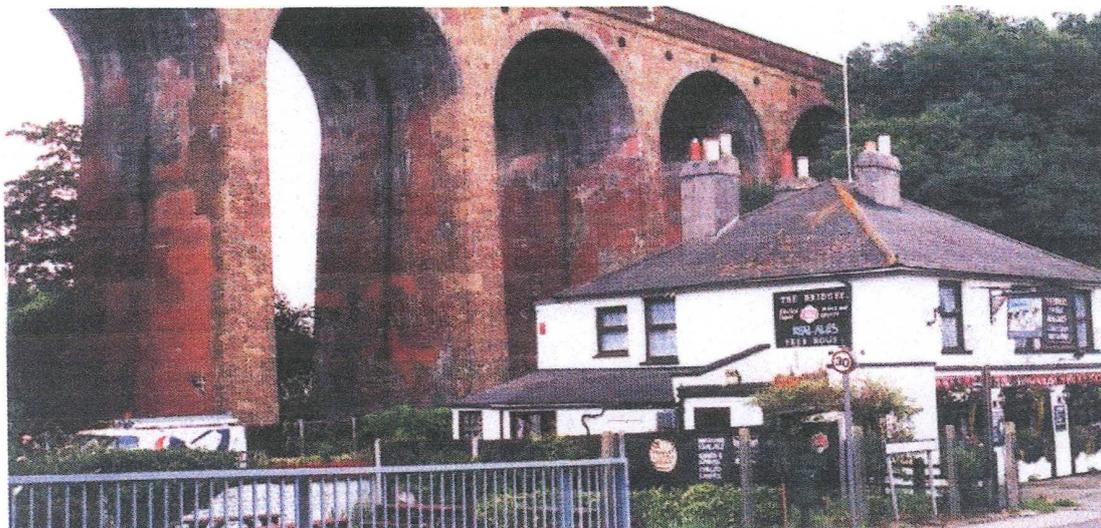


*The Bull, in Lombard Street*

31. Road signs consist mainly of a number of 30mph repeaters, mostly along Horton Road, which are a reminder to motorists of the maximum legal speed limit in the area. Street names are on standard metal road-sign furniture, which, while they add nothing to the character of the village, are at least unobtrusive. The village has two vintage post boxes; one built into a brick pillar near the Fighting Cocks Public House and the other on the boundary wall of Forge House.

32. The roads are of varying widths and many have no pavements, as befits the rural nature of the area. Unfortunately this rural impression does not apply to all roads as many are congested with parked cars, making the passage of buses and emergency vehicles very difficult at times.

## SOUTH DARENTH



*The Railway Viaduct (and The Bridges Public House).*

33. South Darenth is noticeably different from Horton Kirby, a difference which is beneficial to both villages. In 1700, it consisted solely of a few scattered farms, two flour mills and a forge. The coming of the paper mill, followed by the railway, influenced the way the village was to develop. Some places, such as New Road, have the characteristics of a northern mill town, with workers' cottages and the imposing mill buildings at the end of the street, all close to the railway.

34. The site of the former paper mill, probably established in 1820, is the largest industrial complex in the village. The boiler house chimney was one of two constructed in the Victorian era, and it dominates the village as well as being a significant landmark in the area. In the questionnaire undertaken by the Design Team, it was the most popular sight in South Darenth.



*The Paper Mill*

35. The sole papermaking use of the mill had been superseded in recent years by the development of a number of workshops and offices (in contrast to Westminster Mill in Horton Kirby, which has been demolished). These workshops and offices remain in industrial and commercial use, providing important local employment, although the paper mill itself has now closed, and there are plans to develop this site. Employment aspects are important to the village, and they should be encouraged with any new development of the site.

36. There is a small engineering firm in Holmesdale Road, at the junction of Holmesdale Hill, of standard industrial appearance.

37. Older dwellings are clustered near the mill, being mainly terraced houses of London stock bricks, with low-pitched roofs, similar in style due to the systematic programme of industrial house building of the time. Much of this residential housing, brought about through the establishment of the mill, is now occupied by people working outside the village, including commuters to London. Many dwellings have been modernised by these owners, who have installed porches, uPVC windows and garages. There has been some infilling of the original terraces by newer dwellings, with occasional disruption of building lines. Turners Place, built in the 1990s, looks set to integrate well with this part of the village, not least because it has a roof level and semi-dormer windows compatible with its surroundings.



*Perseverance Place, East Hill*

38. Extensive house building, bringing a decidedly urban element into the village, has taken place to the north of East Hill in the late twentieth century. Roads such as Paddock Close, Coopers Close, The Grange and Towers Wood were created on what, in a map of 1896 (reproduced in the book "*Horton Kirby and South Darenth: Pictures and Memories of 100 Years 1894-1994*", published by the Parish Council in 1994) were open fields. Prefabs built there after the Second World War were demolished to make way for this more recent

residential development. Accommodation for the elderly was built in the 1990s, centred on Montgomery Road. It could be admitted that all this building, desirable as it may be, is architecturally undistinguished.



*Coopers Close, South Darent*



*Montgomery Road  
flats, East Hill*

39. To the south-east of South Darent, separated from the main community by the railway lines, lies the retirement complex of Southdowns, formerly the location of the Homes for Little Boys. This experiment in philanthropy was opened in 1867, became an approved school in 1967, and finally closed down in 1976. Redeveloped for the accommodation of retired people, and which included the building of numerous bungalows, it was recently enlarged with the construction of more apartment buildings. Fine views down the Darent Valley are enjoyed by the inhabitants of the dwellings to the south, although the architecture is undistinguished and adds nothing to the style of the village.

40. Northwards from the village centre are some exclusive residences such as Giffords, Avenue House and Paddock Cottage. Giffords, a Grade 2 listed residence, stands in its own park-like grounds. Avenue House is an eighteenth century Grade 2 listed building situated well back from Holmesdale Road. Also in its own grounds, Mallys Place, a very recent development, is a group of detached houses with its own service road. An original flour mill building is also incorporated in this area.

41. The White House, at the bottom of Holmesdale Hill, is a former farm house (the last of three formerly in the village). It is now a private residence.

42. South Darent is more compact than Horton Kirby, with well-delineated boundaries to the north, east and south, where the railway viaduct defines its border. Its western limit merges with Sutton-at-Hone. The doctors' surgery in Devon Road serves the parish despite being in the parish of Sutton-at-Hone.

43. The main feature of South Darenth is the shops: a pharmacy which also houses the sub post office, a greengrocer's shop & general store, a newsagent & general store, a hairdressing salon, and a bakery & coffee shop which serve the local clientele and workers from the industrial units in the former mill complex.

44. These outlets give the village a more lively sense of community, in contrast to Horton Kirby. One actually meets local people in these shops. In the replies to the questionnaire, the most frequent reason people gave for staying in South Darenth was: "friendly people".

45. The river Darent, an attractive feature of the village, runs parallel to the road, past the shops, and continues beside Holmesdale Road, where picturesque willows and other trees line the bank.



*The River Darent*

46. There are three public houses in South Darenth: The Jolly Millers at the bottom of East Hill; The Bridges (formerly The Sun) at the junction of Station Road and Horton Road; and The Queen in New Road. All are mature buildings with some recent renovation, but all three fit in well with their surroundings.



*The Jolly Millers*



*The Queen*



47. There is a local fire station at the bottom of New Road. Although originally built to serve the paper mill it is now under the control of the Kent Fire Brigade. The building is functional, in an undistinguished architectural style, but the fire brigade, as a social unit, is popular. Proposals to close the station some years ago met with considerable local opposition, and the unit is still operative.

48. Most roads are standard two-lane carriageways with pavements. A few are without pavements, while others are single-lane with passing spaces. On-road parking causes problems, especially on the bus routes. An unsuitable car park for Kingfisher Place has resulted in the residents parking their cars on the road, thus creating a hazardous area north of the viaduct. It was an example of poor design which must be avoided in the future.

49. Street furniture consists of standard street lighting columns of varying effectiveness. Litter bins are in recreational areas and the village centre. Road signs are of standard type. As well as the attractive Village Sign there is a clutter of street furniture at the bottom of East Hill: an uncoordinated collection of road signs, litter bins, notice board, parking sign and lamp post.



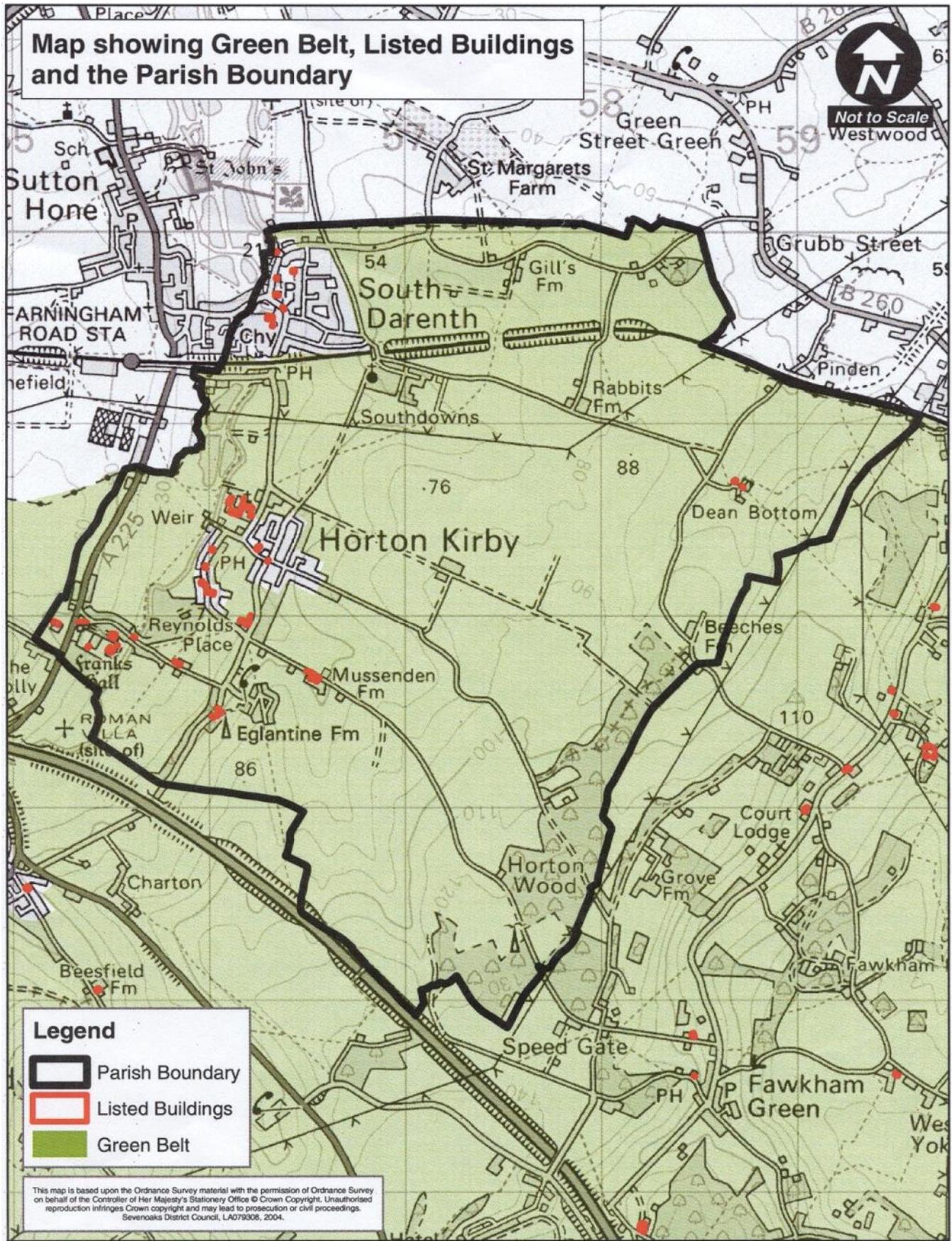
50. Boundaries for residential and industrial buildings are varied, being a mixture of cast iron railings, wooden picket fencing, brick or pebble-dash walls, while some buildings are without boundary walls or fences.

## OUTLYING AREAS

51. Dean Bottom is the parish's least-known settlement; a small group of houses unobtrusively located in the east of the parish. There were once farm buildings here, but most have disappeared.

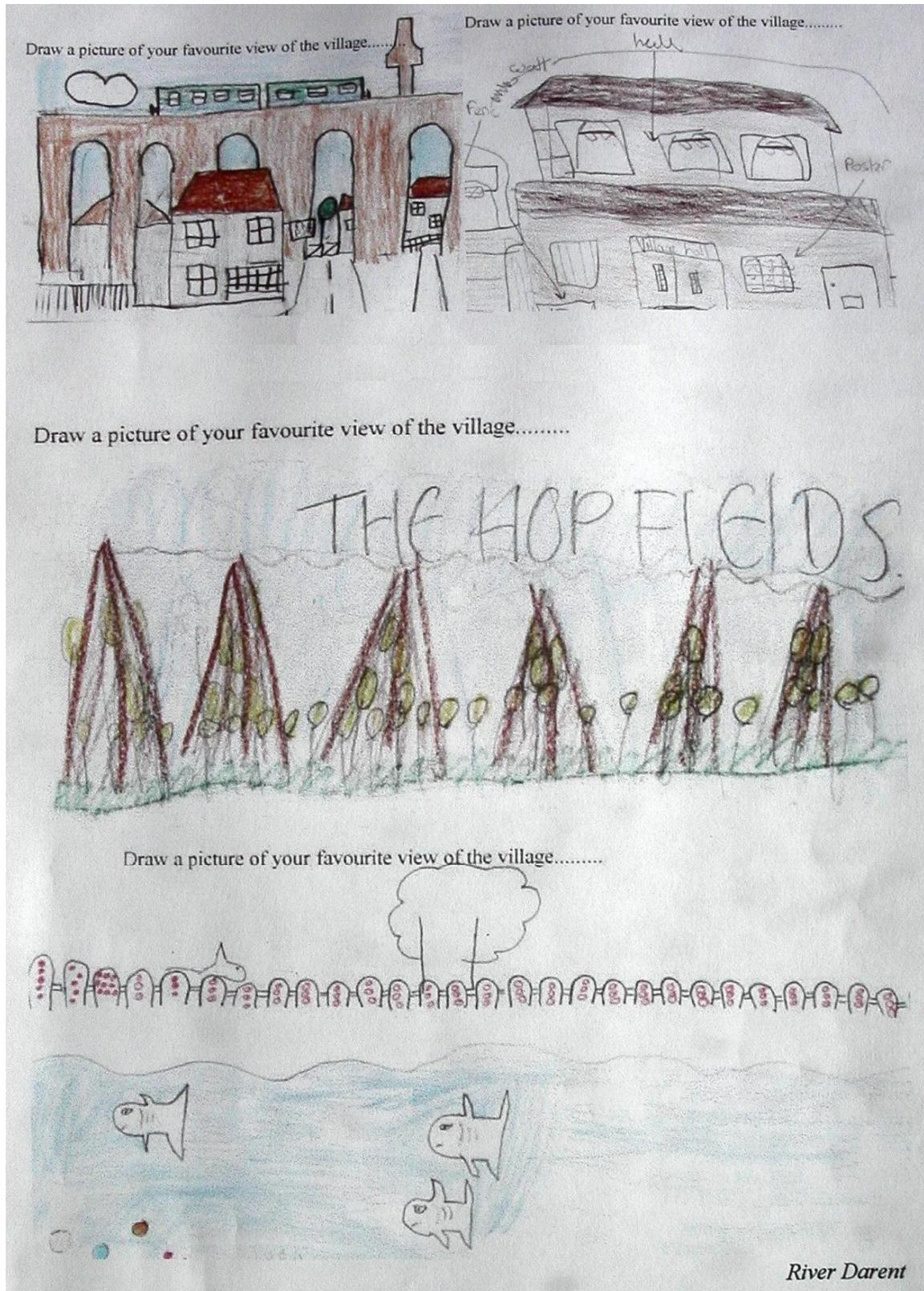
52. The major outlying areas in the parish still retain the characteristics of the previous centuries: farm land, common land, woodland and river. Most building construction up to the nineteenth century related to the area's main occupation of agriculture, but much twentieth-century development has been urban and industrial. Covered by Green Belt legislation as it may be, this land merits active protection. Photographs taken early last century show an uncluttered landscape; the century itself added its own overlay of development, and the new century may well continue this process.

In conclusion, changes should be managed to the advantage of all who live and work here.



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This is a selection of artwork from the children who took part in the school project on the parish. It is included as some of these children will be future adult residents here, and their views should remind us that we are trying to maintain the quality of the environment for them as well as for ourselves.



## PLANNING GUIDANCE

### General

1. The land between the villages is an important space - it serves to emphasise the two separate communities, and, with the fields within Horton Kirby, is a major factor defining the rural character of the Parish. Local opinion and support should be consulted when necessary to involve people in retaining this rural environment. Although protected by both the Local Plan and by Green Belt legislation, the parish as a whole deserves a watching brief, as unsuitable developments have occurred in the past. The open spaces, although designated as Green Belt, have been nibbled at, with such developments as stables and mobile homes. These serve as a warning that vigilance must be maintained
2. The boundaries of the two villages should be kept clearly defined, and, if need be, defended by political and legal means.

### Preservation of Wildlife Habitats

3. Local landscape characteristics should be taken into account in any new proposals for building development, through involvement with parish residents.
4. The churchyard of St. Mary's church has, in some areas, been deliberately left untouched by garden machinery in order to encourage wildlife. Other areas could receive the same treatment. Footpaths, for instance, should be positively preserved and maintained, including gates and stiles, since such maintenance may lead to suggestions from people for areas to be left for wildlife and flower havens. Discussions could be undertaken leading to a positive programme of tree and hedgerow planting in both open and built-up areas to help replace lost trees and hedges, as for example, the hedgerow planting in Skinney Lane.



*Hedgerow, Jacobs Lane, Horton Kirby*



*The River Darent as a leisure area*

5. The fishing lakes, according to The Villagers' Gardening Club, form the basis of a wildlife conservation area, which encourages birds and other animals into the area. As the Hundred Year Wood develops, it too will encourage wildlife, and some way of signposting this Wood perhaps should be considered.

6. The wildlife habitats must be protected at all costs, and provision made in every new development for environmentally friendly habitats to enable the existing wildlife, including kingfishers, coots, moorhens, Canada geese, badgers and ducks to survive - and to encourage other wildlife.

### **Street furniture**

7. Street furniture and road signs should be looked at critically and proposals for improved designs - or at least less-cluttered arrangements - put to the appropriate bodies. The postboxes should be preserved.



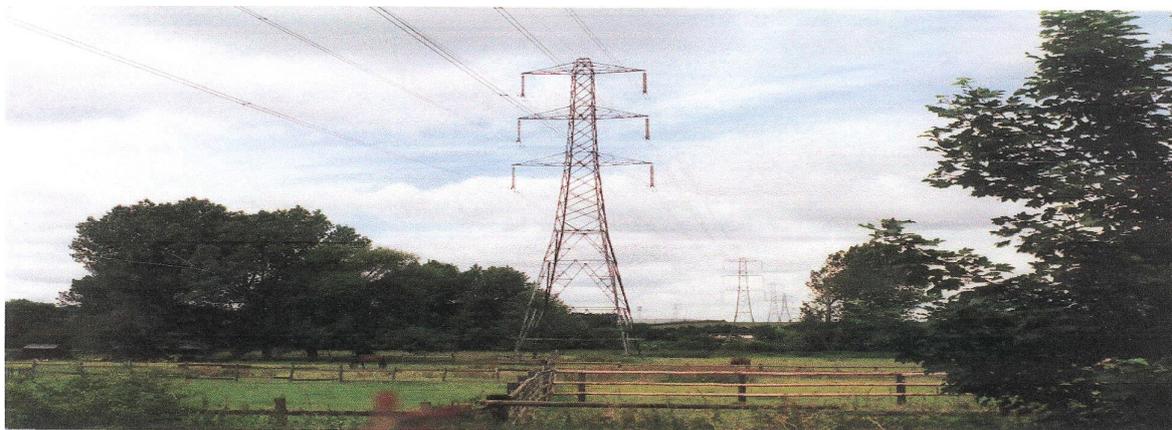
*South Darent: clutter of signs & street furniture*



*Postbox, Forge Lane, Horton Kirby*

### **Electricity pylons and mobile telephone masts**

8. Electricity pylons and overhead lines are unsightly and efforts should be made in the future to have lines placed underground. All attempts to site mobile telephone masts close to residential areas or schools should be resisted.



*Electricity pylons dominating the open spaces between the villages*

## Parking of vehicles

9. Parking needs addressing. Some parking, such as at Kingfisher Place in South Darent, at Lombard Street in Horton Kirby and at the school at dropping-off and collection times, is highly inconvenient to through traffic (particularly buses), and potentially dangerous for pedestrians and emergency vehicles.



*Parked cars outside Kingfisher Place, South Darent...*

Sufficient space should be provided in any new development for garages and off-road parking of vehicles immediately adjacent to each property. Imaginative ideas for off-road parking should also be considered for new developments.



*...and in Lombard Street, Horton Kirby*

## Street Lighting

10. Light pollution at night should be minimised without compromising safety or security. Lights should be white, without glare, and directed downwards. High pressure white light, following the Institution of Electrical Engineers' guidelines, is preferred for street lighting. Low energy, low intensity time-controlled lighting should be encouraged for both street lighting and for household security lights. The village atmosphere should be preserved by a policy of no all-night lighting.

## New Developments

11. Where new construction is carried out, the developer should maintain the density standards in accordance with current Planning Guidelines, including maintaining adequate open spaces between buildings, thus preserving the varied views in the two villages.

12. There are few places in both villages where building development can take

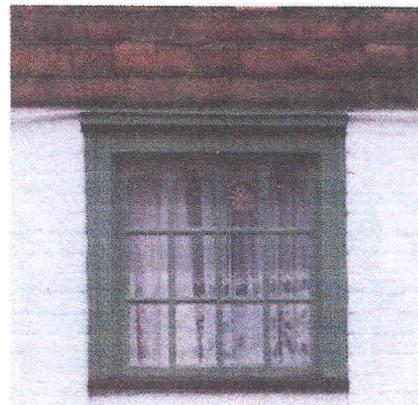
place. Where further development can be undertaken, the developers should take account of traditional materials, including London stock brick walling, and slate or Kent peg roofs. The height and sizes of buildings should relate to existing building heights and sizes. Windows and doors should match those of surrounding buildings and be in sympathy with their original proportions.



*Kent Peg Tiles, Old School Cottage, Horton Kirby*



*Flint, brick and white paint, The Street, Horton Kirby*



*Window, white paint and pantiles, Giffords Cottages, South Darenth*

13. New extensions and additions should also add a positive element to both the parent building and the surroundings. The materials used should reflect local building materials and styles.

*The Street, Horton Kirby*



## Boundary walls and fencing



*Brickwork entrance to Kirby Hall, Horton Kirby*



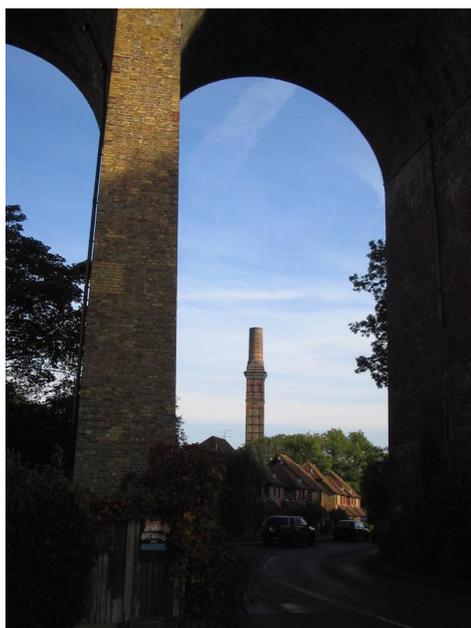
*Brick, stone and flint at the entrance to Reynolds Place, Horton Kirby*

14. The installation of boundary fencing or walling sympathetic to local practice should be encouraged around gardens and private areas, even when some gardens are adapted to the modern practice of parking cars off-road.

### Commercial or industrial development

15. The design or conversion of commercial or industrial buildings should reflect local materials and character, especially the cobbled streets in the paper mill industrial area. The size of existing buildings should not be exceeded in any new development.

In conclusion, it is hoped that the reader now has an improved appreciation of the special characteristics of Horton Kirby & South Darenth.



*HK&SD landmark Mill Chimney and Viaduct*