

# **Brasted Church**

## **Conservation Area Appraisal**



### **SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**



**December 2003**

# Brasted Church

## 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.**

**This appraisal will inform the activities of the Council, the public and other bodies where these impact on the conservation area. The document was approved by the District 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 as set out in any scheme which may have been prepared.

This assessment and the detailed analysis of the area contained in the report are intended to fulfill 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 reuse 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.**

## 2.00 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

### 2.1 General Description

Brasted Church Conservation Area covers some 2.6 hectares and contains 2 listed buildings. It was designated in 1971 and was revised in 1992. It includes the area immediately surrounding St Martin's Church, Mill Farm, the Stanhope Arms Public House and Church End House.

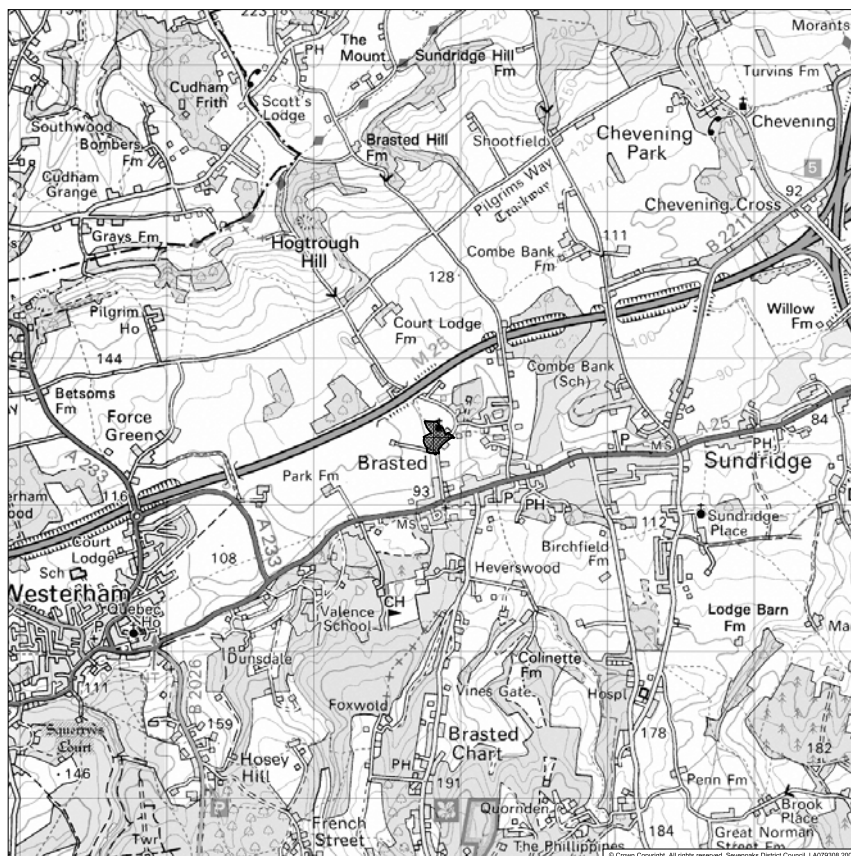
The Conservation Area lies entirely within land designated as Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Landscape Area.

### 2.2 Location and Geographical Context

The Conservation Area lies to the north of the main village of Brasted, to which it is linked by an unclassified lane. It is situated in the valley of the River Darent that runs through the village, at the foot of the North Downs.

To the south, the land rises to the wooded slopes of the Greensand Ridge on which lie the Chart and Ide Hill, Goathurst Common and Toys Hill – part of an almost unbroken swathe of woodland and common that stretches from Limpsfield in the west to Sevenoaks in the east.

Brasted lies close to junction 5 of the M25/M26 although there is no eastbound entry or westbound exit to the M26 at this point, creating traffic problems in the village if there is a blockage on the motorway. Sevenoaks is the closest town and has the main line station.



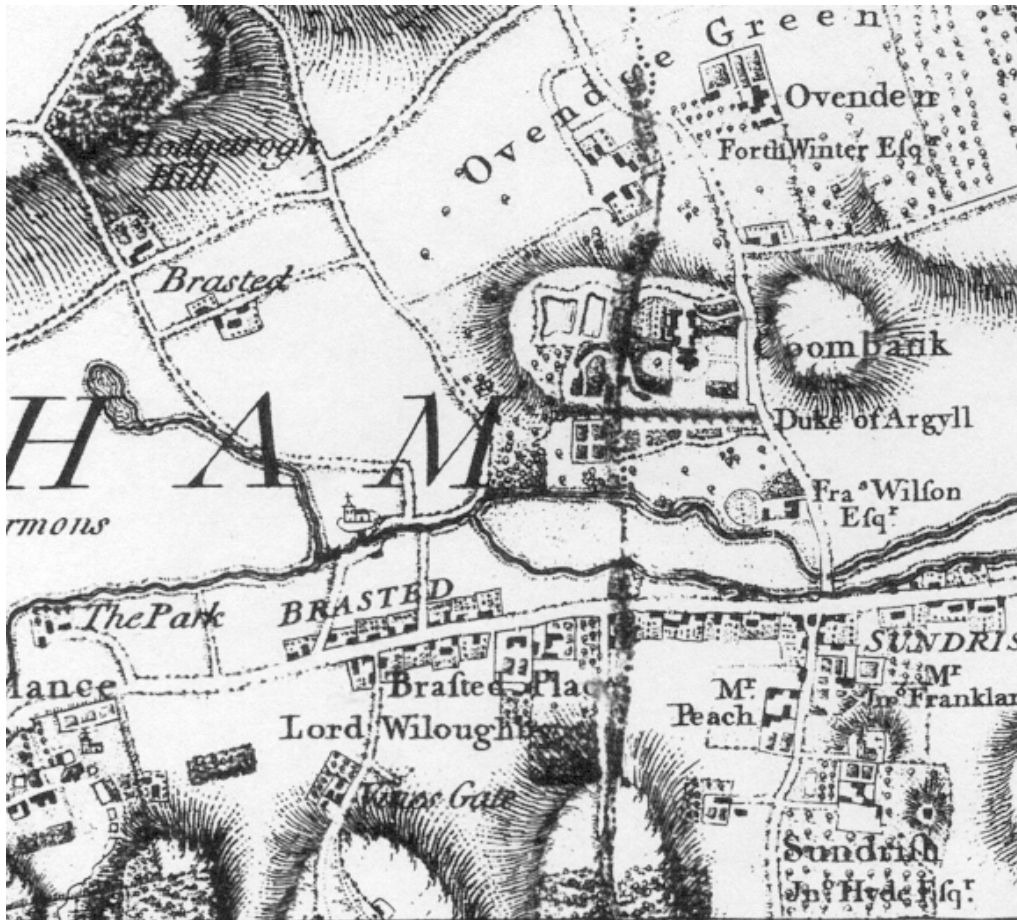
Map 1 Geographical Location



### 2.3 Historical development

From the position of the Church on the outskirts of the village, it would seem likely that the centre of the settlement moved southwards at some time after the scourge of the Black Death in the 14th Century, when many villages relocated away from their original hearts. The church includes parts of a building that dates back to at least the 12th Century, although it was remodeled in 1864/5, to designs by the architect Alfred Waterhouse.

A disastrous fire destroyed much of the roof in the 1980's and today's building is another rebuild from the early 1990's – although the 12/14<sup>th</sup> century tower remains together with some 13<sup>th</sup> century stonework in the south arcade.



Map 2 Brasted in 1749

## 2.4 Architectural Description

Apart from St. Martin's Church, which is constructed in local ragstone, the buildings in the Conservation Area are all of red brick with clay-tiled roofs, and some decorative tile hanging.



**Figure 1 Church End House**

The buildings are all subservient to the Church, ranged on either side of a lane that serves clustered groups of cottages beyond the main confines of the hamlet. Church End House is a larger house with Arts and Crafts characteristics.



**Figure 2 Mill Farm**

Apart from the Church, Mill Farm is the oldest building and, perhaps surprisingly, the lych gate is the newest, built by a local building firm to celebrate the Millennium.



**Figure 3 St Martin's Church and new lych gate**

The properties are enclosed by a series of stone walls and hedges that allow glimpses between and beyond them into the countryside beyond.

### 3.00 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

This tiny area comprises the village church, the adjacent Stanhope Arms Public House, a farm and an old forge with a single house nearby and outbuildings associated with its activities. The mellow brickwork of the Stanhope Arms is an important feature in the approach to and setting of St. Martins Church.



**Figure 4 The Stanhope Arms**

The buildings are closely grouped and it is their setting amongst mature trees and farmland that emphasise the compact nature of the settlement. Mature trees and hedges visually reinforce its close knit character.



**Figure 5 View from the south towards the church**

The road into the hamlet from the South gives a good view into the Conservation Area, and the Church, set on slightly higher ground, is seen from some distance away.



**Figure 6 The bend in Church Road**

In the hamlet itself the lane bends quite sharply, creating a sense of intimacy and providing added interest as the scene unfolds.

There is no grand architecture, and Mill Farm is the only secular listed building, although the Stanhope Arms and associated barn may be worthy of listing. The hamlet reflects the traditional historic relationship between various rural activities with the dominant church, pub and a group of farm buildings.



**Figure 7 The garage doors on the former coal merchant's building**

The properties are generally attractive and well cared for, although the former coal merchants' building has an unfortunate modern garage door that spoils the balance of this little building, and the adjacent bungalow is rather run down.



**Figure 8 The bungalow adjacent to Church End House**

The fencing bounding the field in front of Mill Farm is rather dilapidated and needs some renewal.

Beyond the boundary of the conservation area, the car park to the church and the site of the old works building detracted somewhat from the setting. Planning permission has been given for two houses to replace the works building. The constant background roar of the M25 provides an intrusive reminder of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#### **4.00 FUTURE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

To the south of the Conservation Area boundary, Chestnut Cottage, Fir Cottage and Mill Meadow are situated on the east side of Church Road. They are set a little apart from the hamlet, but might well be included within the area as being part of the view as you approach the Church.



**Figure 9 Mill Meadow**



**Figure 10 Chestnut and Fir Tree Cottages**

They are all interesting properties, although of varying architectural styles and ages. Mill Meadow is of particular architectural interest.

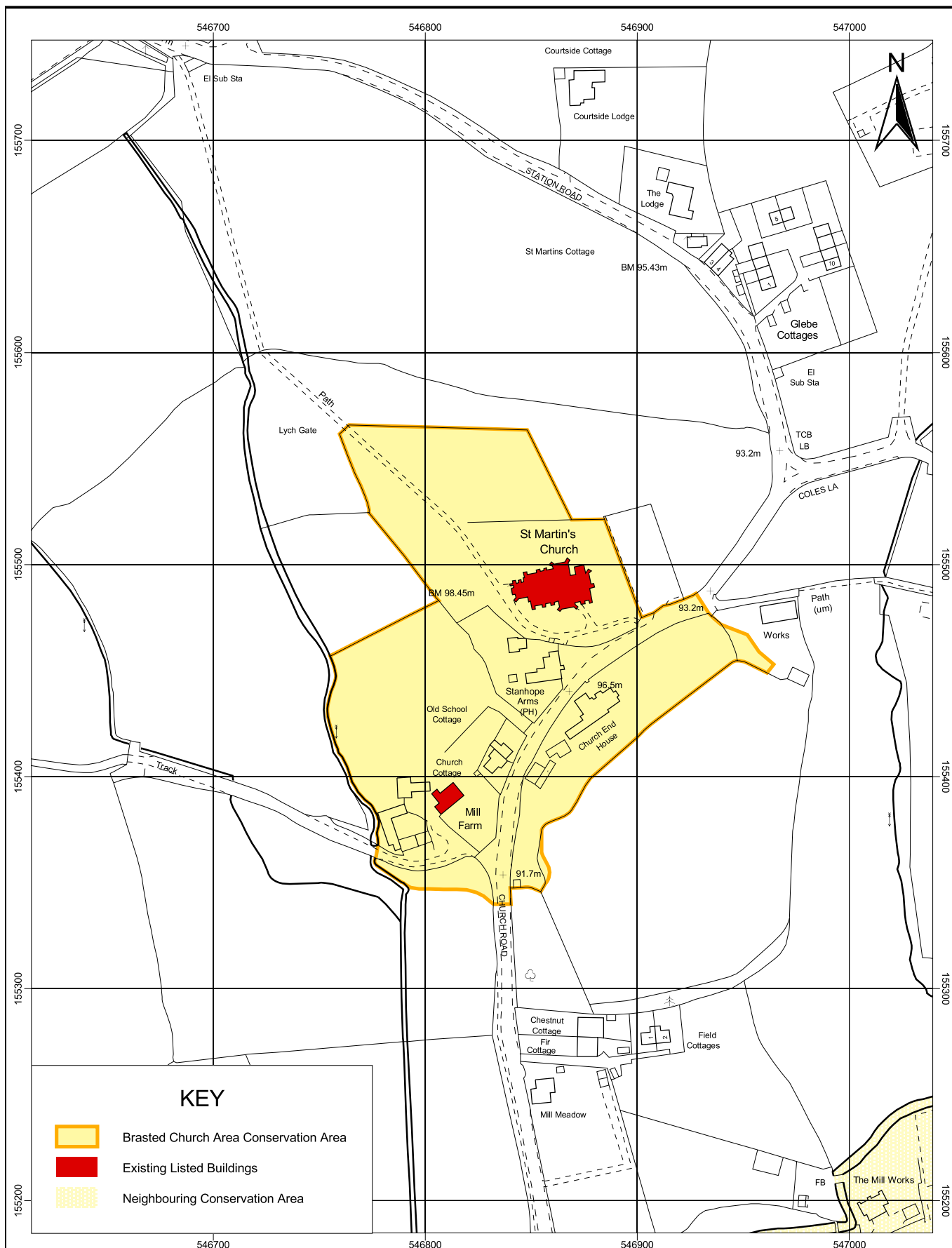
**Acknowledgements:**

The draft document was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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### MAP 3

## Brasted Church Area Conservation Area

### Designations

Scale 1:2500

Date March 2003

Drawn By SNM

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