

Chevening

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



December 2003

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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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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 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 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.**

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 General Description

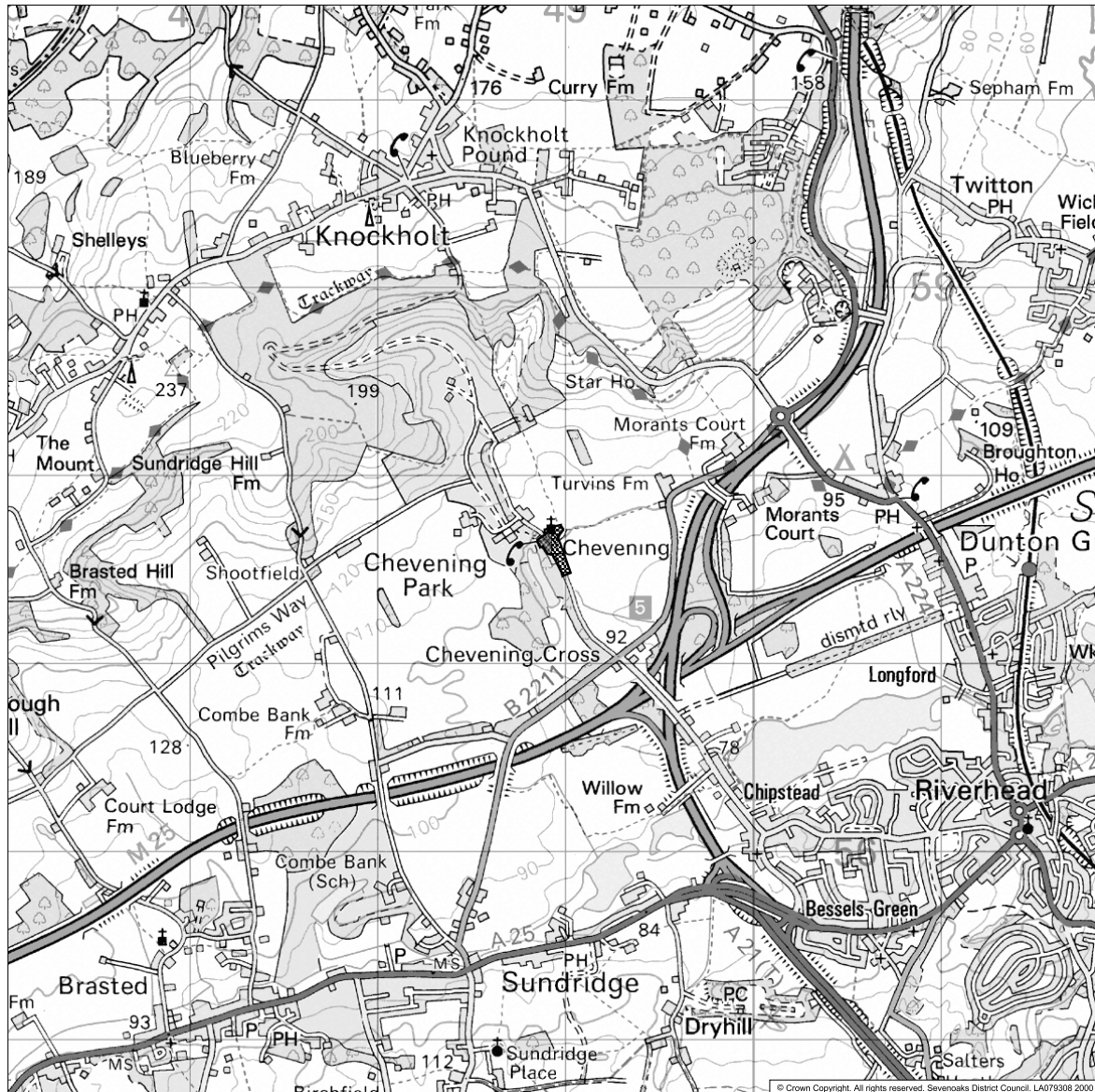
Chevening is a very small Conservation Area covering some 2.0 ha and containing about 15 listed buildings. It was designated in 1978. It contains St Botolph's Church and the small group of cottages clustered around it. It is bounded on the west side by the wall to Chevening Park that lies to the north west. There is only one access road to the Conservation Area leading to the village, Chevening House and its Park.

Chevening village and the surrounding countryside lie wholly within the Green Belt, Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Special Landscape Area.

2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Chevening sits at the foot of the North Downs and gives its name to the Parish which also includes the villages of Chipstead and Bessels Green. Although accessed only by an unclassified road, the M25 junction 5 (with the M26) motorway lies in close proximity to the south east, isolating Chevening from its neighbouring villages, except the access bridges from the roads to Sundridge and Chipstead.

The Pilgrims Way lies to the north, and there is a large lake in the grounds of Chevening House. The nearest station is at Dunton Green, and the nearest town is Sevenoaks.



Map 1 Geographical location

2.3 Historical Development

Chevening is situated at the junction of the Pilgrims' Way and the coast road to London. It was a well travelled route in the Middle Ages, with a thriving market at nearby Chipstead. The road from Chevening Cross past the Church was the old Rye Road, along which travellers moved and fish was transported from Rye to London. The road was closed by Earl Stanhope towards the end of the 18th century but by then it had been superseded by an easier route up the North Downs to the east. Both these roads are shown on the 1769 Andrews and Drury Map although the route of the old Rye road north of Chevening Place is conjectural.

The oldest part of the Church dates back to the end of the 12th Century, when the Manor was held by Adam de Chevening, Justice of the Assizes of King John; he sold it to the Pole family. The present Chevening Place, the second house to be built on the site, was constructed in 1620, to a design influenced by Inigo Jones.

The Map of the Chevening Estate drawn in 1613 by George Batchelor shows 3 cottages or groups of 3 cottages, with one smaller than the other two. In 1745 the estate ledger records rents from 8 cottages; 1840 records show rents from 12 cottages and the Tithe map confirms this. Lennard Cottage has "MOG 1743" cut in stone over the door presumably indicating when it was built. Being on the Rye road so near Pilgrims Way it is likely that there has been an Inn on this site for many centuries, changing its name from the Dacre Arms to the Sussex Arms and then to the Stanhope Arms.

The estate was bought by Major General James Stanhope in 1717. Chevening Estate is administered by a Trust under the terms of the Chevening Estate Act 1959 and the tenancy is in the gift of the Prime Minister for his own, or a prescribed list of occupants as a country residence. The current occupant is the Foreign Secretary.



Map 2 Chevening on the 1769 Andrews and Drury map

2.4 Architectural Description

The Conservation Area consists of a group of estate houses which served, and are subservient to, a large mansion from which they are separated by a boundary wall. The Church forms part of this group and is included within the Conservation Area, as is the open land to the south.



Figure 1 Chevening village from the south

The cottages are brick built with roofs covered with clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs. There are some dormer windows inserted in the roof slopes. Because the pitches of tiled roofs tend to be steep, central valley gutters between two ridges are used in order to keep the roof heights in proportion on the wider buildings.



Figure 2 Lennard Cottage, former inn, built in 1743

Most of the roofs have gable ends and these are generally tile hung. Cat slide roofs, which sweep down from the ridge to ground floor ceiling level are a popular way of covering a single storey extension to the side or rear of a building.



Figure 3 Chevening Road looking towards the entrance to the Park

The cottages sit close to the road and are separated from it only by a narrow path of stone setts, or a small front garden bounded by a brick wall. Hedges line the roadside at the more open southern approach to the Conservation Area.



Figure 3 Cottages in Chevening Road

The windows are white painted timber casements although sliding sashes are found on Lennard Cottage, which was once a public house.



Figure 5 A view from the Churchyard

The Church is built of local ragstone and has a square tower and a lych gate. It and its Churchyard is listed Grade B and they are important features of the Conservation Area.



Figure 6 St. Botolph's Church

3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

The isolation and unspoilt nature of this tiny settlement provide much of its charm and character. The hamlet nestles close to the wall of the Park and is dominated by the church.



Figure 7 A view north along Chevening Road

The open expanse of agricultural land to the east is visible beyond the hedges and the mature trees in the Park are silhouetted behind the roof lines of the cottages to the west.



Figure 8 Cottage on the boundary of the Park

The scene has changed little in the years since the cottages were built and it is this integrity which makes the hamlet unusual and important.



Figure 9 Cottages opposite the Church

4.0 FUTURE TRENDS

4.1 Current and Future Pressures on the Area

The location of Chevening within the Metropolitan Green Belt ensures that there is little scope for new building. The Kents Downs designation will help protect the quality of the landscape setting, and the lack of through roads means that the village is relatively isolated and unlikely to attract much further development.

4.2 Future Policy Recommendations

It is a strange anomaly that the reason for the development of the historic village in this form is not included within the Conservation Area. Chevening House and its park form the focal point about which the village has developed and the two are inextricably linked. It would be sensible to consider the inclusion of the House and its formal gardens within the Conservation Area. Although the parkland is also an integral part of the estate, and contains some carefully landscaped vistas, the logistics of bringing such a large area of woodland under the notification requirements of a conservation area would no doubt prove daunting for the Estate Manager and the Local Authority. It would seem prudent therefore to restrict any new boundary to the walled garden, the formal gardens and the area around the lake, as there is an excellent record of forestry management on the estate.



Figure 10 An historic aerial view of Chevening House and the lake

Acknowledgements:

The draft appraisal was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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