

Hoath Corner

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



December 2003

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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.

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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 analyze 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 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.**

2.00 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

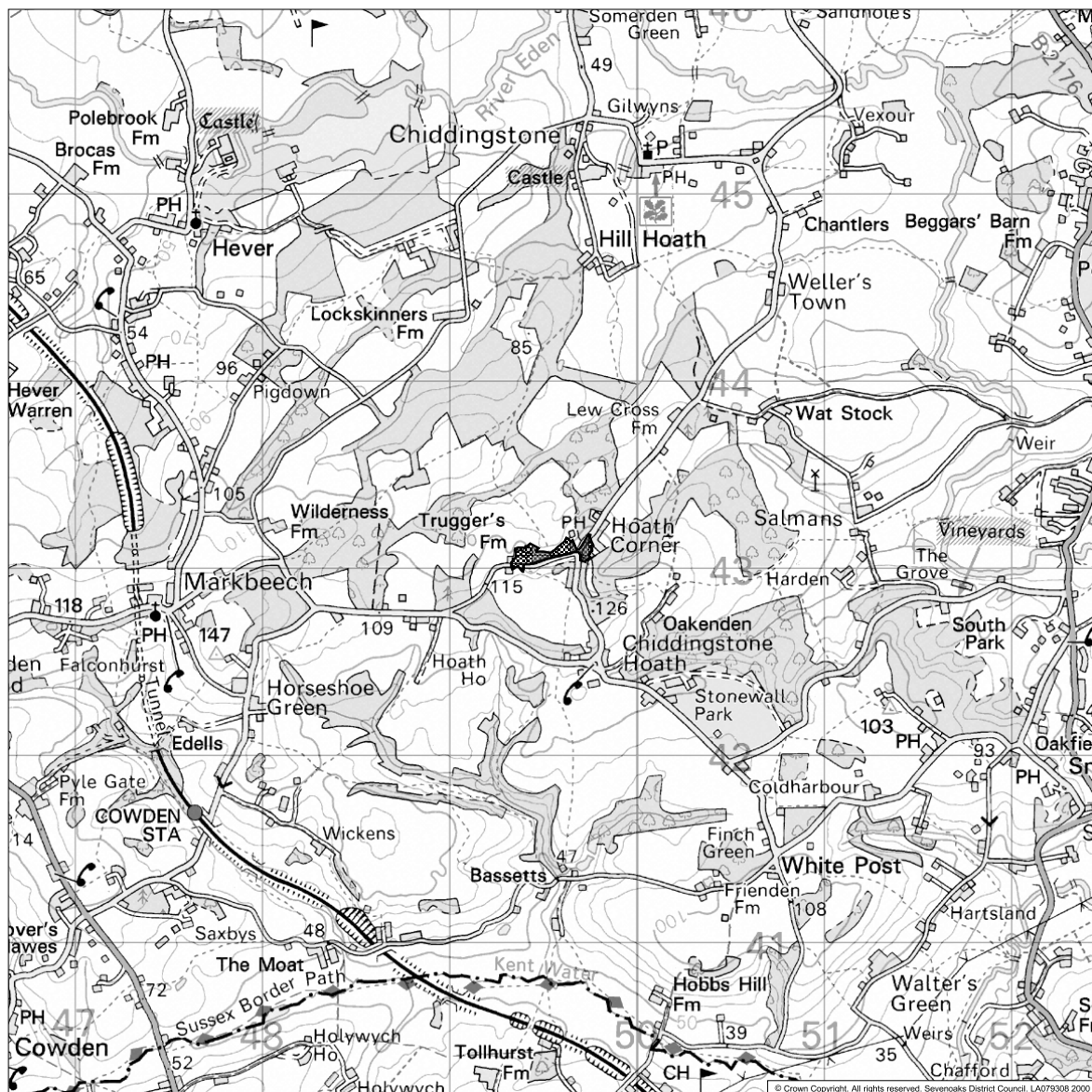
2.1 General Description

Hoath Corner Conservation Area covers some 3.0 hectares and contains 8 listed buildings. It was designated in 1993 and has not been extended since. It includes part of the settlement around the Rock Inn and the farmstead at Truggers Farm.

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

Hoath Corner lies on the route between Chiddingstone and Cowden. The nearest station is at Cowden and the nearest town is Edenbridge to the north east.



Map 1 Geographical Location of Hoath Corner

2.3 Architectural Description

The conservation area contains examples of most of the vernacular features that are typically found in traditional Kentish buildings.

Roofs are covered with clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs, although there is one thatched building.



Figure 1 The thatched barn adjacent to the Rock Inn

Dormer windows are often inserted into the roof slopes, giving light to attic spaces which can then be used as additional accommodation. The pitches of tiled roofs tend to be steep, and, particularly on converted farm buildings, may have small barn hips at the gable ends. Cat slide roofs, which sweep down from the ridge to ground floor ceiling level have long been a popular way of covering a single storey extension to the side or rear of a building.



Figure 2 Apple Tree and Pear Tree Cottages

Some timber-framed buildings survive from the era before brickwork became a popular and affordable alternative construction material, although they may now have brick infill between the framing members, or vertical tile hanging or painted weather-boarding cladding the exterior. In some cases the first floor timber frame remains exposed, with plaster panels between the structural members.

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



Figure 3 Converted barn at Truggers Farm

Windows are generally timber casements, and leaded lights can be found in the windows of Cherry Cottage. Replacement UPVC windows have unfortunately been installed in some of the unlisted properties within the Conservation Area.



Figure 4 Replacement windows in 5 Rock Cottages

3.00 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

The Hoath Corner Conservation Area is essentially two settlements in close proximity and linked by a quiet country lane. Both areas are set on rising ground, although the road between dips into a valley. The southern approach through narrow exposed sandstone rock faces is particularly dramatic and provides a distinctive setting for the conservation area.

Approaching from the north east, the road rises to the point where it meets the lane leading west to Truggers Farm. At the junction stands the Rock Inn and a small group of cottages at the foot of the lane to Puckden Wood.



Figure 5 The Rock Inn

The Public House, the barn behind and the two cottages adjacent to it are listed and dominate the group and are also visible from the western approach.

Entering the area from the south and down the hill, this group is hidden until the bend is rounded, and they then present a pleasant visual surprise.

Heading towards the other end of the area, passing the attractive Cares Cross Cottage, set in a mature garden, and Apple Tree and Pear Tree Cottages adjacent to it, the road dips then climbs towards Truggers Farm. This is a working farm, but with a number of converted agricultural buildings set around it.



Figure 6 View towards Spoke Shave from the south



Figure 7 Converted oast at Truggers Farm



Figure 8 Ponds at Truggers Farm

An oast house sits in the valley before the hill rises to the main farmstead and there is an attractive pond adjacent to it. It is shielded from the road by many mature trees, but enjoys magnificent views to the north.



Figures 9 and 10

Views north from the Conservation Area

The farm on the brow of the hill has a similar advantage, but the other converted properties nearer the road are orientated east/west.



Figure 11 Truggers Farm House

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

The Rock Public House, Spoke Shave and Cherry Cottage are the focal point of the eastern end of the Conservation Area. The public house is a simple, unspoilt Kentish Inn without pretensions, and its setting next to the thatched barn and the charming pair of cottages presents an important group.



Figure 12 Spoke Shave and Cherry Cottage

Rock Cottages, Tilmans and Puckden are less attractive, although it is difficult to pinpoint why they do not sit comfortably in their setting. It is probably because they have lost some of their character when they were modernised, or that the fenestration is wrong for the age and style of property. The dormer windows, in particular, are out of keeping.



Figure 13 Rock Cottages, Tilmans and Puckden



Figure 14 Rock Cottages

These cottages also suffer from cars parking outside their front gates, leaving the verges muddy and damaged. An unattractive garage sits on the corner of the road junction.



Figure 15 Garage outside Rock Cottages

Cares Cross Cottage is a lovely building, mellow and rambling and set in large well-maintained gardens, with a pond in the north. The property is secluded behind large gates, the style of which would be more suited to a suburban estate.



Figure 16 Cares Cross Cottage

The Truggers Farm group is almost self-consciously attractive. Some residential conversions were fairly recent and the properties will probably look less crisp and more traditional once they have mellowed slightly. They will then, hopefully, be closer in character to the farmhouse itself.



Figure 17 Converted farm building at Truggers Farm



Figure 18 Modern agricultural buildings at Truggers Farm

The setting and grouping is nonetheless striking, apart from the corrugated fibre cement outbuildings in the farmyard. The traditional buildings became redundant in terms of modern agriculture and consent was granted to turn them into residential units. The replacement modern buildings are of low architectural merit and tend to have an adverse effect on this traditional farmstead group. Well designed modern farm buildings are achievable but in many cases agricultural buildings are permitted development.



Figure 19 New cottages

At the western extremity of the Conservation Area are a pair of traditional farm cottages, probably dating from the early part of the 20th Century, alongside which have been built another semi-detached pair of houses. These new buildings are just outside the Conservation Area, but so close to it as to have an impact. Their design attempts to reflect the vernacular form of such buildings, but fails in details such as fenestration and materials.



Figure 20 Traditional farm cottages

Similarly, a timber stable has been erected in a field immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area.

4.00 FUTURE TRENDS

4.1 Current and Future Pressures on the Area

There will always be pressure to convert redundant agricultural buildings to residential use in attractive parts of the countryside accessible to London. Where conversion does occur planning policies ensure that the general form and external character of traditional buildings is retained, but there can be gradual suburbanisation which changes the distinctive personality of rural areas. Poorly designed and sited prefabricated buildings for agricultural use can mar the countryside in rural locations but are often outside planning control.

There is pressure for building in such an attractive setting, and it is important to ensure that any future proposals are of positive benefit to the community. Green Belt policies control significant change but the character of small rural settlements relies upon the intimate co-relationship between its historic properties and this balance is easily disturbed by inappropriate development.

4.2 Potential for Enhancement and Future Policy Recommendations

The open land beyond Cares Cross Cottage, Apple Tree Cottage and Pear Tree Cottage extends beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area and stretches down to the ponds and streams in the north west. There are also some outbuildings on the property that could benefit from inclusion within the Conservation Area.

The allotment gardens to the south of Truggers Lane are another area of open space that is important to the character of the hamlet. They could be considered for inclusion within the boundary.

On the south east side of the area, the boundary might logically be revised to follow the boundaries of Spoke Shave and Puckden.

Acknowledgements:

The draft document was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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MAP 3 Hoath Corner Conservation Area

Designations

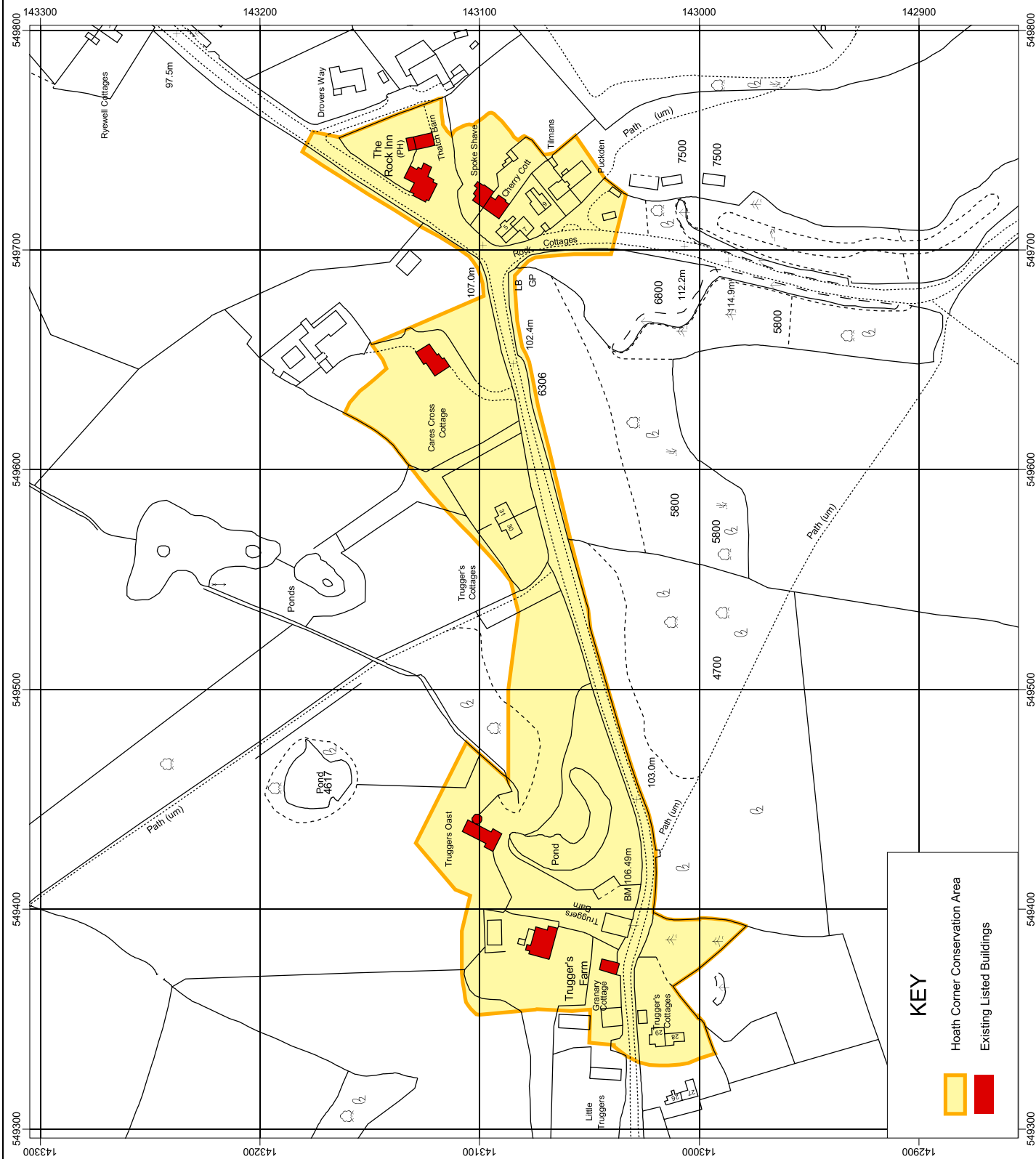
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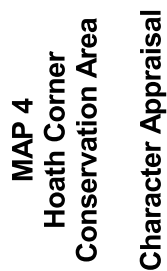
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KEY

Hoath Corner Conservation Area

Existing Listed Buildings

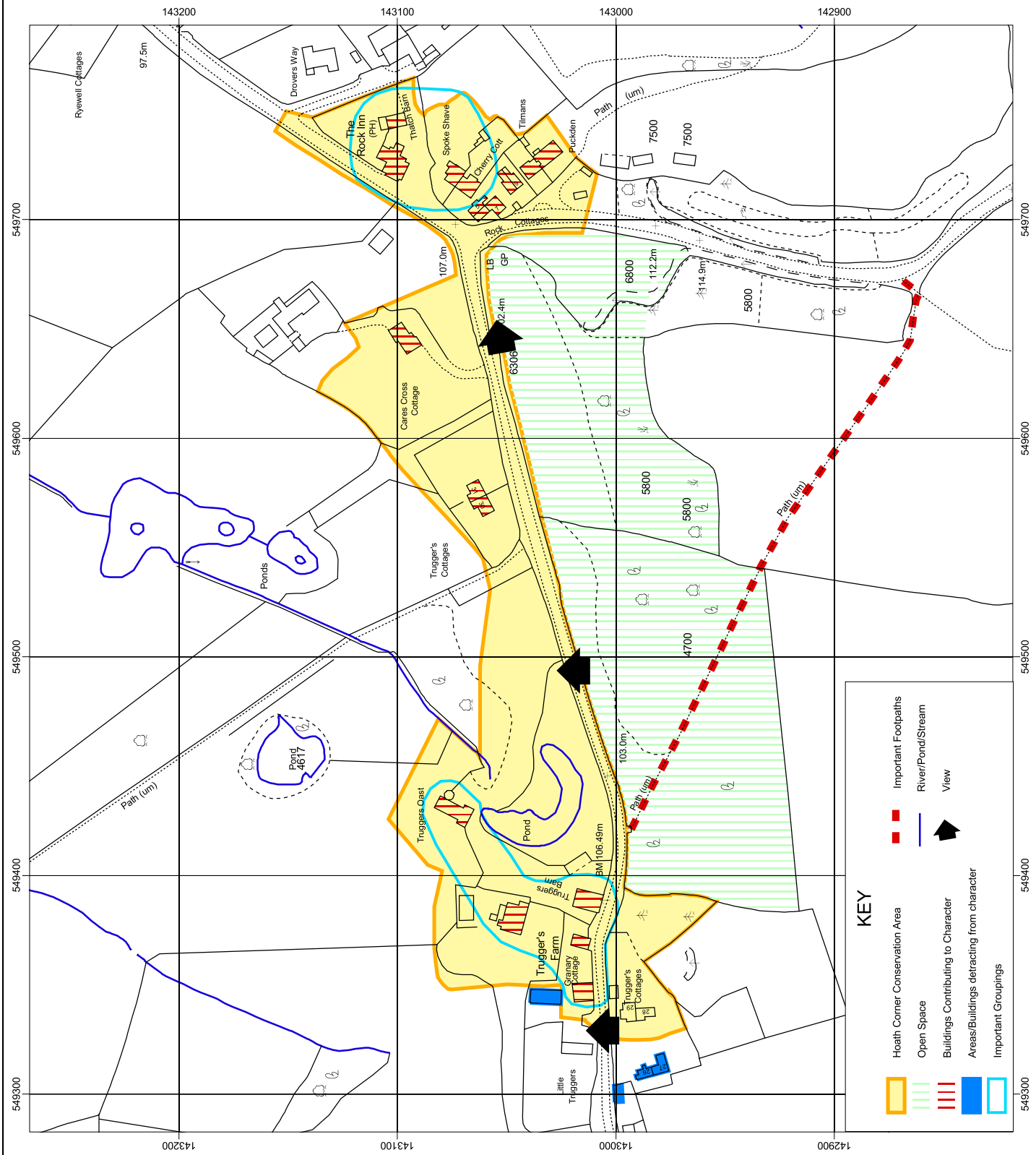
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MAP 5
Hoath Corner
Conservation Area
Recommendations for
Future Policy Changes

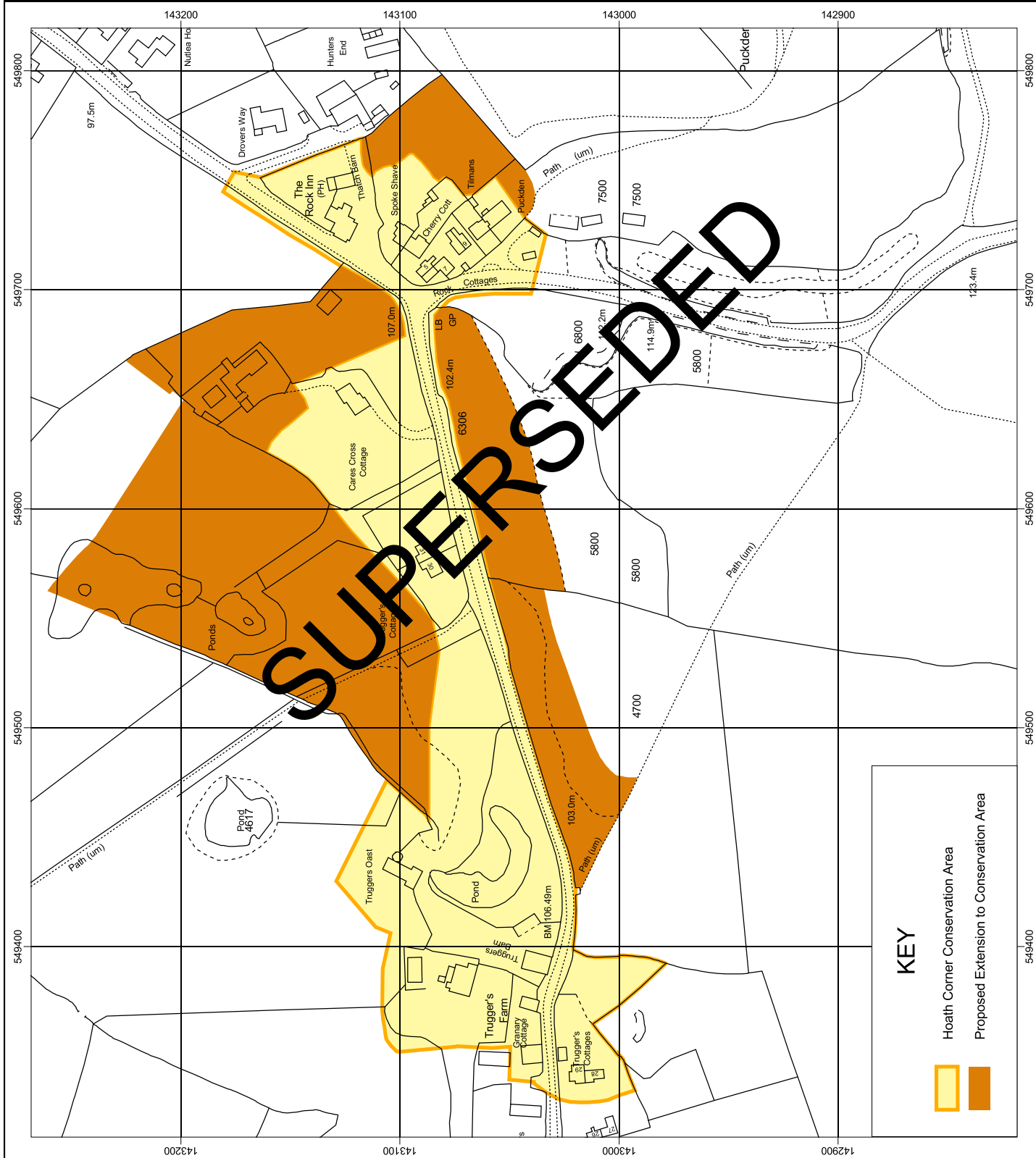
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Map superseded. Please refer to Hoath Corner Appraisal map, PDF dated June 2019