

HORTON KIRBY

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



DECEMBER 2003

Horton Kirby

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. This 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 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 is 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 green space 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.**

2.00 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 General Description

Horton Kirby Conservation Area covers some 12 hectares and contains 10 listed buildings. It was designated in 1974 and was extended in 1990. The countryside around is designated as Green Belt, which extends into the boundaries of the Conservation Area. The Area also lies within the Kent Special Landscape Area.

The Conservation Area includes the main route through the village, Horton Road and The Street which runs north to south, with open grassed land interspersed within the village and Court Lodge Farm to the north. The River Darent is an important feature of the area.



Fig 1: St. Mary's Church from the south in 1905



Fig 2: 16th Century alehouse Old Churchgate

The Conservation Area is divided into two clearly defined sections. The northern most section is of a rural setting with St Mary's Church and scattered domestic buildings centred around the surviving farm which once supported the village.

The southern area is generally of later date and has been largely influenced by the industry associated with the mill located at the centre of the Conservation Area.



Fig 3: Westminster Mill at turn of 20th Century

All of the buildings within the Area are now privately owned residences, but in previous years this part of the village supported various small retail outlets.

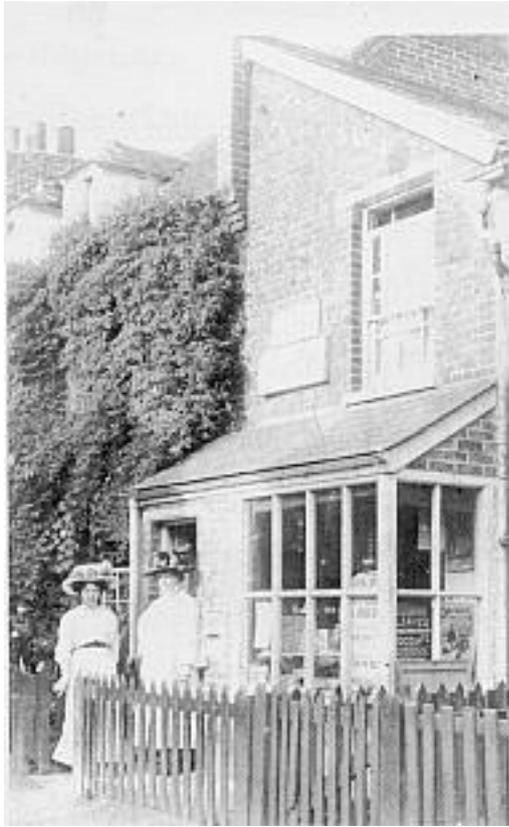


Fig 4: The post office, the Street ; early 20th Century

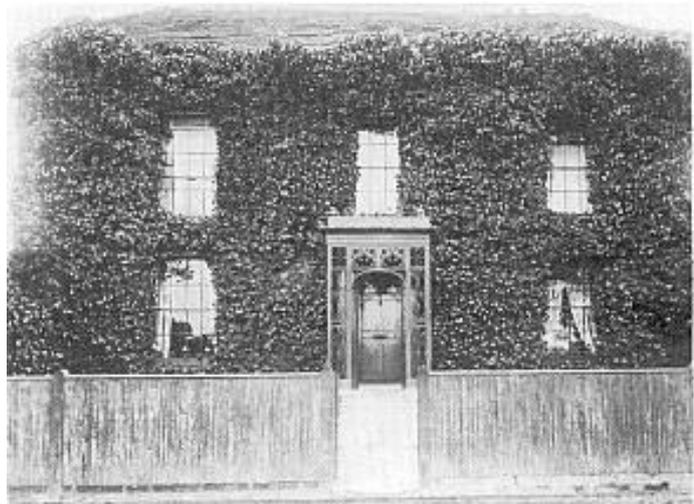
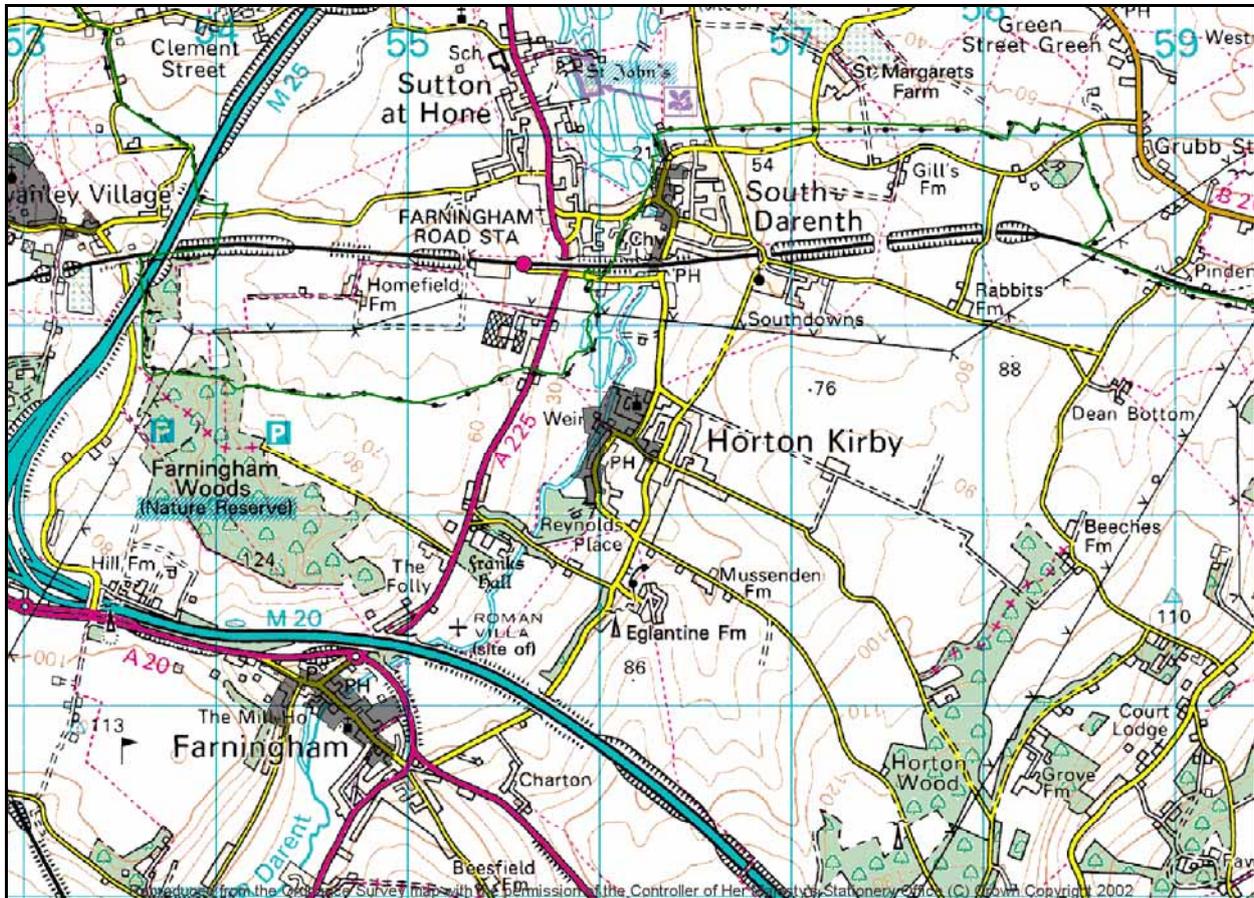


Fig 5: Early 20th Century Ivy House (now Croft House) The Street, former ivory merchants.

2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Horton Kirby is situated in the northern extremities of Sevenoaks District, between the villages of South Darenth and Farningham, to the south-west.



Map 1: Geographical location of Horton Kirby & South Darenth

The village is served by a network of minor country roads with the roads heading north leading to South Darenth, from where the A225 (Sevenoaks to Dartford) is accessible and those to the south directly link onto the A225 and A20 (Dover to London).

From the A225 to the west and A20 to the south, the major routes M25 and M20 are within an easy drive providing routes to the South East, London and routes to the North and West.

The nearest railway station is Farningham Road, to the north-west, which is on the main London/ Medway to Dover line.

The village is close to the town of Dartford and has easy access to the major retail parks of Thurrock and Bluewater, the latter being the nearer.

2.3 Historical Development

There is evidence of human settlement in the Darent Valley dating back 5,000 years, including sites of Stone Age and Iron Age people.

During the Roman period major farming units were built throughout the Valley and the River Darent was used as a means of transportation. Remains of a Roman Villa were discovered in 1972 within the recreation ground at Westminster Fields. Evidence of Saxon habitation is equally plentiful with burial grounds discovered at Riely, near Eglantine Lane, south of Horton Kirby.

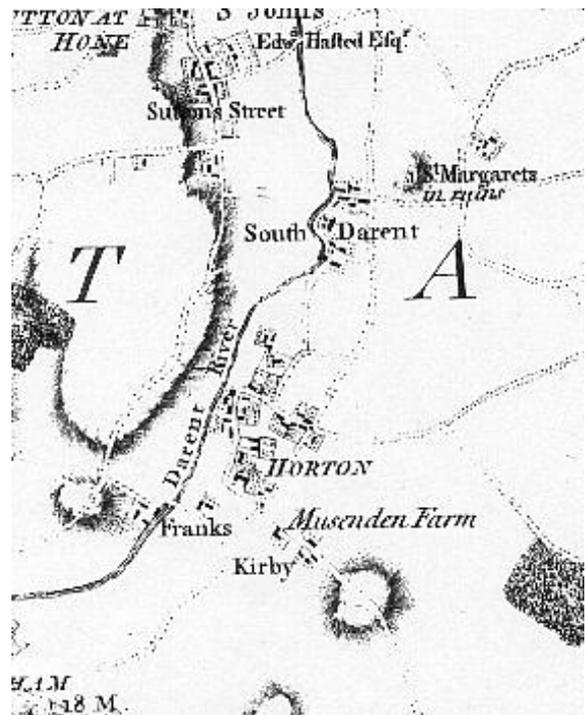
The Domesday Book, after the Norman Conquest, records the village of “Hortine” as being divided into four manors including Court Lodge and Reynolds Place, both located in Horton Kirby.

The Normans built Horton Castle for Bishop Odo on the banks of the River Darent. The site is now part of Court Lodge Farm, and is the oldest residential building in the Parish.

In 1691, the last member of the Norman de Ros family married and as a result the village took on the new name of Horton Kirkby, which eventually changed to Horton Kirby.



Fig 6: Court Lodge: The south wall is believed to be part of the original castle.

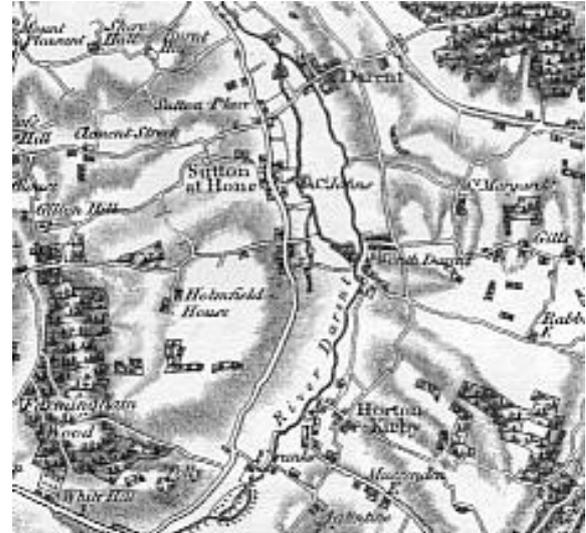


Map 2: Historic map of 1769 showing Horton Kirby.

During the Tudor period the Royal Oak, The Street and Old School Cottages, amongst other buildings, were constructed.



Map 3: Historical map of 1801



Map 4: Historical map of 1816-19

Horton Kirby remained largely unaltered by the Industrial Revolution. The main influence was that of Westminster Mill which originally was a small flour mill owned by Thomas Millhouse, a Church Warden in 1894. In 1908 the Mill was severely damaged by fire and remained in a state of disrepair until 1914.



Fig 7 Westminster Mill: Fire caused by lightning.

In 1918 a new ground floor was added with a temporary roof structure joining Mill House and the Mill. The first and second floors were built and a permanent roof added.

In 1929 another wing was constructed at the northern end of the Old Mill. In 1930, two further extensions added an easterly wing extending to the street, and a large ground floor extension to the south with glass roofing. In 1936 a final addition, similar to the southern extension was built up to and covered the front of Mill House.

In 1975 a former employee set fire to the wing by the bridge, resulting in a complete rebuild and the loss of £50,000 worth of equipment. The building remained unoccupied from 1991, and has recently been redeveloped as a major new housing scheme.

In 1988/89 British Rail announced that the Channel Tunnel Rail Link would be built just north of Horton Kirby. In 1991, after much local pressure, the Government rejected the plan but Channel Tunnel trains are coming through the Parish, on the existing line until the stretch to Stratford is complete.



Fig 8: Arson attack on the mill.

2.4 Architectural Description

Horton Kirby has a great range of listed buildings, many of which line the main north to south route through the village, Horton Road and The Street.

The development of the village over several centuries has given rise to an interesting variety of architectural styles and the conservation area contains examples of most of the vernacular features that are typically found in traditional Kentish buildings.

The parish church of St. Mary, is the oldest building (circa 1190) with 14th and 19th Century alterations. Cruciform in plan, Early English in detail, it is built of flint, the local material, with stone dressings. The centrally placed brick tower is a 19th Century addition.



Fig 9: St. Mary's Church, Horton Road

Flint Cottages, Ivy Cottage and the 18th Century dovecote are also constructed of flint with brick relief to the openings. Vertical brickwork to the dovecote forms a series of curved panels infilled with flint, and brickwork quoins are evident at Ivy Cottage.



Fig 10: Ivy Cottage, The Street



Fig 11: Dovecote, Court Lodge Farm

The roofs are either slated with clay ridge tiles, lead hips and roll, or more commonly with plain clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs. Less common is the use of pantiles and corrugated metal sheeting as roof coverings to outbuildings.



Fig 12: Ash Tree House, The Street



Fig 13: Barn at Court Lodge Farm

Modern roof coverings have been introduced either as replacements or as part of a modern development within the designated areas. At Bexley Cottages this takes the form of diamond pattern asbestos cement slates and concrete roof tiles.



Fig 14: Bexley Cottages, The Street



Fig 15: Wingetts, The Street

On the older buildings the degree of roof pitch varies depending upon the material used and the contrasting lengths of ridge line lend variety and interest to the street scene.



Fig 16: Court Lodge Farm

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 the building. The roof construction of Jasmine Cottage is unusual, giving the impression that it is half of a previous semi-detached house with gable frontage, exposing the party wall at roof level.



Fig 17: Royal Oak Cottage, The Street



Fig 18: Jasmine Cottage

There are a few examples of tall decorative chimney stacks but the majority are simple and finished either in fairfaced brickwork or rendered. There is little variation in the colour of brickwork.



Fig 19: Court Lodge Cottages, Horton Road

Dormer windows have often been inserted into the roof slopes, giving light to the attic spaces which can then be utilised as additional accommodation. Other features include windows inserted into the gable end within the roof construction.



Fig 20: The White House, The Street



Fig 21: Croft House, The Street

The most common building material is brick, usually fairfaced. Further variety is added by the use of both local red and yellow stock bricks. Patterns formed by the inclusions of bands of different colour bricks are evident, together with decorative arches above doors and windows. Brickwork quoin details are also evident.



Fig 22: Court Lodge Cottages, Horton Road



Fig 23: Kirby Hall, The Street

The use of render, tile hanging and weatherboarding to façades adds another variation in the street scene.



Fig 24: Kimberley Court, The Street



Fig 25: Old Garden Cottage, The Street

A few timber-framed buildings are evident, although much of the village is of a later period, and have been adapted to include the more fashionable materials of later years. The traditional wattle and blackened timber in most instances has been replaced with infill panels of brick, weatherboarding and render.



Fig 26: Royal Oak Cottage, The Street

Traditionally windows were either timber casements or vertical sliding sashes although there are a number of replacement windows in varying styles within and adjacent to the conservation area.



Fig 27: Drays Cottages, The Street



Fig 28: The Bull Public House, Lombard Street

Leaded lights can be found in some vernacular buildings and stained glass has been used in the church windows.



Fig 29: Jasmine Cottage, The Street



Fig 30: Kent House, The Street



Fig 31: Westminster Mill, before redevelopment.



Fig 32: New Housing on the Mill Site

Westminster Mill closed in 1991 but until then had a significant social and economic influence on the character of Horton Kirby and the conservation area. The new housing which now replaces the Mill reflects to some extent the architectural scale and form of demolished buildings but the loss of manufacturing jobs and activities has changed the character and identity of the village. Victorian workers housing is now one of the last remaining physical memories of a once active local industry.

Redevelopment of the Westminster Mill site has created a dramatic new addition to the conservation area. The new residential development reflects the scale of the former mill buildings but contrasts with the generally smaller scale of adjacent residential property. Slate roofs with clay ridge tiles, yellow stock bricks and white boarding are used on the new buildings and relate well to the distinctive local character of the village. Some poor detailing such as the use of ridge tiles on hipped roof ends reduces the quality in places, but on balance the redevelopment is a positive addition to Horton Kirby and forms a visual end stop to The Street and a significant new riverside feature along the Darent valley.



Fig 33: New Housing on the Westminster Mill Site

3.00 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

There is a sense of intrigue upon entering the village from Rays Hill as the road changes direction and high sided boundary walls obscure the main settlement.



Fig 34: View looking north west from Rays Hill

As the road continues northwards more of the treescaped village becomes visible. Continuing north, vernacular properties adorn both sides of The Street. Bends in the road create visual interest and a sense of spatial enclosure.



Figs 35 & 36: Views looking north along The Street

As the road bends to the south-east the attractive open space of Parsonage Field opens up and the buildings of Court Lodge Farm and the Church tower provide a visual focus.



Fig 37: Looking north from Westminster Mill

At this junction an access road continues westwards alongside Westminster Mill crossing a bridge and leading into the Westminster fields. From the vantage point of the bridge the course of the River Darent can be observed.



Fig 38: Former view looking south from the bridge



Fig 39: Westminster Field

The road continues in a South-Easterly direction passing the Flint Cottages and Black Cottage to the junction where The Street, Horton Road and Bull Hill meet.



Fig 40: View looking east from Westminster Mill

It is at this point that the whole character of the area changes. The buildings contained within the northern part of the conservation area have a close association with a rural farm settlement. Boundaries are defined by hedgerows and the majority of buildings are set back from the kerb and are sited in spacious grounds.



Fig 41: View looking south along Horton Road.



Fig 42: View looking north along Horton Road

The siting of the Church encourages observers to walk northwards along Horton Road. Modern development is concealed behind established trees and shrubs that adorn the road. Where the hedgerow has been replaced with stake and wire fences, more of Court Lodge Farm becomes visible.



Fig 43: View looking north-west, Horton Road.

Approaching the Church from the south, the grassed verge to the east rises to form a grassy bank encouraging people to sit on the wooden benches and admire the views of the Church and Court Lodge Farm beyond.



Fig 44: View looking south along Horton Road, from grassed bank.

To the north can be seen Court Lodge Cottages, which signify the end of the built environs of the village, as the road continues into the countryside beyond.

The development east of Court Lodge Farm, accessed via Bull Hill, remains largely obscured until entering the graveyard opposite St. Mary's Church. The eastern part of the Conservation Area concentrated around Bull Hill remains unobserved due to the contours of the land and the established hedgerows. Holmsdale remains visually secluded from all aspects, whilst The Bull public house and Old School Cottage are visible when approaching the junction with Lombard Street.



Fig 45: Holmesdale (Rashleigh Lodge)

The setting of the conservation area is idyllic with large open spaces of grass, well-established trees, hedgerows and shrubs softening the horizon.

Much of the River Darent and its flood plain remains concealed from view by the properties located on the western side of the road; however, the grounds of The Fighting Cocks public house provide the perfect vantage point to admire the views across the Darent Valley.



Fig 46: View looking south-west across Darent Valley

Where boundary walls exist they are generally of flint and/or brick, and have additional features such as brick piers and brick on edge cappings. The majority are of red brick, although the use of yellow stock brick is evident in places.



Fig 47: Red brick boundary wall, Court Lodge Farm



Fig 48: Boundary wall Meadowbrook, The Street

Other features that contribute to the character of the area include ironwork such as ornate gates, large wall mounted brackets that serve first floor door openings to farm buildings and traditional public house signs.



Fig 49: Stable Yard, Court Lodge Farm



Fig 50: Public House signboard

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

Court Lodge and its associated barns, oast houses and dovecote are of great importance both architecturally and historically and remain in use today both for agriculture and other commercial purposes. All the buildings have individual features that contribute to the special character of the conservation area. Equally important are their positions in relation to each other, which creates a sense of enclosure and provides an historic insight into the rural lifestyle of a bygone age.



Fig 51: Dovecote and hip roofed barn, Court Lodge Farm.

Court Lodge Cottages are typical of the Edwardian period with prominent gables and barge boards forming their own individual grouping which marks the end of the village.

St. Mary's Church and surrounding graveyard are another important focal group within the conservation area. The church is one of the oldest surviving buildings and is, therefore, fundamental to the character and development of the village. The churchyard contains some fine examples of mature yew trees. The cemetery, which is located on the eastern side of the road, is not contained within the designated area but does form part of this important grouping.

Kirby Hall is thought to be on the site of the original Manor House, Kirkby Court, which was built in the 13th Century.

The property is an important building historically because of the brickwork character of the façade created by the use of mathematical tiles over an older timber frame.



Fig 52: Kirby Hall, The Street, 1933



Fig 53: Kirby Hall, The Street: as seen today

Kirby Cottage and Ivy Cottage were also part of the Kirby Hall Estate which was set in “charming pleasure grounds”.

Rashleigh Lodge (Holmesdale) is an impressive 18th Century building with full height curved bays to both sides of the entrance. The building is listed and its architectural qualities are enhanced by the mature beech and holm oaks within the grounds.

Where extensions have been added, they are usually of dissimilar materials to the main roof or wall construction.



Fig 54: Pebble-dash render to extension - Ivy Cottage, The Street

Some modern interventions, such as repairs, have been unsuccessful and are, at the very least, aesthetically detrimental to the historic fabric



Fig 55: Cement based repairs to chimney stacks, Old School Cottage



Fig 56: Old Garden Cottage

Other alterations include new plastic fascias, gutters and windows on buildings originally of some architectural interest .

There is no consistency in the type of windows prevalent in the conservation area and, whilst examples of traditional forms of window add to the charm of the village and give an insight into changes in fashion over the years, the use of plastic rarely adds to the character of older properties.

The most inauspicious examples of this are in the terraced cottages, where replacement plastic windows in some of the properties contrast unfavourably with the character of those where the original windows survive.

The village as a whole presents an idyllic rural scene, but this does serve to emphasise isolated buildings which have minor dilapidations such as rotting timber porches and broken panes of glass. Some properties have been carefully restored which contributes to the overall character of the conservation area and helps to ensure the long term future of the buildings.



Fig 57: Restored timber porch Croft House, The Street

Where concrete roof tiles have been used as a replacement for traditional roof finishes on specific buildings these can also detract from the overall character of the village.

The close proximity of many buildings to the road, together with the lack of pavements, results in telephone cables and telegraph poles intruding into the visual context of the houses and the public realm. The result is unsightly, adversely affecting the character of the conservation area and consideration should be given to resolving this problem.



Figs 58 & 59: Telegraph poles combined with street lighting, The Street.

Modern infill in most instances does not impinge on the visual quality of the village, though the modern house Meadowbank is not sympathetic to the character of the village or its vernacular detailing and is therefore detrimental to the area.



Fig 60: Meadowbank, The Street

4.00 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 must be carefully considered before permission is granted.

The Green Belt status afforded to the open countryside in and around the village may come under pressure in future years, in response to the need for new housing in the South East, particularly where development is already encroaching into agricultural land. This, however, is outside the scope of the present Conservation Area and will be subject to the political climate of the day.



Fig 61: Fighting Cocks Public House

All of Horton Kirby's retail premises have closed, the last being the Post Office in 1975. Only the two public houses remain.

4.2 Potential for Enhancement and Future Policy Recommendations

Consideration should be given to enlarging the Conservation Area to include the open spaces that provide the setting for the conservation area. There are two main areas suggested for inclusion:

- i) Whilst a small area of Westminster Fields is already contained within the designated area, this could be increased to follow the existing boundaries of the playing field.
- ii) The Graveyard situated opposite St. Mary's Church.

Tranby Croft, a substantial two storey building with additional openings within the gable end to provide light to the roof spaces, is located just outside the southern boundaries of the Conservation Area. Whilst its design may be simple, it is visually impressive and dominates the view when travelling along Rays Hill. The small detached cottage opposite and within the Conservation Area is less pleasing architecturally.



Fig 62: Tranby Croft



Fig 63: Russell Terrace

The small 19th Century terraced houses of Russell Terrace should be reconsidered for inclusion within the Conservation Area.

Although the vast majority have been altered, much of the architectural detail is still evident, including moulded terracotta window and door heads, sliding sash windows, stable doors and associated ironwork.



Figs 64 & 65: Examples of architectural detailing, Russell Terrace

It is suggested that these properties are considered for inclusion in the conservation area, so that the remaining original brick and window details are conserved using an Article 4 Direction and any future alterations subject to tighter planning controls.



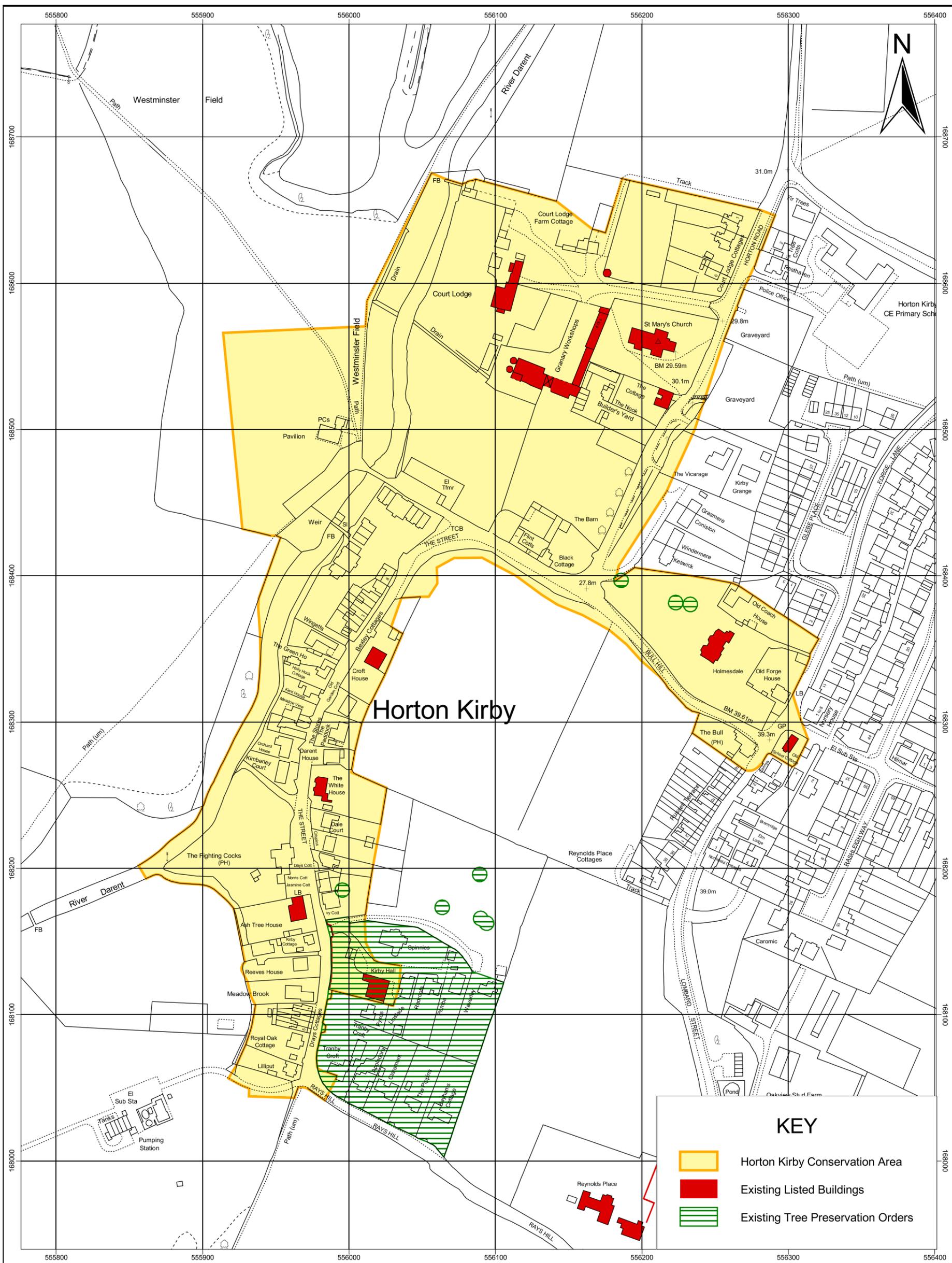
Fig 66: Unsympathetic alteration of window opening

Acknowledgements:

The draft document was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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Pictures and Memories of 100 Years 1894 -1994	Parish Council



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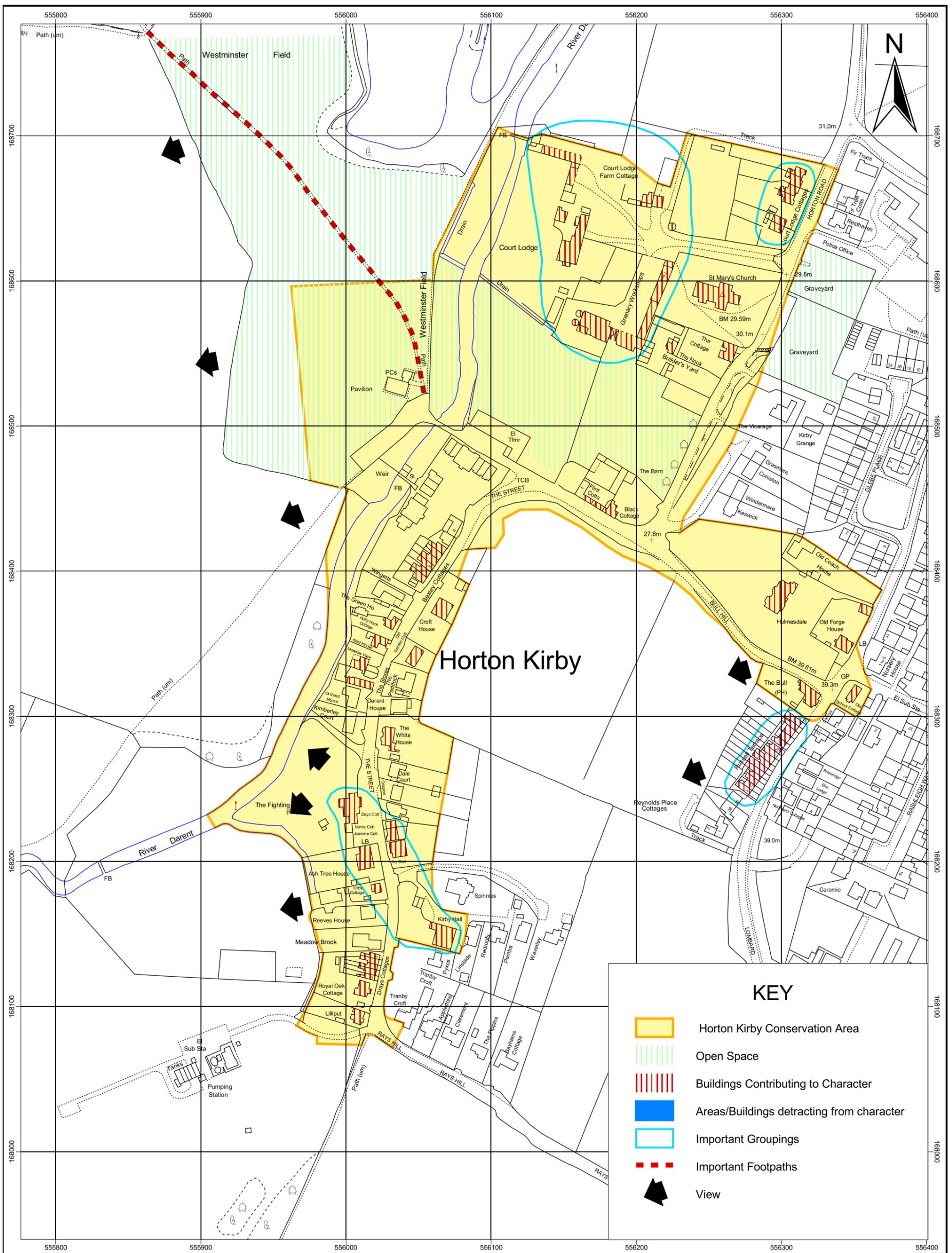
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- Existing Tree Preservation Orders

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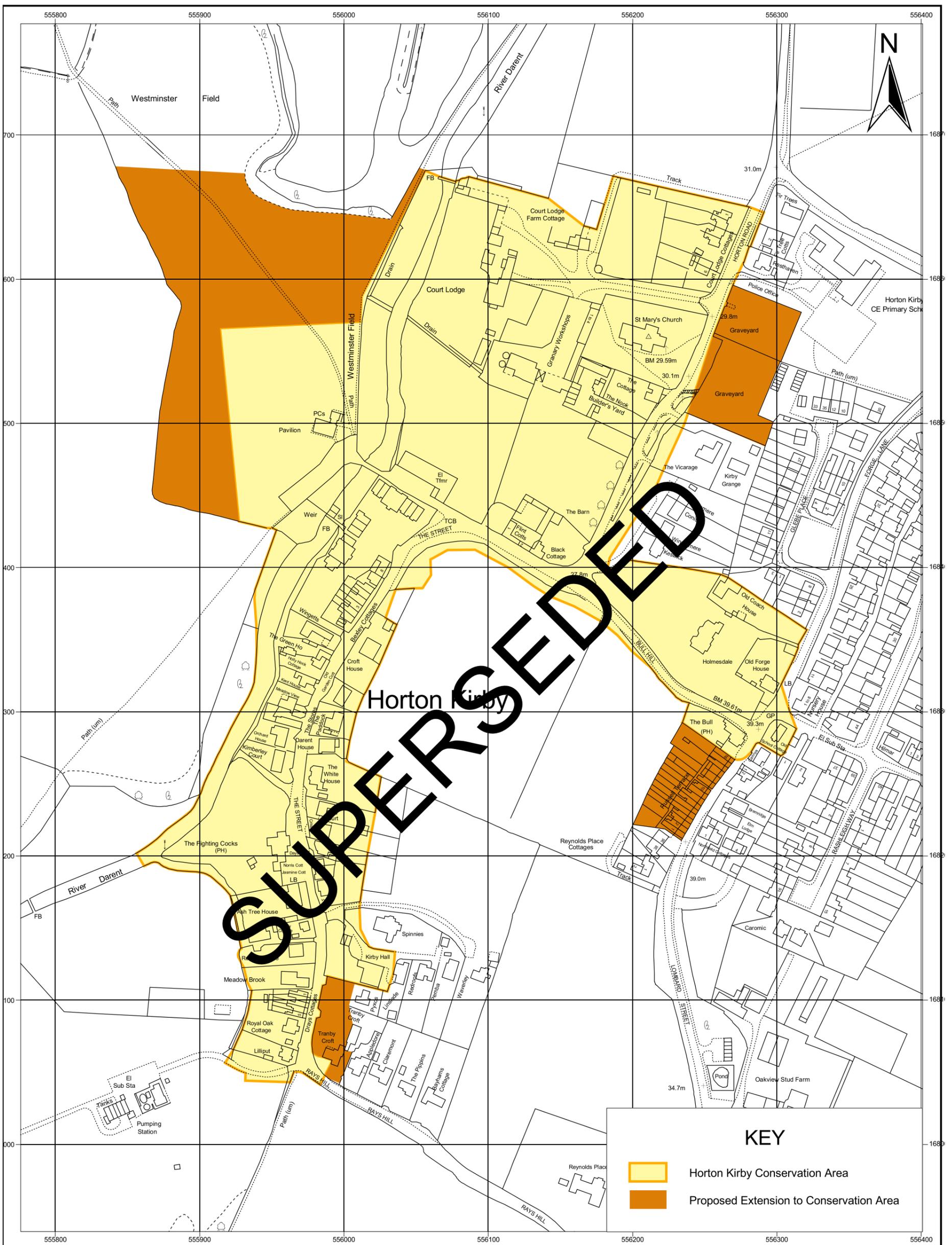


MAP 3
Horton Kirby
Conservation Area
Designations



MAP 4
Horton Kirby
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

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KEY	
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	Proposed Extension to Conservation Area

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MAP 5
Horton Kirby
Conservation Area
Recommendations for
Future Policy Changes