

IDE HILL

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



December 2003

Ide Hill

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. The appraisal was approved 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 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

Ide Hill Conservation Area covers some 6.8 hectares and contains 7 listed buildings including the K6 telephone kiosk. The area was designated in 1974 and has not been reappraised since then.

The village lies four miles south-west of Sevenoaks at one of the highest points on the greensand ridge. The hill top location provides views of the surrounding landscape which contributes significantly to the character of the village. To the north lies the Holmesdale Valley beyond which are the North Downs. Due to its unspoilt nature, the surroundings have been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Ide Hill also lies wholly within the Green Belt.

The conservation area includes the main road through the village with the green lying between the road and the parish church. The area is mainly residential surrounded by agricultural land and areas which are either owned or managed by the National Trust. It includes many examples of Kentish building styles dating from the 16th Century to the late 20th Century. Nearly all of the houses in the centre of the village were built post 1700; the majority dating from the 19th Century. To the north east, there is a modern housing estate outside the conservation area.



Figure 1 View looking north north- east from Myrtle Cottage

Ide Hill conservation area is essentially the heart of the village. The buildings are mainly domestic with small retail outlets and a public house interspersed amongst the residential properties. The public buildings include the church and the primary school.



Figure 2 Ide Hill Primary School 1852 by G.Street



Figure 3 St. Mary's Church 1865 by C.H. Cooke

Old School House (possibly associated with Atherfolds Farm) dates from the 18th Century and was the local school until the present school was built in 1852.

2.2 Location and Geographical Context



Map 1 Geographical Location of Ide Hill

Ide Hill village lies to the south west of Sevenoaks and is accessible via B roads from both the A25 and A21. The nearest main line station is at Sevenoaks with links from Hastings to London. The nearest major towns are Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, both of relatively equal size in terms of the facilities offered.

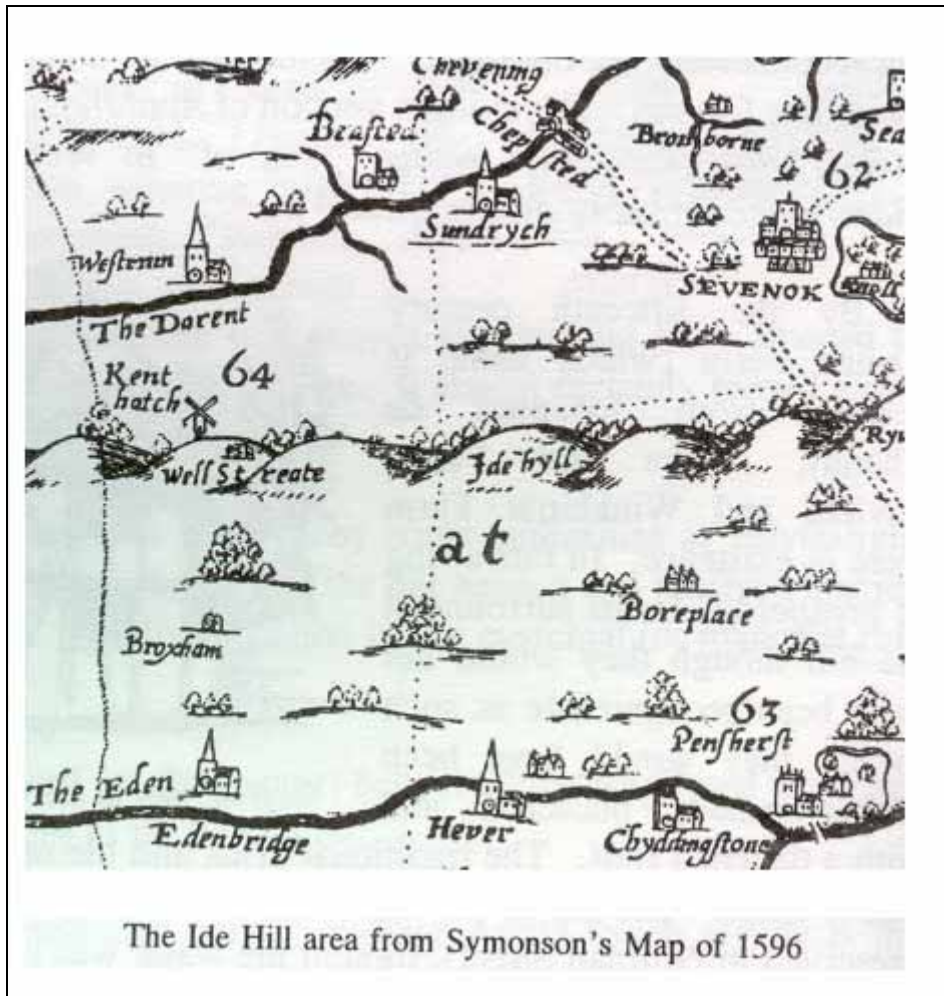
Amenities within the village include a primary school with recreational and sport facilities, local butchers, post office, public house and gift shop cum tearoom.

The community has also formed The Ide Hill Society, which is actively involved in the conservation of Ide Hill.

2.3 Historical Development

The origins of Ide Hill date back to Anglo Saxon times when the ancient forests were cleared and the north-south shape of Sundridge Parish was formed.

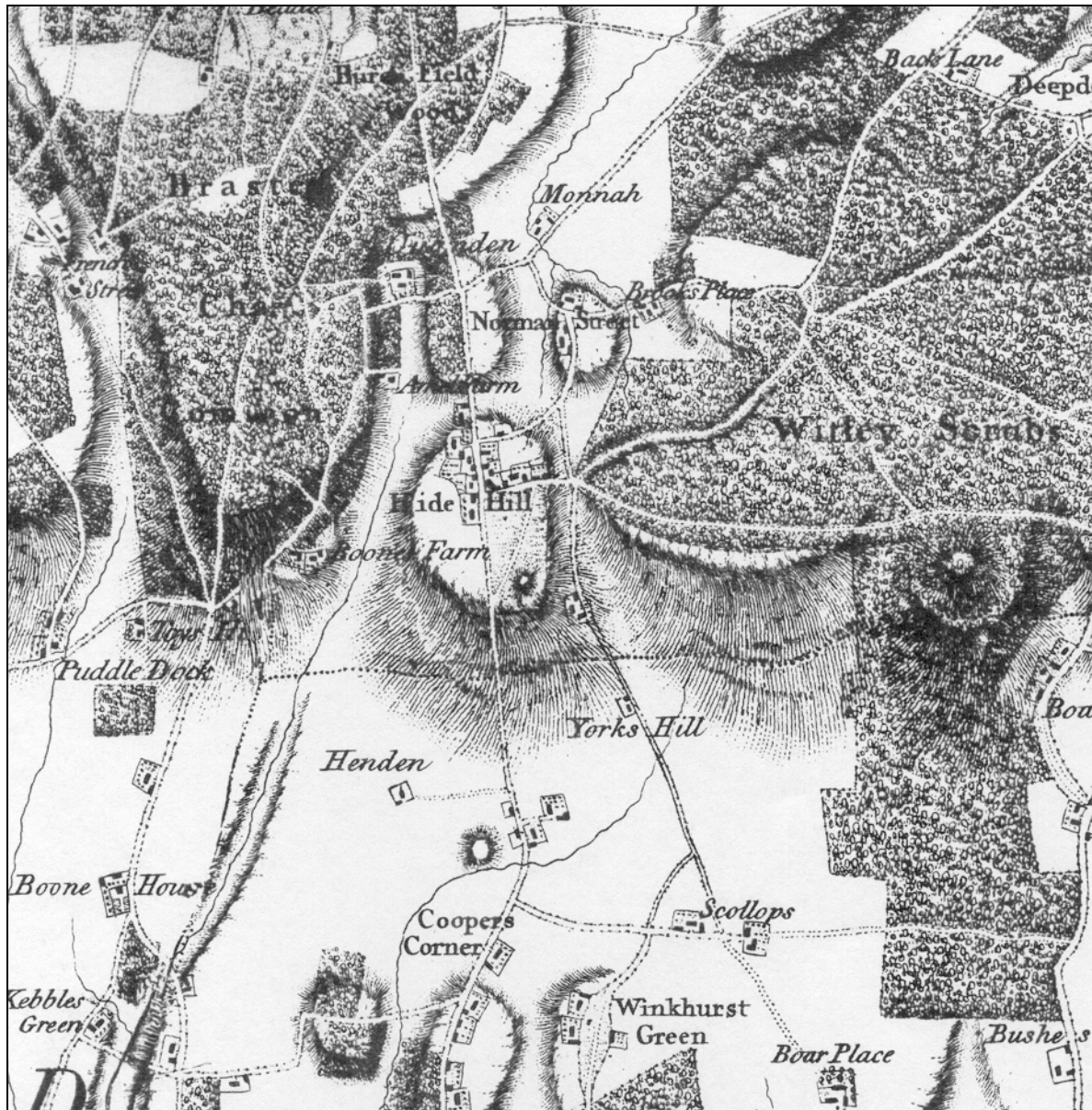
By the 15th Century, cultivation of the flat lands had been established and a ring of prosperous farms surrounded the wooded hilltop. The village of Ide Hill existed but had not developed to incorporate the hilltop or have its own church.



Map 2 Historical Map of Ide Hill 1596 (Symonson)

The height of the hilltop provided an ideal location for a fire beacon and Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn frequently visited the locality during their time at Hever, prior to their marriage.

Although Ide Hill was gradually expanding, the top of the hill still remained largely unaltered by the 17th Century. There were however independent farms and cottages throughout the Parish, separated by woods and common land. The village was still very isolated with little in the way of road access.

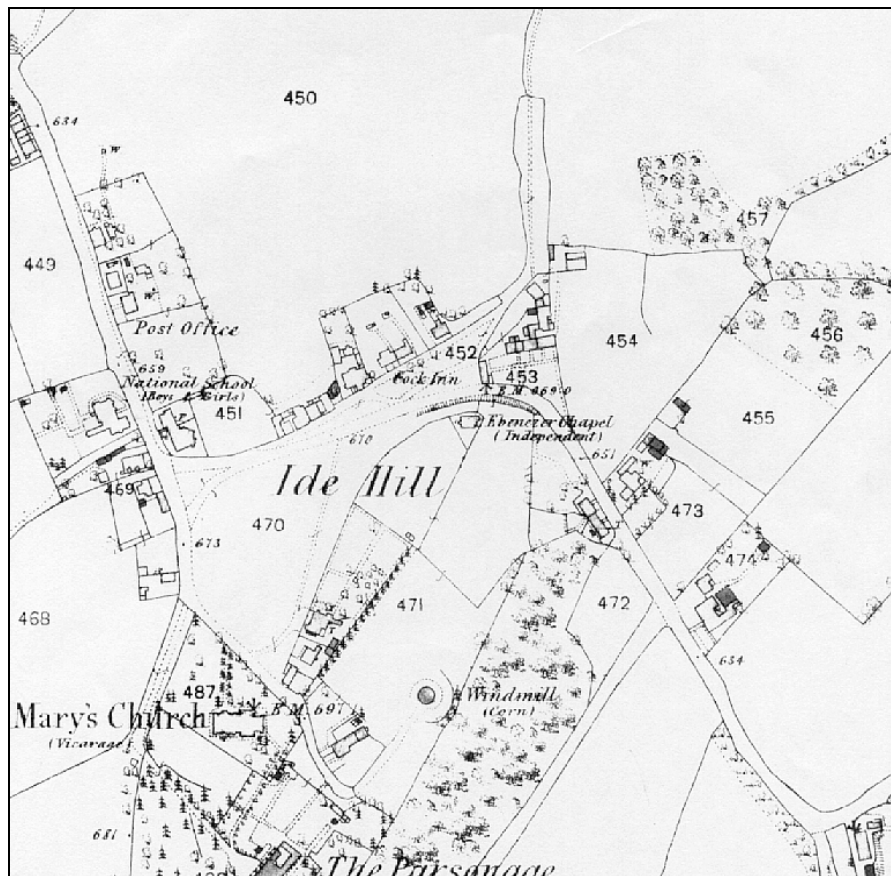


Map 3 Historical Map of 1769 showing Ide Hill

In the 18th Century the basic form of a hill top village around a green was established, forming the basis of the village's appearance today although there was still no Church. The Crown (now Ide House) and the Cock existed as alehouses from the middle of the 18th Century.

The position of some older properties shows that the original north-south road took a different route from that of its modern counterpart. The original road was steep and difficult south of the village and in the 1830's was realigned to wind more gently around the steepest part of the hill on the eastern side.

After 1800, Ide Hill became a flourishing community, spreading out both east and west from the green. It had a small Church, schoolhouse and windmill.



Map 4 Historical Map of 1896

Most of the newer buildings in the village are replacements for old cottages, infills or extensions to houses already in existence and most of this building was constructed in the 1950's.

After that time the hop industry began to decline and the village did not increase further in size; by the 1960's the industry had entirely disappeared and the development of the community has since remained largely unaltered. Today, it is the local community's wish that the village is not developed further and that it should retain its character as a traditional rural settlement.

2.4 Architectural Description

The development of the village over several centuries has given rise to an interesting portrayal of the styles of architecture and the Conservation Area contains examples of most of the vernacular features that are typically found in traditional Kentish buildings.



Figure 4 View looking north from the Church

To the northern end of the Conservation Area, there is a converted Victorian Oast House constructed in a combination of rubble walling with brickwork quoins, coping to plinth and relief to window openings, tile hanging and clay tile covered roofs.



Figure 5 Victorian Oast House (Rondavel)

Generally the roofs are either slated, with clay ridge tiles, lead hip and ridge rolls, or, more commonly, covered with clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs. The degree of the roof pitches varies depending upon the material used and the contrasting heights of the ridgelines often lend variety and interest to the street scene.



Figure 6 Rosemary Cottage

‘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.

There are some good examples of tall decorative chimney stacks but the majority are more simple and are finished either in fair-faced brickwork or rendered. There is little variation in the colour of the brickwork



Figure 7 Atherfolds (formerly Brownings Farm) 16th Century timber-framed farmhouse

The most common building material is brick, all of which is red stock, but there are also examples of local ragstone, timber framing and weatherboarding. All the remaining timber framed buildings have been adapted to include the more fashionable materials of later years. Wattle has also been replaced with brick infills, vertical tile hanging and weatherboarding.



Figure 8 The Cock Inn is the oldest building on the village green.

The Cock Inn Public House displays timber framing and plaster, vertical tile hanging and weather boarding to its front elevations. Although documented records can only date the building to 1755, it is believed to be older.



Figure 9 Prospect House

The use of local stone combined with brickwork and the instances of painted rendered quoin relief around windows and door openings, adds another variation in colour to the preponderance of red brick and tile.



Figure 10 View looking east across the graveyard

St Mary's Church built 1865 stands at the top of the hill with the Old Vicarage to the south and the green to the north. It is constructed of ragstone with galleted joints, a two tone slated roof and north tower.

The two modern properties, Dove Cottage and Pump House, adjacent to Prospect House, have been designed so that their external facades are in keeping with those buildings that surround them. They are of red brick construction, one with slated roof and clay tile ridge detailing and the other with clay tiles and a white weatherboarded first floor.



Figure 11 Dove Cottage and Pump House

3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

There is a sense of intrigue upon entering the village from Wheatsheaf Hill; high-sided ragstone banks with trees and hedges enclose the road and hide the main settlement from immediate view.



Figure 12 View looking north from Deansfield ; Bassetts Hill

As the banks open out the treescaped village gradually becomes visible and the eye is drawn towards the focal point of the village green. The open sloping character of the green with its loosely enclosing buildings, long views and open skies is the dominating feature of the conservation area. The special interest of the conservation area derives from the mix of generally small scale domestic vernacular buildings, which are interspersed by a public house, shops and a church. The relationship of the surrounding buildings to the green is a critical part of the character of Ide Hill conservation area.



Figure 13 View looking south west from Mount Pleasant

The road continues through the heart of the village bisecting the area, with housing on one side of the road and the village green and church on the other. A roundabout at the point where the road turns northwards forms a jarring urban note with its multiplicity of signs. Pedestrians are encouraged to walk along the side of the green to the vantage point of the church which is a dominant building to the south.



Figure 14 View looking west north west from Little Millfield

It is from this position that the eye is then drawn along Sundridge Road, where there is a completely different style of architecture. The backdrop to this road is dominated by terraced houses with slate roofs, both modern and 19th century. There are small garden frontages and further down, little or no pavement, which all contributes to the feeling of enclosure. 18th and 19th century buildings, such as Hope Cottages and Wheelwrights and the 19th century terrace Creasey's Row, are followed by the 18th century Old School House and 16th century Atherfolds. The variety of building styles and ages adds to the distinctive character of the area.



Figure 15 Hope Cottage, Sundridge Road, with rubble and brick boundary wall.

The buildings along the main straight section of the road are mainly detached properties of the 20th Century set back within their gardens and giving a feeling of space.

At the end of the development in Sundridge Road, the road leaves the built environs of the village and leads out into open countryside.

There is a modern housing estate located to the north-east of the village and outside the conservation area. It is obscured from view and does not detract from the overall character of the village.



Figure 16 View looking west from Camberwell Lane
Entrance to the playing field



Figure 17 View looking north west from Camberwell
Lane entrance to the playing field.

The recreation grounds are located between Sundridge Road and the modern housing development. However the main point of congregation is the village green and local shops. The village bus stop is located in this area.



Figure 18 The gardens of Ide Cottage from the Green

The setting is very rural with large spacious areas of grass and well-established trees that soften the horizon. The most picturesque views are those facing south from National Trust land.



Figure 19 View looking north-west from National Trust Walk



Figure 20 View looking west from National Trust Walk



Figure 21 Garden view looking south from Old Vicarage

The views from the private garden of the Old Vicarage are outstanding.

Where boundary walls exist, they are generally of rubble although additional details such as low buttresses, brick vertical bands and brick on edge cappings are in evidence. The majority of boundary walls are located at either end of the village at the sides of the approach roads.



Figure 22 Boundary Wall to Atherfolds

Other features that contribute to the character of the area include traditional lampposts, although there are very few of these.



Figure 23 Lamppost within the grounds Of Woodlawn



Figure 24 Street lamppost by Finches

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



Figure 25 Setting of St. Mary's Church



Figure 26 The Old Vicarage, outbuildings & grounds

The Church, the Old Vicarage and its associated outbuildings form an important grouping, not only in historic terms, but also in relation to their position on the hilltop. Other structures, such as the windmill, were constructed in this area because the hilltop played a vital role in the productivity of the village. Unfortunately nothing remains of this structure.



Figure 27 Ide Cottage. C 18th Cottages with Victorian Bay

Whilst Ide Cottage appears to have more similarity with American architecture than British, the intricate detailing to the leadwork and other elements of design add considerably to the quality of building contained within the boundaries of the conservation area.



Figure 28 and 29 The detailing of Whitelea contributes to the conservation area



Whitelea is another building whose details add to the character of the area; particularly the lead detail to the windows and porch and the use of yellow stocks to accentuate patterns within the brickwork courses.



Figure 30 Outbuildings to Atherfolds



Figure 31 Outbuildings to Atherfolds Farm

It is important to consider the future of the outbuildings located within and adjacent to the boundary of Atherfolds and Atherfolds Farm. Most still appear to be serving a useful function and survive intact, but the same cannot be said of the one positioned outside the boundary. Whilst still in relatively good condition and otherwise intact, its lack of use could result in decline.

Work has been carried out to the Oast House and an extension added to the rear of one of the cottages. Whilst the extension to the rear of the cottage is, in the main, obscured from the public highway, no effort has been made to continue the style of the windows or provide a similar cowl to the chimney.



Figure 32 The Old Post Office with extension to rear



Figure 33 Victorian oasthouse showing repairs/adaptations being carried out

The repairs to the Oast House are not sympathetic and the cement based pointing will have an adverse effect on the natural weathering of the rubble walling. Other alterations carried out previously include new upvc fascias, gutters and glazing.

There is no consistency in the types of window prevalent in the conservation area. There are not only variations from house to house but often also several types in one property. There are timber and metal casements, oak framed metal windows with leaded lights and stained glass, sliding sashes and timber windows with decorative heads as well as recently installed upvc replacements. 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 upvc windows cannot add to the character of an historic property.

The most conspicuous examples of this are in terraced cottages where replacement windows to some of the properties have been inserted and contrast unfavourably with those originals left in their neighbours houses.



Figures 34 and 35 Creaseys Row. Terraced cottages adjacent to the telephone exchange

Only one of the terraced properties in Creaseys Row has retained all the original sliding sash windows. All the other properties have had replacement windows fitted and one has an enlarged window opening to the ground floor. The disparity in appearance is also further exaggerated by the end property to the north being painted grey whilst the others have maintained a uniform appearance in terms of the colour of their painted render.

The village as a whole presents an idyllic rural scene but this does serve to emphasise isolated buildings which have minor dilapidations such as rusting cast iron downpipes, a mass of external cabling and sagging lead flashings to window heads.



Figures 36 and 37 Suttons Cottages, in need of minor repairs

At Suttons Cottages cement based render has been applied to a building constructed with lime mortar and efflorescence staining has built up on the render.

Concrete roof tiles have been used as a replacement for traditional roofing finishes on isolated buildings within the conservation area, which also detracts from the aesthetic appeal of the village.

The close proximity of buildings to the main road and, in some instances, lack of pavements result in telephone cables and telegraph poles intruding into the visual context of the houses. The result is unsightly and consideration should be given to resolving this problem.



Figure 38 Hope Cottages



Figure 39 The Old Post Office

This is especially significant along Sundridge Road, the main road heading northwards out of the village. Further intrusions are the various road signs whose location, although suitable in terms of warning drivers, detract from the general appearance of the village.

4.0 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 has to be carefully considered before consent is granted.

The Green Belt status afforded to the village and countryside beyond 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, will depend upon future Government policy.

4.2 Potential for Enhancement and Future Policy Recommendations

Consideration should be given to enlarging the Conservation Area to include the public open spaces that surround the village. There are two main areas for proposed inclusion:

- i) Recreation / Playing fields between Sundridge Road and Camberwell Lane.
- ii) Recreation / Playing fields behind Glebe House, Myrtle Cottage and Finches called the Glebe Field.

Whilst not public space it may be advantageous to incorporate the strip of land to the north of the Old Vicarage between the houses on the east side of the green and the boundary with the National Trust. Millfield and Little Millfield are not of any great architectural merit when considered individually but their gardens back onto the site of the windmill which is an important piece of archaeology to retain for the future. This site also contains the fairly substantial remains of a WW2 beam deflecting station.

Ide Cottage, originally a pair of 18th Century cottages with a Victorian bay added, is an excellent example of how intricate detailing can change the appearance of an otherwise uncomplicated building. However were any of these elements to be replaced the whole essence of the building would be lost. See *Fig. 27*. Whilst it is already included within the Conservation Area, it may be advantageous to consider its suitability for listing.

Valleymount is situated behind the CE Primary School and although no information has been found to confirm its age, it would appear to be early 20th Century. The house although relatively modern is a good quality design and may benefit from inclusion in the conservation area.



Fig 40 Valleymount

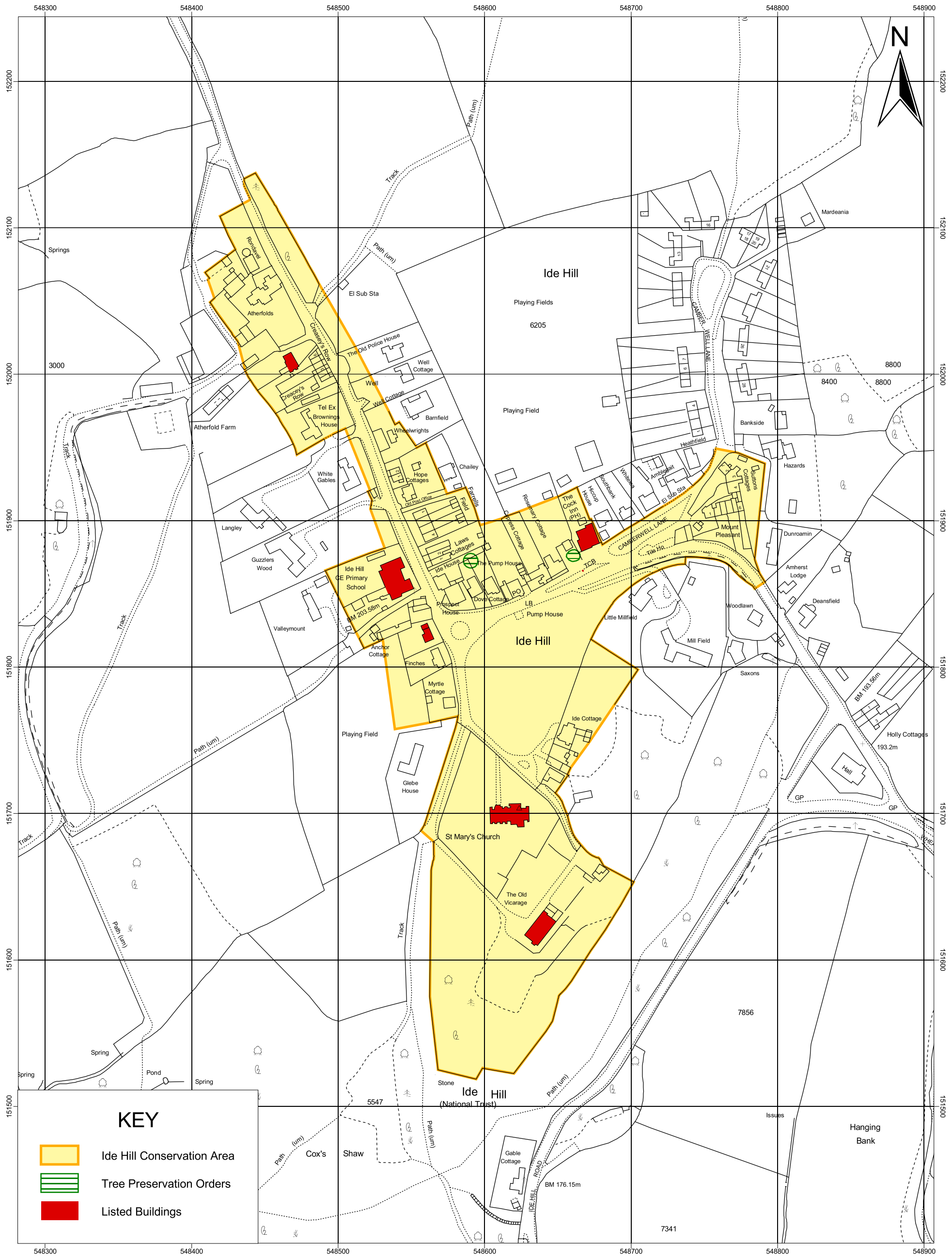
Whitelea also has a contribution to make to the architectural character of the area, and should be considered for inclusion (See Fig 28 & 29).

Acknowledgements:

The draft appraisal document was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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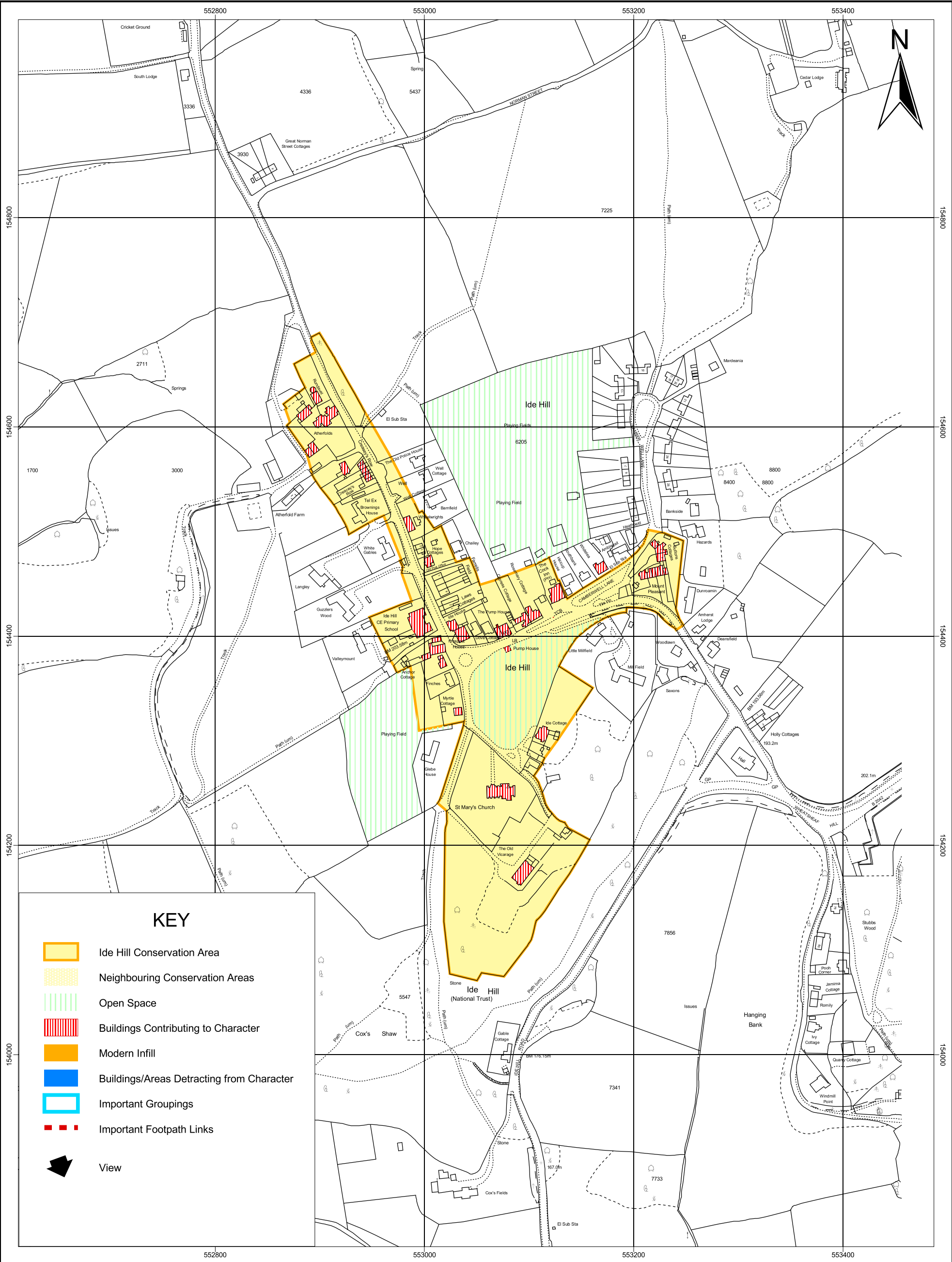
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MAP 1

**IDE HILL
CONSERVATION AREA
DESIGNATIONS**

Scale	1:2500
Date	December 2002
Drawn By	SNM
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MAP 7

Ide Hill
Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

Scale	1:3500
Date	December 2002
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