

Otford

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



PLANNING GUIDANCE - 2010



Otford

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

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 and streets all contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the District's conservation areas.

The built 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 and management plan will inform the activities of the Council, the public and other bodies where these affect the conservation area. This Appraisal was approved by the District Council in **November 2010** and adopted as Informal Planning Guidance.

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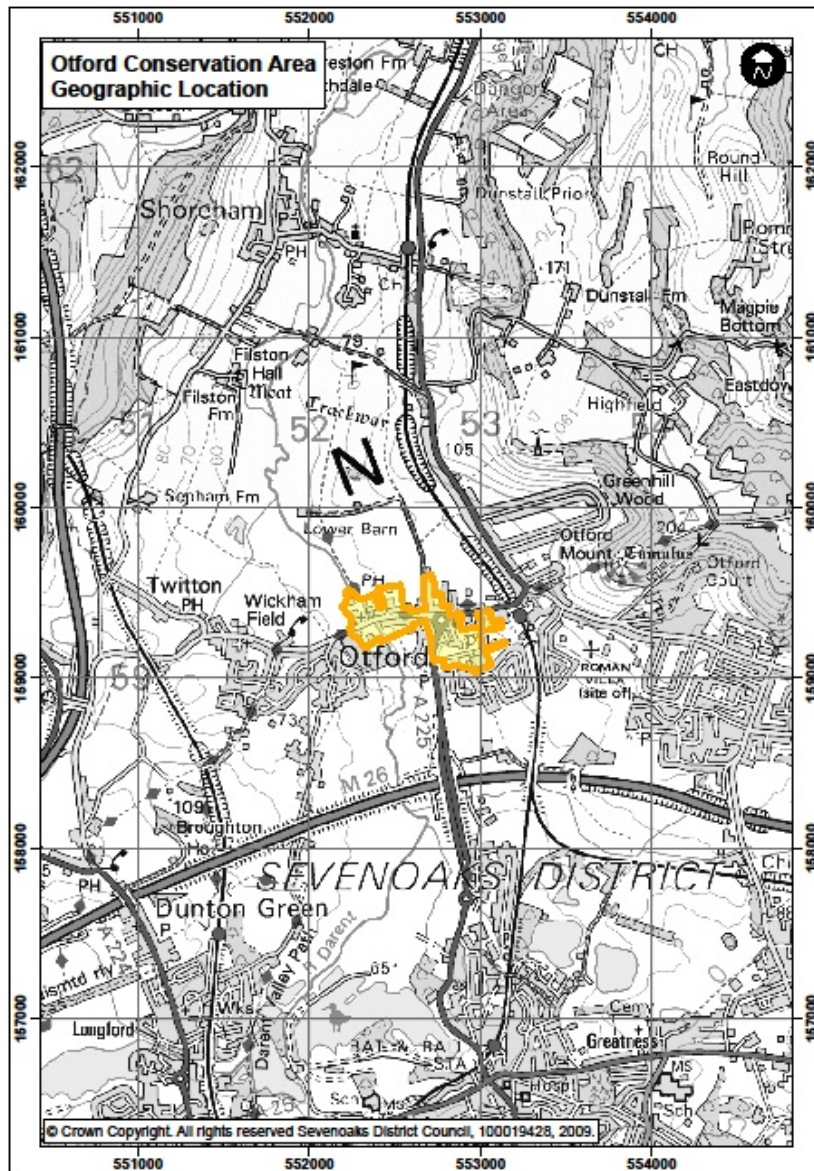
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2. Attractive open space in the heart of the Conservation Area. The main road used to run through the gap between these buildings until a new road was built in the 1970s

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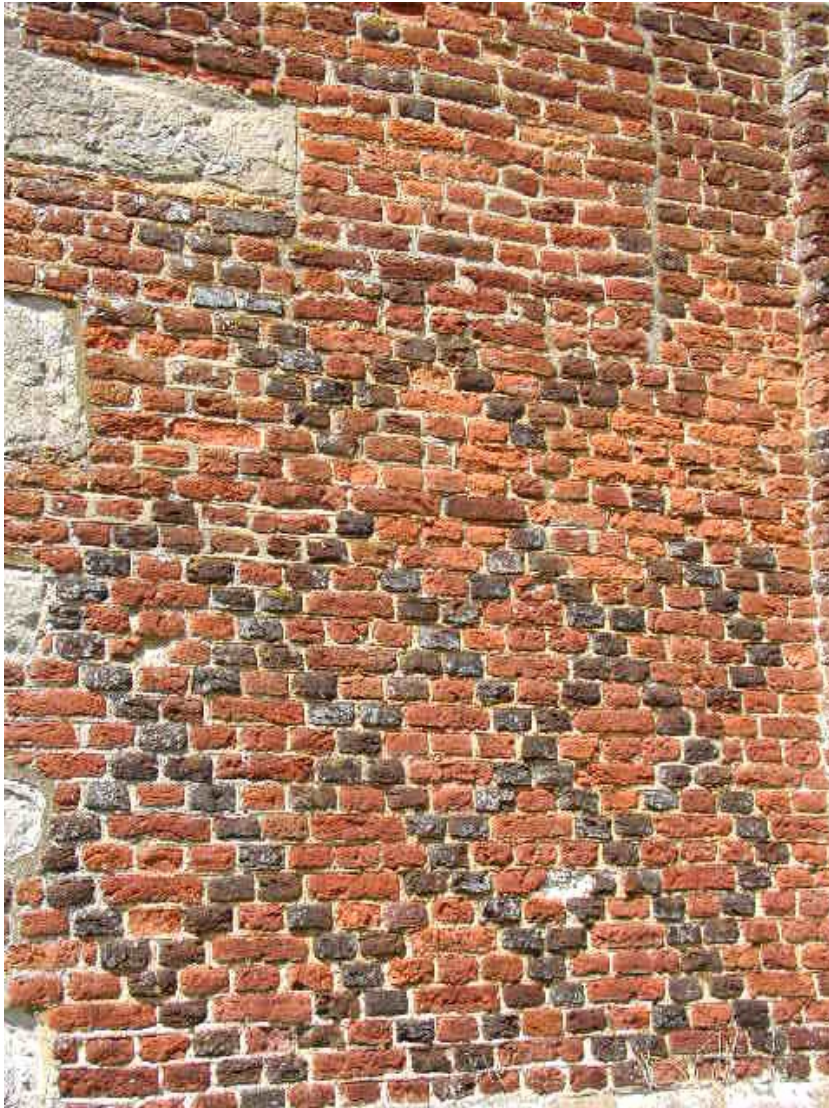
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1.0 INTRODUCTION



4. Good brickwork on Archbishop's Palace

This document replaces the Otford Conservation Area Appraisal which was produced in March 2001 by Sevenoaks District Council. Local authorities are required by law to preserve or enhance their conservation areas and part of that process is to regularly review their conservation areas and produce Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. These explain what is important about the area and what improvements are needed.

This Appraisal and Management Plan follows the broad format suggested by English Heritage in its 2006 documents *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans*. The Appraisal draws heavily on the original document. The boundary was assessed for extension 2006 and a number of minor changes were made.

The omission of any particular feature or building does not imply that it is of no significance.

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 demolition, 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.



5. Characteristic and prominent listed building

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 vital grass roots starting points from which to safeguard the continuing care of our environment.



6. Characteristic open views – these are crucial to the fine setting of the Conservation Area

1.2 The Benefits of Being in a Conservation Area

The historic environment is of particular importance for tourism and leisure. In addition, maintaining the appearance of a conservation area and the character of the groups of buildings and the public areas within it will often sustain or enhance the value of individual properties. Conservation can also play a key part in promoting economic prosperity by ensuring that an area offers attractive living and working conditions which will encourage further investment.

The principles of conservation management planning, that managing any historic place should be based on understanding it and assessing its significance and values, are now accepted as applying to historic areas as much as to historic buildings.

1.3 Purpose of Appraisals and Management Plans

As their number grows, it has become even more important for local authorities to include a well-defined and considered policy for designated conservation areas in their development plans. Development 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 appraisals in 1997 and more detailed guidance on both appraisals and management plans in 2006. This guidance outlines the preferred approach to these plans and gives examples of the type of content that it would be useful to include.

The principal purpose of this Appraisal is to provide a firm basis upon which proposals for development within the Conservation Area can be assessed, through defining those key elements that contribute to the special historic and architectural character and which should be preserved. It supplements and provides clarity to saved policies contained in the Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, primarily those relating to demolition and development within conservation areas and should be read in conjunction with the Plan. It will therefore be a key document in maintaining character and promoting appropriate, sensitive proposals in the Conservation Area.



7. Bubblestone Road



8. Archbishop's palace owned by Sevenoaks District Council – uses for this historic structure should be sought

The appraisal and management plan 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 management 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 plans can also be used to assess the impact of planning policies and the implementation of enhancement measures.

The plan will help the District Council, development professionals (planners, architects, landscape architects, highway engineers etc) and the local community engage in the conservation and enhancement of the local historic environment and help secure the long-term viability of the Conservation Area as an important heritage asset.

1.4 The key purpose of this Plan is to:

- Provide a basis for making sustainable community based planning decisions about the future of the Conservation Area;
- Raise awareness of the importance and value of the local heritage;
- Record those principal elements that detract from the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;
- Identify distinctive built form and character within the Conservation Area;

- Identify opportunities for enhancement to be delivered through accompanying management plans or other initiatives;
- Inform key agencies, societies and residents whose activities impact on the Conservation Area and maximise the investment in the preservation and enhancement to the benefit of the social and economic quality of life;
- Provide guidance and set out objectives to preserve and enhance the buildings, structures and features;
- Identify distinctive public realm character within the Conservation Area, provide guidance, and establish key actions to preserve and enhance the public realm;
- Protect and maintain biodiversity;
- Outline the key statutory requirements in respect of development within the Conservation Area; provide guidance and set out actions to secure the proper and effective application of these requirements;
- Propose the implementation of management procedures to co-ordinate the delivery of new works and maintenance works within the public realm.

As an adopted Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, the plan will be a material consideration in the determination of development proposals.



9. Attractive old style street sign.

2.0 General description of Conservation Area

Otford Conservation Area covers some 16 hectares and contains about forty listed buildings and part of the scheduled monument of the Archbishops' Palace. It was designated in 1969 and extended in 1976, 1990 and 2006.

The focal point of the Conservation Area is the pond and the surrounding green, but the boundaries include the historic High Street down to the bridge over the River Darent beyond Broughton Manor. Troutbeck, an early 20th Century property whose grounds are edged by the river on two sides, lies on the extreme north eastern boundary, and Park Farm is included in the north west.

The southern end of the boundary is the north side of Bubblestone Road whose properties include some of the ruined walls of the Palace, although the extent of the monument stretches further east than the Conservation Area.

The countryside around is designated as Green Belt and to the north is the North Downs Special Landscape Area and part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The land to the south and east of the remaining Palace is designated an important area of green space, and there is another, outside the Conservation Area but to the west of the railway.

The Conservation Area includes residential, retail and public buildings - a true cross section of village property, and the historic nucleus of the settlement. The ages of the properties range from modern to medieval, and there is plenty of open space.

3.0 Location and Geographical Context

Otford sits at the southern end of the Darent Valley where it turns to flow through the North Downs to the Thames. The village lies at the point where the Vale of Holmesdale meets the valley, and to the south is the greensand ridge on which Sevenoaks is situated.

Otford is dissected by two main arteries, the A225 running north/south between Sevenoaks and Farningham where it connects with the A20 and then the M25, and the M26 to the south the road which links the M20 to the east with the M25 in the west. A triangle of motorways surrounds the village and the A225 is the only non-motorway route that links Swanley and Sevenoaks.

The nearest major towns are Sevenoaks and Orpington, the latter being further away but having wider shopping and entertainment facilities. Swanley is also within easy reach but there are no direct links to the M26 eastbound which would bring Maidstone within an easy drive. Many residents also shop at Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Bromley and Bluewater.

Most of the residential areas and the main village street are to the north of the M26 but there is a significant industrial estate to the south, some associated housing, and superstore and retail park.

The village has a population of 3258 (2001 Census) and is managed by a Parish Council. Facilities in the village include a Church Hall designed by Sir Edward Lutyens in 1910 (see below image 10 – images reproduced with kind permission of the Otford VDS Design Team and the Millennium mosaic of the village's long history below the front windows), a Village Hall, railway station, primary school, two private schools, a Heritage Centre adjoining the Parish Council Office, Methodist Church Hall and sporting and recreational facilities. There are also a number of antique or craft shops and pubs.

The major retail parks at Lakeside and Bluewater are also within easy reach of the M25 motorway, via the A224 Badgers Mount to Junction 4 and the A225 through Shoreham and Eynsford to Junction 3.

Otford railway station is on the line from to London Victoria via Maidstone.

The village has a number of specialist interest and activity groups that take a keen interest in the history and conservation of the village.



image 10

11. A detail from the Otford Millennium Mosaic, designed by Oliver Budd.

4.0 GUIDANCE AND POLICIES

4.1 National and Regional Guidance

Government advice concerning conservation areas and historic buildings is set out in Planning Policy Statement 5, Planning for the Historic Environment. Further advice about conservation areas including the production of management proposals, has been produced by English Heritage (2006).



12. Good nineteenth century gas lamp post

4.2 The Development Plan

The government has introduced a new type of development plan known as the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will set out the strategy, policies and proposals for the future shape of Sevenoaks and will be produced over the next 2-3 years. In the meantime the adopted Local Plan of March 2000 will retain development plan status until parts of the new system are adopted. As an adopted planning document the Appraisal and Management Plan will be a key material consideration in the determination of development proposals during this transitional period.

4.3 Local Policies

The Sevenoaks District Local Plan (adopted March 2000) lists the following policy relating to conservation areas. This policy has been saved:

- **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.**

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. Other Areas of Local Landscape Importance where development may be restricted are noted in policy EN8. Important areas of greenspace within the built confines are safeguarded under policy EN9.

4.4 Buildings Contributing to Character.

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. The written criteria from English Heritage can be viewed at the end of this report.



13. Weathered concrete bollards – a timber wheelchair and pushchair friendly gate might be more appropriate as these bollards block the footpath for these users. Any replacement should be agreed with Conservation.

4.5 Conservation and Enhancement.

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 and Planning Policy Statement 5 state that the Local Planning Authority should undertake detailed assessments of conservation areas and prepare proposals for their preservation and enhancement. 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 plan which may have been prepared.

This assessment and the detailed analysis of the area contained in the report is intended to fulfil this requirement and provide the background for development and enhancement schemes.

This area has a rich townscape and an environment of high quality. This appraisal aims to ensure that this rich context is respected so that only design solutions of a high standard are introduced, allowing the area to continue to maintain its quality and status as one of the most desirable places in the south east.

There is a richness, variety, quality and history of townscape within this area that is special and a need to maintain and enhance the best of this quality is crucial. Context and quality design is vitally important in reinforcing the character of this area and this character must not be lost through undue pressure for poorly designed infill development or redevelopment of an unacceptable nature.



14. Fine converted chapel

4.6 Special Controls in the Conservation Area

Designation of a Conservation Area does not mean that changes cannot occur, but rather that any change should preserve or enhance the features which make up its special character. Controls are imposed by the Local Authority which are additional to normal planning restrictions, in order to maintain the character and appearance of the area. The benefits of this and the maintenance of a high quality environment are perceived by most people who live and work in conservation areas as being worth the additional restrictions.



15. Attractive historic timber doorway on Station Road

Additional controls within Conservation Areas are outlined here for information. However other planning controls may still apply and are not altered by conservation area status.

The size of an extension that may be built without the need to apply for planning permission is more restricted within a conservation area.

Any proposals should always be discussed with Sevenoaks District Council at an early stage.

Cladding of the exterior of a residential property with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic, render, pebbledash or tiles will require submission of a planning application. Any enlargement of a house by way of alteration or additions to the roof, e.g. a dormer window, will require a planning application to be made. A planning application is needed for a satellite antenna where it is to be installed on a chimney; or on a building over 15m in height; or on a wall or roof slope which fronts a highway.

Any proposals for development should be checked with the relevant development control team.

Any extension or alteration to other commercial premises or residential flats, which materially affects the external appearance of the building, will require a planning application to be made. This is particularly important within conservation areas, where even small alterations can materially affect the character and appearance of the area. For instance, such alterations can include rendering brickwork, replacement of slates with concrete tiles, and replacement windows. The advice of the relevant development control team should be sought before carrying out any changes.

Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of any building within a conservation area, except the following:

- any building with a total cubic content not exceeding 115m³ or any substantial part of such building.
- any wall or fence (or substantial part) less than 1m high fronting onto the street or less than 2m high elsewhere.
- any building subject to a formal order requiring demolition.

Planning officers are happy to give advice on whether planning permission is required for work within a Conservation Area. Please contact the Council's relevant development control area team.

Six weeks notice must be given to the Council before any work to a **tree** within a conservation area is carried out. The Council will then advise if it wishes to raise an objection. If a response is not received from the Council within 6 weeks of the notice being given, work may go ahead. This requirement does not apply to trees which have a diameter less than 75mm (3") when measured at a height of 1.5m (4'11") above the ground and trees already covered by a Tree Preservation Order, in which case any works will require consent.

Sometimes, landowners and others carry out works without first obtaining any necessary consent from the District Council. The Council does have certain legal powers to deal with such situations, but can only take enforcement action once it is aware of any alleged unauthorised works and after detailed investigation.

The Council has a duty to pay special attention to the character or appearance of conservation areas, in exercising its planning powers. However, these powers are limited. The principal guardians of the character and appearance of the area are the residents and business people who live and work in the conservation area and who are responsible for maintaining their individual properties.

The character of conservation areas can be altered or lost through the use of **inappropriate materials**, not only on the buildings themselves but also on the ground, roads, and along boundaries. The introduction of features, such as **street furniture, signs, lights, and hard surfacing**, can change an area's character. In the conservation area few of the buildings are isolated. Even if they are detached they are part of a wider street scene, often of buildings of similar style and size. Altering the appearance, form or size of any one building can affect not only that building, but the whole street. Unsympathetic replacement windows (particularly where the size of the openings are changed or inappropriate materials used) can alter the appearance of a building considerably. Where a number of different designs are used along a street, the rhythm and unity of its original appearance can be spoilt.

Painting or rendering over original brickwork is another alteration which can dramatically change a property's appearance and irreparably damage the street scene. As well as covering up attractive brickwork, it can obscure original architectural and brick detailing and requires regular redecoration to maintain an attractive appearance. In older buildings paint or render can also trap moisture which may cause damage to walls. Many alterations to older properties using modern materials can upset the balance within these properties and can cause more costly problems, such as cracks, damp, or rot. Care should be taken with any alteration to an older building.

Boundary treatment, especially to the street, is an essential feature of any property. Original wall boundaries, whether brick or stone, railings, fencing or hedges, should be retained wherever possible and every effort made to reinstate missing boundary treatments with a sympathetic replacement. The particular design and the materials used should take account of the character of the property and the surrounding area. There are many mature hedges and attractive walls around the Conservation Area and these are an integral part of character.

Many historic buildings are **listed** by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport because of their architectural and historic interest. The main purpose of listing a building is to ensure that care will be taken over decisions affecting its future, that alterations respect the particular character and interest of the building, and that the case for its preservation is taken fully into account in considering the merits of any development proposals.

If you live in or occupy a **listed building**, further guidance on the controls that apply is available from the relevant development control team. When a building is listed, this covers the building both internally and externally and also any object or structure fixed to it. In addition any object or structure within the grounds or garden of the building which was there before 1948 is also listed. Listed Building Consent is required for the demolition, extension or alteration of listed buildings in any way that affects its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, internally as well as externally. You must get this consent from the District Council before any work is started. You may also require planning permission for the proposed works. The Development Control Area Team will be able to advise you on this.

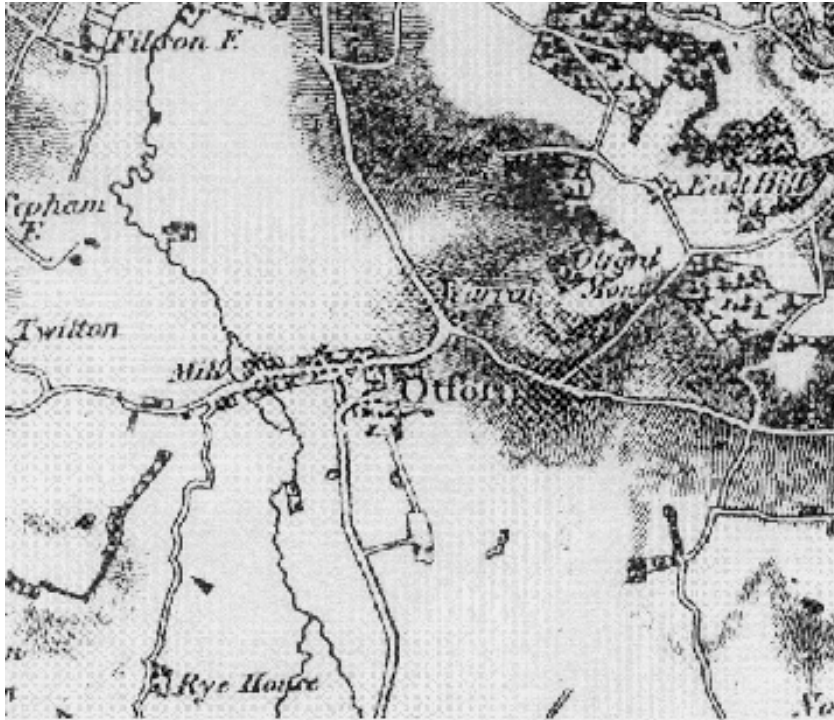
New gates, fences, walls, railings or other means of enclosure surrounding a listed building will require planning permission. Similarly most sheds, garages and greenhouses and other outbuildings will also require planning permission. The design of these should harmonise with the existing building and its setting.



16. Fine open landscape

5.0 Historical Development

Otford appears to have been the site of a settlement for as long as this part of Kent has been inhabited. The Pilgrims Way, which runs through the village from west to east is a pre-historic trackway, Neolithic tools have been discovered along the downs above Otford, and a bronze age burial was found locally at the Coombe, to the north east of the station.



18. Otford in 1817

Roman settlement of the area was well established and several sites have been identified within a 2km radius of the village. Roman bricks were found in the garden of Pickmoss, a house built for Flemish weavers in 1307 and a villa was excavated on the downs along the Pilgrims Way in 1926.



17. The High Street looking west in the 19th Century

It is possible that Otford drew its name from Otta's Ford after the founder of the settlement that was sited at a convenient crossing point on the river. It is also on the scarp slope of the North Downs, with a route from the north running along the Darent Valley. The Church was founded near to the junction of this road with the Pilgrims Way, but the river also played an important role in the trade links of the settlement, being navigable as far up as Lullingstone.



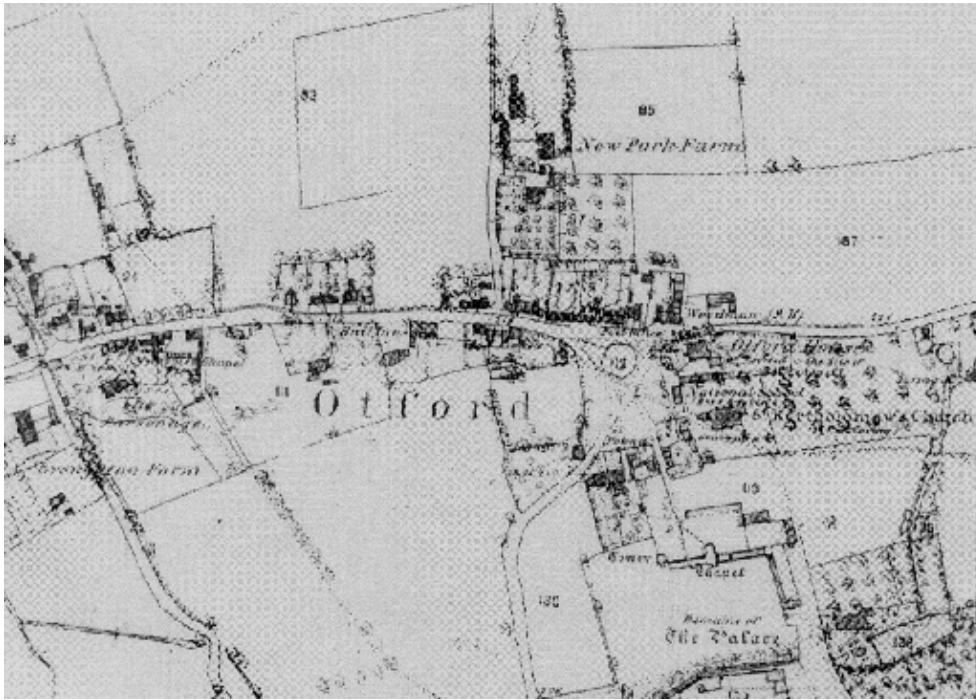
19. Pickmoss in the nineteenth century

Otford grew as the administrative centre of the early settlements in the district although Shoreham was an ecclesiastical manor. A manor was established at Otford at a date well before the Norman Conquest and its sphere of influence extended to include Sevenoaks and Penshurst in the south and Shoreham and Halstead in the north. A courthouse was built in the late 14th Century and survives today, although much altered, as the house known as The Chantry adjacent to the Church.

The area was prosperous and after the Norman Conquest the manor passed back into the control of the Church, and the Archbishop, who held the land as tenant in chief for the King in return for supplying him with knights and finance for some 700 years. There is a popular belief that William I stayed at Otford Manor to recuperate from an illness during his journey to London after the Battle of Hastings.

There is also a legend that Becket's Well was discovered by Thomas 'a Becket during his time as Archbishop in Otford.

The manor was rebuilt in medieval times on a moated site and Edward III stayed there for Christmas in 1348. After the Black Death, a deer park belonging to the Manor was established to the north of the village, known as the New Park.



20. Otford in 1869

In 1514 the Manor was partly demolished on the orders of Archbishop Warham, to make way for his new Palace, the ruins of which can be seen at the site today. The Palace was later appropriated by Henry VIII in his own inimitable way, and, together with Knole, became his base in the area. After his death, Elizabeth I declined to spend any money on the property and in 1601 it was bought by Robert Sidney of Penshurst Place. He, too, could not afford to repair the building and it gradually fell to ruin, some of the stone being appropriated for building work elsewhere.

Many of the historic buildings that survive today were built during Tudor times at the height of the village's popularity. Broughton Manor is a 16th Century house that was purchased in 1554 by the Polhill family, farmers from Otford who had moved to Chipstead Place as their affluence increased. Although they repurchased the Chipstead property in 1710 they carried out various modifications to Broughton Manor and it remained in the family for many years.

Although the influence of Otford as an administrative centre declined as the town of Sevenoaks grew in importance, some substantial village houses were built during the 17th and 18th Centuries.

The Grange at the west end of the High Street and Colet's Well at the east are two of the most significant. The Colet's Well boundary formerly included the pond at the junction of the north/south and east/west routes. The age of the pond is uncertain but its importance to the village scene is such that it is the only 'listed' pond in the country. At one time the stream from the pond ran down the surface of the High Street to the River Darent and the properties on the north side had bridges across it to access their front doors.

The pond itself remained part of the Colet's Well property until 1964 when the freehold was passed to the village in exchange for a easement allowing a new sewer

connection across the Green to serve the new housing development in Colet's Orchard.



21. Otford High Street showing the stream (this nineteenth century image is courtesy of the Otford and District Historical Society)

Prior to this change of ownership there had been some ill feeling between the village population and the owner of the pond in the 1920's after she erected some extremely unsightly iron railings designed to prevent litter being thrown into the pond. These were eventually removed in 1950, when new trees were planted and the pond was repaired and tidied. The listing of the pond confirms its importance as the focal point of the Green and as one of the best known landmarks of the village.



22. Otford Pond in 1951 (this image is courtesy of the Otford and District Historical Society)



23. 1844 Tithe Map (this copy courtesy page 55 of the Otford Village Design Statement)

Otford lay on the line of the first railway which opened in 1862 to run to Sevenoaks and terminated at Bat and Ball. Otford did not get its own station until 1882 when a proper station replaced an exchange platform that had been provided in 1874 at the junction with the Maidstone line.

Following the advent of the railway, the village boundaries began to expand in the early part of this century. The main developments were to the south of the Pilgrims Way around Rye Lane, the estates to the east of Shoreham Road and to the south and east along the Pilgrims Way towards Kemsing where there is now little separation between the two villages.

Two of the estates at the Butts and the Charne were built for staff at the Fort Halstead research centre in the 1940's and have been cited as excellent examples of public sector housing.

6.0 Views, setting and topography

Views, setting and topography are important in the Otford Conservation Area. The photo below illustrates an easily available fine view.

The Otford Conservation Area is surrounded by fine landscape and this is an integral part of its setting. Photographs immediately below courtesy page 12 of the Otford Village Design Statement.



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7.0 Trees and Natural Features

Trees contribute strongly to the special character of the Otford Conservation Area. The trees throughout the Conservation Area are integral to the special interest.

Retaining mature trees and hedges is fundamental to preserving character. Trees in conservation areas are protected and their removal will only be permitted where a clear case exists. New trees should add to the quality. Further advice can be sought from the Council's Arboriculture Officer.

There are also many very attractive and characteristic waterways, ponds and springs throughout the Conservation Area. These are of great importance and the open and green character of the Conservation Area is highlighted around these features. The setting of these features is also important. The ponds and springs around The Palace are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as a "Scheduled Monument".



8.0 Architectural Description

Otford Conservation Area is essentially the heart of a typical west Kent village. The buildings are primarily domestic, with small retail outlets and public houses interspersed amongst the residential properties. There are a number of public buildings – churches, a Lutyens designed Church Hall, a library, school and village hall (formerly the Headmaster’s House for the Village School – this building is now also the Parish Council Office), incorporating a heritage centre, there is also the Methodist Church Hall. These all add variety to the street scene. The overall architectural style is an eclectic blend of the Kentish vernacular tradition.



27. North side of High Street from pond

Most buildings have two storeys and do not vary enormously in height, so much so that the modern builders’ merchant offices in the High Street, and Colet’s Well on the Green are immediately obvious exceptions. Many of the houses do, however, make use of their attic spaces through the addition of dormer windows to provide a second floor living area.



28. Pond House and Holmesdale on the Green

Roofs are covered in Kent peg or nib tiles with the occasional use of slate and many have the traditional 'barn hip' detail at the gable ends. Brick is the most common building material but there are examples of local ragstone and timber framing.

In some instances, the original timber-framing has been encased in masonry. Pickmoss (below), the left part was refaced in the twentieth century to match the earlier timber framing on the right part.



29. Pickmoss in the High Street

Upper floors often have tile hanging matching those of the roofs, particularly on the older timber framed properties. Variation in colour, amongst the preponderance of red brick and tile, is found in the occasional use of painted or rendered masonry, and the lighter infill panels between the timber frames.

There are a couple of examples of the traditional Kentish oast, one a conversion and one a fairly recent (1948) rebuild of a war damaged Victorian building. Sadly the twin roundel oast to the north of the Conservation Area has had its roofs truncated and the cowls are missing.



30. The truncated roundels to the Oast House

Windows are generally small wooden casements, often with leaded light glazing. Sash windows are found on the grander properties such as Colet's Well, Pond House and Holmesdale.

The remains of the Archbishops' Palace stands to the south of the green, surrounded by open parkland. The polygonal brick and stone roofless three-storied tower is attached to cottages formed from the remains of the only surviving range of the 16th Century palace.



31. *The Archbishops' Palace and its grounds*

Fragments of the original ragstone walls of the palace still remain in the gardens of the modern properties in Bubblestone Road (see below).



32.

- 8.1 The church, situated on the Green, is early Norman with a shingled spire and flint rubble masonry wall. The tower is rendered and has a timber porch dated 1637.



33. The Church

Troutbeck (below), on the north west extremity of the area, is an interesting weatherboarded property of unusual design for the area, nonetheless attractive in its spacious garden setting. The importance of water to the character of the Area is also immediately apparent around this property.



34.

Listed walls throughout the Conservation Area are marked on the maps. Their prevalence is an indication of the important contribution that these historic structures make to the character of the environment. Apart from the remains of the Archbishop's Palace, there are a number of Listed walls around the Green and on the High Street which add to the ambience of the properties whose boundaries they define.

9.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Sevenoaks Road. Arriving into the Conservation Area from this direction, it is not clear that one has entered an historic village until one sees the listed Pond. This is simply a busy traffic roundabout for the vehicle and fails to accurately reflect the special quality of this structure.

This approach is very leafy and green.



35. View into Conservation Area north along Sevenoaks Road

Looking east one sees the abandoned main road. This now appears little more than a small lane with mature trees and hedging.



36. Abandoned main road

One then enters the area surrounding the pond at the junction of the A225 and the High Street. This is a pivotal point and is perhaps the most familiar landmark in the village. The mature trees and open spaces are framed by a variety of attractive and picturesque buildings - particularly the Church, Colet's Well and the Crown Inn on the north and east sides.

The open grassed areas of the Green (see below) allow the properties on the south side to be appreciated in their individual settings, whilst still presenting them as a visual group. The tranquillity of the churchyard extends into this area, and footpaths emphasise the lack of vehicular movement.



37.

The main direction of traffic then funnels the motorist up **Station Road** and on towards Dartford. The house at Colets Well (see below) and The Woodman pub opposite are landmark features which attract immediate attention.



38.

The boundary extends a short way along Leonard Avenue to include houses at 1a and 1b. The Boundary then runs east along Station Road, excluding modern development around Colets Orchard, and including the houses, Friars Pool and Moat Cottage. These two houses contribute to character.

Looking back down Station Road (west) from the Station end, the fabulous landscape setting of the Conservation Area is noted.



39. View from Station note fine setting

Around **the Green** by the Church, there are several important and historic domestic properties, in particular the Chantry (below), which has in been identified as the 14th Century Court Hall.



40. The Chantry adjacent to the churchyard

However, the existence of the heavy traffic on the A225 detracts from this first impression and leaves the pond in isolation surrounded by roads.

Walking south from the Green leads to the remains of the Archbishops' Palace, once again surrounded by open space and footpaths, and providing a refuge from the traffic on the A225. The remains of the ancient monument extend across a wide area of this southern section of the Conservation Area and beyond (see below).



41.

The Palace remains form the focal point of the surrounding open space and many fine views are easily available.

From the pond, the road leads west into the **High Street** and curves gradually through the village, leading the eye once again to vistas of the North Downs beyond (see below and overleaf). The buildings are close to the road, with narrow pavements, but glimpses between them always provide a reminder of the open countryside beyond. The properties have private gardens of varying sizes, but it is the area of open space behind them that emphasises the intimate infrastructure of this part of the High Street.



42.



43.

Pickmoss Lane, a narrow track leading south from the High Street, is a good example of a narrow vista opening out into green open space beyond.



44.

The car park and village hall on the north side are not included in the Conservation Area but provide important views across the recreation ground. The car park could be screened by planting. This would not block views if carried out with care. There are maintenance issues which would need addressing.



45. Note Car Park could be screened by native hedging – the Arboriculture Officer could advise.

The rows of terraced cottages on the south side and the larger semi-detached houses opposite are a contrast between the larger more dominant presence of the Bull and the Forge House to the east, and Pickmoss and the Horns to the west.

In the centre of this section, two properties of similar scale occupy opposite sides of the High Street. On the north side nos. 48 and 50 were built in the 18th Century and present a mellow facade behind a mature tree and boundary hedge.

On the south side the Old Parsonage (see overleaf) is set further back from the road behind a wall and 18th Century iron gates, but again is softened by mature planting.

From the library on the north side and the end of the row of terraced cottages on the south, the High Street becomes more open, with a larger proportion of detached properties set in bigger gardens.



46 Old Parsonage

The library building itself is a good example of a modern insertion into an historic environment, in complete contrast to the inappropriately scaled builders' merchant offices adjacent to it.

To the west, the impressively restored Pickmoss and the Horns Public House, also much altered from its 18th Century origins, face each other across the road.

Beyond here properties such as the Mill House, The Grange, Troutbeck and Broughton Manor (see below and page 35) are set in grounds adjacent to the river and water plays an important part in the landscape setting of these properties.



47.

The river forms a natural boundary to the Conservation Area at this point; beyond here, an area of open land separates it from newer housing estates.

A bridleway (BR32) adjacent to no. 28 High Street leads north to a series of farm buildings, some of which have been converted to residential use, and which are included in the Conservation Area. The farmhouse to Park Farm itself is an attractive

yellow brick house with a double gable to the front elevation and white painted quoins to the windows. The other properties, although having pleasant views across the recreation ground, are not particularly noteworthy.



48. Park Farmhouse

Although not Listed, the terraced cottages on the south side of the High Street (see below) are good examples of a more humble vernacular architecture, and attempts to inflict such late 20th Century details as cheap plastic replacement windows and concrete tiled roofs on them should be resisted.



49.

Apart from the aforementioned modern offices, the old Primary School building (see below) has been unsympathetically converted, using inappropriate modern windows, and is marred by the provision of a tarmacadamed car parking area between it and the road.



50.



51. Parish Council Offices – an attractive architect designed building in a prominent location

10.0 Negative Features

In contrast to those examples that enhance the character of the Conservation Area, there are some parts where the potential has not been realised, or where the buildings, details or roads positively detract from the atmosphere.

The dominance of the busy roads and the motor vehicle is the main negative feature.

Much of the existing signage including street signs are just standard units that display no special status for use in historic areas. This is poor. Also, these signs are often old and neglected.

There are good examples from elsewhere of the use of special and individual street furniture, road signage and yellow restricted parking lines in historic Conservation Areas.

52, 53 and 54 examples of untidy signage – far top right is a visitor board for The Archbishop's Palace



Another untidy feature which was noted were standard grey metal barriers. These add to the clutter and some places have actually rejected their use (note London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea – Kensington High Street).



55.



56.



57. Note inappropriate close boarded fence and graffiti. A footpath such as the one above should not have close boarded fencing as this does attract graffiti. Prickly bushes or shrubs and trees would be a preferable option.



58. The road at this pinch point is unsafe and options should be investigated.



59. Note standard signs and damaged light post on triangle.

60. Note plastic windows (immediately below) and poor design (middle & bottom).



60.



61.



62.

11.0 Key Issues

This Appraisal concludes that the most important issues which affect the special architectural and historic interest of the Otford Conservation Area are:

- Highway and car dominance and presence of many vehicles.
- Stunning landscape views and surrounding open countryside. It is noted that this open character often permeates through the Conservation Area.
- Overwhelming historic layout of roads, paths and streets, dominated by historic Palace and streams and rivers;
- Presence of low-quality replacement materials throughout the Conservation Area including plastic windows in High Street (photo 60 etc.) and plastic rainwater goods and synthetic roof tiles throughout. This is perhaps less prevalent than it has been in previous years, although landlords and house owners wanting to make spurious savings on maintenance and increases to thermal efficiency still insist on these inappropriate changes;



63. The presence of streams and rivers throughout the Conservation Area adds to character. Dominant trees are often visible against water course. The Bishop's Palace is located by running water and this makes an important contribution to character.

12.0 MANAGEMENT

Historic buildings and places are a built environment resource in which everyone has an interest. Changes are inevitable but it is important to understand and then seek to sustain or enhance areas.

Clearly in an historic area possessing many important historical and architectural qualities, the overriding policy should be to preserve and enhance those qualities and the Conservation Area. However conservation area status is not intended to imply prohibition of development, and conservation area management is therefore largely the management of change, to ensure that local distinctiveness and the special character of place are respected and responded to in a positive manner. Change is inevitable in the Otford Conservation Area. The challenge is to manage change in ways that maintain and reinforce the area's special qualities.

The built and natural heritage should be conserved and any new development should protect and enhance cherished assets of local architectural, cultural, and conservation importance and the character of the surrounding landscape. Local distinctiveness is an important part of character to be assessed both in the context of the whole conservation area, and the site and its immediate surroundings, when putting together any development proposal.



64. Traditional Wealden farmhouse. The warm colouration of locally made brick with tile-hung façade beneath a barn hip roof of hand-made Kent peg tiles. A typical Kentish yeoman's home.

Current and Future Pressures on the Area

Significant development pressure from developers and house owners/builders could lead to very detrimental changes (which appear at times very minor). Given the high degree of historic assets surviving within the conservation area any development is likely to impact on the character and appearance of the area. Very careful consideration of the fine grain and scale of the area is needed in any interventions.

A thorough understanding of even small areas of potential development is essential in order to maintain the overall quality and authenticity of the historic core. This information should be provided by any developer.

Increasing the strength of the linkages between the Conservation Area and the adjoining countryside would be positive. Low-key information boards should be reviewed and expanded which encourage pedestrians to use footpaths. Reducing the degree of intrusion of speeding vehicular traffic would also increase the attractiveness of the area.

Any new development should encourage high quality and innovative design that reflects local identity and distinctiveness and promotes healthy, safe and secure living and working environments. The design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to the immediate neighbouring buildings but the townscape and landscape of the whole area. The pattern and pedestrian scale of existing local streets and spaces should help determine the character and identity of the new development. Pedestrian linkage and flow should be carefully considered in relation to existing patterns.

The need for contextual design. All development in the conservation area, must respond to its immediate environment and context, in terms of scale, density, form, materials and detailing. Applicants for planning permission must provide a "Design and Access Statement", to justify the design decisions that have been made as the scheme was developed and to show how proposed alterations relate to their context. Where appropriate long views of and from the site must be taken into account. Proposals which fail to respect the local contextual framework or the scale, height, proportion and materials of the local area will not normally be permitted.

The following are general principles that should be adopted for all development within the conservation area:

12.1 Scale

is the combination of a building's design, height and bulk when related to its surroundings. Proposals for new or replacement buildings must show how the new structure will relate to its context.

Proposed extensions must take into account the scale of the existing building and must not dominate or overwhelm the original. Extensions should respect the form and character of the original building and its locality and use high quality materials and detailing. For listed buildings this is particularly important. Design should be of high quality, whether modern or traditional. Roof lines, roof shape, eaves details, verge details and the creation of new chimneys are important considerations. Wherever possible extensions should not dominate neighbouring properties, lead to an unacceptable loss of open space or result in the loss of historic plot boundaries.

12.2 Repairs

Repairs to existing historic structures must be undertaken sensitively to ensure that the appearance and condition of their fabric is not harmed. The regular maintenance of historic buildings can help to avoid the costly repair work required to rescue a building from dereliction. It is especially important to ensure that historic buildings are kept weather and water tight to prevent further deterioration and for this reason it is necessary to keep roofs in particular in a good state of repair.



66. Characteristic landscape

12.3 Windows

The common window types within the conservation area are single glazed white painted timber windows, in the form of vertical sliding sashes or simple casement windows.

Listed Building Consent is always required to alter the form of fenestration in listed buildings. Windows of traditional design, which are in keeping with the building they belong to and respect the historic nature of the Conservation Area, make a very important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Windows should normally be white painted.

12.4 General Improvements

Several of the buildings, would benefit from redecoration: new, more traditional windows; repairs; and improvements to their exterior.

12.5 Traffic and Streetscape

The dominance of vehicles both moving and parked is an issue in the Conservation Area. Speeding cars and large lorries do create a poor environment for pedestrians. This has already been highlighted.

A regular liaison meeting between traffic engineers and conservation officers could be scheduled. This would inform Highways of any conservation issues and provide a useful forum.



67. Attractive small timber bollard

12.6 Streetscape and Public Realm

The relationship between buildings and public realm in the Conservation Area is very important. There is a clear hierarchy of spaces informed by pedestrian routes, the character of the street, that is to say the width of the road, its surfacing material, positions of buildings relative to the carriageway and footway where these exist, and the functions and uses of the buildings in the town centre.

12.7 Streetscape Design Principles

Best practice principles to be adopted as part of the design process for streetscape works within the conservation area include the following:



68. Busy street scene



69. This attractive 1930s finger post sign is appropriate in this historic area and could be reinstated if budgets permit. This could be investigated with Kent Highways (this image is courtesy of the Otford and District Historical Society)

12.8 Surface Materials

Surface materials form the foreground of the street scene. Quality in the design and construction of footways and street surfaces is vital to the character of the area:

- Relate ground surfaces to the local context.
- Keep paving simple and avoid discordant colours.
- Maintain and restore historic paving and detail such as kerbs and gulleys.

12.9 Street furniture

The finest historic streetscapes often have the minimum amount of street furniture sited carefully to reinforce an underlying sense of visual order:

- Retain historic street furniture which reinforces local character; identify and remove superfluous or redundant items.
- Minimise signage and locate signs on existing bollards, lamp posts or walls and buildings at the back edge of the pavement.
- Use a unifying dark colour for all street furniture items.
- Reduce guard rails to a minimum and use simple designs that relate to local character
- Avoid standardised lighting and choose the design and light source most appropriate for the area.



*70. note
attractive small
wooden bollards
outside this
historic building*

12.10 Traffic management

- If traffic calming measures are required, they should be fitted sensitively into the street-scene as though they were part of the original character of the area.
- Adopt a minimalist approach. Any works should involve minimal visual interference with the established streetscape and respect the historic street layout.
- Limit road markings to those essential for highway safety.

12.11 Sustainable design

To encourage sustainable development, all new buildings should use products with a low environmental impact, including the use of locally sourced materials from sustainable resources. Where appropriate in a conservation area, new buildings should also include provisions for waste reduction, the re-use of materials and should be energy efficient, including the use of renewable energy systems.

Energy efficiency for the existing buildings within the conservation area could be improved by such measures as loft insulation and the provision of secondary glazing, subject to the views of the Council's conservation and building control officers.

The Council will seek to ensure that existing local facilities are retained and their viability maintained by facilitating further environmental improvements and high quality new development.



71. The evocative Mill Stream

12.12 Pride and Identity

This area is a quintessential part of the traditional image of rural England and a vital part of the English rural economy. The Otford Conservation Area faces a wide range of challenges including the economic, social and physical impact, the adverse effects of traffic on the area and erosion of environmental quality. In common with surrounding countryside, the Conservation Area will always change. This area's long history and rich historic fabric are assets which, if wisely used, can help to produce an agreeable and interesting built environment, economic prosperity and a sense of pride and identity.



72. Attractive historic wall in Pickmoss Lane

12.13 Article 4 (2) Directions

Within Conservation Areas, there are certain permitted development rights which can be withdrawn following a fairly straightforward procedure.

It is recommended that an article 4 (2) direction is implemented in Otford to prevent further erosion of the historic character.

If this is agreed, a further detailed report on the preparation of such a direction would need to be prepared and considered.

You may normally carry out certain minor works without the need for a planning application to the Local Authority. These are called permitted development, and the rights relating to them are defined in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

Under Article 4 of the Order, a Local Authority may make directions to remove such rights if it feels that such development would be harmful to the character of an area. Where an Article 4 (2) direction is in force, you must get planning permission to undertake the works that it covers.

Planning consent had always been needed for any work in conservation areas involving “demolition”. Demolition had been interpreted nationally as including minor works such as removing traditional windows and replacing them with upvc. Local authorities were therefore able to use this need for consent to prevent such harmful development in conservation areas.

However in 1997 the House of Lords, in the Shimizu case, limited the legal definition of demolition to quite major works of destruction, so removing local authority control over lesser developments.

This is perhaps particularly relevant in Otford.



73. Plastic windows such as those above would require planning permission if an article 4 (2) direction applied.

13.0 Acknowledgements

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This Appraisal and Management Plan was prepared by Quatrefoil Consulting Ltd.

14.0 Bibliography

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15.0 English Heritage guidance - Unlisted buildings in a conservation area

When considering the contribution made by unlisted buildings to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area, the following questions might be asked:

- Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?
- Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of the buildings in the conservation area?
- Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?
- Does it individually, or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?
- Does it have significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces, including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?
- Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?
- If a structure associated with a designed landscape within the conservation area, such as a significant wall, terracing or a minor garden building, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design?

In English Heritage's view, any one of these characteristics could provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, provided that its historic form and values have not been seriously eroded by unsympathetic alteration.

Guidance on conservation area appraisals – August 2005

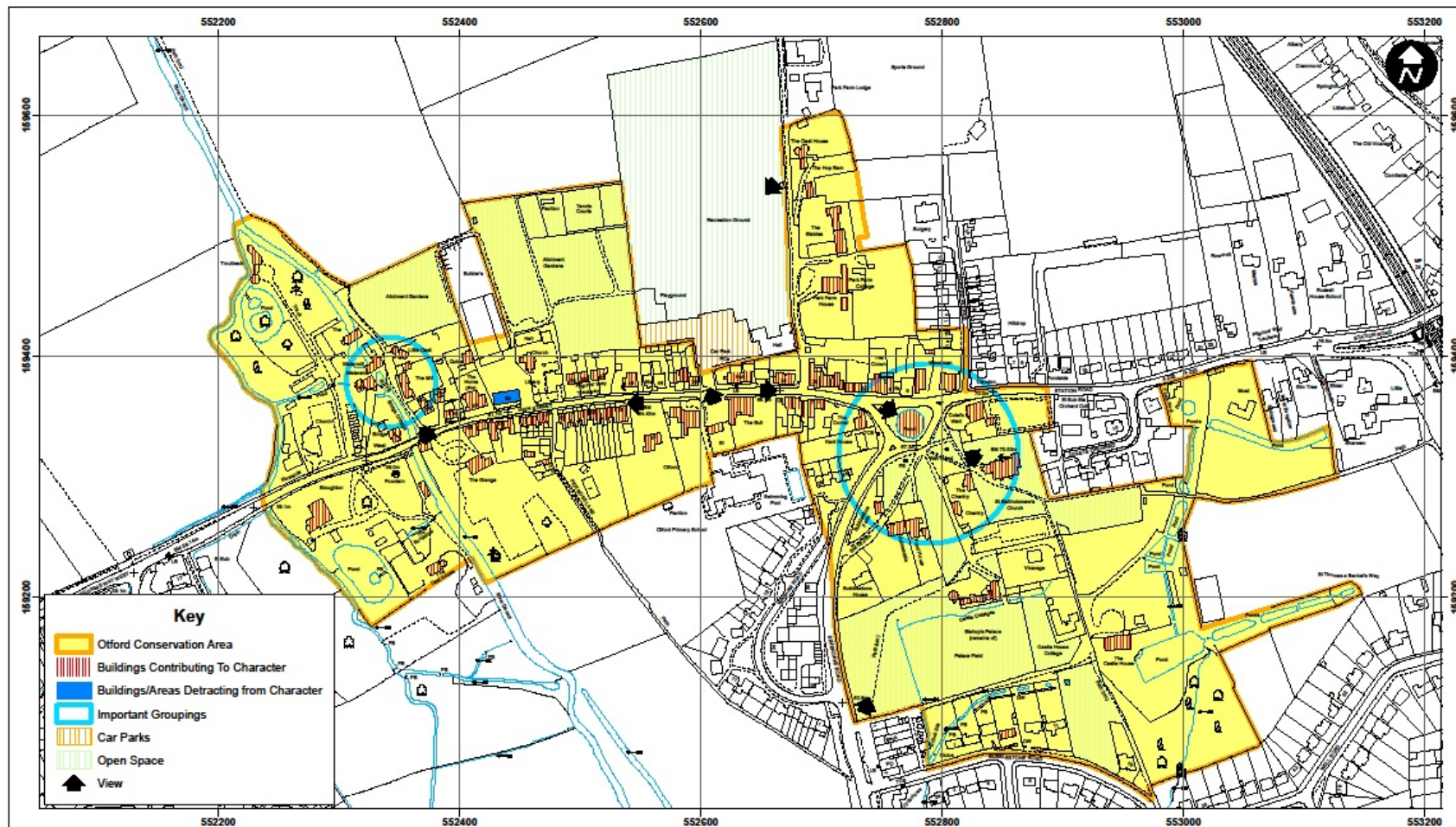


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Sevenoaks District Council, 10/09/2009.

Map 4
Otford
Conservation Area
Designations

Scale 1:3,000
Date 10/09/2009
Drawn By FMcG

Produced by the Information Systems Team, Sevenoaks District Council



Key

- Otford Conservation Area
- Buildings Contributing To Character
- Buildings/Areas Detracting from Character
- Important Groupings
- Car Parks
- Open Space
- View



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Sevenoaks District Council, 100014028, 2005.

Map 5
Otford
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

Scale 1:3,000
Date 10/09/2009
Drawn By FMcG

Produced by the Information Systems Team, Sevenoaks District Council