

Shoreham Mill Lane

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



December 2003

Shoreham Mill Lane

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 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 Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 recognises that there are particular areas of 'architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and charges planning authorities with a duty to designate any such locations within their jurisdiction as Conservation Areas. This designation then empowers the local authority to pay particular attention to planning considerations and development within them and gives greater control over such matters as demolitions, landscaping and trees, and the display of advertisements.

Designation also raises the awareness of local residents and businesses to the quality of their surroundings and is intended to encourage an active interest in the care and maintenance of their properties and surrounding land, thereby fostering a sense of communal pride.

It has been recognised that designation, because of the responsibilities and obligations it places on both owners and the local authority, should only be imposed on areas that are demonstrably suitable. Where the criteria have been met, the area should then benefit from the additional control and protection that designation confers, and from official recognition of the special architectural and historic character of the locality.

The management of our national cultural and historic inheritance is of paramount importance and Conservation Areas are a vital 'grass roots' starting point from which to safeguard the continuing care of our environment.

1.2 Purpose of Appraisals

As their number grows, it has become even more important for local authorities to include a well-defined and considered policy for their designated Conservation Areas in their Local Plans.

Planning pressures are such that any designation is likely to be subjected to detailed scrutiny and must be readily and demonstrably defensible against adverse criticism. The criteria for designation should be kept as uniform as possible and the public should be kept fully aware of the reasons for any proposed changes in their area.

The 1990 Act charges local authorities with the responsibility of undertaking a review of their Conservation Areas from time to time, both to consider the possibility of revising their extent, and to identify any past changes or future pressures which may affect the original reasons for their designation.

English Heritage published an advisory leaflet on the subject in March 1997, which outlines the preferred approach to these appraisals and gives examples of the type of content that it would be useful to include.

The appraisals should define the key elements that together give the area its character, and objectively analyse how they interact to enhance their individual impact.

They can then provide suggestions for future policies and improvements based on a clear understanding of the special architectural and historic qualities that highlight the area and give it its local distinctiveness.

These appraisals can also be used as a valuable means by which the impact of planning policies and the implementation of enhancement measures can be assessed.

1.3 Local Conservation Area Policies

The Sevenoaks District Local Plan (Adopted March 2000) lists the following policies which relate to conservation areas:

EN21 In the designation and review of Conservation Areas the Local Planning Authority will assess all the following matters:

- 1) **The special architectural or historic interest of the area.**
- 2) **The cohesive character and integrity of the area including spaces round buildings their settings and trees.**
- 3) **The desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.**
- 4) **The pressures for change which may encourage piecemeal development which would threaten the character of the area.**
- 5) **The need to promote economic prosperity, through schemes of environmental enhancement, to overcome vacancy, neglect, decay or dereliction.**

EN22 Proposals to demolish buildings which contribute to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted in the absence of overriding justification. Preference will be given to conversion and/or refurbishment as opposed to outright demolition of a building. Proposals to demolish extensions to original buildings or outbuildings will be judged on their contribution to the overall character of the area.

EN23 Proposals for development or redevelopment within or affecting Conservation Areas should be of positive architectural benefit by paying special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area and of its setting. The design of new buildings and alterations to existing buildings should respect local character, whilst the treatment of external spaces including hard and soft landscaping, boundary walls, street furniture and signs should be compatible with and enhance the appearance of the area.

Buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area are identified on the character appraisal plan at the end of this document . English Heritage national guidance on conservation areas sets out the criteria used to identify these buildings.

The Sevenoaks District Local Plan states that the Local Planning Authority will undertake detailed assessments of designated Conservation Areas and will prepare proposals for their preservation. Development proposals will be judged against their overall contribution to the enhancement of the character and appearance of the area as set out in any scheme which may have been prepared. This assessment and the detailed analysis of the area contained in the report are intended to fulfil this commitment and provide the background for enhancement schemes.

1.4 Other Local Plan Policies

The Local Plan also identifies specific policies designed to protect the natural environment and historic buildings.

Policy EN6 places restrictions on development within the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and EN7 gives priority to the enhancement of natural beauty, landscape, open space, geographical features and wildlife over other planning considerations within the North Downs and Greensand Ridge Special Landscape Areas. Other Areas of Local Landscape Importance where development may be restricted are noted in policy EN8.

Landscape features and wildlife habitats beyond the confines of the urban areas, towns and villages are also protected by policy EN11.

Important areas of greenspace within the built confines are safeguarded under policy EN9 and EN10 protects important areas of urban fringe.

Listed building policy is defined in sections EN18 and EN19 and the reuse rather than the demolition of unlisted buildings of local interest is promoted by policy EN20.

Trees over a certain size are automatically protected within Conservation Areas, with any proposed work to them having to be notified to the local authority in writing six weeks in advance.

Transport strategy for the District is summarised by the following section.

T1. A co-ordinated transport strategy will be implemented including:

- 1) Encouragement of the provision of appropriate public transport services and facilities.**
- 2) Use of traffic management to achieve a safer and more efficient use of existing roads.**
- 3) An integrated car parking strategy involving residents' parking, local enforcement and consideration of the need for park and ride facilities.**
- 4) New highway construction and improvements to the existing network.**
- 5) Encouragement of walking and cycling.**

2.00 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 General Description

Shoreham Mill Lane Conservation Area consists of 1.7 hectares of land and 8 listed buildings. It was designated in 1972 and has not been extended since. The Area encloses all properties on the north and south of Mill Lane and The Crown public House on the corner of Crown Road and the High Street.

Shoreham lies within the Green Belt and also within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Landscape Area.

Apart from the Mill House, the most significant building in terms of industry in this small Conservation Area is Oxbourne Farm House. Mill Lane Cottages and Oxbourne Cottages on the south side of Mill Lane, appear to be more related in character to agriculture than to the Mill. Both are small terraces of modest properties, with generous spaces between the groups.

Space between buildings or groups of buildings is an important feature of the Conservation Area. Between Mill Lane Cottages and Oxbourne Cottages, gardens stretch alongside the road behind a low wall, allowing long views to the backs of the Crown Road properties.

Queen Anne House, a large modern property in classical style occupies the large plot between Mill Lane cottages and the Mill. On the north side of the Lane another modern house, Little Oxbourne, occupies land to the east of the farmhouse, but from here to the river is empty land. In the north west corner of the Conservation Area, Oxbourne House faces onto the High Street.

From the eastern end of Mill Lane, the Darent Valley walk sets off to the north-east and public footpaths extend to the south to follow the River Darent back to Church Street and south-east across the water meadows. The river and the remaining Mill buildings are important features of the Conservation Area.

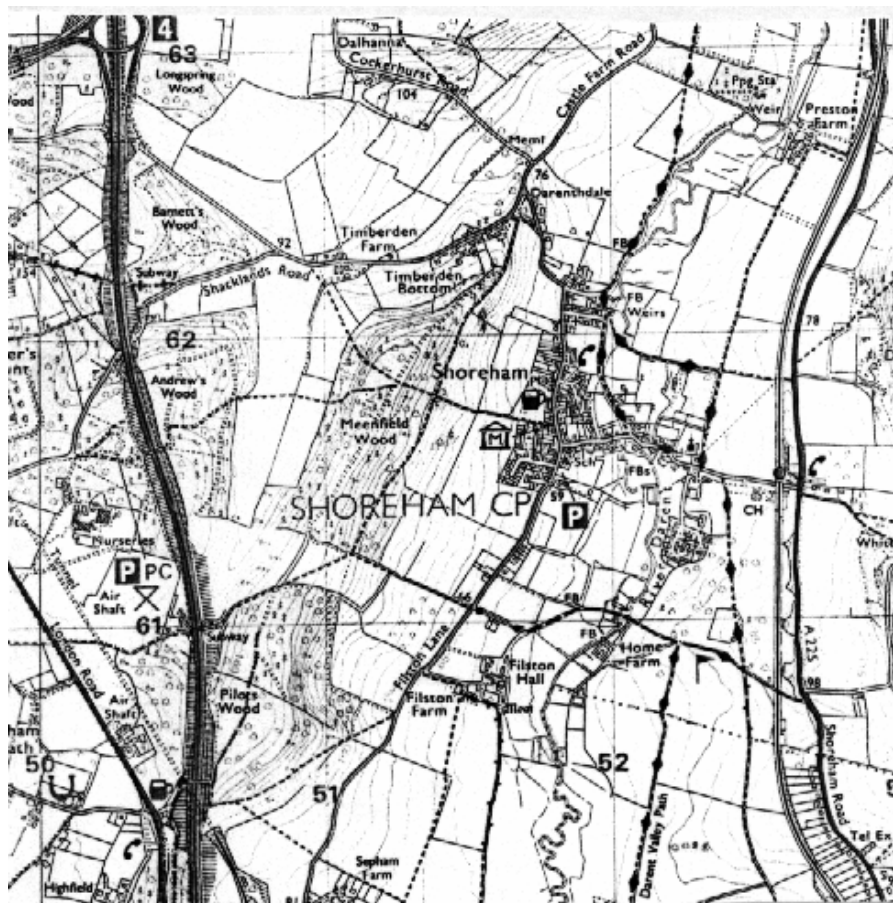
2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Shoreham Mill Lane lies half a mile to the west of the A225, between Otford and Eynsford, on the west side of the River Darent. Road access from the Darenth Valley road passes through Shoreham Church Street and High Street; Mill Lane is at the northern extremity of the village and accessed from the High Street.

The M25 passes the village a mile to the west, and the M26 two miles to the south; the nearest accessible junction to either is a distance of some 4 miles. Shoreham is thus within relatively easy reach of the motorway network, while its separation from the main road ensures that through-traffic is limited.

Shoreham has the benefit of a railway connection to London and Ashford. The station lies on the A225 and is within walking distance of the village. A bus service operates from Mill Lane and through the village to Sevenoaks.

The nearest main town is Sevenoaks, five miles to the south, accessed via the A225. The outer fringes of London, at Bromley and Orpington, are some ten miles away by road, accessible from the A20 via the A225.



Map 1 Geographical location of Shoreham Mill Lane Conservation Area

2.3 Historical Development

Shoreham Mill House is an 18th Century building, the last of a succession of structures built on this spot beginning, it is believed, in Anglo Saxon times. The Godstone Spring – on the west bank of the river – has ancient Druidic associations. The remains of a Roman Bath house were discovered close to the site of the Mill in the 1980s. This, together with the already well-known Roman Villa remains at Lullingstone, suggest a significant Roman settlement on the banks of a navigable river.

From the 5th Century until the mid-20th Century the village of Shoreham and its surrounding hills were shaped by and dependant upon agriculture; fruit and hops being particularly important crops. A corn-grinding mill in the vicinity of the present structure was noted in the Domesday survey of 1086, and was developed into a paper mill in the 1690s and remained in operation until 1926. Throughout its long history, whether grinding corn for the local population or producing paper for a wider market, the mill would have been a continual source of employment for local people.

The 19th Century millworkers' cottages in Crown Road, adjacent to the conservation area, effectively doubled the size of this outlying enclave to the village, and show the importance of the paper industry in Victorian times. The Crown Inn, Oxbourne Farm House, Mill Lane Cottages and the Mill House are all listed grade II. Oxbourne Cottages are not listed but are an important feature at the entrance to Mill Lane.

Since the demise of the Mill in 1926 and the loss of most of its buildings, the historical associations of this conservation area with its industry are not so readily apparent. It is likely that the houses in Mill Lane and Crown Road are now occupied by people engaged in work outside the village. These former mill workers houses and other buildings are now the principal memory of an industrial heritage going back to the Domesday Survey. The Victorian paper mill was a substantial building straddling the river at the end of Mill Lane; an engine house also existed. The original mill house is now a private residence. Vestiges of the industrial history of the area add extra interest to the character of this conservation area. Historically the river Darent was always important for paper making due to the clean water and proximity to London. At South Darenth the last paper mill on the river Darent closed in 2003.



Late 19th Century map

2.4 Architectural Description

The small number of buildings within this conservation area exhibit a wide range of Kentish vernacular styles.

Oxbourne Farm House is a plain, basically rectangular two-storey building with vertical tile hanging over a red brick lower storey and under a Kent peg tiled roof. The windows are small, timber casements. The low front boundary wall of matching red bricks has a hogsback brick coping.



Fig. 1 Oxbourne Farm House

The Mill House is clad in white painted weatherboarding interspersed with white painted brickwork. The Kent peg tiled roofs contain some gable dormer windows; elsewhere, windows are a mixture of casements and vertical sashes. The enclosure to the house is shielded by fences and planting to the north and west.



Fig. 2 Mill House in Early 20th Century



Fig. 3 Mill House now

The 17th Century Crown public house has a timber framed upper floor over cream painted brickwork. The exposed timbers and some window frames are painted black. The peg-tiled roof extends into a long catslide over the northern end of the building. A large modern flat-roofed porch extension to the south elevation forms the main entrance.



Fig. 4 High Street rear of The Crown



Fig 5 The Crown Public House

1 and 2 Mill Lane Cottages are set under a single Kent peg tiled roof, into which large flat-roofed dormers have been inserted. The upper storeys are timber-framed, the lower storeys brick, either painted or rendered and painted white. In the front elevation of No.1 the framing of a former oak-mullioned window has been exposed. No.2 has had a modern metal window installed on the ground floor façade.



Fig 6 Mill Lane Cottages



Fig. 7 Mill Lane Cottages ; historic photo

3-5 Mill Lane Cottages are similarly contained under a single tiled roof, and are composed of timber framed first floors over brick ground floor. The façades of the cottages have been altered over time, masking their basic historic uniformity. Most of the windows have been replaced and number 5 has been extended to the west with a two-storey brick extension.



Fig. 8 3-5 Mill Lane Cottages

Oxbourne Cottages present their 'backs' to the road, in the form of a two-storey height wall composed of large random flintwork set within brick banding and quoins, all under a single slate-covered roof. The windows are uniformly matching timber sashes. At their eastern end the cottages descend to one storey, and the flint and brickwork continues as a low boundary wall to the gardens between here and Mill Lane Cottages.



Fig. 9 Mill Lane with Oxbourne Cottages on the right

3.00 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

The Mill Lane Conservation Area, while covering a small area and consisting in essence of a single road, is characterised by contrasts between open spaces and enclosure.

The western end of Mill Lane is approached from the High Street which is undeveloped on its west side at this point, allowing a view of gently sloping grazing land with tree-lined hills beyond.

Oxbourne Cottages to the south and Oxbourne House to the north form the boundaries to the top of Mill Lane. Oxbourne Cottages in particular provide a sense of enclosure as their northern wall sweeps round to dictate the turning into the road. Oxbourne Farm House and Little Oxbourne on the north side of Mill Lane are set back behind hedges and walls which continue the line of the road, while opposite a large open space between Oxbourne Cottages and Mill Lane Cottages offers a long view of the backs of the Crown Road properties, interrupted only by two small single garages.



Fig. 10 Looking from Mill Lane to High Street



Fig. 11 Boundary treatments in Mill Lane

East of Little Oxbourne, the north side of Mill Lane is undeveloped, but the land is bounded by an embankment which effectively continues the sense of enclosure while suggesting open country beyond. Mill Lane Cottages and the well-planted boundaries of Queen Anne House opposite complete the containment of the Lane, and the latter in particular signals the presence of the river as the roadway descends and peters out at the wooded enclosure of Mill House.



Fig. 12 Boundary treatments in Mill Lane

Footpath access leads around Mill House to the eastern extremity of the Conservation Area, from where the wider view opens out to the water meadows with distant hills beyond.



Fig. 13 View across the water meadows showing the rural setting of the conservation area

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

Due to the hedged or treed boundaries of the larger properties in Mill Lane, which effectively hide the buildings from the road, it is the two groups of modest cottages on the south side and the large open space between them that are the most striking elements that have most impact on the architectural character of the Conservation Area.



Fig. 14 View down Mill Lane towards water meadows

While the small gardens between the cottages reinforce the rural character of the lane, the view across the gardens to the backs of the Crown Road properties is a distraction from the isolated character that otherwise prevails. Some tree screening in the middle distance might improve this view without interfering with the sense of space.

Individual modifications to the front elevations of 3, 4 and 5 Mill Lane Cottages unfortunately have more impact than they would elsewhere in a Conservation Area, owing to the prominence of this terrace in the street.

4.00 FUTURE TRENDS

4.1 Current and Future Pressures on the Area

Access to public footpaths and the Darenth Valley Walk from Mill Lane ensures that this Conservation Area is busy at certain times of the year and there is likely to be some pressure from parking in the area.

The demise of the mill and reduction in agricultural employment means that the present occupants of the houses are not generally employed locally and there is a need to adapt properties to contemporary needs. Properties have been extended and altered in order to provide the facilities required for modern living, including replacement doors and windows and accommodation for cars.

The need to find residential development sites in this popular region within easy reach of London puts villages 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 outlying parts of the village and open countryside beyond, may come under pressure in future years in response to any need for new housing in the south east, particularly where development is already encroaching into agricultural land. This, however, is largely outside the present conservation area and will be subject to the political climate of the day.

4.2 Potential for Enhancement

Open land between Oxbourne and Mill Lane Cottages has the potential for improvement so that it becomes a more positive enhancement to the character of the conservation area. Screening the rear view of Crown Road from Mill Lane with planting could improve the appearance of the area.

4.3 Future Policy Recommendations

The present Eastern and Western boundaries of the Conservation Area stop short of the open views at either end of Mill Lane. The views themselves are a feature of the Conservation Area and contribute largely to its nature as a small, self-contained hamlet. It is suggested that the Conservation Area boundaries could be extended to include these open areas, in order to maintain these spaces as areas influencing the setting, character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



Fig. 15 View down Mill Lane toward High Street

While recognising the particularly rural character of Mill Lane and its contrast with the adjacent Crown Road, there nevertheless appears to be some historic justification for including Crown Road within the Conservation Area, since the majority of the terraced houses were built to serve the Mill. Despite many alterations to individual properties, sufficient of the original features remain to give an overall impression of the nature and purpose of these houses. Riverdale Terrace at the east end of Crown Road, which runs parallel to the river, retains the original pattern for timber sash windows on its river frontage.



Fig. 16 View of Crown Road



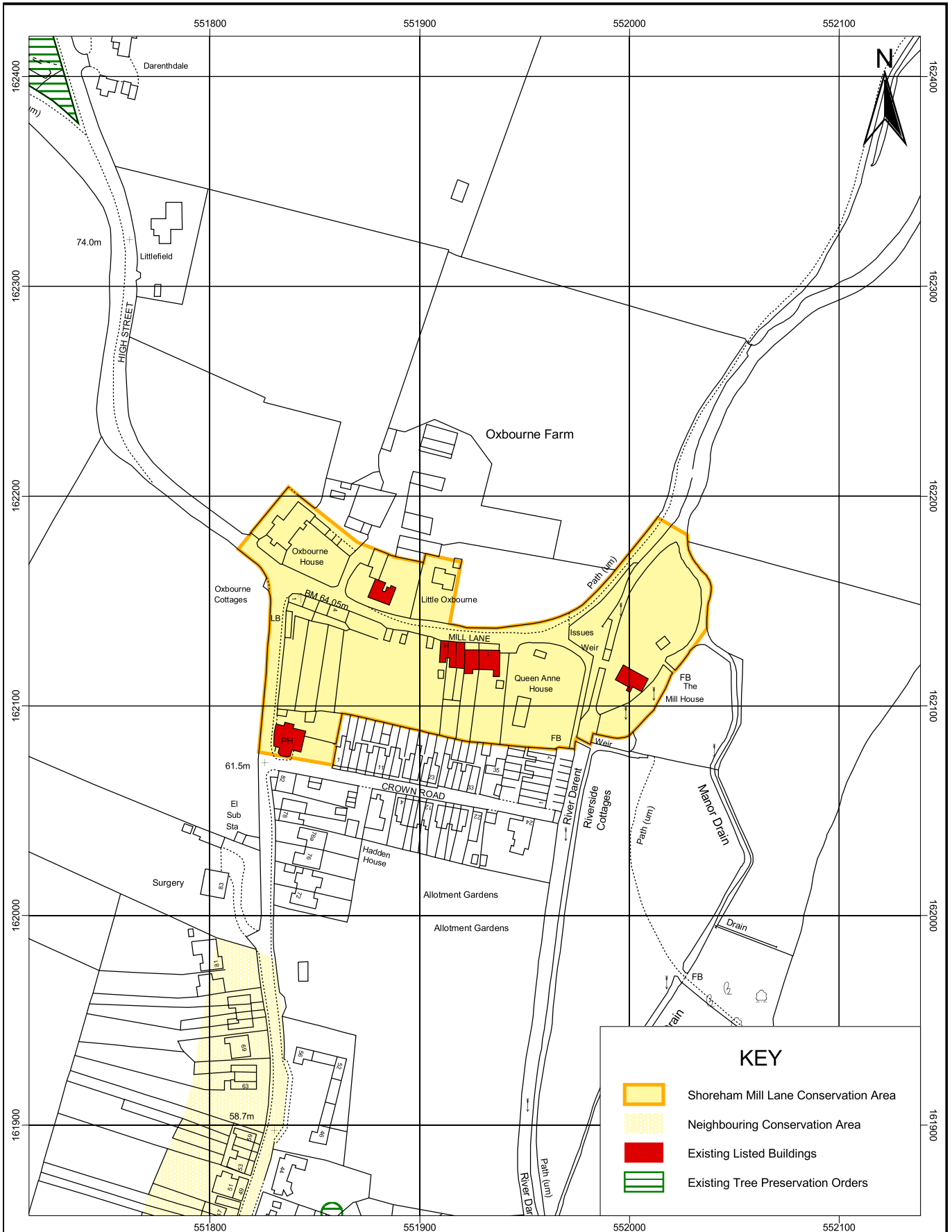
Fig 17 Riverdale Terrace

Acknowledgements

The draft document was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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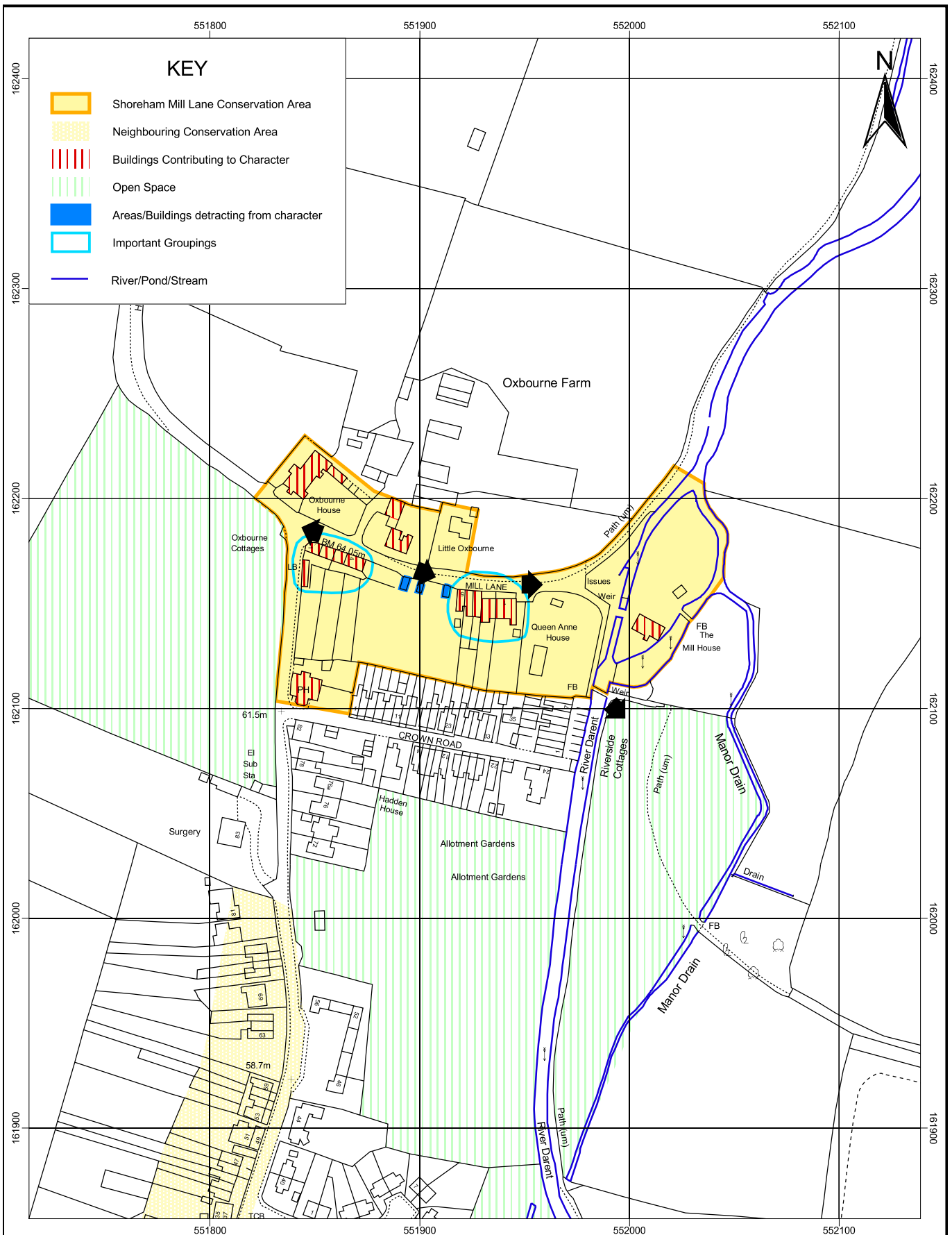


**Map 2
Shoreham Mill Lane
Conservation Area**

Designations

Scale	1:2500
Date	November 2002
Drawn By	SNM

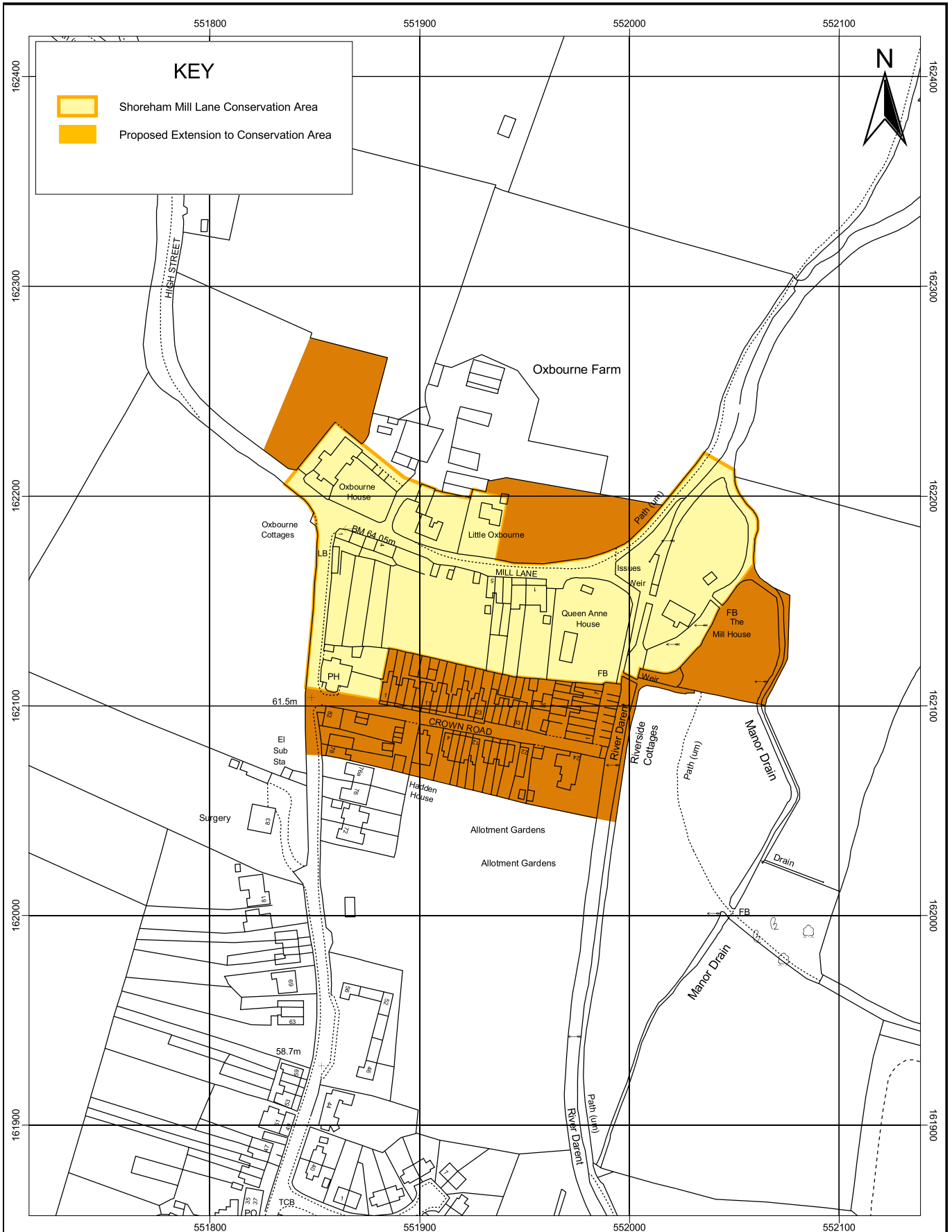
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MAP 3
Shoreham Mill Lane
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

Scale	1:2500
Date	November 2002
Drawn By	SNM

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MAP 3
Shoreham Mill Lane
Conservation Area

Recommendations For
Future Policy Changes

Scale	1:2500
Date	November 2002
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