

# South Darent

## Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



PLANNING GUIDANCE 2010





# South Darent

## 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 June 2010 and adopted as Informal Planning Guidance.

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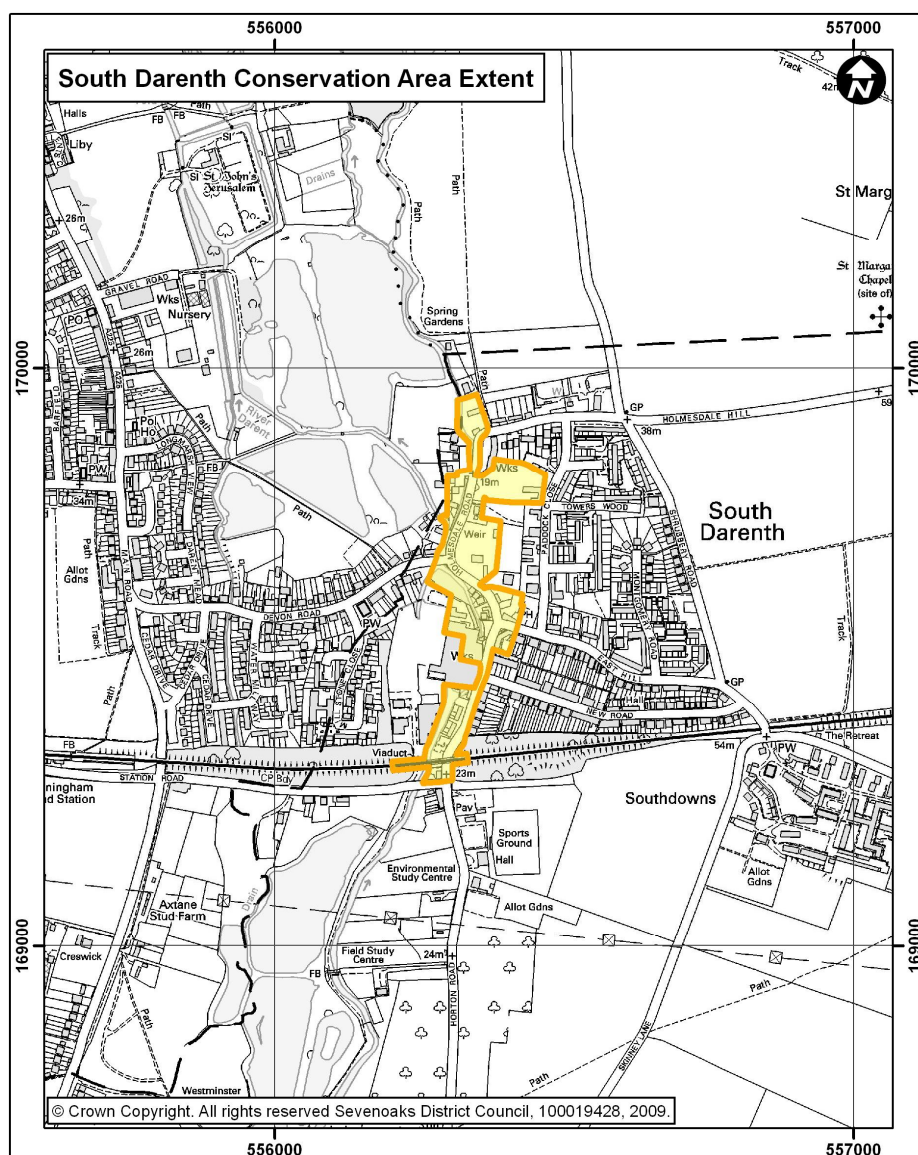
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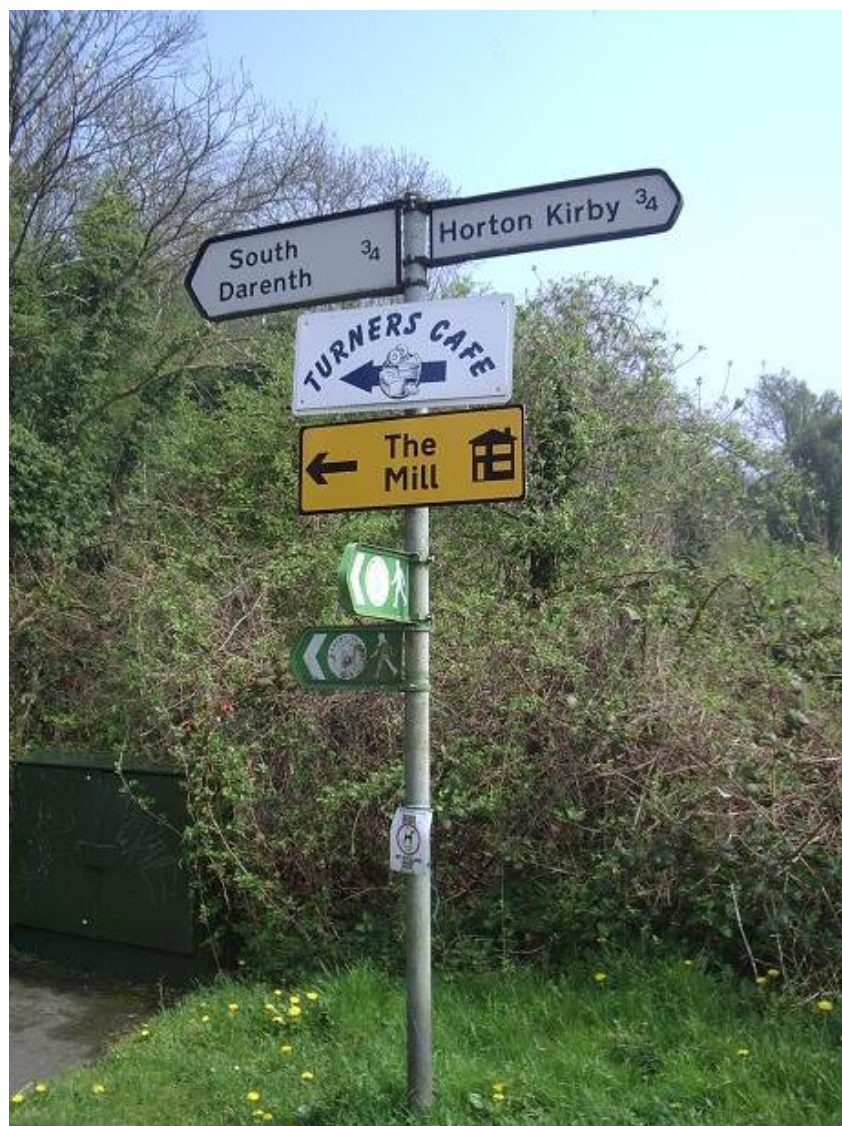
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map 1 Location



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION



***4. This three story brick building with slated roof at Mallys Place Bridge was built as a replacement for the timber clad flour mill, which was destroyed by fire in 1879. As a result of the industrial revolution various modifications were carried out in 1894 to improve productivity. It remained in use as a flour mill until the early 20th Century and in 1993 was converted into a private residence.***

This document replaces the South Darenth Conservation Area Appraisal which was produced in December 2003 by Sevenoaks District Council in collaboration with the Horton Kirby and South Darenth Parish 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 been assessed for possible extension, however, it has been decided that extension is not necessary.

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. Rural scene**

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. Field behind Victory Terrace, Roman Villa Road*

## **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 South Darenth 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 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.

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:**

- Review the boundaries of the conservation area and define the key characteristics and features which contribute to its special character or appearance and should be preserved or enhanced;
- 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 of the conservation area 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, the plan is a material consideration in the determination of development proposals.



**7. Train on the Viaduct**





**8. The railway viaduct, originally built in 1864 was constructed using yellow stock bricks and has been repaired using inappropriate red bricks. Whilst it is visually separate from the mill it is still an important part of this industrial grouping and makes a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area and together with the mill stack is a dominant feature of South Darenth.**

## **2.0 Location and Geographical Context**

South Darenth lies between Horton Kirby to the south and Dartford to the north west, with the Sevenoaks to Dartford A225 to the west and the B260 to the east.

The village itself is served by a network of minor country roads which converge in the centre of the Conservation Area.

The minor roads that run westwards out of the village are directly linked to the A225, which provides access to the M20 serving the east, the A2 Dover to London route and the A20 Ashford to London route via the M25 at the Swanley Interchange.

The nearest railway station is Farningham Road just west of the A225, which is on the main line between London /Medway and Dover.

The village is close to Dartford, and is also ideally situated for the major retail centres of Thurrock, Lakeside and Bluewater; the latter being the closest.





**9. Holmesdale Road**

### **3.0 GUIDANCE AND POLICIES**

#### **3.1 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 and the related Planning Practice Guide. Further advice about conservation areas including the production of management proposals, has been produced by English Heritage (2006).

#### **3.2 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.



### 3.3 Local Policies



*10. Good outbuilding at Giffords*

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.**





***11. Riverside Cottages - Newer buildings that are both contained within the area and abut it, have historic detailing such as exposed timberwork to the gables and tile hanging to the first floor, as well as utilising materials of similar colour and texture to the older buildings.***



### **3.4 Other Local Plan Policies**

The Local Plan also identifies specific policies designed to protect the important green space, for example EN 9.

### **3.5 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. These criteria can be viewed at the end of this report.

### **3.6 Conservation and Enhancement.**

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 states 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 are 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 more 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.

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 which are additional to





**12. View looking south, Holmesdale Road**

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.

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.

### **3.7 Houses and their alteration**

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 the Council at an early stage. Planning permission is likely to be required for the erection of any building or structure within the garden of the house, for example, a workshop, pavilion, greenhouse and so on.

Cladding of the exterior of a residential property with stone, artificial stone, timber, render, plastic 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 15metres 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 of Sevenoaks District Council.

### **3.8 Commercial premises and flats.**

Any extension or alteration to 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.

### **3.9 Demolition**

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 115 cubic metres or any substantial part of such building.
- any wall of fence (or substantial part) less than 1m high fronting onto the street or less than 2metres 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.

### **3.10 Trees**

Six weeks written 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 six 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 1.5metres (4'11") above the ground and trees already covered by a Tree Preservation Order, in which case any works will require consent.

### **3.11 Unauthorised Works and development**

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.



### **3.12 Maintenance and Repairs**

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.

### **3.13 Boundary treatments**

Boundary treatment, especially to the street, is an essential feature of any property. Original boundaries, whether a brick or ragstone wall, 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.

### **3.14 Listed Buildings**

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 and any extensions whether modern or not. 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.



**13. South Darenth from fields**



## 4.0 General Description

South Darenth Conservation Area (CA) covers some 5.2 hectares and contains six Listed Buildings. It was designated in 1992 and remains unchanged.

The Boundary was thoroughly reviewed and checked in 2009 and it was considered that no changes were necessary. An area in the north, around Victory Terrace and Holmesdale Cottages, of the CA was suggested for inclusion in 2003, however, it was felt that the houses in this area had been too altered to warrant inclusion. No other area was felt worthy of inclusion in the South Darenth CA. The area has reached a maturity which is appropriate and does not require review or addition.

The countryside to the east and south is designated as Green Belt and forms part of an Area of Local Landscape Importance.

The Conservation Area is centred around the River Darent and the paper making industry that historically utilised this natural resource.

To the north of the village lies the border between Sevenoaks District and Dartford Borough. To the west the village development continues beyond the boundary of Sevenoaks and falls under the jurisdiction of Dartford Council. As such, the land to the north and west is not covered by the Local Plan.

The Conservation Area is a fascinating mix of small rural houses and lanes and semi-industrial urban buildings.



**14. Running Blue – this modern house incorporates details prevalent throughout the Conservation Area, such as clay peg tiles and timber framing**



## 5.0 Historical Development and archaeological significance

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

During the Roman period major farming units were built throughout the valley and the River Darent was used as a means of transportation.

Evidence of Saxon habitation in South Darenth is equally plentiful. After the Norman Conquest the Domesday Book records the village of Hortune as being divided into four manors, one of which was the hamlet of South Darenth.

By the late 1700s South Darenth consisted of only a few buildings – four scattered farms, two flour mills and a blacksmith's forge. At one time a Chapel was sited opposite the Jolly Miller.

Gifford's and The Towers (Cresy's house) were built during the early part of the 19th Century, but it was the extent of development in the Victorian period that had a profound effect on South Darenth.

The expansion of the paper mills in the 1870s and 1880s, and the coming of the railway in 1864, transformed the village. New shops began to open including a grocers, butchers, post office and hardware shop selling hardboard, paints and decorating materials.

The 1987 storm caused havoc in the Horton Kirby Paper Mill Industrial Estate, resulting in the destruction of at least two business premises. The three-storied West Mill was reduced to rubble and the falling roof tumbled into nearby buildings. The site of West Mill has now been developed.

In 1988/89 British Rail announced that the Channel Tunnel Rail Link would be built alongside the present rail track which passes through South Darenth. This had a profound effect on the community, with large numbers of properties being sold to British Rail, leaving others affected by planning blight. It was not until the end of 1991 that British Rail's plan was rejected, and gradually the properties bought by British Rail have (and are) returning to private ownership.



**15. Store opposite the Jolly Millers c 1920**

additional archaeological information is available from Sevenoaks District Council and the Historical Environment Record maintained and updated by Kent County Council.



## 6.0 Views, setting and topography

Views, setting and topography are crucially important in the South Darenth Conservation Area. The photograph below illustrates an easily available fine view and shows the prominence and distinction that the spectacular architectural features of the nineteenth century have on the setting of the Conservation Area.

The photographs below this to the left and right illustrate a close up view of the dramatic railway viaduct (left image 16) and the visual dominance of the River Darent (image 17). The photograph bottom right illustrates an attractive gap leading to open land in the heart of the Conservation Area (image 18).





## 7.0 Trees and Natural Features

Trees contribute strongly to the special character of South Darenth 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 and local distinctiveness of the area. Contact the Council's Arboriculture officer for further advice.



***19. Mature trees and bushes in the South Darenth Conservation Area add character.***



## 8.0 Architectural Description

South Darenth Conservation Area provides an unusual combination of attractive vernacular buildings, interspersed with survivors of 19th Century industrial growth.



**20. An important grouping is the house and outbuildings associated with the Gifford's Estate in Holmesdale Road. The main house, Giffords, is a Grade II listed building set in beautifully wooded grounds including a magnificent cedar in the front lawn. The external façade is of a later period, mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, comprising brown bricks with red brick dressings to the window openings, stringcourse and pilasters flanking the front and central bay. The windows to the ground floor and the dormers have curved heads and five of the original sashes with glazing bars remain intact.**

Roofs are either slated, with clay ridge and hip tiles, or covered with clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs. Where modern infill has encroached the boundary of the designated area the roofs are red concrete profiled tiles. Both historic and modern developments use gable roof ends, while only the historic properties display full hips and half hips are common on the modern buildings. The pitches of tiled roofs tend to be steep, whilst those that are slated are shallower, and the contrasting heights of the ridge lines lends variety and interest to the street scene. This is amplified by variation in the storey height. Dormer windows are often inserted into the roof slopes, giving light to attic spaces which can then be utilised as additional accommodation.

Brick is the most popular building material and the use of yellow and red stock bricks can be seen in many buildings, together with tile-hanging to first floors and decorative arches above doors and windows. Coloured brick is common. The majority of historic brickwork is yellow stock with detailing in contrasting red stock either as arches above openings or as bands continuing across the façade.





The use of local stone combined with good brickwork (see left) adds another colour and texture to the built environment, and galleting in the mortar joints is a local detail that is often employed. In some instances the brickwork to the ground floor has been painted whilst others have been rendered and painted.

There are a wide variety of window styles contained within the area ranging from either timber casements or sliding sashes to proprietary metal windows and plastic replacement windows. Leaded lights and Georgian window bars can be found in buildings of many ages.

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The residential properties vary in size from large detached manor houses to terraced cottages, the majority being medium-sized semi-detached properties. Many of the terraced cottages fall outside the designated area.

Newer buildings that are both contained within the area and abut it, have historic detailing such as exposed timberwork to the gables and tile hanging to the first floor, as well as utilising materials of similar colour and texture to the older buildings.



**22. Giffords Cottages**



## 9.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

**Horton Road** is where the industrial character prevalent in the South Darenth's Conservation Area is most visible. The railway viaduct is such a prominent feature throughout the Conservation Area and here one can inspect it at close quarters.

The approach to the Conservation Area from the south along Station Road has a semi-industrial feel, although this is balanced by the presence of the River Darent and open fields to the south. There is an interesting juxtaposition between the open fields and the solid industrial buildings which loom over this area.

The semi-industrial feel is heightened by the proximity of the railway and the steep railway embankment.

The scale of the Bridges pub is appropriate and it is an admirable feature of some merit in this prominent location in the shadow of the viaduct.



**23. The Bridges Public House**



Kingfisher Place and the houses opposite on the Horton Road are of no merit, although their scale is appropriate. The setting of the prominent Chimney to the north is crucial.



**24. Kingfisher Place**

New Road runs east from Horton Road and is a good indication of topographical character.



**25. New Road**

The large Fairview development (see below) in Horton Road should be mentioned.

The Mill is very important and was identified as an important grouping in the 2002 document. This is an obvious and appropriate acknowledgement of the merits of this site.

This site is significant both locally and nationally, as one of the few remaining mills of its type and age. As the Mill came before most of the village, there are some dramatic street scenes, notably the enclosure of the street when approaching the village centre



from the south along Horton Rd where there is a high facade rising directly up from the road with no room for a pavement. This provides an unusual pinch point in the road and a sense of arrival in the village. This juxtaposition is even more dramatic when coming down New Road as the 'Mill Wall' is a large and dominant feature at the bottom of the road, but there are also remarkable views over the whole site, which highlight the contrasts between the domestic and industrial scales within the village and the topography. These contrasts in scale and use are very unusual in a village of this size and have a profound affect on the character of the village. After the pinch point of the Mill Wall the road then opens out around the old entrance to the Mill site - now re-opened - which gives you a sense of arrival in the village.



**26. This 2001 photograph was taken just before development began.**



**27. A similar view in 2009**

This development has brought vitality to this area as the Mill was disused. A number of important historic buildings have been saved and the intention is reinstate public views and access to the River Darent within the site. This is excellent.



The traffic calming and enhancement measures which have already been carried out in this area are, on the whole, noteworthy.

The progress of this development, including the rebuilding and refurbishment of many fine buildings, will be monitored closely with interest.



***28. Traffic calming and largely successful environmental enhancement around Horton Road and Turner's Place***

With the conversion of many of the Mill buildings from industrial to residential, there has been a change in the residential character of the area. This is perhaps unfortunate, although, change is inevitable and many of the buildings and their internal features have been retained.





**29. Jolly Millers Public House**

**Turner's Place** is dominated by the Jolly Miller's pub. This building is of merit and does make a positive contribution. It displays an interesting mixture of window types and sizes which does reflect its rich historic development.

Turner's Place is dominated by the space to the south of Willow Cottage.

The entire square has an ambience and a feeling of "arrival" which is significant.



**Holmesdale Road** flows from north to south and has a clear rural character which is in contrast with the semi-industrial character visible in Horton Road.



**30. good wall along Holmsdale Road and rural setting**

There are many characteristic open spaces in this road such as those around Giffords, Paddock Cottage, Avenue House, The White House (also note open fields to the rear), and around Mally's Place and the River Darent. Many of these open areas are easily visible and available. They contribute to the feeling of openness and space which is a crucial part of the character of this road.

Where the river forks at the junction of Devon Road and Holmesdale Road, there is a small wood to the south surrounded on three sides by the river, accessed only from the site of the Paper Mill. This small wooded area, protected by existing tree preservation orders, is an important site for wildlife and provides a visually significant space.



## 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 or details positively detract from the atmosphere.

There is some untidy signage and a some lack of maintenance throughout CA.

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



**31. unnecessary, bland and indistinct signage**



**32. untidy fence as one approaches Conservation Area**





**34. bland and very utilitarian in character road bridge as one enters the Conservation Area from the south**



**35. bland gates and empty hardstanding**



**36. this distinctive, characteristic and prominent building will deteriorate fast without a roof covering.**

***This building was specifically highlighted as contributing to character in the 2002 study.***

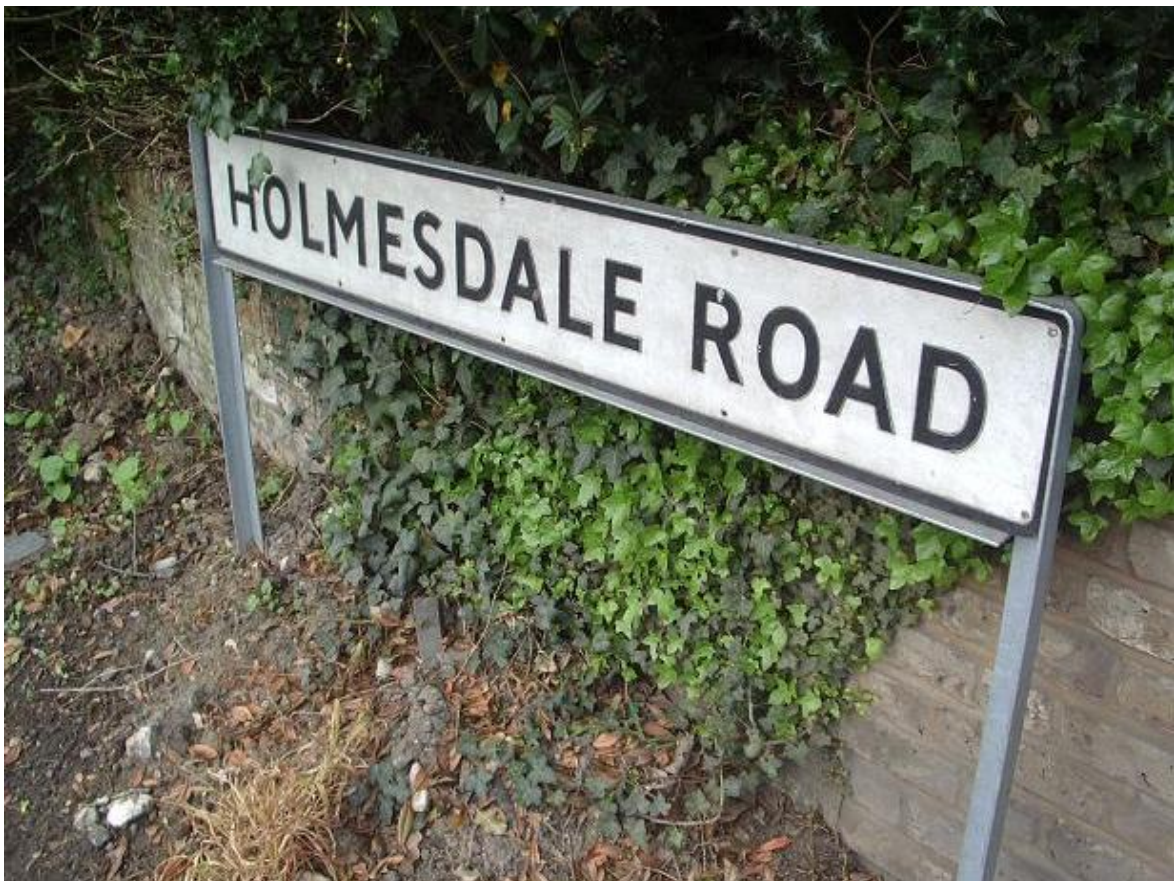
***“The three storey warehouse fronting the road has distinctive detailing – stone capping to gabled ends and parapet, piers and recessed panel of brickwork, red stock banding to the facades and red stock brick arches to the window openings.”***



## 11.0 Key Issues

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

- A lack of maintenance in the public realm (and specifically the Fairview site, although this is under way in 2009 and will have to be monitored) extends to the private arena. Houses must be regularly maintained and painted. The use of modern materials should be discouraged;
- Some inappropriate standard highway signs, etc. (see below and elsewhere). Some recent highway maintenance has used good quality primrose narrow double yellow lines (photograph 40);
- Presence of cheap low-quality replacement materials. 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;
- Speeding traffic through the rural parts of this area (whilst surveying this area, the writer found that many vehicles seemed to be speeding along the Holmesdale Road and there were many large lorries, although this might diminish when the Paper Mill Development is complete.);
- Presence of many large lorries.



*37. Standard and ordinary sign*



## 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. 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 South Darenth 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.



**38. Low-key buildings in Holmesdale Road**



## 12.1 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.



**39. This sign uses non-standard materials which are more appropriate in the Conservation Area**

Increasing the strength of the linkages between the South Darenth Conservation Area and the adjoining countryside would be positive. Low-key information boards could be developed 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 dominance of cars, both moving and parked, is an issue in the Conservation Area.

## 12.2 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.



**40. new primrose narrow yellow lines**

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

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.



### **12.3 Extensions to existing buildings.**

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.

### **12.4 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.

### **12.5 Windows**

The commonest 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.

### **12.6 General Improvements**

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

### **12.7 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.

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



## 12.8 Streetscape and the 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.

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

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.

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

- 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.
- 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.



## **12.9 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.

## **12.10 Pride and Identity**

The South Darenth 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.



**13.0 Acknowledgements:**

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

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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*



## 16.0 Maps

