

Sundridge

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



December 2003

Sundridge

Conservation Area Appraisal

The historic environment is a social asset of immense value and one of the keys to the continuing prosperity of Sevenoaks District. Conservation Area Appraisals are part of the process of ensuring that we make the best use of our historic environment. They are tools for the positive management of change, not a means of preventing development. Conservation is focused on the entire historic environment, not just listed buildings. Trees, open spaces, buildings, uses, roads and streets all contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the District's conservation areas.

The man-made environment of our conservation areas has used energy and materials moulded by people both past and present. The District Council will creatively manage the fabric of these areas in a sustainable way as a legacy for future generations.

It is intended that this appraisal will inform the activities of the Council, the public and other bodies where these impact on the conservation area. This document was approved by the District Council in December 2003 and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

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1.00 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas first came into being as a result of the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 and are intended to identify any valuable visual or historic characteristics in a locality that may warrant special measures in order to protect and preserve them.

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

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

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

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

1.2 Purpose of Appraisals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3 Local Conservation Area Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.4 Other Local Plan Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 General Description

Sundridge Conservation Area covers some 10ha and contains about 18 listed buildings. It was designated in 1973 and has not been extended since then. It includes the area around the crossroads between Chevening Road and the A25 and the majority of Church Road between the A25 and the crown of the hill.

The countryside around is designated as Green Belt and lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Landscape Area.

The village extends along the A25, although the church is found to the south set away from the majority of the development. There is a small green, known as Coronation Garden, at the junction of the A25 and Chevening Road which leads down to the river Darent.



Figure 1 The Green by the crossroads

Sundridge contains a variety of development of varying ages. Many of the buildings are historic, but none constructed earlier than about 1450 and there has been little recent development within the confines of the Conservation Area. Probably the oldest building is Old Hall which dates from 1458, with Wellers Farm and its probable contemporary Dryhill Farm and cottages dating from 1465. However all these properties lie outside the Conservation Area.



Figure 2 New development on the A25 (Main Road)

In the village, but outside the Conservation Area, there is a general store, doctor's surgery, social club, and a village hall. There is a recent large office park development on the outskirts of the village to the east.

There is an art gallery, furniture shop and other commercial development in the area around the crossroads. In 1987 the primary school merged with that of neighbouring Brasted and is situated near the church. There is now only one public house in the village; the White Horse at the crossroads. The former Lamb Public House, which has been converted to office use, is situated on the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area.

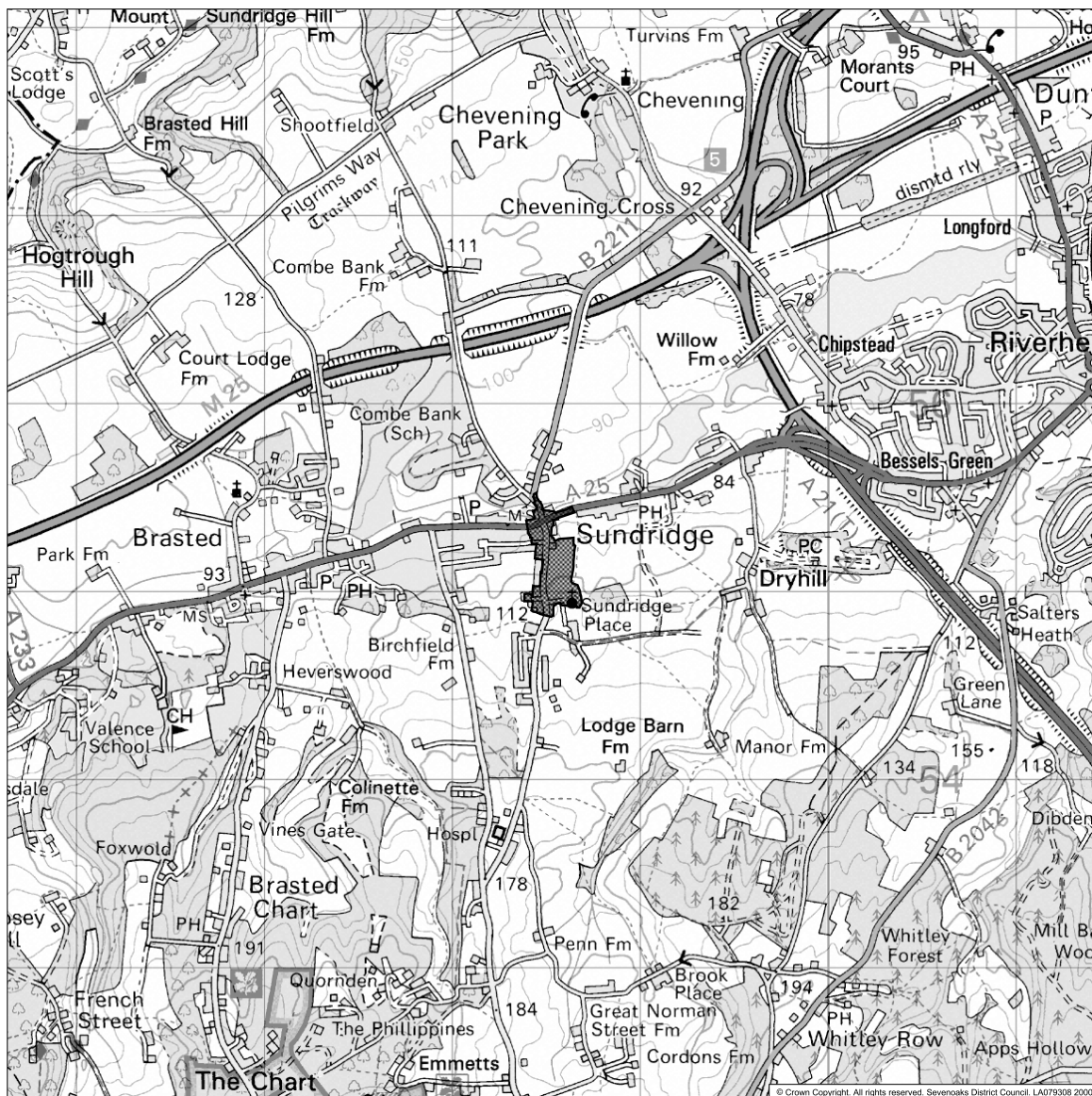
Despite the volume of traffic, both stationary and parked, along the Main Road, Sundridge is a pretty village with many interesting buildings and there are plenty of opportunities to escape from the business of the main road into quieter backwaters.

2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Sundridge lies on the main A25 route between Sevenoaks and Westerham. It has grown as ribbon development along the main road which, until the construction of the M25 motorway which runs parallel with it to the north, was one of the most important east/west routes across the County. It is situated in the valley of the River Darent that runs through the village, at the foot of the North Downs.

To the south, the land rises to the wooded slopes of the Greensand Ridge on which lie Ide Hill, Goathurst Common, Brasted Chart and Toys Hill – part of an almost unbroken swathe of woodland and common that stretches from Limpsfield in the west to Sevenoaks in the east.

Sundridge lies close to junction 5 of the M25. There is no entry to or westbound exit from the M26 at this point, however problems on the motorway can lead to traffic congestion in the village. The nearest town is Sevenoaks which also has the nearest railway station.

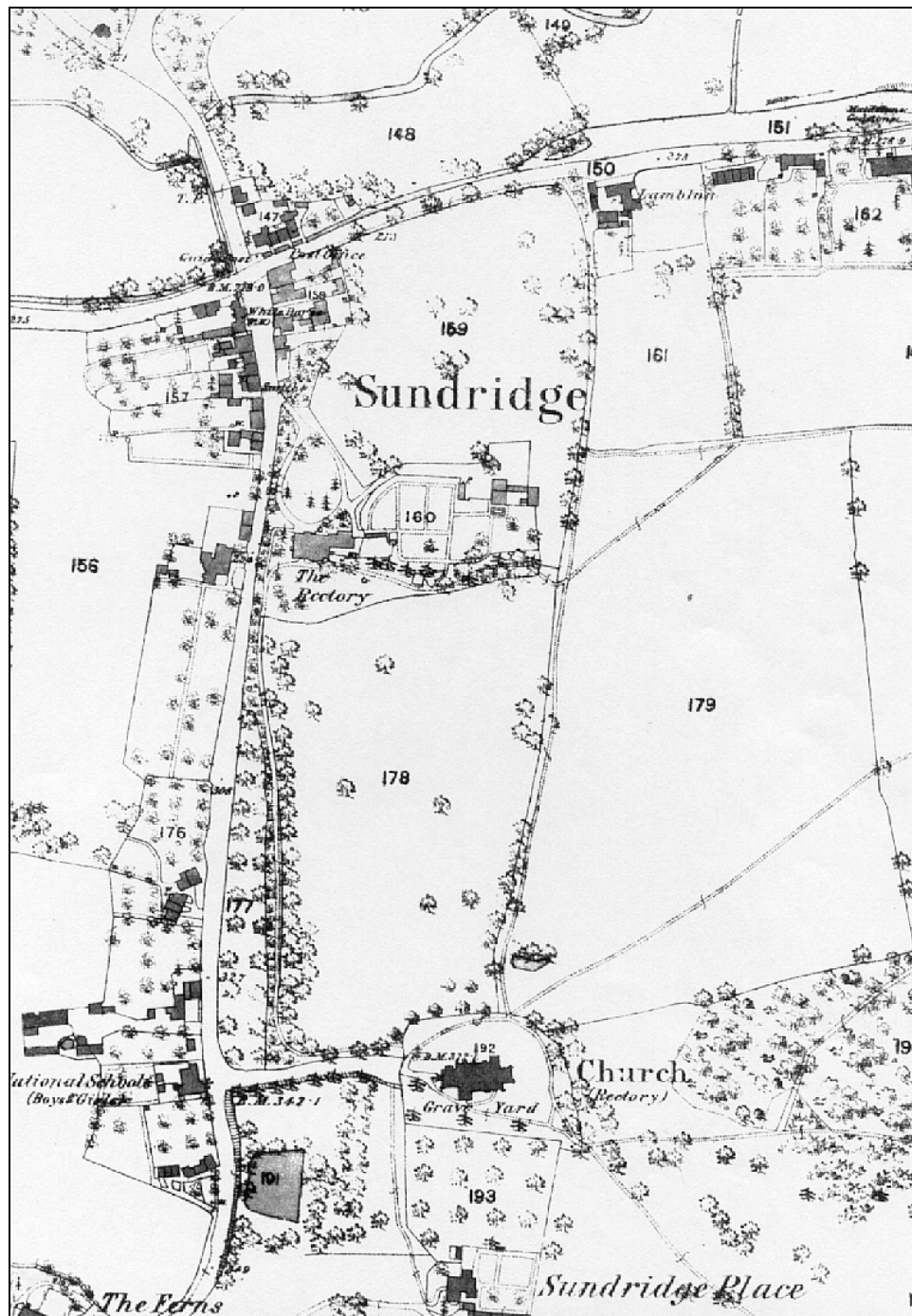


Map 1 Geographical Location

2.3 Historical Development

It is likely that the settlement at Sundridge dates from pre-Roman times and although the existing Church dates from about 1200, records indicate there was a Church on this site in 862.

The village is probably best known for the house at Combe Bank, which was built about 1720 by Roger Morris for Colonel John Campbell in the Palladian style. It was extended in 1907 and sits in a park of 350 acres. It has been a convent and is now a school.



Map 2 Sundridge in 1869

Sundridge is on the River Darent and the water course had mills at regular intervals along its route.

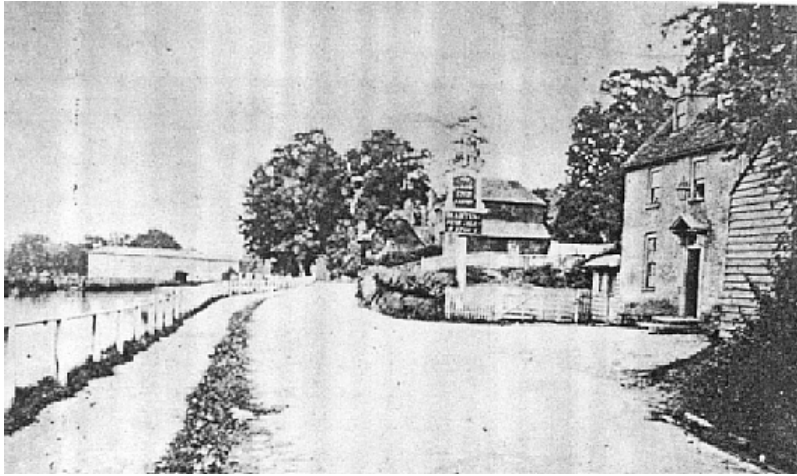


Figure 3 The former Lamb Inn, with the historic Mill in the background



Figure 4 A view westward towards the crossroads showing former mill pond

Beyond the Church to the south is Sundridge Hospital, a listed building now being converted into residential apartments. This was originally one of a series of workhouses giving shelter to the destitute of the district.



Figure 5 An historic view up Church Road

2.4 Architectural Description

The conservation area contains many examples of the traditional Kentish vernacular in its buildings.



Figure 6 Brick and tile hanging on Well Cottage



Figure 7 Timber framing 94 Church Road

Roofs are either slated, with lead hip and ridge rolls, or covered with clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs. The use of full or half hips to one side of the roof with a gable end on the other is common. Dormer windows are often inserted into roof slopes, giving light to attic spaces which are then utilised as additional accommodation.



Figure 8 A variety of rooflines opposite the White Horse Public House

There are examples of timber framed buildings that survive from the era before brickwork became a popular and affordable alternative construction material. Some have been clad in brick, completely hiding the external evidence of their original construction. In other cases the first floor timber frame remains exposed, with plaster panels between the structural members; in others the frame is clad with vertical tile hanging or painted weatherboarding.

Brick is the most popular building material but has often been painted or rendered. The Church and Sundridge Place, to the south of the Conservation Area, are constructed of local sandstone.



Figure 9 Weatherboarding and shutters on No. 11 Church Road

Windows are either timber casements or sliding sashes. Leaded lights can be found in buildings of many ages, and there are external shutters on the first floor windows of no.11 Church Road.

3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area & Spatial Relationships

The Conservation Area consists of two distinct and contrasting areas. The first area is the group of buildings around the junction of the A25 with Chevening Road and Church Road, which includes the White Horse Public House and the open land beside the river.



Figure 10 118 Main Road, a listed building



Figure 11 The crossroads, looking north

There are a good number of mature trees and these, together with the grass verge and hedges soften the impact of the road tarmac.



Figure 12 The White Horse Inn

There is a cluster of listed buildings adjacent to the road and many of the properties are painted white, including the public house and furniture shop opposite. This increases the feeling of openness. The road bends toward Chevening at the junction with Combe Bank Drive and leads to open farmland beyond.



Figure 13 Cottages in Chevening Road

From the crossroads Church Road narrows into a sunken lane as it climbs the hill and the sense of enclosure is heightened by the wall to the Old Rectory.



Figure 14 Martyrs Cottages in Church Road



Figure 15 Cottages at 6-16 Church Road

On the west side of Church Road is a series of small terraced cottages followed by some larger properties. Sakers Cottages are timber framed buildings dating from the 17th Century, hidden behind the later row that stand directly on the kerb. Further up Church Road is The Gate House, formerly the stable to the adjacent Manor House, also dating from the 17th century.

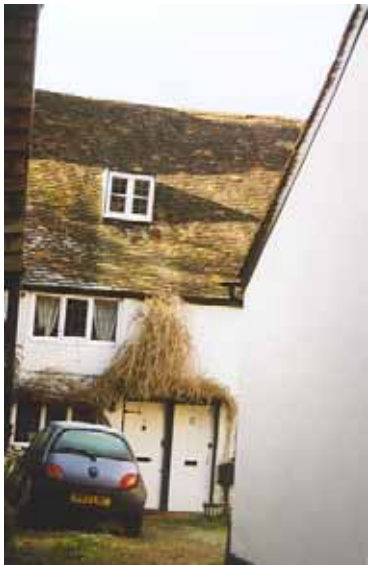


Figure 16 1-3 Sakers Cottages



Figure 17 The Gate House, 40 Church Road

At the eastern end of Chapmans Road is an interesting terrace of cottages dated 1913, known as Monds Cottages, with brick pilasters and stone ionic capitals used as decorative features.



Figure 18 Monds Cottages in Chapmans Road

The second area lies to the south and comprises the grounds to the Old Rectory extending southwards to the Church and the cluster of surrounding buildings. From the Church, which is set high on the hill, there are far reaching views across agricultural land to the North Downs.



Figure 19 The Old Rectory



Figure 20 View from the Churchyard

A narrow lane links this cluster of buildings with the Church. buildings include the primary school and converted farm buildings, as well as some older cottages.



Figure 21 96-104 Church Road



Figure 22 The Primary School

There are outstanding views from the Churchyard north to the Old Rectory and the North Downs beyond.

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

The group of listed buildings at the crossroads and their proximity to the Green comprise the main focal point of the Conservation Area. Although the atmosphere can be marred by heavy traffic, the cluster and contrast between the buildings and the open space on the west side of Chevening Road is an important feature of the area. The expanse of the White Horse car park does detract from the character of this part of the Conservation Area.



Figure 23 The Main Road Crossroads and the White Horse

The cottages at the narrowing of Church Road and the adjacent Monds Court forms a distinct group before the more widely spaced and larger properties beyond.



Figure 24 Monds Court 24-34 Church Road

There are a number of dwellings outside the conservation area to the west and, with the notable exception of the Old Hall, most of them do not have any great architectural merit, although their proximity could mean that alteration or additions may impinge on the setting of the conservation area.



Figure 25 Victorian properties c. 1893 Church Road



Figure 26 St. Mary's Church

The Old Rectory and the Church, although separated by the parkland and the slope of the hill, have an interdependent relationship. Views up and down the hill are important, as is the historic link between the two buildings.



Figure 27 80 Church Road

The group of buildings around the school and the farm complex to the west is a reminder of the early settlement close to the Church and manor house.

4.0 FUTURE TRENDS

4.1 Current and Future Pressures on the Area

As in many areas of the South East the main pressures on the Sundridge Conservation Area are those exerted by the steady increase in traffic movement, the number of vehicles on the road and the search for suitable sites for new residential development.

The village lies on a major east-west road link situated close to the M25, and problems on the motorway can cause a build-up of traffic through the centre of the conservation area. The absence of a full interchange at the M25 Chevening intersection may aggravate this problem.

The need to find residential development sites in this popular region within easy reach of London puts any village in the spotlight in the search for suitable building land. Whilst new development within a conservation area is not necessarily unwelcome, the impact that this can have on the traditional form of the village has to be carefully considered before permission is granted.

4.2 Potential for Enhancement

Some form of screening to the White Horse car park would be beneficial to the Conservation Area.

The lamp standards on the Main Road are suitable for a trunk road but lack the character that would be appropriate for a Conservation Area. The bus shelter on the north side of the Main Road, just outside the Conservation Area to the west, is also of a particular poor quality. Replacement of these in due course may be beneficial to the character of the streetscape.

4.3 Future Policy Recommendations

There are a number of listed buildings, currently on the fringes of the Conservation Area that it may be appropriate to include within the boundaries. To the north, Little Combe Bank is a substantial property set in large grounds which include a section of the River Darent.



Figure 28 Little Combe Bank

South Lodge is a striking and ornate Victorian (c1870) lodge and may be worthy of inclusion for its contribution to the character of the area, although it is not listed.



Figure 29 South Lodge

To the south Sundridge Place is an important local building and, together with its listed outbuildings, could be brought within the Conservation Area.



Figure 30 Sundridge Place

The Red House and the White House and their grounds also have a contribution to make to the architectural character of the area, and should be considered for inclusion.



Figure 31 The Red House



Figure 32 The White House

The buildings, walls, parkland and drive to Combe Bank are an important reminder of the history of the village. Although the site now has a plethora of modern development connected with the school complex, the inclusion of the historic boundaries within the Conservation Area is still worth considering, in order to highlight the need to preserve the character of the Estate in the future.



Figure 33 Combe Bank



Figure 34 Listed Walls to Combe Bank Estate

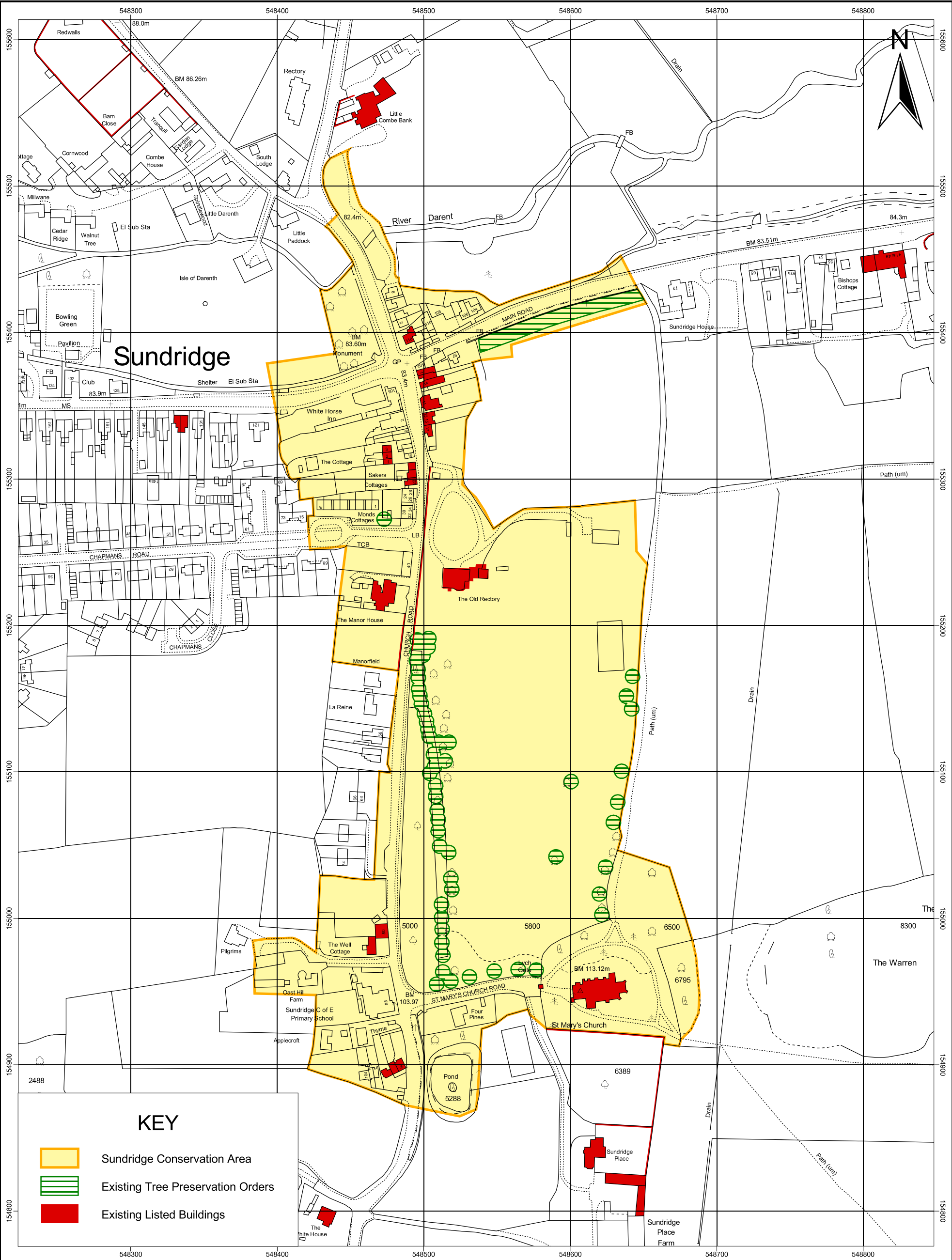
To the east of the former Lamb public house are the listed buildings of Bishop's Court and Bishop's Cottage. Although extended in Victorian times and again in 1972 they date from the mid 18th century. Bishop Beilby Porteous, Bishop of Chester from 1776 and Bishop of London from 1783, lived there until his death in 1809; he is buried in an imposing tomb in Sundridge Churchyard. This group of buildings, which originally faced the mill pond and now demolished paper mill to the north, were an integral part of historic Sundridge and still form part of an area of distinctive character which should be considered for future inclusion in the conservation area.

Acknowledgements:

The draft document was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

Bibliography:

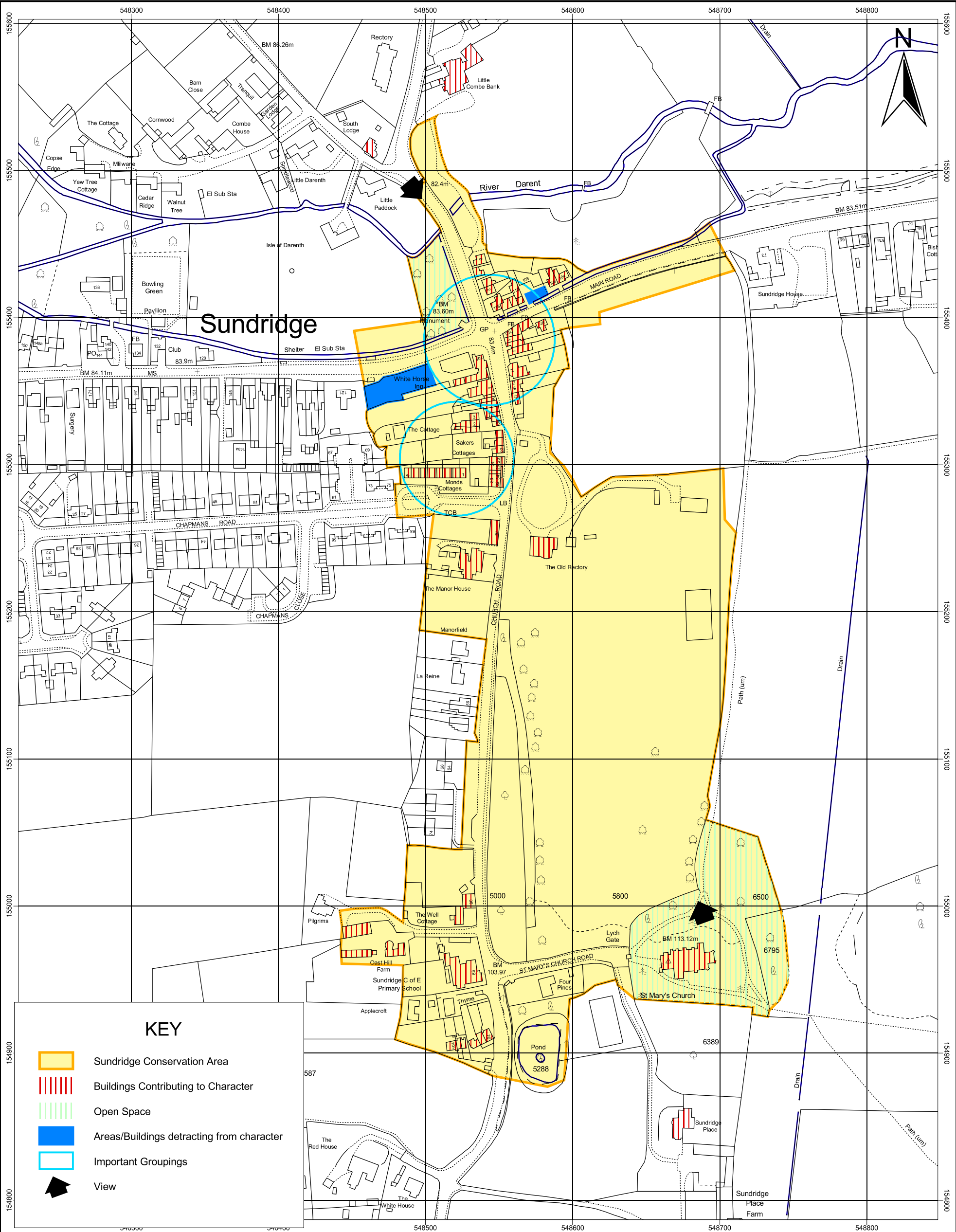
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History & Topographical Survey of the County of Kent Vol iii 1797	Edward Hasted



MAP 3
Sundridge Conservation Area
Designations

Scale	1:2500
Date	November 2002
Drawn By	SNM

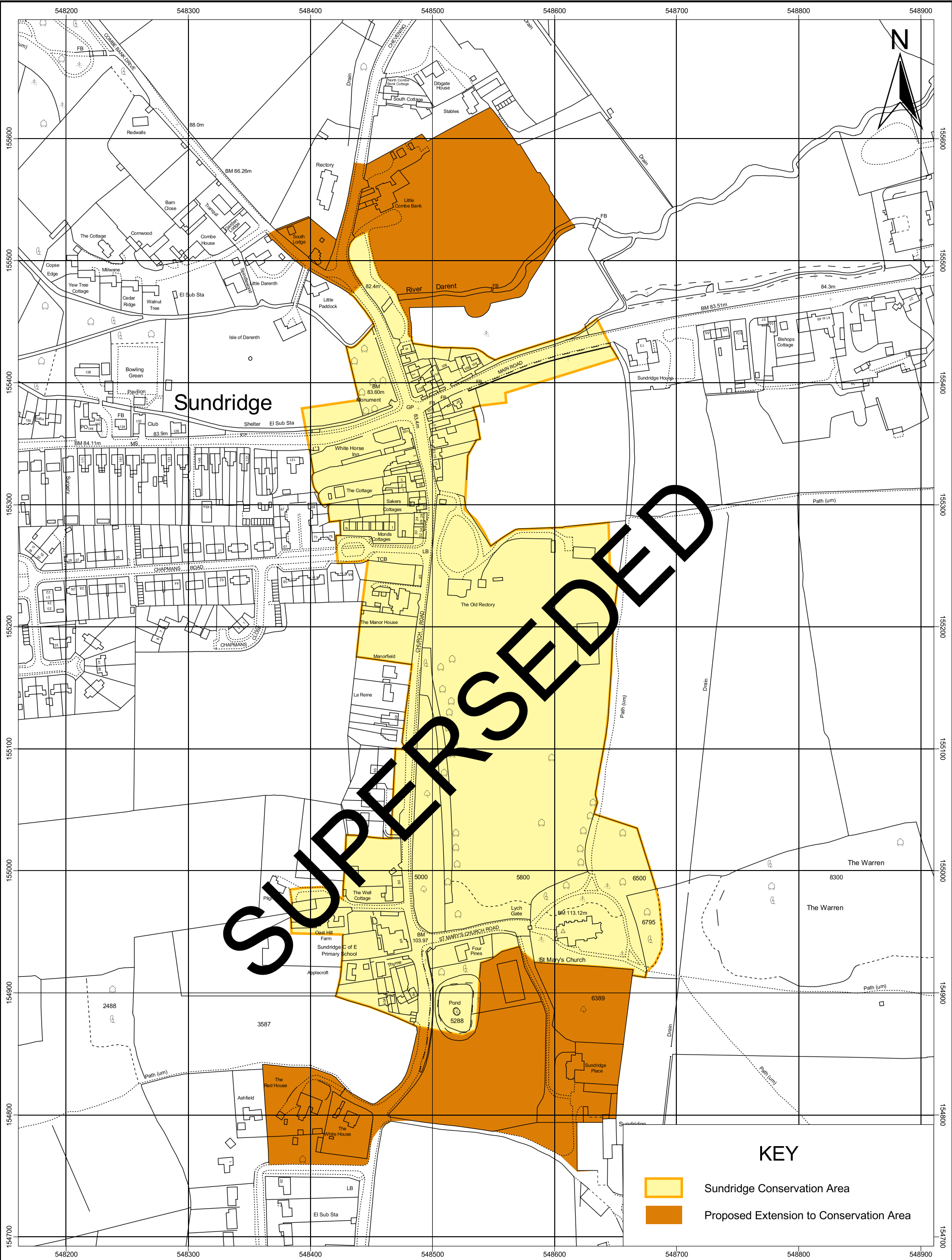
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MAP 4
Sundridge
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

Scale	1:2500
Date	November 2002
Drawn By	CW-T

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MAP 5
Sundridge
Conservation Area
Recommendations for
Future Policy Changes

Scale	1:3000
Date	November 2002
Drawn By	SNM

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