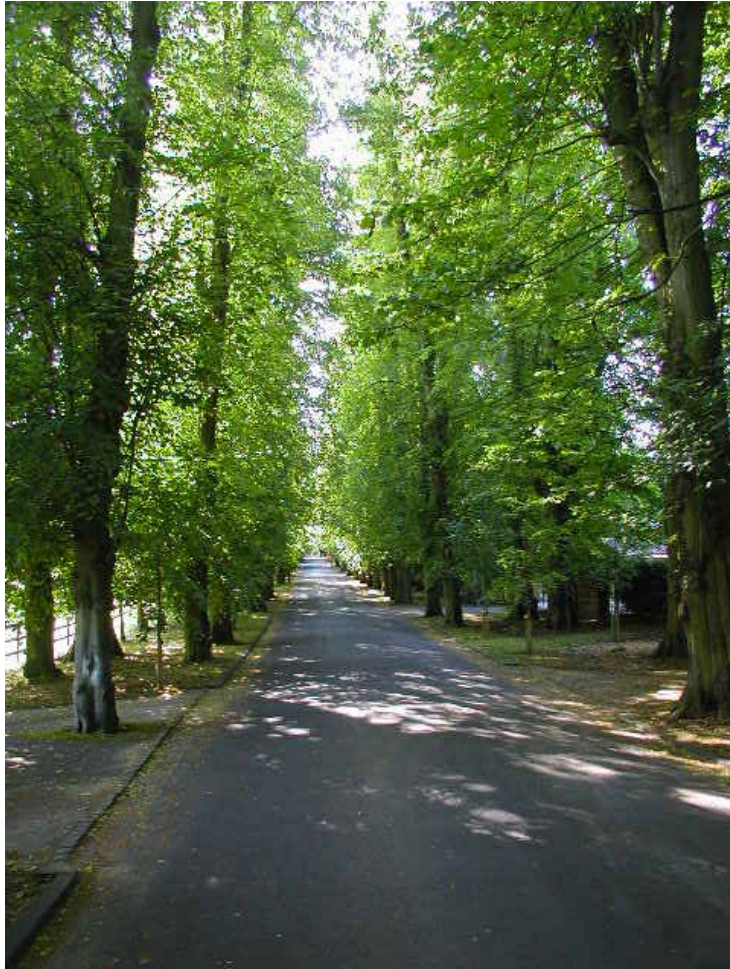


Wilderness

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



PLANNING GUIDANCE - 2010



Wilderness

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

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

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

It is intended that this appraisal and management plan will inform the activities of the Council, the public and other bodies where these affect the conservation area. This Appraisal was approved by the District Council in November 2010 and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Sevenoaks District Council is not liable for any loss or damage, however sustained, by others arising from reliance on the contents of this document. This document must not be reproduced in whole or in part without the prior written permission from the Council.

© Sevenoaks District Council 2010

Published by Sevenoaks District Council
Community & Planning Services
Conservation Team
Council Offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 1HG

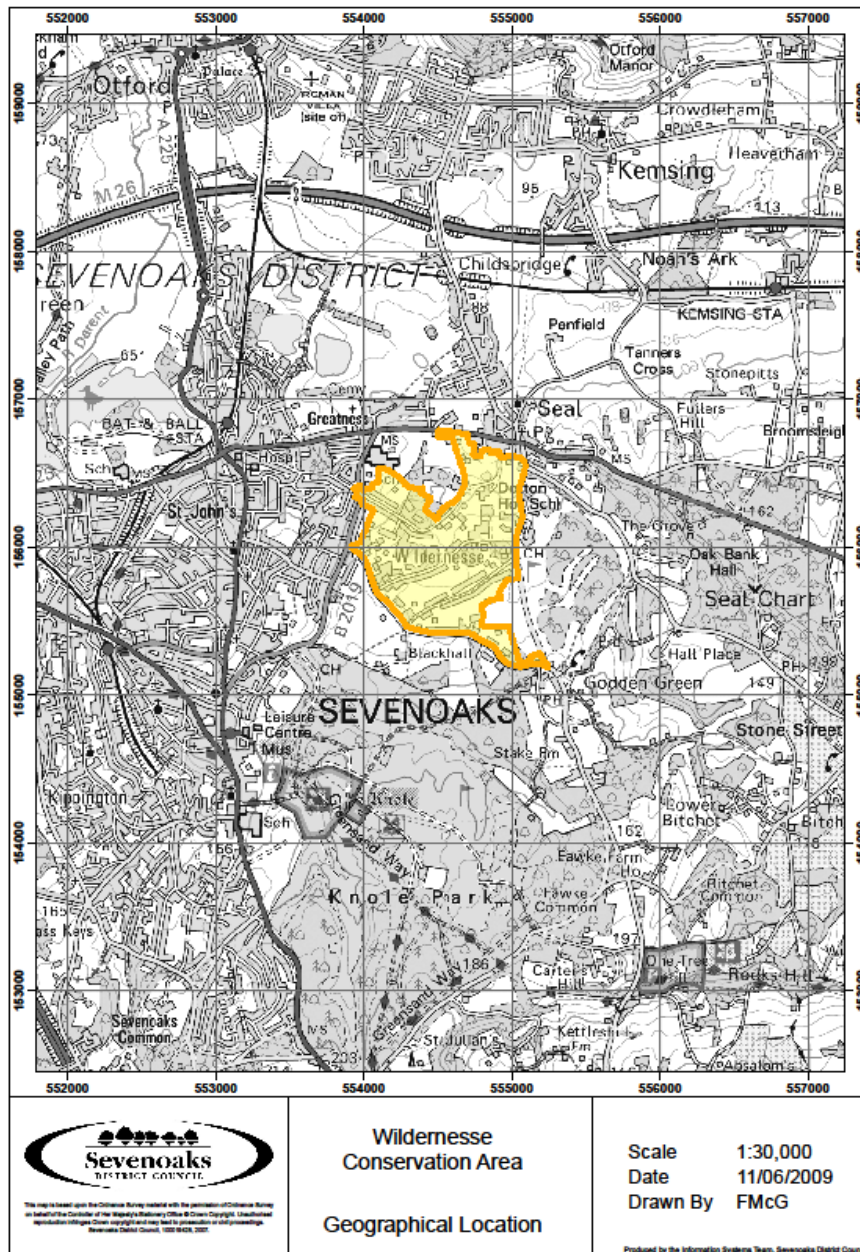
Tel: 01732 227000

Fax: 01732 451332

Website: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

Email: planning.information@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Contents:	page
1.0 INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas	8
1.2 The Benefits of Being in a Conservation Area	10
1.3 Purpose of Appraisals and Management Plans	11
1.4 Key Purpose of Plan	13
2.0 Location, general description and geographical context	14



Map 1 Geographical location

3.0	GUIDANCE AND POLICIES	15
3.1	National and Regional Guidance	15
3.2	Development Plan	15
3.3	Local Policy	16
3.4	Other Local Plan Policies	17
3.5	Buildings Contributing to Character	17
3.6	Conservation and Enhancement	17
3.7	Special controls in the Conservation Area	17
3.8	Houses and their alteration	18
3.9	Demolition	18
3.10	Trees/Hedges	19
3.11	Unauthorised Works and development	19
3.12	Maintenance and Repairs	20
3.13	Boundary treatments	21
3.14	Listed Buildings	21
4.0	Historical Development and archaeological significance	22
5.0	Views, setting and topography	25
6.0	Trees, Natural Features and hedges	26
7.0	Architectural Description	27
8.0	Character Appraisal	30
	• Blackhall Lane	30
	• Woodland Rise	31
	• Parkfield	31
	• Park Lane	32
	• Seal Drive	33
	• Wilderness Avenue	33



1. West end of Blackhall Lane – note simple verges and prominent hedges and trees

9.0	Negative Features	36
10.0	Key Issues	38
11.0	MANAGEMENT	40
11.1	Current and Future Pressures on the Area	41
11.2	The Need for Contextual Design	41
11.3	Scale	41
11.4	Extensions to existing buildings	42
11.5	Repairs	42
11.6	Windows	42
11.7	Streetscape and Public Realm	43
11.8	Surface Materials	43
11.9	Street furniture	43
11.10	Sustainable design	43
11.11	Pride and Identity	45



2. Many houses are set back from the road

12.0	Acknowledgement	46
13.0	Bibliography	46
14.0	English Heritage guidance - Unlisted buildings in a conservation area	47
15.0	Maps	
	Designations	48
	Character Appraisal	49



3. View of corner of Seal Hollow Road and Blackhall Lane from North

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document replaces the Wildernesse Conservation Area Appraisal which was produced in December 2003 by Sevenoaks District Council in collaboration with Sevenoaks Town Council and residents. 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 Conservation Area directly reflects the extent of the original 1920s Estate.

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



4. View at western end of Wildernesse Avenue

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. Green Hailey glimpsed through trees and hedges

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. Wildernesse Avenue

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.



7. Kent Cottage

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.



8. Looking towards junction of Wildernesse Avenue and Seal Hollow Road from north

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 Wildernesse 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.



9. Good gate detail

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 will be a material consideration in the determination of development proposals.



10. Tree and hedge-lined roads without kerbs are an important part of character.

2.0 Location, general description and geographical context

Wilderness Conservation Area was first designated in 1994 and was extended in 1998 to include virtually the whole of the former Wilderness Estate. The area covered is now 40 hectares and includes four listed buildings.

Open countryside to the south and east of Wilderness is designated a Special Landscape Area and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Conservation Area consists entirely of a residential estate formed in the 1920s and later around an existing 18th Century large house. It is bounded on the south, west and east sides by local roads and abuts the Seal Conservation Area at its north end. Three private roads cross the area, running roughly from east to west. The residents of the Conservation Area control the use of these roads. There are no shops, public buildings or transport routes within the Area, although a major outdoor Sports facility/School lies immediately to the north-west.

The most notable built feature of the area is the house (formerly Wilderness House, now Dorton House, (a School for the Blind) around which the estate was built. The other outstanding features are the tree-lined private roads and extensive planting within the grounds of the residential properties.

Wilderness is effectively a suburb of Sevenoaks, lying to the east of the urban area and immediately to the south of the A25. The nearest major railway station is 3km away at Sevenoaks (there is a small station nearby at Bat and Ball). From the A25, the M25/M26 junction is approximately 6km from the edge of the Conservation area.

Sevenoaks and its environs lie in a valley between the North Downs and the foot of the Greensand ridge to the south. The land to the south and east is extensively wooded.

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. 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.



11. North entrance to Seal Drive – note simplicity

3.3 Local Policies

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

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



12. Silver Birches

3.4 Other Local Plan Policies

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

Policy GB1 is relevant (although this only affects small parts of the conservation area)

3.5 Buildings Contributing to Character.

Buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area are identified on the character appraisal plan at the end of this document. The written criteria from English Heritage can be viewed at the end of this report.

3.6 Conservation and Enhancement.

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 and other guidance 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 historic environment of high quality. This appraisal aims to ensure that this rich context is respected so that only design solutions of a high standard are introduced, allowing the area to continue to maintain its quality and status as one of the most desirable places in the south east.

There is a richness, variety, quality and history 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.

3.7 Special Controls in the Conservation Area

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

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.

3.8 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.



13. Good gate in Wildernesse Avenue

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

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

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 1 metre high fronting onto the street or less than 2 metres 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 and hedges

Six weeks notice must be given to the Council before any work to a tree within a conservation area is carried out. The Council will then advise if it wishes to raise an objection. If a response is not received from the Council within 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 1.5 metres (4'11") above the ground and trees already covered by a Tree Preservation Order, in which case any works will require consent. The protection of trees is increased in a conservation area. In assessing planning applications in Wildernesse, we will give high regard to trees and hedges in the Conservation Area.

The importance of the contribution that trees and hedges and other boundary features make is further highlighted in Section 6.

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.



14. Kilnwood

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. The use of urban type piers and gates in Wildernesse is on the increase. The detail of some wrought iron work may be acceptable in isolation, but taken as a whole does negatively affect the character of the Estate. Whereas most houses on the Estate originally had five-bar gates, which, with kerb-less verges, creating a rural feel, the increasing use of tall piers and iron gates is starting to create an urban or suburban feel to parts of the roads. This should be taken into account on future applications.



15. Good open space in front of Dorton House

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 is highly important throughout the Wilderness Conservation Area and must be noted by decision-makers. Original hedge, tree and wall boundaries, whether brick, ragstone, railings or fencing, 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. 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.

4.0 Historical Development and archaeological significance

Sir Charles Bickerstaffe, who built the first house on the site of Wildernesse House at some time after 1669, also enclosed 364 acres of parkland around it. The Estate then passed into the Pratt family who maintained it and built the present house, along with two lodges. At the end of the 19th Century the Estate was bought by Sir Charles Mills (Baron Hillingdon) who founded the golf club to the east of Blackhall Lane. The Wildernesse avenue of limes were planted to commemorate the visit of Wellington to Wildernesse [now Dorton] House in 1815 [the year of Waterloo]. Chestnut trees at the eastern end of Woodland Rise were planted around 1509 to celebrate the marriage of Henry VIII to Catherine of Aragon. Sevenoaks has few items with this length of pedigree. These historic trees and the abundant later planting make a very significant contribution to the Arcadian character of the conservation area.



Map 2 Courtesy of The Wildernesse Residents' Association

Wilderness House became a Country Club and Golf Club from 1927 to 1954, when the house was sold to the Royal London Society for the Blind and renamed Dorton House. The land that is now the Wilderness Estate was sold to the developer Percy Harvey in 1924.

The Estate was conceived as a composition of fine buildings in an open spacious, landscaped setting and strict legal controls were put in place to ensure that these concepts were carried out and retained. The effect of the covenants is vital and has been to retain the principal characteristics of the Estate, maintaining the high standards of design quality and spaciousness and the retention of hedges and woodlands. This should be given some weight by decision-makers today.

The original intentions for the Estate are set out in the sales brochure of 1925. There was a conscious attempt to preserve the characteristics of countryside within the proposed development. The estate roads are of modest width and have the appearance and character of country lanes. Pavements and footpaths are avoided, to be replaced by grass verges flanked by substantial hedges.

Where a house is glimpsed from another it is seen as part of an Arcadian composition, with sculptural roofs and chimneys amid distant trees. There is a greater sense of spaciousness from rear gardens than from the access roads. It is possible to look across four or five acres of open landscaped garden from each house, even though the area of each individual plot may be little more than one acre.

During the late 1920s and into the mid-1930s, the original Estate was laid out and developed to the individual designs of H.M. Baillie Scott and other respected Arts and Crafts architects. This gives an indication of the desire of the estate's developers and residents to create the highest quality of buildings and setting.



16. Baillie Scott house in Woodland Rise

Much care was given to the retention of existing trees, hedges and belts of woodland when the estate was developed. At the end of many gardens, especially in Woodland Rise, there are extensive areas of untouched original woodland containing established

deciduous trees. These areas, though divided into separate ownerships, form a continuous expanse of uninterrupted woodland which have the appearance of being an extension of the adjacent countryside.

House building continued sporadically during the remainder of the 20th Century and continues today on isolated plots or in areas sold off from the original extensive grounds of earlier houses. The nature of the Estate and its inhabitants can have changed little since its inception; it accommodates those who wish for, and can afford, spacious surroundings which give a taste of the countryside close to an urban area, while allowing all the conveniences of modern living.



17. Note wide open roads with large verges and without kerbs.

5.0 Views, setting and topography

Views, setting and topography are important in the Wildernesse Conservation Area. The photo below illustrates an easily available fine view. Open fields are an attractive characteristic feature and this openness was designed into the original Estate.

Individual houses often feel visually secluded on their plots. This setting is important. This setting amongst trees where neighbouring houses are not always seen is a crucial part of character.



18. Topography and stunning open landscape north of Wildernesse Avenue



19. Open view from Blackhall Lane south west

6.0 Trees, natural features and hedges

Trees and hedges contribute strongly to the special character of the Wildernesse Conservation Area. The trees and hedges 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. Hedges are also often characteristic features and their removal should be resisted. If a hedge is removed, then a suitable mature specimen should be planted in its place.

By Dorton House, there is an avenue of ancient chestnuts that is noteworthy (referred to above on page 24 - see image 24 directly below). These were planted in 1509 to celebrate the marriage of Henry VIII to Catherine of Aragon. There are often large and splendid trees in back gardens and views of trees contribute strongly to the special character of the Conservation Area.



20. Fine mature trees add character. These were planted to commemorate the visit of the Duke of Wellington in 1815.

7.0 Architectural Description

The Wildernesse Estate was conceived as a coordinated development. Its architectural manner, materials and quality detailing derive predominantly from the English Arts and Crafts movement. Many of the 1920's and 1930's houses were designed in this comfortable, well proportioned but simple manner exemplified by the work of the architect H M Baillie Scott and others of the same school. Baillie Scott's early involvement probably attracted other Arts and Crafts figures to the area.



**21. Rise House
by Baillie Scott**

The early 20th Century Arts and Crafts approach to domestic design as practised by Baillie Scott and his followers is still the dominant characteristic in large parts of the Conservation Area.



**22. Little
Garnstone
Manor by
Baillie Scott**

Roofs are almost universally well-pitched and tiled, vertical tile hanging and half-timbering is used extensively, fairfaced brickwork is everywhere. Early Crittal windows are common.

Most of the houses built in the first half of the 20th Century are in the style of medieval manor houses or cottages, and most result in pleasing, well-mannered compositions, even contriving to represent garages as stable blocks or similarly historic outbuildings.



**23. *Witham* by
Baillie Scott**

A good deal of the visual attractiveness of the estate, however, depends on the fact that the majority of the houses are hidden – or half hidden – from view, behind tall dense hedges or set well back from the roads behind extensive shrub and tree planting. The effect otherwise might be very ordinary.

A further contributing factor to the area's character is the generous size of plots on which many of the houses are placed and the relatively modest height and bulk of the original designs. The overall impression is thus of the trees and greenery of the gardens, with the buildings nestling in amongst them, subservient to the landscape.

Further development during the latter part of the 20th Century and more recently, has encompassed a few differing architectural styles: neo-Georgian, or distinctly modern, for example.



24.
Rochester House, architect unknown although similar to Baillie

Some examples have succeeded in blending into the overall character by their use of similar materials and scale (and by the judicious use of screening) while others are not so successful. A few properties throughout the estate seem to flout the screening rules enshrined in the original covenants; while providing points of interest in the general view this detracts from the overall characteristic of an Arcadian woodland setting which is otherwise all pervasive.



25. ***Gates at High Weald designed by J.T. Alliston and J.B. Drew***

8.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

The private estate roads and their treatment form an initial impression of the character of the Conservation Area. The carriageways themselves are not wide, but a feeling of generosity of space is created by the use of extensive flat grassed verges flanked by substantial hedges either side of the road, combined with low kerbs. Due to the the extensive grounds of each property, on-street parking is extremely rare. The whole width of carriageway and verge between the boundary hedges is thus available to view and often has the feel of a country lane.

Within the conservation area almost all the older buildings together with their gardens and extensive landscape setting, contribute positively to its character, and are the principal reason for the designation of the area.

Blackhall Lane skirts round the southern part of the Conservation Area. The wide grass verge detail is continued along the estate side of Blackhall Lane, combined with an inset footpath away from the road. Some of the properties along this edge of the conservation area, which are not screened by fences or planting, are set back and at a higher level than the road. An embankment supporting woodland trees, giving way on the southern stretch to hawthorn hedges bordering open fields, bound the opposite side of Blackhall Lane for most of its length.

There are many fine views available into the well-wooded or open parts beyond the Conservation Area (see below).



26. *Blackhall Lane*

A number of roads run off Blackhall Lane. First there is:

Woodland Rise. This road is characterised by an openness and spaciousness. This road meanders through the Estate. The gentle curves in the road are an integral part of the character. The topography in Woodland Rise is noteworthy. The entrance shown below displays an attractive simplicity.



27 Woodland Rise

Parkfield (see below) is also characterised by an openness. Parkfield is distinguished by dense beech or laurel hedges to its properties and cherry trees planted in the verges, forming an avenue of pink blossom in spring. Houses are well set back and the feel of openness and spaciousness is great.



28. Parkfield

Blackhall Lane then joins **Park Lane** (see below) in the south. Park Lane runs north, skirting round Wildernesse Golf Club. There are some highly characteristic and open views looking across the Golf Club. These views are noteworthy.



29 . Wildernesse Golf Club

- 8.1 The eastern boundary of the conservation area is formed for the most part by Park Lane and the golf course. A thin line of woodland trees supported on an embankment borders this open ground. Towards the northern end the hedges and fences of the conservation area properties give way to open views to the west and the buildings of Dorton House beyond.
- 8.2 The openness to the east is spectacular and provides a pleasant rural outlook to this part of the Conservation Area.
- 8.3 Park Lane then skirts round the northern edge of the Conservation Area and joins:

Seal Drive (see entrance off High Street, Seal below) and **Wilderness Avenue entrance off Park Lane** (see bottom)



30. Wilderness Avenue entrance

Dorton House (formerly Wilderness House – see below) is the most visible and distinguished building in the conservation area, and remains the focal point of the northern part of the estate. Its stone walling, classical composition, prominent setting and open aspect contrasts with the surrounding area.



31. Dorton House

Equally prominent by virtue of their setting, but not so distinguished, are the associated buildings of Dorton College – excluded from the conservation area but highly visible from it.

Two houses at the very extremities of the conservation area are listed Grade II. The Homestead/Home Cottage is in the north, at the junction of Seal Drive with Seal High Street. A modest 18th Century house with 19th Century additions, it has until recently been divided into two properties, with one half empty and in a poor state of repair. However a programme of renovation has been carried out.

Whyteladies, another Baillie Scott house, is situated in the middle of the conservation Area, off **Wilderness Avenue**. Unusually, the brickwork exterior is all painted white. A gable window contains stained or painted glass.

Byways, also by Baillie Scott, at the north end of Seal Drive, presents a modelled brick wall to the road incorporating a structure reminiscent of a Norman stair turret.

At the north end of Wildernesse Avenue the road is blocked and the view closed by the classical façade of a stone built former stable block, which is part of the adjacent Seal Conservation Area (see below).



32. Former Seal Clean Laundry

9.0 Negative Features

A few late 20th Century individual houses or improvements are of a lesser design quality than the majority of their neighbours. Variations of style have been successfully accommodated in this conservation area, and will continue to be, where they are good examples of their particular idiom, but inconsistency of detail or ill-informed pastiche design will degrade the whole area if it is allowed to proliferate.

Note over powering signage below .





34. This area adjoining Dorton House (Dorton Drive within the Conservation Area) is bland and stark with little planting reflecting the character of the historic area. Also note inappropriate concrete kerbs, where there is a prevalent character and lack of kerbs throughout much of the Conservation Area.



35. Ordinary and standard highway features are unattractive

10.0 Key Issues

The submission by the Residents' Association in support of the re-designation of the conservation area indicates their awareness of this possibility and their concern to maintain standards of design. They should be encouraged and supported in this as far as legislation allows.

The Estate was conceived as being of the highest quality. That some of the nation's most respected domestic architects of the time were engaged is a clear indication of the desire of the Estate's developers and residents to create the highest quality environment. These standards of excellence in design should be continued in any future development with an emphasis on the use of good quality local materials, notably Kentish brick and tile.

Wilderness is an exclusive residential area. It is ideally situated immediately next to a thriving market town and with easy access to the major road and rail networks in the South East, while offering all the leisure facilities of the surrounding countryside.

The opportunity to develop the few remaining plots of land within or close to the conservation area or to subdivide existing plots, which are extremely generous by today's standards, is an existing pressure which will no doubt increase in the future. Hints of the implications of this pressure can already be seen in parts of the area, where the Arcadian balance between houses and landscape is beginning to change to the detriment of the conservation area.



36. Good historic lamp post on Woodland Rise

Individual houses of diverse design are carefully sited on large plots to maintain the effect of a rural wooded landscape not dominated by the built environment. There is development pressure to divide plots or demolish existing houses and build large new houses.

Extensions to existing houses. Much of the threat to the character derives from unsuitably large and intrusive additions and inappropriate design. The individual character of many buildings is of importance and not just their woodland setting. A high proportion of houses have been identified as making a positive contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area and these should not be demolished or extended out of proportion. **This is of great importance in this Conservation Area.**

Inappropriate design of new houses and lack of new planting to replace existing and the loss of traditional details.

Mature hedges and trees and the careful use of natural cover is prevalent to conceal properties from both the roads and each other.

The original design concept remains, reinforced by individual covenants for each property. Low-density has been preserved by the “one house per plot” covenant (by reference to the original plot scheme) and the rural appearance of the estate roads (limited kerbing, wide verges) by the application of covenanted building lines.

It is important to avoid any urban details such as standard highway features, concrete kerbs, large and solid entrance gates, urban brick walls, large areas of new hardstanding or overly large individual houses.

Specific developments must be assessed not solely in relation to their own site, but from outside the site on the roads and from adjacent sites.



37. Rural scene in Blackhall Lane

11.0 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 a 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. Park Lane

11.1 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. This information should be provided by any developer.

Increasing the strength of the linkages between the Wildernesse Conservation Area and the adjoining countryside would be positive. There is easy access in many places to open countryside and this is excellent. 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 roads 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.

11.2 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.

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

11.3 Scale.

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.

11.4 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.

11.5 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.

11.6 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.



39. *Little Coombe*

11.7 Streetscape and Public Realm

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

11.8 Surface Materials

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

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

11.9 Street furniture

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

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

11.10 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.



40. Notable verge detail in Woodland Rise

11.11 Pride and Identity

The suburban area is a quintessential part of the traditional image of rural England and a vital part of the English rural economy. The Wildernesse Conservation Area faces a wide range of challenges including the economic, social and physical impact, the 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.



41. Suitable post and rail fence

12.0 Acknowledgements:

Ordnance Survey Extracts published under licence no: LA 076308 1998
Crown Copyright reserved

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

13.0 Bibliography:

Sevenoaks District Local Plan Adopted March 2000	Sevenoaks District Council
Development in the Historic Environment	English Heritage 1995
Conservation Area Appraisals	English Heritage 1997
Conservation Area Practice	English Heritage 1995 and 2006
Planning Policy Statement 5	Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010
Kent History Illustrated	Frank W Jessup
Victorian and Edwardian Kent from Old Photographs	Marcus Crouch & Wyn Bergess
Arts and Crafts Architecture	Peter Davey
Highway Works in Conservation Sensitive Areas	Kent County Council 1993
Street Improvements in Historic Areas	English Heritage Guidance Note 1993
Kent Design	Kent Design Initiative 2005
The Wildernesse Estate, Planning Guidance by The Resident's Association and Colin Davis, May 2009	

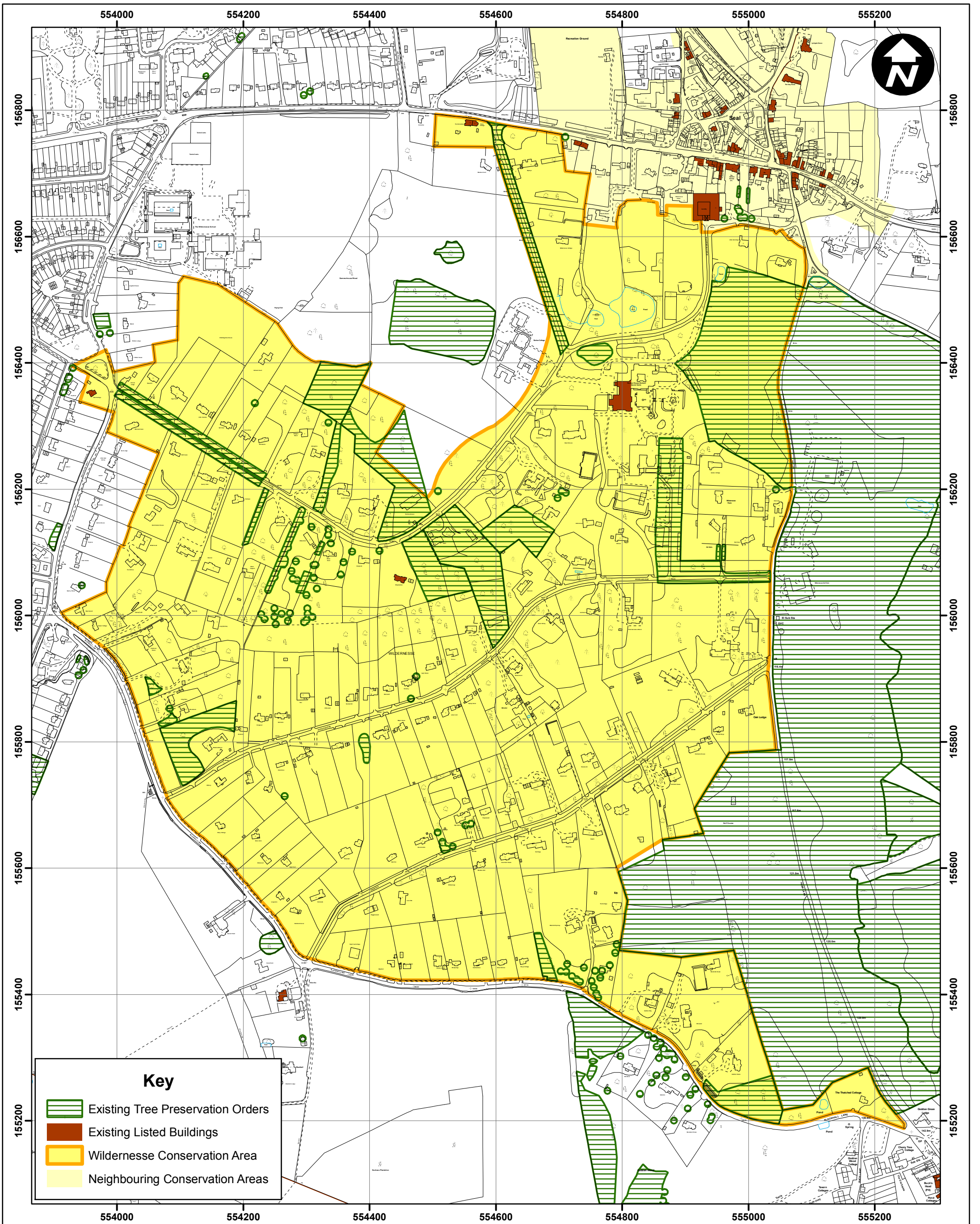
14.0 English Heritage guidance - Unlisted buildings in a conservation area

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.

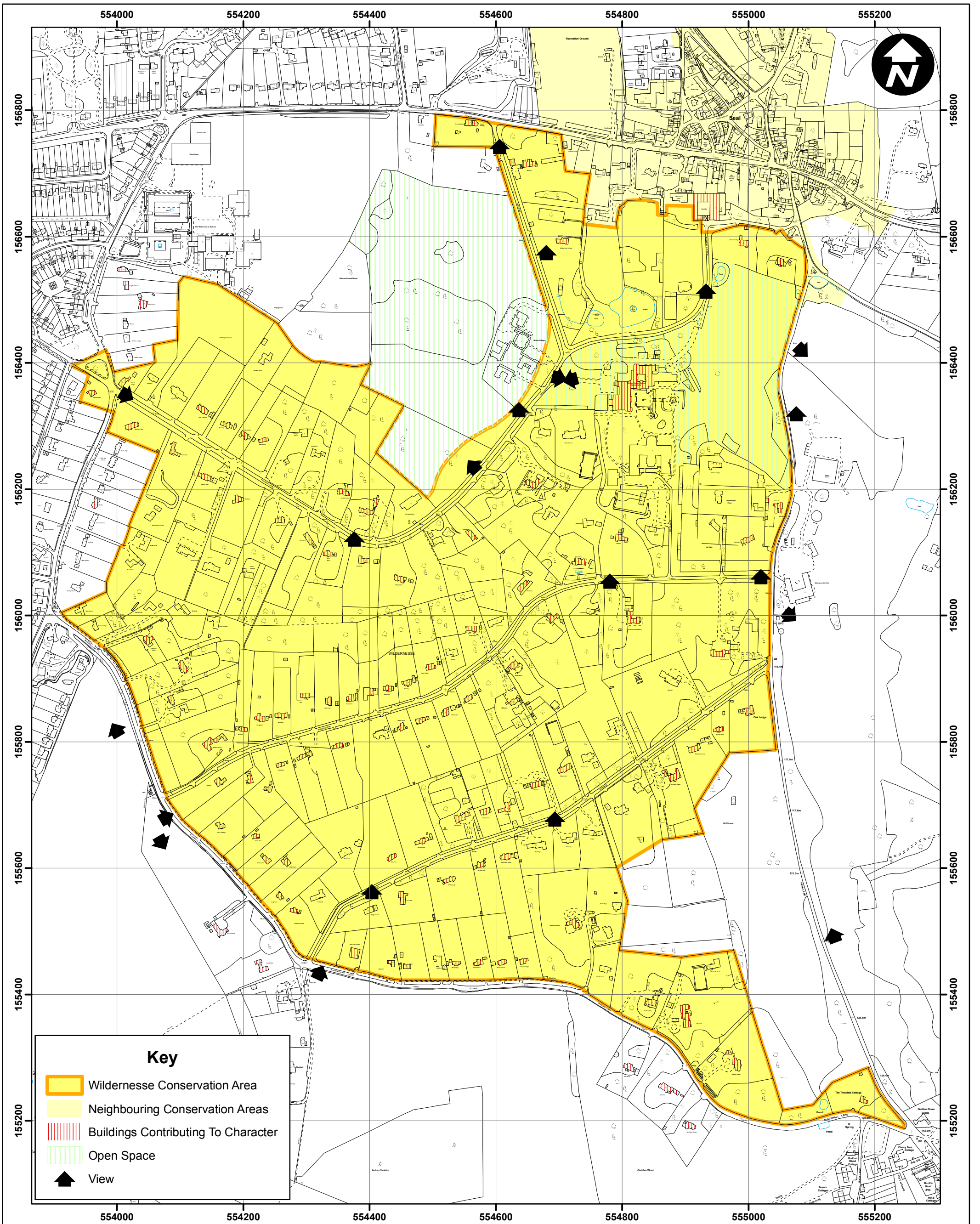
Guidance on conservation area appraisals – August 2005



This map is based upon the Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Sevenoaks District Council, 100019428, 2010.

Map 3
Wildernesse
Conservation Area
Designations

Scale 1:5,500
Date 20/04/2010
Drawn By FMcG



This map is based upon the Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Sevenoaks District Council, 100019428, 2010.

Map 4
Wildernesse
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

Scale 1:5,500
Date 20/04/2010
Drawn By FMcG