

# Supplementary Planning Document: **Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment**

Adopted April 2012



**Local  
Development  
Framework**

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**Sevenoaks**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



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*Cover photographs: Bradbourne Road (top left); Mount Harry Road (top right); Wickenden Road (middle left); The Crescent (middle right); West Heath Lane (bottom centre); Hopgarden Lane (bottom right)*

# 1 What is the Supplementary Planning Document?

Places continue to adapt and evolve. Necessary development to provide new homes and businesses for Sevenoaks will continue to come forward. The District Council is looking to ensure that future development in Sevenoaks is suited to the local character.

The 'character of an area' is often mentioned in the context of considering development proposals. What is often missing is a clear identification of, and agreement about, the locally distinctive features of an area that give it character that should be given careful regard in considering proposals for development. For this purpose, the Residential Character Areas Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out to define the character of identifiable local residential areas within the urban area of Sevenoaks excluding the Conservation Areas - for which separate guidance has already been prepared - and non-residential areas (see Map 1). For the purposes of the Local Development Framework, the Sevenoaks urban area is defined as Sevenoaks town, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Bessels Green and Chipstead.

Good design is a key element of sustainable development, so the District Council will promote a high standard of design. A high quality, well designed, development can enhance the sense of place and identity of an area and can bring significant benefits to the local environment and economy.

The Adopted Core Strategy states that all new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated and that account should be taken of guidance adopted by the Council in the form of local Character Area Assessments. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

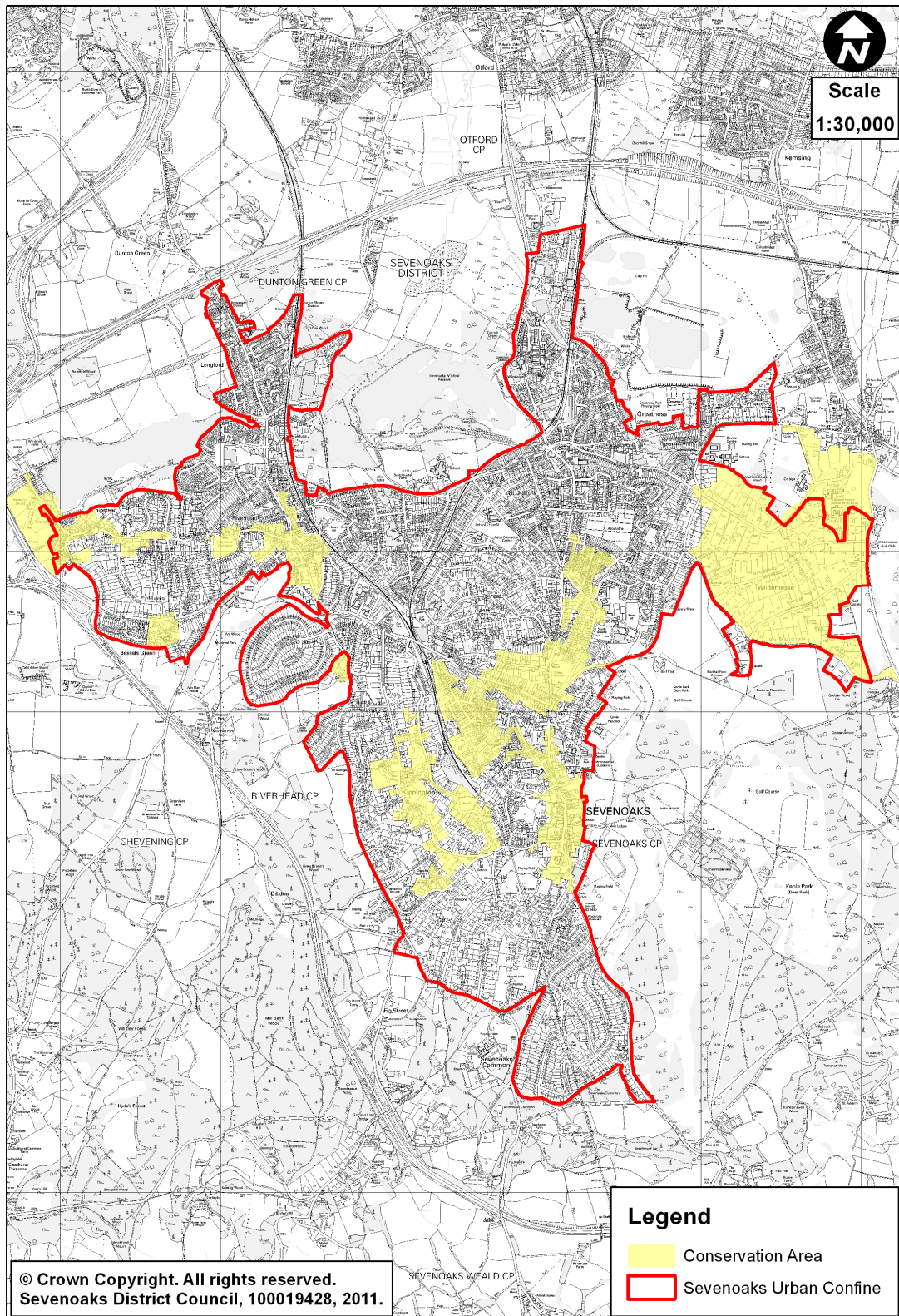
This SPD helps identify the local distinctive character and design guidance to assist the Council in making decisions about the appropriateness of development proposals.

Some minor development is permitted, by Parliament, without the need for a planning application (usually known as "permitted development") and, home owners and developers who are considering such alterations are encouraged to refer to the distinctive characteristics of their area as described in this SPD when considering even minor development. The Council's planning staff will also use the SPD as a basis for giving advice to those who intend to exercise permitted development rights. Although the Council will not be in a position to *require* these good design principles in such cases, it will nevertheless encourage their use where possible.

The SPD will be adopted as part of the LDF. Once adopted, it will be a material consideration in determining planning applications in that part of Sevenoaks to which it applies. Developers and householders should refer to the document in formulating proposals.

The document aims to raise the standard of design of new proposals such that they fit well with the locally distinctive character of an area. Design which is considered to be inappropriate in its context is unlikely to be acceptable and efforts will be made to improve the character and quality of an area through the preparation and consideration of development proposals.





Map 1: Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment SPD boundary

## **2 Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document**

This SPD aims:

- To supplement adopted design policies for assessing development proposals within an area;
- To identify the locally distinctive features that define the character of those residential areas within Sevenoaks urban area which are not included within the town's Conservation Areas;
- To raise awareness of, and provide guidance on, the appropriateness of the design of development within an area in order to strengthen diversity rather than erode character and local distinctiveness;
- To assist the appraisal of planning and allied applications; and
- To deliver improved designs, in practice, which enhance the character of the area

### **3 Policy Context**

The SPD is consistent with national planning policy and is supplementary to the policies set out in the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) contained in the LDF.

#### **3.1 National Planning Policies**

*The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)* states that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. The Local Development Framework should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its present defining characteristics.

Planning policies should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and reflect the identity of local surroundings, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation, and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Planning policies should establish a strong sense of place and address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Policies should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, but it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

#### **3.2 Sevenoaks District Core Strategy – February 2011**

One of the prime aims of the Core Strategy is to ensure that new development throughout the District will be of a high quality incorporating designs that respond to the distinctive local character of areas of high environmental quality or make a positive contribution to the environmental enhancement of other areas.

Adopted Core Strategy Policy SP 1 states that

All new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated. Account should be taken of guidance adopted by the Council in the form of ... local Character Area Assessments...

In areas where the local environment lacks positive features new development should contribute to an improvement in the quality of the environment.

#### **3.3 Saved Local Plan Policy - September 2007, the Secretary of State approved the submitted Saved Policies Schedule**

Saved Local Plan policy EN1 sets out a number of criteria which any development proposal should meet in order to make the development compatible with the locality including scale, height, site coverage, materials and landscaping. The layout of the proposed development should respect the topography of the site and retain important features including trees, hedgerows and shrubs. New landscaping and boundary treatment will be required in appropriate cases. The proposed development should not result in the loss of important buildings or related spaces.

### **3.4 Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document – May 2009**

This supplementary planning document (SPD) is part of Sevenoaks District Council's Local Development Framework. Extensions are a common form of development in the District and therefore have an important influence on shaping the local environment. The SPD is intended for applicants, agents, planning officers and local residents to assist with improving the quality of development and address the issues of design, amenity and other important considerations. This SPD indicates the general parameters and the criteria by which planning applications for home extensions will be judged, although the principles contained in this guidance promote good practice and should be relevant whether planning permission is required or not. It is intended to create a high-quality, sustainable built environment in line with the Council's aspirations for its present and future residents.

### **3.5 Development Management Draft Policies – May 2011**

Draft Policy SC2 – Design principles states

To ensure that new development is designed to a high quality and responds to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated, proposals will be subject to the following design criteria:

- a) The form of the proposed development should respond to the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the locality
- b) The layout of the proposed development should respect the topography of the site, retain important...trees, hedges and shrubs...

## 4 Methodology

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises local authorities to prepare robust policies on design. These should be based on an understanding and evaluation of the present defining characteristics of an area and that is the purpose and function of this SPD.

The evaluation of the Sevenoaks urban area has involved an assessment of the character of the development of the area through the review of historic maps; comprehensive site surveys using the approach and characteristics advocated in *By Design – Urban design in the planning system (DETR, 2000)*<sup>1</sup>.

An initial appraisal was undertaken of all areas of the town covered by this SPD and it was evident that a number of areas shared similar characteristics. From this assessment it was possible to identify a typology of character areas such as Victorian/ Edwardian areas; Inter War Planned Development; Garden City Influenced Planned Development; Informal Lanes and Open Plan Housing.

Where an area grew up sporadically over time through piecemeal development and redevelopment, this has led to mixed house types and layouts. These areas have been classified as Mixed Character Areas.

Although not necessarily physically adjoining each other, each character area typology generally grew up over the same period (with the exception of Mixed Character Areas) using layouts, designs and materials which were based on the technology, legislation and planning and design philosophies of that time. Thus these character area typologies shared common generic characteristics which were recorded using the following matrices:

- Locally Distinctive Contextual Features
- Locally Distinctive Positive Features
- Negative Features

Street by street surveys were then undertaken of each of the separate areas which made up the broad character area typologies. These surveys identified features which were specific to each area such as landscape and townscape features, landmarks, views and detracting features. Locally Distinctive Positive and Negative Features were recorded for each area as text and on a Townscape Analysis Map.

Identifying the generic and area-specific Locally Distinctive Contextual and Positive Features should assist in interpreting Core Strategy Policy SP1 and Development Management Draft Policy SC2 which seek designs which fit well with the local context and protect and conserve the character and local distinctiveness of an area. By identifying the Locally Distinctive Negative Features, the SPD also indicates features which could, through the application of Policy SP1, be enhanced particularly through development opportunities. Representative groups and elected Members of the District Council assisted at each of these stages – see Community Involvement.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1



## 5 Community Involvement

Community involvement in the preparation of the SPD has followed the District Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). There has been close stakeholder involvement in preparing this SPD in order to develop a shared vision with the local community of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and to develop appropriate design guidance.

Prior to the drafting of the SPD, several local stakeholder events were held.

Firstly, a briefing session was held involving District Council officers, local amenity and resident groups<sup>2</sup>, local Ward Councillors, Sevenoaks Town Council, Chipstead Parish Council, Chevening Parish Council, Dunton Green Parish Council, Sevenoaks Conservation Council and Sevenoaks Society followed by a discussion on draft character area typologies and character area boundaries.

Secondly, a series of walkabouts were held involving District Council officers, local amenity and resident associations, local Ward Councillors, Town and Parish Councillors and the Planning Portfolio holder and appropriate groups visited each sub-area to observe and record the key features which made up the character of the area.

Ward Councillors have been kept informed from the inception of the SPD and have participated in the process of assisting with the preparation of the consultation document.

The Planning Consultants preparing the SPD and the District Council would like to thank the individuals and organisations who have contributed to the process to date.

Formal consultation under Regulation 17 on the Sevenoaks Residential Character Areas Assessment SPD took place in January/February 2012. A staffed exhibition explaining the consultation document was held during the consultation period.

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2

## **6 Origins and Development of Sevenoaks, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Bessels Green and Chipstead**

Environments grow in response to local circumstances and it is therefore important to understand the principal influences which created the distinctive character areas of Sevenoaks, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Bessels Green and Chipstead.

It is believed that the original settlement of Sevenoaks was formed when early inhabitants progressively cleared glades in the thickly wooded countryside to make swine pastures which later developed into the Wealden villages. It is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, but formed part of Otford Manor which also included Shoreham, Halstead, Chevening, Woodlands, Sevenoaks Weald and Penshurst with a total recorded population of about 600. Sevenoaks at this time consisted of a small cluster of houses around the sub-manor of Knole. The first church was constructed in Sevenoaks in the 11th century at the site of the present St Nicholas' Church.

Sevenoaks began to grow partly because of the success of the submanors at Kippington, Blackhall, Brittain's and Knole, whose names were all first recorded in the medieval period and partly because of the thriving market which was founded in 1207.

Flemish weavers settled in the area in the 14th Century and weaving flourished for around 300 years. Other immigrants followed in Tudor times, engaged in papermaking, market gardening, hop growing and coal extraction. Iron smelting followed in the 17th Century.

By 1687 the structure of the High Street and market place was well established. Around this central area, the land was owned by the estates of Knole, Kippington, Bradbourne, Montreal, Greatness, Wildernesse, Beechmont and Sevenoaks Park. The great scale of Knole reflected its role in the County as the home of the Archbishops of Canterbury from the 15th century until it was bought from Archbishop Cranmer by King Henry VIII. The Bosville family came to Bradbourne in 1555. Thomas Farnaby bought Kippington in 1630. In the late 18th century and early 19th centuries a number of these estates enclosed common land to increase their extent and influence. For example the Polhill family transformed the Chipstead to Riverhead road into a private drive and the Wildernesse estate enclosed Stiddolphs Heath (now Hillingdon Avenue).

Prior to the arrival of the railways, employment in the town was based on running the estates and a variety of local industries including silk weaving, corn milling, papermaking, brickfields and whitening quarries.

The town began to expand northwards in the Victorian period. The first major housing development was a working class area at Hartslands in the 1840s. However with the arrival of the railway and Bat and Ball Station which was opened in 1862 and Tubs Hill Station in 1868, Sevenoaks began to form a base for commuting to London and areas of villas grew up. In 1873, the settlement reached to just south of Oak Lane and northwards along the High Street to Seal Hollow Road and up the London Road to Tubs Hill. The St Johns area was separated from the main built up area by the Vine Court Estate. However by 1898, development extended to the Tub's Hill station and westwards around Granville, Eardley and Argyle Roads. To the east the Vine Court Estate was laid out for housing connecting St John's with the main settlement. Vine Court Road and Avenue Road were laid out in 1885. The lands between these two were filled in between 1890 and 1914. The area around Hitchen Hatch Lane began to be developed as villas set within large plots.

The decimation of population from the Great War meant that many large houses in Sevenoaks were no longer viable. They were sold off for redevelopment in smaller parcels or were demolished, in either case to make way for the increasing commuter population. After the Wildernesse estate was sold in 1924 a series of large homes were erected to the individual designs of H.M. Baillie Scott and other respected Arts and Crafts Architects, creating in effect a leafy suburb on the north eastern edge of Sevenoaks, which is today a Conservation Area.

Chipstead Place was demolished in 1932 and building plots were put up for sale in 1934 along Packhorse Road, Westerham Road and Holmdean Road. Land along Chipstead Lane, formerly comprising quarries, sandpits and the kitchen gardens of Chipstead Place were developed as loops and cul-de-sacs of detached housing in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result of these developments, Sevenoaks expanded westwards to form a continuous built up area with the villages of Bessels Green and Chipstead.

The Montreal Estate, which had expanded to include the Kippington Estate in 1863 was sold off in the 1920s and in 1936 was split up. Development was halted by the Second World War, so building began in the 1950s creating the extensive Montreal Park and surrounding areas.

The Bradbourne Estate was situated between the two branches of the railway line south of the A25. The 18th century Bradbourne Hall was demolished in 1937 and a grid of roads was laid out which combined with ribbon development along the A25 created a continuous built up area between Riverhead and Bat and Ball.

Some areas were developed as planned estates as in Montreal Park. However in other areas, such as Kippington, Packhorse and Oakhill Roads, individual plots were sold for development often with covenants specifying the minimum value of the house and set back from the road. The White Hart estates for example required low walls and hedges. Such covenants contributed to the spacious character of the inter-war and early post-war expansion of the town. Some later developments in the 1960s and 1970s required an unenclosed layout, creating areas with a distinctive open plan identity which include Beaconsfield•, Brittain's Lane and Chesterfield Drive.

During the 1930s Sevenoaks also expanded northwards with ribbon development and planned estates extending up the London Road connecting Riverhead and Dunton Green and up the Otford Road. To the east of the Otford Road, the Greatness Estate was donated to the Town Council in the 1920s and was subsequently developed, mainly for public housing, forming a northward extension of the town. Other areas of public housing were developed in the 1930s in the Hillingdon area and in the 1950s and 1960s in the Kippington, Bradbourne and Solefields areas. The early public developments were often laid out with reference to the Garden City movement with semi-detached properties set in individual gardens facing onto green open spaces and footpaths. Later developments were more compact.

Since 1960, the rapid expansion of the town ceased with the introduction of the Green Belt and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Most development since that time has been within the urban boundary on infill plots or through the redevelopment of earlier properties at higher densities. Sevenoaks has few of the extensive 1960s and 1970s housing developments found on the edges of many Kent towns.

Sevenoaks today has retained the character of a country market town. The growth and evolution of the town has been complicated and piecemeal resulting in a

complex pattern of development reflected in the large number of character areas identified in this document. Within the wider built up area, the village centres have maintained their identity with each of the centres of Riverhead, Dunton Green, Bessels Green and Chipstead having an historic core.

## **7 How to use the Document and Key Map**

The next sections of the SPD divide the Sevenoaks urban area into separate residential character areas based on the methodology and community involvement set out above.

Each separate character area is named and numbered on Map 2 below. If you are interested in a particular area, locate it on Map 2 and turn to the section on that character area. The relevant page can be found by reference to the Contents page.

For each of the individual areas there is an assessment of the locally distinctive contextual features such as age, height and types of buildings; main uses; prominent building materials and boundary treatments and open spaces. Locally distinctive positive features and negative features are also recorded. Key characteristics of each Character Area are illustrated on a Townscape Map and the key is set out below. Annotated photographs are also included to depict part of the character of the area.

In setting out the important features and overall character of identifiable residential areas of Sevenoaks, a local context is provided for the preparation and consideration of development proposals. This forms a canvas within which proposals for development should be conceived and determined. Design Guidance based on the identified locally distinctive features is included for each Character Area. This along with other relevant planning policy documents and guidance will form the basis for decision making on development proposals.

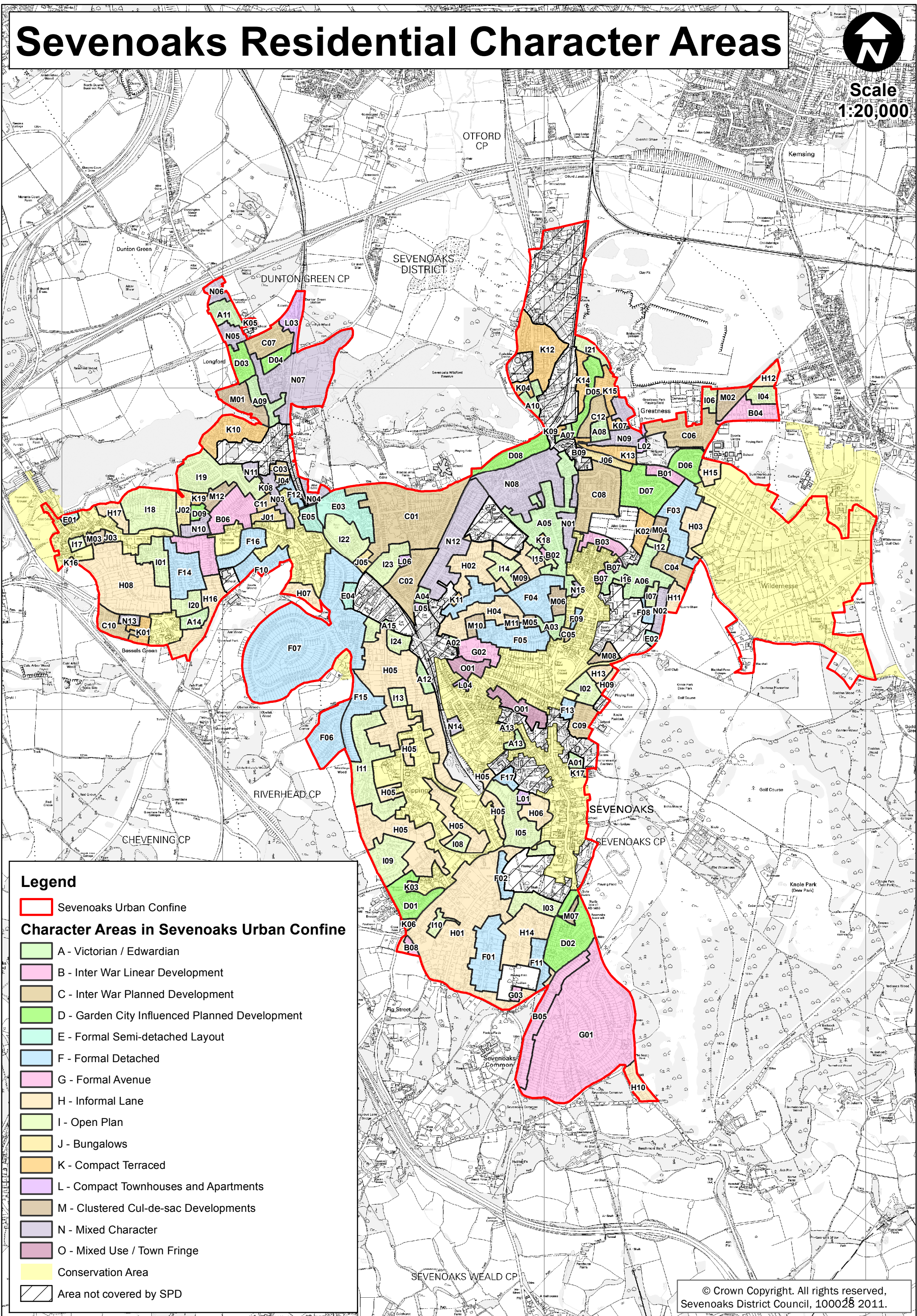
Whilst the principal characteristics for all areas have been summarised, it has not been possible to illustrate each individual feature and consequently the absence of a feature from this document does not necessarily mean that it is unimportant to the character of the local area.



# Sevenoaks Residential Character Areas



Scale  
1:20,000



## Legend

Sevenoaks Urban Confine

### Character Areas in Sevenoaks Urban Confine

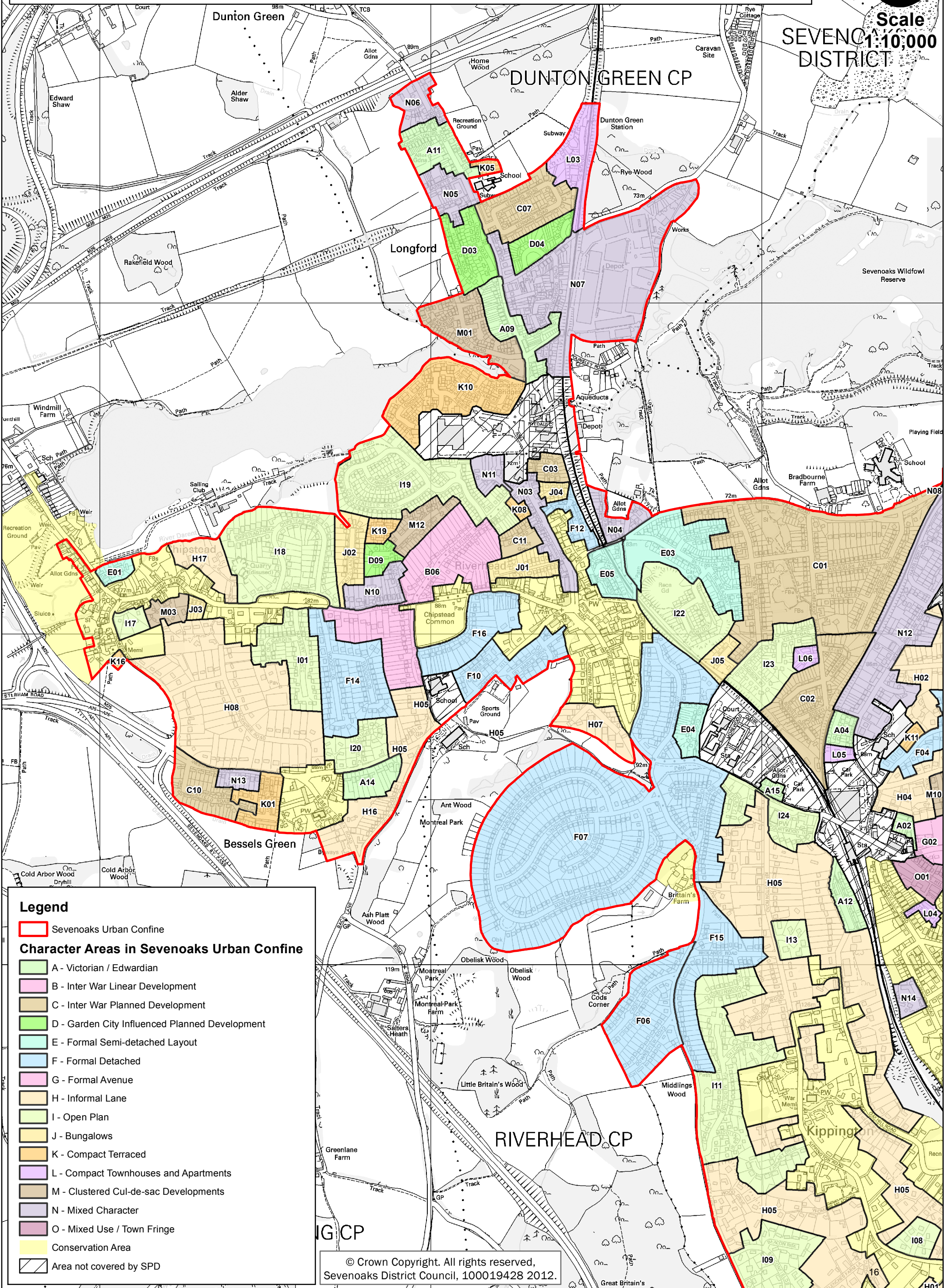
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- N - Mixed Character
- O - Mixed Use / Town Fringe
- Conservation Area
- Area not covered by SPD



# Sevenoaks Residential Character Areas



Scale 1:10,000  
SEVENOAKS DISTRICT



## Legend

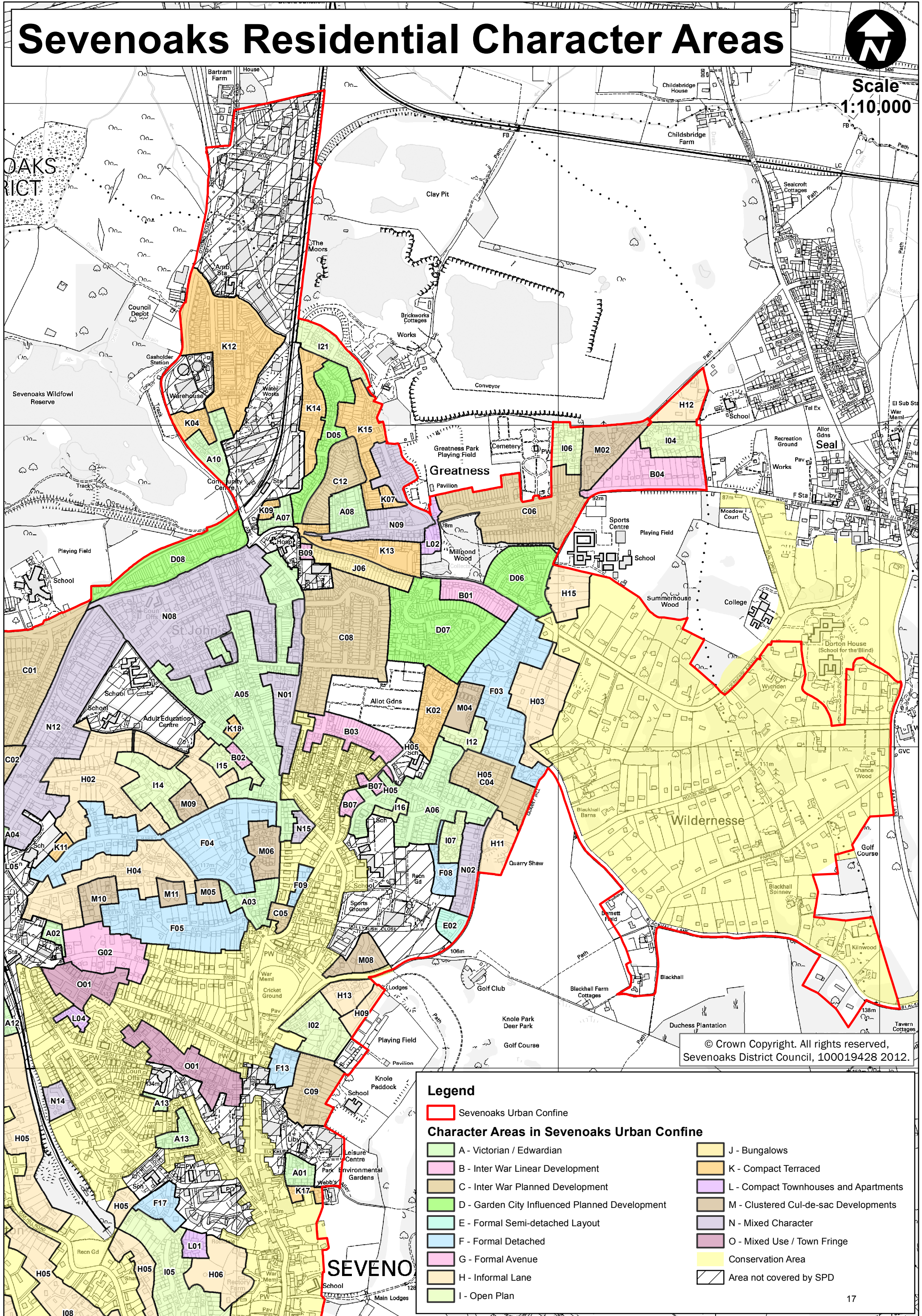
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# Sevenoaks Residential Character Areas



Scale  
1:10,000



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## Legend

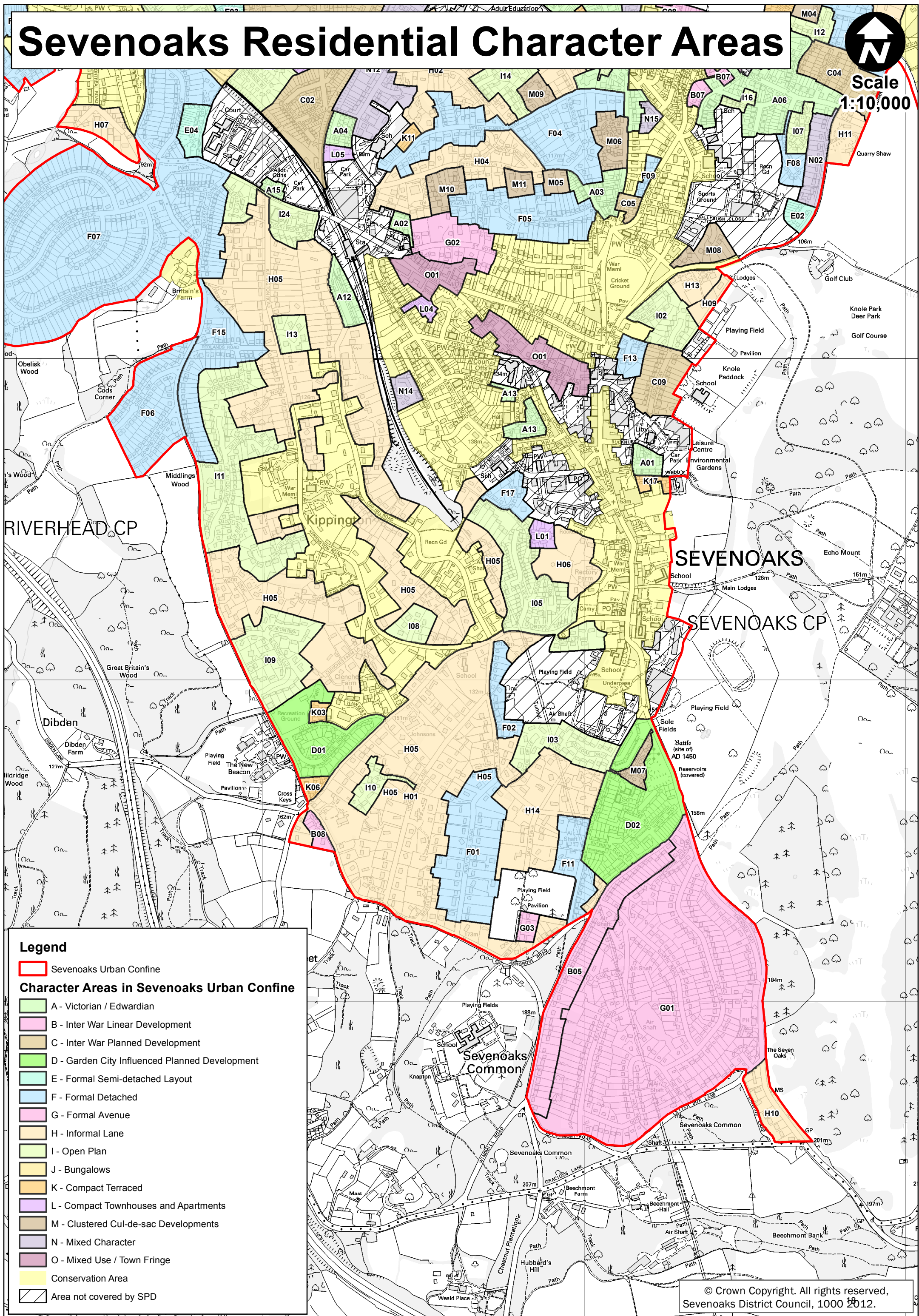
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## Legend

→ Views

Visual Intrusion

Important Boundary

Landmark

Important Tree

Townscape Feature

Listed Lamppost

Listed Building

Important Tree And Hedge Belt

Node

Open Space

Urban Confine Boundary

## Character Areas in Sevenoaks Urban Confine

A - Victorian / Edwardian

B - Inter War Linear Development

C - Inter War Planned Development

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L - Compact Townhouses and Apartments

M - Clustered Cul-de-sac Developments

N - Mixed Character

O - Mixed Use / Town Fringe

Conservation Area

Area not covered by SPD



## **8 List of Character Areas**

### **A Victorian/ Edwardian**

- A01 Buckhurst Avenue p.29
- A02 St. Botolph's Avenue p.33
- A03 Dartford Road/ Hitchen Hatch Lane p.37
- A04 Bosville Road p.43
- A05 St John's Road Area p.46
- A06 Bayham Road Area p.58
- A07 Seal Road/ Chatham Hill Road p.66
- A08 Seal Road/ Greatness Road/Grove Road p.70
- A09 London Road/ Milton Road Area p.75
- A10 Otford Road/ Cramptons Road p.79
- A11 London Road/ Donnington Road p.83
- A12 Holyoake Terrace p.88
- A13 Victoria Road Area p.91
- A14 Westerham Road (east) p.95
- A15 Quarry Cottages p.101

### **B Inter War Linear Development**

- B01 Hillingdon Avenue (east) p.107
- B02 Bradbourne Road p.110
- B03 Quaker's Hall Lane p.113
- B04 Seal Road p.117
- B05 Weald Road p.121
- B06 Bullfinch Lane p.125
- B07 Bayham Road p.130
- B08 Ashgrove Road p.133
- B09 Hospital Road p.136

### **C Inter War Planned Development**

- C01 Lambarde Road p.141

- C02 Bosville Drive p.147
- C03 Hamlin Road p.151
- C04 Hillside Road p.155
- C05 Vine Court Road p.159
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- C11 Orchard Road p.185
- C12 Greatness Lane p.189

### **D Garden City Influence Planned Development**

- D01 Grange Road p.195
- D02 Solefields Road p.199
- D03 Lusted Road p.204
- D04 Crescent Cottages p.208
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- D09 Bullfinch Close West p.229

### **E Formal Semi-detached Layout**

- E01 Darent Close p.235
- E02 The Paddocks p.238
- E03 Betenson Avenue p.241
- E04 Uplands Close p.245
- E05 Church Fields p.248

### **F Formal Detached**

- F01 Burntwood Road p.255

F02 Grassy Lane (east side) p.259  
F03 Wildernesse Mount Area p.262  
F04 Mount Harry Road Area p.267  
F05 Vine Avenue/Ashley Road Area p.273  
F06 Downsview Road p.278  
F07 Montreal Park p.282  
F08 Knole Road p.288  
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