

Vine Court

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

PLANNING GUIDANCE



Front of Walthamstow School

2009

Vine Court

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 May 2009 and adopted as Informal Planning Guidance.

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Mature house in Dartford Road

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Mature planting along Dartford Road

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Junction of Vine Court Road, Hollybush Lane, Hartslands Road and Bayham Road

1.00 INTRODUCTION



12 Dartford Road

This document replaces the Vine Court Conservation Area Appraisal which was produced in July 2000 by Sevenoaks District Council in collaboration with Sevenoaks Town Council and local amenity groups. 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, but the Conservation Area has recently been completely re-surveyed and the boundary revised. During this process, photographs were taken and both positive and negative elements recorded. However, the omission of any particular feature or building does not imply that it is of no significance.

A thorough review of the existing boundary was undertaken as part of the preliminary survey work associated with this Appraisal. Generally, it is considered that the existing boundary, which was reviewed in 1992, accurately reflects the extent of the area of special architectural or historic interest but one small change was made in October 2007.

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.

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.



Wall in Bayham Road – note loss of historic railings

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.

1.2 The Benefits of Being in a Conservation Area

The historic environment is of particular economic 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 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 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.



Attractive curve on Bayham Road looking NE from Hollybush Lane

1.3 Purpose of Appraisals and Management Plans

As their number grows, it has become even more important for local authorities to include a well-defined and considered policy for designated conservation areas in their development plans. Development pressures are such that any designation is likely to be subjected to detailed scrutiny and must be readily and demonstrably defensible against adverse criticism. The criteria for designation should be kept as uniform as possible and the public should be kept fully aware of the reasons for any proposed changes in their area.

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

English Heritage published an advisory leaflet on appraisals in 1997 and more detailed guidance on both appraisals and management plans in 2006. This guidance outlines the preferred approach to these plans and gives examples of the type of content that it would be useful to include.

The principal purpose of this Appraisal is to provide a firm basis upon which proposals for development within the Vine Court Conservation Area can be assessed, through defining those key elements that contribute to the special historic and architectural character and which should be preserved. Saved policies contained in the Local Plan and the emerging LDF Core Strategy and should be read in conjunction with the Plan. The plan will 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. This new Appraisal and Management Plan is based on the Vine Court Conservation Area Appraisal 2000. The Plan sets objectives for the protection and enhancement of the conservation area, addresses areas identified in the first appraisal and brings forward opportunities to enhance the area.

1.4 The key purpose of this Plan is to:

- 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 in Sevenoaks.
- 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



Galletting in Hollybush Lane

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.

2.00 GUIDANCE AND POLICIES

2.1 National and Regional Guidance

Government advice concerning conservation areas and historic buildings is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, Planning and the Historic Environment. Further advice about conservation areas including the production of management proposals, was produced by English Heritage in 2006. The Regional Spatial Strategy and Kent & Medway Structure Plan policies also provide the general strategic policy context.

2.2 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 and the Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006 (until it is superseded by the South East Plan in July 2009 (policy BE6)) 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.



Interesting sewer vent pipe on Vine Court Road

2.3 Local Policies

The Kent and Medway Structure Plan includes a number of policies, which are particularly important in conservation areas. Policy QL 1 indicates that all development should be well designed and of high quality and should respond positively to the scale, layout, pattern and character of local surroundings. Policy QL6 states that the primary planning policy in conservation areas is to preserve or enhance their special character or appearance and QL8 says that listed buildings will be preserved and their architectural and historic integrity and the character of their settings will be protected and enhanced.

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.**



Junction of Hartslands Road and Vine Court Road

2.4 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. Important areas of greenspace within the built confines are safeguarded under policy EN9.

2.5 Buildings Contributing to Character

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

2.6 Conservation and Enhancement

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 state 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 part of Sevenoaks has a rich townscape and an environment of high quality. This appraisal aims to ensure that this rich context is respected so that only design solutions of a high standard are introduced, allowing the area to continue to maintain its quality and status as one of the most desirable places in the south east.

There is a richness, variety, quality and history of townscape within this area that is special and a need to maintain and enhance the best of this quality is crucial. Context and quality design is vitally important in reinforcing the character of this area and this character must not be lost through undue pressure for poorly designed infill development or redevelopment of an unacceptable nature.

2.7 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.



St John's Hall, Hollybush Lane

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.

Houses and their alteration The size of an extension that may be built without the need to apply for planning permission is more restricted within a conservation area. Any proposals should always be discussed with the Council at an early stage. Planning permission is likely to be required for the erection of any building or structure within the garden of

the house, for example, a workshop, pavilion, greenhouse and so on (where these are larger than 10m³).

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

Other commercial premises and flats

Any extension or alteration to other commercial premises or residential flats, which materially affects the external appearance of the building, will require a planning application to be made. This is particularly important within conservation areas, where even small alterations can materially affect the character and appearance of the area. For instance, such alterations can include rendering brickwork, replacement of slates with concrete tiles, and replacement windows. The advice of the relevant development control team should be sought before carrying out any changes.

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 115m³ or any substantial part of such building.
- any wall of fence (or substantial part) less than 1m high fronting onto the street or less than 2m 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.

Trees

Six weeks notice must be given to the Council of any work to a tree within a conservation Area. 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 1.5m (4'11") above the ground and trees already covered by a Tree Preservation Order, in which case any works will require consent.

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.

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, shopfronts, lights, and hard surfacing, can change an area's character. In a conservation area few of the buildings are isolated. Even if they are detached they are part of a wider street scene, often of buildings of similar style and size. Altering the appearance, form or size of any one building can affect not only that building, but the whole street. Unsympathetic replacement windows (particularly where the size of the openings are changed or inappropriate materials used) can alter the appearance of a

building considerably. Where a number of different designs are used along a street, the rhythm and unity of its original appearance can be spoilt.

Painting or rendering over original brickwork is another alteration which can dramatically change a property's appearance and irreparably damage the street scene. As well as covering up attractive brickwork, it can obscure original architectural and brick detailing and requires regular redecoration to maintain an attractive appearance. In older buildings paint or render can also trap moisture which may cause damage to walls. Many alterations to older properties using modern materials can upset the balance within these properties and can cause more costly problems, such as cracks, damp, or rot. Care should be taken with any alteration to an older building.

Boundary treatments

Boundary treatment, especially to the street, is an essential feature of any property. Original boundaries, whether a brick or ragstone wall, railings, fencing or hedges, should be retained wherever possible and every effort made to reinstate missing boundary treatments with a sympathetic replacement. The particular design and the materials used should take account of the character of the property and the surrounding area. There are some very attractive historic walls throughout the Conservation Area.

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.

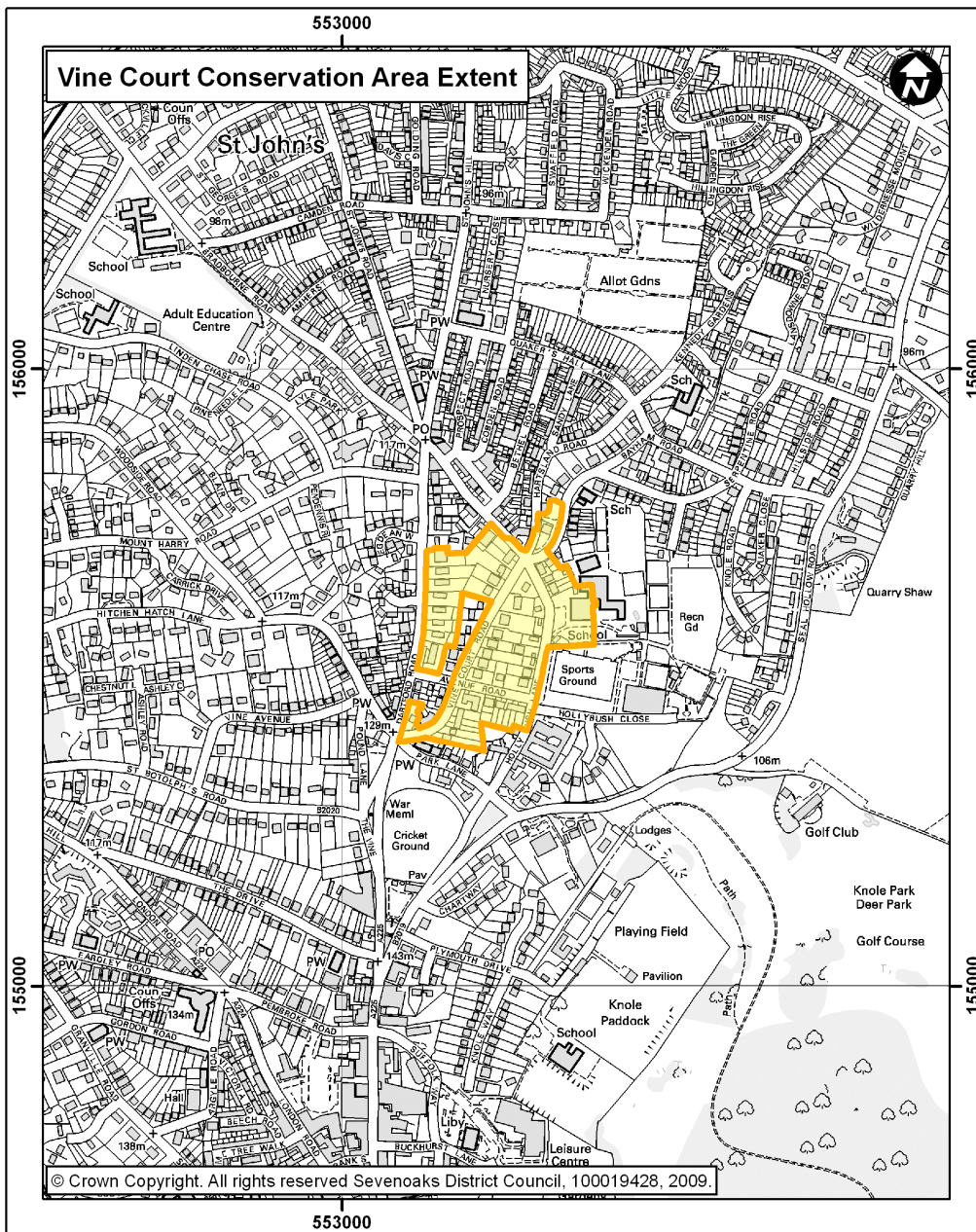


Restricted parking thin primrose lines on Hollybush Lane

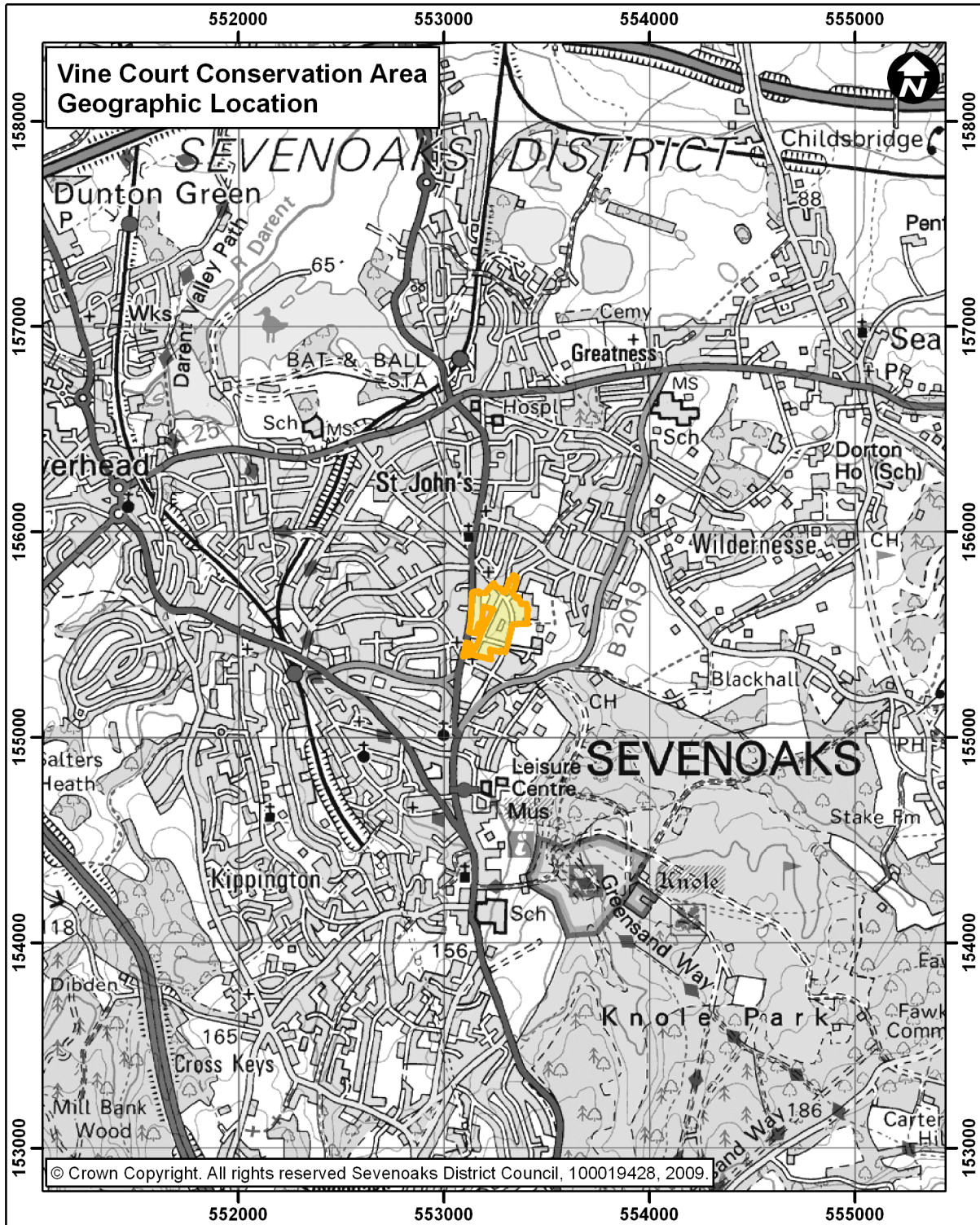
3.00 CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT

3.1 General Description

Vine Court Conservation Area covers about 6 and a half hectares immediately to the north of the Vine Cricket ground. It includes a substantial area between Dartford Road and Vine Court Road, all of the area between Vine Court Road and Hollybush Lane as well as Walthamstow Hall School and the adjacent houses and the property at the southern tip of Bayham Road and Hartsland Road. The northern end has a significant number of important trees that are protected with preservation orders. The area is still mainly residential. The school owns 6 Hollybush Lane. A few modern buildings have been inserted at the ends of the substantial gardens to the houses in Vine Court Road but in the main the character of the area has changed little since it was first built.



Map 1 Extent of Vine Court Conservation Area



Map 2 Geographical Location

3.2 Location and Geographical Context

Sevenoaks is a prosperous market town of approximately 19,000 people, situated on the north slope of the Greensand ridge to the south of the North Downs from which it is separated by the Vale of Holmesdale. It is served by good road and rail links to London and the west, and has an easy connection to the A21, which bypasses the town

and runs to the south coast. The town lies to the south of the M26 motorway and there is a single direction westbound interchange, which gives access to the M25.

The A21 bypass continues northwards round the west of the town and interconnects with the M25 to the Dartford crossing and with the A20 and A2 westbound to central London and east to the channel ports. Sevenoaks has easy access to major road transport routes without having the inconvenience of a major artery running through the town.

It is the rail network however, with its frequent services to London, that has allowed the growth of Sevenoaks and its surrounding villages as a commuter town and at present some 2 million passenger journeys per year use this link to the capital, and Tonbridge to the south. Sevenoaks Station at Tubs Hill is the fifth busiest in Kent.

Sevenoaks is a prosperous town, with 85% of its population classified as professional, managerial, technical or skilled. 16% of the working population travel to work by rail, compared to a 6% national average. Car ownership is high with 80% of householders owning one and 50% owning two or more vehicles; 75% of children are taken to school by car. Bus services in the area are generally considered poor. The high level of car ownership and use is contributing to congestion and poor air quality. Traffic congestion can be heavy at peak times, despite the relief provided by the A21 bypass.



Green area to east of Hollybush Lane

3.3 Historical Development

Vine Court Conservation Area was designated because of its architectural and historic value. The development of houses between Vine Court Road and Hollybush Lane is an interesting example of a historic seventeenth century house being demolished in the last century to make way for a planned scheme of new roads and buildings.

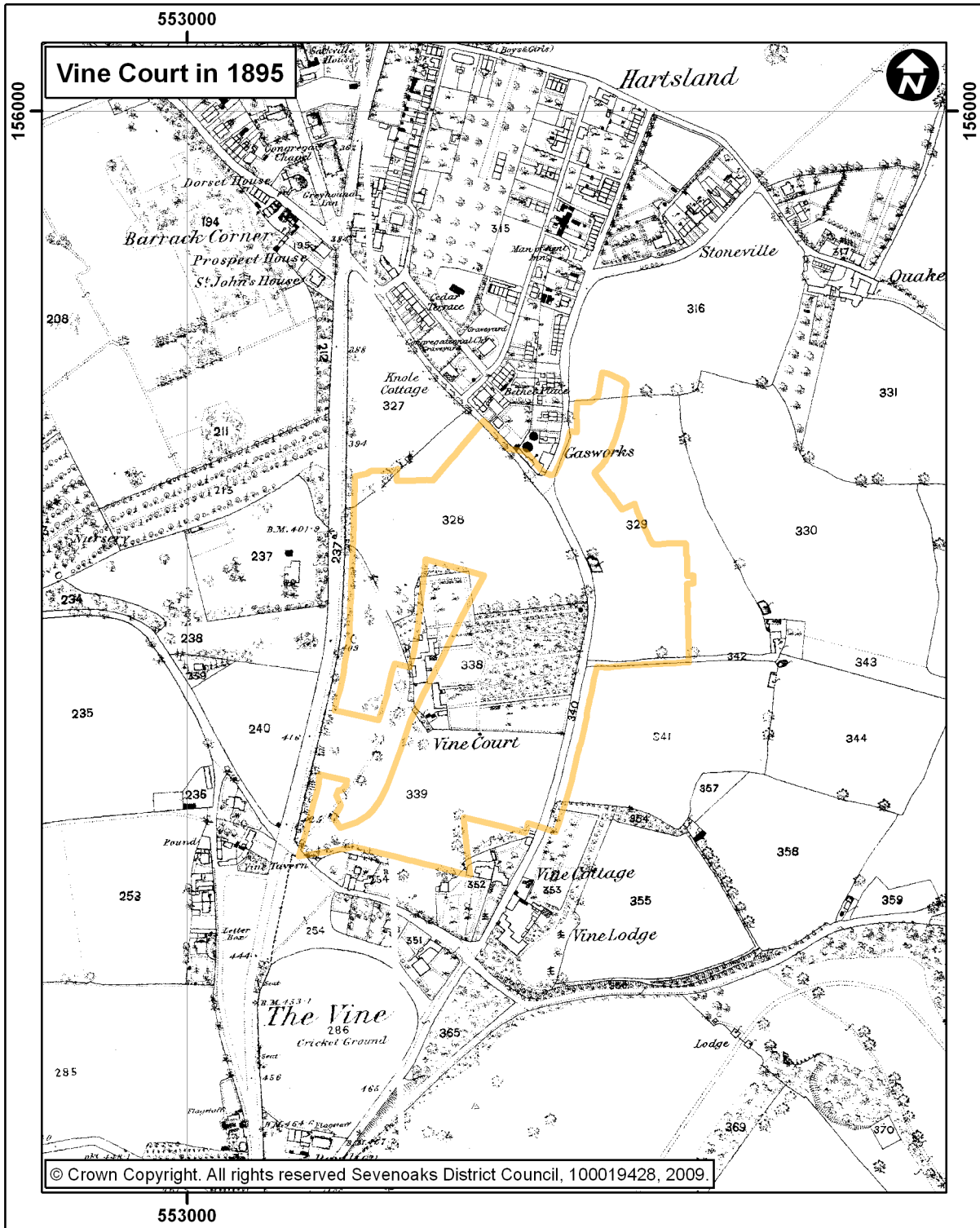
Vine Court, built in the mid-seventeenth century, was demolished sometime during 1884, after the estate was sold, and the new building phase commenced. The houses are good quality individual Victorian houses serving the prosperous new commuting classes that moved to the area following the opening of Sevenoaks Station at Tubs Hill. Vine Court Road and Avenue Road were laid out in 1885 and the first phase of houses appear on the Ordnance Survey map of 1895. By 1909 the remainder had been completed and the layout of the area was established.

Walthamstow Hall School moved from London into the purpose built accommodation in the nineteenth century. The present school building was completed in 1874. The latest addition is the new swimming pool, completed in August 2007.

It is fascinating to note that Hollybush Lane follows an ancient path round the Vine Court Estate.



An early print of Vine Court



The coming of the railway initiated the most significant change in the town's development. For hundreds of years Sevenoaks remained constricted to its hill top site surrounded by a number of country estates such as Knole, Kippington, Montreal, Bradbourne, Greatness and Wildernesse. The first station opened at Bat and Ball in 1862 and the station at Tubs Hill followed in 1868. Sevenoaks then began its expansion into a base for commuting workers to London. This second, and now more important railway line was delayed due to topographical limitations along the deep valley between the town and the Kippington estate, and from this time onwards new development began to stretch northwards from the historic town centre. This is crucial when considering any area in Sevenoaks.



Attractive old road sign compromised by modern, standard and inappropriate posts. Also note poor quality highway maintenance.

3.4 Historic landscape

The area maintains an historic and defining relationship with the surrounding countryside. Prominent landscape surrounds the area and notably lies on the east beyond Walthamstow Hall School

3.5 Trees and Natural Features

Trees and open space contribute strongly to the special character of The Vine Court Conservation Area. Retaining mature trees and hedges is fundamental to preserving this 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.



Typical Large Villas on Vine Court Road

3.6 Architectural Description

The large residential properties constructed throughout The Vine Court Conservation Area are typical examples of their day. They are designed in a sub-Shaw, Queen Anne and Old English style using bold, confident detailing and traditional local materials. The buildings are solid and imposing, constructed mainly of Kentish ragstone and red brick elevations sitting below clay tiled roofs. Carved timber on barge boards and tile-hanging and timber studding to projecting bay windows add decorative interest.

There appear to be 2 basic designs. Variety is created by minor variations in ornamental details and elements such as the design of the dormers or bay windows. Further variety is made by discreet alterations in the design. This was a very common technique in late Victorian domestic architecture, giving the aesthetic variety which the public wanted, whilst at the same time keeping costs down by using the same basic components – the same methods are used in estate developments today.

There are also examples of ashlar stucco elevations below slate roofs, and some houses have dormer windows. The substantial houses are generally on three floors, some with basements. Often the top floor is located on the roof space and the steeply pitched roofs have gables lit by windows and dormers in the slopes.



22 Vine Court Road

The area is well endowed with mature trees and the houses are set on generously sized plots. The roads themselves are comparatively wide for residential streets, reflecting the affluence of the original occupants.



Contrasting Infill Development in Hollybush Lane and Avenue Road

Most of the modern infill development has been excluded from the Conservation Area, but two examples provide an interesting contrast on how such development can be located. The house shown above on the right in Avenue Road is a typically standard solution whereas that on the left in Holly Bush Lane is an interesting example of an individual and original design.



12 Vine Court Road (this attractive Victorian Villa should be enhanced by any future proposals.)

VINE COURT CONSERVATION AREA



Walthamstow Hall School at one time the largest secular building in Sevenoaks, is a red brick, tile hung edifice with tall chimneys and many gables. Most of the newer extensions are to the rear so the view of the buildings must be almost unchanged since its construction. The style of the school is similar to that of the surrounding houses, although on a larger scale.

Walthamstow Hall

Walthamstow Hall has splendid decorative chimneys and its lavish neo-Jacobean interior testifies to its architectural pedigree.



6 Dartford Road (see page 29)

4.00 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

4.1 Character Areas

It is relevant to consider The Vine Court Conservation Area street by street as each street has a crucial character and detailed part to play in the overall character of The Conservation Area. Every area of any size can be sub divided into a number of areas each with its own special character given by the layout of its streets and open spaces, the nature of its buildings and the relationships between these elements. Division of a conservation area into analysis street by street is an excellent way of defining the character and quality of its overall townscape. An important element of character in urban environments is the interplay between open and enclosed spaces, including the public realm, and buildings.

4.2 Vine Court Road and Avenue Road

Vine Court Road and Avenue Road were laid out by 1896. The plots were large and the houses were built to provide family and servant accommodation. Building styles show expressive use of local materials: red bricks, tile hanging and ragstone being used in combination to give buildings variety and originality. There are distinctively designed porches, dormers and decorated bargeboards, roofs with steep gables, timber framing and pronounced chimney stacks.



It is likely that many of the fine trees in these roads date from the nineteenth century.

Vine Court Road runs from Dartford Road in the south up to Hartsland Road in the north. The east side of this road is all included within the boundary, whilst only 4 houses on the west side are included. The views along this road are broad and sweeping and the houses are generously spaced. Architectural style is referred to in 3.7. The road curves round gently towards the West and this uninterrupted curve is very important.

A typical example is Ashbrook House (above) at the end of Vine Court Road. As one enters the road it gives a good indication of the style and character that can be expected in the heart of the area (see paragraph 3.6 on page 25)

4.3 Dartford Road

8 buildings are included in Dartford Road on the east side and to the north of Avenue Road. There is the fine listed building at 6 Dartford Road, designed by Baillie Scott in a Neo-Georgian style in 1928. Dartford Road exhibits a different character from the remainder of The Vine Court Conservation Area. It is dominated by a busy stretch of main road. As with the remainder of The Vine Court Conservation Area, the trees and other greenery are very established and this adds a sense of maturity to the character of this area. Numbers 8-20 (even) are of some quality. They are very mature and established houses.

79 Dartford Road (just outside the Conservation Area) is a block of flats designed to appear as a large house. It conceals a flat roof. Buildings this size would generally not be permitted in The Vine Court Conservation Area.



79 Dartford Road on the west side of Dartford Road outside the Conservation Area

4.4 Hollybush Lane

It is interesting to note that the route which Hollybush Lane follows is an ancient route. Hollybush Lane provides an excellent case study of good townscape providing variety and interest.



The Southern part of Holly Bush Lane is enclosed by high walls, buildings and overhanging trees. Viewing into the long-distance, the outlook is contained on either side. One is very aware of small detail including stone and brick. The Lane rises slightly to the north and there are good views. By Avenue Road, Hollybush Lane retains the character of a small lane with mature hedging on the east side. This area is dominated by the entrance to

Hollybush Lane looking north

Walthamstow Hall, with its impressive entrance gates (see photograph at front). There are a mix of older coach houses and newer dwellings. The Lane curves round to the left, then arrives at a 5-way junction with Bayham, Vine Court and Hartslands Roads, and the continuation of Hollybush Lane. Features that are worthy of attention include the entrance to Holly Bush house and the Victorian post box built into the brick wall.

The Foundation Stone for St Johns Hall (see page 14) was laid in November 1888. St Johns Hall provides a welcome vertical emphasis. The building is very much in the Bedford Park style. Bedford Park was designed by some of the greats of late Victorian architecture. St Johns Hall compliments the houses on the estate admirably and a conscious decision must have been made on this estate to ensure that the development was rather better than the run of the mill speculative late Victorian venture.



Attractive open fence in Hollybush Lane

4.5 Negative Features

In contrast to those examples that enhance the character of the Conservation Area, there are some parts where the potential has not been realised, or where the buildings or details positively detract from the atmosphere.

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

Much of the existing signage including street signs are just standard units that display no special status for use in historic areas. This is poor. There are good examples from elsewhere of the use of special and individual street furniture, road signage and yellow restricted parking lines in historic Conservation Areas.



This lack of uniqueness also applies to other street furniture such as benches and also to street lighting.

In Conservation Areas special regulations apply to double yellow lines which allow them to be painted in narrow primrose lines. This has been done haphazardly around Walthamstow School where the lines and parking bays have recently been repainted. Narrow primrose parking restriction lines should be implemented throughout the entire Conservation Area.

Parking is definitely a pressure which impacts negatively on the Conservation Area.



Thick and thin yellow parking restriction lines and untidy signage in Hollybush Lane

The presence of numerous parking bays adds clutter to the street scene and the recent installation of countless black poles adds inappropriate repetition and visual uniformity and formality to an area which must retain some informal qualities.

4.6 Key Issues

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

- Parking pressure and associated clutter;
- Maintenance and replacement of inappropriate standard features;
- Loss of characteristic houses on large plots and their replacement with smaller uncharacteristic smaller houses or flats;
- Loss of traditional details (see photograph below)
- Presence of cheap low-quality UPVC double glazed windows. This is perhaps less prevalent than it has been in previous years, although landlords and house owners wanting to make spurious savings on maintenance and increases to thermal efficiency still insist on these inappropriate changes (see photograph below of 8 Vine Court Road);



8 Vine Court Road

- Inappropriate change of use from single family house to flats or low-key commercial uses. There are different planning rules relating to flats and commercial properties which should be noted. At least one property in Vine Court Road was noted with PVCU windows. This does require planning permission as this house is being used as flats. UPVC is inappropriate in The Vine Court Conservation Area and original timber windows should always be repaired.
- A lack of maintenance in the public realm extends to the private arena. Houses must be regularly maintained and painted. The use of inappropriate materials should be discouraged.



Attractive ironstone setts and stone kerbs in Hollybush Lane over painted with harsh and thick double yellow lines

5.00 MANAGEMENT

5.1 Conservation Area Management

Historic buildings and places are a built environment resource in which everyone has an interest. Changes are inevitable but it is important to understand and then seek to sustain or enhance areas.

Clearly in an historic area possessing many important historical and architectural qualities, the overriding policy should be to preserve and enhance those qualities. However conservation area status is not intended to imply prohibition of development, and conservation area management is therefore largely the management of change, to ensure that local distinctiveness and the special character of place are respected and responded to in a positive manner. Change is inevitable in the Vine Court 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.

5.2 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 historic development in the Conservation Area is needed in any interventions. A thorough understanding of the Conservation Area is essential.

Many vehicular and pedestrian movements are made across the Vine Court Conservation Area. and the pressure is strong. It is crucial that the excellent links through to open countryside beyond the Area is maintained and strengthened

Any new development should encourage high quality and innovative design that reflects local identity and distinctiveness and promotes healthy, safe and secure living and working environments. The design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to the immediate neighbouring buildings but the townscape and landscape of the whole area. The pattern and pedestrian scale of existing local streets and spaces should help determine the character and identity of the new development.

5.3 The need for contextual design.

All development in the Vine Court 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:

Scale;

Scale is the combination of a building's design, height and bulk when related to its surroundings. Most of the buildings in The Vine Court Conservation Area are three storeys and are of an attractive late Victorian character. Proposals for new or replacement buildings must show how the new structure will relate to its context.

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. 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.

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.

Windows;

The commonest window types within the conservation area are single glazed white painted timber windows, in the form of vertical sliding sashes.

Windows of traditional design, which are in keeping with the building they belong to and respect the historic nature of The Vine Court Conservation Area, make a very important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Windows should normally be white painted.

5.4 Traffic and Streetscape

The dominance of vehicles both moving and parked is an issue in The Vine Court Conservation Area. The Vine Court Conservation Area is busy at peak times of the day and this can create a poor environment for pedestrians. There are many cars passing through the area or looking for parking spaces.

A regular liaison meeting between traffic engineers and conservation could be scheduled. This would inform Highways of any conservation issues and provide a useful forum. It would be crucial to simply review any scheduled maintenance or significant issues.

Streetscape and Public Realm.

The relationship between buildings and public realm in The Vine Court 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.



View along Hollybush Lane from outside number 28

5.5 Streetscape Design Principles

Best practice principals to be adopted as part of the design process for streetscape works within Vine Court Conservation Area include the following:

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.

Street furniture.

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

- Retain historic street furniture which reinforces local character; identify and remove superfluous or redundant items.
- Minimise signage and locate signs on existing bollards, lamp posts or walls and buildings at the back edge of the pavement.
- Use a unifying colour for all street furniture items



- Reduce guard rails to a minimum and use simple designs that relate to local character.

Standard (and unnecessary?) bollards and pedestrian barrier at east end of Avenue Road

- Avoid standardised lighting and choose the design and light source most appropriate for the area.

Traffic management.

- If required, traffic calming measures should be fitted sensitively into the street-scene as though they were part of the original character of the area.
- Adopt a minimalist approach. Any works should involve minimal visual interference with the established streetscape and respect the historic street layout.
- Limit road markings to those essential for highway safety.

5.6 Paving Treatments

The historic, archaeological and aesthetic importance of any historic paving should be valued for its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

5.7 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.



Attractive cast iron street furniture and poorly maintained ragstone kerbs in Hollybush Lane

Energy efficiency for the existing buildings within the conservation area could be improved by such measures as loft insulation and the provision of secondary double 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.

5.8 Trees in Conservation Areas

Whilst the conservation area is generally focused on planned design and other important built features, the landscape surrounding it and trees within it contribute significantly to appearance. The open spaces and trees which provide the setting to the Vine Court Conservation Area can be as important as the buildings or historic features themselves in retaining character. Trees also help to improve the quality and amenity of the area. They provide cool dappled shade and improve the quality of our air.

5.9 Pride and Identity

The Vine Court Conservation Area faces a range of range of issues outlined above. This Historic 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.

Acknowledgements:

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This report was written by Quatrefoil Consulting.

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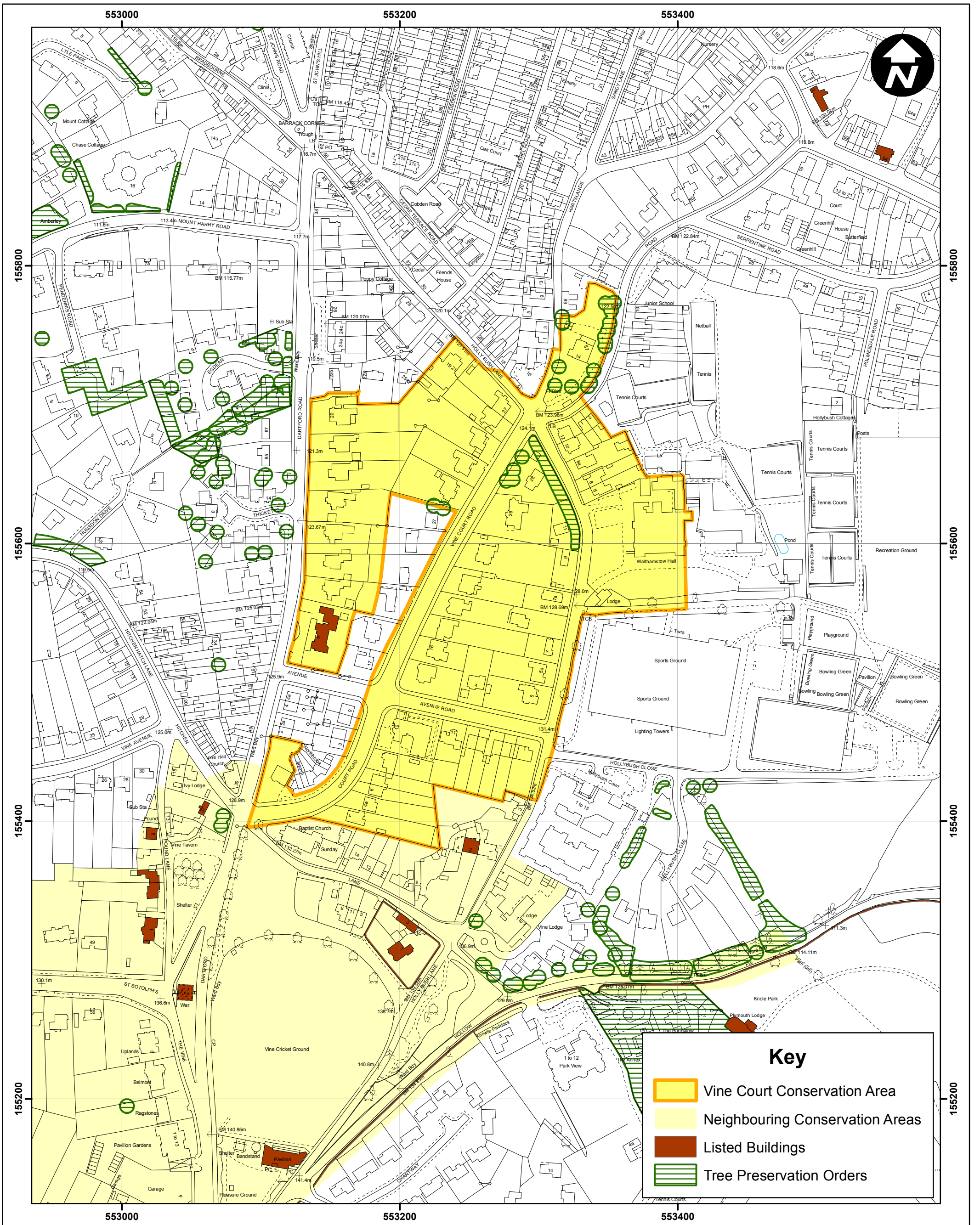
English Heritage guidance Unlisted buildings in a conservation area

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



Key

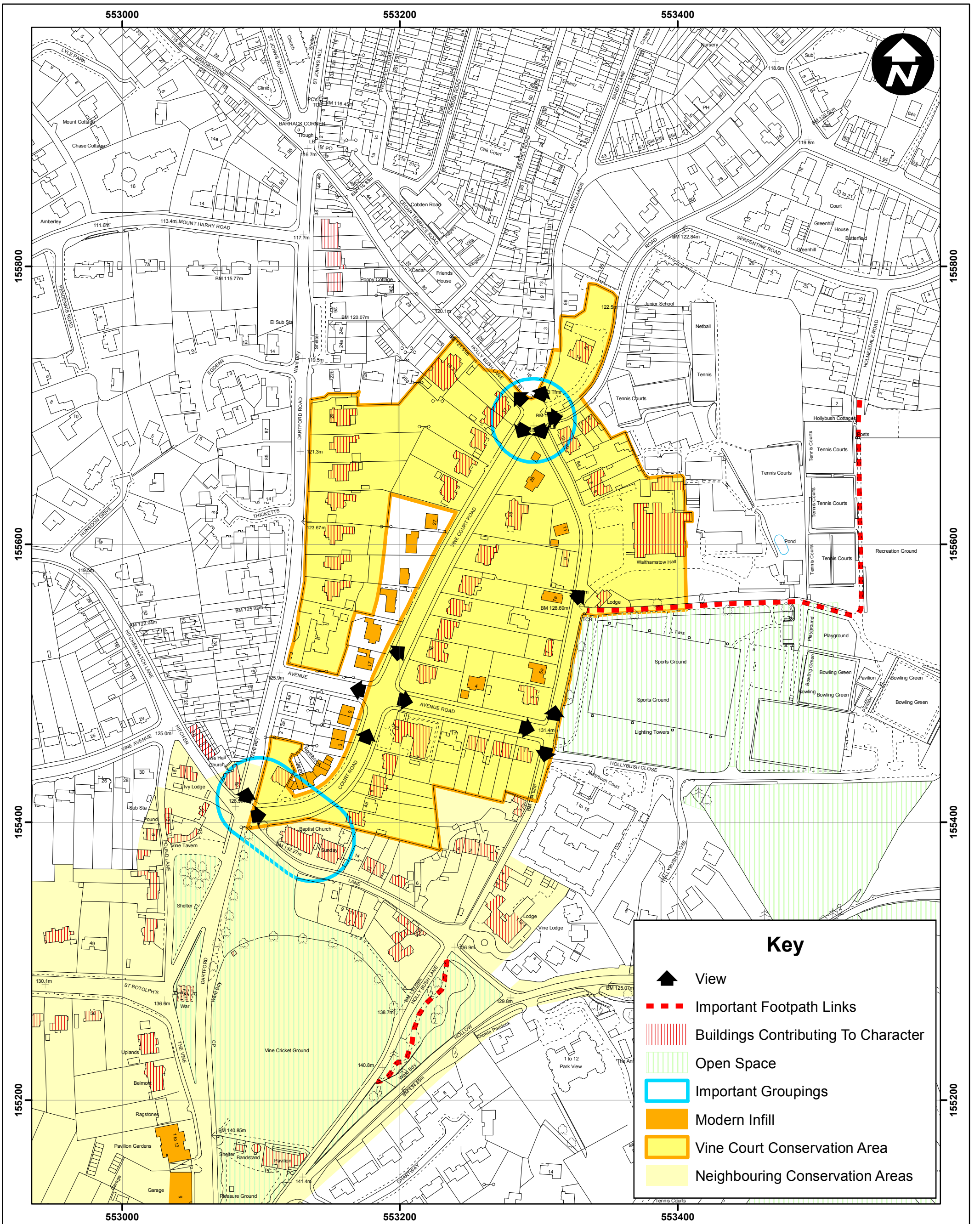
- Vine Court Conservation Area
- Neighbouring Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings
- Tree Preservation Orders



Map 4
Vine Court
Conservation Area
Designations

Scale 1:2,500
 Date 26/09/2008
 Drawn By FMcG

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Map 5

Vine Court Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Scale 1:2,500
 Date 26/09/2008
 Drawn By FMcG