

# Chiddingstone Hoath

**Draft**

## Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



2011

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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 and Management Plans are part of a process to ensure 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, landscape, buildings, uses, roads and streets all contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the District's conservation areas.

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

It is intended that this appraisal and management plan will inform the activities of the Council, the public and other bodies where they affect the conservation area. The Plan was approved by the District Council in \*\*\*\* 2011 and adopted as informal planning guidance.

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

Tel: 01732 227000

Fax: 01732 451332

Website: [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk)

Email: [policy.environment@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:policy.environment@sevenoaks.gov.uk)

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas**

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

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

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

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

The management of our national cultural and historic inheritance is of paramount importance and conservation areas are 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 importance for tourism and leisure. In addition, maintaining the appearance of a conservation area and the character of the groups of buildings within it can often sustain or enhance the value of individual properties. Conservation can also play a key part in promoting economic prosperity by ensuring that an area offers attractive living and working conditions which will encourage further investment.

The principles of conservation management planning, that managing any historic place should be based on understanding it and assessing its significance and values, are now accepted as applying to historic areas as much as to historic buildings.

### 1.3 Purpose of Appraisals and Management Plans

As their number grows, it has become even more important for local authorities to include a well-defined and considered policy for their 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 appraisal and management plan should define the key elements that together give the area its character, and objectively analyse how they interact to enhance their individual impact. They can then provide 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 as a valuable means by which the impact of planning policies and the implementation of enhancement measures can be assessed.

The Plan will assist the District Council, development professions (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 Appraisal and Management Plan has been developed from the Chiddingstone Hoath Conservation Area Appraisal 2003. 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.

The key purpose of this Plan is to:

- Raise awareness of the importance and value of the local heritage.
- Identify distinctive built form character within the conservation area;
- Provide guidance and set out objectives to preserve and enhance the buildings, structures and features.

- Identify distinctive public realm character within the conservation area and provide guidance and establish key actions to preserve and enhance the public realm.
- Outline the key statutory requirements in respect to 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 Supplementary Planning Document, the plan will be a material consideration in the determination of development proposals.

### **1.5 Conservation Area Management**

The management of the historic environment depends on three things:

- sound core principles
- clear adopted policies, based on these principles
- the quality of decisions and actions that stem from these policies.

Clearly in a village possessing the important historical qualities of Chiddingstone Hoath the overriding policy should be to preserve and enhance those qualities. 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 the local distinctiveness and special character of Chiddingstone Hoath is respected.

Change is inevitable in most conservation areas; the challenge is to manage change in ways that maintain and reinforce the area's special qualities. The character of conservation areas is rarely static and is susceptible to incremental, as well as dramatic, change. Some areas are in a state of relative social decline, and suffer from a lack of community and commercial investment. More often, the qualities that make conservation areas appealing also help to encourage residential over-investment and pressure for new housing. Positive management is essential if such pressure for change, which tends to alter the very character that made the areas attractive in the first place, is to be limited.



Figure 1 The rural setting of Chiddingstone Hoath

## 1.6 Local Conservation Area Policies

The Sevenoaks District Local Plan (adopted March 2000) has the following policy which relates to conservation areas:

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

Buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area are identified on the character appraisal plan at the end of this document. English Heritage national guidance on conservation areas sets out the criteria used to identify these buildings. The Sevenoaks District Local Plan also states that the Local Planning Authority will undertake detailed assessments of designated conservation areas and will prepare proposals for their preservation. Development proposals will be judged against their overall contribution to the enhancement of the character and appearance of the area as set out in any scheme which may have been prepared.

This assessment and the detailed analysis of the area contained in the report are intended to fulfil this commitment and provide the background for enhancement schemes.

## 1.7 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.

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



## 2.00 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

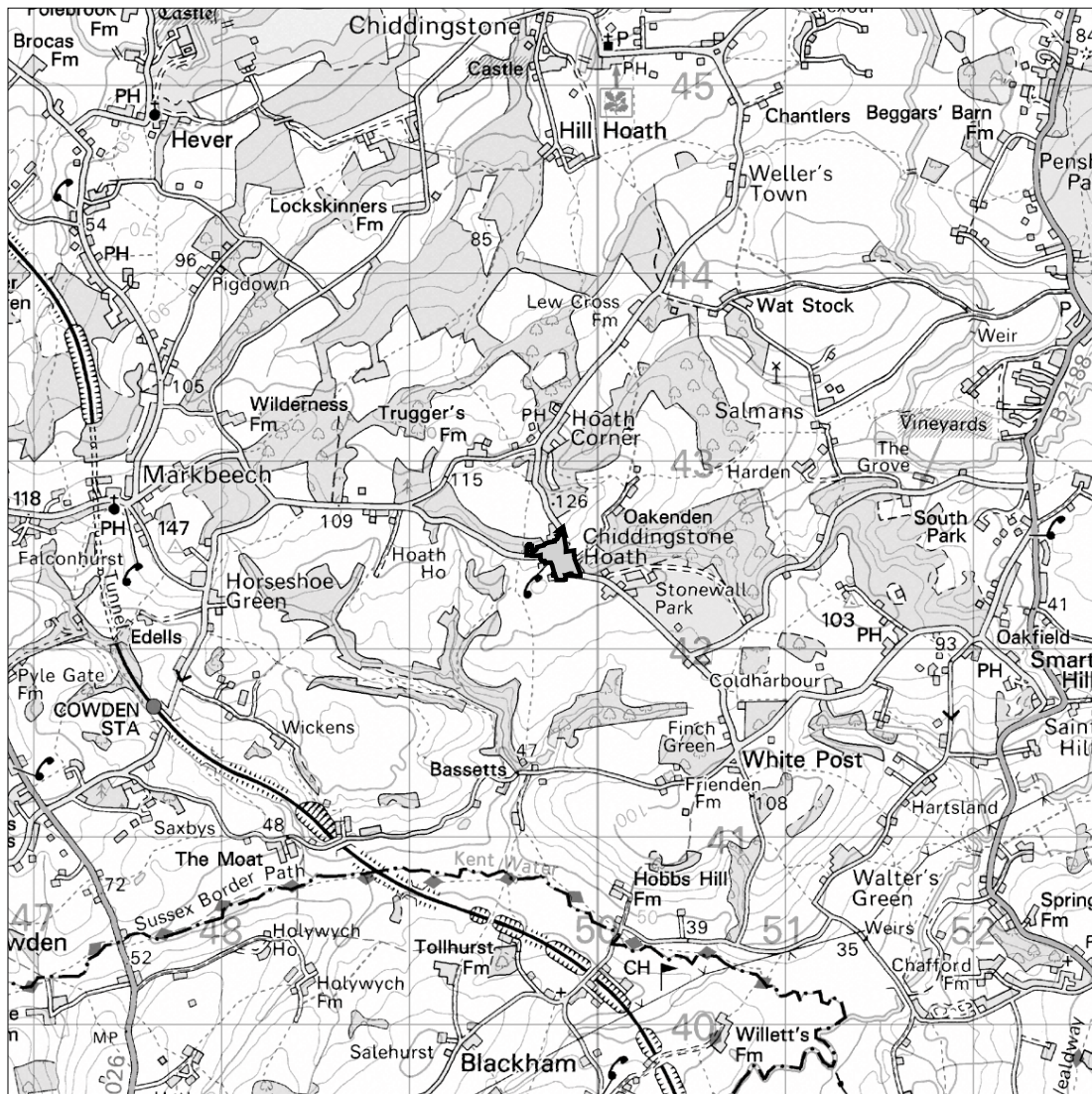
### 2.1 General Description

Chiddingstone Hoath Conservation Area covers some 3.3 hectares and contains two listed buildings. It was designated in 1993 and the boundary was extended in 2007. It includes part of the settlement around the Green and the farmstead at Brookers Farm.

The conservation area lies entirely within the Metropolitan Green Belt, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Special Landscape Area.

### 2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Chiddingstone Hoath lies on the route between Markbeech and Penshurst. The nearest station is at Cowden and the nearest major settlement is the town of Edenbridge to the north east.



Map 1 Geographical Location

### 2.3 Historical Development

Chiddingstone Hoath was formerly known as Rendsley Hoath and until the 1950's had its own village hall, which also served as a school. The north end of the hall was consecrated as a chapel. The hamlet is now closely linked to Hoath Corner.

### 2.4 Architectural Description

Chiddingstone Hoath has an architectural quality typical of a small Kentish hamlet, centred around a green. The buildings are all of a domestic scale, apart from the oast house, and they are constructed of local materials in the vernacular tradition.



Figure 2 Post Office Cottage and the Old Post Office

Red plain clay tiles are predominant on roofs and used as cladding over first floor timber frames. Ground floors tend to be of brick in traditional Flemish bond. Weatherboarding is also used as a cladding material.



Figure 3 Rendsley Cottage

Windows are small timber casements and those in Brooker Farm House have decorative arched heads. Leaded lights are found in Hoath Hall.



**Figure 4 Brookers Farm House**



**Figure 5 Wheelwrights**

Wheelwrights has a combination of local materials which adds to the character of the area. The replanted hedge and picket gate reflects the local vernacular.

### 3.00 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

#### 3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

Chiddingstone Hoath centres on the green, and this is the focal point that draws the eye when approaching the hamlet from any direction. The mature trees and expanse of grass on the triangle contribute to the unspoilt rural setting and frame the buildings set around the open space.



Figure 6 Avondale and 1 The Green

Trees and hedges mark the boundaries of the properties, enhancing the leafy enclosure of the green and the distinctive rural character of the hamlet. An historic K6 telephone box sits on a corner of the green. Orange/red hand-made plain clay tiles are a special feature of the Weald and give Chiddingstone Hoath a picturesque quality derived from the underlying geology of the area.



**Figure 7 Mature tree by the garage to Wheelwrights**

The open field between the oast house and the green links the farm settlement with the heart of the hamlet.



**Figure 8 The Oast House at Brookers Farm**

### 3.2 The Impact of Individual Elements, Features and Groups of Building

Chiddingstone Hoath Conservation Area is a tiny hamlet set around a triangular green at the junction of two minor country roads. It is a quiet area with some attractive buildings on two sides of the green. Others line the road to the north and there is a farm complex to the south.



**Figure 9 Hillside**

It is the cottages on the east side of the green which form the most attractive group. They are seen from a distance when approaching the area from the west and are framed by mature trees. They have a variety of styles and materials that create a cheerful, colourful little enclave.



**Figure 10 Council Cottages**

On the north side are four fairly mundane 20<sup>th</sup> Century cottages, with limited architectural merit. Adjacent to them is Forge Cottage, a single house formed from two smaller cottages, with a porch addition that is rather out of scale.



**Figure 11 Forge Cottage**

Forest Cottage, a 16<sup>th</sup> Century listed property to the west of Forge Cottage, is a timber-framed property with tile hanging on the first floor. It has a high pitched roof clad in hand made plain clay tiles with a ridge chimney stack. The catslide roof to the rear sweeps down across the ground floor. The building makes a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area.



Figure 12 Forest Cottage

Hoath Hall, on the western extremity of the conservation area, is an eclectic mix of timber-framing, weather-boarding and decorative detail that appears to date from the Victorian or Edwardian period. It has a brick plinth and clay tiled roof and much alteration over the years which adds to its unusual character. The wooded grounds contribute to the character of the conservation area and visually complete the western edge of the hamlet.



Figure13 Hoath Hall



Figure 14 Wooded grounds

Brookers Farm, its adjacent oast and the field to the south east of the road, are an attractive grouping of agricultural buildings that contribute to the character of the hamlet. The farmhouse in particular has a charming simplicity and solidity and is set amid mature trees that have remained largely unchanged over the centuries and more recent but well established hedging.



**Figure 15 Brookers Farm House**

Well Cottage and Hill Crest to the north of the green, although much altered and surrounded by modern development, is a potentially attractive, part medieval building, which contributes to the character of the conservation area.



**Figure 16 Well Cottage**

The wooded garden at Hoath Hall and the open land to the rear of Rendsley Cottage both provide part of the setting to the conservation area.



The Green with its millennium stone, seat and trees is the focus of the conservation area and helps to visually link the surrounding group of buildings. The simple rural character of the green is fragile and could easily be spoilt by over enthusiastic road signing or urban kerbing.



Fig 17 The Green

## 4.0 MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 Conservation Area Management

Clearly in an area possessing the historical and architectural qualities of Chiddingstone Hoath 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 most conservation areas; the challenge is to manage change in ways that maintain and if possible, reinforce an area's special qualities.

At Chiddingstone Hoath 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.

## 4.2 Current and Future Pressures on the Area

The hamlet extends to the north of the green, and the newer development does not always contribute to the setting of the older properties. There will always be pressure for development in such an attractive setting, and it is important to ensure that any future proposals are of positive benefit to the community and enhance the character of the conservation area. The nature of such settlements relies upon the intimate relationship between many historic properties and their landscape setting. This balance is easily disturbed by inappropriate development.

Whilst new development within a conservation area is not necessarily unwelcome, the impact that this can have on the traditional form of the settlement and its buildings has to be carefully considered before planning permission is granted. The Green Belt status of Chiddingstone Hoath may come under pressure in future years in response to the need for new housing in the south-east but at present new development is constrained by tight planning policies.

## 4.3 Potential for Enhancement

There is little that might improve the character and appearance of the hamlet, apart from some more regular maintenance of some of the properties, and more care of the public realm. Some enhancements which would have a positive effect on the character of the conservation area include decoration at Post Office Cottage which would be simple to remedy. Unfortunate replacement windows at Avondale highlight the need for careful consideration before such work is undertaken to older properties, even if unlisted.

Consideration should be given to the resetting or under grounding of telegraph poles and overhead power lines within the conservation area. Although functional they tend to have an adverse effect on character due to their prominence



Figure 18 Prominent pole and overhead lines'

Remounting the direction sign on the green onto a traditional cast iron pole would improve its appearance and should not be beyond the resources of the highway authority



Figure 19 Direction sign

#### 4.4 Article 4 Directions

A balance needs to be struck between people's rights and need to adapt their properties and the impact that this can have on a street scene that is enjoyed by all. Many small residential alterations are permitted development over which the Council has no control.

The status of a Conservation Area, and consequently the ability of the Local Planning Authority to protect its special character, can be enhanced greatly by an Article 4 Direction. Without an Article 4 Direction, even within a designated conservation area, many small alterations to private dwelling houses can be carried out as Permitted Development; and would not require planning permission. Such alterations can have a dramatic impact on the very special character of a conservation area, and even relatively minor changes can lead to a dilution in the qualities of the area.

An Article 4 Direction removes specified permitted development rights. This means that anyone wishing to carry out any such work must first obtain planning permission from the Local Planning Authority. Where proposed development would require Planning Permission only by virtue of the removal of Permitted Development rights under an Article 4 Direction, such applications attract no fee.

#### 4.5 The need for contextual design.

All new development in the conservation area, should 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. Areas on the edge of the village have an open rural character and long views of and from the site must be taken into account. It is also vital to respect the agricultural and parkland character of the surrounding area.

The following are general principles that should be adopted for development in all parts of 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 Chiddingstone Hoath are two storeys and are of a modest character. Proposals for new or replacement buildings, such as garages or out buildings, must have drawings with adjacent buildings shown indicating how the new structure will relate to them. House extensions must take into account the scale of the existing building, and must not dominate or overwhelm the existing building.

*Extensions to existing buildings.*

Extensions should respect the form and character of the original house 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 all important considerations. Extensions should not overlook neighbouring properties, lead to an unacceptable loss of garden space, or result in the loss of historic plot boundaries. Extensions should not dominate the original building

*Windows*

The commonest window types within the conservation area are single glazed, white painted timber windows, in the form of side hung casements on many of the older and more modest dwellings. 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 hamlet make a very important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

*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.

*The Character of Roads and Lanes*

The rural nature of local roads and lanes provides more than just a visual contribution to character. Lanes through the village are mostly peaceful, narrow and winding, and their importance to local character should not be underestimated. Most roads retain soft grass verges, bounded by mature hedgerows and trees, and without too many urbanizing pavements and kerbstones. Street clutter caused by too many items of street furniture of conflicting design should be avoided.



Figure 20 Concrete kerbs

There should be no further urbanization of roads and verges through the use of inappropriate materials such as concrete kerbs. Grass verges should be preserved as much as possible. If changes become necessary for safety reasons then preference should be given to the use of natural stone or similar appropriate materials. Leafy green lanes are a characteristic of Chiddingstone Hoath and should be conserved.

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