

# **ST LAWRENCE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT 2018**

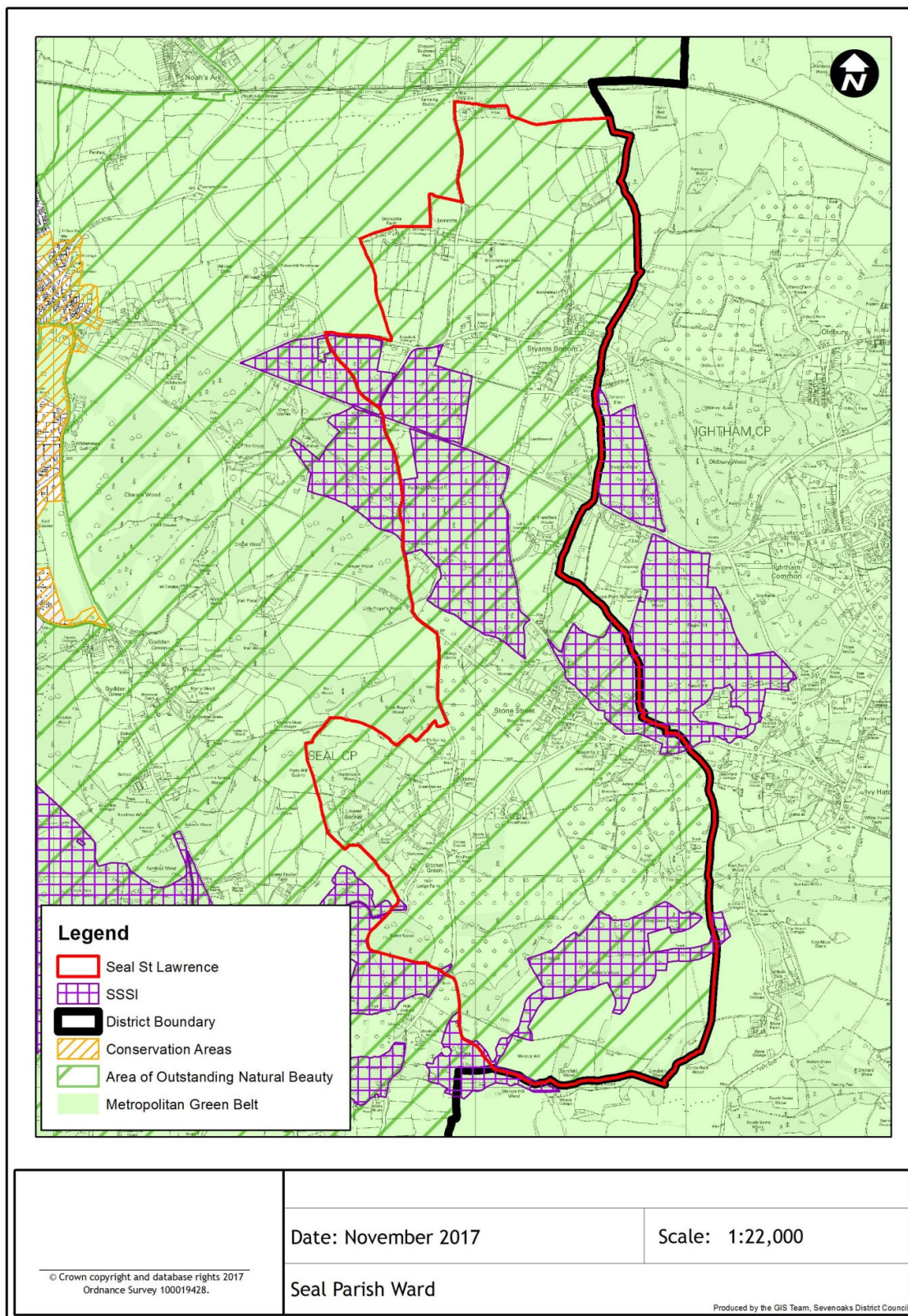
**Including Bitchet Green, Stone Street, Seal Chart**



# ST LAWRENCE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

The Village Design Statement covers the ward of St. Lawrence within the Parish of Seal, and incorporates the hamlets of Bitchet Green, Stone Street and Seal Chart.

2018



## An overview of St Lawrence

The Ecclesiastical Parish of St Lawrence (referred to as "The Parish" in this document), and the civil ward of St. Lawrence, lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in recognition of the fact that this is one of Britain's finest landscapes we are therefore privileged to live in an area of beautiful, varied and relatively unspoiled countryside. Residents and planners alike have an obligation to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of the countryside, not just for the sake of the present and future residents, but also for the many walkers, riders and cyclists who visit us from London, the Medway towns and further afield.

## Background

In 2004 a committee of local people prepared the Village Design Statement for St Lawrence Parish as Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Sevenoaks District Plan, now superseded by the Core Strategy (2011) and Allocations and Development Management Plan (2015).

This edition has been revised by Seal Parish Council to reflect the views of local people from a study of the Seal Parish Plan Questionnaire 2010, and to permit the design statements' incorporation into the Sevenoaks District Local Plan. It has been subject to a full public consultation process prior to publication.

Sevenoaks District Council provided the Ordnance Survey maps included within this publication, under licence from the Ordnance Survey, in order to fulfil its public function to encourage local involvement. Persons viewing this mapping should contact Ordnance Survey copyright for advice where they wish to licence Ordnance Survey mapping for their own use

*This document has been prepared in conformity with the District Council's Core Strategy. Policy SP1 of the 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. Account should be taken of guidance adopted by the Council in the form of Kent Design, local Character Area Assessments, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. In rural areas account should be taken of guidance in the Countryside Assessment and guidance produced by the AONBs..."*

*The delivery mechanisms for the policy include:*

*"The Council will work with local communities to produce Village Design Statements, Parish Plans and Character Area Assessments to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents to provide detailed locally specific guidance to support the general policy".*

Further, policy EN1 of the District Council's Allocations and Development Management Plan provides a detailed framework for assessing planning applications against Core Strategy policy SP1. It gives criteria against which proposals can be assessed so as to deliver high quality design that responds to local character.

*This Village Design Statement for St Lawrence is intended to fulfil the roles identified for Village Design Statements in Policy SP1 and EN1 in providing detailed locally specific guidance on the design of new development.*

In preparing this document, recognition has been given to the responses by people from the St Lawrence Ward to the Seal Parish Plan Questionnaire 2010, in particular the following:

- 41% of respondents had looked at the Village Design Statement.
- Of those respondents 75% found it to be a useful document.
- 86% of respondents thought the Parish Council should liaise more closely with Sevenoaks District Council in relation to the Village Design Statement being adhered to.
- Given the opportunity to suggest improvements to locality, 9 respondents favoured control of speeding vehicles; 5 suggested more pothole and road repairs while 3 wished to see reduced hedge encroachment.

The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan sets out aims, and policies and actions for the positive management of the Kent Downs AONB and should be taken into consideration.



# 1. The Purpose of the Village Design Statement

## 1.1 What is a Village Design Statement?

Village Design Statements are an initiative of Natural England supported by the Government. They are intended to provide local guidance for any proposals for development within the area covered by the Design Statement. They provide a way of ensuring that any new developments are designed and located in a way that reflects local characteristics and the qualities that people value in their village and its surroundings.

The statements are produced by local communities as guidance for use by planners, developers, agents and local Councils. Although the Parish Council is consulted on planning applications, local residents do not get the opportunity to comment or contribute at an early stage to the design of new development: 'how it looks'. Often, they are presented with a completed design and can only comment at that stage, rather than influence. Once a Village Design Statement has been prepared and adopted by the District Council, it can be used in providing guidance to future developments and will also be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

## 1.2 What is its purpose?



*Rural scene*

We recognise that changes are inevitable but wish to help manage change in order to preserve and enhance the beauty of our parish. The majority of the Parish is covered by the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status, and therefore enjoys a high level of protection. But this should not lull us into a false sense of security. It is often the cumulative effects of relatively small alterations which affect our perception of a place: a plethora of road signs, an ostentatious garden wall or gate, or an ugly extension can introduce a discordant suburban tone in a rural landscape. This Design Statement outlines what residents feel makes St Lawrence parish distinctive,

highlights some areas of concern and, most importantly, provides guidelines which we hope will help residents, planners, architects and builders to rise to the challenge.

This Design Statement describes St Lawrence Parish as it is today and highlights the qualities that residents value. It is intended to be a practical tool capable of influencing decisions affecting design and development in the parish and assisting Sevenoaks District Council consider planning applications.

Change is not only brought about by new buildings but also by smaller, day-to-day



alterations to homes and gardens, the countryside, paths, walls and hedges which can affect the look and feel of a whole parish. This Design Statement provides guidance for anyone considering development in the area. It will be as valuable to individual householders wishing to build extensions or make minor alterations as it will be to planners, developers and architects considering new buildings

*Listed house.*

### **1.3 In summary it is intended for:**

- *local householders, businesses and farmers*
- *statutory bodies and providers of services and utilities*
- *Councils- both Sevenoaks District Council and Parish Councils*
- *developers and builders*
- *architects, designers, planners and engineers*

### **1.4 What does it cover?**

**This Design Statement contains sections on:**

- *the historical and landscape setting of the parish*
- *the pattern of settlements*
- *the form and style of buildings*
- *other important features*

Each section concludes with a number of 'Design Guidelines'. We hope these recommendations will ensure that future developments will preserve the beauty of our countryside

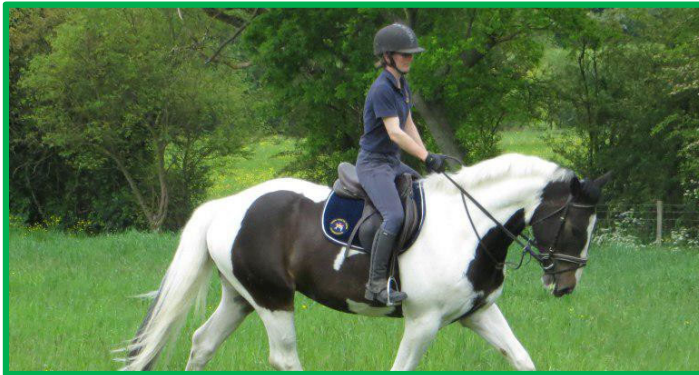


## 2. LANDSCAPE SETTING OF ST LAWRENCE PARISH

- 2.1 St Lawrence ecclesiastical parish covers an area of approximately 980 acres of quintessential Kentish landscape. It extends 3 miles north to south and one mile east to west. The dominant landscape feature is the Greensand Ridge which straddles the parish from east to west, with Raspit Hill, at a height of just under 200 metres being one of the highest points in Kent. To the north, the ground drops gradually towards the foot of the North Downs. There are extensive woods scattered across the Parish, mainly oak but with impressive stands of beech, many of which are classified as ancient woodland.

There was some quarrying for sand until about 40 years ago; these disused quarries have now returned to nature with oak saplings beginning to replace mature birch. There are several Sites of Special Scientific interest. These are of national importance for their biological or geological interest and include Oldbury and Seal Chart in the north and One Tree Hill and Bitchet Common in the south.

- 2.2 In earliest times the land was mainly used for pastoral farming with enough arable to sustain the scattered farmsteads. The woods have always been of the utmost importance supplying fuel, animal feed, fencing and building materials. They were therefore carefully tended and cropped on a regular basis. These agricultural activities, developed over many generations, make the landscape attractive and distinctive. The patchwork of grazed fields, orchards with their trimmed windbreaks and irregular tracts of coppiced chestnut and extensive oak woodland make the parish a popular venue for walkers and horse riders who use the extensive network of foot and bridle paths. It is these usages which have



determined the appearance of the area. Over the past two centuries the emphasis turned to fruit farming but today this has proved to be non viable and has been replaced with the cultivation of lavender and cob nuts which are used in the preparation of beauty products.

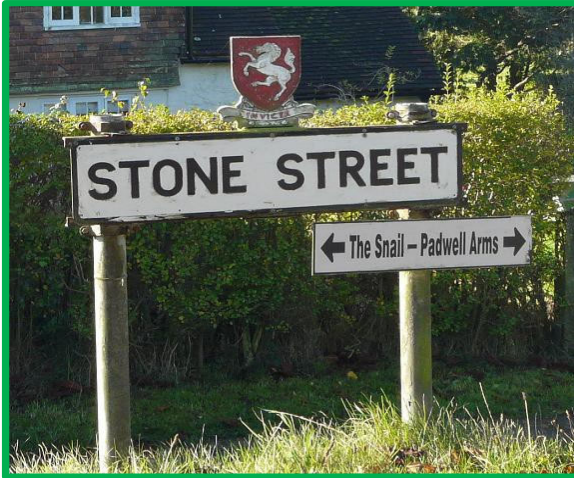
*Horse riding*

- 2.3 There is surprisingly little change in the extent and distribution of wood and cultivated areas: a visitor from the year 1800 would still find a largely familiar landscape. We are fortunate that much of this beautiful countryside is accessible to the public by a network of foot and bridle paths and winding country lanes through dense woodland, pastures and orchards. Some of these go back to

earliest times and offer panoramic views to the North Downs, to the wooded slopes of the Greensand Ridge, or over the rolling countryside of the Weald.

### 3. HISTORY AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

3.1 The parish has been occupied by humans since Palaeolithic times and has at least one Anglo-Saxon driveway crossing it. Over the centuries development has been strongly influenced by very early tracks, some of which later became roads.



3.2 There are three main settlements, the hamlets of Bitchet Green, Stone Street, and Seal Chart as well as many isolated dwellings among the woods and fields. This reflects our history as a farming area from earliest times with settlements originally based around farmsteads. There is a scattering of smaller dwellings; many of which were originally farmworkers' or tradesman's cottages.

*Village sign*

3.3 The arrival of the railway in Sevenoaks in the 19th century saw city businessmen building or developing substantial properties, especially in positions affording beautiful views. From information obtained from the Register of Electors there are approximately 180



occupied houses and about 360 adult residents, most of them working in London or neighbouring towns, or retired. Large numbers of children live in the parish and many other children visit for walking, riding and cycling or to attend the excellent primary school. The main centres of local activity – church, school, the village hall, and at the time of writing the two pub/restaurants (The Padwell and The Snail), the cricket/ football pitches – are widely separated from each other

but are all in beautiful rural Setting

*St Lawrence School*

## 4. HOUSES: BUILDINGS IN A LANDSCAPE

4.1 The impact of buildings on this rolling countryside depends on the topography. Buildings on the slopes of the Greensand Ridge or in open farmland are visible for many miles around. Others are concealed from the road and from their immediate neighbours, yet are clearly visible at a distance from one of the many vantage points. Others are concealed by foliage in summer while forming a prominent feature after leaf fall. To preserve the beauty of the countryside, consideration must be given to not just a building's compatibility with its immediate environment but its potential impact on the wider landscape and views. In a hilly area such as this, there may be cases where immediate neighbours are not affected by a development but it can easily impact views from miles around.

4.2 There is no dominant vernacular style. Most of the listed buildings (Bitchet Farmhouse, Stone Street Farm Cottage, Foxbury Oast, Pond Farmhouse, Chart Cottage, Apple Tree Cottage School, Chart Oast (formerly Crockers), Stonepitts, Bank Top Cottage, Bennetts Cottage, Cheeseman's Cottage) have their origins in medieval farm houses and cottages. There are a few very large houses, such as Stonepitts, Frankfield, Chart Lodge and Flaneswood, but these are generally unobtrusive and have not had a noticeable influence on the architectural style of the area. Most of the Victorian and Edwardian houses are small (mainly terraced and semi-detached), in sheltered locations and are of local materials which have weathered well. Because they are not of major architectural or historic importance, these Victorian and Edwardian buildings are not listed and are therefore vulnerable to



insensitive alterations and expansion. The lesson to be drawn from our older buildings is that our landscape is best suited to buildings of modest size and unobtrusive appearance which blend in with the countryside rather than bold statements which draw the eye.

*St. Lawrence Church*

charming additions to the landscape.

4.3 St Lawrence Church and School were built in the mid nineteenth century in the Gothic style and provide

4.4 The 20th century's contribution to the beauty of the area was variable. A few houses have been designed with care and are attractive in their own right, blend in well with neighbouring houses and with a rural setting. (Examples are the farm cottages on Church Road.) Their sympathetic designs sit comfortably in the rural landscape and are not overpowering in size or style by using quality materials, clay roof tiles, stock bricks and timber or metal windows

4.5 The Village Hall is an attractive example of early 20th century architecture that does not dominate the site and has recently been renovated with the help of funding from the Millenium Commission and an enthusiastic community effort. The new windows, while

being more thermally efficient and easy to maintain, do not spoil the overall look of the building with a steeply pitched roof and appropriate use of materials.

4.6 Broadhoath, a semicircle of houses built in the early twentieth century by a local benefactor for occupation by locally employed residents, is stylistically quite different from anything else in the parish. In a more prominent location Broadhoath might appear out of keeping but, in its hidden setting, forms a pleasing architectural whole whose integrity is worth preserving.



*Barn conversion*





*Village Hall*

4.7 Residents and visitors have commented that some newer buildings do not blend well into the surrounding countryside in terms of setting, style, proportion and colours. We hope this Village Design Statement can help improve this in the future.

4.8 Green Belt and AONB regulations restrict most new building except for limited extensions, replacement of existing permanent buildings, agricultural buildings that are necessary for the purposes of agriculture, or limited affordable housing within or adjacent to existing settlements that meet an identified local need.

4.9 Any large scale development within the Parish will need to comply with national and local policies for development in the Green Belt and the AONB. The '*Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014 - 2019*' and its policies aim to conserve and enhance the local character, qualities and distinctiveness of the Kent Downs. They are a material consideration in planning matters and should be afforded weight in decisions. However, high property prices and the attractive landscape of the area create a considerable financial incentive, and may increase the risk of developments which seek to exceed the limits on expansion allowed under the Local Plan and other policies.

4.10 Replacing, converting or extending isolated properties in visible locations provides a challenge to architects, planners, developers and house owners to contribute to rather than detract from the beauty of the wider landscape.

## ***Design Guidelines***

**4.11** We would encourage anyone contemplating any development to consult this Village Design Statement before submitting an application. Particular importance is attached to meeting the requirements of Policies EN1, which looks at different ways to encourage good design, and EN2, which seeks to provide adequate residential amenities for existing and future occupiers. Also the Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan, which provides further development management guidance:

In particular:

***DG - 1 Buildings that make an important aesthetic contribution to the landscape due to their size, scale or prominent location will require especially sensitive treatment to ensure that the scale and design does not make the property more dominant in the landscape or detract from the aesthetic contribution it makes to the landscape, even where the building itself is of no special historic or architectural significance (and is therefore not listed).***

***DG - 2 In the absence of a dominant architectural style, any new buildings, conversions or extensions will be acceptable provided that they do not have a detrimental impact on the character and residential amenity of the immediate vicinity and also that the works do not result in the increase in their prominence in the landscape.***

***DG - 3 New buildings that would project above the natural skyline and would appear more prominent would not be supported.***

***DG 4 - All new buildings, alterations, or extensions visible from the road, footpaths, bridleways or from the main vantage points across the Parish should be of a design and in materials that sympathetic to the character and materials of the area. The Kent Design Guide may help with this.***

***For example, Suitable materials would not include:***

***Large areas of glass, whitewash, concrete, or similarly reflective surfaces that will be obtrusive by reflecting the light should be avoided where possible. A type of glass that would reduce light emission would be favourable.***

***DG 5 - The use of obtrusive artificial lighting to buildings should be avoided, except where it can be shown that it is essential for safety or security in accordance with Policy EN6 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan. Low level discreet lighting to drives may be acceptable if proved to be serving a useful purpose.***

***DG 6 - Where appropriate, new, converted, or extended houses forming part of a complex, row or group of housing should be compatible with neighboring properties in terms of size, scale, roofline, size of windows and, crucially, materials. The aim should be that after ten years the new construction is only noticeable on close inspection.***

***DG 7 - All new constructions should employ materials that will mellow with time.***

***DG 8 - Particular care must be taken in proposals for increasing the height of a building. Adding an additional storey can upset the balance and proportion of the building and cause it to obtrude upon the landscape.***

***DG 9 -Chimneys should normally be retained especially where they are a distinctive architectural feature.***

***DG 10 – In some instances, provided it is of appropriate scale and employs traditional or appropriate new materials, an original design is preferable to a pastiche of traditional style where a few ‘traditional features’ are added to off the peg buildings.***

***DG 11 - Window and door design should match the existing building (in the case of extensions) or neighbouring buildings (in the case of new builds).***

Note - Double glazing may be inappropriate on historic properties and may require planning permission or Listed Building Consent.

***DG13 - Consideration should be given to attaching a condition to granted planning decisions prohibiting the removal of trees which can add to the amenity of the area and afford enhanced views to the applicant.***

#### Extensions: Design Guidelines

***EXDG 1 - Present guidelines on extensions in National and Local Planning Policy must be implemented firmly and sensibly to prevent small houses being extended in ways which distort the scale and balance of the original building or are out of keeping with their surroundings.***

***EXGD 2- Extensions should normally blend in with neighbouring properties in terms of size, roofline, size of windows, style of doors and window frames and, crucially, materials. Ideally, after ten years the new construction should only be noticeable on close inspection.***

### **Replacement Buildings**

**4.12** There is a trend within the rural areas of the ward to demolish existing houses and replace them with new buildings. The new dwellings usually take full advantage of permitted increase in size in conformity with Planning Policy, currently in the region of an increase of 50% of the floor area that existed before 1948 or when the original dwelling was constructed if after 1948. Many of the new houses have basements or subterranean rooms which allows for even larger units without greater impact upon the open



countryside. It can also be beneficial to relocate the dwelling on the site to mitigate the impact of the building on the openness of the Green Belt and the protected landscape. The aim of the document is to ensure that the replacement buildings are not more obtrusive in the landscape and that developers seek to reduce the impact of the replacement buildings to protect the landscape and character of the area.

## Replacement building

***RBDG1 - Consideration should be given to the overall impact of the proposal to replace an existing dwelling on the surrounding area and in particular should seek to prevent:***

- Large windows with unacceptable light pollution.***
- A negative impact on the character created by walls, gates and entrance drives***
- Excessive roof areas. Ridge heights should be no more than the demolished unit***
- Poor quality of materials and fenestration. Roof tiles in particular should not produce bland surfaces***
- Excessive lighting. Lighting should be low key and not damage the night sky.***
- Inappropriately located solar panels. Panels should be located very discreetly and not damage views from footpaths, bridleways and roads.***

***Whilst we would like developers to take this guidance into account when designing and developing new schemes we do understand that some of the works may fall under permitted development and therefore outside the control of planning policies. We would, however, expect any developer to check with the Local Planning Authority to ensure that the works are permitted before they carry out the works.***

## ***Domestic Outbuildings: Design Guidelines***

***DODG 1 - Garages should ideally appear to be an integral part of the original building to prevent the spread of built form across the site where possible Where this is not practicable, the garage should be in keeping with the style and materials of the main building.***

***DODG 2 - It is preferable that conservatories are sited with care to prevent large areas of glass being visible from a great distance.***

***DODG 3 - Many properties in the Parish have large gardens. Permission to build stables, barns and stores and similar structures within domestic curtilages should only be granted on condition that their use remains ancillary to the main dwelling on the site, this will prevent structures from being sold off separately.***

## 5. FARMING, THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT



5.1 Relatively few people are now employed in agriculture, reflecting the decline of the industry and increasing mechanisation. The majority of local residents now work in surrounding towns and villages or in London. However there are still two significant farming enterprises (Foxbury Farm and Lower Fawke Farm) and a number of smaller holdings. Foxbury Farm produces lavender and cobnuts while *Chart Farm Businesses* Fawke Farm produces sheep and arable crops.

### Recommendations and Design Guidelines

***FDG1 Farmers and landowners should be encouraged to make full use of all their assets, including appropriate diversification. The maintenance of the wider agricultural economy will help protect and manage the landscape which makes the area appealing.***

***FDG2 New and existing businesses can contribute to the local economy and social fabric of the area. A balance of business and residential use within the area is to be encouraged. In line with Core Strategy Policy LO8, new business should be encouraged into the Parish, subject to their activities being in keeping with and not harmful to the tranquil rural area and landscape. Technological advances such as the Internet make this increasingly feasible.***

***Traffic, parking and noise levels will be key factors when considering proposals for new businesses. The conversion of redundant farm buildings for this purpose should be encouraged, provided the conversion is in keeping with the rural setting and that the conversion does not result in the loss of character of the building itself.***

***FDG3 Proposals for the construction of new agricultural buildings, stables or sheds must be scrutinised very carefully, to ensure that they are of an appropriate size and location and provide for a clear agricultural need.***

***FDG4 Agricultural buildings, domestic stabling and field shelters should be designed to minimise the impact on the beauty of the countryside by, for example, siting them in natural hollows or behind existing or new natural screening and using subdued colours or timber cladding.***





*Listed Oast*

***FDG6 Permission for caravans, mobile homes or other temporary buildings to be used for agricultural, residential or business purposes should be granted, where appropriate, temporary consent to allow the need for the temporary structure to be reviewed to ensure that the permitted need continues to exist.***

## 6. ROADS, LANES AND RIGHTS OF WAY TRAFFIC

6.1 A particularly attractive feature of the parish is the many country lanes winding between banks and high hedges or through dense woodland. The network of rights of way and bridle paths through dense woodland and extensive orchards is treasured by residents and the many walkers, riders and cyclists who visit throughout the year.

6.2 The parish is divided by the busy and dangerous A25 though fortunately this does not greatly affect the beauty or tranquility of the rest of the parish. A far more serious problem is the ever-increasing volume and speed of traffic on our narrow country lanes. The situation is particularly worrying because of the number of children who come to this area for walking, riding and cycling. Residents believe that a fatal accident, especially one involving walkers, cyclists or riders is inevitable unless traffic calming measures are undertaken as a matter of urgency. The situation is exacerbated by the number of motorists using minor roads for the school run particularly in Stone Street.



6.3 Our narrow lanes are unsuited to large lorries which consequently damage verges and hedges as well as posing a threat to other road users. The Parish would support measures to help improve the protection of these verges.

6.4 There is a general perception among residents that some road signs and bollards within the parish are unnecessary, obtrusive, or poorly sited.

6.5 The atmosphere of a country road can too easily be spoiled by inappropriate walls and gates. In most parts of the parish high brick walls, pillars, solid fencing or ostentatious metal gates look out of place among the fields and hedgerows.

6.6 Most aspects of signage, street furniture and roads are the responsibility of Kent County Council and much of this guidance is directed towards them.

### Design Guidelines

***ROWDG 1 From a design viewpoint, appropriate markings on the road Surfaces, such as roundels or repeater signs, are preferable to multiple signs on posts.***

***ROWDG 2 Narrow winding lanes with high banks and hedges are one of the most attractive features of the parish and should be protected wherever possible.***

***ROWDG 3 In most parts of the parish pavements would be unnecessary or impracticable and out of keeping with the rural surroundings. They should therefore be avoided where possible.***

***ROWDG 4 Road signs and bollards should be kept to the minimum. The local people would wish to see that the number is compatible with safety but does not result in the proliferation of signage.***

***Note*** – independently from this Design Statement, the Parish Council are encouraged to examine the positioning of all road signs with a view to making recommendations to the KCC for the removal of unnecessary ones and for re-siting others.

***ROWDG 5 Finger posts are appropriate to a rural area and where possible should be used for directional signs on all 'C' class roads. The Kent 'white horse' signs are recognised by local people as being pleasing.***

***Note*** - Planning permission may be required for stone and brick walls, pillars and metal gates and property owners should therefore be encouraged to consult the Council before beginning construction.

***ROWDG 6 - Where there are existing adjoining walls and gates, care should be taken to ensure that any new ones contribute to a consistent pattern, form and design. Particular care needs to be taken in the case of isolated dwellings. High walls and elaborate gates can create a more urban character to the site, and look out of place among the hedgerows of our country lanes and landscape.***

***ROWDG 7 New formal access roads or long imposing driveways, especially with all-weather surfaces, look out of place in this protected landscape and will not be encouraged.***

***ROWGD 8 Mixed hedges of hawthorn, blackthorn, beech, hornbeam and holly blend in well with the countryside and are encouraged in this Parish. Chestnut fencing is a local product and is therefore particularly appropriate. Conifer hedges can look out of place in a rural setting.***

***ROWDG 9 The proliferation of advertising signage along the A25 verges on Seal Chart is not encouraged. This an area of special advertising control subject to the Local Planning Authority.***

## 7. LIGHT AND NOISE POLLUTION

7.1 Sound can carry over considerable distances, especially in rolling countryside, and disturb people over a large area. Light pollution is also an increasing problem.

### Design Guidelines

*NLDG 1 Outdoor lighting for recreational purposes, e.g. tennis courts and swimming pools, normally requires planning consent. If it is required, it would be expected that any proposed development is appropriately designed and discreet. Methods are encouraged to be put in place to reduce light spillage.*

*NLDG 2 Householders should be encouraged to ensure that lights installed for security and other purposes do not cause light pollution and that security lights are on time switches.*

*NLDG 3 The potential for noise pollution should be crucial in considering planning applications. Noise abatement measures should be strictly enforced to ensure that the development complies with planning policies in regard to noise, and to prevent any development being harmful to the surrounding amenity.*

## 8. WOODLAND, TREES AND GARDENS

9. Large areas of woodland, much of it ancient woodland with many fine oak and beech, are a distinctive feature of the parish. There are also large plantations of coppiced chestnut which in spring are carpeted with wood anemones and bluebells and which provide an ideal habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Our woods are treasured by residents and visitors alike, especially as most are accessible to the public through an extensive network of foot and bridle paths. The many small woods, coppices, and fine individual trees on private land contribute significantly to the beauty and rural nature of the Parish.

**8.1** In general terms it would be inappropriate for this Village Design Statement to try to influence garden design. However, the conversion of woodland or agricultural land into gardens with, for example, lawns, prominent built features, and leylandii hedges, can have an extremely damaging effect on a rural landscape. This insidious threat to the rural landscape is growing as more house owners are in a position to purchase substantial areas of agricultural land or woodland. Important individual trees on private land are especially vulnerable since they may be felled or unsuitably pruned before the authorities can impose an appropriate preservation order. The Parish would support Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) where appropriate.

### Design Guidelines

***WDG1 Ancient Woodland should continue to enjoy a high degree of statutory protection. Residents and the relevant authorities should be vigilant against gradual encroachment and destruction. Applications that encroach and are harmful to these areas would not be supported.***

***WDG 2 Owners of areas of woodland and agricultural land should not convert these to gardens if they would destroy the character of the land and fail to protect or enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.***

Note - Where this has already been done without permission, where appropriate and in line with legislation, they may be required to return the land to its original condition.





*Garden*

***WDG 3 In order to preserve the openness of the landscape the incorporation of small  
Parcels of hitherto agricultural land into garden curtilages should be resisted.***

## 10. OVERHEAD WIRES AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

9. 1 In an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty notable for its panoramic views, telecommunications masts may be visible and grossly obtrusive over considerable distances. Siting them where they will do least damage requires great sensitivity. Overhead wires are intrusive though to a lesser extent.

### Design Guidelines

***OWDG 1 AONB/Green Belt planning restrictions on telecommunications equipment (including masts, satellite dishes and other structures) should be strictly enforced. Operators are encouraged not to permit any masts in prominent position and operators are encouraged to remove them when they become redundant.***

9.2 The Local People would support and encourage a programme to relocate overhead wires underground.

# APPENDIX

## Extracts from Sevenoaks District Council's Core Strategy Adopted February 2011

### **Policy LO8 - The Countryside and the Rural Economy**

The extent of the Green Belt will be maintained.

The countryside will be conserved and the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of its landscape and its biodiversity will be protected and enhanced where possible. The distinctive character of the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings will be conserved and enhanced.

Particular regard will be given to the condition and sensitivity of the landscape character and securing the recommended landscape actions in the proposed SPD to ensure that all development conserves and enhances local landscape character and that appropriate mitigation is provided where damage to local character cannot be avoided.

Development that supports the maintenance and diversity of the rural economy including development for agriculture, forestry, small scale business development and rural tourism projects, and the vitality of local communities will be supported provided it is compatible with policies for protecting the Green Belt, the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty conserves and enhances the value and character of the District's woodland and the landscape character of other rural parts of the District and that it takes account of infrastructure requirements.

### **Policy SP 1 - Design of New Development and Conservation**

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 Kent Design, local Character Area Assessments, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. In rural areas account should be taken of guidance in the Countryside Assessment and AONB Management Plans.

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

New development should create safe, inclusive and attractive environments that meet the needs of users, incorporate principles of sustainable development and maintain and enhance biodiversity.

The District's heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains, ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, historic buildings, landscapes and outstanding views will be protected and enhanced.

## Extracts from Sevenoaks District Council's Allocations and Development Management Plan

## **Adopted February 2015**

### **Policy EN1 - Design Principles**

Proposals which would create high quality design and meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) the form of the proposed development would respond to the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the area;
- b) the layout of the proposed development would respect the topography and character of the site and the surrounding area and sensitively incorporate natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds within the site;
- c) the proposal would not result in the loss of buildings, open spaces or green infrastructure that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;
- d) the proposal would ensure satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provide adequate parking and refuse facilities;
- e) the proposal would incorporate, within the design opportunities for increasing biodiversity potential, where possible, and retaining and enhancing Green Infrastructure features including sustainable drainage systems. Proposals that affect a site's existing biodiversity and Green Infrastructure should be designed in a way that avoids or mitigates any potential harm;
- f) the design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, would be permeable and provide connectivity with neighbouring areas;
- g) new development would be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access of those with disabilities; and h) the design of new developments would result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate security measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

Where appropriate, new developments should include infrastructure that meets modern communication and technology needs and restricts the need for future retrofitting. Such infrastructure should include Broadband, high speed internet cabling, digital TV cabling and provision of a power supply that would support green technology initiatives such as in home electric car charging points.

Subject to the above considerations development should make efficient use of the land on which it is proposed.

Where appropriate, proposals should include details and strategies for the effective management and maintenance of sites following their completion.

### **Policy EN2 - Amenity Protection**

Proposals will be permitted where they would provide adequate residential amenities for existing and future occupiers of the development and would safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupants of nearby properties by ensuring that development does not result in, and is not located in areas where occupiers of the development would be subject to, excessive noise, vibration, odour, air pollution, activity or vehicle movements, overlooking or visual intrusion and where the built form would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy, or light enjoyed by the

occupiers of nearby properties.

#### **Policy EN6 - Outdoor Lighting**

Proposals for lighting that affect the outdoor environment which meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) where associated with a wider development, the proposal would be well integrated within the scheme;
- b) any impact on the night sky would be minimised through time-limited and user activated lighting, the alignment of lamps, provision of shielding and selection of appropriate lighting type and intensity;
- c) there would be no harmful impact on privacy or amenity for nearby residential properties;
- d) the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of any Heritage Asset which may be affected;
- e) any potential impacts on wildlife would be avoided or adequately mitigated where avoidance is not possible; and
- f) where proposals affect Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or open countryside, it can be demonstrated that the lighting is essential for safety or security reasons.

Where these criteria are met, proposals incorporating the use of low energy lighting will be encouraged.