

**Sevenoaks District conservation areas  
Public consultation report  
June 2023**

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Consultation methodology
3. Consultation responses: general
4. Summary by conservation area
5. References

## 1. Introduction

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) has been reviewing three conservation areas and updating the associated conservation area appraisals (Eynsford, Farningham and Kemsing). The intention is to adopt the appraisals as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). Public consultation was carried out with reference to the consultation process for SPDs set out in the Council's *Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (2020) (SCI)*.

## 2. Consultation methodology

In preparing each draft conservation appraisal (Stages 1 and 2 as set out in the *SCI*) a 'walk-about' and on-site discussion were undertaken with representatives of the community of each conservation area during November 2022. This was of assistance in gathering evidence on the history of the conservation areas and understanding their condition and the issues affecting their future management. Those attending included District and Parish Councillors, local amenity, and civic and historical societies.

Wider public consultation on the draft appraisals (Stage 3 as set out in the *SCI*) was carried out for a period of seven weeks from 16 January to 3 March 2023. Leaflets were delivered to all residents and businesses within the relevant conservation areas informing them of the public consultation and where and how to access the consultation documents. In addition, the Council issued a press release and publicised the consultation on its website and via social media. Print copies of the appraisals were made available at the Council Offices on Argyle Road, Sevenoaks Library and locally accessible places within the three conservation areas.

A public 'drop-in' session was held in each of the three villages, where SDC Officers and the external consultants who prepared the draft appraisals were available to answer questions and explain how the assessments had been made. Residents and stakeholders were invited to provide written comments via an online questionnaire or a feedback form at the drop-in session, or otherwise via email or post.

## 3. Consultation responses: general

The walk-about events and drop-in sessions were attended by 76 people altogether and the Council received 36 written responses.

The renewed appraisal format was well received and the great majority of respondents found the appraisals easy to use and understand.

#### 4. Consultation summary by conservation area

##### 4.1 Eynsford

An informal consultation ‘walk-about’ event was held on 9 November 2022 and attended by three people representing the District Council, Parish Council and local history group.

The formal public consultation drop-in event was held at Eynsford Village Hall on 4 February 2023 and attended by 12 people. Four written responses were received.

On the ‘walk-about’ and at the drop-in session, appreciation of the character of the village was expressed, as well as for the layout of the new conservation area appraisal. The primary concern raised was traffic in the village, with a particular focus on speeding and pinch points on the High Street.

Four written responses were received. They found the appraisal easy to use and understand and that it accurately captures what makes the area special.

Further to written comments received, a site visit was carried out (access arranged by the landowner) to assess to what extent a proposed area of land warrants inclusion within the conservation area.

##### ***Main issues raised***

- Heavy traffic and poor parking arrangements (three respondents);
- The proposed extension of the conservation area behind the houses on Riverside should include the full extent of gardens (one respondent); and,
- Current lack of access to Eynsford Castle not addressed (one respondent).

##### ***Main changes to the appraisal since consultation***

To include all extended back gardens behind the houses on Riverside in the conservation area.

##### ***Boundary changes***

The following table summarises the boundary changes that are proposed and the reasons for these changes:

| <b>Boundary Change</b>  | <b>Justification</b>  |
|---|---|
| Extension to include more of the meadows and pasture upstream from the bridge | The meadows/pasture nearest the River Darent upstream of the bridge are already part of the Conservation Area. They form an integral part of its character and the highly special interest of the Riverside zone, providing a strongly rural setting to the |

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|   | sixteenth-century bridge and the historic townscape cluster around it, with the church steeple in the background. The existing boundary does not incorporate all of this meadow/pasture. Incorporating the rest into the conservation area will better conserve the setting of the highly significant historic river crossing, in accordance with section 75 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 where ‘immediate setting also requires the additional controls’.   |
| Removal of the front lawn of two houses on the east side of Station Road: 4 Saddlers Park and Bluebell Bank | In accordance with section 15 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 and para 191 of the NPPF, conservation areas should not be ‘devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest’. Since the last review of Eynsford Conservation Area boundary in 2006, mature trees on the front lawn of two modern houses on the east side of Station Road (4 Saddlers Park and Bluebell Bank) have been felled and the area largely paved over. This site therefore no longer contributes to the special interest of the conservation area and should be removed.   |
| Corrections and clarifications  | In a number of locations, the boundary of the conservation area as it is presently drawn cuts across plots of lands and through the middle of buildings. To create a more logical boundary that removes confusion and irregularity whilst maintaining the intent of designation, boundaries have been amended to follow existing land boundaries where possible. This is in accordance with section 68 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 (‘in almost all situations the conservation area boundary runs around rather than through a space or plot’). These adjustments have been refined following public consultation comments to accurately reflect circumstances on the ground. |

## 4.2 Farningham

An informal consultation ‘walk-about’ event was held on 10 November 2022 and attended by five people representing the District Council, Parish Council and local history group.

The formal public consultation drop-in event was held at Farningham Village Hall on 28 January 2023 and attended by 22 people. 23 written responses were received.

In the ‘walk-about’ and drop-in session appreciation was expressed for the historic character of the village. Concern was raised about the threat of development in or near the village, although all areas mentioned are outside the conservation area. There was also concern that two sites south of London Road were proposed to be removed. Following discussions at the drop-in event and further investigation, these boundary changes are no longer proposed. Lastly, there was concern for the loss of commercial property in the village and the transformation of shops into residential properties.

Most of the 23 written responses focussed on proposed boundary changes, with a number of respondents calling for the plot known as ‘Land West of The Mount’ to be included. Another area that respondents wished to be included were the fields and meadows south of The Mill and the Manor House (east of Sparepenny Lane). In accordance with Historic England’s Advice Note 1 (sections 34 and 49), a section of the Mill complex is now being proposed for inclusion (see the boundary changes table below). The Advice Note advises that agricultural land should not normally be designated (section 73) and so it is not proposed to include adjacent fields.

Most respondents who answered the questions said that they found the appraisal easy to use and understand and that it accurately captures what makes the area special. However, a small number thought the appraisal did not go into enough detail in explaining why boundaries were changing and also how any changes would affect the community.

***Main issues raised***

- Development in or near the village (13 respondents);
- Land West of The Mount should be added to the conservation area (10 respondents);
- Concern about the proposal to remove two plots of land to the south of London Road from the conservation area (nine respondents); and,
- The fields to the south of the village should be included in the conservation area, including the whole Mill complex (seven respondents).

***Main changes to the appraisal since consultation***

- Boundary change to incorporate the whole of the historic Mill complex in the conservation area; and
- The two plots of land to the south of London Road will no longer be removed from the conservation area.

The following table summarises the boundary changes that are proposed and the reasons for these changes:

| Boundary Change  | Justification   |
|--|---|
| Southern extension to include Cottage on the Hill, Sparepenny Lane | <p>Cottage on the Hill is a well-preserved inter-war detached home in mature gardens, developed at or close to the same time as its neighbour Dunbrae, which is already part of the conservation area. Inclusion satisfies both section 55 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1, as a ‘planted front garden ... [that] make[s] a significant contribution’ and as a ‘Positive Contributor’ under section 49 for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• landmark quality</li> <li>• contributes positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets</li> <li>• as part of a group, illustrates the development of the settlement in which it stands.</li> </ul> |

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|---|---|
| <p>Southern extension to include the whole Mill Island and leat</p> | <p>Through public consultation, it was highlighted that the whole of Mill Island is an integrated historic industrial landscape of buildings, waterways and land, which forms part of Farningham’s historic settlement footprint. Therefore, the whole of the Mill complex is proposed for inclusion within the conservation area, in accordance with sections 34 and 49 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1:</p> <p>Section 34 states: ‘Key elements in defining the special interest are ... the integrity or group value of buildings.’</p> <p>Section 49 - Criteria for identification as a ‘Positive Contributor’ to the special architectural interest and character of the conservation area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contributes positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets</li> <li>• has significant historic associations with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature.</li> </ul> |
| <p>The removal of small plot of land to the south of South Hall</p> | <p>Research indicates that this plot of land has never been part of the garden of South Hall, and has no historical reason for inclusion in the conservation area. It appears to be included to help conserve mature trees. Section 74 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 states that ‘Tree Preservation Orders would be an appropriate route for protection’ of trees and therefore, in the absence of other reasons for designation, this site is proposed for removal from the conservation area.</p>   |
| <p>The removal of two houses on Oliver Crescent</p>                 | <p>Section 15 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 and para 191 of the NPPF states that conservation areas should not be ‘devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest’. Since the last review of Farningham Conservation Area boundary in 2006, two houses have been built in part of the now former garden of The Croft. These houses do not contribute to the special historical or architectural interest of the conservation area and so it is proposed to remove them from the conservation area.</p>  |
| <p>Corrections and clarifications</p>                               | <p>In a number of locations, the boundary of the conservation area as it is presently drawn cuts across plots of lands and through the middle of buildings. To create a more logical boundary that removes confusion and irregularity whilst maintaining the intent of designation, boundaries have been amended to follow existing land boundaries where possible. This is in accordance with section 68 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 (‘in almost all situations the conservation area boundary runs around rather than through a space or</p>  |

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|  | plot.') |
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### 4.3 Kemsing

An informal consultation ‘walk-about’ event was held on 8 November 2022 and attended by six people representing the District Council and the Parish Council.

The formal public consultation drop-in event was held at the Small Hall in Kemsing on 21 January 2023 and attended by 28 people. 10 written responses were received.

In the ‘walk-about’ and drop-in session a general appreciation was expressed for the historic character of the village. Concern was raised about the bottleneck caused by street parking on West End, in front of the garage and shop.

10 written responses were received, covering different aspects of the conservation area and its appraisal. One topic which prompted discussion was the proposal to include the Common Field within the conservation area boundary. Responses included both those for and against its inclusion, with a slightly larger number of respondents in favour.

All 10 respondents found the appraisal easy to use and understand and that it accurately captures what makes the area special.

#### ***Main issues raised***

- Proposal to include the Common Field in the conservation area (7 respondents);
- The bottleneck caused by street parking on West End, in front of the garage (3 respondents).

#### ***Main changes to the appraisal since consultation***

- In the Open Space Assessment, the fields south-east of the village are now marked as strong contributors;
- A view of the village from south of the land east of Chart View is included;
- Proposed removal of a field east of Chart View from the conservation area. This agricultural land is part of the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The following table summarises the boundary changes that are proposed and the reasons for these changes:

| <b>Boundary Change</b>  | <b>Justification</b>  |
|---|---|
| Extension to include 1920s social housing on the north side of West End | The buildings on the north side of West End (early 1920s) are modest in scale and ambition, but in their materials, form and detail they have taken inspiration from the historic building stock of the village - red brick, tile hanging, tiled hipped roofs and prominent chimneys. As improved public housing built for local families, they are also of historic interest. The wide |

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|  | <p>banked verge and hedging is also consistent with the historic streetscape character conserved in the Conservation Area. They therefore meet the following criteria set out in section 49 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 for positive contributors to the special architectural interest and character of the conservation area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reflects a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics</li> <li>- relates to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in other historically significant ways</li> <li>- contributes positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets</li> <li>- individually, or as part of a group, illustrates the development of the settlement in which it stands.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Extension to include the Common Field Recreation Ground</p> | <p>The Common Field has historic interest due to its role over the last century in village life and its association with prominent local landowner, Sir Mark Collet, who gifted the field to the village in 1923. As the village’s recreational green space, has strong communal value. It also provides a green setting to the church and plays a significant role in preserving the historic boundary between the landscape and the church/churchyard.</p> <p>The boundary to the Common Field and the woodland, verges and green corridor on the north side of Heaverham Road conserve the characterful approach to the High Street from the east, where the relationship between the historic settlement and its landscape setting can be understood and enjoyed as the road dips and winds into the village.</p> <p>For these reasons, the Common Field and verges on the north side of Heaverham Road is proposed for incorporation with the conservation area, in accordance with the following sections of Historic England’s Advice Note 1:</p> <p>Section 34: ‘Key elements in defining the special interest are likely to be ... the design, planting or past use of open spaces, green areas, parks and gardens, and trees’.</p> <p>Section 56: ‘Trees, hedges, boundaries and street greenery are important elements of many conservation areas, not only in public places, but on private land as well’</p> <p>Section 73: ‘Conservation area designation ... can protect open areas particularly where the character and appearance concerns historic fabric’.</p> |

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| <p>Removal of the field of agricultural land south of the High Street and east of Chart View</p> | <p>It is proposed to remove the agricultural field south of the High Street/east of Chart View from the conservation area. This does not form part of the village’s historic settlement footprint. This is in accordance with section 73 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 which states, ‘Conservation area designation is not generally an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape (agricultural use of land falls outside the planning framework and is not affected by designation as a conservation area)’. (The field remains within the Metropolitan Green Belt.)</p>  |
| <p>Corrections and clarifications</p>  | <p>In a number of locations, the boundary of the conservation area as it is presently drawn cuts across plots of lands and through the middle of buildings. To create a more logical boundary that removes confusion and irregularity whilst maintaining the intent of designation, boundaries have been amended to follow existing land boundaries where possible. This is in accordance with section 68 of Historic England’s Advice Note 1 (‘in almost all situations the conservation area boundary runs around rather than through a space or plot’). These adjustments have been refined following public consultation comments to accurately reflect circumstances on the ground.</p> |

## 5. References

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2021)

Historic England, *Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management: Historic England Advice Note 1* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.) (2019)