

Granville/Eardley Road

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



JULY 2000

Granville/Eardley Road Conservation Area Appraisal

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, 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 will inform the activities of the Council, the public and other bodies where these impact on the conservation area. This appraisal was approved by the District Council in July 2000 and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

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1.00 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 a vital ‘grass roots’ starting point from which to safeguard the continuing care of our environment.

1.2 Purpose of Appraisals

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 Local Plans.

Planning 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 the subject in March 1997, which outlines the preferred approach to these appraisals and gives examples of the type of content that it would be useful to include.

The appraisals 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 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 appraisals can also be used as a valuable means by which the impact of planning policies and the implementation of enhancement measures can be assessed.

1.3 Local Conservation Area Policies

The Sevenoaks District Local Plan (Adopted March 2000) lists the following policies which relate to conservation areas:

EN21 In the designation and review of Conservation Areas the Local Planning Authority will assess all the following matters:

- 1) **The special architectural or historic interest of the area.**
- 2) **The cohesive character and integrity of the area including spaces round buildings their settings and trees.**
- 3) **The desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.**
- 4) **The pressures for change which may encourage piecemeal development which would threaten the character of the area.**
- 5) **The need to promote economic prosperity, through schemes of environmental enhancement, to overcome vacancy, neglect, decay or dereliction.**

EN22 Proposals to demolish buildings which contribute to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted in the absence of overriding justification. Preference will be given to conversion and/or refurbishment as opposed to outright demolition of a building. Proposals to demolish extensions to original buildings or outbuildings will be judged on their contribution to the overall character of the area.

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 is intended to fulfil this commitment and provide the background for enhancement schemes.

1.4 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.

Landscape features and wildlife habitats beyond the confines of the urban areas, towns and villages are also protected by policy EN11.

Important areas of green space within the built confines are safeguarded under policy EN9 and EN10 protects important areas of urban fringe.

Listed building policy is defined in sections EN18 and EN19 and the reuse rather than the demolition of unlisted buildings of local interest is promoted by policy EN20.

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.

Transport strategy for the District is summarised by the following section.

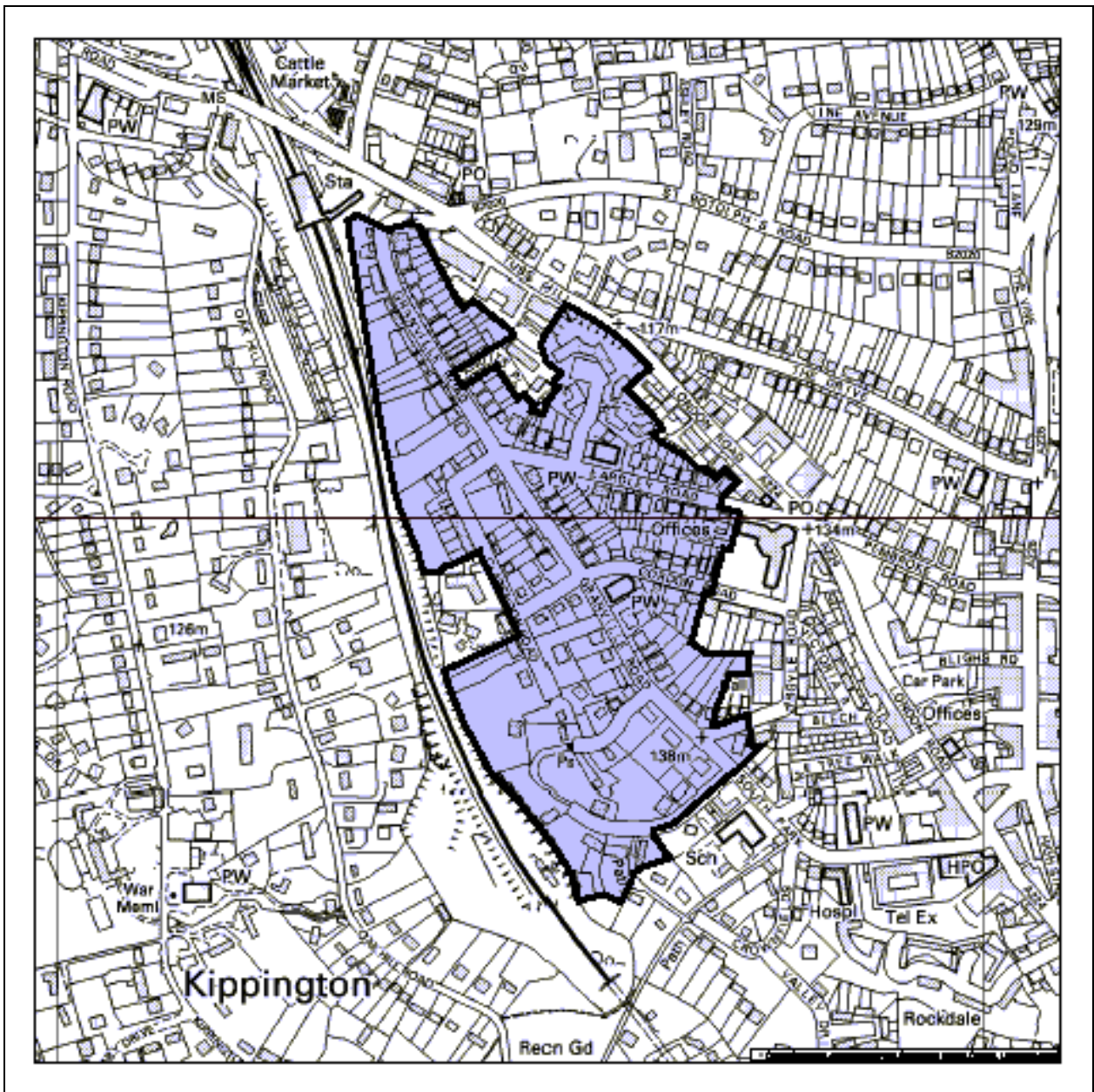
T1. A co-ordinated transport strategy will be implemented including:

- 1) Encouragement of the provision of appropriate public transport services and facilities.**
- 2) Use of traffic management to achieve a safer and more efficient use of existing roads.**
- 3) An integrated car parking strategy involving residents' parking, local enforcement and consideration of the need for park and ride facilities.**
- 4) New highway construction and improvements to the existing network.**
- 5) Encouragement of walking and cycling.**

2.00 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 Description of Conservation Area

The Granville Road/Eardley Road Conservation Area lies on the north east side of Sevenoaks and forms a triangle at whose apex is the station at Tubs Hill. It is bounded by the railway to the west, London Road and Tubs Hill to the east and runs up to South Park, Argyle Road and the District Council offices on the third side. It covers 17 hectares but contains only four listed buildings. It was designated in 1989.



Map 1 Granville Road Conservation Area

The area is primarily residential although some newer development has been specifically excluded from the Conservation Area in Knotts Place, the area around Clarendon Place and the properties in South Park to the north east of the primary school. The older properties are detached or semi-detached houses dating from the second half of the 19th Century when the first commuter belt expansion of the town took place.

On the west side of Granville Road particularly towards the northern end, a substantial number of the Victorian and Edwardian houses have been replaced with more modern counterparts while the larger detached properties in the south have had their gardens divided to provide infill building plots.



Fig. 1 Typical semi-detached Houses in Granville Road

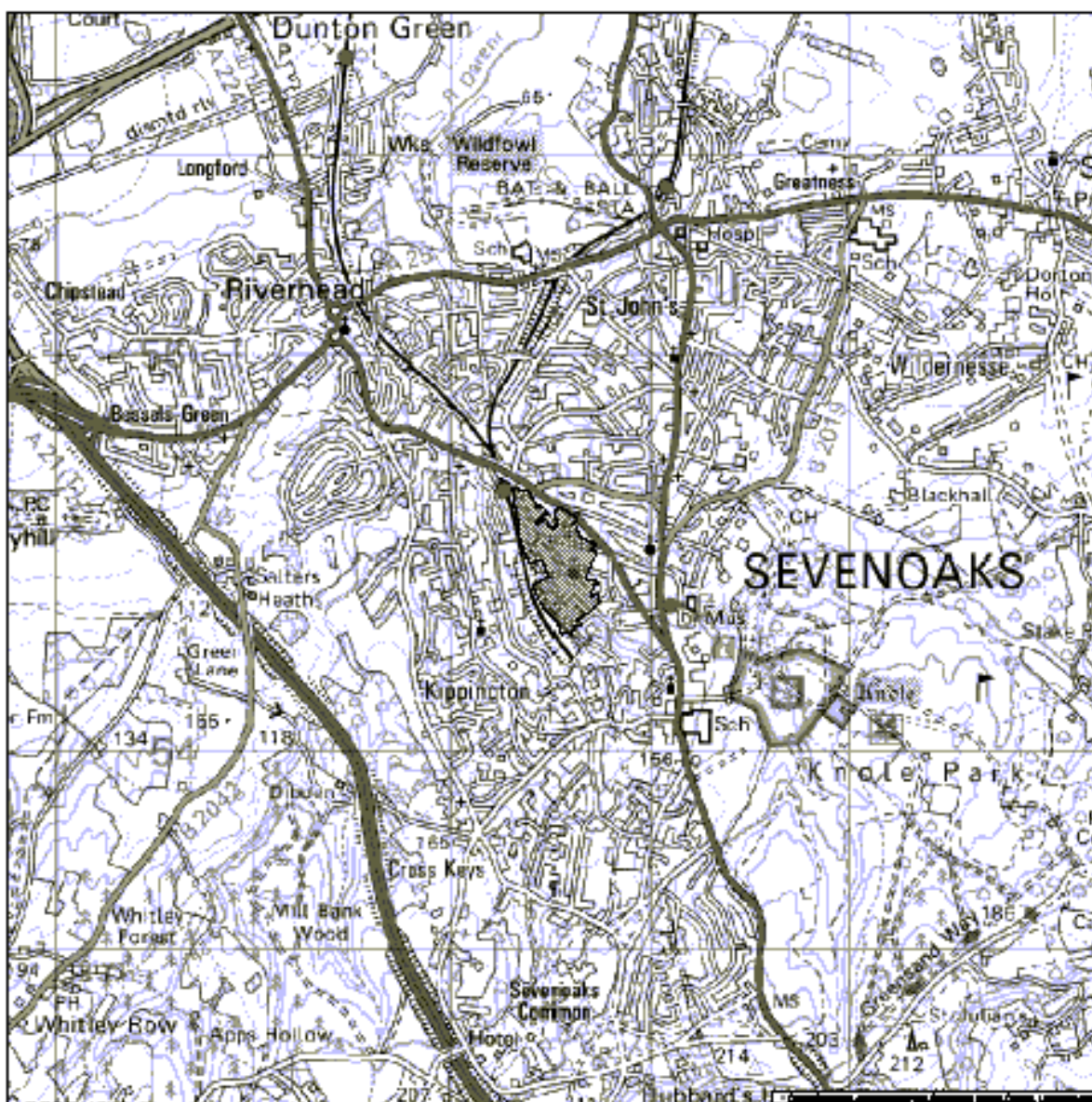
The area has an abundance of trees, some of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The gardens often have hedged boundaries and many show an interesting display of planting and shrubs. The proximity of the houses gives an urban atmosphere, although the countryside of the North Downs can be seen from much of the Conservation Area.



Fig. 2 View To The North Downs

2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Sevenoaks is a prosperous market town of approximately 18,000 inhabitants, 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 that 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 with this, which then gives access to the M23 and Gatwick airport.



Map 2 Geographical Location

The A21 bypass continues northwards round the town and eventually interconnects with the M25 to the Dartford crossing, and with the A20 and A2 to central London Westbound and the channel ports

Eastbound. Sevenoaks is thus within easy access of the major road transport routes, without having the inconvenience of a major artery running through the town.

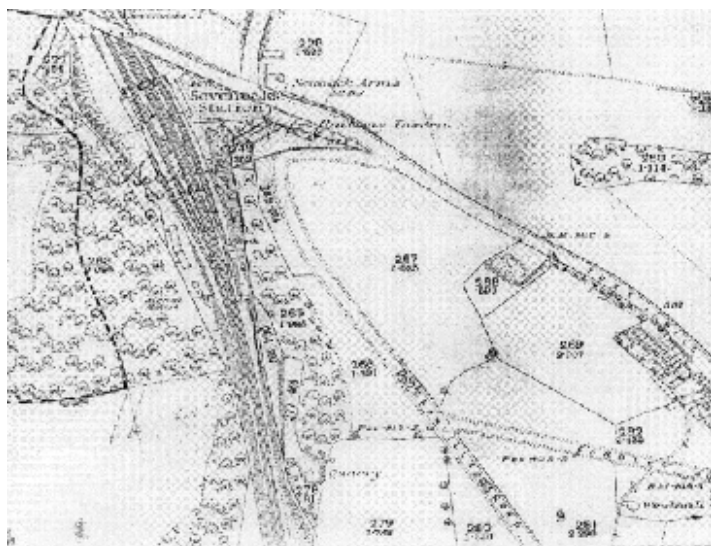
It is the rail network, with its frequent services to London, that has allowed the growth of Sevenoaks and its surrounding villages as a commuter town and at present some 2 million passenger journeys per year use this link to the capital and Tonbridge to the south. Sevenoaks station at Tubs Hill is the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

Granville and Eardley Roads lie on land that slopes from south east to north west down towards the station and includes properties whose rear gardens are set high above the railway cutting as the line emerges from the tunnel.

2.3 Historical Development

It was the coming of the railway that effected the most significant change in the development of Sevenoaks from its early beginnings as a small market town. For hundreds of years Sevenoaks remained constricted to its hill top site surrounded by a number of country estates - Knole, Kippington, Montreal, Bradbourne, Greatness, Wildernesse, Beechmont and Sevenoaks Park.

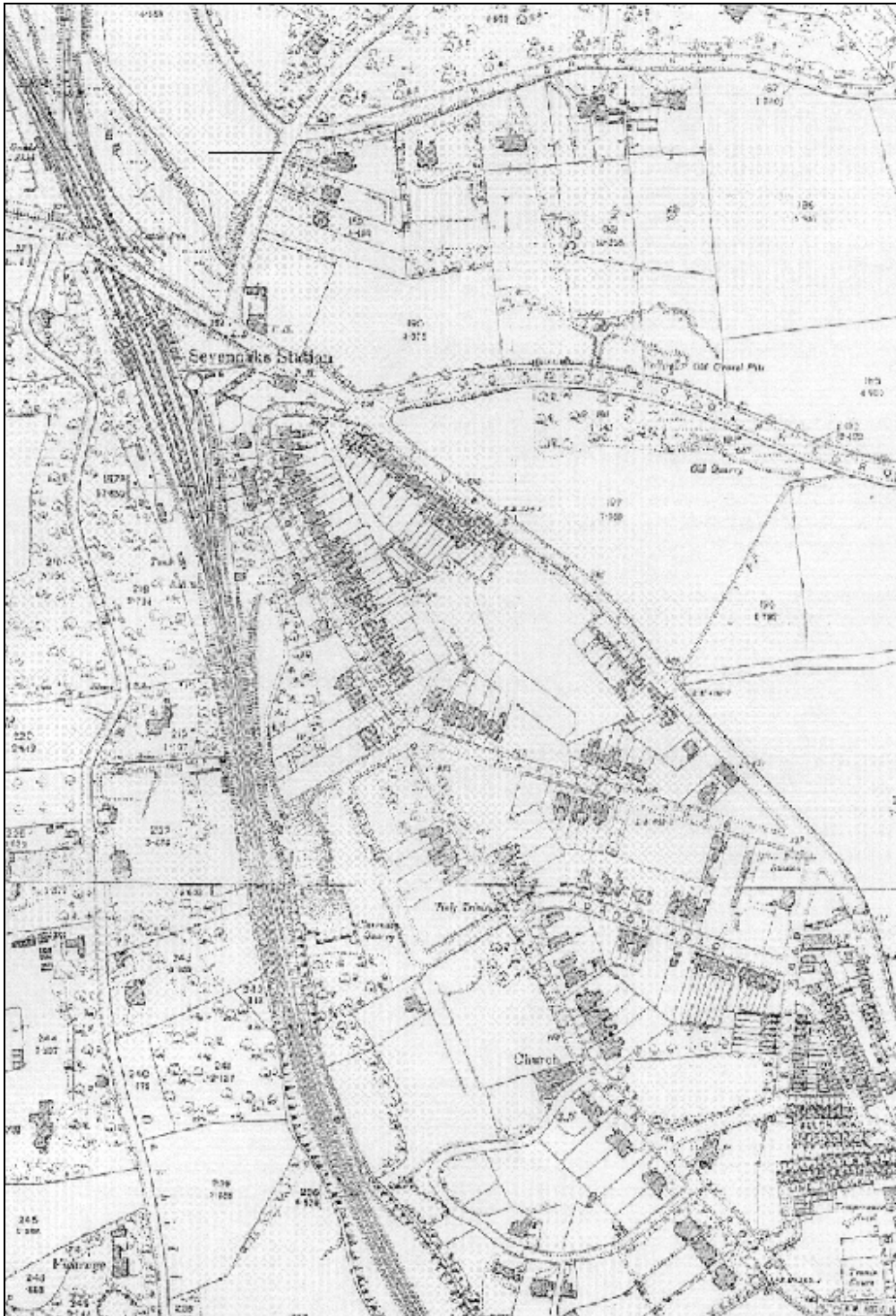
The first station opened at Bat and Ball in 1862 and the station at Tubs Hill followed in 1868 and Sevenoaks began its expansion into a base for workers who commute to London. This second, and more important, railway line was laid according to topographical limitations along the deep valley between the town and the Kippington estate, and from this time onwards new development began to stretch northwards from the historic town centre.



Map 3 Granville Road in 1869

At the turn of the century there was a marked increase in house building and a number of spacious houses appeared in the North of the town and in the Kippington area. A series of large properties were erected in the Wildernesse area after the estate was sold in 1924, and after the First World War, municipal housing projects were begun in Greatness and Hillingdon.

Granville and Eardley Road were once part of the Kippington estate and their development began soon after the station opened. The Ordnance Survey map of 1896 shows the west side of Granville Road already fairly well developed with a number of more widely spaced houses on the east side. The old windmill that had stood in the grounds of what is now 25 Eardley Road had been demolished by this time and two churches had been built. Clarendon Road had been laid out but the row of terraced cottages that perched on the rim of the old quarry had not yet been constructed.



Map 4 Granville Road in 1896

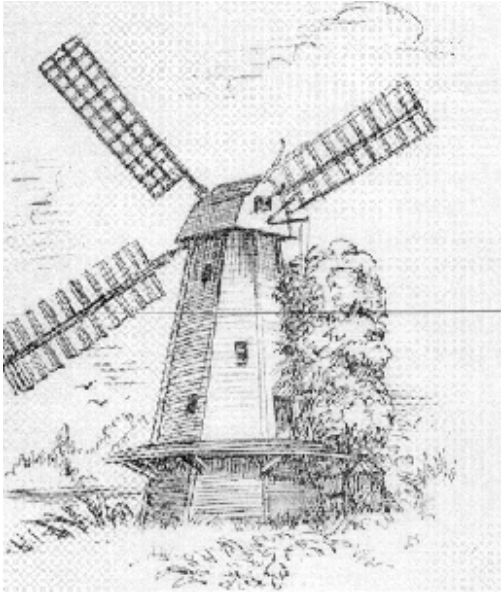


Fig. 3 The Windmill in Eardley Road

Emily Jackson, the sister of Thomas Jackson who had built the cottages in Lime Tree Walk, commissioned her brother to design a purpose built hospital for children crippled by tuberculosis. It opened in 1901 and replaced the original hospital that was founded at 2 Park Lane. The hospital is now an old people's home but still dedicated to the original founder.

2.4 Architectural Detail

The predominant style of the buildings is of neat Italianate villas, interspersed with the occasional acknowledgement of the Arts and Crafts movement.



Fig. 4 One of the Larger Villas

Materials are similar to those found in other areas of the town - red brick, clay-tiled first floors and roofs with stucco and slate as occasional relief. Pebbledash has been used on the turn of the century pair of houses by Niven & Wigglesworth in Granville Road and on the first floor of some of the larger detached properties.



Fig. 5 One of the Niven and Wigglesworth Properties

Timber is used to good effect in bargeboards, gable ends, verandas and cornices. There are plenty of exuberant and cheerful details that individualise the properties and houses of identical plan form have their elevations treated in a variety of ways.



Fig. 6 Turret Detail

The houses are typical Victorian suburban villas, middle class and respectable, each set in their well tended gardens.

The properties have all been built since the middle of the 19th century as a direct result of the increase in demand for housing to serve the commuting population. They vary in size but the majority are semi-detached villas in Eardley Road, Gordon Road and to the east side of Granville Road, whilst there are larger detached properties round the crescent of South Park and Clarendon Road.

The only exceptions to the residential Properties are the two churches and the Emily Jackson House complex.



Fig. 7 St. Thomas' Church

St Thomas' Church, designed by the prolific Roman Catholic Church architect Frederick Walters, was built in 1896 to replace an earlier corrugated iron structure. The Church was sympathetically extended in the 1980's and the clean lines and careful detailing of the porch addition contribute to the character of the area.

In the South Park area, where the road forms a loop down towards the railway, the houses are more substantial and set in larger plots. Once again there is an abundance of mature trees and the road does not suffer from on-street parking as do Granville and Eardley Roads.



Fig. 8 Lynch House

Clarendon Road is similar in character to South Park and there is another listed building by Niven & Wigglesworth - Lynch House - built in an adoption of the Queen Anne style with decorative curved gables, substantial chimneys and moulded brick detailing.



Fig. 9 Emily Jackson Hospital

The Emily Jackson hospital is an unusual design with a butterfly shaped plan and steeply pitched slate roof. The elevations are rendered with decorative red brick quoins to the windows with banding of red brick between ground and first floors.

3.00 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

The character of the Conservation Area is defined by its ordered rows of mainly semi-detached houses down the hill towards the station at the bottom. There is a distinct change from the southern end of the area, where the houses are well maintained and largely unmodified, to the north where there are gaps in the continuity of the 19th Century buildings, and newer and less distinguished infill has replaced the original.



Fig. 10 Villas in Eardley Road

From the new block of flats on the west side to the sharp bend in the road above The Railway and Bicycle Public House, there is little left of the original development, and the older houses are often in a poor state of repair. On the opposite side of the road the once elegant villas have been converted into offices or sub-divided into flats, and once again are often in need of refurbishment.



Fig. 11 Stuccoed villas at the northern end of Granville Road

As one climbs the hill and passes the junction with Eardley Road, houses become better cared for, although it is sad to see the two properties on the corner of Clarendon Road boarded up and awaiting redevelopment.

3.2 The Impact Of Individual Elements/Features/Groups

The importance of the Conservation Area is directly related to its development history and the considerable variety of housing styles within the area. The grouping of the houses and unaltered details increase their interest. They are a good example of the impact that ease of travel had on a small market town and they illustrate the popularity of the Italianate villas of the post-industrial era.

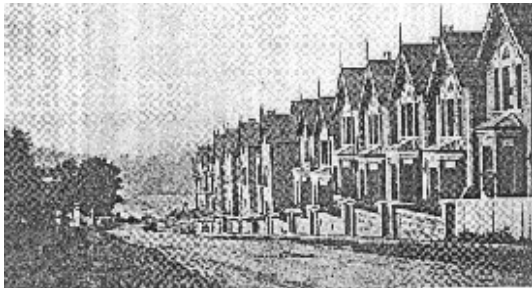


Fig. 12 An early photograph of Granville Road

There is an interesting contrast between the tightly packed urban layout of the houses on the north eastern side of Granville Road with the views to the open countryside beyond, and early photographs illustrate the impact these buildings must of had when first erected.



Fig. 13 Villa in South Park

Important individual buildings include The Emily Jackson Hospital which has an almost French ambience, and the large red brick houses opposite Argyle Road and down South Park that must have catered for the more well-to-do residents of the turn of the century.



Fig. 14 Eardley Road villas

In Eardley Road the houses are not quite so imposing and are set on smaller plots but are nonetheless good examples of typical development of the period.

4.00 FUTURE TRENDS

4.1 Current and Future Pressure on the Area

As has already occurred in many of the properties, there is a tendency to sub-divide large Victorian houses into flats. As this usually means that the properties are then leased, with the landlord not living on the premises, there can be a tendency for routine maintenance and repairs to be overlooked until they become uneconomic to carry out. There is then pressure to demolish the building thereby freeing up a large plot upon which a greater density of new housing can be erected. As the original designation of the Conservation Area was intended to prevent this happening, it is important that any further erosion of the original development is resisted. Many of the properties are not at risk from this threat, but where it has already occurred the results are detrimental to the area.



Fig. 15 Deterioration of two Granville Road villas

The other major problem that is common to much of Sevenoaks is the shortage of off-road parking spaces. When the area was laid out the owners of the properties travelled by rail and today's almost obligatory ownership of at least one car per household was unthought of. As a result, many of the houses have no room to accommodate off-street parking and the roads are therefore constantly lined on each side with cars.



Fig. 16 Original villas



Fig. 17 New Build Version of Villas in Fig. 16

The proximity of the mainline railway station has meant that parking restrictions are in force to ensure that commuters use the designated station car parks and residents permit schemes are in force. This does alleviate the problem, but does not solve it.

4.2 Potential For Enhancement and Future Policy Recommendations

At the northern tip of Granville Road, the Railway and Bicycle Public House is an interesting building dating from the opening of the station at Tubs Hill. Opposite, the Farmers Public House, formerly known as the Sennock Arms, was also in existence before the residential development was begun. It would perhaps be appropriate to include these within the boundary of the Conservation Area.



Fig. 18 Railway and Bicycle Public House

Adjacent to Emily Jackson House, and fronting London Road, are two terraces of cottages that again date from the time of the main expansion of the area. Numbers 141 -151 are listed but consideration should be given to including them all within the added protection of the Conservation Area.



Fig. 19 Cottages in London Road

The southern end of Gordon Road, opposite the council offices, is at present excluded from the area, as the terraced cottages have a different character from the houses in the Conservation Area locality. However, they have their own interest and appeal particularly when considered alongside the neighbouring roads. As discussed in the Sevenoaks High Street Conservation Area Study, it might be appropriate to designate a new Conservation Area to encompass these streets.



Fig. 20 Cottages In Gordon Road

Some of the new development on the north west side of Granville Road could possibly be excluded from the redrawn boundaries, as has been done with Knotts Place and Clarendon Place.



Fig. 21 Contrast Of New And Old

Acknowledgements

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