Brasted High Street

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



December 2003

Brasted High Street

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. The appraisal was approved by the District Council in December 2003 and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

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| Contents | | Page | |
|-----------------------------------|--|------|---|
| 1.0 | General Introduction | | |
| 1.1 | Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas | 1 | |
| 1.2 | Purpose of Appraisals | 2 | |
| 1.3 | Local Conservation Area Policies | 3 | |
| 1.4 | Local Plan Policies | 4 | |
| 2.0 | Description of Conservation Area | | |
| 2.1 | General Description | 5 | |
| 2.2 | Location and Geographical Context | 6 | |
| 2.3 | Historical Development | 7 | |
| 2.4 | Architectural Description | 10 | |
| 3.0 | Character Appraisal | | |
| 3.1 | Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships | 1. | 2 |
| 3.2 | The impact of Individual Elements/Features/Groups of Buildings | 16 | |
| 4.0 | Future Trends | | |
| 4.1 | Current and Future Pressures on the Area | 23 | |
| 4.2 | Potential for Enhancement | 24 | |
| 4.3 | Considerations for Future Policy Recommendations | 25 | |
| Acknowledgements | | | |
| Bibliography | | | |
| Maps | | | |
| Map 1 Geographical Location | | | |
| Map 2 Brasted in 1749 | | | |
| Map 3 Extent of Conservation Area | | | |
| Map 4 | Character appraisal | | |
| Мар 5 | Recommendations for Future Policy Changes | | |

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 recognizes 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 recognized 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.

Sevenoaks District Local Plan 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.

1.4 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 greenspace 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.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 General Description

Brasted Conservation Area covers some 30 hectares and contains about 70 listed buildings. It was designated in 1971 and extended in 1992. It comprises the main ribbon development along the High Street, the land between the road and the River Darent to the north, Brasted Place, its park and lodge buildings and areas along the side roads that join the High Street to the north and south.

The countryside around is designated as Green Belt and the village also lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which extends into the boundary of the Conservation Area.

The village is built along the A25, although the Church is to the north, away from the main area of development. There is a small green at the junction of the High Street and Rectory Lane.

Brasted contains a variety of residential and commercial development of varying ages. The majority of the buildings are historic, but in recent years there has been a considerable amount of infill development within the village confines. There is a proliferation of antique shops along the High Street, interspersed with a few retail outlets and a tea room. Other business premises include the head office of a building contractor, and builders' merchants.

In recent years the primary school has merged with that of the neighbouring village of Sundridge and the buildings have been converted to residential units. The doctor's surgery has relocated to a new building behind the former Primary School and the old pharmacy is now an antique shop.

There are two public houses at each end of the High Street, one now operating as a restaurant. The village hall was built in 1900 and has recently been restored.

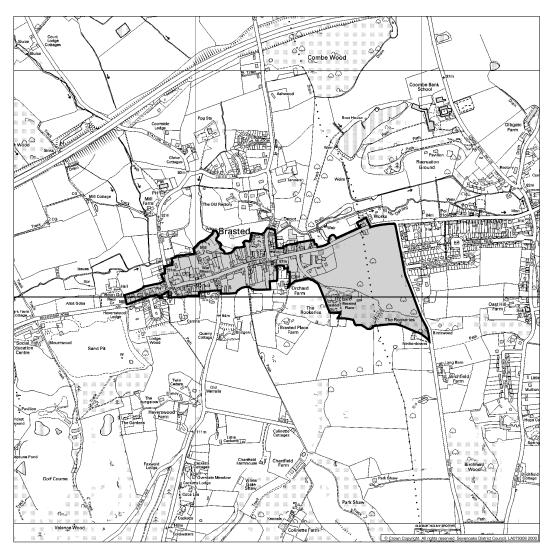
Despite the volume of traffic both travelling through and parked along the High Street, together with a proliferation of road signage, Brasted is an attractive historic village with many interesting and important buildings.

2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Brasted lies on the A25, the main route between Sevenoaks and Westerham. It has expanded as ribbon development along the road that was one of the most important east/west routes across the County prior to the construction of the M25, a short distance to the north. It is situated in the valley of the River Darent that runs through the village, at the foot of the North Downs.

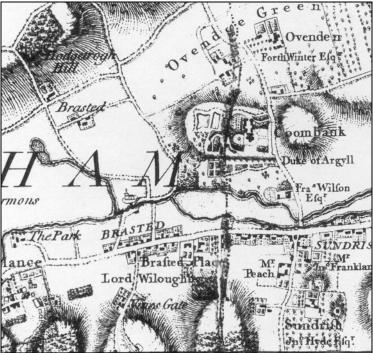
To the south, the land rises to the wooded slopes of the Greensand Ridge on which lie The Chart and Ide Hill, Goathurst Common and Toys Hill – part of an almost unbroken swathe of woodland and common that stretches from Limpsfield in the west to Sevenoaks in the east.

Brasted lies close to junction 5 of the M25/M26 although there is no eastbound entry or westbound exit to the M26 at this point. There can be traffic problems in the village if there is a blockage on the motorway. Sevenoaks is the nearest large town.



Map 1 Geographical Location

2.3 Historical Development



Map 2 Brasted on the 1749 Map

The form of development at Brasted has suffered remarkable little change since the 18th Century. Its linear nature along the main road was well established by that time, and there has been no significant modern expansion of the boundaries of the village since then.



Figure 1 Brasted High Street in the 1900s

The main estate, Brasted Place, was purchased by John Turton, physician to George III, in 1784. He demolished the old house and commissioned Robert Adam to design a new residence for him in the Palladian style with Etruscan details. Turton was given a clock from one of the turrets of the Horse Guards by the King and this was installed in a clock turret on the former service buildings adjacent to the A25. Adam also landscaped the surrounding parkland, and Dr Turton managed to obtain an Act of Parliament that allowed the replacement of an ancient sunken lane on his land, that was a public highway, with the road sited 200 yards to the east, now known as New Road. The house was much extended by Waterhouse in the 19th Century using a French Renaissance style.



Figure 2 The Green in the 1900s

Napoleon III was a resident in 1840 before his unsuccessful attempt to land at Boulogne and take the throne of France. He apparently used to walk in the village with his tame eagle.

Like other villages on the River Darent, Brasted had a watermill and the building still exists.

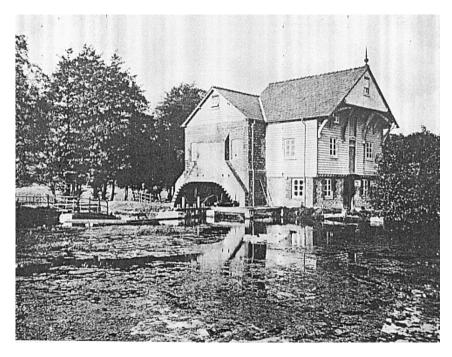


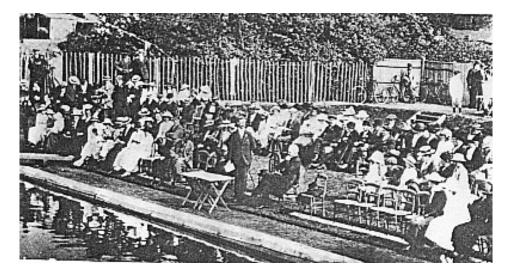
Figure 3 The Mill on the Darent

The White Hart public house was much altered by E.T.Hall in 1885. It became famous as the favourite haunt of Battle of Britain pilots based at nearby Biggin Hill during the Second World War and now operates as a restaurant.



Figure 4 The White Hart in 1866

In the early part of the Century a swimming pool was built in the village which was opened by Earl Stanhope of Chevening in about 1913. The pool was eventually closed to provide room for the village football ground.



 $Figure \ 5 \quad The \ opening \ of \ the \ Swimming \ Pool$

2.4 Architectural Description

The Brasted Conservation Area contains examples of most of the vernacular features that are typically found in traditional Kentish buildings.

Roofs are either slated, with lead hip and ridge rolls, or covered with clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs. The use of full or half hips to one side of the roof with a gable end on the other is common.



Figure 6 Properties on the High Street

Dormer windows are often inserted into the roof slopes, giving light to attic spaces which can then be utilised as additional accommodation. The pitches of tiled roofs tend to be steep, whilst those that are slated are shallower, and the contrasting heights of the ridge lines often lend variety and interest to the street scene. 'Cat slide' roofs, which sweep down from the ridge to ground floor ceiling level have long been a popular way of covering a single storey extension to the side or rear of a building.



Figure 7 Varying roof lines

Many timber framed buildings survive from the era before brickwork became a popular and affordable alternative construction material, although they may now be clad in brick, hiding the external evidence of their original construction. In many cases the first floor timber frame is clad with vertical tile hanging but there are examples of an exposed frame with plaster infill panels and pargeting. Gault clay mathematical tiles appear on Brasted House and are a rare local material. Where brick has been used on ground and first floors to encase a timber frame a parapet gutter is often formed at roof level to give the building a gentrified classical appearance.

Brick is the most popular building material and the local red stock bricks can been seen in many buildings, together with decorative arches above doors and windows. Patterns formed by the inclusion of blue headers or bands of a different colour brick are common.

The use of local stone either on its own or combined with brickwork, adds another colour and texture to the built environment. Sometimes the impression of ashlared stonework is created by the use of rendered brickwork, painted and lined out to simulate natural stone coursing.

Windows are either timber casements or sliding sashes. Leaded lights can be found in buildings of many ages, and coloured glass was popular in Edwardian and Victorian doors and windows. A converted Chapel on the west end of the High Street has some unusual fenestration.



Figure 8 The converted Chapel

3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

Brasted is essentially a linear village and the charm of its wealth of historic buildings is accentuated by the long views afforded along the main street.



Figure 9 White Hart Cottages at the eastern end of the Village

There are slight bends in the road at the eastern entrance to the village, at the junction with Chart Lane, and just before the junction with Church Road towards the western end of the Conservation Area. These changes in direction divide the street into definable lengths, and provide visual stops that add another dimension to what could otherwise appear to be an overlong vista.



Figure 10 Shops on the south side of the High Street

For most of the High Street, the buildings are set close to the pavement, providing an intimate feel to the streetscape, and the presence of a number of mature trees softens the landscape and provides a backdrop to the properties.



Figure 11 Trees soften the streetscape

At the junction with Rectory Lane, the Green opens out to provide a pleasant contrast to the tighter clustering of buildings on the rest of the High Street.



Figure 12 Cottages and the village sign on the Green

There is more open land behind the buildings on the High Street, both to north and south, and although these are mainly private gardens, the planting within them once again softens the impact of the density of the built environment.



Figure 13 Cottages on the banks of the Darent

To the east of the Conservation Area, the expanse of the grounds to Brasted Place which can be glimpsed from the road, are an important area of open space within the village.



Figure 14 Brasted Place

The character of Brasted is typified by the variety of scales and contrasting materials used in the buildings that line the High Street. Large detached classical style houses stand in close proximity to rows of terraced cottages.



Figure 15 The White House and Rectory Lodge opposite the Green

There is a warm range of colour in the mellow bricks and tiles, and interesting texture is provided by stonework and herringbone patterned brickwork. The diversity in the types of windows, and the irregular frontage of the building lines add charm to the streetscape.



Figure 16 Herringbone patterned brickwork

For the most part, boundary walls, hedges and fences are low and do not obscure the houses behind. There is a mixture of brick and stone walls and low evergreen hedging and climbing plants soften the facades of many buildings.



Figure 17 Vegetation adds colour and interest to a building on the Green

Because of the close spacing of the buildings there are few far reaching views out of the area. The main vistas are along the High Street and from the side roads back towards the centre of the village, creating an intimate enclosed atmosphere despite the length of the High Street.

3.2 The Impact of Individual Elements/Features/Groups of Building

A progression along the High Street, in either direction, provides a continually changing streetscape in which individual buildings are sometimes best appreciated as a contrast to their neighbours.



Figure 18 Cottages on the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area

The first buildings encountered on the eastern outskirts of the village are one of the lodges to Brasted Place and the cottages opposite. They do not, however, prepare the visitor for the proliferation of historic buildings that await around the next bend. These are introduced by the pair of lodges on opposite sides of the road - one at the end of the drive to Brasted Place and the other originally at the western entrance to Combe Bank.



Figure 19 The Lodge to Combe Bank

Nearer the Village centre, the White Hart Public House and the row of terraced cottages opposite enclose the road prior to the point where the vista opens out onto the Green.



Figure 20 The White Hart Public House

Around the Green and overlooking it on the south side of the road are a number of substantial 17th and 18th Century properties with good detailing.



Figure 21 Properties on the west side of the Green

Behind the Green, in a more modern view, the extensions to Durtnells's offices are a good example of how new buildings can be included in the historic environment, using scale and forms that complement the vernacular tradition without parodying it.



Figure 22 Durtnell's offices

In the next section of the High Street up to Chart Lane, virtually every property is listed, and those on the north side in particular are a charming collection of colourful little cottages, that are typical of the village.



Figure 23 "Tilings" on the north side of the High Street

On the south side, the Mount House and its adjacent wall in front of the Red Cottage on the corner of Chart Lane form a natural break in the streetscape before the junction.



Figure 24 The Mount House

The façade of Brasted House, clad in mathematical tiles, and West Cottage bring this historic section of the village to a close.



Figure 25 Brasted House

The Kings Arms Public House is now converted to offices. Its decoration tends to suffer from its proximity to the road. A contemporary addition to the back of the former pub contrasts dramatically with the original traditional character of the building.



Figure 26 The King's Arms Public House





Figure 27 New properties, called Granary Cottages

Figure 28 The Village House

Two contrasting developments stand opposite each other in the next group of buildings. On the north side of the road, Granary Cottages are a modern example of infill development in a sensitive location. Their massing and detailing is crude, and the choice of materials unfortunate. On the south side, the Village House dating from the early 18th Century is an elegant reminder of what might have been achieved.



Figure 29 The Old Mill

Tucked behind the High Street is the Old Mill, situated on the river and approached through the yard of a builder's merchant. The building does not look too dissimilar from old photographs, and the industry of the builder's yard is a suitable reminder that Brasted had long been a working village, before the proliferation of antique shops became the main commercial activity.



Figure 30 The converted Primary School

The village hall built in 1900 and the school, now converted to residential use and dating from a similar period, also testify to the life of the community in former years.



Figure 31 Alms Row Cottages

The final set of listed buildings in the village is Alms Row Cottages, which contains a Wealden house with recessed centre and jetties at each end.



Figure 32 Brasted Hall

Opposite them is a new development of detached houses in the grounds of the 19th Century Brasted Hall, which, although rather suburban in character are not as poorly detailed as other attempts at infill.



Figure 33 New development in the grounds of Brasted Hall.

The edge of the closely built form is marked by the Bull Inn public house and the converted Baptist Chapel. There are, however, several rows of older terraced houses on the north side of the road, between the Bull and the recreation ground that are included in the Conservation Area.





Fig. 34 Cottages between the Bull and the Recreation Ground

Although much altered and extended, and in some cases rather poorly maintained, these cottages, with the North Downs in the background, are still attractive.



Fig. 35 Cottages in Elliots Lane

Behind the High Street in Elliot's Lane, there are some pretty terraced cottages and a converted Oast House that form a picturesque group away from the main village centre.



Fig. 36 The Oast House in Elliots Lane

Similarly, cottages in Church Road and Rectory Lane are included in the Conservation Area for their historic contribution to the character of the village.



Fig. 37 Cottages in Church Road

In the grounds of Brasted Place, behind the Lodge and to the east of the drive, there are a number of residential properties of varying ages. Some are historically connected with the main house but others are newer infill developments that do not sit particularly comfortably in the context of the Park and its ancillary buildings. They are examples of the need to carefully design any proposals to add to development in such a historic setting.





 $Fig.\ 38\ Alterations\ to\ estate\ buildings\ in\ the\ grounds\ of\ Brasted\ Place$

4.0 FUTURE TRENDS

4.1 Current and Future Pressures on the Area

The main pressures on the Brasted conservation area are those exerted by the steady increase in traffic movement, the conversion of buildings to offices and the search for suitable sites for new residential development.

The village lies on a major east west road link situated close to the already overburdened M25, and any problems on that motorway causes a build-up of traffic through the centre of the Conservation Area. The absence of a full interchange at the M25 Chevening intersection may aggravate this problem and the situation may be eased by the construction of additional entry and exit roads.

The need to find potential new residential sites in this popular region within easy reach of London puts any village in the spotlight in the search for suitable building land. Whilst new development within a Conservation Area is not necessarily unwelcome, the impact that this can have on the traditional form of the village has to be carefully considered before consent is granted. There has been considerable recent development in Brasted, and no doubt there will be pressure in the future for further such schemes.

The Green Belt status afforded to the open countryside beyond the village may come under pressure in future years, in response to any need for new housing in the south east, particularly where development is already encroaching into agricultural land. This, however, is outside the present Conservation Area and will be subject to future central and local Government policy.

Brasted has retained some local shops, with limited parking outside. The proximity of superstores such as those at Dunton Green and Otford Road, Sevenoaks could have led to their closure. There has been a reduction in local services in health care and education in recent years.

4.2 Potential for Enhancement

Traffic calming measures have been installed at each end of the High Street. Although these reduce the speed of vehicles coming through the area, the street furniture and plastic painted road signs are intrusive on the streetscape and have a negative effect on the character of the conservation area. A review and reduction of signs and road paint would prove beneficial to the character of the area.



Figure. 39 The High Street looking east

The Lodge at the eastern boundary of the conservation area is derelict and detracts from the setting of the historic parkland at Brasted Place. The renovation of this unlisted building would significantly benefit the appearance of the conservation area.



Figure. 40 The dilapidated lodge to Brasted Place

Telegraph poles and wires are a very intrusive element in the High Street and detract from the street scene. The relaying of these cables underground would benefit the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The former newsagent's shop and adjoining neighbour on the south side of the High Street are now empty. The shop fronts to these properties are out of keeping with the traditional designs found along most of the rest of the High Street and alterations to a more suitable design should be encouraged.

4.3 Considerations for Future Policy Recommendations

The land opposite Brasted Place, on the north side of the road that lies between the cottages and the river, might sensibly be included in the Conservation Area.

In the west the open space of the recreation ground, between Park Cottage and the allotments has long been a valuable part of the village amenities and could also be included in the Conservation Area.



Figure 41 The recreation ground

The two Victorian properties, Lindertis and Camrie are set in large gardens to the south of the High Street. Their inclusion in the Conservation Area could be justified on historic grounds and would benefit the Conservation Area as a whole. Meadowgate and its grounds could also be considered for inclusion.



Figure 42 Lindertis



Figure 43 Camrie



Figure 44 Garden to Camrie

Acknowledgements:

The draft appraisal was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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