

# **Westerham**

## **Conservation Area Appraisal**



**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**



**December 2003**

# Westerham

## 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 document was approved by the District Council in December 2003 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 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**

Westerham Conservation Area covers some 36 hectares and contains about 100 listed buildings. It was designated in 1973 and extended in 1994. It includes the historic centre of the town including St Mary's Church and the Green, some open parkland to the south and several well known properties such as Quebec House, Pitt's Cottage and the Kings Arms Hotel. The area extends from the junction of the A25 and Hosey Hill in the east to the boundaries of Squerries Court in the west, and includes part of London Road in the north.

The countryside around is designated as Green Belt, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Landscape Area.

Westerham is a bustling small town in an attractive and popular location. It has a good number and variety of retail outlets, several pubs and restaurants and is well known and popular with tourists visiting nearby Chartwell and Squerries Court.

The main industrial area lies on the site of the old railway station to the north of the town and there are several new office developments within the town centre.

The main housing estates for the town have also developed to the north of the A25, although there has been some recent development on infill sites along, or just off, the main road.

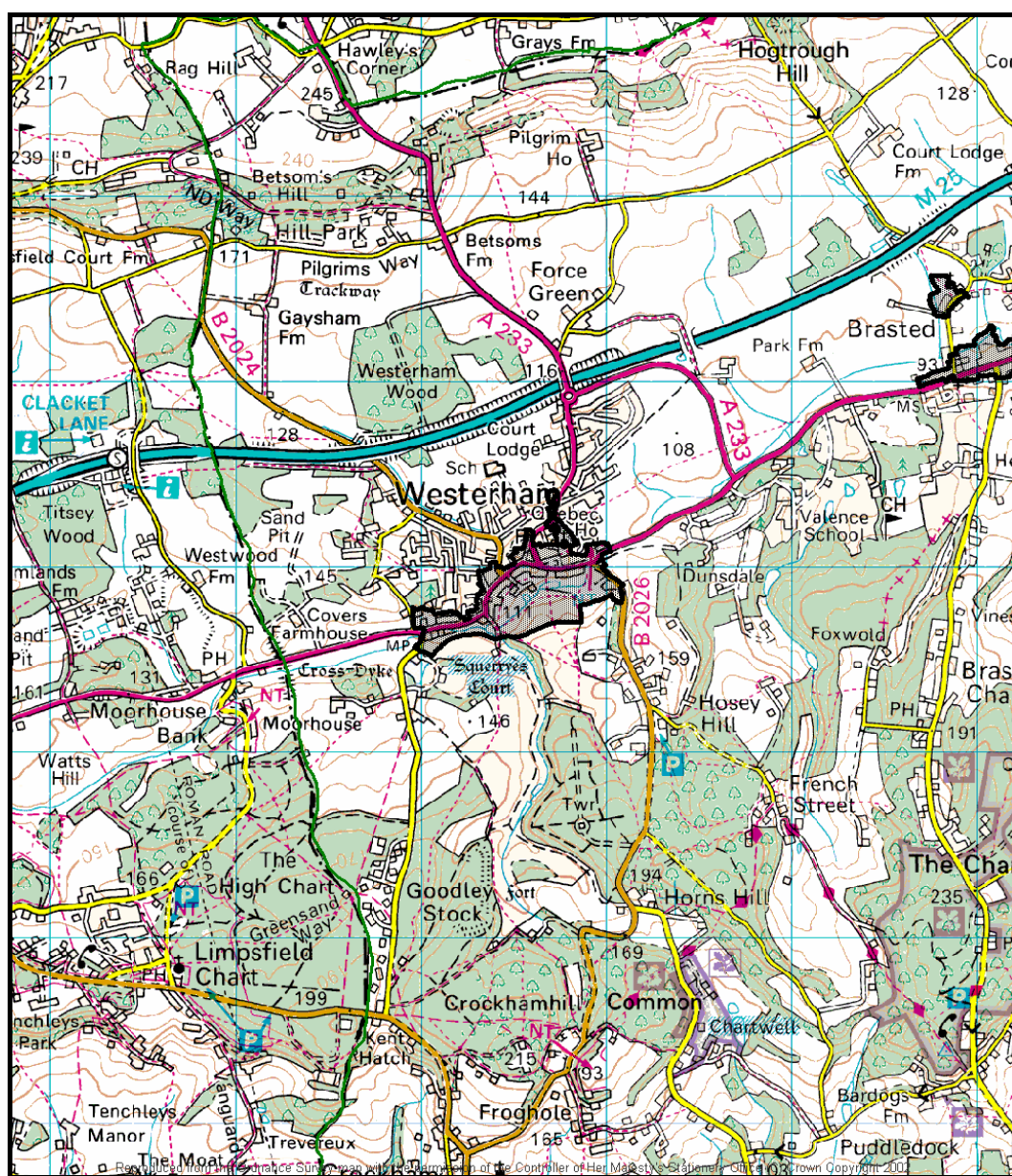


## 2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Westerham lies on the A25, which runs east/west through the town and intersects with Beggars Lane, the A233 and London Road connecting the town to Biggin Hill and Bromley in the north, and the B2024 Croydon Road. The town is situated in a valley between the North Downs and the foot of the Greensand ridge to the south.

The river Darent flows through the town, and the surrounding countryside is mainly farmland to the north and wooded parkland to the south.

The railway line was closed in 1961 by Mr Marples, the then Minister of Transport, and the M25 now follows the former rail route to the north of the town. The nearest motorway junctions are at Godstone in the west and Chipstead in the east, although this there is no access to or exit from the M26. The nearest stations are now at Sevenoaks and Oxted. Biggin Hill, Bromley and Sevenoaks are all within easy reach by car.



Map 1 Geographical Location

### 2.3 Historical Development

The small town of Westerham has over 1000 years of recorded history but a recent find of 25 Celtic gold coins indicates activity dating back over 2000 years. The original settlement grew up from a clearing in the woodland at a point where a number of small streams joined the River Darent. Although the Cantra tribe is believed to have had an encampment on the site of the Squerries Estate as long ago as 100BC, it was the Jutish tribes that inhabited the area until the time of the Norman Conquest.

The manor of Westerham was then granted to Eustace of Boulogne, the knight who killed King Harold at the Battle of Hastings. In the Domesday Survey of 1085 the village had a population of 59. The Church was recorded on its present site from around 1115 AD and is believed to have been built on the remains of a Saxon watch tower, at the highest point of the green.

Squerries Lodge also dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Century and there was a chapel by the river in use by monks until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539. The present building dates mostly from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Squerries Court site changed hands many times after being acquired by Henry VIII along with the manor of Westerham. In 1751 it was sold to the Warde family who still own the property to this day.



Figure 1 Squerries Court

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the growing population needed an improved road system and turnpike roads were built from Sevenoaks and Bromley through Westerham to Edenbridge.



Figure 2 The Market Square – an early photograph

James Wolfe was born in Westerham in 1727 and lived in Quebec House during his boyhood. His statue, together with that of Winston Churchill, another notable local resident, stands on the Green. William Pitt stayed in Pitts Cottage for a time whilst his main home at Holwood, near Keston, was under repair.

The railway opened in 1881 and joined the main line service at Dunton Green.



**Figure 3 C19 Waterside Cottage and the Old Forge**

The town grew in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and acquired a Town Hall. Local industry included two breweries that used hops grown locally on the surrounding agricultural land, and a school was built in 1828. Other local activities included a timber yard, coal yard and market gardening.



**Figure 4 Vicarage Hill – an early photograph**

New housing development occurred in the 1920s and 30s, and in the later part of the 1930s the town centre underwent a substantial change when Winterton House and the Grange passed out of private residential ownership. The demolition of their garden walls opened up the area, and the Grange Estate was sub-divided and developed.



## 2.4 Architectural Description

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



Figure 5 View of Market Square



Figure 6 Old Manor House

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 7 The Old Vicarage



Figure 8 View down Croydon Road

Chimney stacks are often tall and decorative. Dormer windows are often inserted into the roof slopes, giving light to attic spaces that can then be utilised as additional accommodation.



Figure 9 Chimneys at Brook Cottage

The pitches of tiled roofs tend to be steep, whilst those that are slated are shallower, and the contrasting heights of the ridge lines lend variety and interest to the street scene.



**Figure 10** Shops in the Market Square and The Kings Arms Hotel



**Figure 11** The north side of the Market Square

Catslide 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.

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, completely hiding the external evidence of their original construction.



**Figure 12** Brook Cottage

In some cases the first floor timber frame remains exposed, with rendered panels between the structural members; in others the frame is clad with vertical tile hanging or painted weatherboarding. 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.



**Figure 13** Grosvenor House



**Figure 14** Breaches

Brick is the most popular building material and the local red stock bricks can be 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.



**Figure 15 Cottages on New Street**



**Figure 16 St. Mary's Church**

The use of local stone (ragstone, limestone, sandstone) either on its own or combined with brickwork, adds another colour and texture to the built environment. Galleting in the mortar joints is often employed as a decorative and functional feature. Sometimes the impression of ashlar 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. The detailing of the joinery to these tends to be more robust than those of earlier buildings.



### 3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

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

##### *i) Quebec Square & Vicarage Hill*

Entering Westerham from the east, a bend in the road leads to the first sight of the built environs of the town. From the junction with Hosey Hill there are views up Vicarage Hill, but another bend in the road hides the town centre. At the top of Vicarage Hill the Green opens up with its strong visual edge of historic buildings. This is the heart of Westerham.



Figure 17 The Nursing Home on the A25

Apart from the car park, the first feature one notices is the recently extended nursing home on the north side of the A25 and the brick and ragstone walls flanking both sides of the road beyond.



Figure 18 Quebec House

Quebec House with its series of gables is partially hidden behind its walls and amongst mature trees, but the group of cottages, once shops, on the road junction is the first real indication of the quality of the built environment of the town.



**Figure 19 Darenth on Vicarage Hill**

As one turns the corner, the road leads up the hill past a number of imposing and attractive residences. Grosvenor House on the south side, and Darenth on the north are both impressive examples of their types.



**Figure 20 A view up Vicarage Hill**

On the road junction is a small lodge at the edge of the Dunsdale Estate which marks the start of Hosey Hill, and a small series of white painted rendered cottages lead up the hill to the grander houses beyond. There is a converted public house at the foot of the hill and important views up to the Church.



**Figure 21 West Lodge at the bottom of Hosey Hill**



Westerham is a topographical paradox; on a hill but at the same time nestling in a valley. Look along almost any street from the centre and the road falls away to a backdrop of verdant countryside which provides an important setting for the conservation area. From the centre the wooded hills beyond the town are clearly seen, and form a distinctive part of Westerham's character.



Figure 22 A view east from the top of Vicarage Hill

The Conservation Area includes the buildings on the south-west side of Hosey Hill up as far as the Old Well House. This area contains the Vulcan Plastics works, somewhat of an eyesore, and the Roman Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist as well as residential properties.



Figure 23 Vulcan Plastic Works



Figure 24 Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist

Behind these, the open rising park and woodland extends along the southern border of the town as far as Squerryes Court.



Figure 25 The pond behind Waterside Cottage



Figure 26 A view towards the Church from the south

ii) *The Green, Market Square and Fullers Hill*

The historic centre of the town has an abundance of listed buildings, grouped in a picturesque manner around the Green and Market Square. At the highest point of the town the Church is tucked behind the Green, but its elevated position means that the Spire is visible from much of the town.



Figure 27 The south side of the Green



Figure 28 St. Mary's Church

From the Churchyard there are significant views to the Downs and the Greensand Ridge.



Figure 29 Views from the Churchyard, north



Figure 30 Views from the Churchyard, south east

The two statues on the open expanse of the Green are well known landmarks and there are a number of benches to allow contemplation of the scene.



Figure 31 The Statue of Wolfe on the Green

The triangular shape of the Green and the rising land draw the eye up to the Market Square where the buildings are taller, and more closely spaced. Once again the road curves to the west hiding the next section of the High Street.



Figure 32 The north side of the Green

The buildings to the north of the Market Square are set in a triangle between Fullers Hill and London Road, and these roads lead back down the hill, with views to the Downs beyond.



Figure 33 View, north down London Road



Figure 34 Properties on Fullers Hill

Both roads narrow from the wider expanse of the Market Square and Fullers Hill has a number of listed buildings and little lanes leading off it. At the bottom of Fuller's Hill a triangular space, formerly the site of the fire station and now a car park, has views back up the hill to the George and Dragon public house and the centre of town.



To the north of the Churchyard, a group of Almshouses on the London Road and the two cottages opposite are included in the Conservation Area. The northern limit of the Conservation Area includes the converted primary school buildings.



**Figure 35 The converted School Building**



**Figure 36 Moretons Almshouses**

On the south side of the Green a footpath, Water Lane, leads south towards the valley of the river Darent and open countryside beyond.



**Figure 37 The Green from Water Lane**

*iii) Lodge Lane to Verralls Corner*

At the junction of Croydon Road and the High Street, a small lane, Lodge Lane, leads south to Squerryes Lodge and the river. The Lane is a striking catalogue of architectural styles from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century to the 20<sup>th</sup>.



**Figure 38 Lodge Lane**

There are a number of attractive listed cottages on the west side and a larger house behind a high brick wall to the east.



**Figures 39 and 40 Commercial and residential properties in the High Street**

From Lodge Lane the High Street runs southwest and south through an area of mainly residential properties, set close to the road and interspersed with the occasional larger property and office development.

The old laundry site opposite the Drill Hall has been redeveloped, and the adjacent listed cottages restored in association with new residential development.



Figure 41 The old laundry site before redevelopment



Figure 42 Cottages adjacent to the old laundry site

Squerryes Lodge, set in wooded grounds in the river valley is mostly hidden from view except from the higher parkland beyond. It is a large property with important 12<sup>th</sup> Century historic origins.



Figure 43 Squerryes Lodge



Figure 44 Duncans Cottages

Off the High Street are a number of small residential streets with rows of older terraced houses that are a quiet contrast to the busy main road.

Once again, the variety of types of building and scale combined with the changes in direction of the road and the narrowing of the Croydon Road junction provide an interesting street scene.



Figure 45 The Market Square, looking west



iv) *The Forge to Farley Lane*

After the sharp bend in the road adjacent to the Old Forge, which forms a visual stop, is another section of the A25 that has a plethora of historic properties.



**Figure 46** The General Wolfe Pub and Spring Ardens

On the north side of the road are a series of reminders of the brewing history of the town such as the General Wolfe public house and the old Black Eagle Brewery house.



**Figure 47** Moreton's

Also here are Moretons, Great Moretons and Moretons End, one house divided into three but still impressive, and the well known Pitts Cottage, an unusual venue for an Indian Restaurant. Wolfelands, formerly known as Farley, completes this group and marks the western limit of the town.



**Figure 48** Pitt's Cottage



**Figure 49** Wolfelands

v) *The Parkland to the South*

From Park Cottages, in the north-west corner of the Squerries Park Estate, to the west side of Hosey Hill runs a swathe of wooded parkland that rises steeply to the south. The river runs at the bottom of the valley and there are a series of ponds on both public and private land.



**Figure 50** A view east towards Hosey Hill



**Figure 51** Squerries Lodge from the south-east

The area is crossed by footpaths and gives some panoramic views across the town, and glimpses of Squerries Court among the trees. One of the footpaths connects to Water lane, a pedestrian access to the Green.



### 3.2 The Impact of Individual Elements/Features/Groups of Buildings

Westerham has such a wealth of listed buildings that there is a danger that some of the less historically significant but nonetheless characterful properties may be rather disregarded amongst their grander neighbours.

However, mention must be made of these listed buildings as they provide the Conservation Area with much of its charm.



Figure 52 The Green from the south east

The most obvious focal point is The Green, with the range of historic properties on the north side and the sweeping view down to Breaches and the Pheasantry on the south side.



Figure 53 The Pheasantry

A sense of enclosure is achieved in the east by the range of buildings that descend the hill, although some of the detailing on the newer properties is out of keeping with the Conservation Area. The two statues on The Green of heroes from different centuries is a reminder of the town's long historic connections. The Grasshopper public house is a popular meeting place and has tables outside during good weather.



**Figure 54 Owl House**

The dormer window in the roof of Owl House strikes a jarring note in the Conservation Area and the car parking around The Green detracts from its atmosphere.



**Figure 55 Yew Tree Cottage**

From the Market Square, there are views back across The Green and glimpses of the countryside beyond.

The widening of the road and the juxtaposition of buildings at different angles give the Market Square an individual identity and there is a sense of bustle and prosperity about the area.



**Figure 56 The George and Dragon in Market Square**

The buildings in the main are substantial and dignified with enough variety to maintain interest. For example the tiny building at no. 36, tucked between two larger ‘gentrified’ facades comes as a delightful visual surprise.



**Figure 57** The bend at the west end of Market Square

The Market Square is the heart of the commercial district and has a variety of shops, restaurants and banks. Most of the shop fronts are sensitively designed but exceptions include Barclays Bank, the Kebab house and adjacent chinese take away in Winterton Court. Next to these, the gift shop shows how careful detailing improves an identical property.



**Figure 58** Contrasting shop fronts on Winterton House

The potentially interesting property next to Winterton House has been spoilt by the use of unsuitable replacement roof tiles.



**Figure 59** Unsuitable roof tiles

There are interesting alleys leading away from the main shopping area that invite exploration, but occasionally disappoint due to neglect of the buildings hidden from general view.



**Figure 60** Properties behind the south side of Market Square

Fullers Hill has a cluster of interesting buildings, some listed, although parked cars mar the setting at the northern end. From Fullers Hill there are good views to the Downs.

The grouping of buildings around Quebec House and the junction at the bottom of Hosey Hill is often the first impression that visitors have of Westerham. The properties serve as a good introduction to the atmosphere and character at the heart of the town, and the ascent to The Green, past Darenth, Grosvenor House, The Old Vicarage and Monks Way provides a gradual revelation of what is to come.



**Figure 61** A view west up Vicarage Hill

Similarly, at the opposite end of the town the buildings on the banks of the Darent and the parkland beyond are a pleasant introduction to the more densely developed areas in the town centre.



**Figure 62** A view towards the Long Pond at the west end of the High Street



The old brewery site has been redeveloped as residential and, although most of the buildings are excluded from the Conservation Area, they can be seen from the river and road and have been criticised for their suburban character.



Figure 63 Brewery Cottages

The Old Forge is a well-known landmark on the bend and, together with Brewery Cottages and Brewery House forms a focal point where the more densely built part of the town begins.



Figure 64 Waterside Cottage

The old Laundry site, and the mediaeval cottages adjacent to it have detracted from the area for some time. The site has now been redeveloped and the listed buildings ( 49-55 High Street) which were in urgent need of maintenance are now repaired. (See Fig. 42)



Figure 65 The parade of shops in The High Street



Figure 66 Properties at the junction of Croydon Road and the High Street

At the junction with Croydon Road and the High Street are two extreme contrasts in terms of character and scale. Although excluded from the Conservation Area, the parade of shops between Grange Close and the High Street is a flat roofed modern block in a central location which impinges on the townscape around it. The shop fronts are garish and inappropriate and the poorly scaled block detracts from its more attractive neighbours.



**Figure 67** Office development at 83 High Street

The new office block further down the High Street at number 83 is set back from the road in order presumably to achieve a wider frontage than would have been possible with infill development closer to the original building line. Once again, its scale and detailing in this location leaves much to be desired.

In Lodge Lane the scale is intimate and small. A series of cottages wind down the hill to the Squerryes Lodge entrance and a public footpath leads to the Darent, although car parking can mar the tranquility of the Lane.



**Figure 68** Car parking in Lodge Lane

A fence on the edge of the footpath no doubt provides privacy and security for Meadow Cottage, but adds a jarring urban note in this otherwise rural setting.



**Figure 69 Moretons Almshouses**



**Figure 70 43 – 45 London Road**

In the northern arm of the Conservation Area, Moretons Almshouses and the converted school are striking buildings representing Victorian development in the town. In this area, new housing on the former garage site is using local details and is scaled to relate to the existing street scene.



**Figure 71 New development in London Road**

## **4.0 FUTURE TRENDS**

### **4.1 Current and Future Pressures on the Area**

As in many areas of the south east the main pressures on the Westerham Conservation Area are those exerted by the steady increase in traffic movement, the number of vehicles on the road and the search for suitable sites for new residential development.

The town lies on a major east-west road link situated close to the overburdened M25 motorway. Problems on that road can cause a build-up of traffic through the centre of the Conservation Area. The roads are narrow and ill equipped to cater for the large commercial vehicles that sometimes try to use them. Traffic calming measures in the town centre are being considered, but these can lead to an unacceptable barrage of signs and road markings that are inappropriate in a Conservation Area.

The need to find residential development sites in this popular region within easy reach of London puts any small country town such as Westerham 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 town has to be carefully considered before consent is granted. The Westerham Conservation Area and its environs have examples of both good and bad solutions to infill development. Backland development is often proposed by owners of properties with large gardens, and whilst such development may be suitable in certain locations, in a Conservation Area it can damage the historic form of the built environment.

The Green Belt status afforded to the open countryside beyond the town 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, will be subject to future Government policy. However, one of the characteristics of Westerham is that it has clearly defined town boundaries, surrounded by open countryside that contains little development other than traditional farm buildings. There is a perception locally that the proximity of Greater London at the top of Westerham Hill could threaten the traditional settlement pattern. Already the demand for office and commercial premises in inappropriate areas is causing concern to the Parish Council.

It has been noted that redundant farm buildings on the fringe of the town are being converted into industrial units, and this is seen by some as a further threat to the rural nature of the locality.



## **4.2 Potential for Enhancement**

The local community in Westerham have produced a Design Statement for the town and the neighbouring village of Crockham Hill, in which measures that should be incorporated into any future developments to enhance the public realm are identified and discussed. Of particular relevance to the Conservation Area are proposals for street signage, shop fronts and awnings, paving design and the encouragement of traditional detailing into new development.

## **4.3 Future Policy Recommendations**

At present the Squerryes Court Estate and the adjacent Home Farm, both listed buildings, are excluded from the Conservation Area. As the buildings and the associated park are such an important part of the town, it is recommended that they be included in the Area.

It has been suggested that the new building Osprey House, on the corner of Black Eagle Close, be included in the Conservation Area, as it has an influence on the street scene at this point.

At the south eastern boundary of the area there are a few houses set high on the bank on the east side of the road in an area which might be considered worthy of inclusion.

Park Lodge, at the end of Mill Lane, occupies a pivotal position close to the Darent and set among the park land to the south of the town. Its inclusion in the Conservation Area should be considered along with the Squerryes Court Estate.

## Acknowledgements:

The draft appraisal was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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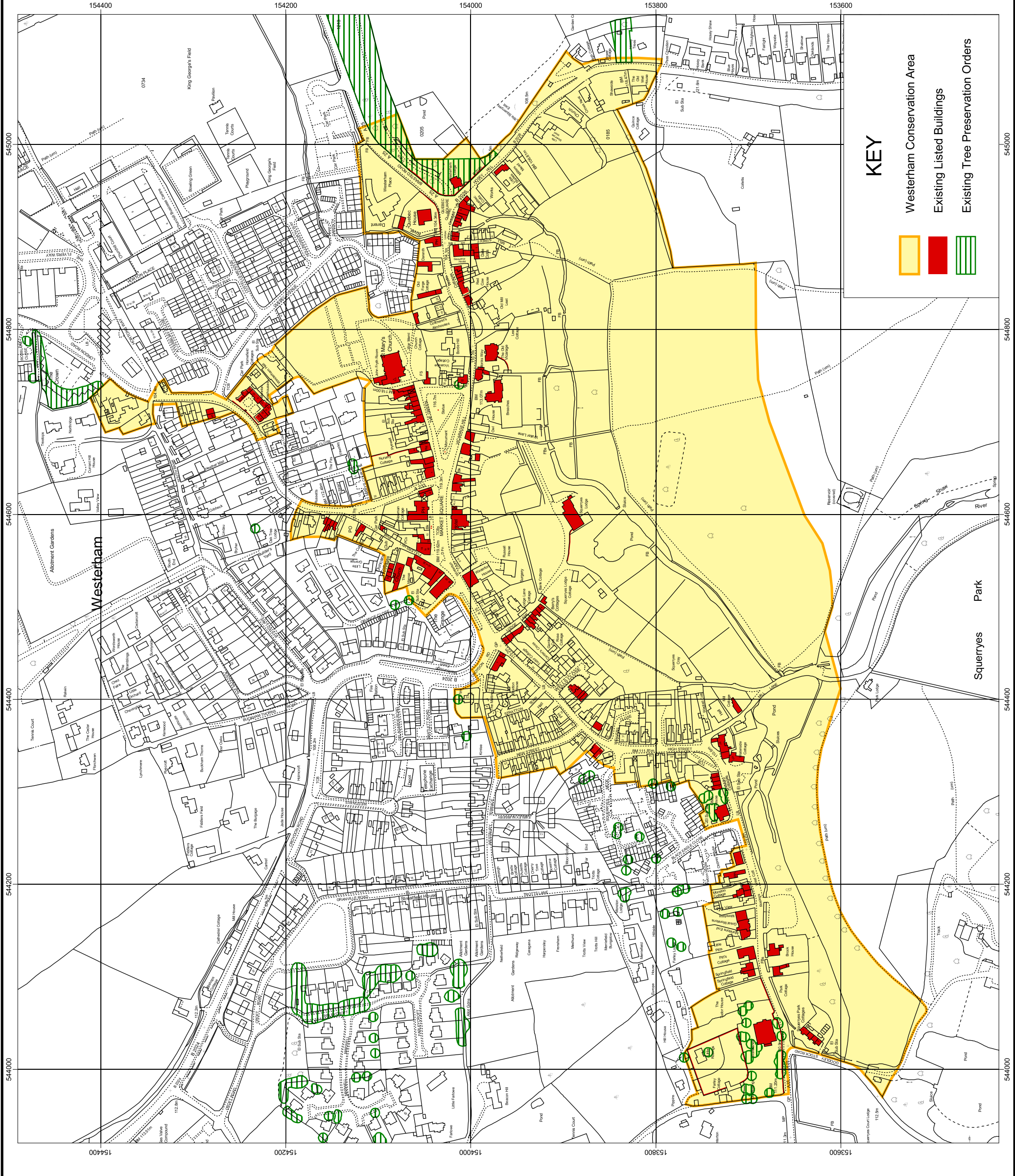


MAP 2  
Westerham  
Conservation Area  
Designations

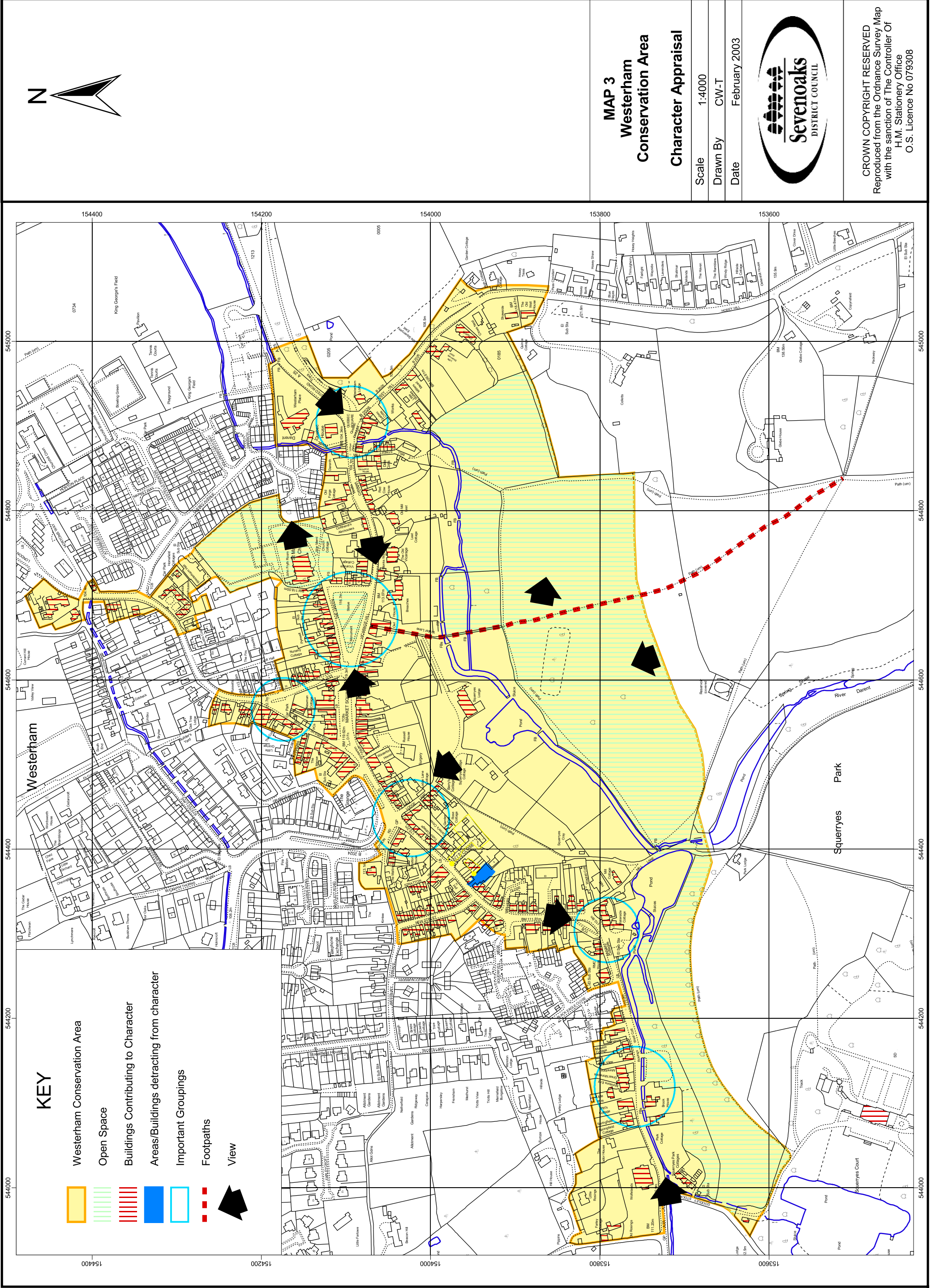
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**MAP 4**  
**Westerham**  
**Conservation Area**  
**Recommendations for**  
**Future Policy Changes**

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**KEY**

Westerham Conservation Area

Proposed Extension to Conservation Area

