

# LARKFIELD CHURCH CONSERVATION AREA



## *Introduction*

The objective of the Larkfield Church Conservation Area Appraisal is to analyse and record the special character of the Conservation Area, which was originally designated in 1993. The appraisal covers the area within the Conservation Area boundary and provides further details to assist with the interpretation and use of planning policies. It will help guide the Council in making planning decisions on planning applications and to this end will be adopted for development control purposes.

Importantly, it is hoped that the appraisal will prove to be of help to residents and landowners. For anyone proposing new development or changes within the Conservation Area, the appraisal should be read in conjunction with the Borough Council's **Conservation Area Advice Note**. This includes guidance on the broad issues to be considered and the special controls that apply in Conservation Areas.

The Conservation Area comprises the church, former rectory and school buildings all of which date from the mid - 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In the Victorian period it was common to associate a church, rectory and school closely with each other. The buildings were constructed through the efforts of the Wigan family of Clare House, East Malling. The Church of the Holy Trinity was designed by R P Pope and dates from 1854. The stained glass in east and west windows is by Alexander Gibbs. The school buildings have now been converted to residential use but have retained much of their original character.



*As the purpose of this appraisal is to describe the **character** of the area, it does not include a detailed description of every feature or building. Omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken therefore, to imply that it is not of interest or similarly that there are no opportunities to improve the character of the area.*

## ***Townscape/Landscape Analysis***

The map shows the key features of the Conservation Area and forms part of the townscape appraisal. It should be looked at in conjunction with this text.

The Conservation Area comprises a cluster of buildings inter-related by design and former function. To the north, the buildings are set in an elevated position above New Hythe Lane and the more recent Sheldon Way which serves the adjoining industrial estate. The embankment is obscured to some extent by hedge and tree planting which encloses the Conservation Area to the north, abutting Sheldon Way, and to a lesser extent to the east, abutting the industrial units. Further south the elevation is much less pronounced but a hedge and tree boundary screens the buildings behind at this point. Nevertheless, the two stage bellcote and topmost spirelet with cross on the church and the roof of 226 New Hythe Lane are visible above the vegetation.



**Verdant landscape and church bellcote viewed from New Hythe Lane**



**Landscaped frontage and rooftops to 226 New Hythe Lane**

This verdant western edge to the Conservation Area is dramatically interrupted by the elevated ragstone ecclesiastical buildings. The buildings and boundaries are strongly unified through the use of ragstone and plain tile roofs on all the buildings.



The Church of the Holy Trinity has large buttresses, a circular window and bellcote facing west towards New Hythe Lane. The scale and elevation of the church make the listed building a local landmark. A low ragstone wall fronts the lane and returns into the site to frame the steps which climb the embankment – approaching the church through a lych gate. A sloped grass bank either side of the steps forms an important part of the setting of the church.



The former school buildings and rectory are also built of ragstone and are set above a high ragstone wall which includes a curved driveway and wall which separates the buildings from the churchyard. The proximity of buildings, their elevation and the materials used give this part of the Conservation Area an urban form which contrasts with the landscaped edges and the open space surrounding the church.





The buildings depict traditional features including contrasting red brick detailing surrounding the windows and doors and matching brick string courses, and tall chimneys.



No 226 New Hythe Lane (now a nursery) is only visible from from the street through the entrance. Unity with adjoining buildings is achieved through the use of ragstone and plain tile roofing, although the detailing (such as quoins and string course) are stone. The tall brick chimney is also visible.



The open space surrounding the church, particularly the more open and expansive graveyard to the north, forms a peaceful enclave of green space. The graveyard is enclosed by a row of yew trees, which separate the church from the green space on the south side, and the landscaped embankment to the north and west.

The eastern side of the churchyard is not enclosed and affords long views of the North Downs. The foreground of the roofs of industrial buildings is not obscured by low level planting or the low ragstone wall. The landscaping to the east is important to the setting of the Conservation Area but the industrial setting currently detracts from the character of the Conservation Area.










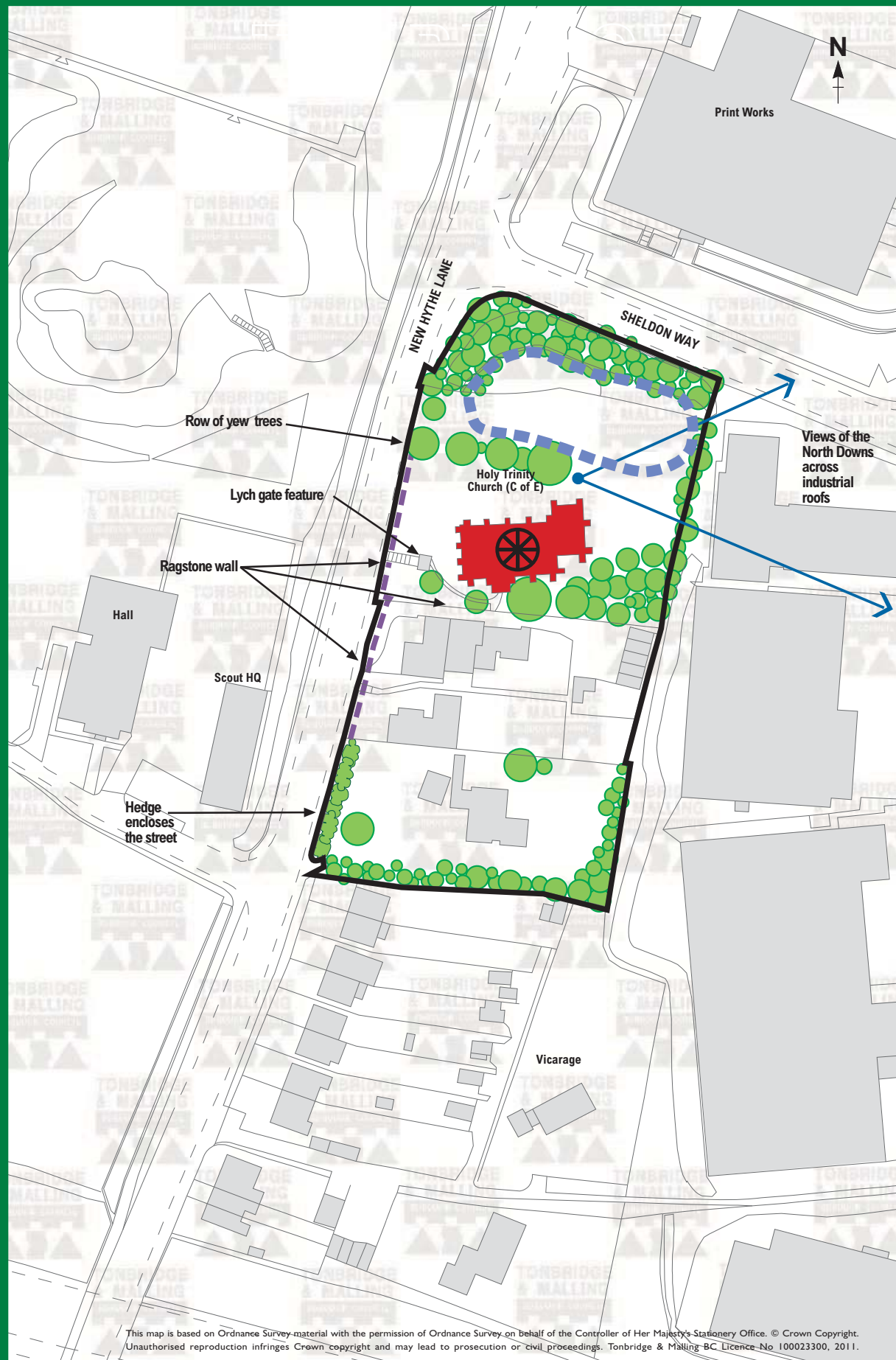
A group of mature trees dominate the space to the east of the church and further specimen trees line the wall to the south and provide a welcome contrast to the built form.

## Planning Policy Background

- The Appraisal will help interpret
- Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment),
  - the Tonbridge and Malling Core Strategy (Policies CP1 – Sustainable Development; CP24 – Achieving a High Quality Environment and CP25 – Mitigation of Development Impacts), and
  - the Managing Development and the Environment DPD (Policy SQ1)

# LARKFIELD CHURCH

-  Listed Buildings
-  Landmark
-  Views/vista
-  Important visual space
-  Important trees - acting as focal points etc.
-  Important Hedge
-  Boundary treatment contributing to special character



Map