

# Borough Green Character Areas

## Supplementary Planning Document



Adopted July 2011





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## Key to Maps



**Views**



**Panoramas**



**Local Landmark**



**Visual Intrusion**



**Protected Trees**



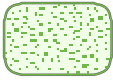
**Protected Woodland or Groups of Trees**



**Important Tree and Hedge Belts**



**Conservation Area**



**Open Space**



**Listed Buildings**



# 1 What is the Supplementary Planning Document?

Good design is a key element of sustainable development, so the Borough Council will promote a high standard of design. A high quality, well designed, development can enhance the sense of place and identity of an area and can bring significant benefits to the local environment and economy.

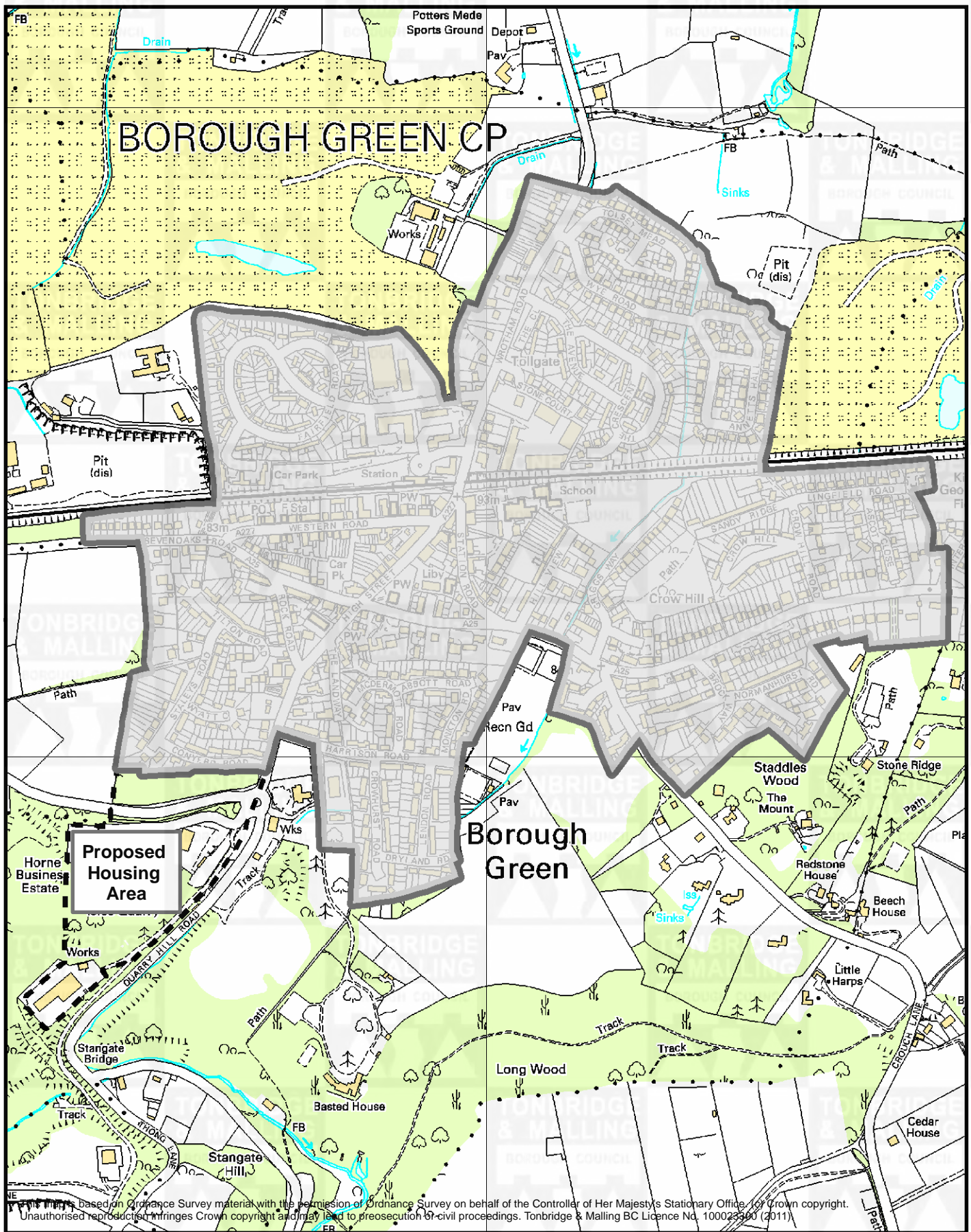
The 'character of an area' is often mentioned in the context of considering development proposals. What is often missing is a clear identification of, and agreement about, the locally distinctive features of an area that give it character that should be given careful regard in considering proposals for development. This Character Areas Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out to define the character of identifiable local areas across the Borough for that purpose.

The Managing Development and the Environment DPD states that it is important that unique characteristics of an area are identified and protected and where practicable enhanced having regard to the Character Areas SPD in order to strengthen this diversity rather than eroding its character and local distinctiveness. Government guidance (PPS3) advocates that Local Planning Authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and develop design policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the local area.

The Borough Council is undertaking character area appraisals of all of the main urban areas in the Borough, including the larger villages, defined in the Local Development Framework (LDF) as Rural Service Centres. The Character Area Appraisals SPD therefore comprises a number of separate volumes. Appraisals are being prepared for:

- the Tonbridge Urban Area;
- the northern urban areas (including the Medway Gap, Snodland and Walderslade) and
- the Rural Service Centres - Hadlow, Hildenborough (including Hilden Park), Borough Green, East Peckham, and West Malling

This particular part of the SPD sets out to define the character of, and appropriate design guidance for, the existing built up area of Borough Green as defined in the LDF Core Strategy (see Map 1).



Map 1: Borough Green Area Boundary

Borough Green Character Area Appraisal





The SPD will be adopted as part of the LDF. Once adopted, it will be a material consideration in determining planning applications in the existing built up area of Borough Green to which it applies. Developers and householders should refer to the document in formulating proposals.

The document aims to raise the standard of design of new proposals such that they fit well with the locally distinctive character of an area. Design which is considered to be inappropriate in its context is unlikely to be acceptable and efforts will be made to improve the character and quality of an area through the preparation and consideration of development proposals.

## **2 Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document**

This SPD aims:

- To supplement adopted design policies for assessing development proposals within an area;
- To identify the locally distinctive features that define the character of the existing built up area of Borough Green;
- To raise awareness of, and provide guidance on, the appropriateness of the design of development within an area in order to strengthen diversity rather than erode character and local distinctiveness;
- To assist the appraisal of planning and allied applications; and
- To deliver improved designs, in practice, which enhance the character of the area.

## **3 Policy Context**

The SPD is consistent with national planning policy and is supplementary to the policies set out in the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) contained in the LDF.

### **3.1 National Planning Policies**

*Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development)* states that the Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment, in both rural and urban areas. Planning policies should seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole.

Planning authorities should seek to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design, conservation and the provision of public space.

Planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people and take the opportunity to improve the character and quality of an area.

Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary planning documents on design.

*Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing)* affirms that good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.

The guidance advocates that Local Planning Authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and develop design policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the local area, aimed at:

- Creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character.
- Promoting designs and layouts which make efficient and effective use of land, including encouraging innovative approaches to help deliver high quality outcomes.

Good design is fundamental to using land efficiently. Local Planning Authorities should facilitate good design by identifying the distinctive features that define the character of a particular local area.

Careful attention to design is particularly important where the chosen local strategy involves intensification of the existing urban fabric. More intensive development is not always appropriate. However, when well designed and built in the right location, it can enhance the character and quality of an area.

PPS3 states that the density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment.

### **3.2 Core Strategy – September 2007**

One of the prime aims of the Core Strategy is to ensure that new development result in a high quality environment by, for example, promoting and delivering new development that can positively contribute to the spatial quality of towns and maintaining or enhancing local distinctiveness.

Core Policy CP24 states that all development must be well designed and of a high quality in terms of detailing and use of appropriate materials, and must, through its scale, density, layout, siting, character and appearance, be designed to respect the site and its surroundings. Wherever possible, all development should make a positive contribution towards the enhancement of the appearance of the area.

### **3.3 Managing Development and the Environment DPD – April 2010**

The DPD states that the diverse character of Borough Green should be protected and enhanced for its own sake as it is important for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Borough. It is important that the unique characteristics of the area are identified and protected and where practicable enhanced in line with Core Policy CP24 having regard to the Character Area Appraisals SPD in order to strengthen this diversity rather than eroding its character and local distinctiveness.

Policy SQ1 requires proposals for development to reflect the local distinctiveness, condition and sensitivity to change of the local character areas as defined in the Character Area Appraisals SPD.

*All new development should protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance:*

*(a) the character and local distinctiveness of the area including its historical and architectural interest and the prevailing level of tranquillity;*

*(b) the distinctive setting of, and relationship between, the pattern of settlement, roads and the landscape, urban form and important views...*

## **4 Methodology**

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) advises local authorities to prepare robust policies on design. These should be based on an understanding and evaluation of the present defining characteristics of an area and that is the purpose and function of this SPD.

The evaluation of the Borough Green area has involved an assessment of the character of the development of the area through the review of historic maps; comprehensive site surveys using

the approach and characteristics advocated in By Design – Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice (DETR, 2000) – see Appendix 1.

An initial appraisal was undertaken of all areas of the village covered by this draft SPD and it was evident that a number of areas shared similar characteristics. From this assessment it was possible to identify a typology of character areas such as 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cottages, Inter-war Public Housing, Post-war Public Housing Schemes, Bungalows, Open Plan Housing, Clustered Cul-de-sac Development and Commercial Areas.

The main road frontage of Sevenoaks Road, Maidstone Road and Wrotham Road form the framework around which Borough Green has developed. As main frontages, accommodating the most journeys, they also have a disproportionate influence on the perception of the village. For these reasons, the Main Road Frontage is classified as a character area typology.

Although not necessarily physically adjoining each other, each character area typology generally grew up over the same period using layouts, designs and materials which were based on the technology, legislation and planning and design philosophies of that time. Thus these character area typologies share common generic characteristics which were recorded using the following matrices:

- Locally Distinctive Contextual Features (including the age, type and height of buildings, the main uses, the predominant building materials and boundary treatments, and the types of open space).
- Locally Distinctive Positive Features
- Negative Features worthy of Enhancement

Street by street surveys were then undertaken of each of the separate areas which made up the broad character area typologies. These surveys identified features which were specific to each area such as landscape features, landmarks, views and detracting features. Locally Distinctive Positive and Negative Features were recorded for each area as text and on a Townscape Analysis Map.

Identifying the generic and area-specific Locally Distinctive Contextual and Positive Features should assist in interpreting Core Strategy Core Policy CP24 and Managing Development and the Environment DPD Policy SQ1 which seek designs which fit well with the local context and protect and conserve the character and local distinctiveness of an area. By identifying the Locally Distinctive Negative Features, the SPD also indicates features which could, through the application of Policy SQ1, be enhanced particularly through development opportunities.

Representative groups and elected Members of the Borough Council assisted at each of these stages – see Community Involvement below.

## 5 Community Involvement

Community involvement in the preparation of the SPD has closely followed the Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement which states that specific consultation will take place at an early stage on a draft of the document. Consultation is to be targeted at particular groups and individuals, depending on the specific nature of the issue or location dealt with by the SPD. There has been close stakeholder involvement in preparing this SPD in order to develop a shared vision with the local community of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and to develop appropriate design guidance.

Prior to the drafting of the SPD, three local stakeholder events were held.

Firstly, a briefing session was held involving local representatives<sup>1</sup> followed by a discussion on draft character area typologies and character area boundaries.

Secondly, a walkabout was held involving local representatives who visited a number of sub-areas to observe and record the key features which made up the character of the area.

As a third exercise the recorded features were then presented back as summarised text and photographs to the local representatives at a locally held workshop for review and discussion. Representatives were also asked about the elements of the environment they most valued about their local area and important detractors to the character of the town.

Ward Councillors have been kept informed from the inception of the SPD and have participated in the process of assisting with the preparation of the consultation document. Planning Consultants Tony Fullwood Associates preparing the SPD and the Borough Council would like to thank the individuals and organisations who have contributed to the process.

Formal consultation under Regulation 17 on the Draft Character Assessment SPD took place between Friday 11 March and Thursday 21 April 2011. This included a manned exhibition in the Village Hall on the afternoon of Saturday 12 March 2011.

Copies of the SPD were available during this time for comment at the Borough Council offices, local library and on the website. Statutory consultees including the Parish Council as well as other local representatives were also consulted. Every resident in the area covered by the Appraisal was written to and advised of the consultation. The SPD was publicised in the local press, including the Parish Newsletter and there was a formal Public Notice in the press under Regulation 17.

The Council recognises that it is important to report back to the community and other stakeholders the response to their comments. The Council has published the feedback to the consultation on its website and in document format that is available in all Council offices and libraries.

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<sup>1</sup> Borough Green Parish Council, Fairseat Residents' Association and Woodlands Residents' Association

## **6 How to use the Document**

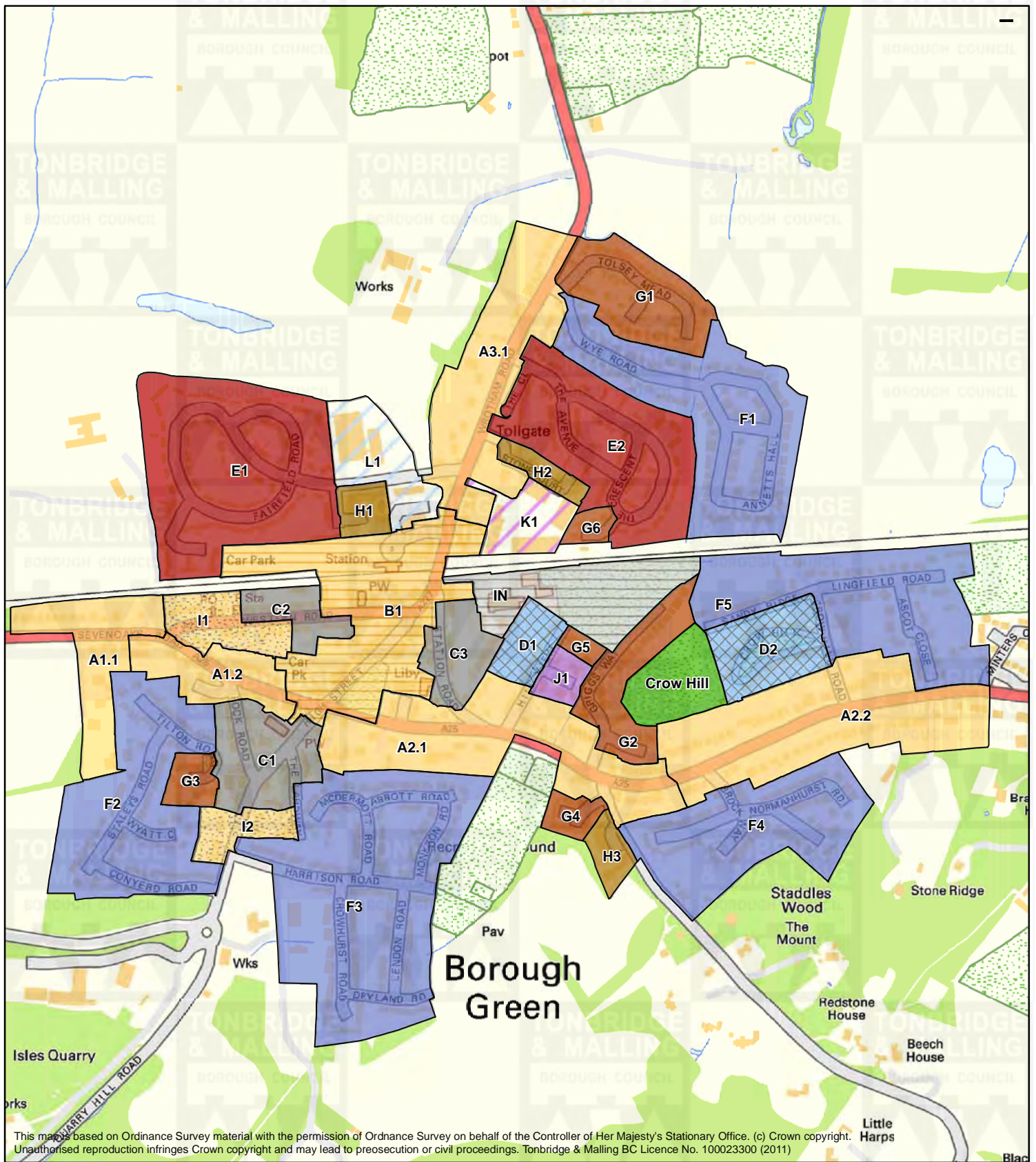
Section 8 divides the existing built up area of Borough Green into separate character areas based on the methodology set out above.

For each of the individual areas there is an assessment of the locally distinctive contextual features such as age, height and types of buildings; main uses; prominent building materials and boundary treatments and open spaces. Locally distinctive positive features and negative features worthy of enhancement are also recorded.

Each separate character area is named and numbered on Map 2 below. If you are interested in a particular area, locate it on Map 2 and turn to the section on that character area in Section 8. The relevant page can be found by reference to the Contents page.

Design Guidelines based on the locally distinctive features may be found in Section 9.

In setting out the important features and overall character of identifiable areas of the Borough, a local context is provided for the preparation and consideration of development proposals. This forms a canvas within which proposals for development should be conceived and determined. Generic Design Guidelines based on the identified locally distinctive features may be found in Section 9. These will form the basis for decision making which will interpret the individual character area appraisals.



## Map 2: Borough Green Character Areas

Borough Green Character Area Appraisal

0 100 200 400 600 800 Metres

### Key

	Area of Landscape Significance		Clustered Cul-de-sac Developments		Open Plan Developments
	Other Open Space		Compact Cul-de-sac Developments		Post-War Public Housing Schemes
	Schools and Institutions		Inter-War Public Housing Schemes		Commercial Areas
<b>Character Areas</b>			Main Road Frontages		Offices
	19th Century Developments		Mixed Character Areas		
	Bungalows		Mixed Use Village Centre		



## 7 Origins and Development of Borough Green

Environments grow in response to local circumstances and it is therefore important to understand the principal influences which created the distinctive character areas of Borough Green. Map 3 illustrates the evolution of development of Borough Green.

The derivation of the name Borough Green is uncertain but it is possible that borough is derived from barrow as there is a tumulus within the village. Alternatively it may refer to the use of this area as recreation space for the Borough of Wrotham.

There is evidence of early occupation in the form of the man-made tumulus; Ancient Briton finds from around 100 BC and Roman finds at Barrow Field and north of the station. By 1559 rental documents indicate that this area was occupied by tenants of the Manor of Wrotham with the land split into many small fields as well as gardens, orchards and small hemp plots. However, the current village has quite recent origins, with most of the buildings dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

The village stands at a crossing point of the A25 which runs west-east from Sevenoaks to Maidstone and the A227 which runs north-south from Gravesend towards Tonbridge. Some of the oldest buildings in the village are inns which grew up around the junction of these important trading routes. The village does not appear on a map of 1795 but in 1840 there were small isolated clusters of buildings around junctions. The road layout was visible with the High Street and Station Road forming a triangle north of the A25 and Rock Road and Thong Lane (now Quarry Hill Road) forming a triangle to the south of the A25.



The growth and prosperity of the village resulted from its position on the clay vale between the North Downs and the greensand ridge. The geology creates a prevalence of sand, ragstone and clay and the village is encircled by quarries which provided



materials for the construction industry. There remains evidence today of the use of ragstone in local buildings and particularly for boundary walls.

In addition, the fertile loam suited hops, fruit and cereals and supported several farms. Although much of the land has now been developed, historic farm buildings are still standing in the village. In particular the 16<sup>th</sup> century Old Manor House and Whiffens Farmhouse, the early 17<sup>th</sup> century barn at Borough Green House and the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century Hunts Farmhouse on the north side of the Maidstone Road can still be seen.

The village began to expand in the 1830s with houses being constructed along the High Street and in Station Road. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the only buildings in the High Street related to Yew Tree Farm. The first houses and shops to be built were on the east side from the current village hall car park to the junction with the A227. By 1897 a bakery on the west side (now Nat West



Bank) and the stores had been constructed together with the Railway Hotel (now the Henry Simmonds) north of the railway and the Chapel at the A25 junction. Bridge House was built in 1887/89 by Joseph Walls whose firm bought most of Yew Tree Farm.

The residents were mainly agricultural labourers or engaged in local shops and services for the rural economy. A turnpike road was constructed in 1820 between Gravesend and Borough Green but the opening of the railway was a major stimulus to the expansion of the village. The London, Chatham and Dover Railway opened a single track line to Maidstone in 1874, which was doubled in 1882. The first large development was in 1877 when the owners of Yew Tree Farm sold 56 acres for the construction of Western Road and the Fairfield area was laid out in 1-2 acre plots. The western side of the High Street was developed in the early 1900s with the ten tall shops being built by a Mr Gregory between 1904 and 1908. By 1900 there were 200 houses in the village.

The infant school to the east of Quarry Hill Road was designed by Robert Wheeler and built by John Bishop in 1875. It served as a church on Sundays. In 1922 the infant school moved up to the existing Borough Green County Primary School which opened in 1911.

Borough Green was split between 3 separate parishes, Wrotham, Ightham and Platt (after 1843) and did not become a separate ecclesiastical parish until 1973. There was no Church of England church building until The Church of the Good Shepherd was opened in 1906. It was designed by architects HP Monkton and Gillespie and was built by Allcorn of Shipbourne. The Baptist Church standing at the junction of the A25 with the High Street is older. It was founded in 1809 and the original small chapel was built on this site in 1817. Following a series of extensions it is now a prominent landmark in the village. St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Western Road was opened in 1957.

By 1909, the village was still compact with a single building depth of development lining the roads extending along the A25 from Western Road to Station Road and from the railway in the north to the Rock Road/Thong Lane junction in the south. To the north along Wrotham Road there were buildings associated with the sand pit, gas works and Wrotham pottery. To the east along Maidstone Road there was a small isolated cluster of buildings around the Black Horse Public House and Hunts Farm.

Wrotham Urban District Council was created in 1894 and in the early 1900s occupied a building at the A25/High Street junction which became known as Council Square. The Parish Council was formed in the 1930s. Two small public housing developments were constructed in the interwar period to the north of Maidstone Road at Crow Hill Park (1919) and Hill View (1928). By 1948 some ribbon development had taken place along the Maidstone Road to both the east and west with some houses also being built along the A227 and Quarry Hill Road.

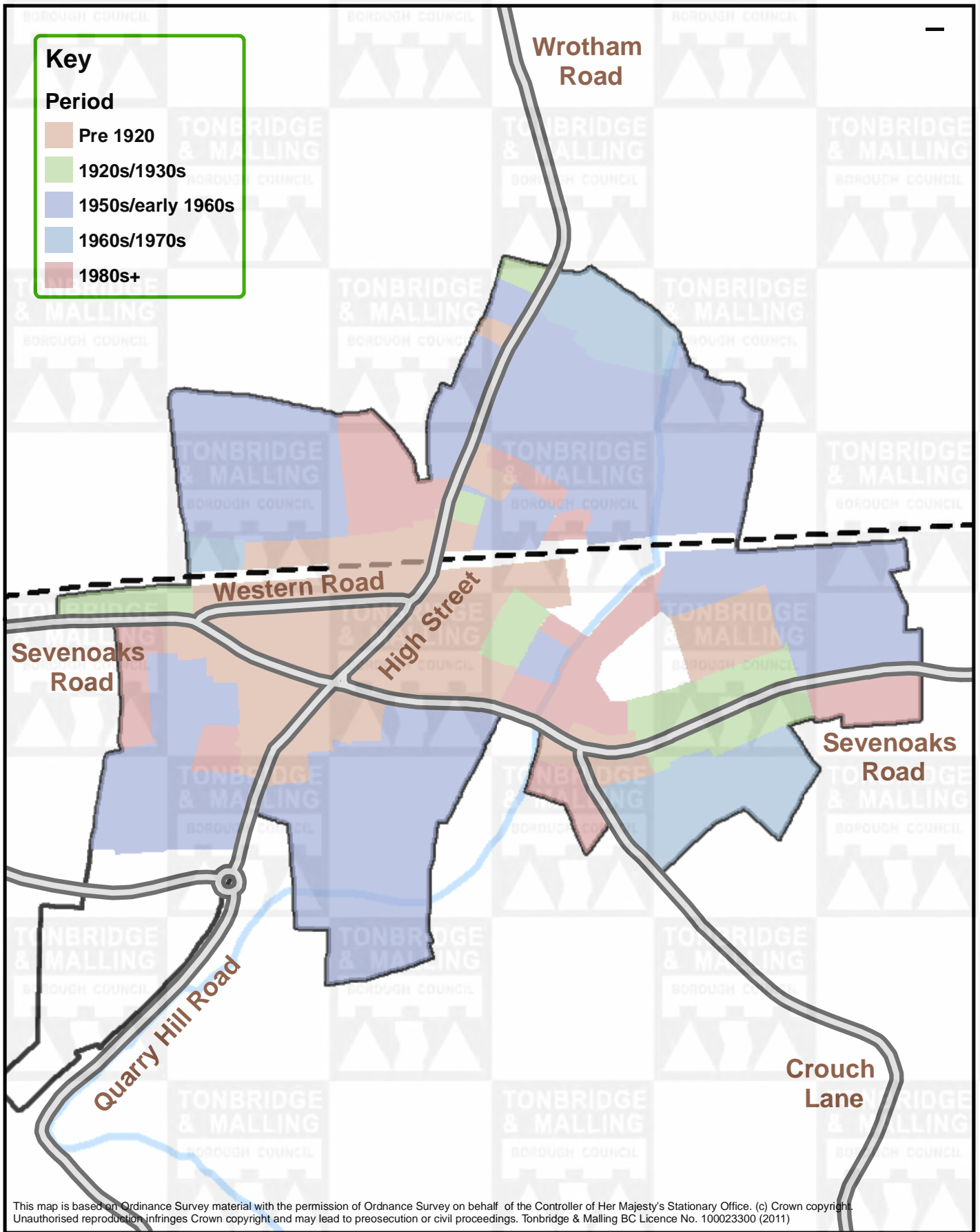
However, the most rapid expansion of the village occurred in the post war period with private and public housing developments extending outwards from the village centre over former farmland and quarries. Much of this development took place from the late 1940s to early 1960s with the Tollgate Estate, Fairfield, Wye Road, Annetts Hall, Valley View, Woodlands, Lingfield Road, Ascot Close and Sandy Ridge all being built in this period. This was followed by further,

smaller scale developments in the 1980s at Roman Court, Hunts Farm, Eaglestone Close and Tolsey Mead. Between the end of World War II and 1988 the population of Borough Green rose from 400 to 1,300.

Located at a transport hub just south of the M25 and M20 motorways and with two major routes running through it, much of the village centre is dominated by traffic. However, it is a thriving and bustling community which has a broad range of local shops and community facilities including recreation grounds, a modern medical centre, village hall, churches and primary school.

A narrow strip of open space separates Borough Green from neighbouring Platt to the east.

The undulating topography creates long views over surrounding woods and fields, with the scarp face of the North Downs being the prominent feature to the north and the rolling greensand ridge to the south. Within the village, Crow Hill is the highest point, from which there are 360 degree views over the surrounding countryside. Borough Green lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt.



## Map 3: Evolution of Borough Green

Borough Green Character Area Appraisal

0 510 1,020 Metres

