

Medway Gap Character Areas

(Leybourne, East Malling & Larkfield, Ditton and Aylesford)

Supplementary Planning Document



Adopted February 2012

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Key to Maps



Views



Panoramas



Local Landmark



Visual Intrusion



Nodes



Protected Trees



Protected Woodland or Groups of Trees



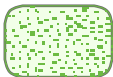
Important Tree and Hedge Belts



Walls



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 Area Appraisals 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 Area Appraisals 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.

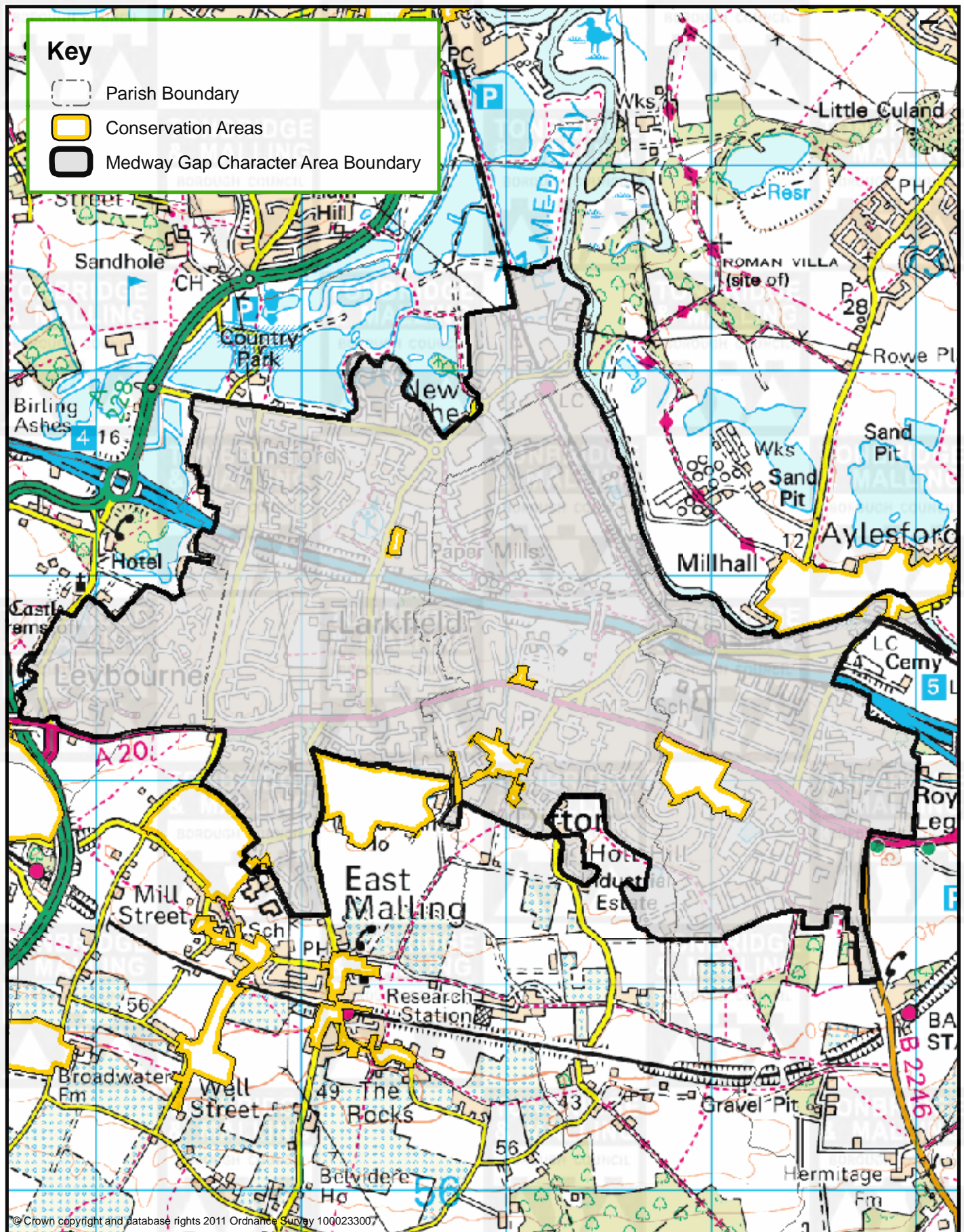
The Borough Council is undertaking character area appraisals of all of the main urban areas in the Borough, including the larger villages, defined in the Local Development Framework (LDF) as Rural Service Centres. The Character Area Appraisals SPD therefore comprises a number of separate volumes. Appraisals have been 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 the Medway Gap as defined in the LDF Core Strategy (see Map 1). This includes the main built up parts of Leybourne, East Malling and Larkfield, Ditton and Aylesford.

The SPD is adopted as part of the LDF, and is a material consideration in determining planning applications in the existing built up area of the Medway Gap 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.



Map 1: Medway Gap Boundary

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

0 1,500 3,000 Metres

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 the Medway Gap;
- 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 the Medway Gap 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 Medway Gap 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 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 19th 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 the A20 London Road, and the historic routes of New Hythe Lane, Lunsford Lane, Bradbourne Lane, New Road and Station Road form the framework around which the Medway Gap has developed.

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, two local stakeholder events were held. Firstly, a briefing session was held involving local representatives¹ 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.

Ward Councillors and Parish 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.

Formal consultation under Regulation 17 on the Draft Character Assessment SPD took place between Friday 2 September and Friday 14 October 2011. This included a manned exhibition at Hamlets Hotel on Monday 12 September 2011. Further meetings with local representatives took place as requested during the consultation period².

Copies of the SPD were available during this consultation period for comment at the Borough Council offices, Larkfield library, West Malling library and on the Council's Website. Statutory consultees including the Parish Councils 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, local newsletters (where possible) and there was a formal Public Notice in the press under Regulation 17.

¹ Ditton Parish Council, Aylesford Parish Council, East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council and Leybourne Parish Council

² Meeting with Aylesford Parish Council 20 September 2011.

6 How to use the Document

Section 8 divides the existing built up area of the Medway Gap into separate character areas based on the methodology set out above. As the Medway Gap covers such an extensive urban area and the number of character areas is so numerous, the document has been structured in the following way to try and aid usability. Each of the character areas are grouped into their relevant character type, and within this, are organised geographically from west to east, with those in Leybourne Parish listed first, followed by East Malling and Larkfield, then Ditton and finally Aylesford.

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. 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.

7 Origins and Development of the Medway Gap

Environments grow in response to local circumstances and it is therefore important to understand the principal influences which created the distinctive character areas of the Medway Gap. Map 3 illustrates the evolution of development of the Medway Gap. The term Medway Gap is used to describe the built up area comprising the major developed parts of Leybourne, East Malling, Larkfield, Lunsford Park, Ditton and Aylesford south of the River Medway as set out in Core Strategy Policy CP11(b). Although the village centres of Aylesford and East Malling have a rich and diverse history and have influenced the development of this area over many years, for the purposes of this study they are excluded because they lay outside of the CP11(b) boundary and instead are covered by a more restrictive policy (CP13) to reflect the character and scale of the rural settlements.

The derivation of the name Medway Gap originates from the Kent Development Plan 1967 when the Medway Gap Town Map was produced to direct and manage development of this area.

The Medway Gap lies approximately four miles west of Maidstone and straddles the M20 and A20 London Road between the A228 Castle Way in the west and the B2246 Hermitage Lane in the east. Some of the oldest buildings in this area grew up around the junctions of these and other key routes in the area. The Medway Valley railway line (built in the 1850s) runs through the north-east part of the area and can be accessed via Aylesford and New Hythe stations. The M20 can be accessed from the Medway Gap via either junction 4 north of Leybourne or junction 5 north-east of Aylesford. Prior to 1870, the four villages of Leybourne, Ditton, Larkfield and Aylesford were small clusters of buildings around junctions. The road layout at this time has been retained today and is clearly visible.

Prominent geographical features include the North Downs and Oaken Wood. These do not fall within the Medway Gap but provide a wider landscape setting for the area to the north and south respectively.

The origins for the Medway Gap can be traced back to as early as the 10th century (East Malling and Aylesford) although the first record of many of the areas (including Ditton, Leybourne and Larkfield) can be found in the Domesday Book of 1086. There are several buildings of historical and architectural significance, many of which are listed, which have played an important role in the evolution of the area including St Peter's Church in Ditton, Preston Hall in Aylesford, The Wealden Hall in Larkfield and the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Leybourne.

Up until the early part of the 20th century, the Medway Gap was predominantly rural in character, including farmland, the deer parks at Preston Hall and Bradbourne House and Holt Wood and Quarry Wood. The one notable exception was the ragstone Quarry in Aylesford. The Aylesford Paper Mill built in the early 1920s provided new employment opportunities and this triggered the expansion of many of the areas. The Medway Gap grew along and off (at junction points) the major route through the area, the A20, with main road frontage residential development increasing quite significantly during the inter-war years. However, it was not until the post-war period when the Medway Gap experienced residential development on a major scale.

A significant programme of public housing development by Malling Rural District Council took place across the Gap during the 1950s and 1960s including the estates around Woodland Road area in Ditton, the Birds Estate in Larkfield and the Stepstile and Clare Park Estates in East Malling. This growth continued throughout the following 30 years but

in the form of open plan market housing including the Greenacres Estate in Aylesford, the estates at the east end of Woodlands Road and north and south of Kiln Barn Road in Ditton and the Poets Estate in Larkfield.

The Medway Gap significantly expanded westwards in the 1980s with the major Croudace development (in the order of 1000 units) at Leybourne. Whilst Leybourne's origins date back much further and there is evidence of development during the inter-war years, it was not until the Croudace development that Leybourne significantly expanded and became an integral part of the Medway Gap. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s retail and economic development also took off with the expansion of the industrial estates at New Hythe, Larkfield and Quarry Wood and the establishment of Safeways (now Morrisons) and Sainsbury's superstores and the Retail Park at Aylesford. Expansion of the Medway Gap northwards continued in the early part of the 21st century with major developments including Leybourne Lakes and Frantschach off New Hythe Lane.

A more detailed analysis of the origins and development of the Medway Gap, with an examination of how each parish evolved is set out below.

Aylesford

The village of Aylesford lies outside of the Medway Gap and largely falls within the Aylesford Conservation Area. However, its origins are important and can help explain, in part, the expansion of this area of the Medway Gap.

The village is located on the banks of the River Medway and this is reflected in the origins of the name which, in old English means 'Aegel's ford'. Its first recorded use is from the 10th century. The bridge across the Medway, believed to be one of the earliest crossings over the river, dates back to the 14th century. Historic buildings of note in the village which are listed include the Chequers Inn (early 16th century) and the George House (formerly a coaching inn, mid 16th century), the almshouses and St Peter's Church (12th century). Significant expansion of the village took place in the Victorian era with the development of terrace cottages. Development south of the river occurred during the 1930s reflecting the growth of industry in the area, including the Aylesford Paper Mill near by.

South of the River Medway, the origins can be traced back to the 11th century when the Domesday Book mentions Preston Manor near Malling. The estate of Preston Hall north of the A20 opposite Hermitage Lane, developed as a farming concern in the 14th century. Towards the close of the 18th century there was an avenue extending in a direct line from Aylesford's bridge south through parkland to Barming. Flanking this avenue were established specimens of cedars, some of which are still standing today. The original manor was demolished in 1848 and replaced by a country house in a neo-Elizabethan style (see right).



Up until the early part of the 20th century the area south of the river was predominantly rural in character including the deer park in the grounds of Preston Hall estate and Quarry Wood. The only industry of significance was the quarrying for ragstone at Quarry Wood and Ditton Court Quarries south of the A20.

The area started to expand in the 1920s with the establishment and growth of the Royal British Legion Village (RBLI) west of Preston Hall. The RBLI was founded to help injured

soldiers on discharge from the nearby Preston Hall Hospital (which is still in service by the Health Authority). The next phase of significant expansion took place in the 1960s with the development of the Greenacres Estate to the west of Hall Lane. From the mid 1960s onwards economic development began to establish itself at Quarry Wood (in response to the end of quarrying activity) with the growth of industrial and warehouse units. The landscape changed quite significantly in this area in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the development of the Quarry Wood Retail Park and Sainsburys Superstore.

Ditton

The origins of Ditton can be traced back to 1086 when the place was mentioned in the Domesday Book. At that time, there were only 36 dwellings in Ditton. The name Ditton comes from the Saxon word Dictune meaning village on the dyke, in reference to Bradbourne Stream passing through the area. Ditton boasts the only ford in the Tonbridge and Malling Borough which, along with the 15th century St Peter's Church (see right), is located in the Conservation Area.



The A20 London Road from Maidstone cuts across the Parish in an east-west direction and two train lines pass through Ditton (London to Ashford line and the Medway valley line) although there are no stations. The southern end of the Borough borders the borough boundary with Maidstone.

The area was predominantly rural, with agriculture the principal activity, up until the post war period. Before this time, the little development that took place was concentrated into two phases: the first phase included terraces of 19th century cottages along New Road near the junction with the A20; the second phase comprised residential development in the 1930s along the main road frontages of the A20 and Station Road. This latter growth was partly as a result of the establishment of the Aylesford Paper Mill (now Aylesford Newsprint) on the banks of the Medway which was, and is still, a major employer in the area. The Mill itself is located in the adjoining Parish of East Malling and Larkfield (please see the origins of this neighbouring parish for more details of the Paper Mill).

Ditton began to expand significantly during the 1950s and early 1960s with the Malling and Rural District Council development of public housing in the Woodland Road area, east of New Road. Growth of Ditton continued at a steady pace for the following 30 years, including open plan housing developments east of the public housing at Woodland Road, north and south of Kiln Barn Road and north of the A20 in the west part of the parish (now known as the Trees Estate). From the 1990s onwards the expansion of Ditton slowed down quite considerably with a few pockets of clustered cul-de-sac developments on former commercial sites at the southern end of Kiln Barn Road and south of the A20 opposite the Cobdown Farm Conservation Area.

In addition to St Peter's Church, other buildings of significance and importance to the community include the Junior and Infant schools and the Ditton Community Centre and associated playing fields which opened in 1974. The Ditton War Memorial located at the junction of New Road with the A20 is an important landmark feature which is listed.

There is no major industry within the Parish, with Aylesford Newsprint being located in the adjacent East Malling and Larkfield Parish.

East Malling & Larkfield

The earliest recorded reference to East Malling is in a Charter of King Edmund (942 – 946 AD) which refers to 'East Mealing', describing a gallows which stood at the corner of Lunsford Lane and London Road. The first record of Larkfield dates back to 1086 when it was referred to as 'Laurochesfel'. This is a descriptive name coming from the Old English words for larks and field, reflecting the large number of skylarks that could be found in the skies above the arable farm fields that were prevalent in the area. New Hythe Lane is named after New Hithe, a small port on the Medway north of Larkfield, where people and goods were ferried across the river from the 14th century up until the 1950s. New Road, which links the main road frontage of Larkfield with the estates of East Malling was built in the 17th century so as to make a deer park round Bradbourne House. The ragstone wall is still a prominent feature in the area.



The predominant activity and use of land in the area even up until the 1960s was farming, including hops and, until recently, apple and cherry orchards. The majority of the properties that were built prior to the 20th century were for agricultural workers either in the



form of 19th century Victorian cottages for farm workers or houses for the farm owners. One of the oldest farmhouses is Wealden Hall, on the London Road opposite the junction with New Hythe Lane, which is a timber-framed building dating back to the 14th century (see photo left).

East Malling and Larkfield started to significantly expand during the post war era, in particular during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

The Malling and Rural District Council planned and developed the significant proportion of the Birds Estate, including Martins Square, in Larkfield, and the Stepstile and Clare Park Estates in East Malling. In the 1960s the Birds Estate was significantly expanded with market housing and during the 1970s the Poets Estate was developed north of the M20 motorway. During the early part of the 21st Century the residential area of Larkfield expanded to the north with large developments of market housing at Leybourne Lakes and on the site formerly occupied by Frantschach off New Hythe Lane.

In terms of industry, Aylesford Newsprint located in north Larkfield across the M20 motorway is the oldest operator dating back to the 1920s when the first paper mill was developed by Albert Reed. The New Hythe Industrial Estate is relatively young, only significantly establishing itself in the 1960s and 1970s.

East Malling Parish Council was set up in 1895. The name changed to East Malling and Larkfield (as it is still known today) in 1962 following an Order by Kent County Council.

Leybourne

Leybourne settlement started when the ancestor of the Leybourne family came over with William the Conqueror from France. Granted land in Yorkshire, he lived there but his descendent Sir Philip Libourne decided to live in a village in Kent called Lillieburn. The names mixed to become Leybourne and he built Leybourne Castle in 1275. Leybourne is listed in the Domesday Book and there are traces of a circular earthwork enclosure. It is likely that the area was predominantly agricultural for many centuries. The focus of Leybourne would have been the Church Although outside of the urban confines of Leybourne, these buildings provide a historic context for the village and the importance of Castle Way as a route from West Malling to Medway.

The remaining properties in the area were farm houses and related buildings, some of which still remain (e.g. Bridge House on Castle Way).

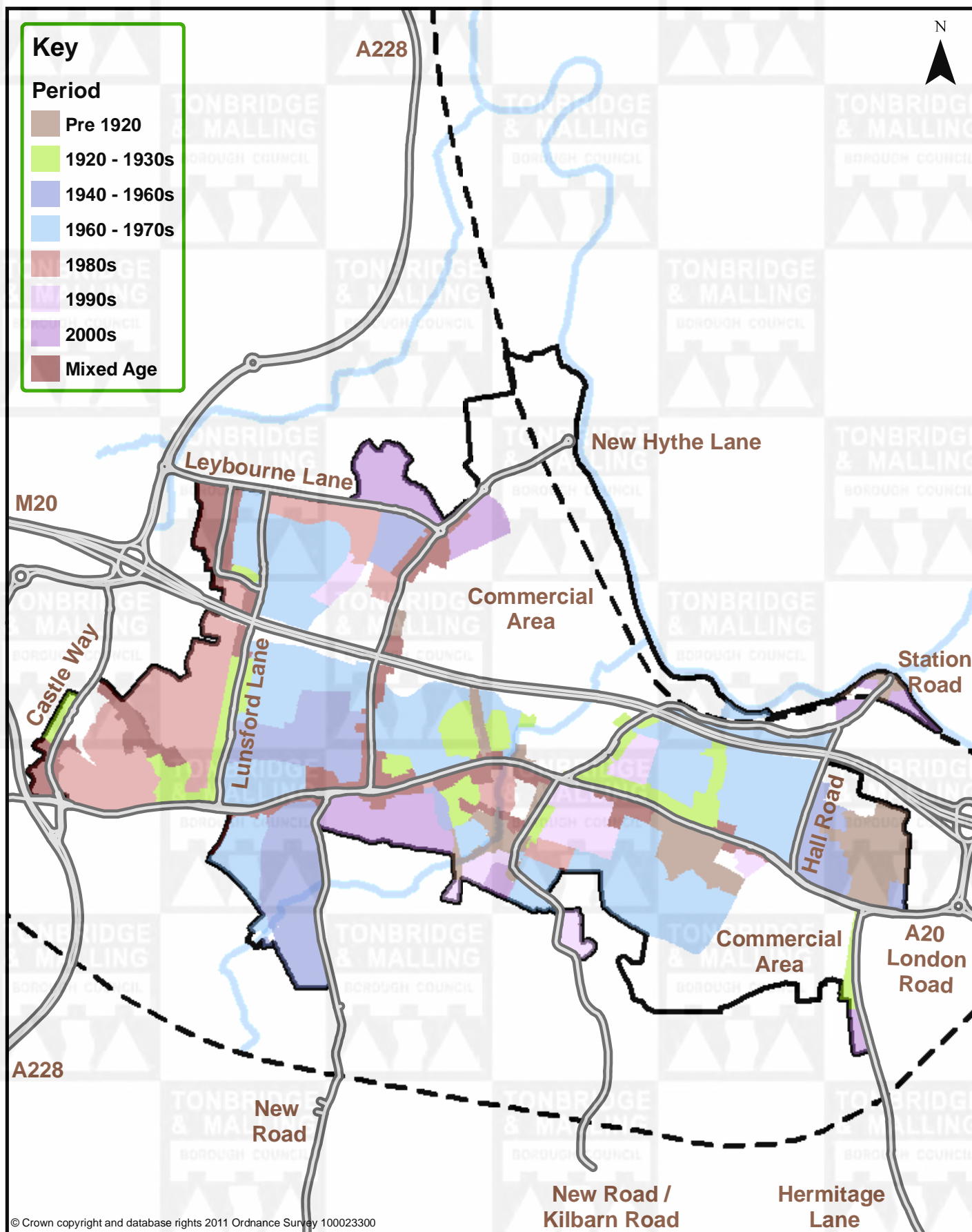
Leybourne Grange was built in 1850 and was a sizeable estate that included all of the built up area of Leybourne as we know it today. In 1920, the estate was divided into lots and sold at auction. This included Rectory Lane that was subsequently sub-divided further into individual plots that were developed from the 1930s onwards. Leybourne Grange itself was converted into a mental hospital in 1936 with related services and staff accommodation provided on site, making little impact on the growth and development of Leybourne itself. The Leybourne St Peter and St Paul Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School which was built in 1876 consisting of one classroom and two cottages for educating girls while a boys school was located on the opposite site of Rectory Lane North.

The owners of Leybourne Grange were also responsible for the low stone wall that runs the length of Pump close, Castle Way and beyond. They bred racehorses and each time one of their horses won a race, they put something back into Leybourne. They are also responsible for the Village Pump that was built in 1859.

The Old Rectory was built in 1870 by the Hawley family who owned the Leybourne Grange estate at the time. They built it for Rev. C Hawley who was the Rector of the parish at the time. After the death of Rev. Hawley in 1914, the Old Rectory became an ordinary dwelling house until the early 1980s when it was converted into a pub/restaurant around the same time as the construction of Little Market Row.



With the development of the M20 motorway in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Castle Way and Pump Close were altered resulting in the demolition of some older properties, but there was no significant change in Leybourne until 1980 when construction of the new housing began.



Map 3: Evolution of Medway Gap
Medway Gap Character Area Assessment

0 1,500 3,000 Metres



8 Character Area Appraisals

Close analysis has been undertaken to identify the distinctive features that define the character of the different parts of the Medway Gap using recognised methodologies and with public involvement. The next sections of the SPD describe the locally distinctive contextual features of each area as well as locally distinctive positive features and negative features worthy of enhancement.

Key characteristics of each Character Area are illustrated on a Townscape Analysis map and are summarised in table form. Annotated photographs are also included to depict part of the character of the area.

Whilst the principal characteristics for all areas have been summarised, it has not been possible to illustrate each individual feature and consequently the absence of a feature from this document does not necessarily mean that it is unimportant to the character of the local area.

There are five **Areas of Landscape Significance** within the Medway Gap which provide an extensive landscape framework. Whilst it is not appropriate to consider locally distinctive contextual features in the same way for such areas, it is important to note the wider value of these extensive areas of landscape. The areas are shown on Map 2 and comprise **Cobdown Sports and Social Club playing fields, land off Castle Way (Leybourne), woodland to the south of the M20 (Ditton), A20 Larkfield and Larkfield playing fields**. These areas contain mature trees which are visible from, and form a backdrop or edge to, a number of character areas. Development within these areas is minimal, however where buildings do exist they are glimpsed through mature trees and vegetation as the landscape is the dominant feature.

Cobdown Sports and Social Club is located off Station Road near the junction with the A20 London Road in Ditton. It comprises several playing fields used throughout the year for various sports including football, hockey and cricket (see right). A belt of tall specimen trees line the northern edge, (screening properties in the Cobdown character area from view) whilst a ragstone wall defines the frontage with London Road. The playing fields provide an open spacious green setting to the A20 west of the junction with New Road and glimpses of the area between the trees lining the eastern boundary can be enjoyed from Station Road.



The eastern side of **Castle Way** consists of an expanse of green space that includes open grassed areas, groups of trees, a small toddler play area and an enclosed area to the south known locally as the “donkey field”. It provides a green edge to the west of Lillieburn, Old Orchard Lane and the culs-de-sac that lead off these roads. The area forms a barrier between Castle Way and the rest of Leybourne to the east as it shields properties from the road and visa versa.

The **woodland area south of the M20 (Ditton)** lies to the East of Lunsford Lane behind the Parish Council offices. This screens the M20 from the adjacent housing and provides a green backdrop to this part of the Medway Gap.



A20 Larkfield The London Road leading westwards from the junction with New Road (East Malling) towards Leybourne is lined either side by a dense narrow belt of woodland (see right). This landscape area plays an important role in providing a verdant buffer between the busy A20 road and the Winterfield and Stepstile Estates to the south and the Birds Estate to the north. It also significantly softens the streetscene and marks the transition from the built up extent of the Medway Gap to the urban rural fringe.

Larkfield playing fields is set between the M20, New Hythe Lane, Larkfield Leisure Centre and the Poets' Estate. It is set on high but level ground with hedges and trees around the boundary with openings that allow panoramic views to the west and north of the North Downs. The site also contains a scout hut and Larkfield Village Hall.



The character of these areas is important in their own right but also in providing an extensive landscape framework to a number of surrounding character areas.

A – MAIN ROAD FRONTAGES

The Medway Gap area grew up along the A20 London Road and along the roads leading off it including the A228 Castle Way, Lunsford Lane, New Hythe Lane and Hermitage Lane. The main characteristics of the A20 route may be summarised as follows:

The A20 road **gently undulates** in places and curves only slightly along the linear route resulting in long views to the east of the North Downs and to the west of tall mature landscape features lining it.



The road frontage is **verdant** although this varies in intensity throughout the Medway Gap (sometimes only applicable to one side) and differs in character from belts of dense mature trees near in the western extent to deep lanwed frontages with tall trees and large bushes and hedges in the Ditton area.

The buildings along the frontages are generally of a **variety of ages**. A few pre-Victorian farm houses can be found opposite the junction with New Hythe Lane, including the Wealden Hall (14th century). At the outer eastern and western extents the housing fronting the A20 is mostly 1930s in the form of ribbon development.

The frontage is **mainly residential** but there are a few clusters of retail uses.

The **scale of the buildings is reasonably uniform**. The majority of buildings are two storey, with a few single storey retail units.

Traffic noise and movement dominate the character.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

Age of buildings	<p>The age, type and height of buildings, the main uses, materials and boundary treatments are so different along the main roads that it is not possible to generalise the contextual features.</p> <p>Instead, the Locally Distinctive Contextual Features are included in the individual Character Areas in the Main Road Frontages Section.</p>
Type of buildings	
Main uses	
Building heights	
Prominent building materials	
Predominant boundary treatments	
Open spaces	

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Verdant frontages and edges along several sections created either by belts of tall trees or deep front lawns with mature landscape features*
- *For some stretches, in particular near the junction with New Hythe Lane, the progression of building styles and ages provides a window on the historical development of the Medway Gap*
- *Long and panoramic views of the North Downs in places*
- *Historical landmarks*
- *Traditional build materials and boundary treatments including timber-framed buildings and ragstone walls*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *Traffic noise from traffic travelling through the area*
- *Undistinguished modern commercial buildings of greater scale and mass built of materials that are unsympathetic to the predominant surrounding character*

A1.1 – LONDON ROAD (LEYBOURNE)

Comprising: London Road

A busy wide road representing the outer (western) extent of the main road frontage in the Medway Gap. The area slopes gently downhill towards the junction with Lunsford Lane. It includes a row of 1930s detached and semi detached properties, a derelict former garage site, and a wooded area along the northern side of the road. To the south there is open farm land.



The northern side of the road comprises two storey semi detached and detached properties built during the 1930s to a range of different designs along a staggered building line. The properties are set back behind deep landscaped front gardens, with dwarf walls, mature hedging and large specimen trees to the front, and off road parking. All of the properties have attached or detached garages.

The properties vary in design which creates a mixed feel to the area. Roof styles include hipped and pitched roofs some with front facing gable ends, and are finished in either red tiles or grey slate. Bay windows can be found on some properties, as can timber or tile detailing. Despite the range of features, the retention of original features, verdant edges, the scale of the buildings and the use of white painted render throughout helps to create a cohesive character.

There has been some personalisation of properties including side extensions, loft conversions, addition of dormer windows and replacement windows and doors. However due to the retention of the elements which help unify the character, the overall character of the area has been retained.

Long panoramic views to the south over the surrounding open farm land (see below) and woodland, create a spacious character.

The tall hedges along the front property boundaries (see right) line the northern side of the road and limit views into this character area. This form of enclosure creates a private and arcadian feel.

Further tree belts can be glimpsed between and over properties to the north adding to the verdant character.



This former petrol filling station site is now under construction for residential development. The hoardings restrict views into and across the site.



The wooded area at the eastern end of the character area is a balancing pond site which is screened from the road by a high earthen bund. The tree cover adds to the verdant character.



Road noise from traffic on the A20 London Road is considerable, and there is a significant amount of street furniture and signage in this area.

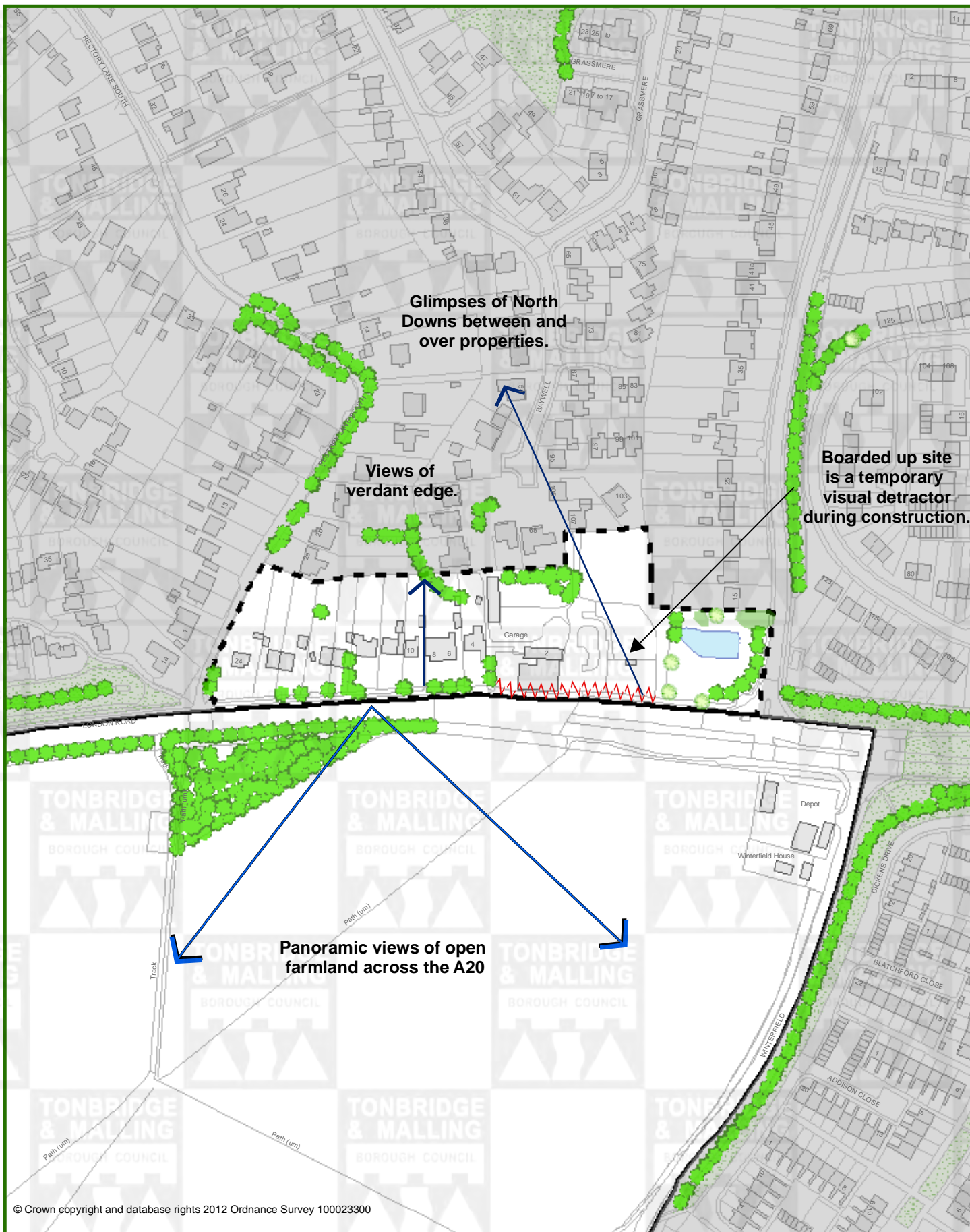
LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>1930s</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Detached and semi-detached</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Mainly residential. Boarded-up garage</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>2 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Varied including painted render, hung tiles and timber detailing</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Dwarf brick walls, hedges and mature trees</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>None</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Verdant frontage along the A20 created by mature hedges and trees
- Retention of original features
- Panoramic views of countryside to the South
- Individuality of buildings
- Spacious character created by long open views and no properties on the opposite south side of the road

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from traffic travelling along the A20
- Cluttered townscape due to relatively large amount of street furniture and signage



0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref **A1.1**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **London Road (Leybourne)**



A1.2 – LONDON ROAD (LARKFIELD)

Comprising: London Road (west)

A busy wide road that represents the outer (western) extent of the main road double frontage in the Medway Gap. There is one more main road frontage to the west in Leybourne, although this is very much smaller, comprising principally of a short row of residential properties, and is less busy only occupying the northern side with open countryside opposite. The area includes the historical origins of Larkfield and is mixed in character in terms of the age, size and uses of the buildings, particularly on the northern side of the road. There is evidence of the beginning of the transition from the built-up urban area to the urban/rural fringe at the western end, with the predominance of groups and specimen trees lining the frontage.



The road is relatively straight and wide, gently sloping down to the east providing long views eastwards of the North Downs (see left).

The groups of tall mature trees and grass verges provide a verdant edge to the character area, softening the busy urban environment and lining the views of the Downs.



The origins of Larkfield are evident, with the cluster of Listed Buildings opposite the busy junction with New Hythe Lane (see above). These date back to as early as the 14th century (Wealden Hall) and are positive features providing fine examples of traditional building techniques including timber frame construction and sash windows (please see 'Listed Buildings' table at the end of this section for more details).

Wealden Hall is a local landmark occupying a prominent position on the frontage by the major junction of the A20 with New Hythe Lane, from which it is clearly visible at the southern end.

The original character is still strong and intact and the group of buildings are an important part of local history demonstrating when and where Larkfield began. The properties display a few similar characteristics to the 19th century cottages to the east, in that they are two storey buildings with no real frontage and have pitched (gable ended and gable fronted) roofs. The roofscape of the properties along the southern edge is therefore consistent and is not disrupted by the varying age of the buildings.



Traditional boundary treatment of a ragstone wall topped with red brick (see left) provides a strong linear feature along the southern side of the road defining the edge of the frontage. This wall sweeps round and follows New Road towards East Malling to the south. It dates back to the 17th century, originally providing an enclosure to the deer park at Bradbourne House. Public access to the grounds and the housing off Bradbourne Parkway can be achieved near the junction with New Road where there is a break in the wall (see above, far left)

The character of the western part of the area differs quite significantly from the rest. There is less activity, with the southern edge of the frontage defined by the ragstone wall enclosing parkland behind. Tall mature trees lining the edge of the parkland (see above) and at the front of the Hamlets Hotel (see next page) along with the group of trees along the edge of the A20 which buffer the housing estates with the main road (see above, right) create a verdant character and define the transition from the built-up area to the urban/rural fringe.



The main group of properties along the southern edge of the frontage follows a uniform building line that is quite tight to the edge of the road (see above). The massing of the buildings with little or no frontage coupled with the ragstone wall at the western end creates a strong linear feature defining the southern edge of the character area. These buildings provide evidence of traditional building techniques and features including chimney stacks and detailed lintels above door and window frames (see above, right). There has been some individualisation including the introduction of replacement upvc doors and windows but these have not significantly diluted the character being of a similar colour to the original feature although the leaded light windows are not typical of the 19th century. The traditional flat frontage of 19th century cottages remains intact. This grouping of properties is important to the character of the area because it is evidence of the origins of Larkfield and where and how it grew.



The block of Victoria properties to the east of Wealden Hall are boarded up and in quite a poor state of repair and currently detract from the character of the area (see left).



The character of the northern side of the road is diverse in terms of the age, size and use of properties (including residential, a car showroom, shops and a nursery - see above) which is in contrast to the southern side. There are no unifying characteristics with the exception of the building height which does not exceed two storeys. The building line is variable, reflecting the piecemeal development of the frontage. Most of the properties are modern and individualistic in comparison with the buildings on the opposite frontage, although there is a small row of nineteenth century cottages at the western end which display similar unifying characteristics to the properties at the eastern end of the area.



There is a significant amount of retail development on the northern side of London Road, including a parade of shops with flats above at the eastern end of the character area (see above, left) a Morrisons supermarket at the junction with New Hythe Lane (above right) and a B&Q store at the western end on the north side of the A20 opposite the junction with New Road (above middle). These buildings are quite modern, dating back to the mid-1960s (parade) and 1980s (supermarket and B&Q). Their undistinguished design, lacking any details or features of interest, does not contribute positively to the character of the area. The scale, massing and plain frontages of the Morrisons and B&Q stores are unsympathetic to the original buildings close by, including the Wealden Hall and adjacent Listed Buildings and the nineteenth century cottages.



At the western end of the area, the development on the northern side is of a lower density and set further back, creating a spacious character. The Hamlet Hotel, a former Georgian House rebuilt in the mid 1800s, has a deep lawned frontage with tall specimen trees creating a verdant character (see left). These specimen trees not only play an important role in softening the townscape for the main road frontage but they also provide a verdant frame to the Martin Square character area to the rear. The adjacent B&Q store is also set back with a car park in front (see above, middle). In front of the hotel there is a busy three-way junction with New Road opposite leading towards East Malling.



A short clustered cul-de-sac development is located on the south side of the road at the eastern end of the area opposite the parade of shops. The properties are clearly part of the streetscene, enjoying a slightly elevated position (see above, right). It is a planned mixed development built in the early 1980s comprising bungalows and two storey detached, semi-detached and terraced properties. The properties are built of red brick with either white weather boarding or red hung tiles on the upper storey façade. The roofs are either half-hipped or pitched gable-ended and the properties follow a variable building line. The cul-de-sac was built in the grounds of the original properties (see above, left) which are a short terrace of 19th century cottages with white washed rendered facades, pitched gable-fronted roofs and prominent chimney stacks.

Listed Buildings	
<p>Wealden Hall, 773 London Road</p> <p>Farmhouse, now restaurant. Late 14th century to right with mid 17th century block to left. Exposed timber-framing with curved braces and brick infilling. Plain tiled hipped roof with gablets. All windows being in central recess except on ground floor with one window on left hand side of ground floor under right hand jetty. All windows glazing bar sashes, except non-opening window with glazing bars on ground floor to right.</p> <p>Grade II*</p>	
<p>The Inn House, 777-779 London Road</p> <p>Farmhouse, subsequently inn, now shop. 15th century with later 16th century additions. Timber-framed, elevations of painted brick on coursed rubble stone plinth, rendered to north. Plat band. Plain tiled roof with slightly lower end cross-wing gables.</p> <p>Grade II</p>	
<p>Cottage Row, 781-789 London Road</p> <p>18th century with evidence of earlier structure in cottage at extreme left, probably 16th. Timber-framed elevations now faced in mixture of painted brick and painted rubble stone. Long continuous roof, stepped over No 785, with full hip at left hand end and half-hip at right-hand end.</p> <p>Grade II</p>	

Listed Buildings

London Road, (North side)

Cast-iron milepost attached to earlier milestone. Probably early to mid 19th century. V-section, white painted, cast-iron milepost attached to a similarly painted earlier milestone. On the head of the milepost, parallel to the road, the legend, in black-painted relief, reads 'To/London/30/East Malling'. Below this on the right (east facing) angle the legend reads 'Wrotham/6' and on the left (west facing) 'Maidstone/4'.

Grade II



LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

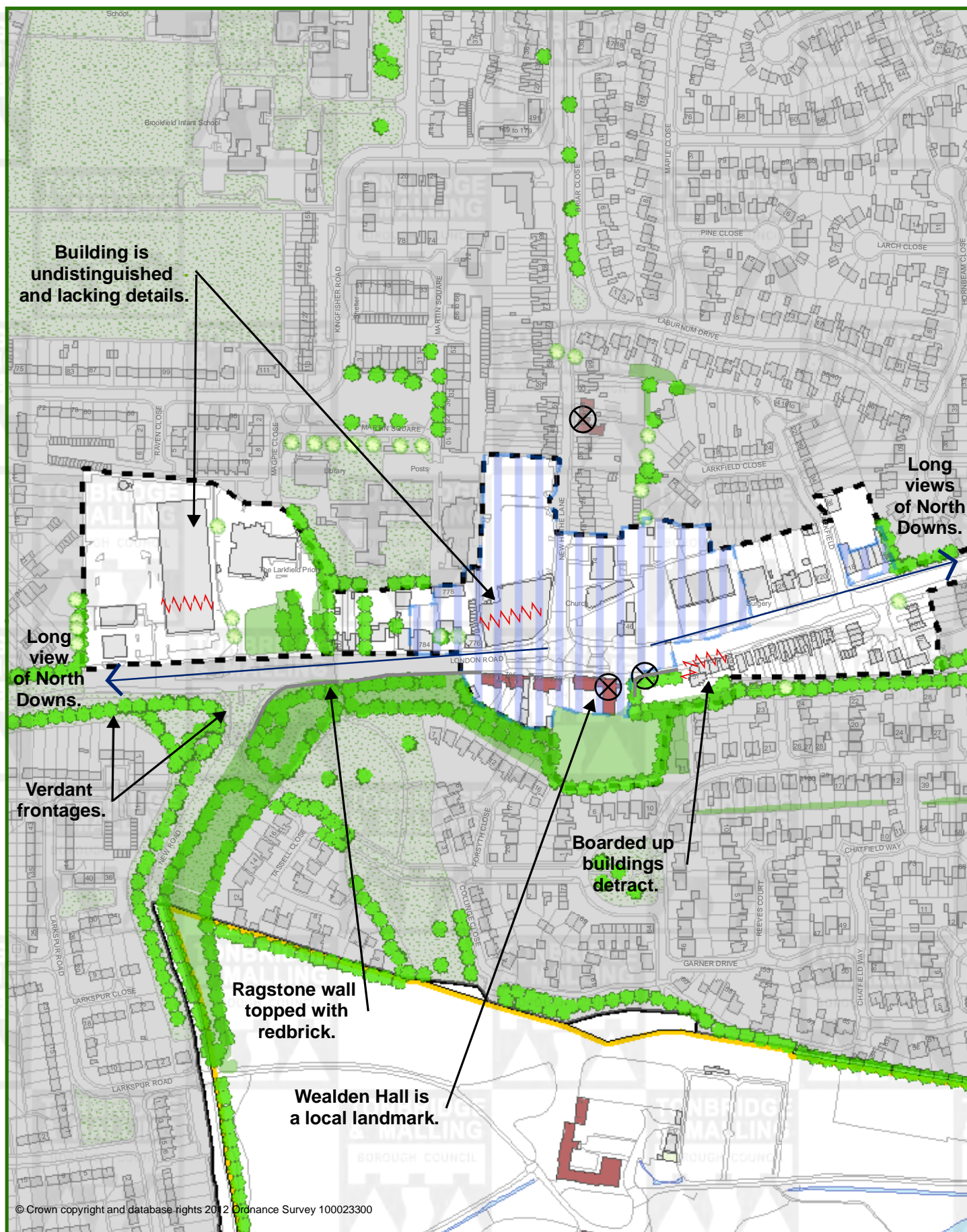
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>Varied, 14th century - present</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Detached, semi-detached and terraced</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Mixed – residential, retail, hotel, restaurant, offices</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>Mainly 1-2 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Red and red/brown brick, slate and clay tile roofs, timber-frames, painted render, yellow brick details</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Open, ragstone wall, hedges, trees</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>None</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Listed buildings
- Wealden Hall - local landmark
- Historical character of 19th century buildings and retention of architectural details
- Wide relatively straight road providing long views to the east of the North Downs
- Verdant frontage of tall mature trees to the west acting as a transition from the built up main road double frontage to the urban fringe
- Progression of building styles and ages provides a window on the historical development of Larkfield
- Traditional boundary treatment of ragstone wall topped with red brick provides a strong linear feature along the southern side of the road defining the edge of the frontage

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from traffic travelling through the area
- B&Q and Morrison buildings – mass, scale, materials and design unsympathetic to character of original buildings
- Boarded up (currently) 19th century properties east of Wealden Hall



0 30 60 90 120 150 300 Metres

Ref A1.2

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title London Road (Larkfield)



A1.3 – LONDON ROAD (DITTON WEST)

Comprising: London Road between the junctions with Station Road (to the east) and Bradbourne Lane (to the west).

Predominantly residential in character with a few retail units, including a car showroom, a petrol filling station, a fish and chip shop and a barber shop. Development dates back to the 19th century with a few clusters of cottages. The topography is undulating resulting in stepped building lines in places and elevated building plots with panoramic views. Cobdown Farm Conservation Area fronts the northern side of the London Road but does not form part of this character area appraisal because it is subject to its own appraisal.



The residential development along this stretch of the A20 is mixed in age and type, comprising two terraces of nineteenth century cottages (top, right), inter-war semi-detached houses set back in an elevated position from the road (top, middle) and a few early 1980s low density detached houses occupying large plots (top left). A striking characteristic of the 19th century cottages along the northern edge is the stepped building line which has created an interesting roofscape (see above right), a positive feature of the area. This stepped building line has broken up the mass of the cottages and they are grouped in small clusters. A cohesive character is created by uniform features including hipped roofs with prominent chimney stacks (which create a sense of rhythm), light coloured painted render on the facades and shallow frontages. Some individualisation has taken place with replacement UPVC doors of differing colours but this has not significantly diluted the original character.

The inter-war residential properties similarly occupy a stepped building opposite the 19th century cottages (see top, middle). Unifying characteristics include hipped roofs with short chimney stacks (which create a sense of rhythm), symmetrical fenestration and deep sloping frontages which are verdant in character often including mature landscape features such as bushes and in some case specimen trees. These properties occupy a prominent elevated position on the southern side of the A20.

The low density detached houses developed in the early 1980s are individualistic in design (see top left) but do share a few similar characteristics to the adjacent inter-war properties in that they occupy large plots with deep sloping frontages to the A20 with mature landscaping including specimen trees.

The predominant deep frontages with mature landscaping along a significant stretch of the southern side of the A20 are positive features helping to create a spacious verdant character.

Positive distinctive features for the whole area include the short and long views to the north that can be enjoyed from many parts of the main road frontage (see below).

At the western extent of the area, there are no tall properties fronting the main road on the northern side (this part of the frontage is made up of fenced rear gardens to the properties in the adjoining character area of the Trees Estate) meaning that long panoramic views of the North Downs can be enjoyed (see bottom, left). Short views of Cobdown Farm Conservation Area, including the roundels and cowl and tall specimen trees (see bottom, middle) can be enjoyed from the public highway near the junction with Orchard Grove. Whilst this area does not form part of the Character Area Appraisal, the short views are a positive feature for this part of the main road frontage, providing a visually interesting verdant contrast to the adjacent 19th century cottages. Short views of Cobdown Sports and Social Club playing fields, an Area of Landscape Significance, can be enjoyed from the public highway near the junction with New Road. This is a positive feature because it provides an open green outlook (backed by a belt of tall specimen trees) in an area that is otherwise quite significantly urbanised and busy.



There are a few buildings in the area which do not contribute positively to the character including the petrol filling station and the showroom (see left). The KIA garage is in contrast to the residential character, being of a greater mass, having a lower profile and lacking detailed design features.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
Age of buildings	Varied, mid 19 th century - present
Type of buildings	Detached, semi-detached and terraced
Main uses	Mainly residential, some retail
Building heights	1-2 storeys
Prominent building materials	Red brick, slate and clay tile roofs, white wood, painted render
Predominant boundary treatments	Open brick walls, hedges, trees and wooden fences
Open spaces	None

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Panoramic views of the North Downs, short views of Cobdown Farm Conservation Area and short views of Cobdown Sports and Social Club playing fields, an Area of Landscape Significance
- Spacious verdant character created by deep landscaped frontages

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise and movement



0 30 60 90 120 150 300 Metres

Ref A1.3

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title London Road (Ditton West)



A1.4 – LONDON ROAD (DITTON EAST)

Comprising: London Road between the junctions with Teapot Lane (to the east) and Station Road (to the west) and Station Road between the junction with London Road and the M20 flyover.

Predominantly residential development dating back to the 1930s. There are a few exceptions including a small pocket of nineteenth century cottages, a cluster of 1950s bungalows and a couple of retail units (Pinions Pet Store and Papas fish and chip shop). The most significant noticeable exception is the Territorial Army Centre built in the 1950s.



The wide straight road and pavements coupled with the grass verges and deep frontages create an open spacious character (see left). A positive feature are the long views from the eastern end of the A20 over the roof tops of the tall specimen trees in Cobdown Sports and Social Club, an Area of Landscape Significance (ALS). This landscaping provides a verdant frame to the area.

The properties following a uniform building line, with all the properties fronting the main road. Rhythm is created along the roof line with the presence of low chimney stacks on each property.

There is no uniformity in the treatment of boundaries with a variety of enclosures including low brick walls, low concrete walls, open plan and hedges.



Tall specimen trees and a scattering of mature hedges lining the front boundaries of properties on London Road are positive features contributing colour to the area and softening the townscape. (see middle, left). The road frontage developed significantly during the inter war years, as evidenced by the predominance of semi-detached two storey houses with hipped roofs and bay windows with hung tiles on the upper storey (see middle, right). These are grouped in the western half of the area creating a strong cohesive character here with the properties displaying similar design features and details all following a uniform building line and being evenly spaced on reasonably large plots with relatively deep frontages.



There are a few exceptions in the middle and towards the eastern end of the area including a small cluster of bungalows with half-hipped roofs and white painted frontages (see above, left) and the Territorial Army (TA) Centre (see above, right). The scale of these buildings differs quite considerably to the inter-war properties, diluting the character slightly, although the building line, colours of materials and roof styles of the bungalows are similar to the surrounding properties. The TA Centre is an exception to the predominant character, being a large, wide fronted building of considerable mass. However, the Centre does not detract from the character of the area because it is set back from the main road frontage and is screened from the view from the A20 by a row of tall conifer trees either side of the entrance (see above right).




The properties on Station Road date back to a similar period (1930s) (see left). The original character is still strong and has not been noticeably diluted, with the line of semi-detached houses fronting the road on a uniform building line with hipped roofs and two storey bay windows with hung tiles (red) on the upper storey. The mature hedges lining the boundaries of the properties and the belt of tall trees along the eastern boundary of Cobdown Sports and Social Club playing fields (see bottom left) are positive features which create a verdant character that helps to soften the streetscene. Short glimpses between the trees of the playing fields, an Area of Landscape Significance (ALS), can be enjoyed from the frontages of the properties on Station Road. Half way along Station Road the belt of trees thins and is broken in places resulting in short wide views of the ALS and long views of the North Downs, which are positive features.



There are two landmarks of note at the cross-roads of London Road with Station Road and New Road. The Ditton Parish sign (see top, left) depicts a local scene atop of a square wooden pillar and is located on the small island site at the busy junction of the London Road with Station Road. The War Memorial is a more visually prominent landmark built of brick and stone and is located at the junction of London Road and New Road (see top, middle). This is a Grade II Listed structure.

Whilst the main road frontage developed significantly in the inter-war period, there is still evidence of the origins of the area in the shape of a small terrace of nineteenth century cottages located at the front of Cobdown Sports Ground on Station Road at the junction with London Road (see top, right). These buildings differ in character to the 1930s housing, being of a smaller scale and greater mass, although the contrast is not very significant with the cottages sharing some similar design features including a hipped roof with brown tiles and a similar painted finish. The original character of the cottages has been diluted slightly with replacement doors and windows of differing colours and styles with at least one cottage having fitted a porch canopy which has disrupted the otherwise traditional flat frontage.

Listed Building	
<p>Name: War Memorial, London Road, Ditton</p> <p>Description: War memorial. 1920 designed by Gilbert Scott. It is about 18 feet high and comprises an octagonally-shafted ashlar crucifix, set within an ashlar four-centred arch about 30 feet high and 4 feet wide. The names of the Fallen are inscribed on stone tablets beneath the crucifix and under an inscription "THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE". A lower panel records those who fell in the Second World War.</p> <p>Grade: Grade II</p>	

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

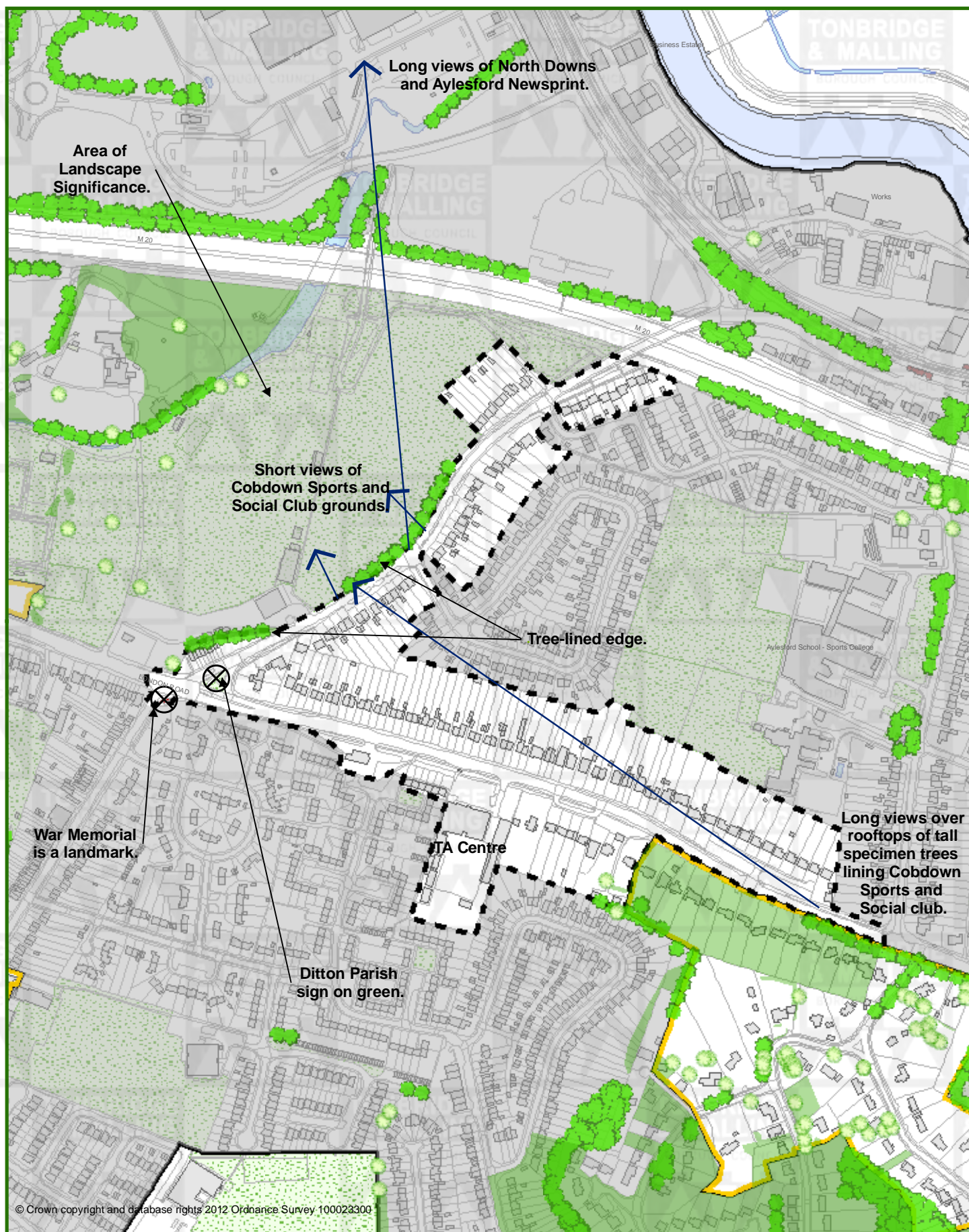
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>Varied, mid 19th century - present</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Detached, semi-detached, terraced</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Mainly residential, some retail</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>1-2 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Red and red/brown brick, slate and clay tile roofs, white wood, painted render, clay hung tiles</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Brick walls, hedges, trees, wooden fences</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>None</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Deep frontages and wide roads create a spacious character
- Long views of tall specimen trees in Cobdown Sports and Social Club, an Area of Landscape Significance, over the roof tops from the eastern end of the area, providing a verdant backdrop
- Verdant character of Station Road created by the tree lined eastern edge of Cobdown Sports and Social Club and the hedges lining the front boundaries of the properties
- Glimpses and short views of the Cobdown Sports and Social Club playing fields and long views of the North Downs between the trees on the eastern edge of the ALS
- Visually prominent historical landmarks including the War Memorial (Grade II Listed) and the Ditton Parish sign

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise and movement



0 50 100 150 200 250 500 Metres

Ref **A1.4**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **London Road (Ditton East)**



A1.5 – LONDON ROAD AREA (AYLESFORD)

Comprising: Hall Road and London Road

The busy A20 London Road passes west-east through the settlement. The road in this section is broad, gently curving and undulating.



At the eastern end close to the junction with Teapot Lane, two storey semi detached 1930s houses are set below the road on the north side (see left). The houses have prominent gables and brown clay tile hipped roofs with chimneys on the ridge. They have two storey bay windows and porch canopies. The houses are rendered and white painted, some with weatherboard on the upper storeys and gables. The houses are set back behind landscaped gardens enclosed by hedges and wooden fences. This section of the road has a cohesive 1930s character with one more recent infill dwelling.

On the south side of the road a row of three pairs of semi detached cottages is set close to the road (see right). The ragstone cottages dating from around 1900, have brown clay tiled gabled roofs with prominent half timbered gables and black barge boards. Yellow brick details and stone sills and lintels enhance the elevations. Tiled porch canopies are supported on white wooden brackets, except for one which has been enclosed. The narrow front gardens are paved and partially enclosed. The cottages provide a link with the historic significance of the London Road in this predominantly 20th century part of the Aylesford.



To the east of the cottages, there is more recent infill development and a single storey farm shop and garden centre. The road from this point eastwards has a commercial character on the south side. This section of the road is verdant with glimpses northwards towards the North Downs (see above).



Approaching the Mills Road junction from the west, the north side of the road comprises a 1960s housing development (see The Avenue Area), whilst to the south there is an area of retail warehousing (see Area N3). Both are partially screened by foliage. The junction is wide and busy, cluttered with highway signs and barriers. The small 19th century listed cottage, in a prominent position at the entrance to Hall Road, and adjoining semi detached villa contrast with the surrounding 20th century development. Finished in ragstone, they have steeply pitched clay tiled roofs and prominent chimneys. The buildings adjoin the Preston Hall Estate providing a reminder of the historical importance of this road and of the estate.

To the east of the Hall Road junction, retail warehouses occupy the south side (see right), whilst the north side is enclosed by a brick then ragstone wall and belt of trees which form the boundary of the Royal British Legion Village. This section of road is very verdant and there are glimpses of the North Downs towards the north west (see below left). At the eastern end of the area, both sides of the road are enclosed by dense tree belts (see below right).



Listed Buildings

The Lodge

Mid 19th Century ragstone cottage. Octagonal plan at south end, with the roof canted out on wooden posts forming a verandah at the ground floor. Plain tiled roof.

Grade II



LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

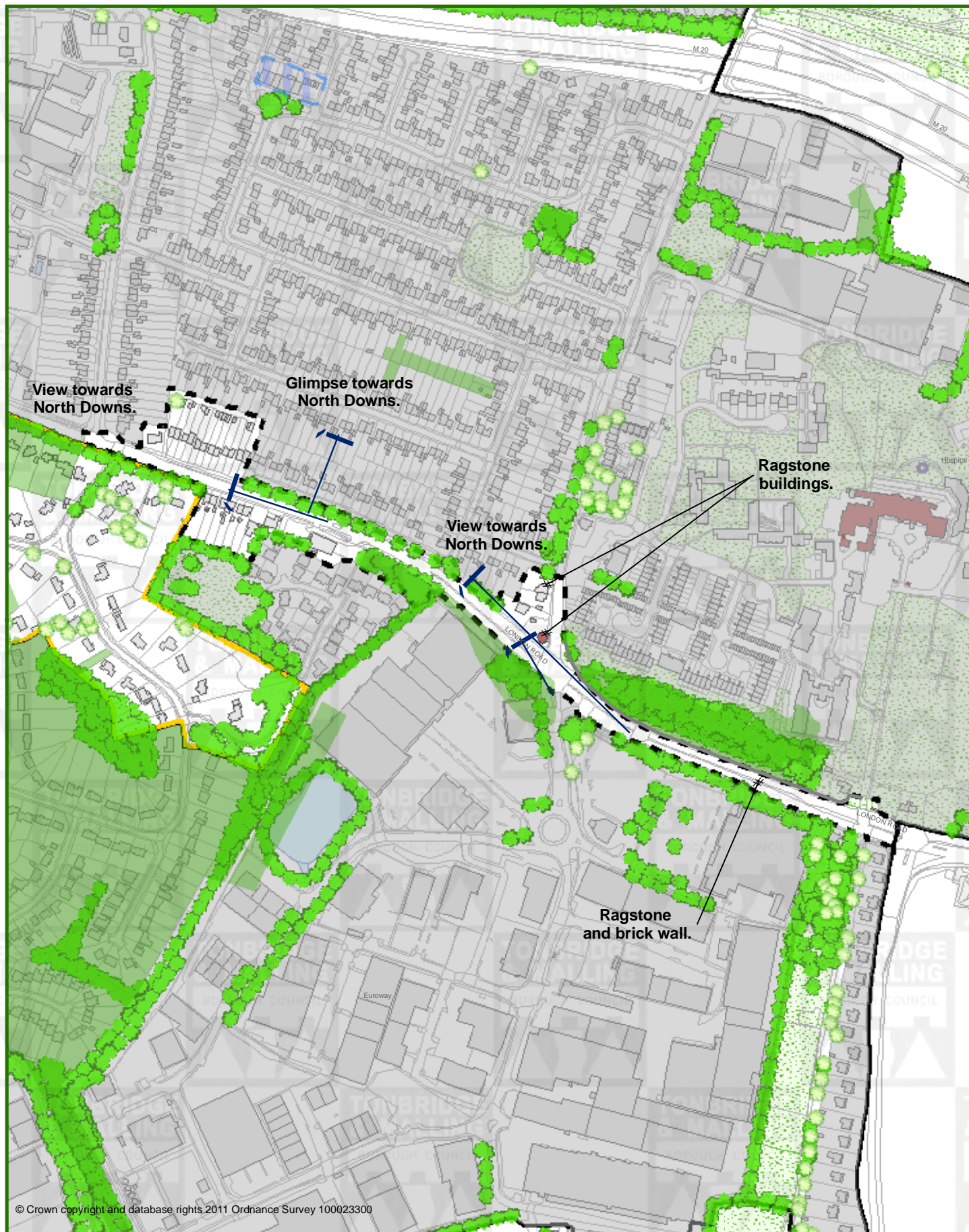
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>Varied, 19th century - present</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Detached and semi-detached</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Mixed - residential and retail</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>1-2 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Red and red/brown brick, slate and clay tile roofs, painted render, lintels, clay hung tiles, lead, yellow brick and timber details</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Ragstone and brick walls, hedges, trees, wooden fences</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>None</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- The undulating, curving road is verdant with tree belts lining much of the route
- There are occasional views to the west and north west of the North Downs
- Ragstone 19th century buildings and wall provide a link with the past and the historical importance of the London Road and Preston Hall Estate
- The 1930s semi detached houses at the western end have a cohesive and distinctive character

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise and movement dominates the character of the area
- The streetscape is cluttered with signage and barriers
- Some pavement surfacing is poor quality



0 50 100 150 200 250 500 Metres

Ref **A1.5**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **London Road Area (Aylesford)**



A2 – NEW HYTHE LANE

Comprising: New Hythe Lane; Mercer Close

A historic gently curving routeway running between the villages of Larkfield and New Hythe, now bisected into northern and southern sections by the M20. Development is unevenly spread out along the length of the road, with a mixture of 19th century terraces, 1930's detached and semi detached houses, bungalows and some more modern infill development and a fire station. Some older 17th century listed properties are located at the southern end of the area. The road slopes upwards from the A20, crests at the M20 flyover and then slopes downwards towards New Hythe allowing long views. Larkfield Church Conservation Area is located along the eastern boundary.



The 19th century cottages are 2 storey properties in short terraces set behind shallow front gardens, often with no pavements. The 1930's properties are detached and semi detached and are set behind deep front gardens, in part along a straight building line. This dominant building line and repeating design features such as central chimneys and hipped roofs create a distinctive rhythmic pattern.

Elsewhere, small scale infill development has occurred on individual plots in the latter half of the 20th century, and several larger former industrial sites have been more recently developed for houses and flats such as Mercer Close.



The palette of materials used in this character area is varied and reflects the building styles of the different periods of development. However red brick and pale coloured rendering are common throughout, as is brown tiling to the roofs. Roof styles are generally steep but include a mixture of hipped and pitched, and some with front facing gable ends. Windows are a mixture of sash and casement styles and generally white in colour.

Front gardens are generally enclosed by low walls, with off street car parking provided to the front of most properties. On street parking is not prevalent.

The recent compact cul-de-sac development at Mercer Close uses the same palette of materials as the rest of the character area, and the majority of properties are visible from New Hythe Lane. The properties are a mixture of flats and houses set behind shallow front gardens. The development also includes some 3 storey blocks of flats and some amenity green space (see right).



Boundary walls are a particular feature in the southern section of the character area as a distinctive ragstone wall (see left) runs along part of the eastern side of New Hythe Lane, separating this character area from the adjoining Trees Estate. This also represents a change in ground level with New Hythe Lane sitting lower than the surrounding character areas. This change in level creates a more enclosed character as properties on either side of the road sit in slightly elevated positions. Ragstone is also picked up in similar boundary walls along the western side of New Hythe Lane.

This recurring material and feature helps to create a cohesive character.



Another unifying characteristic of this area is the repeated use of buff and red brick patterns on the properties. Although the buildings date from different periods, these brick patterns can be found along the length of the area.

The undulating topography of this area allows opportunities for long views of the North Downs to the north (see below left) and east and of Holy Trinity Church at the centre of the area (see right). These long views, combined with properties being set back behind deep front gardens create a spacious character in the north.

There are also shorter views over the Larkfield Playing Fields (see below right) to the East and glimpses along roads and between properties into the neighbouring character areas of London Road, Leybourne Lakes and the Birds Estate. This adds to the spacious feel.

Tall mature trees line the road in the central portion of the character area, some of which fall within the adjoining Larkfield Church Conservation Area, giving an enclosed arcadian feel to this part of the area (see right).





Although the majority of properties in this area are residential, there are a few exceptions. These include the Bricklayer Arms Public House and the Monks Head Public House, the New Hythe Store and some small offices. These are dispersed along the length of the area and are generally small in scale, and therefore do not detract from the overall residential character. However the fire station (see left) is in a prominent location at the junction of New Hythe Lane and Kingfisher Road, is of a different scale and materials to the neighbouring buildings, being constructed of brown brick with a flat roof. It is also set back from the surrounding building line, therefore disrupting the street scene.

A large number of properties in this area have been subject to personalisation, ranging from replacements windows and doors, to the addition of porches, side extensions and loft conversions. However this adds to the mixture of characteristics present.

New Hythe Lane is a busy and sometimes congested road and as a result road noise is high.



Listed Buildings

The Monk's Head Public House and Nos 46-50
Cottage row and public house C17th with C19th Public House.

II



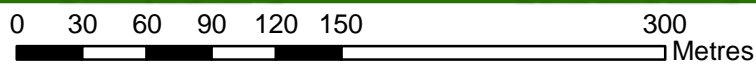
LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>Varied, 17th century - present</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Varied</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Mainly residential, public house, fire station</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>1-3 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Red, brown and buff brick, slate and clay tile roofs, painted render, lintels, clay hung tiles, yellow brick details.</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Brick walls, hedges, trees, black railings, wooden fences</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>Larkfield playing fields</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Mature trees along the length of New Hythe Lane give it a green character
- Holy Trinity Church, although outside the character area, can be seen from a distance due to its elevated position and visual prominence and is a local landmark
- The Monks Head and the surrounding listed buildings
- Long views of North Downs
- A strong rhythm in the northern section of the area created by the prominent roofs and chimneys of a row of 1930's semi detached properties
- Individuality of buildings
- Traditional boundary treatments of ragstone and brick walls are strong linear features

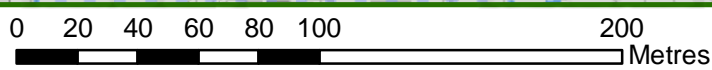
Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise and congestion from traffic travelling along New Hythe Lane
- Fire Station occupies a prominent location



Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal





Ref A2

Title New Hythe Lane

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



A3 – STATION ROAD (SOUTH)

Comprising: Station Road and Teapot Lane.

The south side of Station Road comprises a ribbon of development which backs onto the M20 motorway. The area may be sub-divided into three distinct zones representing three phases of development.



The eastern section immediately west of Sedley Close comprises a row of 1930s semi detached houses of uniform design. The houses are constructed of red brown brick with hipped brown tiled roofs and central short chimneys. They are flat fronted with slightly arched door openings and white framed windows. The houses are set back behind a service road and deep front gardens enclosed by picket or panel fences and wire. Many vehicles are parked on the concrete driveways creating a cluttered frontage. The houses have a consistent 1930s character and the identical designs and chimneys create rhythm of repeated features. The commercial area to the north of the road is screened by trees.

To the west, towards Teapot Lane, the houses have a similar scale and character but are slightly more varied in design and finishes and some are of more recent date. The gardens front directly onto the pavement and main road and are partially enclosed by hedges and low walls. Some properties are weatherboarded, tile hung or rendered and painted on the upper storeys. There have been some front porch extensions. The railway line on the north side of the road is screened by trees.



To the west of the motorway bridge, the character changes. The semi detached properties are more widely spaced and set back from the road behind landscaped gardens and high hedges. The buildings incorporate 2 pairs of wide 1930s semi detached houses and houses of more recent construction. The roofline, material, colours and design details vary. Although this section of road is sandwiched between the M20 and the railway line, it has a surprisingly verdant, almost rural, character with high hedges on both sides. The gently rising topography, curve in the road and high hedges prevent any long views.



The 19th century station building lies outside the area to the north providing a reminder of the age and historical significance of Station Road and the railway line. The two storey building is finished in ragstone with prominent decorative chimneys.

Trees and hedges enclose the north side of Station Road, screening the railway line and creating a verdant character the length of the area. A tree belt to the north of the M20 forms a backdrop to the houses along Station Road.



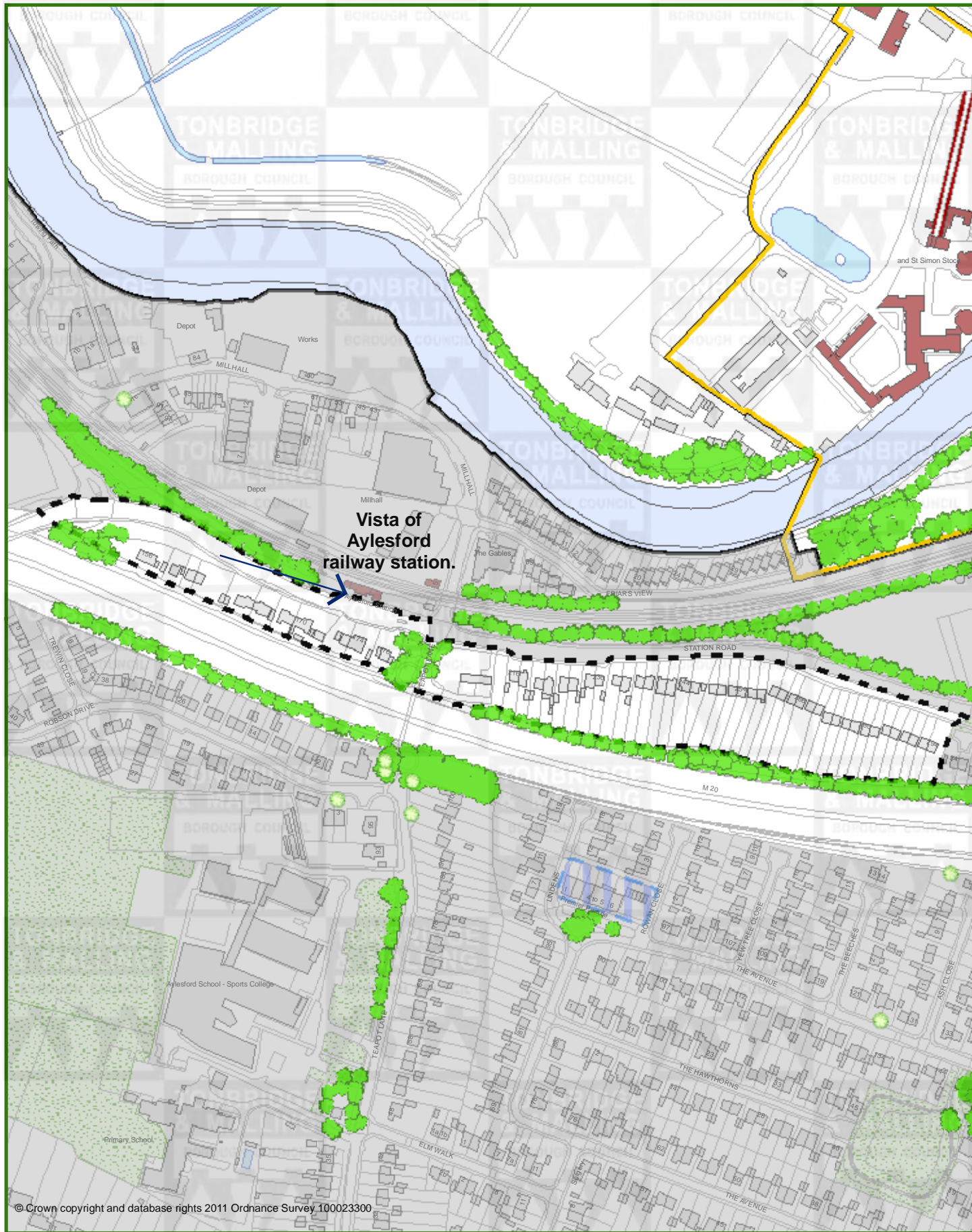
LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>Mainly 1930s. 19th century station building</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Semi-detached</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Residential</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>Mainly 2 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Red/brown brick, ragstone finish, slate and clay tile roofs, painted render, clay hung tiles, lead</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Brick walls hedges, trees, wooden fences</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>None</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Cohesive 1930s character at the eastern end of the area with the identical designs and height creating rhythm in the streetscape
- The tree belt to the north encloses the road and, together with garden hedges and planting, contributes to a verdant character, particularly at the western end. The tree belt also screens the railway and commercial uses
- The houses are set back from the road on a reasonably consistent building line behind service roads and/or deep front gardens
- The vista of the old station provides a link with the historical importance of the railway and of Station Road
- Original details and chimneys have been retained on inter-war housing

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- There is noise from Station Road, the M20 and the railway line. Station Road is a busy through route and dominates the character of the area
- Some pavement surfacing is in poor condition
- The townscape is cluttered by parked cars on front gardens and driveways. Some driveways are in poor condition



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0 30 60 90 120 150

300

Metres

Ref **A3**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Station Road (South)**

**TONBRIDGE
& MALLING**

BOROUGH COUNCIL



B – NINETEENTH CENTURY COTTAGES



During the 19th Century, the Medway Gap was a rural area with farming the main activity. Some small scale development took place to provide accommodation for farm workers, but due to the rural nature of the area, development did not take place on the same scale as it did in nearby towns such as Snodland or Maidstone where there were industrial activities that required a local workforce. As a result, there is very little in the Medway Gap by way of this type of Character area. Small pockets of this type of development remain and despite some infill and redevelopment, the original character and scale has been retained. The two storey terraced houses are set in narrow plots fronting directly onto the road or set behind shallow front gardens and low brick walls. Often the cottages in a particular street will be of a uniform design giving each street an individual character.

The streets in the Medway Gap of this character are linear and front directly onto the road. There is no evidence (from historical maps) that there was development behind the linear development in a grid pattern although this would have been the normal pattern had further growth during the nineteenth century taken place.

The buildings are constructed in yellow or red brick and (originally) slate roofs with flat fronts or single storey canted bay windows. Arched brickwork or stone lintels span window and door opening. Some properties have simple decorative features including name and date plaques, string courses of contrasting brick and ridge tiles. In semi-detached properties the doors are usually placed in pairs centrally or in the side elevations. In terraced houses the front doors and rear extensions are paired together. The unified, simple roof lines fronting the street generally slope down towards the road and are tiled with clay, concrete or slate tiles. Plain chimneys are centrally placed on the roof ridge. The repetition of details along a constant building line gives the streets a strong rhythm.

The overall effect is a distinct character with blocks of uniform front elevations creating a strong sense of identity. Original sash windows, panelled front doors and roof tiles or slates have been replaced on many properties and in some instances intrusive extensions and dormer windows visible from the public realm have been added on. Since these Victorian streets are narrow and the properties are set close to the road and each other, there is little off street parking space. As a result the historic character and the pedestrian environment is frequently affected by on-street/pavement parking and wheelie bins.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>1850s to early 20th century</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Terraced</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Residential</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>2 storey, with some 3 storey</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Yellow or red brick, slate or brown roof tiles, white painted sash windows</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Red brick walls and railings</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>Tight knit development with few open spaces</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Strong cohesive character created by the uniformity of materials, architectural details, roof heights, and building line*
- *Some original features have been retained such as decorative carved brick lintels and string courses providing interest and enhancing the street scene*
- *Original design details and decorative features are still evident*
- *Individuality of buildings*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *On street parking detracts from the street scene*
- *Traffic noise from nearby main roads*
- *Unsympathetic infill and personalisation of properties dilutes the otherwise historic character*

B1 – BELL LANE (EAST)

Comprising: Bell Lane (east)

Bell Lane is a straight road the eastern side of which was developed during the late 19th century. Properties along the western side of Bell Lane are included in the Fernleigh Rise character area, but are highly visible from this character area. Long views west of Bell Lane are blocked by the more elevated properties of Fernleigh Rise. Bell Lane is accessed from the A20 and dips slightly towards the north where it goes under the M20 and public access stops. This modern structure effectively stops the vista and marks an abrupt end of the historic area. Motorway noise is considerable, particularly in the north of the area. Although the properties along the eastern side of this road are predominantly two storey terraced houses, some later infill development has introduced more modern semi and detached properties to the street. Bellevue Villa (built in 1883) serves as a local landmark due to its striking blue colour, dominant gable end and decorative features.



The terraced properties were originally constructed of red or yellow brick and are either flat fronted or with a canted bay window to the ground floor. Properties are generally of two storeys, with narrow frontages, shallow front gardens and vertical windows. Some have loft conversions with generally consistently designed dormer windows. The roofs, originally covered with slate or grey tiles, are a mixture of steeply pitched, hipped or gable ended with chimneys on the ridge, now finished in a variety of materials.



There has been a high degree of personalisation of the properties with replacement windows and doors, addition of porches and modern dormer windows in the roof space and a variety of boundary treatments which detract from the historic character and cohesiveness. Much of the original brick work has been painted, in a variety of colours, and there are examples of hung tiles, rendering and pebbledash decoration too.





There have been a number of small scale infill developments along Bell Lane (east). In most instances they are set back from the historic building line, use a range of different materials, have horizontal windows, do not have retaining boundary walls, have a shallower roof pitch and do not respect the scale of the older properties. Although this dilutes the historic character of the area, the Victorian character of the street still predominates.



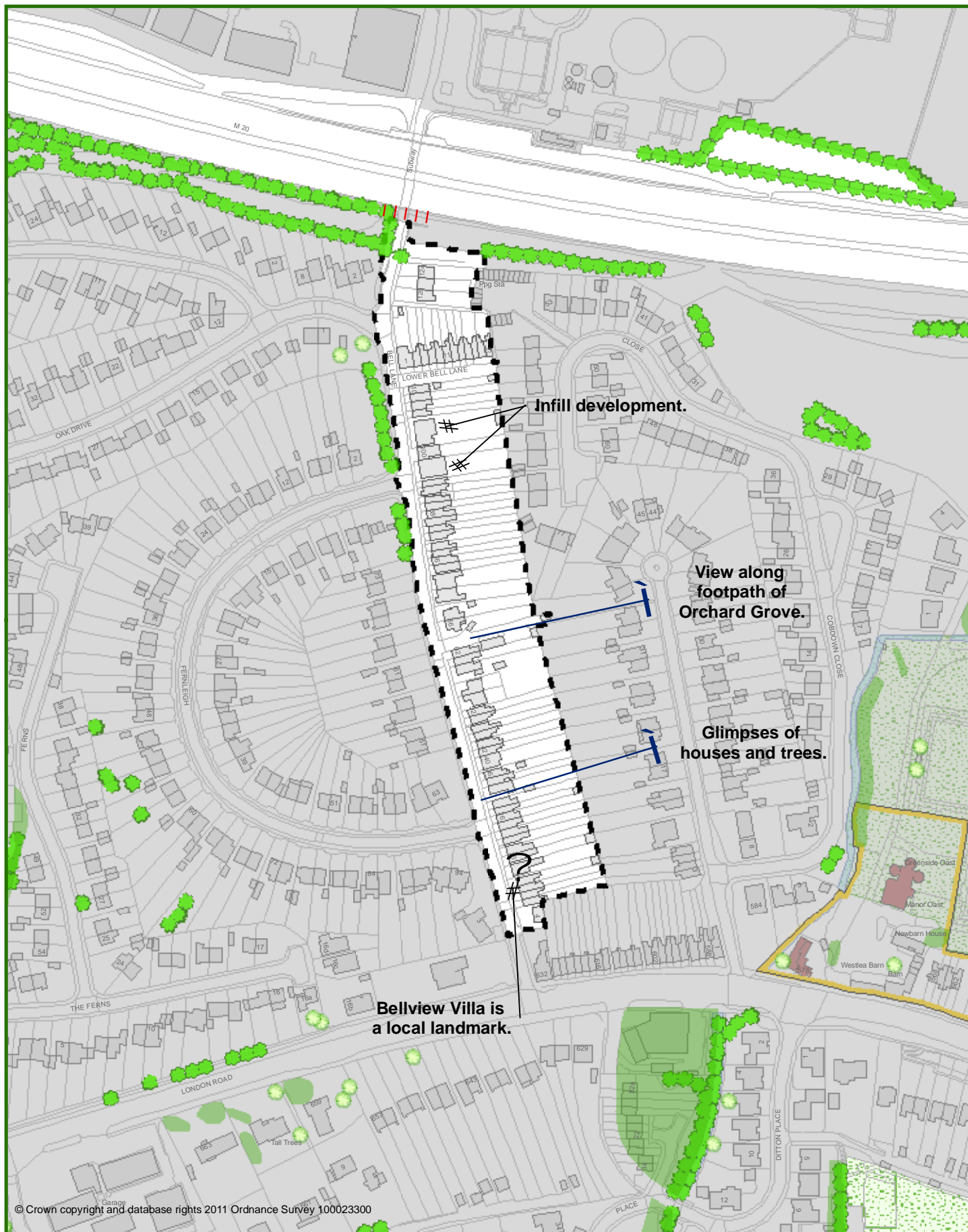
Despite personalisation of the properties, there are numerous historic details that are still evident. Decorative lintels, barge boards, ridge tiles and string courses enhance the elevations and add interest to the street scene.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Belleview Villa local landmark
- Original design details and decorative features are still evident
- Individuality of buildings

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- On street parking detracts from the street scene
- The M20 flyover is a visual detractor
- Traffic noise from the M20
- Some unsympathetic personalisation and infill development which does not respect the historic character



0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref **B1**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Bell Lane (East)**



B2 – NEW ROAD (WEST)

Comprising: New Road (West)

New Road is a straight linear road that rises to the south from the A20 into Ditton village. The western side (as marked on map B2), consists of a number of Victorian terraces with some modern infill. The properties are predominantly residential although there are a few commercial premises including a pub, shop and post office.



The western side of New Road consists of terraced properties that are two storeys. Properties are generally of two storeys. Some have loft conversions with generally consistently designed dormer windows. Many of the terraces have retained their date plaques, dated 1881, 1882 and 1883. They are predominantly built from pale yellow brick with red clay roof tiles and double four pot chimney stacks at regular intervals, after every second dwelling.

The properties are flat fronted with bay windows on the ground floor with decorative lintels above and the front doors. The original windows would have been sash, but over time modernisation and individualisation of properties has included replacement windows with casement bays, front porch extensions, render and concrete roof tiles.

The properties have shallow front gardens that are enclosed with wooden fencing, brick walls or hedges.



Bell Cottages on New Road were built in 1882 and retain the original date plaque along with some of the other original design features common in Victorian properties such as decorative string course and decorative lintels above the windows and doors. Most properties have replaced the original sash windows with aluminium or UPVC windows and taken the opportunity to increase the size of the fenestrations. Other individualisations include front porch extensions, concrete roof tiles, pebble dashing, painted render and painted brick work.



Despite personalisation of the properties, some historic details are still evident, such as decorative lintels and string courses that enhance the elevations and add interest to the street scene.

The majority of the buildings are residential dwellings although there are some commercial premises including this convenience shop and post office and public house that stand out because of their greater width, and the shop presents a front facing gable roof to the street giving the appearance of a greater scale.

The public house has large sash windows with decorative arched lintels and contrasting brick detail around the windows and doors and tall chimney to the side Creating a further visual break in a row of properties that are more uniform.



Some modern infilling has taken place such as the pair of semi detached dwellings in the photo above right. They are set back from the road and although they reflect the period of their construction (1970s), as a result of their flat roof, integral garages, irregular fenestration and unenclosed hard landscaped frontages, they do not respect the predominant character of the area.



Despite personalisation of the properties, some historic features are still evident, such as decorative lintels, string courses and other features that enhance the elevations and add interest to the street scene.



The area enjoys views to the east down Woodlands Road and through the gaps in between the houses on the eastern side of New Road over to the woodlands on the higher ground. Facing northwards down New Road there are views of the tall specimen trees of Cobdown and the North Downs beyond. These views soften the otherwise hard and urban landscape.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Strong cohesive character created by the uniformity of materials, architectural details, roof heights, and building line
- Commercial buildings – the shop, post office and pub provide a node
- Views northwards of the tall specimen trees at Cobdown and the North Downs beyond
- Views to the east of the woodland on higher ground
- Some original features have been retained such as decorative carved brick lintels and string courses providing interest and enhancing the street scene

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- From time to time there is noise from traffic travelling through the area and from near by major routes
- Unsympathetic infill and personalisation of properties dilutes the otherwise historic character



0 10 20 30 40 50 100 Metres

Ref B2

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title New Road (West)



C – EARLY PUBLIC HOUSING SCHEMES



The Homes for Heroes Campaign and Housing Act of 1919 placed a requirement on councils to provide housing in an effort to improve the living conditions and health of working people. The Medway Gap has several early housing developments which still retain a distinctive design and character. These early developments were influenced by the Garden City Movement and were built at medium density. On these early public housing schemes, the houses are generally built in a vernacular cottage style. The two storey family homes, often with rendered upper stories and gently pitched hipped roofs have enclosed front gardens. The homes were built in traditional local materials – brick and rendered with wooden casement windows and tiled roofs.

In the Medway Gap early housing developments can be seen at Larkfield Close and New Road (East) which took place during the 1920s and 1930s.

These areas today have a distinctive character. The uniformity of design and age of the houses, the consistent colours of the red brick and painted render and the enclosed cottage style front gardens provide a strong sense of identity, differentiating these character areas from surrounding development.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

Age of buildings	1920s – 1930s
Type of buildings	Semi-detached and terraced
Main uses	Residential
Building heights	2 storeys
Prominent building materials	Brown brick, brown roof tiles, painted render, white casement windows
Predominant boundary treatments	Low walls, hedges and picket fences
Open spaces	None

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Strong cohesive character – created by uniformity of design, materials, scale, height and building line*
- *Historic significance as examples of ‘Home for Heroes’ early social housing*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *Traffic noise from traffic travelling along the near by A20*

C1 – LARKFIELD CLOSE

Comprising: Larkfield Close, Larkfield Road

A small development of early public housing built in the 1930s. The 2 storey properties are arranged in short terraces along 2 cul-de-sacs. The development is accessed from the A20.



The terraced properties are grouped into blocks with steep red and brown tiled hipped roofs and small centrally positioned chimneys on the ridge. All properties are rendered and are painted in pastel shades with white casement windows. The repeated design, uniform roofline and limited colour palette give the area a distinctive unified character.

Replacement windows and doors in a variety of styles have diluted the uniformity of character. The addition of porches to some properties, loss of some front boundary walls and side extensions somewhat dilutes the character (see below) but the changes do not detract significantly from the unified character.



Glimpses of mature trees along the western and northern boundaries can be seen between and over properties and these provide a green backdrop. This along with a continuous high hedge along the western side of Larkfield Road helps to soften the architecture.

Views in to and out of the development are limited due to the flat topography and the enclosure provided by the inward-looking terraces, and despite a public footpath running along the northern boundary connecting to New Hythe Lane, there is little pedestrian or vehicular movement. This gives the area a private and enclosed character. However there is some background road noise from the A20.





At the northern end of Larkfield Road there is a small flatted development constructed in the 1970's of yellow brick with white weatherboarding detail. The front facing gable ends of the properties, along with the shallow roof pitch and material used is in sharp contrast to the rest of the character area.

Road surfaces in the area are in poor condition.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Uniform building design, materials and scale give a strong cohesive character
- Glimpses of surrounding mature tree between and over properties
- Enclosed private character

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from traffic travelling along the A20
- Poor surfacing of roads
- High level of personalisation through replacement windows and doors and the addition of porches result in a loss of original character
- During busy periods, car parking and commercial activity can detract from the residential character of the area.



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0 10 20 30 40 50 100 Metres

Ref **C1**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Larkfield Close**



C2 – NEW ROAD

Comprising: New Road.

New Road is a straight road that connects the A20 London Road to Ditton village. It rises gently upwards to the south. The eastern side of the road is lined with traditional 1920s – 30s early public housing, with a small number also on the western side of this character area. The remaining properties on the western side of the road are Victorian and are part of a separate character area.

These buildings provide a strong sense of rhythm as each of the design features is repeated in every property and no modernisation of windows etc. has taken place in isolation. The building line also contributes to this rhythm as the pairs of semi detached houses are staggered.

Grass verges along the pavements contribute to the green character of the area along with the greenery of the large front gardens with the properties set well back from the road.

Built circa 1932, these houses are typical of early public housing and mirror similar properties built elsewhere in the Borough at the same time for the same purpose.



There are three pairs of semi detached properties on the western side of New Road that although newer (built circa 1947), have many of the design features and characteristics found in the other properties. They are 2 storey. semi detached houses with central chimneys and are again set back in deep front gardens. However, their building line is consistent and they have hipped roofs with cat slides at the sides and are brown brick built with brown roof tiles. This symmetry is important to the character as it provide a rhythm of features that are unique in this area.

The frontages have generally been paved over to provide off road car parking, creating a hard character that is softened by the glimpses between the houses of the trees in the surrounding areas.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Strong cohesive character created by consistency of building line/roof line/height/scale/design/materials
- Strong sense of rhythm to properties to the eastern and part of western side of the road
- The urban character is softened by the landscaped front gardens, grass verges and glimpses of woodland to the east/ west
- Traditional/original materials/details/decorative features/boundary treatments
- Glimpses between houses of woodland on higher ground in the distance

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors although there is occasional traffic noise from the nearby A20 London Road
- Paving over and parking in front gardens



0 10 20 30 40 50 100 Metres

Ref **C2**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **New Road**



D – INTER-WAR SEMI-DETACHED HOUSING



During the 1930s, private residential development took place in the Medway Gap in culs-de-sac off the principal roads and in linear patterns along the principal roads themselves. This type of housing can be found on Castle Way in Leybourne, around the A20 London Road and Station Road in Ditton and in Aylesford along and off the A20 Lond Road.

These developments are quite distinctive with substantial semi-detached properties set back behind enclosed front gardens giving a verdant character. The properties are more widely spaced than the earlier Victorian and Edwardian properties, with generous rear gardens and some having a garage to the side which give a spacious feel. These semi-detached properties are of similar design with gently sloping hipped tiled roofs and wide casement windows. Many have bays windows and porches. Although frequently built to a standard design, the individual buildings were enhanced with painted cement render generally in white or cream and embellished with hung tiles, brick detailing or pebble dash.

Substantial semi-detached properties set back behind front gardens are more widely spaced than the earlier Victorian or Edwardian properties, some having a garage to the side. The semi-detached properties are of similar design with gently sloping hipped tiled roofs and wide casement windows. Many have curved bays and porches. Although frequently built to a standard design, the individual buildings were enhanced with painted cement render generally in white or cream and embellished with hung tiles, terracotta plaques, brick detailing or oriel windows. Many had two storey bay windows with mock half timbered or tile hung gables. In the 1930s it became common for the doorways to be situated on the outer sides of semi-detached properties.

Properties from this period are usually set back from the road behind enclosed front gardens and often have generous gardens to the rear giving these areas a spacious, verdant character.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>Late 1920s – 1930s</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Mainly semi-detached</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Residential</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>2 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Red brick, cream or white render, tiled roofs, casement windows, decorative details including hanging tiles, mock half-timber gable ends, decorative brickwork.</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Brick walls, hedges</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>Generally few public open spaces but generous private space</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Properties set back from the road along a constant building line behind enclosed landscaped front gardens contributing to the spacious, open and verdant character*
- *Views of the North Downs and tree backdrop in some areas*
- *Cohesive character created by uniformity of building materials and finishes, pattern of roofscapes, relatively deep frontages and low-level front boundary treatments*
- *Culs-de-sac have quiet, private character*
- *Alterations have taken place, but many original design details have been retained including bay windows, chimneys, decorative finishes, porches and gables*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *Loss of front boundaries and gardens to accommodate parking*
- *Traffic noise from the A20 London Road and the M20*

D1 – CASTLE WAY (NORTH)

Comprising: Castle Way

Castle Way, formerly Malling Road, is a straight road that links Leybourne with the A20 and junction 4 of the M20. It provides local access now, but was part of the original main north/south route between the M20 and West Malling and Kings Hill until the by-pass was completed in 2006/07. The properties in this character area are set well back from the straight road in an elevated position with an outlook over the Area of Landscape Significance to the east.



Castle Way is a wide straight road with traffic calming pinch points and sleeping policemen that were introduced shortly after the opening of the by-pass to deter through traffic. On the western side, there is a string of 1930s properties – detached and semi detached, with a few modern infill developments, that sit well back from the road in an elevated position with generous landscaped front gardens behind low stone walls.

The eastern side of the road consists of an expanse of open space, an area of strategic landscape significance. Land levels, the fact that it is on the fringe of the urban confines and the extensive woodland in adjacent areas along with the verdant and generous landscaped frontages create a spacious, semi-rural character that is further enhanced by the traditional style lampposts and wooden bollards.



The properties are two storeys with red clay tiled hipped roofs, some with front facing gables. Despite being built in the same period, there is a variety of details and finishes. The larger detached properties have bow windows, tall slim chimney stacks rising up the side elevation, and arched front doorways, the semi detached properties have smaller proportions with a mixture of roof details – plain hipped roof, half hipped where the loft space has been converted, and protruding roof or front facing gables over the principal fenestrations. Most properties have white casement windows and are rendered, either fully or on upper storeys only, with painted concrete or pebble dash. Some properties have red/brown hung tiles underneath the main windows on each storey. Most of the semi detached properties have short centrally placed square chimneys. Despite the differences in detail, the age of the buildings, the consistent building line, their uniformly elevated position, the palate of harmonious materials used and the (predominantly) large enclosed landscaped gardens set behind a low brick wall create a cohesive character. The infill (shown above right) respects the building line and land levels and fits in well with its surroundings despite its architectural style being different from the traditional 1930s properties in the area.



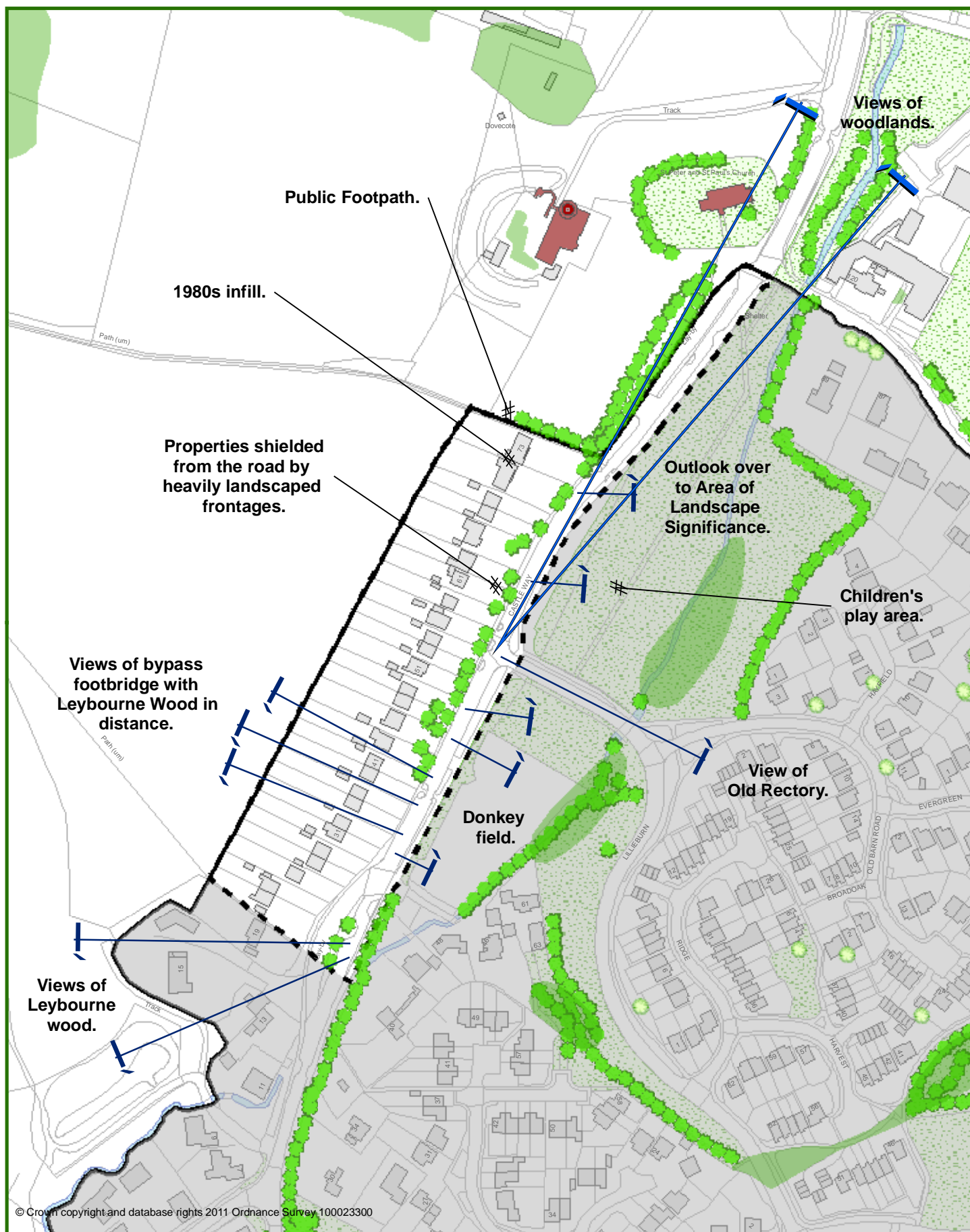
The outlook to the eastern side of Castle Way is over the highway to the area of landscape significance and includes a donkey field, children's play area and amenity open space with mature trees. These fields with groups of mature trees limit views across to the main part of Leybourne creating a semi-rural enclosed character for the general area. However, there are glimpses of the chimneys of the Old Rectory pub and restaurant across the Area of Landscape Significance. The fact that there is such a strong concentration of trees and open space within the general area creates a semi-rural character. The garden trees, shrubs and hedges of the properties on Castle Way further enhance this character, as do the wooded areas in the distance such as Leybourne Wood that sits on an elevation position west of the by-pass and the naturalised woodland to the north that acts as a buffer with the M20 motorway.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Similarity in building age, building line, boundary wall and complementary palette of materials unite the area and provide cohesion
- Verdant frontages e.g. deep front landscaped gardens, grass verges, hedges and tall trees
- Views of Leybourne Wood and naturalised wooded areas to the north
- Views of the area of landscape significance and the Old Rectory pub and restaurant
- The area of landscape significance and the woodland creates a semi-rural character and a sense that this is the edge of the urban confines

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors



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0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref **D1**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Castle Way (North)**



D2 – FERNLEIGH RISE

Comprising: Fernleigh Rise, Bell Lane

Situated to the north of London Road, with access from Bell Lane, Fernleigh Rise is a distinctive crescent development of semi-detached residential properties built in the late 1930s on former orchards. In addition a row of semi detached properties on the West of Bell Lane are also included in this character area. Although not part of the crescent development, these properties demonstrate many of the same characteristics. Properties along the east of Bell Lane fall in the Bell Lane character area. The central section of the crescent occupies an elevated position allowing for long views of the North Downs and Medway Valley.



The houses have hipped plain brown/grey tiled roofs with small centrally placed chimney stacks. The repeated design and even spacing gives a strong identify to the area. Properties are set back behind generous landscaped front gardens and driveways, some with garages. The majority of the houses have a red brick ground floor, with either pebbledash or white/cream render to the upper floor. There is a mixture of repeated designs, those with front facing gable ends and two storey square bay windows, those with suntrap style bay windows and the flat fronted properties with open arched porches. A range of decorative features can also be seen including brick detailing and dentil courses.



The street has wide pavements with grass verges which help contribute to the spacious character. A green backdrop is provided by tall trees visible over the houses to the north, south and east. Long uninterrupted views of the North Downs can be seen over the top of properties to the North East, and further glimpses of the North Downs and neighbouring character areas can be seen between properties. The use of hedging and specimen planting adds to the verdant character of the area.

Views of the roofs and rear of properties along The Ferns in the Trees Estate character area can also be seen between and over properties in the West.



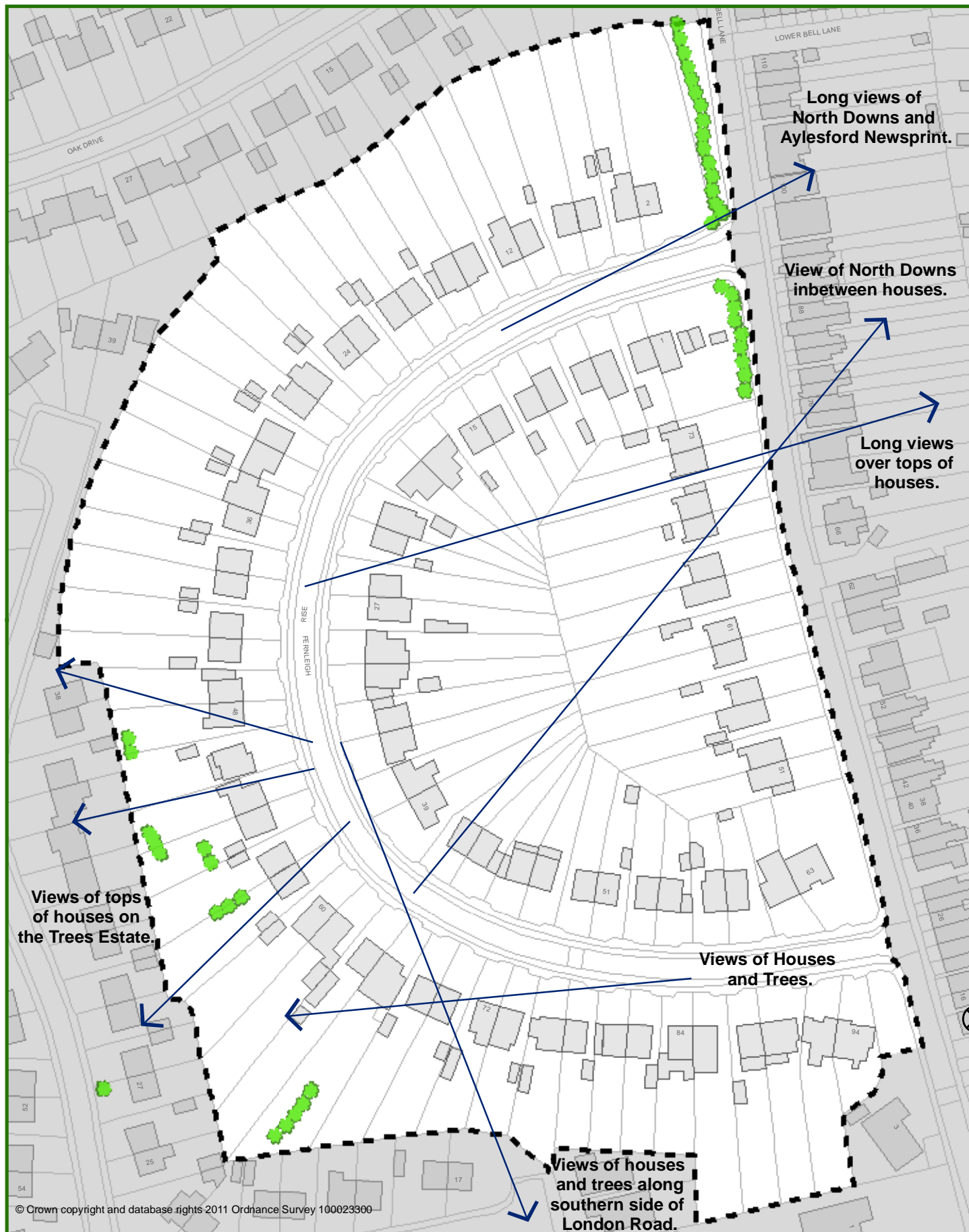
Although the majority of properties have retained their original character, with some recent alterations and extensions blending in to original building lines and making use of similar materials (see above right), others have been less sympathetic. Use of white UPVC weatherboarding and the loss of front gardens for car parking (see above left) detract from the cohesive character of the area.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Strong cohesive character due to repetition of design and materials used, even spacing between semi-detached houses and the scale of the buildings
- Direct and interrupted views of surrounding tree belts and the North Downs
- Quiet character with little through traffic
- Properties set back from the road along a constant building line behind enclosed landscaped front gardens contributing to the spacious and verdant character
- Retention of original building designs and detailing

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Background traffic noise from A20
- Loss of some front gardens to accommodate parking



Ref **D2**

Title **Fernleigh Rise**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



D3 – ORCHARD GROVE

Comprising: Orchard Grove

A development of semi-detached two storey houses dating back to the 1930s along a relatively short cul-de-sac which is linear in character. A few exceptions exist at the entrance to Orchard Grove including a small cluster of nineteenth century cottages and a couple of bungalows built in the late 1950s. There is direct access to the A20 to the south and the character area of Cobdown Close, which is accessible off Orchard Grove, wraps around the rear of the properties to the east and north.



The properties are set back fronting the road following a constant building line. The roofs, topped with brown tiles, are a mixture of hipped and gable-fronted (see left). There is a clear pattern to the roofscape design which is identical on both sides of the road.

A cohesive character is created by the uniformity in the surface treatments of the façades with white painted render on the upper storey and exposed red brick on the ground floor and with low front boundary walls, relatively deep frontages and white casement windows. This consistent finish and limited colour palette creates a strong unity.



The building mass of the properties at the cul-de-sac end (north end) differs from the rest of the street in that it is quite significantly greater. This is a result of large two storey extensions (see above). The effect of this on the streetscene is quite dramatic and the original character of spaced semi-detached houses with glimpses between the properties (see right) has been lost. This is a negative feature, with views of mature specimen trees to the north along the embankment with the M20 severely reduced.





There are two exceptions to the predominant character of the area. These include a small cluster of nineteenth century cottages (above, left) and a pair of bungalows (above, right) which date back to the late 1950s. The cottages located at the entrance to Orchard Grove on the western side differ in character to the adjacent inter-war housing by being of a greater mass and having shorter frontages resulting in a change to the building line. The bungalows located opposite on the eastern side of Orchard Grove by the junction with Cobdown Close are of a much smaller scale, have a noticeably different roof design (steep pitched) and enjoy slightly deeper frontages than the neighbouring houses resulting in a slight change to the building line. A positive feature of the bungalow development is the view over the properties of the tall specimen trees in Cobdown Park.

Whilst these exceptions differ from the rest of the development, the impact on the character of Orchard Grove is not significant because the properties are at the entrance to the area and they therefore do not disrupt the inter-war housing streetscene further along the road.

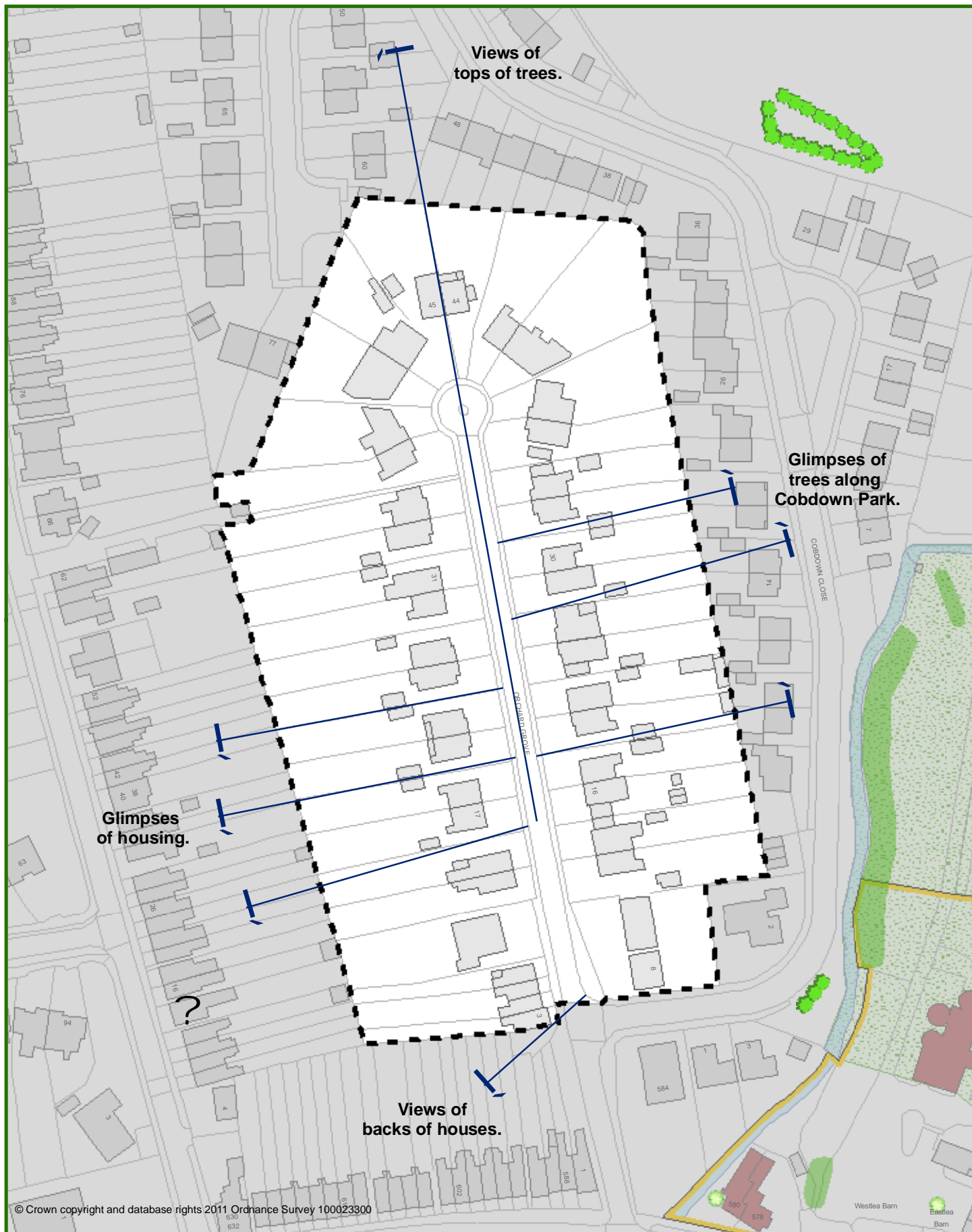
A negative feature of the southern end of the character area is the traffic noise from vehicles on the A20. There is traffic noise at the northern end from vehicles travelling along the M20 but this is lower in comparison.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Cohesive character created by uniformity of building materials and finishes, pattern of roofscapes (identical on both sides of the street) relatively deep frontages and low-level front boundary treatments
- Enclosed, private character created by cul-de-sac
- Glimpses of mature specimen trees along the border of Cobdown Park between the houses and over the bungalows on the eastern side of the road

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Massing of properties at the northern end of the character area resulting in the loss of glimpse between the houses of tall specimen trees
- Background traffic noise from vehicles travelling along the A20 and M20



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0 10 20 30 40 50 100 Metres

Ref **D3**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Orchard Grove**



D4 –TEAPOT LANE (SOUTH)

Comprising: Teapot Lane (south)

Teapot Lane is a linear development of 1930s semi detached houses which runs northwards from the London Road to the M20. It now adjoins the 1960s Avenue development to the east and the recently constructed Aylesford Sports College to the West.



The 2 storey houses are constructed on an even building line set back behind landscaped front gardens, usually enclosed by hedges, walls and fences. The houses are red brick with a variety of finishes including white painted render, hung tiles and half timbering and have hipped clay tiled roofs with chimneys on the ridge. Many original details have been retained including prominent gables, one or two storey bay windows, recessed curved porches or tiled porch canopies supported on timber frames. The even scale and height of the buildings, repeated designs and the use of traditional materials contributes to the distinctive 1920s/30s character of the street (see left and below) although alterations and extensions have taken place.



The modern buildings of the Aylesford Sports College contrast with the more traditional buildings in Teapot Lane, creating an interesting juxtaposition (see left).

The hedge, trees and grassed areas of the College campus enhance the open, verdant character of the northern section of the street. A wide footpath and cycle path further enhance this character. A belt of trees screening the motorway close the view northwards (see right).





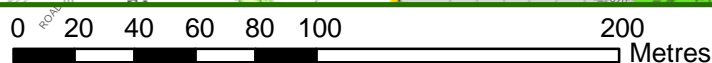
A band of trees south of the London Road enclose the view southwards (see above).

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- The street has a strong cohesive 1930s character created by the uniform height, scale, building and roof line and materials of the semi detached houses
- Alterations have taken place, but many original design details have been retained including bay windows, chimneys, decorative finishes, porches and gables
- The houses are set behind enclosed front gardens and wide pavements creating an open character
- The modern buildings of the Sports College create an interesting juxtaposition of styles and the campus, hedge and trees contribute to the verdant, open character of the street
- Belts of trees to the north and south enclose the views

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- There is traffic noise from the A20 London Road and the M20
- Views of the motorway footbridge harm the character of the area



Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

D5 – LONDON ROAD EAST

Comprising: London Road East

This straight cul de sac runs north of London Road to the east of the Hospital. There are views from the entrance of the cul de sac over open countryside to the south.



The 2 storey semi detached houses are of identical design with flat front elevations, brown tiled hipped roofs, chimneys on the ridge and wide casement windows with white frames. Four pairs of properties face onto the busy London Road (see left and below). They are set back from the road behind landscaped gardens and a brick wall.

The remaining 10 pairs of houses face onto the private cul de sac which dips down towards the north causing a stepped roof line. Those to the east are set close to the road (see below left). A specimen tree is a particular feature.



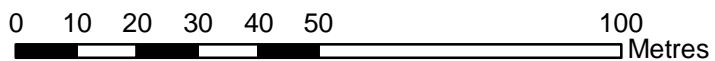
The houses on the west side are set back behind unenclosed lawns and driveways, creating a spacious character. The majority of the houses are rendered and painted, but one pair is brown brick (see above right). Trees close the view to the north and form a backdrop to the houses to the west and east.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- The development has a cohesive 1930s character due to the identical design of the buildings which is typical of the period
- The buildings are set back from the road creating an open character
- Trees frame the development to the west, east and north. A specimen tree is a particular feature
- The cul de sac has a quiet, private character

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- The properties are affected by traffic noise and movement on the A20 close to a major junction



Ref **D5**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **London Road East**

